

illustrations incorporated into editions of the texts being cited. The aspect of book history which is most intriguing here is these texts' consumption: often these textual fragments were worn on the body for protection against evil or, inversely, for calling up demonic spirits to do one's bidding. The literal corporeality of these texts could not be more exquisite: one manuscript amulet used by midwives to place on the abdomens of young women giving birth to babies contains residue of actual blood from the birthing process! These are physical traces of textual consumption not normally considered even by book historians.

This study is fascinating. Chapter 1, "Amuletic Manuscripts," centers around a lyrical text known as *Razón de amor* as well as King Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa María* (ca. 1250–80) to show how a previously understudied exorcistic prelude to the former work functions as a "physical, textual presence in the codex" (30) and how el Rey Sabio himself left indications in his songs to Mary of his own healing by means of a codex brought to his sickbed during a near-death experience. Chapter 2, "Naming God," considers the thirteenth-century *Libro de Alexandre* (Book of Alexander the Great) in light of Jewish and later Christian prohibitions against uttering the sacrosanct name for God known as the Tetragrammaton; it then moves on to another amuletic device, the *Scutum fidei* (Trinitarian Shield of Faith), and explores its connections to the *Libro de buen amor*. Chapter 3, "Amuletic Voices," begins with a medieval clay tile containing amuletic inscriptions which was discovered in an abandoned hermitage in Spain only fifty years ago and relates its contents to the thirteenth-century *Libro de Apolonio* before returning to the *Libro de buen amor*. Chapter 4, "The Bawd's Amulet," crosses the threshold to the Renaissance with highly innovative and utterly convincing readings of the *Celestina* and *Lozana andaluza*, both written by known conversos (one of the most pleasing characteristics of Giles's study is his careful attention to Spain's complex religious diversity). Finally, Chapter 5, "Outlaw Prayers," comes back around to one of Giles's favorite genres, the picaresque, to round out the discussion with examples from the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* and Quevedo's *El Buscón* (ca. 1604).

In light of Giles's spectacular findings, I can honestly say that I will never teach these texts the same way again. His own text is amuletic in its dual function of blessing the world of scholarship but cursing anyone who might dare to try to surpass it.

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"Celestina" and the Human Condition in Early Modern Spain and Italy.

Rachel Scott.

Colección Tamesis Serie A: Monografías 372. Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2017. xvi + 216 pp. \$115.

This book studies the reception of *Celestina* (1499) in the sixteenth century by reading it against or through the lens of several influential Spanish and Italian books published

in the first part of that century. These books dealt with what the author defines as aspects of the human condition. She is referring to what she identifies as the contemporary debates about self-knowledge, self-fashioning, and self-determination (19). These debates are placed in the book within the bigger discussion of the dignity of man, or better said, of the misery vs. the dignity of man, a subject that was undergoing major shifts in early modernity. The author clarifies that she is not claiming any direct influences of *Celestina* in the books adduced but exploring how the readers of those books may have interpreted certain passages of *Celestina* that deal with similar issues of being human. The underlying argument is that *Celestina* was popular in the sixteenth century because it dealt with issues about being human that were paramount at the dawning of modernity.

The first text against which *Celestina* is read is Fernán Pérez de Oliva's *Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre* (1546), in which one of the interlocutors argues against self-knowledge as a useless, even dangerous achievement. The author reads in this light the painful illuminations of the characters in *Celestina*, especially of Melibea and Pleberio, which lead them to isolation and alienation. Furthermore, Pleberio's desperation is presented as an anticipation of the disbelief in divine Providence that was gaining ground in society. The second book used as a sounding board for the reception of *Celestina* is Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528). In this light, *Celestina* is read as an exploration of an as yet untheorized capacity of language, namely, the power of language in self-fashioning. But unlike *Il Cortegiano*, *Celestina* highlights the many pitfalls in this task. For instance, Calisto and Melibea are trapped in the literary discourse of courtly love to the point that they cannot really communicate. Similarly, Rojas's book proves the inability of language to create social cohesion or personal identity. The next two and final chapters deal with Aretino's *La vita delle puttane* (1535) and its Spanish, highly modified translation, Fernán Xuárez's *Coloquio de las damas* (1547). Aretino's book is seen as a discussion on agency in which the life of Venetian prostitutes is presented as an example of personal freedom limited by social marginality. In this light, *Celestina* presents similar contradictions between the supposed freedom of prostitutes and their limitations as poor, exploited women: Areúsa seems to exert freedom but her apparent choices are merely the consequences of her poverty. The next chapter argues that Xuárez's altered translation is a diatribe against the dangers posed by the prostitute and by corrupting books, especially fictional literature. This is the least convincing of the chapters since the similarity between prostitutes and books is tenuous.

In general, the book is thoroughly documented and opens an interesting venue to analyze *Celestina*. It started as a dissertation and has all the virtues and defects of this kind of text. At the same time, some of the book chapters have been published in separate articles, with the result that the book does not flow smoothly from chapter to chapter. The two most innovative aspects of the book are the insights of how the translations of *Celestina* and other texts between Spanish and Italian changed in meaning, as well as punctual remarks on how the presence of engravings and typographical

decisions in some editions of *Celestina* reveal how interpretative decisions taken by the printers influenced the readers. The other innovative aspect is the new reading of passages of *Celestina*, which, when interpreted through the selected later texts, acquire interesting meanings. However, without further proof, it is difficult to establish that early modern readers who had read these texts came up with those interpretations of *Celestina*. More factual arguments, as the ones about the use of specific engravings and marginalia, would reinforce these interpretations.

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El imperio de la virtud: "Grandeza Mexicana" (1604) de Bernardo de Balbuena y el discurso criollo novohispano. Jorge L. Terukina Yamauchi.

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In *El imperio de la virtud*, Jorge Terukina Yamauchi provides rigorously documented perspectives on Aristotelian ethics and their selective application by the theorists of the colonization of Mexico. Terukina focuses on Balbuena's portrayal of the divisions between the Creole Spaniards who were the Conquistadors' descendants, and the later generations of imperial bureaucrats who were the product of Philip II's evolving colonial management. *El imperio de la virtud* presents the classic tome of the Mexican Baroque, Bernardo de Balbuena's *Grandeza Mexicana*, from a lucid and unromantic perspective, designed for the scholar but equally accessible to the interested layperson. Rather than interpreting Balbuena's opus as a nascent explosion of Mexican nationalism *avant la lettre*, as has been done frequently since the Mexican revolution, the author places *Grandeza mexicana* within its historical parameters: the Machiavellian world of New Spain's administrative politics.

As Terukina Yamauchi substantiates in *El imperio de la virtud*, Balbuena's omission of Mexico's indigenous population from his pro-Peninsular narrative downplays the main protagonists of the conquest of Mexico, a fact evident in the erasure of the Mexica (Aztec) Indian warriors of Moctezuma II's armies from Balbuena's retelling. Perhaps more unexpectedly for the reader, the Conquistadors, and the dominant personalities of Hernan Cortes and Pedro de Alvarado, are as irrelevant, in Balbuena's eyes, as the supposedly heathen Aztecs.

Aristotle's postulates regarding the natural virtues and their origins in Earth's different climatic zones, and their believed ancillary effects on body and brain, are what, in Terukina Yamauchi's vision, enable Bernardo de Balbuena to relegate the protagonists of the Spanish/Mexica military conflict to minor roles. When some men are called natural masters due to their good fortune at having been bred in ideal locations (such as Mediterranean Spain), then there is no need to praise the bravery of Aztec and Spaniard