

Tirso de Molina: Jealous of Herself. Translated with an introduction by Harley Erdman. Oxford, UK and Oakville, CT: Aris & Phillips, 2012. Print.

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In this attractive bilingual edition, Erdman provides a comprehensive translation of Tirso's classic comedy *La celosa de sí misma*, his second translation of Tirso (after *Marta the Divine*, 2012) for the Aris & Phillips Hispanic Classics imprint of Oxbow Books. With a concise introduction, Erdman provides a coherent and sufficiently comprehensive exploration of the life and work of the author, the Spanish Golden Age and its theatrical and literary currents, more than adequately contextualizing Tirso's 1622-1623 play for student and casual readers alike.

Honing in on the modern currents of Tirso's work, specifically its perspectives on male desire and the projection of unsustainable, idealized male views of female subjectivity onto women, Erdman makes a conscious effort to relate *Jealous of Herself* to the modern reader in his critical introduction. Suggesting that his "smart urbane comedies make Tirso a sort of precursor to Woody Allen or Pedro Almodóvar" (8), Erdman also strives to connect reader familiarity with contemporary popular culture to the study of Golden Age drama. Likewise, his statement that "a better word today [for Tirso's sexual orientation] might be 'queer'" builds upon previously cryptic critical references to Tirso's sexual orientation (8), demonstrating that Erdman is willing to modernize the language used to talk about the playwright's personal life in spite of the polemic potential of such a claim. One emerges from the introduction with a solid overview of the work and an awareness of Erdman's critical position.

Given the current paradigm of budget cuts that have detrimentally affected the funding of countless library acquisitions offices, one must admit the pragmatic value of this text: Erdman's English translation is printed alongside a reproduction of the Spanish original based on the 1627 *Primera Parte* in which *Jealous* was first published. This renders the bilingual text suitable for teaching across Spanish, English, and Comparative Literature Departments. While Joan Dejean has signaled the detrimental effects of teaching primary texts in translation for both departments

of national literatures and the rigorous academic formation of advanced students,¹ I concede that Erdman provides an excellent first translation of Tirso's *La celosa de sí misma*, equally useful for cross-departmental teaching of Golden Age literature and for library collections personnel in need of a versatile edition of the classic play.

Both those students who are simultaneously studying the Spanish language while reading Erdman's translation and those with prior background in the language will benefit from the impression of the Spanish text alongside the English, enabling consultation of the original for language-learners or reading strictly from the Castilian for those students who are up to the task. Although Erdman's translation necessarily avoids the linguistic rigidity prone to literary and theatrical decontextualization—as he states, “too much faithfulness [to the original] becomes a kind of betrayal” of the cultural and historical traditions from which the text emanates (28)—his text still demonstrates great utility for students with parallel interests in improving their familiarity with early modern Spanish.

Speaking to the work's additional pedagogical merits, the *comedia*-inspired system of translation that Erdman devises is a valuable lesson in translation practice for students and formative literary translators. With the goals of trying “to be as complete as possible in rendering Tirso's play” and “to reflect the specificity and density of the Spanish”, Erdman outlines his methodology in clear terms in order to convey why “it's important that a translation have its own rules” (27). His guiding tenets are clear: first, the text must be in verse, the structural life's blood of the “deep, organic relationship between form and content” of the *comedias* (27). Secondly, he tries to rectify jokes, references, and allusions specific to the Spanish text in English, only reverting to footnotes when absolutely necessary for the understanding of polyvalent phrases that escape English translation. Third, he is faithful to the *comedia*'s shifts in verse form in order to reflect the text's “polymetric texture” (28). Erdman also employs 7-9 syllable lines in his translation so as to maintain certain proximity to Tirso's original Castilian octosyllables and uphold the quick cadence of the play on stage. Ever mindful of the stage, Erdman's rhyme schemes intentionally reduce the “quantity and impact” of Tirso's structures (28), thus avoiding the trite monotony of what he deems a potentially burdensome consonance in English rhyme.

In spite of a few surprisingly noticeable typographic errors in the introductory material and no verse enumeration in the text,

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Erdman's debut of the English language translation serves as a valuable pedagogical contribution to the critical corpus on Tirso de Molina. Although *Jealous* is Erdman's first translation not intended directly for stage production in the Anglo world, given its pedagogical merits and its value for library collections, I would not be surprised if Erdman's translation found its way onto the stage before long.

NOTES

1. See Joan Dejean, "A Long Eighteenth Century? *What Eighteenth Century?*" *PMLA* 127.2 (March 2012): 317-20.