

SANTANO MORENO, Bernardo 1990: *Estudio sobre Confessio Amantis de John Gower y su versioãn castellana* Confisyon del amante de Juan de Cuenca. Caãceres, Ediciones de la Universidad de Extremadura.

Santano Moreno's *Estudio* was originally a doctoral thesis defended at the Universidad de Extremadura in Spain. The study is part of a group effort by young scholars from this university to analyze and establish the text of the Spanish translation of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Although Juan de Cuenca did not make his translation directly from English but via a Portuguese translation of Gower's poem, Cuenca's counts as the first rendering of an English text into Spanish. Santano Moreno carries out "a comparative analysis" of Juan de Cuenca's and John Gower's texts and provides new evidence which allows him to date both the lost Portuguese translation and the Spanish one with more precision than has been possible until now.

Estudio is divided into seven chapters plus an introduction, a conclusion, and an extensive and useful bibliography. Short versions of the first chapter have been published as articles in *Manuscripta* (reviewed in *JGN* X.2 [1991]) and in *Selim* (reviewed in *JGN* XIII.1 [1994]). This chapter provides some convincing arguments that establish the dates of the Portuguese and the Spanish translations at around 1433-38 and no later than 1454 respectively. It also gives a historical context for each of the two translations, as products of the political relationships among England, Spain, and Portugal in the late Middle Ages (in the late fourteenth century, one of Henry IV's sisters, Philippa of Lancaster, married King João I of Portugal, while another one of his sisters, Catherine of Lancaster, married King Enrique III of Castile). Robert Payne, the translator of the lost Portuguese translation, seems to have come to Portugal as a member of Philippa's court. Although, according to Santano, Payne's translation must have been commissioned by João I's successor,

King Dom Duarte, Philippa herself must have brought to Portugal the manuscript of the *Confessio Amantis* that was the basis of Payne's translation. Moreover, Santano argues that the Spanish translation was probably commissioned by Juan II rather than by his mother Catherine of Lancaster. The ingenuity of the presentation of the evidence and the conclusions derived from that evidence make this the best chapter in the book, as well as the main *raison d'être* of Santano's study.

The remaining six chapters offer a comparative analysis of Cuenca's and Gower's texts in which Santano notes interesting omissions, additions, and differences between them. This part of the book, though, has two main shortcomings. First, it is rather unclear what kind of taxonomy he uses to arrange his data. For instance, the title of chapter three is "Omissions that do not modify the meaning substantially," while the title of chapter four is "Omissions that modify the meaning, and censorship of ethical and religious nature." But what Santano understands by "substantial modifications of meaning" in the *Confessio* is never explained. This gives rise to some odd arrangements of the data. For example, in chapter three Santano analyzes Cuenca's omission of Gower's metaphoric reference to virginity as a "flour" in the story of Apollonius. Gower's lines, "Sche couthe noght hir Maiden-hede / Defende, and thus sche hath forlore / The flour which sche hath longe bore" (VIII.301-03), are translated by Cuenca as follows: "non se supo defender del que por fuerça no le privase la vergenidad" (f. 366 r. b.). Instead of "flour" Cuenca uses the noun "vergenidad." Since Santano makes this observation in chapter three, one concludes that, according to him, the omission of the metaphor does not modify the meaning substantially.

Now, when we go to chapter four, in which he purports to analyze those omissions which modify the meaning of the translated passage, or which reveal a certain ethical or religious censorship, we find examples similar to the one just mentioned. He cites, for instance, two lines from the "Tale of Canace and Machaire" — "I wole a lettre untomi brother, / So asmy [sic] fieble hand may wryte" (III.268-69) —and notes that Cuenca misses the adjective

“fiable”: “...una carta a mi hermano enbiare, la qual por mi mano escripta sera ®” (f.127 v.b.). Santano does not explain why he considers this omission a substantial modification of meaning, while the omission of the “flour” metaphor in the passage from “Apollonius” cited above is not. Does not “flour” convey several possible connotations (like fragility, or temporality) that are as meaningful as the adjective “fiable”? One could find many more examples of such inconsistencies not only in chapters three and four but in the other chapters as well.

The second shortcoming that should be mentioned is Santano’s limiting self-restriction to a mere recording of textual differences. He gives us very valuable information when he notes, for instance, that Cuenca (or, perhaps, Payne, the Portuguese translator) tends to correct Gower’s modifications of Ovid’s stories in order to bring them closer to Ovid (126-27), or that either of the translators also corrects Gower’s “mistakes” in his Biblical references (for instance, when he notes that Noah’s sons engendered seventy-two nations [VIII.91], Cuenca, following Genesis 10.1-32, corrects the number and makes it seventy-five). Gower scholars will be especially interested in his observation that the translation tends to moralize and emphasize the role of religion in the English text. Santano notes, for instance, that the translators tend to suppress references to nakedness or sexual desire, and introduce God at many points where the English text does not mention Him.

Nevertheless, many of the differences recorded in *Estudio* either remain unexplained, or are explained in very general terms. Santano notes, for example, that Cuenca omits the term “Sarazin” when he translates Amans’ comments on slaying knights: “A Sarazin if I sle schal, / I sle the Soule forth withal, / And that was nevere Cristes lore” (IV.1679-81). Cuenca’s translation reads as follows: “es sabido que matando los cuerpos matariamos asy mismo las almas, lo qual es contra la fe de Christo” (f.171 v.b.). Santano’s only observation at this point is that Cuenca omits the term “sarazin,” a word which, as he himself notes, obviously had an equivalent in Spanish, since part of Spain was still dominated by the Arabs at that time. Here, Santano

misses a great opportunity to try to give depth to his analysis and look into the political motivations and context of the Spanish translation. Indeed, Amans' remark in the *Confessio* invalidates the killing of "sarazins" even as acts against Christ's own teachings. Such a remark would have been too radical for a country which was still fighting the "sarazins" in order to finish the Reconquest. Cuenca, probably writing for the King of Castile, cleverly omitted such a problematic allusion to the killing of "sarazins."

The problems noted in this review, though, should not deter us from welcoming Santano's study. His work on the dating of the translations is the most valuable part of it, and the dates he proposes will remain as the most accurate ones until more evidence is found. The comparative analysis of the texts does offer a starting point for in-depth studies of the Spanish translation at both literary and historical levels. For historians, Santano's study opens up many questions and reminds us of how much research is still to be done in the area of Spanish, English, and Portuguese relationships in the late Middle Ages. For literary critics and students of Gower, his conclusion that the translation tries to smooth out ambiguities in the English text in order to "moralize" the *Confessio* is very suggestive. Indeed, it indicates not so much that it is possible, as some would say, to "outgower" Gower, but rather, that we should reconsider the dominant view of the *Confessio* as another moralistic work by the English author. That the translators feel a need to correct and modify Gower's text in order to give one-sided morals reveals that Gower's *Confessio* is not as straightforward as we may think it is.

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