

CORNELIUS AGRIPPA AND CELESTINA

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It is often repeated that Juan Valdés, in his *Diálogo de la lengua* (ca. 1535) was the first to write an opinion on the *Tragicomedia*,¹ although the first major figure to mention the Spanish drama was Juan Luis Vives in 1523, in his *De institutione christianaefeminae*, and then in 1531, in the section of his *De disciplinis libri xx* titled *De corruptis artibus libri septem*. Yet there is another early reference which is worth quoting because of the author's prestige and the popularity of his work, an author who includes *Celestina* in a list of classics, who retains the original title and, interestingly, accords magic a central place in the plot.

The author is Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1486-1535), the wandering scholar from Cologne who taught Hebrew at Dole, studied medicine, alchemy, theology and cabala, wrote works on magic (*De occulta philosophia*), ethics and philosophy. Agrippa's most famous work, the one which contains the allusion to *Celestina*, is *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium*, written possibly as early as 1526 and published first in Antwerp in 1530 by Joan. Grapheus (it was reprinted a year later, Paris: Iohannes Petrus, 1531, and began appearing, beginning

¹ Suffice it to mention the references of Julio Cejador y Frauca's introduction to Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1963), I: xxxvi-xxxvii, and Peter E. Russell to his edition of the *Comedia o Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (Madrid: Castalia, 1991), p. 26.

also in 1531, in various *Opera*, or collections of Agrippa's works). It remains one of the major expressions of Renaissance skepticism, an unusual one because it proves its theses through "declamations" rather than through philosophical argumentation. In *De incertitudine*, Agrippa examines all the professions which require intellectual faculties, beginning with the grammarians and continuing on through poetry, rhetoric, logic, mnemotechnics, alchemy, medicine, mathematics, while touching as well on agricultural, veterinarian and astrological *artes* and many other professions. It amounts to a scathing attack on occultism and the sciences and is said to have provoked the ire of the Emperor, Charles V, whom Agrippa had served as court secretary. As a result of his writings, he spent a year in a Brussels jail (1530-1531), accused of heresy.

Two of the 101 chapters (63 and 64) of *De incertitudine* deal with prostitutes and ruffians, respectively. In the latter the mention of *Celestina* is preeminent and I quote the full context:

Caeterum etiam ad tam insanam credulitatem plerique inducti sunt, ut putent Astrologicis imaginibus & horarum obseruationibus amorem cogi posse, sicut de istis Theocritus, Vergilius, Catullus, Ouidius, Horatius, Lucanus, & multi alii nugaces Poetae cecinerunt, atque ipsi Astrologi Poetis non minus mendaces autores in suis electionum libris statis canonibus tradiderunt quo vno profecto lenociniorum obsequio Astrologi omnes & diuinatores non minimum faciunt quaestum, quibus in adiutorium proxime sese offert Magia,

Quae se carminibus promittit soluere mentes

Quas velit ast aliis duras immittere curas

De qua etiam apud Lucanum:

Carmine Thessalidum dura in praecordia fluxit

Non fatis adductus amor.

Et apud Horatium Canidia, apud Apuleium Pamphilae maleficae suos amatores astringunt, & in Calisti tragicacomoedia [sic] *Celestina* lena Meliboeam puellam accendit.²

² The quote comes from the first edition of *De incertitudine* (Antwerp: Joan. Grapheus, 1530), 90^v- 91^r and could be translated as follows: "Moreover many people have been induced into this peevish credulity, that they believe love can be caused and constrained by means of astrological images and observation of hours, as Virgil, Catullus, Ovid, Horace, Lucan and other babbling poets have written. And the astrologers themselves, no less liars than the poets, have written

Agrippa calls Rojas' work a *tragica Comoedia*, reflecting its original title which, apparently, in some circles had not been supplanted by that of *Celestina* (as we see in Vives, for example). What is most striking in this passage is that Agrippa mentions this work among the classics — Virgil, Lucan, Horace (*Epod.* V) and Apuleius (*Metam.* III, 21-25) — and includes Celestina's name alongside those of famed classical enchantresses. A few pages earlier, in the same chapter, he had also associated Calisto with some classical lovers:

[...] Superiorem tamen istis locum possident Historici, illi praecipue, qui amatorias illas Historias contexuerunt Lanceloti, Tristamii [sic], Eurealis, Pelegrini, Calisti et similium, in quibus fornicationi & adulteriis a teneris annis puellae instituuntur, et assuescunt (...).³



Cornelius Agrippa. Grabado anónimo (1527).

rules in their books of elections, with which all astrologers and diviners pay homage to the same type of bawdry and make no small gain. Next to them, magic offers itself as helper 'Which promises to loosen any mind it wants, as well as to press others with hard concerns' [Virgil, *Aen.* IV, 487-488], Lucan, too, speaks of it: 'By the spell of the Thessalian [witches] love steals into insensible hearts against 'the decree of destiny [*Pharsalia* VI, 452ff]. And as in Horace's *Canidia* and in Apuleius' *Pamphile* magicians bind their lovers, as in the tragic comedy of Calisto, *Celestina*, the procuress, inflames the maiden Melibea."

³ Agrippa, *De incertitudine*, p. 89^v. The translation follows: "Yet historians stand above these [i. e., poets], especially those who have written the love stories of Lancelot, Tristan, Eurialus, Pellegrin and Calisto and the like, in which maidens from tender age are instructed in fornication and adultery." Eurialus is the lover in the *Historia de duobus amantibus* of Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Pellegrin is the lover in *Il libro del Pellegrino* by Jacopo Caviceo.

Agrippa's *De incertitudine* enjoyed great success.⁴ It was translated into several languages, helping to bring the name of Celestina to an ever-widening readership. One of the authors who plagiarized Agrippa was Tomaso Garzoni in his *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (1585). In this immense encyclopedic work, dealing with more than five hundred professions and all types of jobs, we find in Italian translation the passage from Agrippa's *De incertitudine* quoted above:

Ma sopra ogni cosa le superstitioni, gli incanti, le strigarie sono insegnate da'ruffiani alle donne, perché esse troppo scempie si pensano con questi mezi venire a i lor disegni dionesti. Per questo Canidia e Sagana, Veia & Folia appresso Horatio, Pamphilia appresso Apuleio, con incantesimi astringono i loro amanti; e nella Tragicomedia [sic] de Calisto, Celestina ruffiana infiamma a Melibea fanciulla.⁵

Garzoni was not utilizing the Latin original but was, rather, adapting an earlier Italian translation by Ludovico Domenichi of 1547, which read, in part:

E appresso Horatio *Canidia*, appresso Apuleio *Pamphila* incantatrici. Astringono i loro amanti, et nella

⁴ Agrippa's *De incertitudine*, after its initial edition, was frequently reprinted. It was more often printed with other works of Agrippa and in the edition of his *Opera* (Paris: Baringo Fratres, 1531) an interesting misspelling occurs, a potential *felix culpa*. In the quoted passage, instead of "Celestina *lena* Moeliboeam puellam acendit" we find "Celestina *lana*," which would mean that Celestina inflamed Melibea with the *hilado*, thus giving us what would be the earliest recognition of magic as the cause of Melibea's change of heart towards Calisto. It is tempting to see this reading not as a printer's mistake but as a correction by the author. Is it not appealing to link *lana* and *hilado*? It may have been pure coincidence, for in the many subsequent editions only *lena* appears, either because subsequent editors did not know of this coincidence or were certain (and reassured by the context) that *lena* was the genuine reading.

⁵ The text consulted is a reprinting of the 1585 edition: Tomaso Garzoni Bagnacauallo, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (Venice: Gio. Battista Somasco, 1589), p. 609 (Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid R-8111). The text can also be found in a newly-printed edition, Torino: Einaudi, 1996, vol. I, at page 975.

**Tragicomedia di Calisto Celestina ruffiana infiamma
Melibea fanciulla.⁶**

Agrippa first reached the Spanish-language audience in 1615 via Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa's translation of a sizeable portion of Garzoni's *Piazza universale*. Chapter 72 of this work, titled *La plaza universal de todas las ciencias y artes*, is devoted to "los alcahuetes" and there the relevant passage is rendered thus:

Sobre todo enseñan las alcahuetas supersticiones, encantos y hechizarias. Por eso Cadinia [sic], Sagana, Beya, Hipholia acerca de Horacio, y Panfilia en Apuleyo aprietan a sus amantes con encantos. En la tragedia de Calisto, Celestina alcahueta inflama con tales cosas a Melibea.⁷

Agrippa's work was translated as well into English, as *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences by Henry Cornelius Agrippa*. It is not clear from what edition, or language, the anonymous translator of the edition seen was working.⁸ In chapter 64, "Of Pandarism, or Procuring," we find both our passages:

Historians also have not a little Interest in the World, especially the Compilers of those Historical Romances of *Lancelot, Tristram, Eurialis, Peregrinnus, Calistibus*, and the like; by means whereof, young Children are in their

⁶ The edition consulted is Arrigo Cornelio Agrippa. *Della vanità delle scienze, Tradotto per Messer Ludouico Domenichi*, no, place, no date (Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid U-11105) and the citation is from p. 105^v. Domenichi's dedication, which appears at the end of this edition, is dated in Florence on Sept. 30, 1546. The other passage which is relevant is translated from Agrippa's Latin as follows: "Stanno però sopra di loro gli historici, quegli specialmente, c'hanno scritto le historie d'amore, di Lanciloto, di Tristano, d'Eurialo, di Pellegrino, di Calisto, et di simili, ne i quali le fanciulle da primi anni s'ammaestrano, et s'auizzano alla lussuria et à gli adulterii" (104^r).

⁷ Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa, *Plaza universal de todas las ciencias y artes parte traducida de Toscano, y parte compuesta por el Doctor ...* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1615), p. 278^r. In this chapter, the second allusion to *Celestina* has been omitted, while the one remaining, here quoted in full, abbreviates the material greatly.

⁸ Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid U-8212 is the copy seen (London: R. Bentley, 1694). There apparently exists an earlier, more rare, edition of this translation.

tender years bred up and accustom'd to the Intrigues
and Mysteries of Fornication and Adultery. (199)

Nay, some are so mad as to believe, that by Astrological
Images, and observation of Hours, Love may be
compell'd, as Theocritus, Virgil, Catullus, Ovid, Horace,
Lucan, and many other trifling Poets have made the
world believe: By which single piece of Cunning, your
Astrologers and Fortune tellers make no small
advantage. Next to which, Magic also brings a very
considerable aid,

That by her Charms some Lovers frees from fear,
Afflicting others with consuming cares.

Of which Lucan thus sings:

Love that before was slow
Thessalian Charms now cause to overflow
the'inflam'd heart.

In Horace we find *Candidia* [sic]; in Apuleius *Pamphilia*
provoking their lovers; and in the Tragi-comedy of
Calistibus, *Celestina* the bawd inflames the Virgin
Meliboea by her Magick Art. (201-202)

In this latter version, our anonymous translator — who perhaps had read the *Celestina* — places special emphasis on *Celestina's* prowess in the 'magick art.' His use of 'intrigues' (in the first passage) — not highlighted in the Italian or Spanish versions seen — strengthens this hypothesis. If so, it is most likely that he knew it in the James Mabbe englished version of 1631, recirculated in 1634.

Curiously, as we have already seen in Suárez de Figueroa's Spanish version, only the second of the *Celestina* allusions was retained in the French translation made by Henri de Mayerne Turquet in 1582, as previously noted by Denis Drysdall.⁹ We reproduce this passage from one of the early seventeenth century editions of this translation:

⁹ *Déclamations sur l'incertitude, vanité et abus des sciences ...* (Paris: J. Durand, 1582), p. 292. Drysdall noted this in his "Allusions to the *Celestina* in Works Written or Published in France up to 1644," *Celestinesca* 20 (1996): 21-36, at p. 24, note 3. We have not seen this original version. Several re-editions of this translation were to follow, with slightly varying titles, in 1603, 1608, 1617, 1623 and, finally, in 1630.

Et se trouuent des hommes si faciles à croire follement qu'ils pensent que l'amour peut estre contraint & forcé par les images astrologiques & obseruations des heures, ainsi que Theocrite, Virgile, Catule, Ouide, Horace, Lucain, & plusieurs autres poètes par mocquerie, ont chanté, & comme les astrologues, autant menteurs que les poètes, és liures de leurs elections ont par certaines reigles escrit & enseigné. Au moyen desquels petits tours de maquerelage tous astrologues & deuineurs font vn gain & proffit qui n'est pas petit. A l'aide desquels vient le mariage, laquelle par charmes, coniurations, & sorcelleries, peut, ce dit-on, resioüyr & contrister les esprits ainsi qu'il luy plaist, & comme dit Lucain,

L'amour au coeur par l'art magique des Thessaies
S'escoula, non forcé par volonteé fatales.

Et Horace fait mention de Canidia, Apulés des Pamphiles sorcieres, lesquelles contraignent leurs amoureux à les aimer, & en la tragicomedie de Castillo [sic], la maquerelle Celestine enflamme d'amour la ieune fille Melibée.¹⁰

In the times when Domenichi (1547), Garzoni (1585), Mayerne Turquet (1582), Suárez de Figueroa (1615), and our slightly later anonymous English translator were producing vernacular versions of Agrippa's *De incertitudine*, the name of Celestina needed little additional promotion, given the great notoriety already attained by the *alcahueta*. Still, Agrippa's mention of her in 1526-30 not only reminds us of how early her fame had spread, but also accords this *lena* the stature and status of a classical figure even as she was new in Western literature. This latter inclusion may seem to us to have been a rash gamble in 1526 or 1530, certainly more so than was mentioning Eurialus or Peregrinus who were at least creations of well-known Humanists (see note 3). In any case, Agrippa's was a winning bet: we have today largely forgotten Eurialus and Peregrinus, and even Canidia and Pamphila, while the name and literary fame of Celestina burn brightly still, lexicalized in Spanish as the *lena* "por antonomasia."

¹⁰ The quotation comes from ch. 64 ("Du Maquerelage.") of *Paradoxe sur l'incertitude, vanité et abus des sciences, traduit en François du Latin de Henry Corneille Agrippa* (n.p., 1608), 204^r-204^v.

Celestina,



Ende is een Tragicomedie van Calisto en Melibea In die welcke (byuten haer gewerch lichen ende sueten sin) staet veel profeteliche ende wise sentencien oft spreekwoorden: en veel noot-sakeliche waerscouwingen bysonder voor ionge ghelicken betoonende haer meechelike geluck als in enen claren spieghel dat groot bedroch vanden pluinstrickers \ van ontrouwen dienuersende vande Coppelerren. Nu eerst nieu getranslatert tot den Spaensche in onser gemeender Dwtischer spraken seer oorboutich om lesende mach wel te rechte gheeten worden den spiegel der verdoolder amoreuser Ioncheyt. En bet is een onderwijs en leeringe allen menschen van wat state dat sij wesen maghen.

C. Mel. Beatie ende Priuilegie.

Portada de la traducción neerlandesa.
Amberes: Hans de Laet. 1550.