

TWO EARLY ALLUSIONS TO *CELESTINA*

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As the debate continues over *Celestina's* generic affiliation, two sixteenth-century allusions to Rojas' masterpiece tie it, on the one hand, to courtly theater in Castile and, on the other, to raucous street celebrations in Toledo. In the nineteenth century that indefatigable bibliographer Bartolomé José Gallardo acquired a collection of early dramatic texts, but the collection was destroyed by fire in 1824 before he could prepare modern editions of the plays. The collection contained thirty-eight printed works composed prior to 1540 by thirty-eight different dramatists. Only the titles and opening lines have survived. These plays by signed playwrights betray the influence of Encina and Torres Naharro.<sup>1</sup> They were most likely commissioned by members of the nobility for performance before an aristocratic audience. This hypothesis is borne out by Salvador de Breno's *Egloga al duque de Medinaceli*. Apparently the Duke and Duchess of Alba were not alone in having a dramatic poet in their employ.

In this collection of courtly theatre we find the *Farsa sobre la comedia de Calisto y Melibea* by a certain Lope Ortiz de Stúñiga.<sup>2</sup> It opens with the lines "Hi de San, y qué floresta / y qué floridos pradales." Despite its brevity, this information is, nonetheless, suggestive. The poet appropriated the title of the earliest version of *Celestina*. His use of *farsa* emphasizes the dramatic nature of his piece as it also reflects the generic confusion of the early sixteenth century unless Ortiz de Stúñiga in fact replaced Rojas' tragic denouement with a comic one. Unlike those works by Encina and Torres Naharro, which draw heavily on Rojas but can hardly be called *refundiciones*, Ortiz de Stúñiga's title suggests a closer adaptation of *Celestina*, perhaps a verse rendition comparable to Pedro Manuel Ximénez de Urrea's 1513 *Egloga*. The opening lines of the *Farsa* probably belonged to an *introito* and were recited by a Naharresque yokel who described in Sayagués the beauty of the bucolic world while Calisto waited in the wings.

The second allusion evokes the boisterous and seamy world of street theater. In 1555 news that England under Mary Tudor had returned to the true faith unleashed the Carnival spirit as Toledo, the

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ecclesiastic capital of Spain, celebrated from February 9 to 25. Church officials even promised to grant pardons to all those who joined in the merrymaking. In *Memoria de las fiestas y alegrías que en Toledo se hizieron por esta razón* the dramatist Sebastián de Horozco, attentive to the farcical and theatrical features of the celebrations, describes how the old bawd Celestina, replete with knife wound, paraded through the city streets peddling her wares:

En este tiempo salieron maxcaras de moros, judios, doctores, medicos, deceplinantes, salvajes, locos, triperos, melcocheros, buñoleros, cornudos, romeros, diablos, correos, porteros de cofadrias, caçadores, hermitaños, negros, negras, portugueses, amazonas, ninfas, cardenales, monjas, biudas, Çelestina con su cuchillada y su canastico de olores, lençeras, bizcaynas, reyes, pastores y avn frayles salieron al principio, avnque la justicia se lo prohibio, y otros muchos disfrazes, asi a cavallo como a pie.<sup>3</sup>

There was Celestina fraternizing with bandits, madmen, devils, cuckolded husbands, hermits, Jews, Negroes, Portuguese, cardinals, nuns, widows, Biscayans, kings and shepherds. Many of these folk characters rose to the literary ranks in the farces of Gil Vicente, Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, and Horozco himself.

A second account of the festivities by Juan de Angulo, though much longer than Horozco's, contains no allusion to Celestina, for Angulo, unlike Horozco, spends his time eulogizing Philip II and Mary Tudor, also Toledo's Archbishop, Juan Martínez Siliceo, and Pope Julius III. He also lingers over the elegant attire of the military orders and the elaborate allegorical floats mounted by various trade guilds which extolled the true faith and condemned the Lutheran heresy.<sup>4</sup>

Rojas' *Tragicomedia* contributed then to two radically different forms of theater: Calisto and Melibea enriched the courtly theater of the Castilian aristocracy and Celestina the popular drama that unfolded in the city streets.




## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Manuel Cañete gives the titles, authors and opening lines in his prologue to Lucas Fernández' *Farsas y églogas* (Madrid: Imprenta Nacional, 1867), pp. lix-lxiv. The identical material is reprinted in *Teatro español del siglo XVI* (Madrid: M. Tello, 1885), pp. 54-59. Cañete explains, "Interin doy más circunstanciada razón de estos autores en la *Historia del teatro español anterior á Lope de Vega*, comprobaré lo dicho en el texto, citando aquí algunas obras tuyas que poseo ó de que tengo noticia." He does not clarify which works he possesses and of which he has simply "noticia." He does state, however, "Pues de todos estos autores existen impresas obras dramáticas, ó noticia de ellas anterior á 1540, sin que la haya de que el Santo Oficio las prohibiese, á pesar de la demasiada libertad de algunas" (*Farsas y églogas*, p. lxiii). As far as I know, the *Historia del teatro anterior á Lope de Vega* never appeared in print. Cañete may have died before completing it.

<sup>2</sup>Plays by Diego Durán, Diego de Nequeruela and Alonso de Salaya have since surfaced and been published, which leaves the door open for the possible retrieval of others including Ortiz de Stúñiga's.

<sup>3</sup>Santiago Alvarez Gamero, "Las fiestas de Toledo en 1555," *Révue Hispanique* 31 (1914), 392-485. Horozco's commentary is on pp. 393-415, the quotation on p. 395.

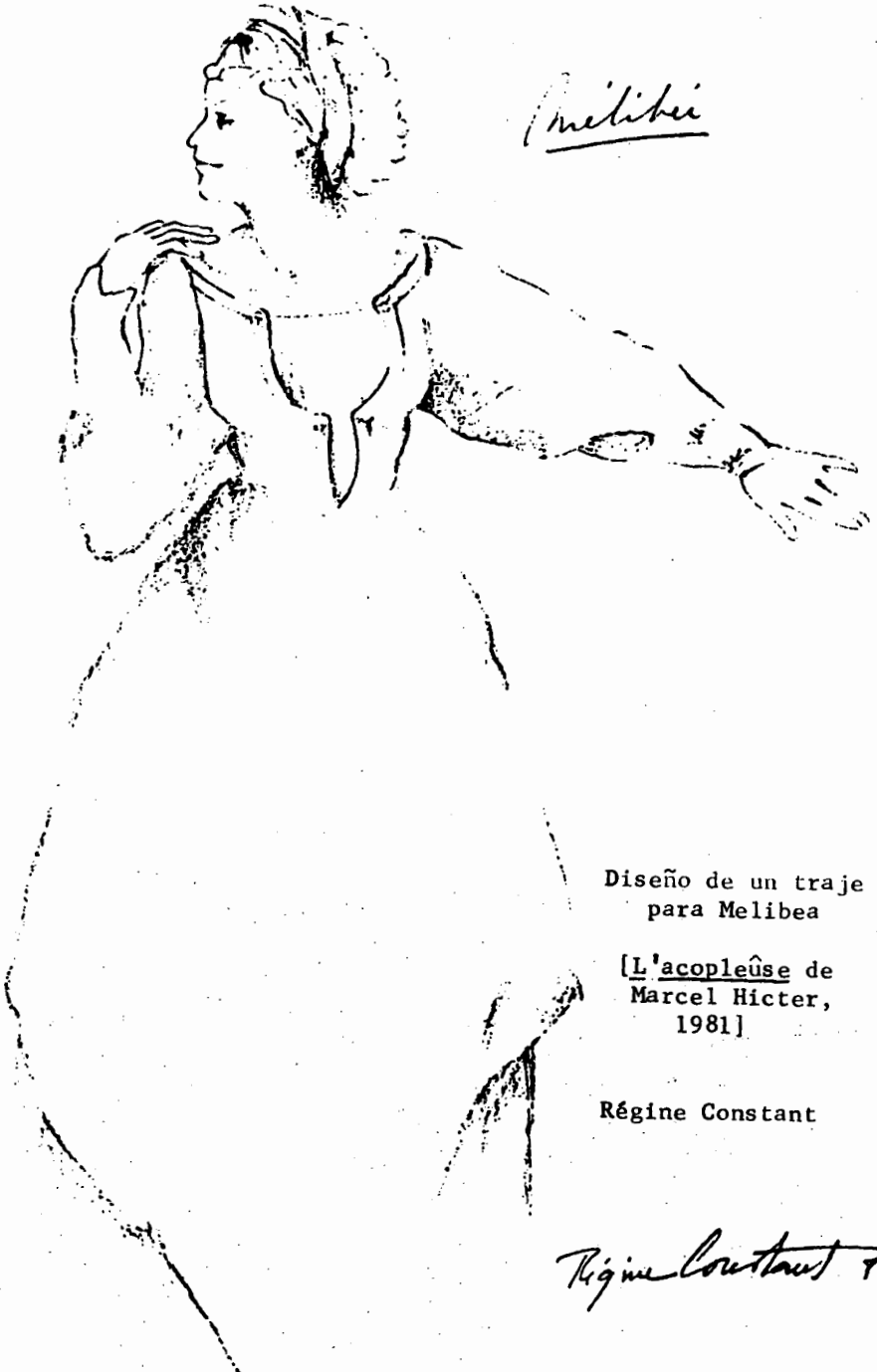
<sup>4</sup>Angulo's account, composed largely in verse, appears on pp. 416-485.

 **Comedia intitulada Teso**  
rina la matçria dela quales vnos amores  
de un pcnado por vna scñora / y otras per-  
sonas adherentes. Hecha nueuamete por  
Jayme de Huete. Pero si / por ser su natu-  
ral lengua Aragonesa / no suere por muy cèdrados termi-  
nos / quãto a esto merece pcrdon Los Interlocuto:es son  
los infrapuestos / y es de notar que el fraylc es sacador.

Jaime de Huete. Comedia Tesorina. BN-Madrid.

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Melibea



Diseño de un traje  
para Melibea

[L'acopleûse de  
Marcel Hicter,  
1981]

Régine Constant

*Régine Constant*