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, although the first major figure to mention the Spanish drama was Juan Luis Vives in 1523, in his De institutione christianae feminae, 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 scientarum 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

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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 observationibus amorem cogi posse, sicut de ipsis Theocritus, Vergilius, Catullus, Ovidius, 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 alis 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 malefiae suos amatores astringunt, & in Calisti tragicacomoedia [sic] Celestina lena Meliboeam puellam ascendit.²

² The quote comes from the first edition of De incertitudine (Antwerp: Joan. Grapheus, 1530), 90'-91' 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 Comedia*, 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 (*Epodi* 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:

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

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. 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. 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 mezzi venire a i lor disegni disonesti. Per questo Canidia e Sagana, Veia & Folia appresso Horatio, Pamphilia appresso Apuleio, con incantesimi astringono i loro amanti; e nella *Tragicomedica [sic] de Calisto*, Celestina ruffiana infiamma a Melibea fanciulla.  

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

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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.

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 hechizerias. 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

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6 The edition consulted is Arrigo Cornelio Agrippa. Della vanità delle scienze, Tradotto per Messer Ludovico Domenichi, no, place, no date (Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid U-11105) and the citation is from p. 105. 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’ammaestranu, et s’auezzano alla lussuria et à gli adulterii" (104”).

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. 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:

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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 & observations 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 regles escrit & enseigne. 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, conjurations, & sorcelleries, peut, ce dit-on, resiûyr & contrister les esprits ainsi qu’il luy plaist, & comme dit Lucaín,

L’amour au coeur par l’art magique des Thessales S’escoula, non forcé par volontez fatales.

Et Horace fait mention de Canidia, Apulés des Pamphiles sorcières, lesquelles contraignent leurs amorourex 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'-204".
Ende is een Tragicomedia van Calisto en Melibea in die welcke (bijten baren gewechslicher ende lieten sin) staft verl profytclieke ende roosse sentencien oft sprichwoorden oft veel noot- lakelieke waerstrouwingen byloonder voor lange gheseilten betoonende harr meerelijte gelich als in eere claren spieghel dat groot bedoich vanden physiocraters van ontrouwen dienstende vande Coppelersten. Neer eerst nieu getranslatert tot den Spaensche in ouder gemeender Wyslicher sprakenlere oorblycklich om lesem ende mach wel te rechte geheeten worden den Spiegel der verdoolder amoruluer Jongheert. En het is een onderwijt en leersinge allen menschen van wat State dat zij weten mochten. Met Geatie ende Privilegie.

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