In a recent article\(^1\) we described a shadow play of 1865 with a
Celestina title that has patent connection to the rebirth of interest for La
Celestina in the Barcelona area after 1840. Between 1865 and the end of
the century, in addition to various Madrid printings, La Celestina is
published again in Barcelona in 1886 (Palau 51173).\(^2\) It is possible that
the aforementioned shadow play could have had numerous amateur
performances in the later years of the 19th century. Indeed, the one-act
play now in question (see illustration) may draw as much from the
shadow play of 1865 as it does from the text of the original.

The Celestina-juguet cómich, premiered in December of 1899, has
a less than brilliant plot. A young tripla, Aurora Iqnoceilt, mysteriously
disappears from Barcelona, the newspapers suggesting foul play. She has
in fact only run away because of a lover's misunderstanding. In nearby
Sant Gervasi she takes a job as a maid, calling herself Celestina Ros
(rubio: de color rojo: Rojas?). At one point there is a curious angry
exchange between Celestina and the mistress of the house which might be
construed to have a double meaning, referring, perhaps simultaneously, to
Celestina's beauty spot and to blemishes on the face of Celestina, the
crone of Rojas' original. The mistress refers disdainfully to Celestina,
"una cambrera que te una pica aprop de nas." Celestina's sharp retort
defines the pica as a natural, not cosmetic, beauty spot: "Al menos es
natural y es meva." In any event, this Celestina is a most attractive young
woman. The men of the house, young and old, are excited by her
presence and make various propositions, which Celestina turns down.
When the mistress of the house finds jewels in Celestina's room with the
initials A.I., all assume Celestina has murdered the Barcelona singer and
made off with her valuables. All is happily resolved when the "jutge
interino" brought to apprehend the servant Celestina turns out to be
Aurora's estranged suitor.

The connections with the namesake of the novel are those of
carnal intrigue and of valuables as motive for murder. The connection
with the shadow play of 1865 is that of the disguise of a virtuous young
CELESTINESCA

girl ironically using the name Celestina (1865: "angel bajado del cielo"/1899: Aurora Ignocent) for reasons of love. In both plays we only learn of true identity toward the end, thus allowing the connotations of the name Celestina full rein. The author of the juguet cómich would appear to know the original novel and the implications of disguising his heroine under the name of Celestina, but he also appears to have followed the pattern of the shadow play in terms of the ironic disguise used up to the denouement.

The forging of new dimensions to the name Celestina, perhaps begun with the shadow play of 1865 and promulgated because of its popularity, seems to be confirmed by this otherwise insignificant playlet of 1899.

NOTES


La Celestina

Juguet cómich en un acte y en prosa

Estrenat ab aplauso en lo Teatre Catalá (Romea)
la vetlla del 11 de Desembre de 1899

BARCELONA

Imprenta d'en Joaquim Collazos
Plassa de la Igualtat, 3
1900
Seneca and Celestina

This book examines the reason and intent behind the many Senecan and pseudo-Senecan quotations in Fernando de Rojas' masterpiece Celestina (1499), which enjoyed enormous popularity in sixteenth-century Europe.

The author considers the importance attached to Senecan thought in the oral, scholarly and literary traditions of fifteenth-century Spain, and demonstrates how readers' tastes and sensibilities were shaped by it. The main themes of Celestina, such as self-seeking, friendship and love, pleasure and sorrow, gifts and riches, greed, suicide and death, are shown to be rooted in this intellectual background. The Senecan tradition, albeit treated in a satirical vein, is also seen as underlying the later additions and interpolations to the text, with a shift towards Seneca's tragedies in response to changes in fashion; Professor Fothergill-Payne reveals that even the Petrarchan quotations in Celestina have Senecan sources.

Seneca and Celestina thus offers an entirely new perspective on the literary and intellectual sources that shaped this famous book.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE MELBOURNE SYDNEY