

A NOTE ON DERIVATIVES OF "CELESTINA"

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In mid-August 1995 I visited Chile for a period of ten days. It was my good fortune to visit with Antonio Skármeta, one of Chile's outstanding contemporary novelists. He autographed for me a copy of his *Match Ball* (=MB) (Santiago: Ed. Sudamericana, 3ª reimpresión, 1994). In the meantime I had purchased a copy of his *Ardiente paciencia* (=AP) (Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, 1985; 1994).

Skármeta uses in the two novels both *celestino* and *celestinaje* as the following citations show:

... a pesar de que era un tema *celestino* ... (AP, 107)

Soy tu *celestino*, tu cabrón y el padrino de tu hijo. (AP 125)

...que nos había oficiado Forbes en su rol de *celestino*... (MB, 150)

Skármeta would seem to use *celestinaje* as a synonym for *celestino*. In his "Notas" to AP, there is this entry:

Celestino/Celestinaje: Celestina es un personaje literario, figura central de la obra dramática de F. de Rojas, *Tragicomedia de Calixto y Melibea*. Por extensión, designa a la persona que arregla los encuentros de dos enamorados. (151)

In the text of AP, the word appears thus: "Se trataba de un pequeño acto de *celestinaje*..." (70).

I next tried to see if dictionaries of *chilenismos* dealt with either word. The Academia Superior de Ciencias Pedagógicas de Valparaíso's *Diccionario ejemplificado de chilenismos*, vol. 2 (Santiago: Ed. Universitaria, 1985) defines *celestinaje* at page 89 as follows: "Actividad propia del celestino" and gives this citation from Marta Brunet's *Montaña adentro* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1953): "La vieja volvía con los huesos, muy sosegadamente, ni buena ni mala en aquel *celestinaje*" (95). Polí Délano uses the word in his *Los mejores cuentos* (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1969) at p. 33: this dictionary provides the following citation from the collection — "Servicio telefónico interior: *celestinaje* legal."

The same dictionary notes that in Chile both *celestino* and *celestina* are found and that the dictionary of the Real Academia Española provides data on only *celestina*. It gives this citation with *celestino* used as a noun: "Este viejo *celestino* se le lleva haciéndole propaganda a sus sobrinas." According to this same source, *celestino* is also given as "panqueque" and is illustrated with this sentence: "me encantan los *celestinos* rellenos con jamón."

I checked such dictionaries of *americanismos* as are found in the Southern Illinois University-Carbondale Library with little luck. The *Lexicón de colombianismos*, 2nd ed. (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1983), compiled by Mario Alario di Filippo, provides the following:

celestinaje, m. Alcahuetería
celestinear, tr. Alcahuetear

One might assume that these words would appear in slang dictionaries published in Spain. My sample of such dictionaries is too small for the drawing of significant conclusions. Martin Alonso, *Enciclopedia del idioma* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1958, p. 1,018) notes that the verb *celestinear* is found in writers of 19th and 20th centuries with the meaning of "alcahuetear" and notes its use in Benito Pérez Galdos' *Amadeo I* and cites "Algo se *celestineaba* allí..." (*Episodios nacionales* [Madrid: Ed. Urbión/Ed. Hernando, 1979]; 10: 4382). While Covarrubias' *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* entry for 'Celestina' is "nombre de una mala vieja, que le dio a la tragicomedia española tan celebrada,"¹ the 21st ed. of the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* (1972) shows how associated meanings have come into common usage (*celestina*¹ is given as figurative for 'alcahueta'; *celestinazgo* is the masculine noun for the

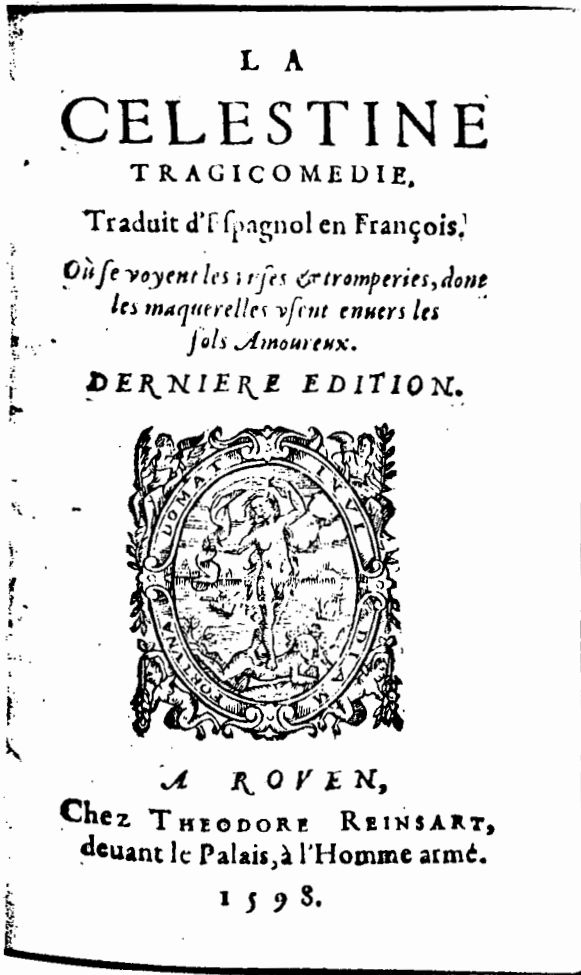
¹ I have used the edition of this seventeenth-century work printed in Madrid by Castalia in 1994, in an edition by Felipe C. R. Maldonado and Manuel Camarero (p. 294).

'acción de celestinear'; celestinear, the verb, is 'ejercer o practicar la función propia de una celestina'; and, finally the adjectival form is given as celestinesco/a and is described as 'perteneciente o relativo a la celestina.'

The verb is not used reflexively in Colombia and Chile according to my data. Others with larger collections of dictionaries from the Spanish-speaking world probably will be able to provide data on other derivatives or uses of *celestina*, *celestino*, *celestinaje* and *celestinear*. Others with good access to Portuguese materials might see if there are derivatives in that language. The *Dicionário da língua portuguesa elaborado por Antenor Nascentes* (1961) defines *celestina*, a feminine noun, as "alcoviteira" (De Celestina, nome de uma personagem da *Tragicomédia de Calixto e Melibéa*). The *Codil Dicionário prático* (Sao Paulo, 1965; I:313) provides the same meaning for *celestina*, but labels it a figurative meaning.



Sempronio and Celestina en route to Calisto's house, Act I.
Barcelona: Lumen, 1988. Illustration by Bartolomé Liarte



Title page. French translation, Rouen, 1598.
Private collection of J. T. Snow