

CELESTINA O LOS DOS TRABAJADORES:
A SHADOW-PLAY OF 1865

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After an interment of almost 200 years, Celestina was resurrected at Madrid in 1822 by the publisher León Amarita, who circulated her again in 1835. In 1840 at Barcelona, Tomás Gorchs introduced her to that city (accompanied by four illustrations) with re-issues in 1841 and 1842. In 1846 she was elected to the Biblioteca Rivadeneyra as volume 3. All this new attention seems to have produced an interesting by-product: Celestina for children, a lo divino.

Shadow plays of various types, sombras chinescas, were introduced to Madrid in 1786: "Popular for palace as well as for simple, public entertainments, to be created with skillful hands by the amateur and the professional throughout Europe, they quickly formed a part of religious and secular performances in the amusement halls of Madrid."¹ By the earlier 19th century very ambitious productions in sombras were frequent and included full-length Siglo de oro plays and even full-scale operetas replete with symphony orchestra. In their most primitive form, theatrical sombras were achieved by placing the actors behind a sheet or translucent curtain but in front of candles or other sources of light.² The "actors" could also be improvised by adroit use of hands for creation of the silhouettes, by puppets, or by cut-out figures. Scripts in home productions were probably improvised on the spot. The first published script written expressly for shadow production is unknown, but in any event by the last half of the 19th century sets of cut-out figures and published scripts were available for amateur productions in private homes.

One such set was published in series in Barcelona at the Imprenta Juan Llorens from about 1864 to 1866. The cut-outs consisted of at least 15 pliegos, apparently containing some 400 different human figures and props. These, in turn, were intended to be used and re-used in varying combinations in an apparently extensive series of playlets (pliegos of 8 pages) written for the project by anonymous authors, and presumably commissioned. The plays run the gamut of dramatic genres, both secular and religious, and may be in prose, verse, or a mixture of the two.

The playlet which interests us for celestinesque studies is titled Celestina o Los Dos Trabajadores (see Illustration A). The text (7½ pages) is divided into three cuadros (sets) with a total of ten scenes, all in romance, ending with the line "¡Justo castigo del cielo!" The

CELESTINA

O LOS DOS TRABAJADORES.



Pieza MORAL, en un acto y tres cuadros, para representarse en

SOMBRA.



BARCELONA.

Imprenta de JUAN LLORENS, Palma de Santa Catalina.
1865.

Illustration A

CELESTINESCA

opening verses and cast of characters with prop list (indicating the location of corresponding cut-outs in the pliegos) are shown in Illustration B.

The opening dialogue (probably an echo of La Fontaine's treatment of the Aesopian tale of the "Ant and the Grasshopper")³ consists of a debate between two workmen over the respective virtues of labor and sloth. In passing, the antagonist of labor, Peregrín, makes the following utterance: "...con los pocos dineros/que me gana mi Ruperta/me voy á pasar el dia/ en esta ó la otra taberna." We are not told who Ruperta is or how she earns her money. The debate ends without either party convincing the other. Alone in the second scene, Juanillo convinces himself that Peregrín is right after all and decides to abandon his work and join his friend at the local tavern. However, as he is leaving, Celestina appears. Juanillo does not know who she is but at length she convinces him that by working he will become wealthy:

Juanillo: ¿Mas quién sois?

Celestina: Ya lo sabrás, cuando te hayas hecho rico.

Juanillo: Pues á trabajar me pongo.

With the Ruperta reference, the adult spectator now awaits a further proposal for Juanillo from Celestina, in keeping with her old profession. We should perhaps point out that her "figurilla" (reproduced on the title page, Illustration A) can serve for any crone or witch in the repertoire of the series but, at the same time, is not too distinct from her image in the Gorchs edition of 1840 (see Illustration C). In other words, the adult spectator is likely to make the Ruperta-Celestina connection whereas a child presumably would only see a mysterious witch.

In any event things do not come to pass as we expect. When the job, the destruction of a bridge, is finished, Juanillo acquires a boat to ferry people across the river. Peregrín appears as a client. The dialogue of the first scene is repeated with the same results and, again, after Peregrín's departure, Juanillo decides that his lazy friend is right after all. Once more to the rescue comes Celestina. Perhaps now she will suggest something appropriate to her past. But no, she simply convinces Juanillo to execute his plan to use his savings to go to Cuba and build a sugar mill. Three years pass, Juanillo returns wealthy from Havana to find Peregrín as impoverished as ever but convinced at last of the error of his ways. Suddenly Celestina arrives on the scene, using her name for the first time. But she appears not as an old crone (figure i) but rather as a pretty young girl (figure m), confiding to Juanillo that:

Yo soy una pobre jóven
que siempre te amé en silencio;
Y ansiando hacerte rico
dizfraz de vieja me he puesto.

CELESTINA

O LOS DOS TRABAJADORES.

FIGURAS Y ACCESORIOS

que se emplean en esta pieza, van comprendidos en los pliegos 8 y 15 de la colección de figuras.

Nombres.	Figuras.	Seña.	Pliego.
Juanillo.	figuras.	g n h.	15.
Peregrin.	»	f g	»
Celestina.	»	i m	»
D. Rufo.	figura.. . . .	c	»
D. Salustiano.	»	b	»
Aldeana.	»	ñ	»
Lacayo.	»	j	»
Puente.	a	»
Patos.	e	»
Vapor.	d	»
Barcos.	a b h.	8

ACTO ÚNICO.

CUADRO PRIMERO.

La escena representa un puente en derribo. Sobre él aparecen Juanillo (fig. g.) y Peregrin (fig. f); el primero trabajando, el otro con la piqueta al hombro.

ESCENA I.

Juanillo y Peregrin.

Peregrin. Juanillo tú eres un tonto
en sudar de esa manera,
que el trabajo no hace rico
y al que se muere le entierran.
Así, déjate el trabajo
y echa á un lado la piqueta
y vente á beber un trago
de buen vino á la taberna.
Juanillo. Peregrin, no seas tonto,

no huelgues de esa manera,
que al que no trabaja siempre
le persigue la pobreza:
con que así, ponte al trabajo,
dá de firme á la piqueta
y déjate estar de tragos,
de vinos y de tabernas.

Peregrin. Pero dí, Juanillo amigo:
¿Qué adelantas, que prosperas
en estarte todo el día
machacando en esas piedras,
si al cabo de la semana
te pagan vida tan perra,

Illustration B

CELESTINESCA

The joke is on us, the jaded and well-read spectators, who have been expecting a certain plot development all this time. Ruperta remains unexplained, except for the purpose of our deception. Juanillo and young Celestina, she of the ironically divine name, are to be wed. "Angel bajado del cielo" Juanillo defines her. The play closes with the lament of the penitent Peregrin, who summarizes the burden of this self-styled "Pieza MORAL" in the spirit of Aesop and La Fontaine:

¡Oh auditorio que me escuchas!
mírate en aqueste espejo.
El descansa y yo trabajo.
¡Justo castigo del cielo!

The text is literate, the somewhat outrageous plot adroitly and straightforwardly conveyed. Suspense on two different levels is provided and, like a Mae West double entendre, is harmless to the ears of the incognoscenti. This Celestina attenuates the bawdy elements of an authentic Punch-and-Judy Show without abandoning a bit of unrequited spice for the grown-ups, somewhat in the direction of Kukla, Fran, and Ollie, a popular American TV show of the 1950s.

There is no real clue as to the identity of the author. It is curious that there are two Catalan dramatists working at this time whose family names are identical to those of the printer, Juan Llorens, who presumably commissioned the play: Francisco Llorens y Cánua and Modesto Llorens y Torres. Equally curious is the first name of a descendent of the Llorens clan: Peregrín Luis Llorens y Raga. Is Peregrín an old traditional first name in the Llorens family? And what relationship is there to our hero, Juanillo, and the publisher, Juan Llorens? We hasten to insist that all of this may be only coincidence.

Whoever our playwright is,⁴ he has understood the original Celestina completely and then manipulated her in a most interesting, reverse fashion. We easily underestimate the role of Celestina as a practitioner of white magic⁵ in her first appearance. She advises Juanillo (Scene III, p. 4):

mira que yo te lo digo,
mira que tengo experiencia,
mira que te pronostico
riquezas inestimables
si trabajas con ahinco.

Juanillo is incredulous, but the anonymous crone assures him that she has special powers:

Vive tranquilo
pues mi poder es inmenso,
ilimitado, infinito.

After the second dialogue with Peregrin and Juanillo's return to doubting the virtues of hard work, Celestina arrives to persuade him again. She is outraged ("hombre ingrato") that he would scorn her powers (Scene VI, p. 6):

CELESTINA.



*Quitate allá que no soy de aquellas que piensas;
ten mesura por cortesía.*

Esc. 149.

Acto VII

Illustration C

CELESTINESCA

¡Malhaya sea la hora
en que te dejé este barco,
supuesto que mis favores
quieres dejar malo grados!

In the ensuing scene she also attempts to reform Peregrín, but without success. She then declares that she will make things happen:

Peregrín: No lo creo.
Celestina: Yo haré que
dentro de tres años lo creas.

Indeed, things do happen. Juanillo returns from Cuba a wealthy man in precisely three years. Now occurs the "magical" transformation of the old crone into a beautiful young girl, somewhat in the tradition of Grimm's Frog Prince,⁶ and she is to become the bride of our hero. At last Celestina fulfills her primordial instincts--finding a young girl for a young man--but as a marriage-broker not as a procuress, and as her own client. The pun on her celestial appellation is complete: "ángel bajado del cielo," Celestina a lo divino.

Thus, for some children in the greater Barcelona area during the later 19th century, old Celestina was incorporated into their lore as a magical figure, a good witch,⁷ eventually to be replaced and transformed on a different kind of screen and portrayed by Billie Burke (The Wizard of Oz).

NOTES

¹Ada M. Coe, Entertainments in the Little Theatres of Madrid, 1759-1819 (New York: Hispanic Institute in the United States, 1947), 48ff. For a general account of the history of shadow theater see Max von Boehm, Puppen und Puppenspiele, II (München, 1929), 148-184.

²In 1837 the term, sombras chinescas, appeared in the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy, its definition still intact in the latest edition: "...sombras chinescas. Espectáculo que consiste en unas figurillas que se mueven detrás de una cortina de papel o lienzo blanco iluminadas por la parte opuesta a los espectadores," Real Academia Española, Diccionario de la lengua española; II (Madrid, 1984), 1258, col. 3.

³By this time several Spanish translations of the Fables are available as well as a large number of the original French version. Equally, Spanish translations of Aesop, notably by Samaniego, are readily available. See the Fábulas de Esopo, ed. Emilio Cotarelo y Mori (Madrid, 1929), xl-xlii.

⁴Other plays in the series include Las tentaciones de S. Antonio (1864) in romance and Los lances de Carnaval (1865) and La enferma fingida (1866) in prose with incidental verse (Hispanic Society collections N.S. 1/1165 and 1199).

⁵See Elizabeth Sánchez, "Magic in La Celestina" (Hispanic Review 46, 1978, 481-494) for a discussion of the role of magic in Celestina comparing various critics' opinions. In Las Brujas y su mundo (Madrid, 1961), Julio Caro Baroja includes a section on "La 'Celestina' como arquetipo" (pp. 151-153). Also see related titles listed and indexed in Joseph T. Snow, Celestina by Fernando de Rojas: An Annotated Bibliography of World Interest, 1930-1985 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1985).

⁶The earliest known collection of Grimm tales published in Spanish is in 1896. The specific tale could have appeared in anthologies or magazines. But in any event, magical transformations are a staple of literature and folklore as well. See Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, II (Bloomington, Indiana, 1956), 13 and 346.

⁷The Diccionario de autoridades, IV (Madrid, 1734), already makes the distinction between magia negra (diabólica) and magia natural (blanca). Jeffrey Burton Russell discusses the clear distinction between high (divinatio) and low (maleficium) magic in Witchcraft in the Middle Ages (Ithaca, New York, 1984), pp. 6-7 et passim. See also Julio Caro Baroja, Teatro popular y magia (Madrid, 1974).