

James W. Nelson Novoa. *Los Diálogos de Amor de León Hebreo en el Marco Sociocultural Sefardi del Siglo XVI.*

Série Monográfica "Alberto Benveniste" 1. Lisbon: Cátedra de Estudos Sefarditas "Alberto Benveniste," 2006. 422 pp. index. append. illus. bibl. €30. ISSN: 1645-1910.

Until fairly recently, study of *The Dialogues of Love* generally concentrated on textual and philosophical interpretation of the Italian text that was first printed in 1535 and on the sixteenth-century Latin, Spanish, and French translations, to uncover the European reception of the book in art, philosophy, and literature. Since 1959, discoveries of earlier manuscripts and printed parts of the work have been announced and discussed in articles. This book takes account of those developments to determine that the British Library manuscript Or. Gaster 10688, an Aljamiado text (Judeo-Spanish written in Hebrew characters), was neither Leone's original, nor a variant of the first printing. Instead it derived from a distinct Sephardic tradition, as did a 1568 Spanish translation by "Guedella Yahia," printed in Venice. A thorough and exacting, but clear, chain of historical, philological, and codicological reasonings disproves the old hypothesis and, in the space of a few hundred fluent pages, replaces it with a convincing account of the way these two versions of the *Dialogues* came to be. Although the Aljamiado manuscript "does not tell us anything about the original composition of Abravanel, it does turn out to be a precious document for understanding the fortune of the *Dialogues of Love* among its sixteenth-century sephardic readers" in Italy, the Ottoman Empire, and Holland, "as well as a singular example of sephardic literary production of that period" (30).

The book is divided into six parts, each of which deals economically with a different field of investigation. The first part reviews what is known about the life and contexts of León Hebreo, son of Isaac Abravanel, the eminent Jewish financier, commentator, and leader of Jewish refugees from Spain in 1492, and Portugal in 1496. The immediate settlement of the Abravanel, their relatives, and other Spanish and Portuguese refugees in the major cities of Italy deals with social organization, cultural activity, and politics, as well as migration. The second part of the book focuses more closely on the development of Jewish communities and their cultural and intellectual institutions, particularly in Venice, Salonica, and Constantinople, into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The third part traces the early manuscripts of the *Dialogues* and the immediate reception of the book by Italian and other European audiences, and surveys Italian literary language at the time of the composition and the question of the original language of the *Dialogues*.

The fourth part deals with Judeo-Spanish and Aljamiado literature from pre-expulsion Iberia to the formation of a diasporic Spanish koine. Nelson Novoa examines the Gaster manuscript against the background of Aljamiado literary production in Italy and the Levant, and in the fifth part closely compares the orthography and morphology of the Gaster text with the Spanish translation by Guedella Yahia of 1568. The manuscript and the printed edition belong to the same distinct family, without either being dependent on the other. Consideration of textual ornaments, filigranes, and typefaces is necessary for situating the Spanish text among Venetian printings. Each topic could become quite complicated, but these discussions are consistently fluent, and the conclusions make good sense. The different commercial and political circumstances for the two Spanish printings illuminate the situation of the Jewish writers; Yahia's translation, surprisingly dedicated to Philip II of Spain, evidently did not reach the king, whereas the translation by Garcilaso Inca de la Vega succeeded grandly. We may consider it a posthumous consolation for Yahia that Spinoza apparently had a copy of his translation. Indeed, a Venice reprint of 1598 may have been intended for distribution to Sephardic settlements that were forming in Northern Europe. Circulation of the text in Holland and involvement of Petruccis and Piccolominis with the early Italian manuscripts and printings were the Western side of an early modern cultural circulation that, in the East, included Moses Almosnino, Amatus Lusitanus, and Don Joseph Nasi. Publication of the manuscripts by this investigator and others now working should expand our awareness of sixteenth-century cultural and intellectual encounters.

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