



CALISTO AND MELEBEA (ca. 1530)

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Subtitled "A new comodye in englysh in manner of an enterlude," *Calisto and Melebea*¹ mainly translates the first part of Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina (LC)*,² a Spanish dramatic novel in twenty-one acts about the consequences of passionate love. *LC* tells how Calisto, failing to win Melibea's affection, enlists Sempronio, his servant, to secure the services of Celestina, an old bawd. Celestina persuades Melibea to submit to her true feelings and brings about the initial seduction. The lovers continue their blissful meetings awhile, but the story concludes with the deaths of all the principals. Calisto, hurrying from Melibea's garden, falls to his death down a ladder; Melibea, brokenhearted, commits suicide by jumping from a tower. Meanwhile, Sempronio and Parmeno murder Celestina for failing to divide the profits with them, and they, lying mortally wounded in the square after leaping from Celestina's window, are summarily beheaded.

The English interlude introduces the source's chief characters, sketches their personalities, and traces the action through the first conflict, Celestina's proposal that Melebea give herself to Calisto. At this point, however, 920 lines into the 1088-line play, the imitation ends. Melebea's father, Danio (Pleberio in *LC*), enters, relates a dream he has just had, and interprets it saying Calisto's desires are sinful and Melebea will be damned forever if she yields. Grateful for the warning, Melebea vows to retain her maiden chastity, repenting that she was swayed even partially by Celestina's trickery and Calisto's laments. In the final fifty-six lines, Danio urges "ye vyrgyns and fayre maydens all" to pray diligently "to withstand all euyl temptacions" (1051, 1056) and advises mothers, fathers, and teachers in the audience.

that they circumspectly
May rule theyr inferiours by such prudence,
To bryng them to vertew and dew obeydyens. (1095-97)

Danio's dream and Melebea's repentance are not in *LC*. That work, however, presents both parents of Melibea as virtuous and devoted to their daughter, and it professes to be a moral work,

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composed as a reprimand to wild lovers,
who, overcome by their excessive appetite,
call their ladies God. The play will also
serve as warning against the wiles of go-
betweens and bad and flattering servants.³

The violent ends of the lovers, the bawd, and the servants make moral points; furthermore, *LC*, like *Calisto*, ends with the father preaching a sermon; as Pleberio mourns over Melibea's broken body, he rails against the cruel inconstancy of fortune, the falsity of the world, and the destructiveness of passionate, illicit love.

Calisto and Melibea bears the colophon, "Jōhes rastell me imprimi fecit. Cum privilegio regali," followed by Rastell's printer's device; generally 1526-1530 is accepted as the printing date.⁴ Rastell may have compiled, translated, or written the play; but, though evidence for Rastell's authorship is fairly strong, it is not conclusive.

Since external evidence conclusively placing *Calisto* in Rastell's canon has not surfaced, the authorship problem cannot be resolved, and the critic would be wiser to concern himself with the nature of its mixtures of genres. Is it a translation / synopsis of *LC*, a morality play like Rastell's *The Four Elements*, which has been called a "lecture in verse disguised as a play," or an entertainment or an interlude, as the title-page indicates? *Calisto* is not as clearly a redaction as is Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrez*, in which a sketchy source plot is expanded and its characters given depth and greater reality. But *Calisto*'s author faithfully translates part of its source, and one wonders why the job was not completed.

Calisto cannot be called a true morality, like Medwall's *Nature* or *The Four Elements*, wherein allegorical characters act out a traditional series of interrelationships and conflicts adding up to a thoroughly predictable lesson. Still *Calisto*, much like a morality, emphasizes its moral lesson and employs humor largely for didactic ends. Moralities, like *Nature* and *The Four Elements*, seem to have been banquet entertainments, too; their clownish bawdiness and singing have entertainment values as do, for certain audiences, the learning, speculation, allusion, and debate found in them.

Calisto likewise presents some humor and at least one song; and, if the title-page describing it as an interlude and the informal approach to the audience are reliable indications, the play may have been produced as a banquet entertainment. Many early Tudor plays were composed for such presentation, and *Calisto* seems no exception.⁵ T. W. Craik notes that, in interludes and moralities, an apotheotic entrance, such as *Celestina's*, often indicates a courtly audience:

Now the blessing that our lady gaue her sone,
that same blessing I gyue now to you all!
That I com thus homely, I pray you of pardon:
I am sought and sendfore as a woman vniuersall. (313-16)

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Also suggestive is Calisto's, "Thus fare well, my ladys; for a whyle I wyll go," immediately preceding Celestina's entrance speech. Parmeno, one of Calisto's servants, twice addresses the audience as "my lordis" and "syrs" (469, 618), both times appealing directly to them to understand his position. An honest, virtuous servant until Celestina exercises her influence upon him, Parmeno joins her and Sempronio in advancing Calisto's affair. Thus, Parmeno's direct comment to the audience on the progress of Calisto's mad affair is especially appropriate:

How sey ye, my lordis? se ye not this smoke,
In my maisters eyes that they do cast?
The one hath his chayn, the other his cloke;
And I am sure they wyll have all at last. (469-72)

A further indication of *Calisto's* appeal to a sophisticated public is its learned references to ancient and contemporary literature, traditions, and allusions. *LC* provides its English adapter with theological, philosophical, and literary materials he utilizes fully. Like its source, *Calisto* displays knowledge of classical philosophy, and comments on various heresies and blasphemies, mentions purgatory, courtly love conventions, and debate materials, such as the good and bad properties of women, a perennial favorite, joyful poverty as opposed to greed, and youth versus age. Not exactly like any other early Tudor interlude (although possessing some of their characteristics), *Calisto* reworks these traditional traits in new, unique ways.⁶

Quantitatively, *Calisto* is chiefly a translation. Approximately eight hundred of its 1088 lines are literally translated from *LC*.⁷ The play's first forty-two lines, Melebea's opening discourse on conflict in nature, are based upon, but not translated directly from, the more detailed exposition in *LC's* prologue. Melebea as expositor of the play's intent and her description of foolish lovers as part of nature's grand conflict, however, are original in *Calisto*, as are the concluding 168 lines. This means that, within the translation itself, only seventy-eight lines are original. The English author deals with only a small part of *LC*--act I, part of act II, act III, and a few lines from the opening speech of act V.⁸ It does not come close to being a complete version or even an outline of the original, nor is it a particularly thoughtful improvement on its source. No changes are made in the borrowed action and characterization, faithful in most aspects to the original. What is interesting and valuable in *Calisto* is found in *LC*.

Several minor characters appearing in the first four acts of *LC* are left out of *Calisto*: Elicia, Lucrecia, and Elisa. Omitted are numerous details and conversations which help delineate Celestina; for example, Parmeno's lengthy description of her six trades (act I). Another significant change from *LC* to *Calisto* involves the scene where Sempronio, visiting Elicia at Celestina's house, becomes suspicious of sounds from upstairs; hearing Sempronio's approach, Celestina had hidden a visiting lover of Elicia's there. In *Calisto*, this scene is presented by Celestina in a "lively narrative, which at once impresses upon the audience the subtlety of the wise bawd."⁹

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The question of the translator's intentions, however, still fascinates. Why does he embark on what ostensibly is a translation, stop when only a fraction through it, then add a *deus ex machina* and a moral tag which, dramatically speaking, have little connection with what went before? Surely he cannot have believed he captured the original's essence, nor is it plausible, as H. W. Allen suggested, that "at the end of Celestina's interview with Melebea either the patience of his piety and his powers of translation were exhausted, or he despaired of reducing the piece to the required dimensions."¹⁰

This translation of *LC* is more accurate and frank in capturing the tone of the original's many bawdy passages than is even Mabbe's version of 1631. The author of *Calisto* was not squeamish, nor was his audience. In addition, the translation's language is remarkably accurate in its portrayal of the original's substance and is itself good poetry. The translation shows no apparent diminution of vigor. Similarly without evidence is the judgment that the author discovered he was not going to produce a workable dramatic version of the whole *LC*. Would anyone possessing this translator's obvious literary gifts have been so careless or inept in planning his task?

For several reasons, the moral lesson and the translation from *LC* have an appropriate existence together. *Calisto* can possibly be seen as a synopsis or preview of recent, justifiably popular Spanish literature and thus is properly called, on its title-page, an interlude, offering to its sophisticated audience dramatic, literary, and educative entertainment. Simultaneously, however, *Calisto* has a traditional didactic, moral function and employs the translation and its entertainment values to enhance it. Moral points are advanced about love and sex, prayer, work, and the state's well-being. Luis Vives' presence in England at the probable time of composition may have been a factor. Furthermore, the translator recognizes a responsibility to the language. His translation of a famous foreign literary work, serious and educative in intention, will enrich the English language and the English people, certainly a Rastellian idea as stated in his *The Four Elements* and other works and possibly supporting his claim as author.

The play's incompleteness as a translation may be explained if its author's main purpose is assumed to be the preaching of a dramatic sermon. He lifted just enough characterization and action from the source to enable him to illustrate the moral and to dramatize his lesson about the responsibilities of parents to keep children busy and on virtuous paths. The English translation of part of *LC* is thus complete in itself, if understood as an exemplum or cautionary tale; and, as a dramatized illustration of moral or ethical doctrine, though it contains none of the expected allegorical figures, *Calisto* can be called a morality play.

The differences, nevertheless, between *Calisto* and its source cannot be emphasized enough. *Calisto* employs more lifelike characters than the morality play (in English) and attains historical importance in making a transition from allegory to realism. But these characters do not perform significant actions in varied conflicts; hence, they have no particular

importance in themselves. They are like numbers in a column with no meaning until Danio adds them up at the end. *Calisto* thus resembles a fable, at least by comparison with its sources. *LC* does make a point about the spiritual harm idle lovers do to one another. Indeed, its introduction states it was "compuesta en reprehension de los locos enamorados" (Severin edition, 44) and as a warning against panders and wily servants. But to say that this is the moral substance of the story is to miss the points of the character development and the various conflicts, as complex and manifold as life itself, among the bawd, the servants, their wenches, and the lovers. *Calisto* borrows some names, personalities, and actions of *LC*, but not its spirit, scope, or intention.

One indication of how *Calisto's* author envisions his work can be noted in assigning a song to Celestina, for she does not sing in Rojas' original. Allen thinks the English translator makes her ridiculous by having her sing.¹¹ Usually, *Calisto's* author is not concerned with fine points of characterization. He focuses on details of his source in developing his own moral points, and the same purpose governs departures from his source. Celestina's song is one such departure. Whether Celestina's singing tarnishes her greatness is probably a matter of opinion and depends upon what one thinks *Calisto* proposes to be. Certainly the English audience understood her song as a badge of her evil. As if the traditional association of levity with sin is not clear enough, Celestina tells Parmeno she is anxious to get Calisto singing, too--to embroil him in his passionate excesses to force his purse to "swet":

For the thyrd parte Sempronio we must get.
 After that thy maister shall come to skole
 To syng the fourth parte, that his purs shall swet.
 For I so craftely the song can set;
 Though thy maister be hors, his purs shal syng clere,
 And taught to solf, that womans flesh is dere. (491-96)

Celestina here makes explicit the connection between song and evil and reiterates that connection later, when she tells Parmeno songs are part of lovers' dalliance: "stryke vp, mynstryl, with sawes of loue, the old problem. / Syng swete songes? (578-79).

In addition to his moral, didactic intentions, *Calisto's* author has serious critical and literary aims. He is trying to do something about the oft-repeated complaint of the humanist that not enough famous literary works in other tongues are translated into English. *LC*, a "wark of connygne," is not merely another literary "toy" or "tryfell," of which there are too many. The prologue and the final lament of Pleberio make apparent the moral seriousness of the Spanish work and establish clearly its author's humanistic bent.

Before concluding this exploration of the moral intentions of the first English translator of *LC*, the critic should re-examine Pearl Hogrefe's theory about the motivation of *Calisto's* author, his probable auspices, and theme. Hogrefe lists several differences between *Calisto* and *LC*, such as:

- (1) . . . The Spanish story and the English interlude are quite different in depicting the passion of love.
- (2) The characters in the English play have been changed where necessary or not changed to further the moral impact of the play. Calisto and Sempronio remain much the same, but both are intended to be unsympathetic characters. In the English play Melebea is the ideal maiden, or nearly so. [Her] wavering is not entirely irrational, not motivated by a real response to seduction. Even Vives might concede that her inner feelings of chastity has been scarcely touched.
- (3) *Calisto and Melebea*, when compared with its source and with the comments of More, Erasmus, and Vives on women, love, and marriage, seems a deliberate piece of propaganda for the beauty and the good properties of women.¹²

Hogrefe believes Vives' presence in England in the 1520's probably influenced the play's composition. Vives was "almost fanatical" about chastity. In his *De institutione Christianae foeminae*, he condemns irrational, illicit, romantic love as in *LC*, calls it a *liber pestifer*,¹³ and speaks of the bawd as the "mother of naughtiness." Hogrefe implies that *Calisto* was probably compiled for Vives' benefit or under his direction, because it embodies his ideas on women, chastity, and romantic love. She carries these implications further, saying *Calisto* satirizes its source and much increasingly widespread romantic literature. If, as Hogrefe thinks, the More circle to which Rastell belonged was as fanatically opposed to romantic literature as Vives was, *Calisto*, a straight-laced English take-off on a typically decadent Spanish romance, presents the humanist's alternative to romantic excess.

Hogrefe's argument, however, begins with faulty premises. As a result, some conclusions about the play's moral intent, its author's literary conceptions, and the More circle are out of focus. First, the translated portion of *Calisto* does not differ from its source in its presentation of the "passion of love." The one faithfully copies the other; in that, contrary to Hogrefe's claims, the love affair, the courtly love conventions, and, most importantly, the characters of the courtly lovers are the same.

The crux is Melebea's character in *Calisto*. Far from being the "ideal maiden" cruelly tricked into "wavering," Melebea knows the implication of giving Celestina the token, her "gyrdyll," and asking her to return "secretly" for the "prayer" (884-85). Melebea is intelligent. She quotes Petrarch and Heraclitus (1-10). Calisto praises her "excellent wyt" (223). Melebea says, "I perseyve the entent of they wordys all" (65), when Calisto lavishes praise upon her and reveals, in conventionally euphemistic language, that he wants to go to bed with her (46-61). Celestina only mentions Calisto's name amidst a flow of compliments, prayers, and *non sequiturs*, and Melebea catches on:

A ha! is this the entent of thy conclusyon?
 Tell me no more of this matter, I charge the . . .
 Is thys the dolent for whom thow makyst petycyon!
 Art thow come hyther thus to desseyue me?
 Thow berdyd dame, shameles thou semest to be!
 Is this he that hath the passion of folishnes?
 Thinkyst, thow rybaud, I am such one of lewdnes?
 It is not sayd, I se well, in vayn,
 The tong of man and woman worst members be.
 Thow brut bawd! thow gret enmy to honeste, certayn!
 Cause of secret errours! Iesu, Iesu, benedicite! . . .
 Go hens, thou brothell, go hens in the dyuyll way!
 Bydyst thou yet to increase my payn!
 Wylt thow make me of thys fole to be fayn?
 To gyue hym lyfe, to make hym mery,
 And to myself deth, to make my sory?
 Wilt thow bere away profet for my perdition,
 And make me lese the house of my father,
 To wyn the howse of such and old matrone
 As thow art, shamfullyst of all other?
 Thinkist thou that I understand not, thou falls mother,
 Thy hurtfull message, thy fals subtell ways? (788-814)

Melebea understands because she knows how to play the "courtly love" game. She is supposed to be cruel, to ignore her suitor's complaints, using moral, religious, or personal excuses, and to protest violently--to preserve the appearance of cruelty, disdain, or virtue--when someone reveals an awareness of the affair and proposes to take part in it. Whatever else Melebea may be called, her verbal abuse of Celestina (788-829) is proof enough she is not an "ideal maiden." After a decent interval, should her feelings for the suitor tend that way, she is supposed to give him a token, then follow through on further arrangements, for so long as the affair is secret.

In *LC*, Melibeia finally reveals her craving for Calisto to Celestina, and the pander begins to work actively for both sides. Clearly Melebea is at first very sad to see her father upset: "For I have no cause but to be mery and glad" (943), she says, and one, of course, knows why. Then Danio relates his dream. Melebea, her Christian sensibilities shocked, no longer wishes to play the game. She assures her father she did not disgrace him and confesses, "though I dyd consent / In mynd, yet had he neuer hys intent" (1021-22). Melebea does, then, willingly take that first step into sin. The deed's consequences, which form the framework of the rest of *LC*, are outside the scope and purpose of the English production. Up until the Danio close of *Calisto*, however, Melebea is presented exactly as she is in the source.

How do these facts, then, affect Hogrefe's interpretation of *Calisto*? Can *Calisto* be called "a deliberate piece of propaganda for the beauty and good properties of women?" The answer is yes, but some distinctions must be made. The subtitle says *Calisto* deals with the good properties and the "vycys and euyll condicions" of women. In *Celestina*,

the bawd and Melebea, the courtly maiden, one sees some vices and evil conditions. In Melebea, the intelligent woman and devoted, repentant daughter, one sees the good properties of women. As a heroine, Melebea is not simply the innocent, wayfaring pilgrim beset by evil through no fault of her own. Hogrefe's reading, therefore, oversimplifies Melebea as well as *Calisto's* humanistic moral and literary values.

In such early humanist plays, some moral alternatives are not argued for while others are condemned. Rather, all opinions are presented simultaneously for individual consideration and judgment. There is little desire to rush in with dogmatic conclusions. The humanist author of *Calisto* may intend to satirize courtly love conventions, while he argues seriously "through Danio" for prayer, reasoned behavior, and fulfilling occupation. However, also part of the humanist's point of view is an all embracing sympathetic understanding, a willingness, as the prologue of *LC* puts it, to gather, even from "vayne and idle" subjects, the "pith and marrow of the matter for their owne good and benefit," while laughing at "those things that savour only of wit, and pleasant conceits." A closed-mind approach to sexual behavior, for which Hogrefe suggests *Calisto's* author is arguing, would make sheer farce of all but the play's end, and *Calisto* has more value than that.

Not solely serious lectures, traditional moral plays mix their "sad matter" with humor, song, dance, and other entertainments appropriate to audience and occasion. So, too, *Calisto* presents several types of entertainment to add variety and depth to its message. Most important is the translation itself, the presentation of part of a currently popular Spanish work. Possibly the translator wished to introduce his sophisticated audience to the work while simultaneously fulfilling his self-imposed, humanistic obligations of teaching morality, enriching the vernacular, and satirizing sin and folly. Aside from its status as literature and didactic exemplar, however, *LC* is the sort of production a sophisticated humanist would like, for it contains a wealth of theological, philosophical, scientific, and literary allusions, or "learned entertainment." Furthermore, its characters' complexity gives rise to contradictory, unresolvable interpretations of human existence. Here is found some of the intellectual delight fostered by medieval debate at its finest. Thus, *Calisto's* author must have been attracted all the more to the possibilities of *LC* for adaptation and dramatic presentation as an interlude.

The play presents several debates or debate-like conversations. The subtitle itself promises treatment of the good properties of women versus their vices and evil conditions. Sempronio takes the traditional antifeminist stand against the starry-eyed Calisto (161-265), who even praises his lady's fingernails. Parmeno defends joyful poverty before the cynical materialist, Celestina (539-52), and Celestina herself argues both sides of the youth versus age issue (650-89).

Several references to blasphemies and heresies are also found in *Calisto*. Now *ipso facto*, nothing is sophisticated about blasphemy and heresy. However, the way some heretical comments are presented in *Calisto*, recalling conventions and motifs of the romances and the courtly love

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tradition and giving rise to subtle humor, suggests a sophisticated audience. First, *Calisto* speaks of Melebea as greater than any heavenly delight, as a greater reward than saints possess in seeing God (53-61). Similarly echoing the blasphemous complaints of the courtly lover is *Calisto's* claim he worships the goddess, Melebea: ". . . there is no such sufferayn / In heuyn, though she be in yerth? (160-61). *Calisto* paradoxically invokes the Christian deity's aid in bringing his love-longing to a successful conclusion and sends off his pander *Sempronio* as he says:

Cryst make the strong!
The myghty and perdurable God by his gyde,
As he gydyd the iij kynges in to Bedleme
From the est by the starr, and agayn dyd prouyde
As theyre conduct to return to theyre own reame;

So spede by *Sempronio* to quench the leme
Of this fyre, which my hart doth waste and spende;
And that I may com to my desyryd ende! (298-305)

The translator retains the Bethlehem allusion of the original, but substitutes the spelling, "Bedleme," which, in the early sixteenth century, the *OED* notes, is already being used in its modern sense. Uttered by the addlebrained lover, the word play is both serious and funny.

Similarly humorous because of the speaker is *Celestina's* blasphemy as she promises Melebea she will quickly carry to *Calisto* the glad tidings of Melebea's "favor":

And to *Calisto* with this gyrdle *Celestina*
Shall go, and his ledy hart make hole and lyght.
For *Gabriell* to Our Lady with Aue Maria
Came neuer gladder that I shall to this knyght. (894-96)

Celestina's reference to herself as another *Gabriel* carrying to "the virgin," *Calisto*, the promise of sexual consummation, a scene original in the English translation, is a monumental piece of impudence. The sexual difference aside, no one is less fit than *Celestina* to be likened to *Gabriel*, God's special messenger, the trumpeter of the Last Judgment, and the bearer of glad tidings to Mary, traditionally depicted carrying a lily, the symbol of purity. Another passage having blasphemous overtones is *Calisto's* speech in which he refers to his passion's intensity:

And yf the fyre of purgatory bren is such wyse,
I had leuer my spirete in brute bestes shuld be,
Than to go thydyr, and than to the deyte. (135-37)

To this remark, *Sempronio* replies: "Mary, syr, that is a spyce of heryse."

In addition, the translator utilizes some passages smacking of blasphemy and heresy to inflict puns on the audience. In another departure from *LC*, the author creates a double entendre. In the source, *Celestina* speaks of Melebea's girdle as having touched the holy relics in Rome and

Jerusalem. The English version becomes suggestive, leaving out the cities' names. A pun is also intended on "beads-folks" as Celestina says: "Fayr maydyn, for the mercy thou hast done on vs; / This knyght and I both thy bedfolkis shall be" (901-02). The knight certainly wishes he was Melebea's "bed partner," and Celestina already is, figuratively speaking. The sexual implication of "mercy" is present here and elsewhere in Celestina's appeals for "pity" from Melebea for the "sick knyght." *Calisto* employs other double-meaning diction from the romances, such as "dy" (26), the "fyre" of love (124), the knight's "greuys" (295) and "pyne" (843), and the plea to the lady to give her lover "lyfe" (807).

Another sophisticated entertainment the translator finds in *LC* and carries over into *Calisto* may be referred to as intellectual allusion. Like its source, *Calisto* is conceived and executed as a courtly love story. All the conventions are there: the pining suitor, the cruel lady obviously protesting too much, the physical craving of the lovers, a host of impediments to consummation, like strict parents, religious codes, garden walls, secrecy, and the consequent delays. Often associated with courtly love literature, though having its own long literary heritage, is the concept of fortune, and the play refers to fortune at least five times.

Several other intellectual references in *Calisto* can be briefly cited. The figure of Nature as the principle of earthly life, a motif critics have called sophisticated in its origins and auspices, is mentioned in Melebea's opening speech. In addition, *Calisto* refers to Melebea (46) as a gift of "Dame Nature," showing forth "the gretness of God." Several places allude to noted authors and thinkers. Petrarch, "the poet lawreate," is mentioned at the opening in connection with the Nature figure (2-4). Melebea, trying to account for *Calisto*'s disruptive behavior and her own conflicting emotions, recalls Heraclitus and his theory of universal conflict and change (5-10). Danio's views on idleness may be intended to echo More's discussion of it in *Utopia*, and the mention of purgatory and the souls of brute beasts may refer to Rastell's involvement in those issues. Finally, references to Nimrod (166), Alexander the Great (167), the liturgy of St. John's feast (173), Elias (177), Paris and Venus (249), Hector (860), St. George (863), and the "gentyll Narciso" (866) presuppose an audience educated enough to understand and appreciate them.

If much in *Calisto* appeals to a sophisticated audience, much enhances its appeal for the common people. Some characters, the lovers, the wily old bawd, and the parasitical servants, are readily recognizable by all classes. The story itself, detailing the seduction process, also has a potentially wide appeal, as do the singing and bawdy humor. Finally, Danio's dream "bears a plausible resemblance" to *Dame Siriz*, a popular fabliau of about 1250.¹⁴

Calisto, then, indebted to *LC* for plot, setting, and true-to-life characters, opened Spain to English writers, for *LC* is the first important Spanish literary work translated into English. Its realistic characterization, transmitted from *LC*, is perhaps the salient feature of *Calisto* as an English play of about 1530. Not the first play to endow its characters with individuality as some critics claim,¹⁵ *Calisto* is the first play to

begin with a realistic, romantic, non-morality plot and cast. Although it turns that plot and cast to the service of didacticism, it introduces into English a conception of drama unique in characterization and romantic conflict. Celestina, the most notable addition to the English gallery of dramatic personalities, could almost be called, as Allardyce Nicoll does, a prototype of "Juliet's nurse,"¹⁶ or another Falstaff, depending upon how much one appreciates her role in *Calisto* or understands her depth in *EC*. In addition, the versification of *Calisto* is competently handled and almost completely done in rime royal, "a phenomenon almost without parallel in the interludes."¹⁷

To a large extent, the humanist author of *Calisto* observes traditional assumptions and methods in constructing his moral play. He excerpts a longer work of a different genre and presents his reaction to his audience to illustrate and dramatize a moral point. He utilizes standard humorous devices, like singing and bawdy language, to embellish his lesson. Simultaneously, he presents a great deal of entertainment over and above music and low-life humor; debate material, theological and philosophical problems, and intellectual allusions; all embodied in a preview and perhaps a satire of a currently popular foreign literary work. Though its virtues are largely those of its source, in the context of English drama in the first third of the sixteenth century, the play uniquely foreshadows important dramatic developments. *



A new comode in englysh in maner
 of an enterlude ryght elygant & full of craft
 of rethorik/wherein is shewed a byctrype as
 well the bette & good propertes of women/
 as theyr bycrs & euyl cōdiciōs/wich a morall
 cōclufion & exhortacyon to bette w.



Incipit de Calisto y Melebea.

Copia de la Bibliotheca Bodleiana.

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NOTES

¹ All line references to *Calisto and Melebea* are to the Malone Society facsimile reprint, ed. W. W. Greg (London: Charles Whittingham and Co., 1908). The only surviving copy of the work at the Bodleian Library was also consulted. The punctuation used by H. Warner Allen in his combined edition of *An Interlude of Calisto and Melebea for the First Time Accurately Reproduced from the Original Copy, Printed by John Rastell, c. 1530. Celestina or the Tragi-Comedy of Calisto and Melebea, Trans. from Spanish by James Mabbe, anno. 1631* (London: Routledge and Sons, 1908) has been incorporated in the citations.

² All references to *LC*, except when noted otherwise, are to the James Mabbe translation (1631), in the Tudor Translations (New York, 1967), a reprint of James Fitzmaurice-Kelly's edition (London: D. Nutt, 1894).

³ Mack H. Singleton, trans., *LC* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958); these lines follow the prologue and precede the "summary of the whole work."

⁴ W. W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, Vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 87.

⁵ T. W. Craik, *The Tudor Interlude: Stage, Costume, and Acting* (Leicester: University Press, 1958), p. 23.

⁶ David M. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 45. These views may also be found in Richard Allen Pacholski's "The Humanist Drama of the Sir Thomas More Circle" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1969) and Joel B. Altman's *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

⁷ Allen, p. 341.

⁸ See H. D. Purcell's "The *Celestina* and the *Interlude of Calisto and Melebea*," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 44 (1967), 1-15, in which the author maintains *Calisto*'s writer also uses parts of Act VI and the prologue of the original.

⁹ Allen, p. 334.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

¹² Pearl Hogrefe, *The Sir Thomas More Circle: A Program of Ideas and Their Impact on Secular Drama* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959), pp. 339-43.

- 13 Reprinted in Allen, p. 330.
 14 Bevington, *Mankind*, p. 45.
 15 Allen, p. 335.
 16 Allardyce Nicoll, *British Drama: An Historical Survey from the Beginnings to the Present Time* (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, Co., 1925), p. 48.
 17 J. E. Bernard, Jr., *The Prosody of the Tudor Interlude* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), p. 51.

* See also Prof. Geritz's "Calisto & Melebea: A Bibliography," in *Celestinesca* 3, ii (Nov. 1979), 45-50. [Ed.]



Melebea

¶ Francisus petraricus the poet lawreate
 Sayth that nature whych is mother of all thing
 w out styff can gyue lyfe to nothynge create
 And Craclico the wyse clerk in his wrytyng
 Sayth in all thyng create styff is theyre workyng
 And ther is no thing vnder the firmament
 with any other in all popnes equivalent
 ¶ And accordyng to theyre dyscretes rehercyd as thus
 All thyng are create in maner of styff
 These folysh louers then that be so amercous
 fro pleasure to displeasure how lede they theyre lyfe
 Now sory now sad now Joyous now penytent
 Alas I pore mayden than what shall I do
 Combryd by dotage of one Calisto
 ¶ I know that nature hath gyuen me betwre
 with sanguynous complectyon fauour & sapyness
 The more to god ought I to do feruor
 with wyllyng lyfe laud and loue of percytyness
 I deny not but calisto is of grete worthyness
 Al.

Primeras líneas del texto de Calisto y Melebea

(facsimil de la Malone Society, 1908)



*Besos y abrazos que á mí no me queda otra
cosa sino gozarme de xello.*

Acto IX.