
El manuscrito de piedra

Report by: Jason Wilson

García Jambrina has written a lively, easy-to-read historical detective novel focussing on the city of Salamanca and Fernando de Rojas, later author of *La Celestina*. The novel takes the form of a detective novel, with Rojas, from a 'converso' family in trouble with the authorities, slowly puzzling out what has been happening, with the poisoning of the Prince of Asturias and the drowning of a whore he had bedded. Jambrina acknowledges the research he has incorporated about Salamanca and the historical characters involved in this novel around the end of the c15. He uses dialogue particularly well. The plot leads the reader into caves and passages under the main church. We finally meet *La Celestina* deep inside, discover that she is the brain behind the murders as she had them carried out through Hilario, one of Rojas's best student friends.

There's a post-modern feel to the novel for the mind frames of his characters are very c21. Rojas, for example, has to invent himself his detective procedures, while the reader knows them too well from countless novels. Nevertheless, Jambrina writes with style and is always a pleasure to read. The story explores, through its detective device, the twin cities of Salamanca, the outward one of official history and the inner or below ground one with its histories, its secret Jews.

Though close to Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, to Dan Brown, and even to Alas' *La Regenta*, there is plenty of action, lively dialogues and much easy erudition. My hunch is that Jambrina's novel could do well in English as a clever variant in the detective novel tradition.

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