

Confision del Amante por Joan Goer. Spanische Übersetzung von John Gowers Confessio Amantis by A. Birch-Hirschfeld

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For though Guest's principles were hopelessly wrong, his method (which, if man were not the most inconsistent of animals, ought to have taken his principles and wrung their necks) is almost perfectly right. It is, except when the principles interfere, purely historical; and the history is so pervading that it automatically points out the errors of the principles themselves. Here you have arranged, in chronological order for the most part, examples of almost all English lines and of a very large number of line-combinations. You could not have found them out for yourself (*crede experto!*) without years of labour and trouble. Here all, or most of it, is done to your hand; and you have only got to supplement it with a similar historical conspectus of later movements and tendencies, to have all your necessary materials before you. (p. 290.)

Professor Saintsbury in one passage wittily compares himself to Hippocleides in Herodotus, who stood on his head upon the table and performed unseemly antics with his legs; and it is to be feared that, like Hippocleides, he has 'danced away his marriage'; in other words that having chosen to amuse himself with the subject of prosody rather than to deal with it thoroughly and systematically, he has failed to produce a book which can take its place as a standard authority. But for this he perhaps cares as little as his prototype. It may be remarked that several times in the course of this volume he hints at a history of English prose rhythms as his next work, and we shall look forward to it with interest. He will here be on comparatively fresh ground, and will at least have less temptation to spend his time in tilting at supposed opponents, while the subject will lend itself better to the unsystematic mode of treatment which in the history of verse rhythms we find unsatisfactory.

G. C. MACAULAY.

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*Confision del Amante por Joan Goer.* Spanische Übersetzung von John Gowers *Confessio Amantis*. Herausgegeben von A. BIRCH-HIRSCHFELD. Leipzig: Seele & Co. 1909. 8vo. xxxiv + 553 pp.

The existence of an early fifteenth century translation into Spanish prose of the *Confessio Amantis* is rather a remarkable phenomenon. No other instance occurs, probably, of the contemporary translation of a Middle English book into any other European language. I called attention to the manuscript of this version some ten years ago in my edition of Gower, having been informed of it first by Mr Fitzmaurice Kelly, and having obtained some details with regard to it from the Librarian of the Escorial. It has now been printed from a transcript made by the late Hermann Knust, with a short Introduction by the editor, followed by a summary of the contents of the book itself. The manuscript is said to belong to the early years of the fifteenth century, and it purports to be a Castilian version made by one Juan de Cuenca from a Portuguese translation by an Englishman, Robert Paym (probably Payne), an ecclesiastic resident at Lisbon. 'Este libro es llamado confision del amante, el qual compuso Juan Goer natural del rreyno de Ynglaterra. E fue tornado en lenguaje portogues por Rroberto Paym

natural del dicho Reyno e canonigo de la çibdad de Lixboa. E despues fue sacado en lenguaje castellano por Juan de Cuenca vesino de la çibdad de Huete.'

No doubt the large collection of stories from various sources, with a more or less moral bearing, which is to be found in the *Confessio Amantis* proved useful to preachers, and probably the book owed to this fact the unique honour of translation. The translation is made, as I formerly pointed out, from the earliest form of the text, with the dedication to Richard II and the conclusion which belongs to this recension, and, of course, with omission of the passages in the fifth and seventh books which are characteristic of the intermediate text.

The translation is tolerably faithful. There is an omission of about 420 lines in the fourth book (ll. 1813—2233), but this almost certainly proceeds from the loss of two leaves in the manuscript used, an explanation which is indicated both by the amount of the loss and by the absence of proper connexion. Another supposed omission which is mentioned by the editor, viz., VII, 3207\*—3360\* is concerned with one of the passages which did not occur in the text that the translator followed. There is also some expansion of the tale of Constantine (after II, 3329), where a short reflection is enlarged into a speech of some length.

As an example of the style of translation we may take a passage from the tale of Rosiphilee (*Conf. Am.*, IV, 1329—1385):

La fija del rrey que esto veyá, tirose a fuera con pura verguença e ascondiose debaxo de los rramos por tal de las dexar pasar, commo aquella que penso en su voluntad que non era digna de preguntar a dueñas de tan alto estado, no embargante que ella saber quisiera quien eran mas que a ser señora de todo el mundo. E algo un poco la cabeça fuera del bosque mirando en derredor e vido venir una muger detras de las otras ençima de un cavallo morsillo magro, los quadriles de fuera e coxqueava commo si toviese enclavadura de que la muger mucho se quexava, porque esto cavallo estava en punto de se perder, e tenia en la frente una estrella blanca commo quier que el freno que traja de piedras preçiosas era muy rrico, e la su silla mala e su brial muy desharrapado; e traya alderredor de si de cabestros mas de quatro çientos. E tanto que lleço açerca de la ynfanta, mirola e vido commo era muger fermosa e de buen pareçer, aunque de otra parte le menguase la graçia: e asi penso que esta le diria nuevas de las otras que antes viera. E salio entonçes fuera rrogandole que esperase e dixo: desid, hermana, que mugeres son aquellas que van aca adelante tan ricamente apostadas. La muger que vinia asas llena de pesar, rrespondio muy mansamente disiendo: señora, estas son de aquellas que verdaderamente sirvieron al amor en su tienpo, e donde tenian sus coracones, sienpre mantovieron verdad. Agora, señora, quedad con dios que no puedo mas aqui aguardar porque a mi conviene de yr a servir mi ofiçio, por ende dadme liçençia que no puedo mas aqui estar.

This is a close translation (though the rendering is not quite accurate throughout), and at the same time it is quite readable and idiomatic. Probably the version profited by its passage through two hands, the one that of an Englishman, who understood the original fairly well, and the other that of a native of Castile, who wrote in good Spanish.

The editorial work seems to be competently done; but it is to be

regretted that no account is given of the manuscript except from the catalogue of the Library. It would be interesting to know whether the date 1400, which is there confidently assigned to it, rests on any substantial grounds. It must be a rather remarkable book in appearance, very small and very thick, for it is written in double columns containing each only about a hundred and twenty words, and it has no fewer than four hundred and eleven leaves. It is difficult to say why the original table of contents should be printed at the end instead of the beginning of the book, as in the manuscript, unless to make way for the editor's full account of the contents of the *Confessio Amantis*, which we might well have dispensed with. We owe thanks, however, in any case, to those who have placed within our reach this most interesting literary document.

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*Peacock's Memoirs of Shelley, with Shelley's Letters to Peacock.* Edited by H. F. B. BRETT-SMITH. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1909. 8vo. xxviii + 219 pp.

Mr Brett-Smith has done good service in reprinting Peacock's *Memoirs of Shelley*, together with Shelley's letters to Peacock, in a small and convenient volume. The *Memoirs* are too much neglected now that so many longer and more careful studies of Shelley and his work have appeared, but however careful and critical later biographers may be, nothing can have the same vivid interest as an account of the poet from one of his most intimate friends, especially when, as in this case, intimacy does not lead to indiscriminate admiration. The frankness with which Peacock disbelieves all Shelley's tales of mysterious adventure and midnight alarm, is as delightful as the naivety with which the poet accepts his incredulity, and the fact that this put no strain upon their friendship says much for their power of understanding each other. Most important of all, from a biographical point of view, the *Memoirs* give us the true picture of Harriet. The tall, graceful woman, 'her speech the essence of frankness and cordiality; her spirits always cheerful; her laugh spontaneous, hearty, and joyous,' has little in common with the Dora Copperfields amongst whom she is usually classed.

The letters also are of great interest. Not only are the descriptive passages which they contain fine in themselves, but they not unfrequently shew the inception of some thought or phrase which later finds a place in Shelley's poetry. Mr Brett-Smith points out several striking instances of this in comparing the letter of March 23rd, 1819, describing the arch of Constantine, with Act II, sc. iv, ll. 135—9 of *Prometheus Unbound*.

The volume has been edited in scholarly fashion. It is not overloaded with notes, and what comments there are, are interesting and to