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Título Artículo: **Traces of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea***

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Resumen:

En la *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, la caracterización de la joven protagonista exhibe los rasgos principales de la condición trágica, tal como ésta se perfila en la *Poética* de Aristóteles. En el presente estudio se intenta poner de relieve la dimensión dramático-teatral de la Melibea trágica. Se sacan, así, a relucir en la actuación de Melibea, como factores de indudable procedencia aristotélica, los principios clave de la “anagnórisis” y “hubris”.

Palabras clave:

anagnórisis, hubris, “infierno de los enamorados”, *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, la condición trágica, la mujer como protagonista, la *Poética* de Aristóteles, matrimonio, motivo, “novela sentimental”, peripeteia.

Abstract:

In the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, the characterization of the young woman as a protagonist exhibits the essential traits of the tragic condition as profiled in Aristotle's *Poetics*. This essay is an attempt to point out the dramatic and theatrical dimensions in the role of a tragic Melibea. Thus, such key principles as “anagnórisis” and “hubris” are highlighted in Melibea's role as factors of unmistakable Aristotelian provenance.

Key words:

anagnórisis, Aristotle's *Poetics*, female protagonist, hybris, *infierno de los enamorados*, *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, marriage, motivation, *novela sentimental*, peripeteia, the tragic condition.

Traces of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*

Published at the turn of the fifteenth century —at the dawn, that is, of the Spanish Renaissance —the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, commonly known as *La Celestina* or simply *Celestina*, is widely acclaimed as a prominent masterpiece in the history of Spanish literature. The unanimous accolade that critics unhesitatingly bestow on that chef-d'oeuvre contrasts sharply with the heated controversy that still rages among them as to the fundamental issues pertaining to genre and authorship. For a concise, updated review of the

controversy we may well repair to Peter E. Russell's introduction to his edition, which bears the title of *La Celestina: comedia o tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. Here I should like to call attention to what, in my judgment, constitutes *prima facie* evidence of Aristotelian influence on the composition of *Celestina*. I will concentrate on three mainstays of Aristotle's *Poetics* —namely those notions that in ordinary scholarly parlance are identified by the terms of *anagnorisis*, *peripeteia*, and *hamartia* or *hubris*.¹ What I expect may be deduced from my argument is an appreciation of these Aristotelian factors in profiling Melibea's tragic persona and, by extension, tracing the evolution of the overall plot of the masterpiece in question. The significance of Melibea's role as a determinant of that plot is beyond question. The damsel is, after all, one of the trio of protagonists — the other two members being Calisto, her lover, and *la vieja alcahueta*, the eponymous go-between herself.

Of Anagnorisis and Peripeteia

As has been shown by Paloma Andrés Ferrer and Peter Dunn, among others, a strong case can be made to illustrate the characterization of Melibea as a tragic personage in accordance with the principles laid out by Aristotle in his seminal *Poetics*. Referring to the very terminology adduced by Aristotle to underscore the critical moments in the quintessential phenomenology of the theater, one may notice, for instance, telltale signs of two such moments —namely those of "anagnorisis" and "peripeteia"— in Act X of the *Tragicomedia*. Indeed, Act X is suffused with an aura of tension gradually rising to the point of explosion. Here Celestina scores the greatest victory in her nefarious career. The old hag manages to great effect her art of seduction of amazing subtlety, though of dubious distinction. In her dialogue with Melibea, she broaches and relentlessly sustains a two-layered discourse, which refers, overtly, to physical ailments and, covertly, to the dark passion of eros. Celestina conceals the primary referentiality of her perverse rhetoric well beneath the surface of her smooth speech. By a feat of analogical transferal —a feat no less

¹ Useful in this context is the discussion of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* found in Draper, 1980: 14. See, also, the observations on *hamartia* in Drakakis and Liebler, 1998: 8-9. Of special interest are the key excerpts from Aristotle's *Poetics* provided in Draper, 1980: 41-50.

impressive and effective what with all its maliciousness —Celestina slithers surrepticiously from the physical to the psychological realm. Needless to say, her sole aim is to shatter the protective wall of inhibition, susceptibility, and decorum that Melibea has constructed for herself. And whatever Celestina wants, Celestina gets— or so it seems! Ultimately the madame provokes Melibea into letting herself go in order to face up to the overpowering emotion that binds the damsel to Calisto, who has become the obsession of her life. Then, in a scene which readily brings to mind Federico García Lorca's dramatics, the plot explodes into an incident fully invested with melodramatic special effects. Under the heavy mental strain Melibea swoons, leaving her interlocutor little to gloat or brag about. Fearing for Melibea's and her own life, Celestina, as we may surmise from the implicit stage direction (*acotación*) so deftly interwoven into the fabrics of the dialogue, bursts into a stream of tears, erupts into a storm of sobs and remonstrations of self-pity. Following is an example of the profusion of exclamations Celestina indulges in as soon as she realizes that the mere mention of the name "Calisto" has caused much havoc in Melibea:

O, por Dios, señora Melibea! Qué poco esfuerzo es éste? Qué descaescimiento? O, mezquina yo! Alça la cabeça! O malaventurada vieja! En esto han de parar mis passos? Si muere, matarme han; aunque viva, seré sentida; que ya no podrá sofrirse de no publicar su mal y mi cura. (450)

When perceived in the light of Aristotle's theory, the episode of Melibea's fainting spell stands out because it exemplifies, first of all, the principle of anagnorisis (recognition). Melibea cannot avoid any longer looking at the mirror of her own self-consciousness. By her reflective exercise, which brings her to the brink of a breakdown, she begins to acknowledge, avow, accept her passion and adapt her life to it. For the sake of conciseness we will forgo the many declarations pertaining to anagnorisis to be culled throughout the aforementioned Act X. It is convenient, nevertheless, to quote the following short speech, which marks, arguably, the inception of peripeteia, the second process under discussion in our illustration of some fundamental Aristotelian principles. No sooner does Melibea regain her senses than she begins with an unabashed declaration of longing for her beloved:

O mi Calisto y mi señor, mi dulce y suave alegría! Si tu corazón siente lo que agora el mío, maravillada estoy cómo la ausencia te consiente vivir. (452)

The impassioned confession makes way for a direct inquiry, which announces Melibea's resolve for an immediate plan of action:

O mi madre y mi señora!, haz de manera como luego le pueda ver, si mi vida quieres! (452)

The importance of peripeteia in determining Melibea's role and standing as tragic figure cannot be overestimated. For Melibea peripeteia is a defining factor in more ways than one. It is, indeed, a turning point marking the inception of her remarkable transformation from a submissive young woman to a formidable personage. In effect, from Act X on Melibea replaces Celestina as the unmatched controlling force of the entire community of men and women that surround her or come into contact with her. There are, of course, aspects in the characterization and in the plot of the *Tragicomedia* that underscore the momentous change in Melibea's behavior. First, there is the elimination of the go-between, murdered, as we may recall, in Act XII. Melibea is, then, the presence that fills the vacuum produced by the loss of Celestina. Secondly, Areúsa, one of Celestina's "mochachas," exhibits a transformation that runs parallel and is in many ways analogous to Melibea's evolution. Areúsa's sudden shift, obviously precipitated by Celestina's death, from a passive, almost demure role to an aggressive and manipulative one, has puzzled, to be sure, many a critic, the noted *Celestina* scholar, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, among them. What makes the situation even more enigmatic is the fact that Elicia, Areúsa's cousin and close associate, undergoes, after Celestina's death, a transformation just as radical as that of the other "mochacha" but of an inverse nature. Elicia's conduct, in other words, in diametric contrast with Areúsa's, evinces a shift from the symptoms of a bilious, shrewish disposition to those of a self-effacing, meek personality.²² The crisscross patterning is, to say the least, curious enough to have generated, understandably, a variety of interpretations, painstakingly described by Lida de Malkiel with the proverbial thoroughness, typical of her stupendous spadework (659-61). In the light of the controversial issues reviewed by that illustrious critic, it is reasonable to look for an explanation stemming from the inner

² Following is the way Lida de Malkiel summarizes the situation:

Las dos cortesanas plantean el más extraño problema sobre la relación entre el texto primitivo de *La Celestina* y el interpolado. La individualización de ambas es perfecta en las dos versiones pero, en cuanto al carácter, la de Elicia de la *Comedia* prosigue en la Areúsa de la *Tragicomedia*, así como la Elicia de ésta es continuación de la Areúsa de aquella. (659)

workings of the *Tragicomedia* itself —precisely from the dynamic of peripeteia. It is clear that, by virtue of that dynamic, a symbiotic bond is born between, on the one hand, Melibea and Areúsa and, on other hand, Celestina and Elicia. Upon reflecting on the dynamic of peripeteia it becomes apparent that the interchange of traits between Areúsa and Elicia makes sense if each of the two women is envisaged in her respective role as dramatic foil. This means that the author of the *Tragicomedia* endows each "mochacha" with a distinctive role in the context of the peripeteia: Areúsa foreshadows the ascendancy of Melibea as a mature, independent, empowered woman; Elicia adumbrates the decline, death, utter disappearance of Celestina.

Melibea's Hubris

In the light of the present analysis it is no surprise that a study of of the relationship between Areúsa and Melibea should bring us face to face with an existential symbiosis best explained in terms of dramatic dynamism, momentum, and suspense. As our attention shifts from Celestina's pupil to Calisto's ladylove, we notice the effect of what, in musical terminology, may be called a theme-and-variation composition. That is to say: the essential symptoms manifest, as has been pointed out, in Areúsa's behavior, reappear in the characterization of Melibea from Act X to the end of the *Tragicomedia*. We would hasten to add that the reoccurrence of symptoms, far from a process of mere recycling, involves a considerable raising of dramatic stakes. Specifically, the aura of tension that enfolds the presence of Melibea reaches its high point in Act XVI, in which Melibea's parents, Alisa and Pleberio, discuss their plan to marry their daughter off at the earliest opportunity.

Act XVI consists of two concurrent dialogues. The first features the elderly couple engaged in the aforementioned discussion. The second bears out the conversation between Melibea and her servant Lucrecia. A few circumstantial factors contribute to the singular theatrical impact of the scene. Melibea and Lucrecia are stationed in such a fashion that they can see and hear the other two but can neither be seen nor heard by the latter. Of course, from a spectator's point of view, a dialogue that acts as a frame for another creates the typical setup of a play within a play. The spectator cannot fail to be struck by the

pathetic ignorance and naiveté demonstrated by both parents with respect to the heady, unsettling experiences, the engrossing, ominous events that determine a crucial turning point in Melibea's life. What the spectator is able to contemplate, then, is an artful overlay of dialogues, reminiscent of an operatic performance. Here and there transpire signs of misconceptions, misinformation, lack of communication, which poison the air even as they forebode disaster. Pleberio and Alisa do not show the slightest inkling of the amorous trysts their daughter holds with her beau in the garden. They consider her completely innocent. They, of course, cannot hear Melibea confess openly to Lucrecia that the torrid encounters have been taking place every night for a whole month. Throughout the premonitions are palpable and unavoidable: what the parents don't know can and will hurt them and their daughter, too.

Act XVI will be remembered for the profile it offers of an overwhelming conflict, which looms menacingly over three lives —Melibea, Pleberio, Alisa— trapped in a dysfunctional, uncommunicative family. The conflict is best perceived in its epic proportions, from Melibea's standpoint. The maiden's overall attitude, her mind set, or — to use a German term —her *Weltschmerz* is not easy to comprehend, let alone explain— at least explain in rational terms. Her speech shows excitement to the extreme, which faithfully reflects in Lida de Malkiel's words, "lo resuelto de su temple y lo fogoso de su pasión" (408). One may be tempted to say of Melibea that "the lady doth protest too much," but her protestations should not be lightly dismissed for they make her position quite clear on one pivotal point, if on nothing else. She is adamantly set against marriage and finds it unbearable even to hear her parents talk about it. She makes no bones about rejecting, flatly, the thoughtful designs of those who are most solicitous about her wellbeing. She begins by enjoining Lucrecia to put up a posture of benign but, in the long run, quite cruel neglect:

Déxalos hablar, déxalos devaneen. Un mes ha que otra cosa no hazen ni en otra cosa entienden. (547)

Allowing for the strict necessity of some preliminary remark or two, Melibea wastes no time before asserting her unnegotiable contrariness. Of marriage she will have none:

No piensen en estas vanidades ni en estos casamientos; que más vale ser buena amiga que mala casada. (547)

As if this peremptory declaration were not enough, she adds:

No quiero marido, no quiero ensuziar los ñudos del matrimonio, ni las maritales pisadas de ageno hombre repisar... (548)

Her oratory reaches a climax of sorts in yet another astounding refusal:

...ni quiero marido, ni quiero padres ni parientes! (550)

Lida de Malkiel could not be more accurate regarding Melibea's unbudging determination: "lo resuelto de su temple."

The most curious, and intriguing, part of Melibea's rhetoric resides in the staunchness of her *parti pris*, which works to the detriment of the clarity of her motivation. It is not that she does not try to justify her refusal to get married. It may be said that she waxes prolix in her contentious reaction to the sensible concerns of two people who really care for her. It cannot be denied, however, that prolixity does little or nothing to make her case. It does not surprise us in the least that Melibea should adduce two solid pillars -- that is, love and independence -- on which to lodge her willful purpose. Those pillars should remind us of not only the symbiotic bond which has been shown between Melibea and Areúsa but also, as has been argued, the high level to which Melibea raises dramatic action — a level much higher than the one attained in Areúsa's case.

Some further comments are in order regarding the dramatics of Melibea's presentation in Act XVI. There can be little doubt about her profound love for Calisto. Declarations to that effect abound in her rather long speech. She insists on "el gran amor que a Calisto tengo" (547), observes that "Calisto es mi ánima, mi vida, mi señor..." (547), and, alluding to her readiness to give up her life for the sake of her love, concludes: "faltándome Calisto, me falte la vida..." (550). These, as may be suspected, prove to be fatidic words. As for the matters of freedom and independence, Melibea roots her action or non-action in the metaphysical depths pertaining to the source of free will (*libre albedrío*). Here the power of her "no quiero" and "ni quiero" matches the empowerment of the self-knowledge she claims boastfully ("a mí me sé conocer" [548]). Melibea manifests herself as a formidable fountainhead of conviction concomitant to an unassailable assertion of principle (love, free will, personal independence). This notwithstanding, there is in that conviction, paradoxical as it seems, a hefty quotient of frustration, which translates itself into a flagrant inadequacy

to convince —that is, Melibea's incapacity to convince anybody, herself included.

Meanwhile, that ubiquitous though unacknowledged spectator is left to ask still: why does Melibea refuse to marry? The impetuous stream of comments that Melibea, from all appearances, is eager to provide as an answer turns out to be a series of side notes, enunciated in byzantine sophistry and labyrinthine rounds of ratiocination. Eminent hispanists have identified the intertextual links of Melibea's speech with various specific sources.³ The main connection, however, between the gist of Melibea's argument and the various *exempla* she mentions or hints at remains, at best, tenuous. Take, for instance, Melibea's appeal to a veritable catalogue of notorious women, personages from the Bible or from pagan mythology. After acknowledging that these have become familiar to her thanks to her own reading ("[muchas] hallo en los antiguos libros que leý" [548]), Melibea leaves no doubt as to her intention: she endeavors to draw a sharp distinction between these figures and herself. She vows that she will never allow herself to be in a situation in any way resembling that of each of the women in question, whom, for a start, she accuses, en masse, of "las maritales pisadas de ageno hombre repisar" (548). Is she referring to adultery? The special importance Melibea accords to the exemplarity she wishes to establish warrants the quotation of the passage in full:

Las quales algunas eran de la gentilidad tenidas por diosas, assí como Venus madre de Eneas y de Cupido, el dios de amor, que siendo casada corrompió la prometida fe marital. Y aun otras, de mayores fuegos encendidas, cometieron nefarios y incestuosos yerros, como Mira con su padre, Semíramis con su hijo, Cánasce con su hermano, y aun aquella forçada Thamar, hija del rey David. Otras aun más cruelmente traspasaron las leyes de natura, como Pasiphe, muger del rey Minos, con el toro. (548-9)

One may well call into question the appropriateness of at least some of the examples proffered by Melibea. The list of aberrations, including incest and other loathsome acts, goes beyond the adulterous relationship Melibea purports to illustrate. The maiden surely realizes that the examples she adduces would be pointless if they were meant simply to enumerate vile practices she would not engage in anyway, abominable as they are to her, especially in view of the profound love she professes for Calisto. Besides, the list of infamous women does not shed any light on the reason or reasons why it does not even occur to Melibea that her plight would be over if she opted for marrying Calisto in the first

³ See Russell's notes in his edition of *La Celestina*, pp. 543-51.

place. If she were Calisto's wife, how could she be in any danger of ever walking down the path of marriage together with a strange man ("las maritales pisadas de ageno hombre repisar")?

Judging from the way Melibea presents her case, it is only fair to conclude that she is not really interested in providing justification for her "no quiero." Her primary if not exclusive goal is to establish beyond any doubt that she is different from those infamous women of antiquity. For a full appreciation of her being different she would have us focus on her uniqueness. And the awareness of being unique leads her to assert herself as the embodiment of triumphant individualism. After all, she knows herself! Having been put through the school of hard knocks by none other than Celestina —"aquexada por tan astuta maestra como Celestina, servida de muy peligrosas visitaciones" (505)— she has learned the hard way how to get the better of circumstances and, above all, how to dispose of her own life the way she sees fit. No need to come up with reasons or justification for her behavior. Melibea is, at long last, a full-fledged Melibea that has come onto her own: she has become a law unto herself. Thus, Melibea carries legitimate concerns for love, independence, freedom to the level of non-reason. She exhibits the unmistakable symptoms of that essential aspect of the tragic condition that Aristotle identifies with the label of "hubris." It is at the level of hubris that Melibea most effectively projects herself as a tragic persona. As such —she would remind us— she cannot, will not be mistaken for any of the characters that populate the "antiguos libros." And we would readily agree: in the scale of tragedy she ranks as high as any of them, the likes of Medea, Electra, Antigone, Phaedra, and a host of others.

Without disparaging the uniqueness of Melibea's case, it is useful to draw attention to another womanly figure of great prominence in the history of Spanish theater. Adela, one of the leading characters, if not the protagonist, in Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, may be regarded in many respects a late incarnation of Melibea. Despite the notable differences to be expected in the circumstances that impinge upon each particular case, Adela and Melibea share, in their respective plight, some crucial aspects of the tragic condition. Not unlike Melibea, Adela privileges love over marriage and champions individual freedom, independence, and the inalienable right to take charge of

her own life. It may be argued —and rightly so— that the conflict faced by Melibea does not appear, at least to the casual observer, half as daunting as the one determined by the tyrannical forces Adela has to contend with. It is quite true that, apropos of Adela's predicament, the forces that work to such dire effect of gloom and doom are painfully laid bare and relatively easy to identify because they are embodied in Adela's abusive mother, whose obtrusive presence struts and frets upon the stage with all the persistence of a nightmare. It is no less true, nevertheless, that those same evil forces, though not so glaringly, blatantly vicious, are at play in all their obnoxious consequences in Melibea's life. Just like Adela, Melibea, we may be sure, feels pushed to the brink of rebellion by an asphyxiating social atmosphere, to which Magdalena, one of Adela's sisters, refers in a haunting lamentation: "Nos pudrimos por el qué dirán" (1371). When drawing a masterful profile of Adela's fifteenth-century predecessor, Lida de Malkiel is keenly aware of this constant living on tender hooks, this morbid fear of a tainted reputation, reflective of adverse public opinion (what other people will ever say or even think). One could compile a veritable collection of catchwords (*ansia, honor, arraigo en la sociedad, parecer colectivo, conciencia individual, fama*, for example) in Lida de Malkiel's incisive comments, such as the following, on feminine psychology:

El ansia de velar sus amores es una faceta del sentimiento del honor, muy vivo en Melibea, a diferencia de Calisto, precisamente como consecuencia de su arraigo en la sociedad; acatando, así, el parecer colectivo y no su conciencia individual, no dará a la alcahueta su justo castigo, por no poner en lenguas la propia fama. (408)

When brought together on a point of hubris Melibea and Adela may be envisaged in a harmonious duo as inseparable, not to say indistinguishable, soul mates. Adela can muster a heady confrontation, impelled by a steely *no quiero* of her own:

No quiero que se me pongan las carnes como a vosotras: no quiero perder mi blancura en estas habitaciones... ¡Yo quiero salir! (1376)

Other likely remarks by Adela would make up a long, impractical list. It is hard to leave unnoticed such exclamations as: "Yo hago con mi cuerpo lo que me parece" (1389)! "Mi cuerpo será de quien yo quiera" (1389). The same may be said of Adela's numerous expressions that could be adduced to match Melibea's "gran rifiuto". Suffice it to say that Adela shows her mettle to be no different than Melibea's in balking at reason and common

sense. A good example would be Adela's outright rebuff, enunciated in no uncertain terms the moment at which La Poncia, the old maid, in a note of cynicism that does Celestina one better, advises the young woman to wait and see: Adela should let her beloved Pepe marry Angustias, her step sister, and wait for the latter's early death, prompted by fragile constitution, bound to collapse under the burden of child bearing, let alone the needs and demands of a lusty husband.⁴

Needless to say, what underscores the radical affinity between Melibea and Adela is the irrevocable outcome of their hubris: their awesome act of suicide. An analysis of that act would lead, doubtless, to some fresh insights into the tragic sense of life.

Conclusion

The *prima facie* evidence we have just reviewed is of itself not sufficient to resolve the dilemma regarding the genre of the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. In other words, it does not settle the controversy, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, as to whether the *Tragicomedia* is a narrative or a literary piece intended for some kind of dramatic performance. It is fair to say, nevertheless, that such evidence tends to reinforce the latter position, which in recent times has found one of its most staunch champions in Emilio de Miguel Martínez (*La Celestina de Fernando de Rojas*). Aside from the various topics, often strenuously debated, one would hardly deny that the presence of Aristotelian constituents adds to the already mounting documentation concerning the multifaceted textuality of *Celestina* —a textuality which, as Ciriaco Morón Arroyo astutely observes, "reflects the complexity and ambiguities of intellectual life in the learned circles of Castile around 1500" (16).

⁴ La Poncia's advice comes toward the middle of Act 2. The original text, nothing short of astonishing, is worth reading and rereading:

No seas como los niños chicos. ¡Deja en paz a tu hermana, y si Pepe el Romano te gusta, te aguantas! Además, ¿quién dice que no te puedas casar con él? Tu hermana Angustias es una enferma. Esa no resiste el primer parto. Es estrecha de cintura, vieja, y con mi conocimiento te digo que se morirá. Entonces Pepe hará lo que hacen todos los viudos de esta tierra: se casará con la más joven, la más hermosa, y ésa eres tú. Alimenta esa esperanza, olvídalo, lo que quieras, pero no vayas contra la ley de Dios. (1391)

Adela's mind set is aptly summarized in her reply: "Es inútil tu consejo" (1392).

The numerous momentous issues raised by Morón Arroyo in the stimulating essay from which the foregoing words are quoted, prepare us for a careful meditation even as that scholar's trailblazing analysis invites a thoughtful response through further research. Even though Morón Arroyo does not deal directly with the all-important subject of dramatics or theatricality, he does adumbrate, all the same, the characterization of an imposing Calisto as a superhuman figure: "the lover becomes, like a Titan fighting God, a cosmic force destined for destruction" (27). From the perspective of one who concentrates on the stage presence of another imposing figure—that of Calisto's ladylove—"[t]his titanic greatness," which Morón Arroyo ascribes to Calisto, qualifying it as "gothic grotesque, not a romantic defiance of God" (28), provides a fit complement and contrast for a Melibea of full-fledged tragic stature. The point to be made is that the very dynamics of this interplay of complementation and contrast prompts some weighty questions that beg for attention. Is that "gothic grotesque" identified by Morón Arroyo really an index of the tragic mode or must it be taken, rather, as a comic feature in line with the interpretation of a ridiculous or parodic Calisto, proffered by such noted students of *Celestina* as Marcel Bataillon (108-34) and Dorothy S. Severin (25-32)? In much the same inquisitive vein we may wonder, also, whether the "transformations in Aristotle's sense of the term" (27), which Morón Arroyo recognizes in the larger-than-life Calisto, could not be applied, perhaps more appropriately, to the salient stages in Melibea's evolution from a naive, vulnerable maiden to a self-conscious fully empowered, self-governed woman.

These and other kindred inquiries relative to the field of dramatics explored by the author or authors of *Celestina* bring us to the realization that any satisfactory answer—not easy to come by—must take into account, on the one hand, the strains of the autochthonous literary tradition—the strains, say, of solitude (the *infierno de los enamorados*) and of subjectivity (the *novela sentimental*), to name two prominent examples—and, on the other hand, the innovative intertext engendered by the sea change of the Renaissance. This is to say that a study of *Celestina*'s textuality in general and theatricality in particular makes for an arduous undertaking, indeed. In view of the timeliness of this study and the rewarding insights it holds in store, we cannot but conclude that it is well worth the arduous undertaking and long-term commitment it commands.

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