

"EL FALSO BOEZUELO CON SU BLANDO CENCERRAR":
OR, THE PANTOMIME OX REVISITED

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Seldom in the history of *Celestina* scholarship has an individual phrase from Rojas's classic work driven so many scholars to distraction, thereby prompting a truly stimulating interchange in a relatively brief time-span, than Pármeno's "El falso boezuelo con su blando cencerrar trae las perdices a la red" (*Celestina*, XI). In 1980, Dr. Severin shed light on the matter by way of the explication contained in *Celestina comentada*, Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid) MS 17631, fol. 156r, which describes "el falso boezuelo etc. [as] un género de uaca conque toman perdizes; y es que hazen con una sáuana o con otra cosa semejante uno a manera de buei, y con sus cuernos y cabeça a manera de buei, y va dentro un hombre..." (p. 31).⁴⁹ Professor Whinnom offered interesting ornithological commentary during the same year that would render "superfluous" the trappings described in the corroborating illustration found in Antonio Valli da Todi's *Il canto de gl'augelli* (Rome, 1601) that Dr. Severin had included in her study,⁵⁰ while Professor Hook, in 1984, appeared to clear up the matter once and for all in detailing an eye-witness account by Pedro Carrillo de Huete, *halconero mayor* of King Juan II, of an incident that occurred in 1420 in which *bueyes* were indeed used.⁵¹ [See David Hook's second article on this topic elsewhere in this issue. Ed.].

In the present note, I wish to offer further evidence that the pantomime ox was employed internationally (cf. Dr. Severin's text) as a venatory decoy for more than eighty years after the appearance of Rojas's work, and that its currency in Spain, despite Professor Hook's keen observations, may have been due originally to foreign influences. In his *Discurso sobre el "Libro de la montería"* (Seville, 1582), the indefatigable bibliophile Gonzalo Argote de Molina includes the following

⁴⁹ Dorothy S. Severin, "'El falso boezuelo', or the Partridge and the Pantomime Ox," *Celestinesca* 4, i (1980), 31-33. Further references to this article appear in the text.

⁵⁰ Keith Whinnom, "Dr. Severin, the Partridge, and the Stalking Horse," *Celestinesca* 4, ii (1980), 23-25.

⁵¹ David Hook, "'Andar a caça de perdizes con bueyes,'" *Celestinesca* 8, i (1984), 47-48.

curious observations in Capítulo XXXIII, "Dela Monteria del Buey," fol. 12rv:

Vsan en algunas partes de Alemania y Frãcia algunos Monteros yr a Monteria, q̃ llaman del Buey, la qual se haze lleuando hecho de lienço armado sobre aros ligeros vna forma de Buey, pintado con su cabeça y cuernos: y dentro d[é]l se mete el Montero con los aparejos dela caça [see Illustration]; y caminãdo, deuisa por ventanillas que [é]l tiene la caça que ay enel Monte; y dexãdole plantado sobre palillos que trae, sale por vn lado (por donde no sea visto ðla caça) y tira a la q̃ a descubierto.⁵²



Discurso sobre el "Libro de la montería"
Chapter 33, fol. 12r

At the right in this woodcut, which Argote reproduced from the collection *Venationes* by Johannes Stradanus (Antwerp, 1578),⁵³ are two partridges, a deer (of disproportionate size), and a turtle-dove (*pace*, Prof. Whinnom), *the last of which* appears to be cognizant of the strange figure approaching its perch. It is gratifying, indeed, to know that our pantomime ox has a cosmopolitan background--at least in "Alemania y Frãcia"--as Argote informs us. But what of Spain's and Rojas' knowledge of this particular custom? It appears odd that no occurrence for it in that country is cited in Argote's *Discurso*, and all the more so

⁵² Edited in *Francisco Javier de Santiago y Palomares: Selected Writings, 1776-95*. Study and Edition by Dennis P. Seniff. (Exeter Hispanic Texts, 38.) Exeter, UK: Univ. of Exeter Press, 1984, pp. 62-63.

⁵³ Other commentary on Stradanus's work appears in Homero Serís, *Nuevo ensayo de una biblioteca española de libros raros y curiosos*, I, no. 26 (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1964), p. 51.

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because this work contains a *de facto* history of hunting therein; indeed, the nationalistic tone that prevails throughout (cf. the section on the *Monteros de Espinosa*) suggests that the pastime would have surely been mentioned had it been an indigenous one.

Could Rojas have seen this activity in France (or elsewhere)? Did he possess emblematic illustrations, perhaps like those made by Stradanus years later, that had been produced outside Spain? Was Rojas actually a huntsman, moreover, or was he merely drawing Pármeno's words from the popular speech of his day? Was he familiar with any well-known hunting treatises, e.g., Alfonso XI's *Libro de la montería* (which is silent on the matter of the *buey*), the premier venatory text in Spain that, while produced during the mid-fourteenth century, was still circulating at the end of the fifteenth? Too, were the huntsmen of the court of Juan II influenced by foreign hunting techniques, particularly those from France?

Clearly, numerous controversies continue to envelope the figure of the pantomime ox--not the least of which is the issue of the plural *bueyes*, noted by Professor Hook in his 1984 study (p. 48), a farcical venatory enterprise at best that appears to have given way to a "lone hunter" approach by the time Rojas composed his work, and had definitely done so by the time of the appearance of Argote's *Discurso* (1582). I do not pretend to be able to give complete answers to any of the above queries. What I *would* prefer to emphasize is the subtle fashion in which *Celestina's* author has incorporated the quotidian phenomenon--possibly of foreign origin--of the *falso boezuelo* for artistic purposes, thereby immortalizing it in a poetic context ("con su blando cencerrar") that not only transcends any original venatory interpretation, but also reflects Rojas's awareness of the "allegorical link between hunting... and passionate courtship..."⁵⁴ and, in developing *Celestina's* character, the psychological and concupiscent traps that she could be made to set in order to ensnare her victims.



⁵⁴ For an impressive (but incomplete) discussion of the pervasiveness of hunting imagery in the *Celestina*, see E. Michael Gerli, "Calisto's Hawk and the Images of a Medieval Tradition," *Romania* 104 (1983), 83-101. The citation is from p. 86.



Parmeno apporte noz cappes & espes
es/a allons disner sil te semble quil
soit heure. ¶ Par. ¶ Allōs tost:ie

Figuritas que ilustran el aucto IX de la
primera traducción francesa de "Celestina"
París 1527