

THE 'ARGUMENTO' OF 'CELESTINA'

KEITH WHINNOM

(edited by Alan Deyermond
Queen Mary and Westfield College, London)

[As I explained in *Celestinesca* 13, ii (Nov. 1989), 45n, I am—as Keith Whinnom's literary executor—preparing for publication various unfinished projects. The present article, unlike that printed here two years ago, is complete. I found in a file a carbon copy, together with some correspondence on *Celestina* textual problems (none of which seemed to refer to this article). Internal evidence showed that it was written in 1966: F. J. Norton's *Printing in Spain* was in proof when Keith was working on the article, but published by the time the article was typed; Keith's review-article on J. Homer Herriott's book (see note 2, below) was still in press. It was also clear, from the typographical conventions observed, that the article was intended for an American journal or collective volume, but there was no indication of its fate after it was sent off (the fact that only a carbon copy was in the file was, of course, strong evidence that it had indeed been sent). Only at a much later stage, when I was part-way through the editing process, did I come across, in a file of Keith's letters to me, one written from the University of the West Indies on August 9, 1966, that refers briefly—so briefly that I had forgotten the reference—to "an article on the *argumento* which I have sent to HR." And that is all: the article is mentioned merely as an interruption to Keith's main research commitment of that period, the writing of a book on *Celestina* problems. This must, I think, be the article to which Professor Emma Scoles refers in a letter to Keith on August 9, 1966: "Le devuelvo su artículo del que he sacado fotocopias y que leeré con muchísimo interés. Le agradezco muchísimo habérmelo enviado. Comuníqueme, por favor también, en cuanto pueda, adonde va a salir [...] porque puede que escriba yo también algo sobre el asunto." As far as I can recall, Keith never referred to the article's non-appearance in any of our conversations, and Professor Dorothy Severin tells me that she cannot remember any reference to it. This is strange: Keith, as all his friends knew, was beset by mishaps, and he quite often mentioned publishers who had mislaid typescripts, ignored his proof-corrections, or offended in some other way.

Professor Russell P. Sebold, General Editor of the *Hispanic Review*, has very

kindly discussed the problem with me. He was not then at the University of Pennsylvania, but he knows that at that period it was still *HR* practice to send a detailed letter of explanation to anyone whose article was rejected (the large number of articles submitted has now forced the journal to abandon that practice). If, therefore, Keith's article had been rejected, one would have expected to find such a letter, and probably the top copy of the article, in the file. Professor Sebold thinks it unlikely that it would have been rejected: "I know that Keith was highly regarded here." Unfortunately, *HR* now maintains files for only the past five years, because storage has become an insuperable problem. Unless new evidence turns up, one can only guess. My guess, with which Professor Sebold concurs, is that either the article never reached *HR* (the vagaries of the postal service to and from the University of the West Indies caused Keith, who hated muddle and uncertainty, much worry and considerable irritation), or that it arrived but that Keith asked *HR* to hold it pending modification. In either case, Keith's return to England (he was interviewed for the Chair of Spanish at Exeter six weeks after his mention of the article, and by January of 1967 he was already packing his books and papers for dispatch to England) could well have delayed action on the article to a point where he felt that it was no longer worth pursuing.

Apart from the normal copy-editing, and the provision of [bracketed] bibliographical addenda in the notes, I have made only one change in Keith's article: the replacement of "*La Celestina*" by *Celestina* in the title and a few times in the text. Keith's realization that *La Celestina* is a XIXc invention, and that the early printers knew the work as *Celestina*, was, when he wrote this article, still more than a decade in the future (see *Celestinesca* 4, ii [Nov. 1980]: 19-21). The change in usage is therefore anachronistic, but to publish his article now with a title to which he would have objected seems to me unacceptable. With that single exception, the article as printed is what Keith wrote in 1966. Were he writing on the subject today, he would of course take into account Miguel Marciales' comments on the *argumentos* in vol. I of his edition (1985), pp. 44-49, 176-80, and 202-04; and Jerry Rank's "The 'Argumentos' of the Early Editions of the *Celestina*," in *Philologica hispaniensa in honorem Manuel Alvar*, III (Madrid: Gredos, 1986): 387-95. He would also, especially, comment on the implications of Charles B. Faulhaber's discovery of a manuscript of part of Act 1 in Biblioteca de Palacio MS 1520 (*Celestinesca* 14, ii [Nov. 1990]: 3-39; 15, i [May 1991]: 3-52). When Dorothy Severin and I discussed Faulhaber's first article, we concluded that the manuscript was in all probability part of Rojas' draft revision of the anonymous author's Act 1, and therefore represented a half-way stage between the "papeles" found by Rojas and the text of Act 1 printed in the 1499 *Comedia*. Our conclusion is endorsed by Faulhaber, on the basis of a detailed analysis (pp. 3-5 of his second article). It is not the view of all scholars: at the IV Congress of the Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval (Lisbon, October 1-5, 1991), when

Faulhaber gave a paper on his discovery, Ian Michael and Francisco Rico dissented vigorously. Nonetheless, I still believe it to be the most economical and convincing hypothesis. And if it is correct—if Palacio 1520 does indeed represent Rojas' draft revision—then, since the MS includes the general *argumento* but not that to Act 1, it triumphantly vindicates Keith's conclusion that the authorship and textual history of the *argumento* [*de toda la obra*] are distinct from those of the *argumentos* to Acts 1-16 of the *Comedia*. Faulhaber's discovery does not enable us to decide between Keith's view that the *argumento* is Rojas' work, and Ramón Menéndez Pidal's opinion that it was written by the anonymous first author (see note 12, below), but it does demonstrate—in a way that reminds us of María Rosa Lida de Malkiel's daring hypothesis on the nature of the primitive *Amadís de Gaula* and its vindication by Antonio Rodríguez-Moñino's discovery of a manuscript fragment—that a scholar possessed of great learning and powerful intellect may, by re-examining the available evidence, reach a conclusion that is not widely accepted at the time but that is experimentally verified by the later discovery of manuscript evidence.]

THE PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT PAPER is to explore just one of the logical consequences of the new and far-reaching discoveries in *Celestina* studies: of Norton's accurate dating and placing of the "1502" editions of the *Tragicomedia*,¹ of the arsenal of material provided by Herriott's thorough-going graphing of the variant readings,² and of the recovery of the lost edition of Saragossa 1507.³ I have set out

¹ F. J. Norton, *Printing in Spain 1501-1520* (Cambridge: University Press, 1966), especially Appendix B, "The Early Editions of the *Celestina*," pp. 141-56. I am indebted to Mr. Norton for allowing me to read this work in proof several months before its publication. [This article was, of course, written before the publication of Norton's masterpiece, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Printing in Spain and Portugal 1501-1520* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978), which Keith Whinnom reviewed in the *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 56 (1979): 246-47, but Norton's conclusions about *Celestina* are already given in the 1966 book.]

² J. Homer Herriott, *Towards a Critical Edition of the 'Celestina': A Filiation of Early Editions* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964).

³ Although I had the pleasure of being the first to examine closely and to describe this interesting text, it seems that José Simón Díaz, *Bibliografía de la literatura hispánica*, 2nd ed., 3:2 (Madrid: CSIC, 1965), p. 267, no. 4794, must be conceded to have discovered it earlier, although he records its existence in the Library of the Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, without any mention of its ever having been lost, and misprints the catalogue number, which is in fact 3-7-2/3566. Note that earlier critics who have spoken of "Saragossa 1507" have been relying on the supposed reproduction of it by Tomás Gorchs, *La Celestina* (Barcelona, 1841), which actually, as Herriott suspected, leans heavily on the edition of León Amarita (Madrid,

elsewhere what appear to be the ineluctable conclusions to be derived from this combined evidence and I do not propose to reargue the case here; but I must summarily restate what we now know about the affiliation of the early editions of the *Tragicomedia*.⁴

The earliest surviving version of *Celestina* in any language is the Italian translation by Alfonso Ordóñez printed in Rome in 1506.⁵ The earliest surviving Spanish version is that of Saragossa 1507. Following, in chronological order of the editions from which they derive, are: Valencia 1514, "corrected," but except for his own verses very cursorily indeed, by Alfonso de Proaza, and based on an edition later than that from which Saragossa 1507 derives; deriving from the same lost Seville (?) edition, and therefore of equal authority, the edition of Toledo c.1510-c.1514 (Toledo "1502," British Library C.20.b.9) and Seville c.1511 ("Seville, 1502," BL C.20.c.17); deriving from the Seville c.1511 edition, the Rome c.1516 edition (Seville, "1502," BL C.20.b.15 with a fudged last leaf, Boston Public Library, etc.); and, finally, and scarcely now of any consequence, the Rome c.1520 edition ("Salamanca 1502," BL G.10224 and the Hispanic Society) and the Trotter-Criado de Val "puta vieja" text of Seville c.1518-1520 (Seville, "1502," Biblioteca Nacional R.26575), which derive from a lost Seville (?) edition based on the edition represented by the Michigan text.

The title of the Italian translation runs as follows:

Tragicocomedia de Calisto & Melibea nouamente agiontoui quello
che fin a qui manchaua nel processo de loro innamoramento nel
quale se conthiene ultra il suo gratioso & dolce stilo assai
philosophiche sententie & aduisi necessarii per gioueni monstrando
loro linganni che son renchiusi ne falsi seruitori e rrofiane per

1822, repr. 1835). [The 1507 text is the basis of the edition by Dorothy S. Severin with Maite Cabello, *Letras Hispánicas*, 4 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1987).]

⁴ See my "The Relationship of the Early Editions of the *Celestina*," *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 82 (1966): 22-40, in which I have shown that Herriott's scheme of affiliation must be rejected, in part on account of the evidence of Norton and Saragossa 1507. To reassure the reader that my conclusions are not peculiar or eccentric, I should perhaps say that Mr. F. J. Norton, Prof. P. E. Russell, Prof. D. W. McPheeters, and Mr. A. D. Deyermund, who read the article in typescript or proof, have, except for minor details which are not important here, accepted my findings.

⁵ [Now edited: Kathleen V. Kish, *An Edition of the First Italian Translation of the 'Celestina'*, UNCSRL, 128 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1973).]

Alphonso Hordognez [...] ⁶

Emma Scoles (1961, p. 177) has speculated on whether, in view of the translator's fidelity to the Spanish text elsewhere, this might not indicate that the title of the Spanish edition on which the translation is based was:

Tragicomedia [or Tragicocomedia] de Calisto y Melibea, nuevamente añadido lo que hasta aquí faltaba en el proceso de su deleite [...]

borrowing the latter phrase, and so substituting "deleite" for "enamoramiento," from the Prologue.

Saragossa 1507 lacks its title-page, although the bibliographers, copying Salvá, list it almost without exception as *Comedia o tragicomedia*.⁷ (I was myself hypnotized by this tradition in my description of this text, "Relationship," p. 31.) In fact this supposed title derives from the *incipit*, "Siguiese la comedia o tragicomedia [...]," which persists through all the early editions of the *Tragicomedia*. More important is the fact that Saragossa 1507, while preserving the *argumento* of the whole work, suppresses the *argumentos* which precede each act.⁸

Valencia 1514 has the title (which Cejador's edition does not reproduce):

Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea nueuamente reuista y emendada con adicion de los argumentos de cada un auto en principio. La

⁶ See Emma Scoles, "Note sulla prima traduzione italiana della *Celestina*," *Studi Romanzi* 33 (1961): 155-217, especially p. 176, and "La prima traduzione italiana della *Celestina*: repertorio bibliografico," in *Studi di letteratura spagnola*, ed. Carmelo Samonà (Rome: Univ. Società Filologica Romana, 1964): 209-30, especially 213-14; [Kish 1973, p. 31]. I have made no attempt to reproduce the titles of these editions with full bibliographical detail.

⁷ [Pedro Salvá y Mallén, *Catálogo de la biblioteca de Salvá* (Valencia: the author, 1872).]

⁸ [Cf. "Saragossa 1507 [...] is [...] unique among all early editions of the *Celestina* [...] in suppressing all *argumentos* except the *argumento general*" ("Relationship," p. 31). Reasons for believing that this edition derives from *Seville 1504 are given on p. 32. There is no mention of a *Seville 1504 edition or of Jacob Cromberger's possible responsibility for suppression of the *argumentos* to individual acts in Clive Griffin's excellent study of the Crombergers: *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Printing and Merchant Dynasty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), in which a chapter (pp. 20-70) is devoted to Jacob. Griffin was, of course, unaware of the existence of the present article when he wrote his book.]

qual contiene de mas de su agradable estilo [...] alcahuetas.

The latter part of this title is familiar to us from the *Comedia* of Toledo 1500 and Seville 1501.

Thereafter, beginning with Seville c.1511, we find in all the "1502" editions, except that of Seville c.1518-20, the title with which we are most familiar:

Tragicomedia [...] Melibea. En la qual se contiene [...] alcahuetas y nueuamente añadido el tractado de Centurio.

Valencia 1518 copies the title of Valencia 1514.

Now, it is well known that Fernando de Rojas, in the Prologue to the *Tragicomedia*, complains of the intervention of the printers in inserting the *argumentos*: "Que avn los impressores han dado sus punturas [Trotter-Criado "pinturas"] poniendo rúbricas o sumarios al principio de cada aucto narrando en breue lo que dentro contenía; vna cosa bien escusada según lo que los antiguos scriptores vsaron" (Cejador I:25). What, then, appears to have happened is this:

a) The *princeps* of the *Tragicomedia* appeared, despite Rojas' protests in the Prologue, with the same inadequate summaries of the acts which had been printed in the editions of Burgos 1499, Toledo 1500, and Seville 1501, and with some very much better-written summaries for the additional acts, and a rewritten summary of Act 14. This *princeps* was in all probability printed by Stanislaus the Pole in Seville in 1502, and is, of course, now lost. The Italian translation may be based on this edition, or, as Emma Scoles would prefer to postulate (though it is not strictly necessary), on a second edition. It appears extremely likely that the title of the first expanded edition did in fact mention, immediately after "Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea," the extending of the love-affair, in a phrase very similar to that reconstructed by Scoles, whether using the term "deleite" or "enamoramiento" it may be forever impossible to determine. I do not propose to discuss here whether the first word of the title was "Tragicomedia" or "Tragicocomedia."

b) Since the Saragossa 1507 *Celestina* is the cheapest, most hastily produced, and most badly misprinted of all the pre-1520 Spanish *Tragicomedias* (Rome c.1516 takes the booby-prize for misprints if one includes Spanish texts printed outside Spain), it is *a priori* unlikely that George Coci cared enough to attempt to adjust his version to the author's complaint and to take the initiative in suppressing the summaries of each act, and since we have other evidence that at least one Seville edition suppressed them, we should conclude that it was Jacob Cromberger who, in

a lost edition of c.1504?, took Rojas' remarks to heart and omitted the summaries of each act.

c) It is clearly impossible that it was Juan Joffre or Alonso de Proaza who took the initiative in restoring them, for they are already restored in Seville c.1511, without any reference to their ever having been suppressed. It seems almost certain, therefore, that in the title of Valencia 1514 the phrase "con addicion de los argumentos de cada un auto en principio" is copied from the title of a lost Seville edition (say 1506?), from which the text itself certainly derives. (The notion that Valencia 1514 reflects the text of the *princeps* of the *Tragicomedia* is now untenable.) We know that it was always very difficult for the early printers to jettison even spurious added material once a tradition of printing it had begun, and the summaries of the acts were almost certainly put back by Cromberger after possibly only one attempt at leaving them out.

d) The title was changed again in one of the main-stream Seville editions now lost (say 1508?). The reference to the restoration of the *argumentos* was omitted, and the additional material was described as the "tractado de Centurio." This is the well-known title of all but one of the "1502" editions.

e) In 1518-20, Cromberger took the extraordinary and not-to-be-repeated step of completely changing the title to *Libro de Calixto y Melibea y de la puta vieja Celestina*. Although Trotter and Criado de Val do not mention it, perhaps one of the factors which weighed with them in selecting BN R. 26575 as their base text was that the inventory of Rojas' library lists only one *Celestina* under the rubric "Libro de Calisto."⁹ It may be thought a little odd that Rojas did not possess more copies of his own work and that the one he did own was not the first edition. It might then be argued that the title of the *princeps* of the *Tragicomedia* was indeed "Libro de Calixto y Melibea," in which case one would have to suppose that the Italian translation was based on a second edition, with the title which I have postulated above for the *princeps*, or, alternatively, that "Libro de Calisto [...]" may have been the title of an early *Comedia*, possibly the lost Salamanca 1500. But I do not believe myself that the inventory need commit us to any such hypotheses.

⁹ See Fernando del Valle Lersundi, "Testamento de Fernando de Rojas, autor de *La Celestina*, otorgado en la villa de Talavera, el 3 de abril de 1541," *Revista de Filología Española* 16 (1929): 366-88, p. 382: "Yten el libro de Calisto."

The summary of the whole work appears first, of course, with the *Comedia*.¹⁰ It is extant in the editions of Toledo 1500 and Seville 1501, and there would have been more room for it on the verso of the lost folio A1 of Burgos 1499, though there is no way of proving that it was printed in that edition, and still less that it was printed in an earlier edition (say Salamanca 1498/1499?) which did not contain the summaries of the acts. But there does exist the distinct possibility that this summary is Rojas' first statement of his conception of the *Comedia* (written earlier, that is, than the epistle-preface and the acrostic verses), and it would seem, since not a word is changed for the expanded *Tragicomedia*, that he regarded it as still valid for the 21-act version, which many critics have thought lacked the moral impact of the *Comedia*. That the *argumento* was written by Rojas I have, of course, still to show.

When Cromberger, doubtless influenced by Rojas' complaint, suppressed the summaries of each act, he allowed the *argumento* of the whole work to stand. The references are in fact unequivocal: Rojas complains only of the "rúbricas o sumarios al principio de cada aucto;" Valencia 1514 announces the restoration of the "argumentos de cada un auto en principio." But all the earlier critics, except Menéndez Pidal, lumped all the *argumentos* together, and concluded, like Gilman, that "there is no reason to doubt that the 'argumento de toda la obra' and the *argumentos* to the individual acts were written by another hand."¹¹ Menéndez Pidal, accepting the view of the unity of artistic conception between Act I and Rojas' continuation, suggested in explanation that not only did Act I contain the germ of the whole work, but it was also probably accompanied by the *argumento* of the whole work.¹² Bataillon appears to accept Menéndez Pidal's suggestion, although he makes the point negatively: there is nothing to suggest that Rojas had any more detailed outline of what the first author intended.¹³

It does not seem likely that the *argumento* of the whole work is by the author of Act I. In the first place, the artistic unity of Act I with the rest has been consistently exaggerated, so that the hypothesis of the *argumento*'s earlier existence

¹⁰ [See the introductory note, above.]

¹¹ Stephen Gilman, *The Art of 'La Celestina'* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1956), Appendix B, "The *Argumentos*," 212-16, p. 212. [Gilman's hypothesis was first set out, in a different form, in his "The *Argumentos* to *La Celestina*," *Romance Philology* 8 (1954-55): 71-78.]

¹² R. Menéndez Pidal, "La lengua en tiempo de los Reyes Católicos," *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, no. 13 (Jan-Feb 1950): 9-24, p. 14.

¹³ Marcel Bataillon, *'La Célestine' selon Fernando de Rojas* (Paris: Didier, 1961), p. 64.

is not needed as an explanation of this "unity of conception." My own view coincides with that of Deyermond, who wrote in 1961: "there is nothing [in Act I] to show that the author [...] intended the work to develop in the direction it eventually took. Act I is consistent with what follows, but it would also be consistent with a light cynical ending of the type found in humanistic comedy. [...] It has none of that unambiguous pessimism which marks the main part of the work."¹⁴ Further, one may object that it is improbable that an unfinished fragment of a drama would have had a summary of its plot attached, and that, if it had, Rojas might have been expected to make some reference to the outline which his esteemed predecessor had left him. There are other arguments against its attribution to the author of Act I which will emerge in a moment.

Gilman is the only critic who has subjected the *argumentos* to close reading. He has shown, fairly convincingly, that there are marked differences of approach to the summarizing of the plot, first between the *argumento* of the whole work and the act-summaries, and secondly between the summaries of Acts 1 to 16 of the *Comedia* and those of the additional acts. He concludes in the first case, as I have noted, that there is no reason to doubt that all the *argumentos* of the *Comedia* editions are by a hand other than Rojas', and in the second case that the summaries of the additional acts are the work of Rojas. In fact, there is rather more evidence to show that Rojas is the author of the *argumento* of the whole work than to support the idea that he is the author of the additional summaries, although this latter hypothesis of Gilman's is very attractive, and one I am inclined to accept. The arguments may be set out as follows:

a) In the Prologue to the *Tragicomedia* Rojas complains very specifically only of the summaries preceding each act. In negative support, there is no reason to suppose that the phrase "con los argumentos nueuamente añadidos" of the Seville 1501 *Comedia* must be taken to refer to more than the act-summaries.

b) On the evidence of Saragossa 1507, Cromberger at least appears to have been in no doubt that what Rojas was complaining of did not include the *argumento* of the whole work.

c) Rojas tells us that the summarizing of the plot of each act was

¹⁴ A. D. Deyermond, *The Petrarchan Sources of 'La Celestina'* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 115, note 2. Martín de Riquer, "Fernando de Rojas y el primer acto de *La Celestina*," *Revista de filología española* 41 (1957 [1958]): 373-95, p. 394, and Manuel Criado de Val, *Índice verbal de "La Celestina"* (Madrid: CSIC, 1955), p. 214, earlier expressed similar but less explicit views. Criado notes that Act I lacks any "vuelo trágico."

superfluous and unnecessary in the light of the practice of the ancients: "una cosa bien escusada según lo que los antiguos scriptores usaron." But this is true only if he is referring to the act-summaries. It may be argued that Rojas did not know Plautus, but the anonymous *Querolus* (which has a prologue summarizing the entire plot) was well known in the Middle Ages, and Terence's plays were equipped with *argumenta* in classical times. As María Rosa Lida de Malkiel pointed out to Gilman (Gilman, p. 212), the fifteenth-century editions of Terence are all equipped with *argumenta*, but not, of course, with summaries of the individual acts. Once more it must be concluded that Rojas is not complaining of the *argumento* of the whole work.

d) Further negative evidence that the summary of the whole is not the work of the first author is Rojas' silence on the point, and evidence that it is not the work of the printer who produced the act-summaries for the *Comedia* is to be found in the acrostic verses, where Rojas cites the *argumento* as evidence of his "limpio motivo" (Cejador, I:10, and it is identical in Toledo 1500 and Seville 1501): "buscad bien el fin de aquesto que escriuio / o del principio leed su argumento."

e) If it is to be assumed that it was the printer who produced the summaries of Acts 1 to 16, Gilman has shown that the printer has quite a different plot-summarizing approach from the author of the *argumento* of the whole work. The printer stresses, indeed overstresses, the largely irrelevant external action, whereas the *argumento* of the whole work summarizes the plot itself in drastically simplified fashion, and, as Gilman says, "the most important words are adjectives of moral evaluation, 'malo,' 'casto,' 'amargo,' etc."

f) Finally, it may be noted that the heavy moral emphasis of the summary of the whole agrees well with the repeated statements of moral intention contained in the epistle-preface, the acrostic verses, the additional *Tragicomedia* preliminaries (including the substitute final stanza of the acrostics), and the author's conclusion.

Against all this, the only argument is Gilman's: "he [Rojas] can hardly be thought responsible for the oversimplification and general inanity of this summary" (p. 213). Gilman avers that Melibea did not begin with a "casto propósito," that Sempronio and Pármeneo were not "engañados," and that Rojas "must have laughed out loud when he read it." It is surely not wholly absurd to say that the servants are "engañados y por ésta [Celestina] tornados desleales [...] con anzuelo de codicia y de deleyte," nor that Melibea's "propósito" is "vencido." Where one is struck by the oversimplification, if not "inanity," of this summary is in the words omitted above: "presa su fidelidad" with reference to the servants, "el casto propósito" with reference to Melibea. The summary speaks of faithful servants suborned by greed and lust, but the play opens with at least one servant ripe for corruption, and shows us the

other's loyalty undermined in large part by his master's behavior. The summary speaks of Melibea's chaste resolution, but, even allowing for her bewitchment, the play shows us a Melibea not wholly unwilling to play the game of love, and whose ambivalent curiosity (as Lope pointed out long ago) is the starting-point of the entire action. The summary speaks of a wicked and astute Celestina, "mala y astuta muger," where the play shows us an old woman not entirely a monster of vice incarnate (at least to the modern reader, and, apparently, Juan de Valdés), and, though astute, led to destruction by a failure to perceive the bankruptcy of her routine. That the summary also throws in the notion of Fortune, placing the blame for the disastrous end of the five main characters on "el aduersa fortuna" which brought Calisto and Melibea together, confuses, as P. E. Russell has pointed out with reference to the play itself, the straightforward morality implied in the earlier part of the summary.¹⁵

But in all this the *argumento* is in no worse case than the rest of the preliminary matter; these contrasts are no greater than those between other statements by Rojas and what actually happens in the play itself. The fact is that if one reads carefully the preliminary matter, ignoring completely the text of the work, one finds no hint of moral ambiguity, of irony, of cynicism, of any shading of attitude—no hint, in fact, that the work which is to follow (despite the fulsome praise of the first author, that "great philosopher") is to be more than a tedious morality. "Selon Fernando de Rojas," *Celestina* is a moral comedy, a warning to young men (title, preface, acrostics, incipit) of the perils of passion and the dangers of flattering servants and bawds. Bataillon made the brave and thoroughly worthwhile attempt to show that the text of *Celestina* (except the ending, which he explains as a failure) supported its author's assertions, but none of his reviewers seems to have felt that he proved his case. But if Bataillon's thesis, which is that there is substantially no discrepancy between the preliminary statements and the text itself, fails to convince, we need some other explanation of these discrepant facts.

The critics who have perceived a difficulty have so far resolved it either by finding a different author for the preliminary matter or by alleging, and usually excusing and explaining, insincerity on Rojas' part. It is true that sundry more or less plausible explanations can be found for the latter, in medieval literary theory and tradition, in Rojas' insecure status as a *converso*, as a law-student, and so on. That someone other than Rojas wrote the preliminary matter is a discarded

¹⁵ P. E. Russell, "Ambiguity in *La Celestina*," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 40 (1963): 35-40, p. 37: "the role of hostile fortune [...] is rather difficult to reconcile with the overt didactic intentions of Rojas."

hypothesis which is no longer a live issue. But it is interesting that critics uninhibited by belief in Rojas' authorship of this material should have felt free to use extremely despective language about it (for instance, Cejador's notes, *passim*, and Gilman's "inanity" with reference to the *argumento* of the whole work). I do not propose to attempt to solve here this paradox of the "inanity" of the preliminary matter and the shaded subtlety of the dialogue.¹⁶

All I have tried to show is that in any such attempt, the *argumento* of the whole work must also be taken into account.

Siguiese la Comedia o Tragicomedia
de Calisto y Abelbea: compuesta en reprehension de los locos ena-
morados: que vencidos en su desordenado apetito a sus amigas lla-
man y dicen ser su dios. Así mismo hecho en aviso de los engaños de
las alcabuetas y malos y lisonjeros sirvientes.

Argumento.

Calisto fue de noble linaje: de claro ingenio: de gētil disposiciō:
de linda criança: dotado de muchas gracias: de estado media-
no: fue preso en el amor de Abelbea: muger moça: muy generosa: de
alta y serenissima sangre: sublumada en prospero estado: vna sola he-
redera a su padre Pleberio: y de su madre Alisa muy amada: por so-
licitud del pungido Calisto vencido el casto proposito della: entreue-
niendo Celestina mala y astuta muger con dos servientes del vécido
Calisto engañados: y por esta toznados de leales: presa su fidelidad
con ansuelo de codicia y de deleyte: vinierō los amantes y los q̄ les
ministraron en amargo y desastrado fin. Para comieço de lo qual dis-
puso el aduerfa fortuna lugar oportuno donde ala presencia de Ca-
listo se presento la deseada Abelbea.

¹⁶ [Keith took up this and related problems in a much later article, "Interpreting *La Celestina*: The Motives and the Personality of Fernando de Rojas," in *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies on Spain and Portugal in Honour of P. E. Russell* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1981): 53-68.]