The unique quality of the novel lies in the penetration of human character. These people come so much alive, that one can never forget them. The novel is a literary masterpiece; it is more than an autobiography—it is a study of tortured human relations on the one hand, a parable of the misery of human existence on the other. The novel is reminiscent of Kafka’s Der Prozess, Salinger’s Catcher in the Rye and the early parts of Dickens’s David Copperfield. Edwin McClellan’s translation is superb; his introduction is concise and gives Sôseki’s biographical background as well as a summary of those facts about Japanese customs which the Western reader must keep in mind to understand some of Kenzô’s actions.

Ingrid Schuster

CRISTÓBAL DE TAMARIZ
Novelas en verso
Ed. Donald McGrady.

One of the most enduring traditions in the writing of fiction is that of the literary adaptation or reworking, in which an author does not wholly invent the plot and circumstances of his tale but rather borrows them, either from one or more writers’ works or from a general fund of commonly-shared folk stories. The Novelas en verso (Novels in Verse) of Cristóbal de Tamariz (fl. 1580) participate in this tradition: of the seventeen stories and one brief fable edited by McGrady, eleven are based on Italian models (Straparola, Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, Masuccio Salernitano, Boccaccio, Bandello), four stem from Spanish sources (El caballero Cifar, Juan Timoneda, La vida del Ysopet con sus fabulas hystoriadas, Floresta espanola), and the remaining three have their roots in the Disciplina clericàs of Pedro Alfonso, an “emblema” of Andrea Alciato, and a folk theme of wide diffusion.

Popular tales and folk motifs are an important ingredient of almost all Tamariz’s stories in verse, and their presence is ably detected and documented by McGrady in his extensive introduction and notes to the text. In many cases the determining of sources has involved a considerable amount of literary detective work. Regarding two of the most artistically ambitious of his works, El envidioso and La madrastra, McGrady remarks that the researcher is faced with “a fabric made up of such diverse threads that he abandons any hope of finding all the skeins which contributed to it.” In addition, the editor establishes the hitherto uncertain identity of Tamariz, discusses his role as precursor in the adoption of the Italian novella in Spain, and examines the moralistic justification which the author frequently provides for his entertaining stories.

McGrady has given us a text faithful to the original, with the modifications in abbreviations, punctuation, accentuation, capital letters, and word division which are customary in presenting a manuscript of the period. He has chosen as his text a copy from c. 1640, reporting that other MSS, which he does not fully identify, are incomplete and generally inferior. The text is followed by detailed notes for each novela, four appendices of related works in verse, an exhaustive bibliography, and indices both of names cited and of the notes themselves, making the results of the editor’s research easy to consult.

Of particular interest is McGrady’s discussion of the audience for which the novelas were written. Noting the excessive frequency with which Tamariz points out that the substance of his tales is borrowed, and the author’s practice of introducing himself into his work, McGrady argues that Tamariz was writing not for the single reader but for a live audience, a small group of friends, probably occasional writers themselves, who made up an informal literary circle. The existence of these groups is well documented in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, and McGrady aptly remarks that the publication of the present work makes it possible for the modern reader to sit in, in spirit, on a literary experience typical of four hundred years ago.

The editor’s exploration of the sources of the narrative material of these brief novels by no means leads to the conclusion that Tamariz was an uninspired plagiarist. On the contrary, the author was skilful in refashioning his material to create a deliberate and appealing air of fantasy, and to provide an opportunity for humor (No. 15, Novela del torneo); he was adept
at creating and maintaining narrative sus-
pense (No. 5, "Cuento de una burla que
hizo una dama"); his most ambitious
novelistic efforts are successful in intro-
ducing brief yet credible psychological
character studies (No. 13, Novela de la
madrastra, No. 16, "No la culpa y error
de las hermanas . . ."); and he could
borrow from his sources freely and
selectively, producing a story noteworthy
for its originality of conception and
development (No. 1, Novela del envidioso).

The Novelas en verso are old, but not
out of date. The wit and craft of their
author make them eminently readable
today. We are indebted to Professor
McGrady for making Tamariz's fiction
available, and hope that future volumes of
the Biblioteca Siglo de Oro will maintain
the standards of scholarship established
in this edition.

Anthony J. Farrell

DISCUSSION AND COMMENT

Butor's Beethoven: A Bibliographical Footnote

When I wrote my review of Michel Butor's Dialogue avec 33 variations
(IFR, 3 [1976], 65-9), I had not been able to see the dossier on Butor and
music in the periodical Musique en Jeu 4 (1971), 63-111, which includes a full
account of the genesis of the work by the animator of the Liége lecture, Henri
Pousseur ("Écoute d'un dialogue," pp. 73-82). It appears that Pousseur
approached Butor in the spring of 1970, and that the first version was written
in July and August. At the concert itself (17 September), Butor was able to
present only a portion of what he had noted, and he wrote to Pousseur on
20 September: "Je vais réécrire mon dialogue pour en faire, pour commencer,
un petit livre. Je vais réaliser dans le texte, la double grande reprise irréalisable
en concert." This answers my question about the relationship of the book to the
actual concert (p. 67).

On line 15 of the same page, the word "works" should have read "words."

Anthony R. Pugh