Review Article

THE BRITISH LIBRARY'S CATALOGUE OF EARLY SPANISH BOOKS*

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Of the British Library's printed books in foreign languages, the Spanish collection was the first to receive its own catalogue. This was the familiar Short-title Catalogue by one of the most distinguished keepers of the Department of Printed Books, the Hispanist Sir Henry Thomas, published in 1921 and reprinted in 1966. Almost seventy years later we have an update of this classic work. Dennis Rhodes, author of various studies of early Spanish printing, prepared the present volume.

With a collection of such wealth it is hard to know where to begin: with the collection itself, with the changes since 1921, or with the many virtues and few shortcomings of this catalogue. The British Library owns one of the two great collections of Spanish imprints outside Spain, the other being that of the Hispanic Society in New York. It has the most complete set of the parts of Amadís de Gaula in existence, and most of them are, furthermore, together on a shelf in view of anyone who wanders in. There are many unique items, such as the earliest known edition of Amadís de Gaula (1508), the princeps of Amadís book 6 (1510), and the famous Cancionero de obras de burlas. The proportion of works of interest to Hispanists is high: there are few publications in Latin, while Spanish books published outside Spain are well represented. This makes it very different from Spanish libraries. It also is distinguished from Spanish libraries in that it is completely and properly catalogued, and the catalogue is published.

The present catalogue is almost three times longer than the original volume. Three factors account for this increase. The collection itself has grown by some ten to twenty percent. Among the additions are the earliest dated books printed in Seville, Valencia, and Zaragoza (p. vii), and one copy each of the two editions of book 12 of Amadís (Silves de la Selva). This is no longer a short-title but a full title catalogue, so such abbreviated entries as

Albertus Magnus's Paraíso del alma are now listed under their full titles, in this case Tratado de las virtudes, intitulado Paraíso del alma. (Throughout this review I have modernized i/j, i/y, u/v, word division, many capitals, tacitly resolved abbreviations, and added accents.) Brief annotations have been added to many of the entries, indicating which items are unique, what their condition is, giving bibliographical references and discussing typographical evidence for identifying printers. One wishes that provenances were specified when known, as in the Hispanic Society catalogue, as well as superseded shelfmarks. Finally, printer, publisher, and place indexes have been added. These are extraordinarily useful, providing, for example, additional information on Juan de la Cuesta and on the Robles family. Unfortunately non-Spanish printers are not indexed, so one cannot readily identify the books that were printed outside of Spain. There is also a sad appendix of twenty-two books “Destroyed in the War of 1939-45.”

In sum, this is one of the most revised “second editions” with which this reviewer is familiar. Indeed the label “second edition,” when we have moved from a short- to a full-title catalogue and tripled in length, would seem overly modest, as is the omission of the compiler’s name from the title page. It is an indispensable item in any collection used for bibliographical information on early Spanish imprints.

Considering the richness of the collection, it would be most helpful if an index or (better) cross-references to translators and editors were added to the next edition. As it stands, for instance, there is no reference under Herrera to his influential edition of Garcilaso, in which his comments are far more extensive than Garcilaso’s text. A more accurate intellectual landscape would be perceived were there references from Luis de Granada to his translation of John Climacus’s Escala spiritual, from Antonio de Nebrija to his edition of the Libri menores, from Ambrosio Montesino to his translation of Ludolphus of Saxonia, from Alfonso de Palencia to his translation of the Specchio di croce.

An index of subjects to such an extensive, multinational collection is also desirable. At present one must page through the entire volume. The discoveries in doing so have been the most pleasant part of writing this review. The following are books which may be well known to some, but were not to me:

Philographía universal de todo el mundo, by León Hebreo, Zaragoza, 1584.
Libro de las costumbres de todas las gentes del mundo, by Francisco Támara, Antwerp, 1556.
Theatro de varios y maravillosos acaecimientos de la mudable fortuna, of Girolamo Garimberto, Salamanca, 1572.
Libro de reloges solares, by Pedro Roiz, Valencia, 1576.
Teórica y práctica de fortificación, by Cristóbal de Rojas, Madrid, 1598.
La renunciación quel Emperador [Carlos V] ha hecho de todos los Reinos de Castilla y Aragón y quanto tenia. Valencia, 1556. Not in Benito Sánchez Alonso, Fuentes de la historia española e hispano-americana, 3rd edition, II (Madrid: Revista de Filología Española, 1952). On the suggestion by R.O. Jones that Carlos was inspired by the abdication of Lisuarte in the Sergas de Esplandián, see my A Study of Don Quixote, p. 21 n. 53. Can any reader help find Jones’ missing lecture on the topic?

El grande y muy sumptuoso recibimiento que hizieron en...París al Invictísimo Emperador y rey nuestro señor [Carlos V]. Valladolid, 1540.


Reglas gramaticales para aprender la lengua española y francesa, by Antonio del Corro, Oxford, 1586.

Dictionario, coloquios, o diálogos en cuatro lenguas, flamengo, francés, español y italiano, Antwerp, 1569.

Libro de abalanzas de las lenguas hebreá, griega, latina, castellana y valenciana, by Martín de Viciána, Valencia, 1574.

Heroicos hechos, y vidas de varones illustres, así Griegos, como Romanos, by Tomás de Espinosa de los Monteros, Paris 1576.

Compilación de los establecimientos de la orden de Santiago del espada, ed. Juan Fernández de la Gama, Sevilla, 1503.

Origen de la sagrada orden de cavallería, que llaman Constantiniana, by Juan de Turiel de Rojas Angelo Flavio, Roma, 1597.

Diffinciones de la sagrada religión y cavallería de sancta María de Montesa, y sanct Jorge, by Frey Alvaro de Luna y Mendoza and Frey Francisco Rades de Andrade, Valencia, 1573.

Vergel de plantas divinas, by Arcángel de Alarcón, Barcelona, 1598.

Camino del cielo, by Luis de Alarcón, Alcalá, 1547.

Tesoro de los soberanos misterios y excelencias Divinas, que se hallan en las tres letras consonantes del Sacrosanto e Inefable nombre de Jésus, by Domingo García, Zaragoza, 1598.

Libro intitulado Luz y claridad del entendimiento, by Hierónimo Calvo, Valencia, 1594.

La scala de Paradis, by Antonio Boteler, Barcelona, 1495.

Sphera del universo, by Ginés Rocamora y Torrano, Madrid, 1599.

Historia de Sevilla, by Alonso Morgado, Sevilla, 1587.

La torre de David, moralizada por vía de diálogos, by Hierónimo de Lemos, Medina del Campo, en casa de Francisco del Canto, a costa de Juan Boyer, 1584. What was David’s tower, and why was this issued by Boyer, one of the more secular publishers?

La poncella de Francia y de sus grandes fechos en armas, anonymous (under “Joan d’Arc”), Seville, 1553. In the 1562 edition the title has been embellished with “sacados de la chronica real por un cavalier discreto, imboiado por embaxador de Castilla a Francia.”

“Romance del moro Calaínos de como requería de amores a la infanta Sebilla y ella le demandó en arras tres cabeças de los doze pares,” Seville, 1511-15 (under “Calaynos”).

La institución para Rescate de captivos Christianos españoles que hizo Pero García Orense, alcalde mayor de Burgos, Burgos? 1569 or later.

Breve historia de la orden de nuestra Señora de la Merced de Redempción de cautivos, Christians, and of algunos santos, by Felipe de Guimerán, Valencia, 1591.

Libro intitulado Palinodia, de la nephanda y fiera nación de los Turcos, and of sua engañoso arte y cruel modo de guerrear, by Vasco Díaz Tanco de Fregenal, Orense, 1547, printed by the author.

Historia en la qual se trata de la origen y guerras que han tenido los Turcos, by Vicente Rocca, Valencia, 1556.

Sumario de la vida del primer Arcobispo de Granada, Hernando de Talavera, by Alonso Fernández de Mard, Granada, 164.

Diálogo de las guerras de Orán, by Baltasar de Morales, Córdoba, 1593.

Epistolae magní Turci, found under “Muhammad II,” Lérida, 1490. Why were these published? For whose use?

In the second edition of Roberto de Nola’s Libro de guisados manjares, and potajes intitulado Libro de cozina (Logroño, 1529, “a expensas del...alcalde”) there is added “un regimiento de las casas de los cavalleros.”

La vida del estudiante pobre, by Benito Carrasco, Barcelona, 1600.

Breve explicación de la bula de la suspension de las indulgencias por este año del santo Jubileo de 1600, by Martín Carrillo, Zaragoza, 1600.

Aquí se contienen unos avisos y reglas para los confesores que oyeren confessiones of los Españoles que son, o han sido en cargo a los Indios, by Bartolomé de las Casas, Sevilla, 1552.
Tabla en declaración del Officio divino Góthico, o Muzárabe, de su antigüedad, y autoridad: y del orden deste rezado en general, by Francisco de Pisa, Toledo, 1593.

Libro y relación de las grandezas del Reyno de la China. Hecho por un Fraile descalço de la orden de Sant Francisco, de seis que fueron pressos en el dicho Reyno, anonymous, Madrid, about 1590.

Historia de cosas del Oriente, by A maro Centeno, Córdoba, 1595.

Libro llamado Antialcorano, by Bernardo Pérez de Chinchón, Valencia, 1532.


Institución de un rey chrstiano, colegida principalmente de la Santa Escritura, y de sagrados Doctores, by Felipe de la Torre, Antwerp, 1556.

Philosophia moral de principios, by the Jesuit Juan de Torres, Burgos, 1596.

Summa de casos de conciencia, by Manuel Rodríguez, Salamanca, 1595. The British Library also has six editions of Rodríguez's Explicación de la Bulla de la Sancta Cruzada.

Libro que trata de la enfermedad de las bubes, by Pedro de Torres, Madrid, 1600.

Documento e instrucción provechosa para las donzellas desposadas y recién casadas, anonymous, Burgos, 1552.

Libro intitulado Vida política de todos los estados de mugeres, by Juan de la Cerda, Alcalá, 1599.

Strangely, the British Library does not own León Hebreo's Diálogos de amor, and of the many published works of Santa Teresa, only a single edition of Camino de perfección.

Dr. Rhodes' typographical scholarship is visible on almost every page of the volume. There is no overview of or index to it, and for this reason it may be underappreciated. Paging through the catalogue is thus also the means to identify this contribution, and to locate the corrections made to the typographical reference work of F. J. Norton. Comparing the original with the second edition, one sees how many question marks have been removed after possible printers, and how many books are assigned to a known printer for the first time. The probable dates of many undated imprints are also specified or corrected. One per page would seem a conservative estimate of these improvements, which means the printers and dates of over 200 books are identified for the first time, or with more precision than before.

Even aside from the question of indexes, the catalogue is somewhat more difficult to use than it could be. It is understandably based upon British cataloguing practice, but this will be unfamiliar to many users of the volume. The Anglicizing of many name entries compounds matters. There are cross-references from Juan Manuel to John Emmanuel and from Enrique fijo d'Oliva to Henry, but the user must know to look for Fernando under Ferdinand, Felipe under Philip, and, in the index of cities, Zaragoza under Saragossa. At the same time, old spelling of authors' names produces needless complications: for Alfonso el Sabio one must look under Álphonso, for Juan del Encina under Enzina, with no cross-references provided. Works published under pseudonyms are invariably filed under the pseudonym, even if such is obviously fictitious: Martín de Reina's translation of Jacobus de Cessolis's Dechado de la vida humana. Morálamente sacado del Juego del Axedrez is entered under “Xerxes.” An introduction in Spanish explaining the organizational principles would be helpful. The system used for arranging multiple books under a single heading is unclear to me: under Jesuits, Regulae (1583) precedes Copia de diversas cartas (1556); under James, Order of, Reformación comes between Regla y and Regla de; under Jesus Christ, Tractado (1545) comes before Pasión (1493).

There is in addition some inconsistency in entries and cross-references. There is no cross-reference under the author Raymondus Jordanus to Contemplaciones del Idiota, found only under “Idiota, pseud.” Part I of Morgante is found under Morgante, but Part II is found under Luigi Pulci; under Pulci there is a reference to Morgante for Part I, but under Morgante there is no reference to Pulci for Part II. Book II of Clarián de Landanís is under the pseudonymous author Alvaro físcido; Part III is found under the title. Under the title there is a reference to Alvaro for Book II, but under Alvaro there is no reference to Part III, nor is there a reference under the true author Jerónimo López, whose name is supplied in brackets. One edition of Belianís de Grecia is found under Belianís, with no cross-reference elsewhere; the same edition is found together with two others under the author Jerónimo Fernández. Book II of Lepolemo is found both under the pseudonymous author “Artidoro” and under the author Pedro
de Luján, with a discrepancy in capitalization between the two entries. Under neither is there a reference to the pseudonymous “Xarton,” under whom Book I is entered. Torres Naharro’s Jacinta, but not Aquilana, is entered under both the author and the title. The same copy of Castillejo’s Sermón de amores del maestro Buen Talante llamado fray Nidel de la orden del Fristel is found under both the author and “Buen Talante.” The entries are not identical, and there are no cross-references. Under “Rojas y Sandóval [sic], Bernardo de,” there is a reference to “Sandoval y Rojas (Destroyed Books).” There is no such reference under Sandoval, nor are there other references in the main section to the appendix of destroyed books. Under Isabella of Valois there is a reference to Toledo, for the Recebimiento que la ciudad de Toledo hizo a la reina doña Isabel, but there is none to López de Hoyos’ Historia y relación verdadera de la enfermedad, felicíssimo tránsito, y sumptuosas exequias fúnebres de la... Reina.

Some surprises: Pedro del Corral’s Crónica del rey don Rodrigo is found only under Roderick, with no cross-reference under Corral or Rodrigo. There is no cross-reference under Garcílaso to the entry used, “Lasso de la Vega, García.” Antonio de Nebrija is entered under Antonio, with a cross-reference under Nebrija, but there are no cross-references under Alcalá to Pedro de Alcalá’s Arte para saber la lengua áraba, found only under Pedro, under Ginés de Sepúlveda to Genís de Sepúlveda, under Zamora or Alfonso to Alfonso de Zamora’s Loo de virtudes, placed under Alphonso Zamorensis. There is no reference from Paolo Giovio to the Historia del capitán Hernando de Ávalos, rewritten by Pedro Vallés. Flores y Blancaflor is placed under Florio. The Historia del Emperador Carlo Magno, usually associated with the name of its translator, Nicolás de Piamonte, is found only as an instruction under Jean Baignon to “see Charles I.” Under Charles I nothing is found. In short, if entries familiar to Hispanists cannot be followed, more and more consistent cross-references are a desideratum.

In personal name entries, accents have been added “only when such spelling of such names agrees with modern practice” (p. viii). Complete accentuation would have been preferable, since this principle produced such strange hybrids as López de Holos, Cristoval de Virués, and Diego Ximenez Ayllón. Many accents are missing: González de Bovadilla, Gerónimo de Lomas Cantoral, Suárez de Chaves, Suárez de Paz, Gutiérrez de los Ríos, Luis del Marmol Carvajal, López de Gomara, Jerónimo de Carranza, Sanlúcar (p. 232); a few are incorrect: Ilíguez (pp. 100, 263). Latin forms of names are inconsistently accented: Mélchior Peláez a Mérès, but Ludovicus López. It is a small disappointment that in a book so extraordinarily rich in typographic devices an accent could not be used on capital vowels: Ilígo, Lobera de Ávila.

The following misprints have been spotted, in addition to those noted above. Under Balbi de Correggio, A bínade Aracay and Rodrigo de Narbacz; under Fernández de Constantina, eloquent for eloquentes. Under López de Santa Catalina, Reynos a for Rey nosa; under M., D.F.R. de, Respuesta y desengano, which at least needs a sic; under López de Hoyos, Historia y relación. P. 254, Enríques should be Enríquez. Under Antonio A randa, “Ramerez” should be followed by sic. Juana Míllían (p. 272) should be Millán; in the body two of her three books have Latin colophons, and the other gives her name as Milian, a misprint somewhere along the line. Considering the length and complexity of the volume, this is a small crop indeed.

One wishes one knew why the Crónica de Juan segundo is under Fernando Pérez de Guzmán (with no reference under “John” or “Juan”). Florambel de Luca is indeed an original Spanish work, and Part II was published in 1532 and reprinted in 1548/1549 (Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, R-34.803). The author “Enciso” should be mentioned. There was indeed no more of Gómez de Luque, Celidón de Iberia. “Juan de Enzinas,” Diálogo de amor intitulado Dórida, is a pseudonym of Damasio de Frías; see Eugenio Ansensio, “Damasio de Frías y su Dórida, diálogo de amor. El italianoismo en Valladolid,” NRFH, 24 (1975), 219-34. Pedro de Reinoso (entered under Reynos a) is not the author of a three-part Orlando enamorado. While the bibliographic problems of the book have yet to be fully clarified, Parts I and II are López de Santa Catalina’s Espejo de caballerías. Light is probably brought to bear by Javier Gómez- Montero, “Literatura caballeresca en España y Italia (1483-1542): El Espejo de caballerías y sus relaciones intertextuales con el Orlando Innamorato y el Amadis de Gaula” (Ph.D. dissertation, Tréveris, 1988), not yet seen.

Increased use of the collection would be a fitting tribute to the labors of Dr. Rhodes. Even in sixteenth-century Europe, no one had access to such a multinational collection of Spanish books, much less properly catalogued. Today there are few Hispanic collections which approach the richness of that of the British Library, and none which is as easy to use. We are all in the debt of the many who contributed to the growth of the collection, to Sir Henry Thomas for its first published catalogue, and now to Dennis Rhodes for this much enlarged and improved second edition.
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The dawn of British literature is obstructed by Anglo-Saxon—the early English dialect in which Beowulf is written. Nonetheless, enough of the essence of the work comes through in translation for us to appreciate it. There is no such obstruction with the true father of English literature (it will, alas, be some centuries before a mother appears), Geoffrey Chaucer. Edmund Spenser, it is fair to say, could never have written his great chauvinistic epic The Faerie Queene did he not have Chaucer on which to build. Likewise, Shakespeare could not have created the plays that are commonly regarded as the highest ever achievement of British literature did he not have Chaucer, Spenser, the early Miracle street drama, and above all, Christopher Marlowe from which to work.