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Byzantine countryside was like and what changes came over it during a thousand years. In fortification works as in other areas, the Byzantines changed as new situations confronted them, and the changes registered in fortifications will provide yet another index of cultural development in their society. This excellent book, thus, covers a broad range of significant and suggestive topics.

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LOUISE FOTHERGILL-PAYNE, *Seneca and "Celestina."* (Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies.) Cambridge, Eng.; New York; and New Rochelle, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Pp. xviii, 172; frontispiece, 5 black-and-white facsimile plates. \$39.50.

Spaniards — and often Hispanists, by extension — have always taken special pride and pleasure in Seneca, their "own" classical author, and this book is at once a reflection on that phenomenon and part and parcel of the same tradition. The author provides an important chapter in the considerable *fortuna* of Seneca in Spain, which culminated in a fifteenth-century Castile extravagantly devoted to the peninsula's preeminent classical author: Fothergill-Payne reckons that at that time translations of genuine Senecan works were quadruple those of any other author, and if one adds the translations of the semi- and pseudo-Senecan works in circulation, "the list becomes truly extraordinary" (p. 8).

The principal, and considerable, value of this book is the extent to which it is in effect an encyclopedia of the Senecan and pseudo-Senecan tradition in the peninsular Middle Ages. Fothergill-Payne meticulously documents the myriad translations, commentaries, and introductions (including their purposes and patterns) of both the genuine and apocryphal Senecan tradition, and one is left, finally, overwhelmed by the proliferation of material, the detailed extent of the enamoredness over this native philosopher of the classical world. Of the book's six principal chapters the first two are explicitly devoted to the Senecan tradition and frame of reference; the subsequent four, however, are scarcely less encyclopedic in their inventory of Senecan motifs, *sententiae*, wisdom, and miscellaneous dicta and quotations, although these chapters are in principle structured around the alleged manifestations of this Senecan avalanche in *Celestina*. (The author follows Keith Whinnom's practice of not using the definite article when naming the work.) The extent to which this is, far more than anything else, a book first and foremost dedicated to Seneca and the Senecan tradition (which included, as Fothergill-Payne is meticulous in pointing out and documenting, a considerable spurious tradition) is evident from the simple title, which gives "equal prominence" (as the author asserts in the preface) "to the Roman philosopher and to the book that fictionalizes his message" (p. xv). And in many respects the book is highly successful in fleshing out the particulars of the author's conviction that the fifteenth century in Spain (at least in parts of Spain) was a "truly Senecan age" (p. 1): the student or scholar interested in knowing the details of, say, which commentary or translation of Seneca gave what cast to the philosopher, or which appeared in the most editions in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, or what was the nature of the manifold *vulgarisations* will find reasonably straightforward answers here.

The problem is that *Celestina*, article or not, is as far from a straightforward work as one could wish for, and the author's relatively simple theory of dependence ("the book that fictionalizes his message") is, at best, problematic. Fothergill-Payne's trajectory of thinking is, roughly, as follows: (1) Seneca was, for reasons that remain largely unexplored (she claims it was not "mere" nationalism but other reasons, such as a

“natural” preference for moral philosophy over rhetoric, i.e., Cicero, but this just restates the problem) the preeminent philosopher of late-medieval Spain (Castile, really, but that, too, is a separate problem). (2) In fact, Seneca’s philosophy was (predictably, of course) bowdlerized and popularized and hence distorted; the major characteristic and appeal of this version of the original was that it was a relatively easy, already explained (translated, of course) moral-philosophical system that gave itself (and its readers and citers) the veneer of classicism. (3) Rojas and the other author(s) of *Celestina* are at once bona fide classicists and thus familiar with the authentic Seneca and, no less, fully aware of the enormous popularity of the quasi- and pseudo-Senecan tradition (of which this was “the age”) and in considerable contempt of this popular tradition. Hence, the work in question, one of the “obras maestras” of Spanish literature (to remember now María Rosa Lida de Malkiel’s critical characterization), is in essence a parody of both the pseudo-philosophy of the popular Senecan tradition and of the “passionate mood” of the real Senecan tragedy. As I make it out, the point is that Rojas et al. were able enough to distinguish between the genuine and the disfigured Senecan traditions, and the *Celestina*, in turn, is a mockery of the latter and an affirmation of the former.

It is difficult to avoid the judgment of anachronism when faced with this straightforward reading of both the climate of late-medieval Spain and of the literary text at hand. If one ignored the date of publication and did not peruse the bibliography too carefully, it would be hard to imagine its having been written in the last several decades: there is little or no trace of the multiple complications that both literary and historical studies have brought to our understanding of medieval literature in general and to the state of Spanish hearts and minds at that critical juncture of peninsular history in particular. An innocent reading this book would never know that medieval Spain was, as in Otis Green’s memorable title, anything other than a straightforward part of the “Western tradition,” would never guess a Stephen Gilman has radically altered the possible discourse of *Celestina* studies (although Gilman’s book is dutifully cited in the extensive bibliography), would never imagine that in literary studies medieval texts are no longer, for most literary scholars, those preliterate artifacts that the oldest philology made them out to be. Given that the text in question would be regarded by any number of fine literary historians and readers of literature as one of the most complex, powerful, and compelling of all times, and that “even” innocent students are not infrequently left shaken and disturbed by the remarkably powerful soul- and text-searching of this *tragicomedia*, it leaves this reader, at least, put out to read in the conclusion that *Celestina* is not “as serious or even as pessimistic as it might appear to be, because of the objective distance afforded by the mood of parody” (p. 143). This statement, too, reflects the author’s multiple naivetés.

It is not, finally, that Fothergill-Payne’s reflections in and of themselves have no merit: as a handbook on the Senecan tradition in Spain the book is of considerable value, and it is in many ways convincing in its argument, if not that this was a “Senecan age,” at least that a Senecan tradition was a major feature of an age that, pace Fothergill-Payne, must now be seen as considerably more neurotic and complex vis-à-vis both past and present. It is not unconvincing, even, that the popularized Senecan tradition is manifest, wholesale, throughout *Celestina*, although one might have any number of quibbles with many of the specific instances adduced. But to consider these phenomena in the context of the cultural and literary simplicities assumed here, and to ask one to imagine that *Celestina* is, ultimately, but a fictionalization of the Senecan message, is to ask for a remarkable and unacceptable banalization of both history and literature.