

## A “New” Seventeenth-Century English Translation of “El celoso extremeño”

DALE B. J. RANDALL

SINCE A HEFTY HANDFUL of hard-working scholars over the years have interested themselves and others in England’s early reception of Cervantes, it is remarkable at this late date to learn that a translation of his “Celoso extremeño” published in London in 1681 appears to have been overlooked. Only slightly less surprising, there is no reference to it in the revised second edition of Donald Wing’s *Short-title Catalogue*, or its current Internet descendant.<sup>1</sup> In 1903, however, in Edward Arber’s privately printed *Term Catalogues, 1668-1709 A.D.*, it was listed among books said to be published in London during Michaelmas Term, 1681 (1: 461).

Titled *The Jealous Gentleman of Estramadure*, osut of Miguel de Cervantes *Savedra His Novels*, this 125-page story in duodecimo, costing one shilling when bound, was printed for the booksellers Charles Blount and Richard Butt. Blount, professionally the more active of the two, was situated “near the *Bear-Tavern* by the *New-Exchange* in the *Strand*” and Butt “at the *Bear* and *Orange-Tree* in *Princes-street* near the *Horshoe-Tavern* in *Drury Lane*” (Figure 1). An extremely rare book now (the copy in the British Library may be unique), it was noteworthy even in its own time insofar as it was the only book in English to focus on a single one of the stories from Cervantes’s *Novelas ejemplares*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wing’s *Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America, and of English Books Printed in Other Countries, 1641-1700* (copyright 1981-2005 by the British Library and ESTC/North America). This site covers works from the beginning of print to 1800 and is updated daily. For the present article, the site was checked on 9 January 2007.

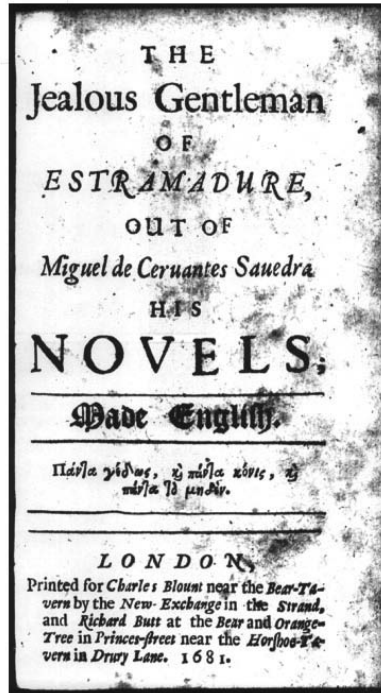


FIGURE 1. The telling motto chosen for the title page of *The Jealous Gentleman* is by Glycon (date unknown), from Book 10, Epigram 124, of the *Anthologia Græca*: “All is laughter, all is dust, all is nothing, for all that is cometh from unreason” (as translated by W. R. Paton). Reproduced by permission of the British Library.

“El celoso extremeño” is, of course, the tale of a very wealthy and hyperbolically cautious old man, Felipe Carrizales (here presented as Philipppo de Carizale), who takes extraordinary pains to protect his beautiful young wife, Leonora, from the ways of the world. In the words of this 1681 translation, Carizale

did not so much as suffer any Living Creature to come within his Doors, which was not Female. He had never so much as a He-Catt that coursed the Mice, or a Dog that bark'd there, they were all of the Feminine Gender.... Never Man came within the Gate of his Court, he always treated with his Friends upon the Street. Yea the very figures represented in the Tapestry, that hung his Rooms, and

## Chambers were all Women, and Flowers, and Landskips. (21-22)

Different minds in different times may be depended upon to react differently to an extended series of such precautions, and, surprisingly or not, the anonymous writer of the preliminary address here "TO THE READERS" chooses to present the story as simply comic. Perhaps he (almost certainly *he*) had hopes of building on Cervantes's already flourishing reputation as the creator of another aging but quite different Spanish gentleman. Certainly *Don Quixote* was usually regarded at the time as a funny book. In any case, on the grounds that Carizale is cuckolded, the writer of "TO THE READERS" would have those readers respond much as they would to the popular cuckold jests of the day. He writes:

*I Have here brought you a Man from Spain, on purpose to make you Laugh. Not but that I might have found Ridiculous Cuckolds enough nearer home, but because I had no mind to expose my self, to an action of Slander, for a matter of truth.*

*The poor Don has had a hard time, and a long Voyage of it, and therefore 'twould be inconsistent both with the discretion, and civility of any body, that knows the World, to Laugh at him, because his Cloaths are a little Thread-bare, for I can assure you he has better at home. But if you can make your selves any sport with his Head-piece,<sup>2</sup> he says you are welcome, and bids you laugh on in the name of Merrymment, for he suffers in good Company, and such, as (whatever he does) think themselves never a whit the worse Men for the Cognizance.*

*I will not do my Breeding the wrong, to forestal his Story, let him tell it himself: I will only forewarn you, that (like many another Man) he was undone by a Plot, and why may not we take the Liberty, to Laugh at their Plots, as well as they Laugh at ours, And so fare you well. (A2<sup>r</sup>-A3<sup>v</sup>)*

As for the translation itself, and because plagiarism of some sort was not uncommon in England at the time, one might wonder whether the anonymous translator of this work was indebted to the now-long-deceased James Mabbe (1571/2–1642?). Mabbe's version of "El celoso extremeño" had been published twice, first in his *Exemplarie Novells* (1640), and later, after his death, as *Delight in Severall Shapes* (1654), and both times with the title "The Jealous Husband."

---

2 A reference to the cuckold's traditional pair of horns.

Wherever one looks, however, comparing passages in Mabbe with those of his successor soon exonerates the latter. Where Mabbe writes "Ducats" (*Delight in Severall Shapes*, 271), his successor writes "Crowns" (5). "An old Negro" in Mabbe (276) appears in 1681 as "an old Moor" (16). The phrase "rich household-stuffe" in Mabbe (276) becomes the anonymous translator's "delicate Moveables" (16). In a passage on Carizales's four white female slaves, Mabbe reports that the old man "burned them with a hot yron in their cheekes" (176), whereas the later writer is satisfied with the calmer "marked them in the Face" (17). Mabbe has Loaysa, the determined, ingenious, and musically inclined young wooer of Carizales's beautiful young wife "sing some pleasant wittie Ballads of Moores, and Moorish Women" (282). In contrast, his successor writes less happily that the young man sang "some of the Moors Mock-Romances" (27). It turns out that while both translators have their strengths, Mabbe's grasp of Spanish is more firm and his talent as a writer more sure.

Whatever smiles the phrasing of the later translator may elicit here and there, his prose in the final paragraph of the story is both clear enough and close enough to Cervantes's prose:

I cannot tell the reason why *Leonora* took no more care, nor made any further endeavours, to justify her self, and to let her Jealous Husband understand, how pure, and blameless she was, and how valiantly she had resisted in this adventure: And yet there is a great likelihood, that the trouble of her Soul bound up her Tongue, and the sudden Death of her Husband left no room for her Justification. (125)

Despite *Leonora's* innocence, the *turbación* she feels inhibits her speech. This innocence combined with unease is not only faithful to Cervantes's quiet ambiguity but also far removed from the "Merryment" of cuckoldry assumed in the volume's opening remarks addressed to the reader (A3<sup>r</sup>).

Of course, no translation conveys the meaning of its source perfectly—as Cervantes himself acknowledges in his famous tapestry simile. Nevertheless, this anonymous *Jealous Gentleman of Estramadure* conveys not only the action but also the mood of its original far better than its own introductory address might suggest. Imperfect as it is, the volume as a whole added its modest duodecimo weight to the ever-expanding English reputation of Spain's greatest writer.

Department of English  
Box 90015  
Duke University  
Durham, N.C. 27708  
dbjandpr@duke.edu

### WORKS CITED

- Arber, Edward, ed. *The Term Catalogues, 1668-1709 A.D.* 3 vols. London: Edward Arber, 1903.
- Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *Delight in Severall Shapes Drawne to the Life in Six Pleasant Histories, by the Elegant Pen of That Famous Spaniard, Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, the Same That Wrote Don Quixot.* Trans. James Mabbe. London: William Sheares, 1654.
- . *The Jealous Gentleman of Estramadure, out of Miguel de Cervantes Savedra His Novels.* Anon. trans. London: Charles Blount and Richard Butt, 1681.
- English Short-title Catalogue.* The British Library and ESTC/-North America. 9 January 2007 <<http://eureka.rlg.org/Eureka/zgate2.prod>>.
- Glycon. Epigram 124, Book 10, in *The Greek Anthology.* Trans. W. R. Paton. Vol. 4 of 5 vols. 1918. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1963. 62-63.
- Wing, Donald. *Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America, and of English Books Printed in Other Countries, 1641-1700.* 2d ed. Rev. John J. Morrison and Carolyn W. Nelson, assisted by Matthew Seccombe. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1994.