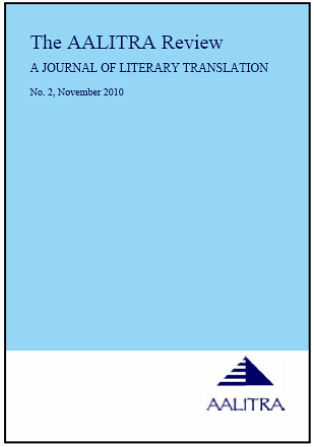

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The Centrality of a Translator's Culture: Fernando de Rojas's Celestina and the Creation of Style in Translation

PETER BUSH

Fernando de Rojas started his story of passion and social conflict when he was studying law at Salamanca University in his early twenties, around 1496. In various prologues and epilogues, he gives self-deprecating, ironic glimpses of how it all happened and what the context was for reading literature at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Apparently he came across a manuscript chapter lying around in a lecture theatre, read it, liked its style and, as he had a few weeks' holiday, decided to finish it himself. The volume was published in 1499 in sixteen chapters. De Rojas then submitted it to the scrutiny of student friends who recommended he should develop it further as they liked the characters so much. He duly did this and added five chapters. The final version of *Celestina* was published in 1500.

De Rojas's publisher, Alonso de Proaza, introduced notes at the beginning of each chapter explaining the scenario and the characters and gave it the framework of a medieval humanistic comedy, that is, the appearance of a theatrical dialogue on the page. However, it was not written for the stage. De Proaza appeals to the professional readers who will read the work to vary their expression for the different roles and capture the attention of their listeners by putting on "a show of accents and banter".

Neither de Rojas nor his publisher can have realised that *Celestina* would in time be seen as a key work in the development of European prose fiction and Spanish as a literary language: an experiment in the novel form almost a hundred years before Cervantes, before the genre existed as such. More immediately, they must have been astonished to see it become a bestseller in Europe, translated into numerous languages, including Italian, English, Hebrew and Latin, with a stream of sequels by other Spanish writers hoping to cash in on its success. De Rojas went off to be a lawyer in a provincial town and wrote no more.

His masterpiece remains largely unknown and unread in the English-speaking world. Could I as a translator do anything about that? And why should I want to? And how would I even attempt to re-recreate stylistic originality from the sixteenth century into an English style that could sound at all original over five hundred years later?

First I will sketch in the historical context in which de Rojas lived and wrote. The 1490s was a tumultuous decade for the Iberian peninsula, a watershed when

Ferdinand and Isabel, the Catholic monarchs, launched into their forging of a pure-blooded nation-state: crusading, imperial Spain. In 1492, Granada, the last Arab kingdom, fell, thus ending over seven centuries of Muslim government in some part of the peninsula. The decree expelling the Jews was promulgated and Columbus embarked on the voyage that would lay the cornerstone for future imperial expansion. The Catholic monarchs had already revamped the Inquisition, which quickly grew into a form of national police particularly keen on rooting out heretical converted Jews – *the conversos* – and Muslims – the *moriscos*, whose final expulsion was decreed in 1611 – as well as any other individual deemed to be engaged in "impure" activities.

The turbulent changes promoted by the state met with opposition from Catholic citizens used to and happy with forms of rough-and-ready coexistence, those drawn to more Erasmist theological positions, and the *moriscos* and *conversos*. At the same time, the spread of printing presses and the movement to establish Spanish as a vernacular language that could challenge Latin meant that reading matter was becoming more available for individuals, diminishing the control of ideas and interpretation of the faith that were no longer a monopoly of the Church. De Rojas belonged to a *converso* family that had converted at the end of the fourteenth century. Members of his family had suffered persecution and been burnt at the stake and had property confiscated. His father-in-law lost status and property for heretical remarks. Salamanca and its university were home to clerics and professors of conflicting tendencies, astrologists, mystics and linguists. Old Castile was soon to be one of the centres of the *comunero* peasant rebellions. The mood of his novel reflects the vigour and turmoil within the old, doomed world through the language of the rebellious whores and servants who employ a Shakespearean flamboyance in rhetorical debate and alcoholic banter.

The act of translating de Rojas confronts his and his work's historical context with those of the translator: the factors leading him to become a literary translator, his own reading of the novel and the existing tradition of translating *Celestina* into English, his own culture and historical context.

I first read de Rojas when I was at a provincial grammar school in Spalding, Lincolnshire, in 1963 when the welfare state was firmly established in the United Kingdom and enabled me to enter a university territory unknown to my family. My teacher was preparing me for the Oxbridge entrance examinations and one possible topic in Spanish literature was Golden Age fiction. Inevitably, England being England, I was hypersensitive about social class and my ambivalent relationship with standard English. My father was a print-worker and active trades-unionist whose father had been a shepherd. In the daytime he was constantly using two forms of English: standard in the pages he was making up and with the journalists and non-standard with his "mates"; at home, our conversations were always in non-standard, though standard was present in the numerous newspapers we read and the radio and any conversations we had with those who spoke standard. My mother

had journeyed from Sheffield to Lincolnshire in the 1920s to pick strawberries, met my father and never returned, an atypical migration from the city to the country. She brought a third element to the conversation – what remained of a Yorkshire working-class accent.

For me, this linguistic shifting was never an issue and always seemed "natural" until I entered formal schooling at five and was told, much to my surprise, that I didn't speak proper English and again when I passed the 11+ examination that was the gateway to higher education and a professional career that only became available to children from working-class families after the Second World War with the expansion of the welfare state and education for all. Grammar School brought me into a world largely comprising sons of the local bourgeoisie who didn't live on council estates and didn't speak non-standard *and* standard. I thrived on learning Latin, French and Spanish where we started *tabula rasa*.

I also came to *Celestina* after intensive exposure to the writing of the Angry Young Men of the 1950s like John Osborne and the social realists like Stan Barstow, Alan Sillitoe and Shelagh Delaney in Sixth-form General English lessons that were notable for their focus on class and language and for the universal hostility to literature of those specialising in sciences, a hostility that expressed itself in verbal violence towards the teacher. Such exposure, nevertheless, allowed a space for the experience of class to be debated, if always as something exotic and other, and was an antidote to a combination of public school high-mindedness (rugby not football, pray Church of England, *The Times* not *The Daily Mirror*, the Third Programme not Radio Luxemburg)) and a Leavisite civilizing mission that left out of account anything that wasn't "high" culture.

Being by now a budding member of the bourgeoisie, I glimpsed some of the history of social conflict as related in innumerable stories by my parents through my own experience of local hypocrisies, for example, a local pillar of the establishment, a scoutmaster and school governor, I knew also as the manager Dad had to face in his union activities.

I was immediately struck by de Rojas's description of life in a small town, living as I did in a market town where people are known by the street where they live, family histories are common knowledge, and there is a rich and powerful class of landowners and a large class of extremely poor, mainly agricultural, labourers. Never mind it was five hundred years ago, the fear felt by Celestina and her friends and the stable-boys before the power of magistrates, police and rich reminded me of the tone of family stories: the eviction of Granddad and his family from his tied-cottage one Christmas, the imprisonment of a local twelve-year old girl reported by the Church of England parson for picking flowers from the gardens of the Alms Houses and , the "tramp-hands", unemployed print-workers who used to turn up in busy seasons hoping to pick up some casual work, the landowners who fought against the introduction of industry into the local economy in order to maintain a docile labour-force dependent on the land.

De Rojas's characters from the fourth estate made an impact: they feared power but were not cowered and spoke up for their rights, the language they used in extremely lively oral exchanges was in a different literary vein to the peasants of Lope de Vega or even Sancho Panza who didn't seem so contemporary.

My own explorations of dialects of English and English society was then forever broadened as I went to Cambridge and was influenced more by English Faculty members like Raymond Williams (oh, the structures of feeling), then Oxford, became a '68 revolutionary (oh, the dialectic of history) and then taught in London schools (oh, comprehensive mixed ability), before turning to literary translation (oh, the challenge to write) or teaching in university (oh, translation theory and practice).

At university I re-read *Celestina* and met scholarship that was obsessed about authorship – did de Rojas really write the whole book? The Spanish edition from the 1920s I used had large sections italicised that were viewed as additions by another hand. Modern Spanish scholarship has continued largely in this vein, such textual anguish obfuscating the impact of characters and language. Conversely, English Hispanic scholarship preferred to see the work as promoting moral poetic justice – the lovers deserve to die because they stooped to use a bawd as a go-between. Criticism focussed on the star-crossed lovers and relegated the other characters, after demonising them, to medieval tradition. Both camps relished, still relish, the tracing of influences, stacking their pages with erudite, often prudish footnotes. Social conflict and historical context barely get a look in. After all, the leading UK Hispanists veered from high Catholicism and Anglicanism to liberal elitism in their beliefs. A complementary vein has been to read the novel simply as an amusing book where nothing is to be taken too seriously, eschewing moral high ground or social relevance. The more socially and politically sensitive interpretations and research of American scholars Stephen Gilman and Dorothy Severin were treated with benign paternalism by figures such as the late Sir Peter Russell, Alfonso el Sabio Professor of Hispanic Literature at Oxford University, champion of the "funny book" approach and himself now resurrected and lionised in literary form by Javier Marías as Sir Toby…. In other words, scholars have tended to help marginalise this Renaissance masterpiece which, one can be sure, would be recognised as a masterpiece worthy of Cervantes and Shakespeare if it weren't so socially critical, had been originally written in English or had enjoyed a different tradition of scholarship and translation.

My move into literary translation was inseparable from a connection I made in the early 1980s, a connection that also helped eventually to restore *La Celestina* to my horizons. I prepared and published in 1981-82 a critical edition of *Campos de Níjar* by Juan Goytisolo and soon after that I translated the first volume of his autobiography, *Forbidden Territory*, and became, by and large, his translator into English. Goytisolo has been a writer in exile since 1956, a champion of the Muslim roots of Spanish culture and defender and interpreter of a literary canon of works

that have been either forgotten or sanitized by the Spanish literary establishment, a tree of literature on to which he had grafted his own. A central work in his alternative canon is de Rojas's novel. He wrote an essay to celebrate its five hundredth anniversary that I translated for the *Los Angeles Times* (in the days when that newspaper had a weekend literary supplement). While translating the essay I re-read the novel and thought about the project of a new translation and even began using extracts from various translations as material for translation seminars I was giving at the British Centre for Literary Translation, of which I had become the Director. However, being director of a national literary translation centre meant I had minimal time for actual translation. It was only when I left Norwich to become a full-time freelancer in Barcelona in 2004 that the idea became feasible. I took it to Dedalus Books, which has a good record of publishing European classics in translation. Coincidence would have it that I re-translated in tandem *Celestina* and Goytisolo's *Juan the Landless*. Goytisolo had re-worked the final part of his trilogy and insisted that his American publishers commission a new translation. Both projects encouraged me to be bold stylistically: a late modernist destruction of conventional literary language and nationalist myths and a first vernacular novel creating a new literary language, a new genre and in rebellious mode. In neither case, as translator, did I simply want to defer to what had been done before.

Reading *Celestina* almost forty years after my initial late teenager tussle with de Rojas's Spanish, I brought a quite different intellectual and existential baggage to the process. The acute class-consciousness had receded slightly into the background and the playful exuberance of language and the immense energy of Celestina as the protagonist, a woman of seventy, who relishes her intelligence, power and scheming imagination while she bewails the waning of all that as well as her opportunities for sexual pleasure. Any fixation I might have had for the Romeo and Juliettish figures of Calisto and Melibea under the influence of 1960s' scholarship was blown away by the rhetoric of the servants and whores. I now saw that one of the original features of the novel was the latter's brazen humour and sense of independence and worth: de Rojas created an equality of rhetoric across the social classes, and in fact tips the balance in the favour of the subaltern who outscheme their masters.

I took two strategic decisions as translator. First, I would get rid of the framework of the humanistic comedy and restore for the English reader a narrative that was closer to the voice of a single professional "performance" reader in the inflections of the interpretive translator. Secondly, I decided I would not attempt to create a form of cod-Shakespearean English (the conventional translation tradition), for if the genius of de Rojas's language derived from its original blend of street Spanish and literary registers, then his "shock of the new" demanded an English that attempted to create an original blend of street English and a variety of literary registers. Whatever it was, the language of the translation couldn't be bland and should be driven by a strong sense of orality. This was something reinforced by my

experience of translating Juan Goytisolo and, in parallel now, *Juan the Landless:* however difficult the imagery, the discontinuous, anti-linear narrative, the immense repertoire of references, the language must be driven by an oral musicality to hook the reader: the art is in the rhythm.

Changing the physical presence of the prose on the page was relatively simple. The only adjustments I had to make were the addition of names or a "he mumbled" or "she muttered" to ensure it was clear who was saying what to whom. Creating the style I was after took me over twelve drafts in just under three years. It involved a number of literary researches (from Chaucer to eighteenth-century Madames) and the releasing of various voices from my past for the subalterns.

I will give below an example of the translation of a monologue by Celestina from the beginning of chapter five as she walks along the street after her first encounter with Melibea from which she gets a firm sense of the young lady's hypocrisy – she wants to meet Calisto but her social status won't allow her to admit she does – and of her success in implanting the idea of an eventual encounter. She is on her way to tell Calisto about the good prospects.

I have listed the different changes from draft to draft as material evidence of how style is created in translation, how the interpretive art of the translator draws nearer and nearer to an intense literary language, the verbal expression of a strategy that can only be wrought from such a drafting and research process. The art is informed holistically by the translator's history, experience, scholarship, subjectivity: all that can be drawn on rationally and irrationally in the course of re-writing and moving forwards and backwards in terms of the original Spanish. The translation is in effect burnished on the translator's consciousness as a writer to the point that it takes on an existence independent of the original and the translator has to release himself from the latter, let himself/herself go in the writing: the unique form of writing that constitutes literary translation.

In this particular excerpt of 300 words, there are some 120 actual changes. In a novel of some 60,000 words, that means in the region of 24,000 changes of words. And these are changes always in terms of an overall re-writing, on the path towards the desired style. I highlight this in case any publisher thinks literary translators are overpaid or any university administration or literary critic thinks that literary translators are fly-by-nights on Grub Street.

Apart from a few gleanings from previous translations for seminars, I had never read thoroughly previous translations into English and would only do so once I was happy that my own translation was more or less where I wanted it to be. In order to illustrate the tradition of translating de Rojas, I include here translations of the excerpt by James Mabbe, John Clifford, Margaret Sayers Peden and, in French, Aline Schulman. All maintain the theatre dialogue framework. The English translations are all in archaic English. Mabbe's is archaic because his translation is from 1631 and so he is much closer in time to de Rojas and his English is his contemporary literary English. Following the practice of his period, he expands in

translation and his riffs on de Rojas are usually italicised in modern editions. John Clifford's translation is an example of the many translations for the stage that start from the premise that the "play" isn't performable and must be cut back until it is. Clifford cut the text by over 40% for the Calixto Bieito production at the 2004 Edinburgh Festival and Bieito made further cuts in the process of production. As a producer, Bieito is reputed for his fondness for nudity and shock-value; the translation, however, is firmly in archaic mode. The 2009 translation by Margaret Sayers Peden is a tour de force in this manner and was published in September 2009 three months after Dedaus published mine in the UK. She wanted the English to resemble as far as possible the Spanish even at the expense of being annoying. Both Clifford's and Peden's translations, by opting for the archaic, translate in the Mabbe tradition, doing the opposite of what de Rojas achieved, that is, a shockingly new Spanish for his time. Aline Schulman, Juan Goytisolo's French translator, opts for a contemporary tone but avoids using words that entered the French language from the second half of the nineteenth century.

1.

¡Oh rigurosos trances! ¡Oh cuerda osadía! ¡Oh gran sufrimiento! ¡Y que tan cerca estuve de la muerte, si mi mucha astucia no rigiera con el tiempo las velas de la petición! ¡Oh amenazas de doncella brava! ¡Oh airada doncella! ¡Oh diablo a quien yo conjure, cómo cumpliste tu palabra en todo lo que te pedí! En cargo te soy.

CELEST. O cruel encounter! O *daring and* discreet attempt! O great *and singular sufferance*! O how near had I been to my death, if my much subtlety and *cunning craft* had not shifted in time the sails of my suit! O braving menaces of a gallant lady! O angry and enraged damsel! O thou devil whom I conjured! O how well has thou kept thy word with me in all that I desired! I am much bound unto thee!
JM

CELESTINA. O cruel encounter! O subtle daring! O great sufferance! And how near I was to death! What cunning subtlety to trim the sails of my petition in her angry gale! O the threats of the roaring girl! O angry virgin! O devil I conjured up, how you fulfilled the promise I made you give me! I am in debt to you!
JC

SCENE 1
CELESTINA (*alone*) O such danger! O cunning daring mine! O great suffering! I was very near death had my cleverness not known to trim the sails of my petition! O threats from that fiery maiden! O wrathful maiden! And you, Devil, you I conjured, how faithfully you kept your word in everything I asked of you! I am in your debt!
MSP

> CÉLESTINE. – Dans quel mauvais pas je m'étais mise! Quelle audace, quelle astuce il m'a fallu! Et quelle patience! Si je n'avais pas change de cap au bon moment et parlé d'une prière, c'était la mort qui m'arrivait dessus! Comme elle m'a menacée, cette pucelle en colère! Une vraie furie! Et toi, démon que j'ai conjure, comme tu as su tenir parole, tu as fait tout ce que je t'avais demandé! Je te dois beaucoup.
> AS
>
> That was a close shave! Cunning wins cunny! How I sweated! I was close to death but my quick wits trimmed my sails to the breeze! What threats from that short-tempered young girl! What a short fuse! Devil that I invoked, you granted me all I asked for! I am in your debt.
> PB

The numbers below denote the sequence of drafts on screen and those on paper, marked by "p". The edits provide a snapshot of how the final style arises out of drafting that is driven by a strategy that is consistent but is realised in fits and starts. The style becomes sharper and denser.

2	What a close shave.	3	That was a close shave.
2	What cunning daring.	2p	Cunning and daring win!
3	Cunning daring wins!	4	Cunning wins cunny!
2	How I suffered.	3	How I sweated.
2	I was so close	3	I as close
2	trimmed the souls	3	trimmed the sails
2	such threats	3	what threats
2	bad-tempered	3	irritable maiden
3p	that bad-tempered young girl	10	that short-tempered young girl
9	What a quick temper!	10	What a short fuse!
3	Devil invoked by me, you granted all I asked for!		
3p	You granted all I asked for, devil that I invoked!		
11	I owe you one.	Dedalus editor: I am in your debt.	
2	I asked of you	3	I asked

The two contemporary translations keep the "O"s and thus follow in the Mabbe mould. JC's has a close echo in "cruel encounter". Neither JC nor MSP decide to retain "thee","thou" etc. that would have made their archaic style more authentic; it is therefore a modified archaism they are seeking. (However, it's all very relative to where you stand in the English-speaking world – I had Yorkshire aunts and uncles who used "thee" and "thou" all the time as part and parcel of their Yorkshire dialect.) AS creates a more conventional conversational rhythm and even includes explanatory remarks about Celestina's prayer. PB's is radically different at several points, aiming to create an English that reflects the chattering of the old woman as she walks along in a hurry. It is hybrid. "close shave" and "sweat" belong to a contemporary colloquial/almost cartoon register; "cunning wins cunny" introduces a play on words inspired by the eighteenth-century Madame's tag of "Cunny is money"; obviously the original is playful as well in its combination of daring and cleverness. "Short-tempered" eventually prompts "short fuse", which introduces the idea of explosion. In this way, the style is honed over many drafts.

Publisher, Eric Lane, made a few helpful suggestions concerning the asides, and some turns of phrase he felt were too contemporary. Sometimes PB agreed as in the case where he removed the "I owe you one", noting now in this comparison how that brings in a more conventional solution and wondering whether he shouldn't have responded by creating something sharper or whether he was right to add this conventional touch to Celestina's mutterings. Does the formally more equivalent or "correct" translation add a neutral tone which this interpretation is not simply trying to avoid but is actually writing against? Obviously, it stands out in this focus on one of Celestina's monologues and is less noticeable in a once-through reading of the whole book.

2.

> Así amansaste la cruel hembra con tu poder y diste tan oportuno lugar a mi habla cuanto quise con la ausencia de su madre. ¡Oh vieja Celestina! ¡Vas alegre! Sábete que la meitad está hecha, cuando tienen buen principio las cosas. ¡Oh serpentino aceite! ¡Oh blanco hilado! ¡Cómo os aparejastes todos en mi favor! !Oh yo rompiera todos mis atamientos hechos y por hacer, ni creyera ni en piedras ni palabras!
>
> So handsomely hast thou appeased this cruel dame by thy mighty power, and afforded me so fit a place and opportunity, by reason of her mother's absence, to utter my mind unto her. O thou old Celestina, cheer up thy heart, and think with thyself that things are half ended, when they are well begun! O thou oil of serpents! O thou *delicate* white thread! how have you bestirred yourselves in my business! *Whose favourable furtherance if I had not found*, I would utterly have broken and destroyed all the enchantments which either I have already, or hereafter are to be made; nor would I ever any more have had any belief in herbs, stones or words.
> JM

Old Celestina! Are you happy? Think how, now the beginning's gone so well, the whole job is as good as accomplished.
JC

You tamed that cruel female with your power, and with her mother's absence provided the opportune opening for my words, as I wished. O Celestina, old girl. Are you happy? You know that with a good beginning half is done. O my snake oil! O my white thread! How well you worked in my favor. If not, I would have broken all my bonds, now, past, and future, and never again had faith in herbs or stones, or words.
MSP

Ton pouvoir a dompté cette femelle farouche et m'a donné l'occasion de lui parler autant que j'ai voulu, en l'absence de sa mère. D'autant qu'un bon début, c'est une moitié du chemin parcourue. Et l'huile de serpent, et le fil, comme ils étaient bien disposeés en ma faveur! S'il en avait été autrement, j'aurais rompu toute alliance avec toi, faite et à faire, et n'aurais plus voulu croire ni aux plantes, ni aux pierres, ni aux mots magiques.
AS

Your power softened that cruel female and gave me all the time in the world to say what I wanted to, in her mother's absence. Dear old Celly! Aren't you happy? You know the battle is half won when you get off to a good start. Snake oil! White thread! How well you both worked for me! If you hadn't, I'd have broken all my ties – present and future – with the nether world and stopped believing in magic herbs, stones and spells!
PB

2	You mollified …with your powers	3	Your powers mollified
3p	Your powers softened		
3	what I had to	2p	what I needed
3	Dear Old Celestina!	4	Dear old Celly!
2	gave me plenty of time	3	gave me all the time in the world
2	all I had to	3	what I had to
2	when things get off	3	when you get off
2	That snake oil!	3	Snake oil!
2	That white thread	3	white thread
8	White thread, how well	8p	White thread! How well
2	words	3	spells

JM here may seem excessively wordy and loses pace but he remains playful in his additions with the alliteration in "favourable furtherance …found". JC drastically cuts for the stage. AS also uses alliteration: "femelle farouche", "plantes…pierres", "mots magiques". PB makes three additions: "all the time in the world" and "with the nether world" in pursuit of naturalness for the character and "the battle is half won", developing the military flavour, and alliteration: "softened… female","stones and spells". A key move was to decide to have the bawd and sometimes her entourage refer to her as "Celly". This was first suggested by a need to reflect her constant use of diminutives and by a desire to create a more familiar, affectionate side to her character too often interpreted as distant, cruel or plain evil. "Celly" also echoes "cunny" and is short, thus helping to maintain orality, pace and tension, a breathlessness to which the spare exclamations "Snake oil! White thread!" also contribute.

3.

Pues, alégrate, vieja, que más sacarás de este pleito, que de quince virgos que renovaras.¿oh malditas haldas, prolijas y largas, cómo me estorbáis de llegar adonde han de reposar mis nuevas! ¿Oh buena fortuna, cómo ayudas a los osados, y a los tímidos eres contraria! Nunca huyendo huye la muerte al cobarde. ¿oh, cuántas erraran en lo que yo he acertado! ¿Qué hicieran en tan fuerte estrecho estas nuevas maestras de mi oficio sino responder algo a Melibea, por donde se perdiera cuanto yo con buen callar he ganado?

Be merry then, *old stinkard, frolic with thyself*, old wench, for thou shalt get more by this one suit than by soldering of fifteen cracked maidenheads. A pox upon these long and large *plaitings in my* petticoats; *fie how they rumple and fold themselves about my legs*, hindering my feet from hasting hither, whither I desire my good news should come! O good fortune, what a friend art thou to the valiant! What a foe to those that are fearful! Nor by flying doth the coward fly death. O how many have failed that which I have effected! *How many have struck at, but missed that nail, which myself only have hit on the head!* What in so strong *and dangerous* a strait as this would these young graduates in my art have done? Perhaps have bolted out some foolish word or other to Melibea, whereby they would have lost as much *by their prattling* as I have gained by my silence.
JM

So be happy, old woman, for you will earn more from this account than from fifteen renovated virgins. O curse these long trailing skirts for rumpling and folding themselves about my legs and preventing me from giving my good news! O good fortune, how you favour the bold and disfavour the timid! The coward can run but can never outrun death! O how many would have erred where I acted right! How many novices in my profession would have answered back her ravings and so lost all I gained through good silence.
JC

So be cheerful, old woman; you will take in more from this transaction than from fifteen patched maidenheads. Curse these long skirts, you keep getting in the way of my reaching the place where my new ones are to be found. Good fortune, how you aid the daring and belay the timid! Never by fleeing has a coward fled death. How many would have failed in what I have achieved! And what would many of these new mistresses of my trade have done in such narrow straits but say something to Melibea that would have lost way I, with clever silence, have gained?
MSP

Réjouis-toi, la vieille, tu vas tirer davantage de cette affaire qu'en restaurant quinze virginités! Maudites jupes dans laquelles je m'empêtre, à cause de vous je ne vais pas assez vite là où ces bonnes nouvelles sont attendues! Et toi, la chance, comme tu souris aux audacieux, comme tu es contraire aux timides! Jamais le lâche en fuyant n'a fait fuir la mort! J'en connais beaucoup qui, à ma place, auraient échoué. Qu'aurait fait une de ces nouvelles que se disent maîtresses dans le métier, si elle s'étaient trouvées en pareil danger? Elle aurait répondu à Mélibée n'importe quelle sottise et perdu tout ce que moi j'ai gagné en me taisant.
AS

Rejoice, old girl, you'll make more from this job than from mending a dozen maidenheads. Blast these long skirts of mine that hold me back as I rush to spread the good tidings! Lady Luck, how you favour the brave and spurn the timid! A coward can run but he'll never outpace death. So many have missed while I hit bull's eye. If the new women plying my trade had been in such a cleft they'd have argued with Melibea and lost everything I gained by keeping silent.
PB

3 Rejoice, old girl — 3p Rejoice, you old girl

2 from this case — 3 from this job

2 repairing fifteen virgins — 3 repairing a dozen virgins
8p mending a dozen maidenheads

2 delaying me — 2p holding me back — 3 hold me back

2 on my way to spread my good news — 3 as I go to spread the good news
4 to spread the good tidings — 6 as I go to spread — 7 as I rush to spread

3 how you like to favour — 4 how you favour

2 ignore the timid! — 2p scorn the timid — 4 spurn the timid!

7 In flight death never flees the coward 7p D???? Death never flees the coward 8 A coward can run but he'll never outpace death. 8p A coward runs but never outpaces death.

2 so many missed 3 so many have missed

9 when I hit Dedalus editor: while I hit

3 target 4 bull's eye

2 if these new women 3 if the new women

2 in such straits 3 in such a strait 3p in that cleft

2 and thus lost 3 and lost

2 I got by keeping quiet 2p I gained by shutting up 4 by keeping silent

The forcefulness of JM's version is apparent in his underlining of the sexual vein in Celestina's ramblings – "frolic with thyself" – and the inventiveness of his vocabulary ("soldering", "prattling", "graduates in my art") and his more conversational colloquial gambits as with "A pox upon" and the reference to hitting the nail on the head. JC again echoes JM with the "rumpling and folding" and plays with repetition as in "favour…disfavour" and "run … outrun". MSP's Celestina sounds increasingly stately and mellifluous, confident and mature. MSP interprets "nuevas" as new clothes rather than as the news to which the other translations refer, and that is a valid reading. Her translation highlights what may be an intended pun by Celestina. AS has the alliteration "maîtresses dans le metier". PB persists with the colloquial register, "Old girl", "job", "Blast", "Lady Luck", "bull's eye" (and the military), alliteration in "mending…maidenheads" and the naturalisation by changing the "fifteen" to "a dozen".

4.

Por esto dicen quien las sabe, las tañe; y que es más cierto médico el experimentado que el letrado; y la experiencia y escarmiento hace los hombres arteros; y la vieja, como yo, que alce sus haldas al pasar el vado, como maestra. ¿Ay, cordón, cordón! Yo te hare traer por fuerza, si vivo, a la que no quiso darme su buena habla de grado.

And therefore it is an old saying, 'Let him play that hath skill': and that the better physician is he that hath experience than he that hath learning: for experience and *frequent* warnings make men artists in their professions; and it must be such an old woman as I am, who at every little channel holds up her coats*, and treads the streets with leisurely steps*, that shall prove a proficient

in her trade. O girdle, *my pretty girdle, let me hug thee a little! O how my heart leaps in looking upon thee!* If I live, I will make thee bring her to me by force, who is unwilling to *come* to me of her own accord, that I had much ado to get a word from her.
JM

O cord, cord, with your help I will drag along by force the young woman who would not willingly give her word.
JC

That is why it is said: “Let him play who knows the tune?”, “Better the physician with experience that one who learned from books”, and also, “Experience and hard knocks make a man skilful”, as it has me, an old woman who knows how to lift her skirts when she wades across the stream. Ah, girdle, girdle, I hold in my hand! If I live I will make you drag her to me by force, this pretty one who did not want to speak to me with courtesy!
MSP

On a raison de dire: “Il faut connaitre la musique pour en jouer”; et aussi: “Jeunes barbiers, vieux médecins: s’ils sont autres, ne valent pas un brin”; ou encore : “L’expérience et l’usage rendent l’homme sage.” Une vieille comme moi sait qu’il faut retrousser ses jupes pour passer le gué! Ah cordon, je te tiens! Si Dieu me prète vie, je te ferai amener de force celle qui n’a pas voulu me donner sa réponse de bon gré.

This is why people say, “Who thinks, drinks.” Or “Better a hands-on doctor than one well-read”, or “Practice makes perfect”, and this old lady, lifting her skirts to cross this ford, is a past mistress at the cunny arts. Cord, sweet cord, I’ll make sure you’re the downfall, if I ever live to see the day, of that damsel who refused to give me a pleasant word!
PB

2	This is why they say	3	This is why people say
2p	Who knows, plucks proper	3	Who knows, plucks the bird.
4	Who thinks, plucks.	7p	Who thinks, drinks.

2 The doctor with experience who’s read 3 A doctor with experience
4 A well-honed doctor 7 Better a well-honed doctor than one well-read
8 Better a hands-on doctor than one well-read

3	one who reads books	4	one well-read
2	make a skilled man	3	make for a skilled man

3 Experiment and experience make for a skilled man.
4 Practice makes perfect.

3	lifting her skirts	3p	and lifting her
2	is a past mistress	3	is a past mistress at the cunny arts
2	Cord, dear cord	2p	Cord, sweet cord
2	if I live	2p	if I ever live to see the day
3	bring perforce	4	to bring down

3 I'll get you to bring down
5 I'll make sure you're the downfall of the woman
Dedalus copy-editor: of that damsel who refused

JM further underlines Celestina's preoccupation with sexual desire and lesbian sex as she fondles the cord ("let me hug thee a little" and "oh, how my heart leaps"), though these cries may be equally prompted by the prospect of earning money. JC again drastically reduces the text. MSP sticks close to the wordiness of the original. Celestina and her companions are fond of proverbs and lapidary remarks, and in his whole translation PB will use the English equivalent if it exists or invent one in a style that fits his characterisations through language. Generally, the proverbs become snappier and their humour is heightened (elsewhere Celestina laments "A house without males pales" and here also reinforces the sense of the confident old woman walking quickly to her appointment with Calisto. The development of the English for "quien las sabe, las tañe", a proverb from the musical world – "he who know how to, plays well" – is instructive. The first stab introduces the word "pluck", prompted by the idea of plucking a stringed instrument. In the course of drafting, the sense of "pluck" drifts over to the idea of plucking a bird, until the transformation is one hundred per cent into a novel English proverb, "Who thinks, drinks". This translation underscores the rhythm, the notion of Celestina as an intelligent wheeler-and-dealer fond of a glass of wine. PB also gives another twist to the "cunny" leitmotif by adding that she is "a past mistress at the cunny arts". The Dedalus copy-editor suggested a few edits; one here that I accepted was the use of the archaic damsel that gives the final sentence a more ironic twist.

Here is the whole monologue, so it can be read as a piece.

> That was a close shave! Cunning wins cunny! How I sweated! I was close to death but my quick wits trimmed my sails to the breeze! What threats from that short-tempered young girl! What a short fuse! Devil that I invoked, you granted me all I asked for! I am in your debt. Your power softened that cruel female and gave me all the time in the world to say what I wanted to, in her mother's absence. Dear old Celly! Aren't you happy? You know the battle is half won when you get off to a good start. Snake oil! White thread! How well

> you both worked for me! If you hadn't, I'd have broken all my ties – present and future – with the nether world and stopped believing in magic herbs, stones and spells! Rejoice, old girl, you'll make more from this job than from mending a dozen maidenheads. Blast these long skirts of mine that hold me back as I rush to spread the good tidings! Lady Luck, how you favour the brave and spurn the timid! A coward can run but he'll never outpace death. So many have missed when I hit bull's eye. If the new women plying my trade had been in such a cleft they'd have argued with Melibea and lost everything I gained by keeping silent. This is why people say, "Who thinks, drinks." Or "Better a hands-on doctor than one well-read", or "Practice makes perfect", and this old lady, lifting her skirts to cross this ford, is a past mistress at the cunny arts. Cord, sweet cord, I'll make sure you're the downfall, if I ever live to see the day, of that damsel who refused to give me a pleasant word!

Students and young literary translators, emerging from universities with their MAs in Translation, often ask which translation theory has most influenced me. I say that many have but that the relationship between theory and practice isn't mechanical, and that any reading of translation theory is an extension of a subjective critical consciousness that was formed by interacting with many other theories – from which translation theory derives – and by the whole process of living, reading and writing in a particular historical context. Translation scholars, like Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldana, have studied my style as a translator through corpus analysis and have made relevant comments but most of these are conclusions based on repetitions that are disembodied and peripheral to what I think is key in the translations themselves. When there is such a vogue for concepts like "the agency of the translator" or "the voice of the translator", perhaps translation scholarship should take a turn towards the study of the lives of translators, their artistic re-writing of the original (not the endlessly reductive attempts to identify what is "domesticating" or "foreignising"). There are now, at least in the USA, in the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana in Bloomington or the Harry Ransom Library at the University of Texas in Dallas collections of translators' archives with drafts, correspondence with authors, editors, contracts, etc. This is the raw material that speaks about the practice of translation.

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