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INCONCINNITY IN THE *TRAGICOMEDIA*, ACT XIV

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The juncture of the *Comedia* with the new acts of the *Tragicomedia* occurs a bit less than halfway through the original Act XIV. The addition of about twenty lines of new material before the juncture does little to prepare the reader for the temporary salvation of Calisto from his precipitous fate. The three brief interpolations are all spoken by Melibea: the first and longest reflects her state of mind as she awaits the arrival of Calisto; the second expresses her reservations as the amorous activity commences; the third promises her continuing availability, "porque siempre te espere apercebida del gozo con que quedo, esperando las venideras noches."¹ The continuation will provide a number of "venideras noches."

The major interpolation begins with the dialogue between Tristán and Sosia as they return with their master from the assignation. Their theme is the need for silence and discretion as they make their way home at dawn, "porque suelen levantarse a esta hora los ricos, . . . los devotos de templos . . . los enamorados, como nuestro amo, los trabajadores . . . los pastores . . . y podría ser que cogiesen de pasada alguna razón, por do toda su honra y la de Melibea se turbase" (XIV, 192-93). Calisto interrupts them, saying, "Mis cuidados y los de vosotros no son todos unos." This line sounds very good, but what can it possibly mean? If Calisto is referring to the need for caution and prudence in his illicit enterprise and the desirability of protecting his and Melibea's honor, he must certainly share the concern of his servants, which is directed entirely to the success of his undertaking. The sense of the phrase--Calisto's first words after the garden meeting--seems so completely out of context that a careful reader is forced to wonder if lines may not be missing; it is a puzzling non sequitur.

A second example of inconcinnity occurs immediately afterwards. Calisto cautions his servants: "Entrad callando, no nos sientan en casa." Who can be "en casa"? Calisto's strange household has consisted, up to this point, of two body-servants, now deceased, and a page and a groom to whom he is speaking. We have no indication of other family, relatives, or servants. No maiden aunts, cooks, or *amas de llaves* are mentioned at any point in the *Comedia* or later in the continuation, although Calisto will presently refer in passing to "los otros mis sirvientes y parientes," who never appear.² This preoccupation is completely lacking in Act XII under

identical circumstances, when Calisto returns from his meeting with Melibeia, certainly at a late hour, and chats companionably with his servants for a while before retiring. Afterwards Pármeno feels free to consider whether to go to bed or be off to the kitchen for a snack. Calisto displays no concern that he or they may wake a sleeping entourage. Why, we must ask, is this new, unexplained, and pointless element introduced?

A third incongruity occurs early in Calisto's soliloquy. Alone now, and reflecting on his reaction to the death of his servants, he asks himself: "¿Por qué no salí a inquirir la verdad de la secreta causa de mi manifiesta perdición?" To what "secreta causa" can he be referring? Sosia has, in Act XIII of the *Comedia*, given his master every relevant detail of the scandalous event: "Señor, la causa de su muerte publicaba el cruel verdugo a voces, diciendo; 'Manda la justicia que mueran los violentos matadores'" (187). A bit later, at the close of this scene, Calisto asks the key question: "Dime, Sosia, ¿qué era la causa por que la mataron?" Sosia supplies the information with admirable clarity and precision: "Señor, aquella su criada, dando voces, llorando su muerte, la publicaba a cuantos la querían oír, diciendo que porque no quiso partir con ellos una cadena de oro que tú le diste" (188). Calisto is probably referring in his soliloquy to his own inaction on learning of his servants' death; to his failure to make a public show of righteous indignation at their summary execution, but the term "secreta causa" is, even so, inappropriate to the context--a clear example of inconcinnity.

A textual analysis of this sort cannot, unfortunately, give us much more than some indices of the unfolding pattern of a creative process. At this point of juncture we find jarring non sequitur, jolting new elements which do not mesh with immediately precedent conditions and which have no structural value in themselves. If Rojas came back to his work after a lapse of time, a period occupied with other concerns, it is possible that he proceeded to amplify the material according to new and perhaps unconscious promptings and a somewhat different understanding of his creation. If, however, the continuation is the work of another writer, then obviously he had not fully absorbed the sense of the foregoing acts and is innovating ineptly and capriciously. Yet it must strike us as odd that, having placed interpolations in every act of the *Comedia* except the first and the last, the *Auto* and Pleberio's lament, and thus having had to reread the work with creative understanding of its total sense, the author of the continuation was not able to effect a less puzzling and troublesome transition to the new action of the *Tragicomedia*. We find no such striking incongruence in material added to the earlier acts.

We have some useful clues to Rojas' literary mentality based on his continuation of the *Auto*. He had read the fragment, he tells us in the *Carta*, repeatedly and with analytic care. He is remarkably attentive to major strategy--for example, carrying forward the theme of Pármeno's inheritance and resolving it in ironic and metaphorical fashion through Celestina's fulfillment of her promise to secure the favors of Areúsa for the lad³--and to minor details such as the development of the Crito sit-

uation when, in Act III, Celestina asks Elicia, "¿Fuéase la moza que esperaba al ministro?" and Elicia replies, "Y aun después vino otra y se fue" (184). Almost nowhere in the fifteen acts of his *Comedia* does Rojas improvise confusion or introduce material clearly out of consonance with character, events, or situations established in the first act. He builds upon the given.

We may see this in his development of the figure of Celestina. Rojas invents a distinguishing characteristic for her; a scar, "aquel su Dios os salve, que traviesa la media cara" (IV, 92), which Pármeno had not referred to in his description of the bawd. Such a mark is hardly out of place when we reflect on what we know of Celestina's long career among ruffians and prostitutes, and the brevity of Pármeno's physical description of the "puta vieja alcoholada" hardly implies a total inventory of her appearance. Rojas also invents her love of the grape, which again causes no problem for the reader, although it may temporarily sidetrack her main purpose in Act IX, the subjection of Melibea to her will and the furtherance of the "negocio." For a final example, he augments and dramatizes her demonic powers at the end of Act III, building on material supplied by Pármeno in the *Auto*.

At only one point does Rojas create confusion, and that is a paradoxical result of his conscientious attempt to do the opposite; to clarify the circumstances of Calisto's initial meeting with Melibea. The opening words of Pármeno's syllogism in Act II, "Señor, porque perderse el otro día el neblí fue causa de tu entrada en la huerta de Melibea a le buscar," (77) create a problem with the time sequence which the first author probably did not intend, but Rojas remains consistent; repeated references to "el otro día" for the opening scene of the *Auto* systematically reinforce his reading of the received text and his interpretation of the Antiguo Auctor's design.

This sustained understanding of the sequence of action is quite distinct from the operation of the three cases of inconcinnity in the continuation of Act XIV I have outlined. Calisto's non sequitur, the population of his house with persons unknown "que no nos sientan" who never appear in body or direct reference, and the mysterious "secretata causa" behind an event that has been publicly aired in all significant detail, suggest not a reasoned reinterpretation of the *Comedia* but inconsequential improvisation and a lack of attention to circumstances the reader has come to accept. If Rojas is the author of this transitional material, he does not exercise the same care with his own work that he had brought to his continuation of the *Auto*. If we are reading the text of a third author, we must agree that he has done his work of splicing in a clumsy fashion, raising questions which he neither resolves nor uses creatively.

NOTES

¹ All references to the text follow *La Celestina*, ed. Dorothy S. Severin (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 8th ed., 1981). Act and page of quotations are indicated in the text. For this example, XIV, 192.

² XIV, 194. Melibea's self-accusation, "Yo dejé hoy muchos sirvientes descubiertos de señor" (XX, 229) may be taken as a figure of speech, a sort of hysterical hyperbole which matches other exaggerations in this soliloquy.

³ For an analysis of Rojas' successful transmutation of the inheritance from "tal copia de ora y plata, que basta más que la renta de tu amo Calisto" (I, 68) into the servant's *rite de passage* in the company of Areúsa, see my note "El tesoro de Pármene," *LC y su contorno social. Actas del I Congreso Internacional sobre LC*, ed. Manuel Criado de Val (Barcelona: Borrás Ediciones, 1977), pp. 185-91.



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ARGUMENTO DEL PRIMER ACTO
DE ESTA COMEDIA

Illus. J. Azpelicueta. Ed. Juventud. 1967.