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978-0-521-12283-2 - Tragicomedy and Novelistic Discourse in *Celestina*  
Dorothy Sherman Severin  
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Tragicomedy and Novelistic Discourse  
in *Celestina*

The late fifteenth-century Spanish masterpiece *Celestina* is one of the world's most neglected classics. In this important study one of the most recent editors of the text, Dorothy Sherman Severin, investigates how Fernando de Rojas' work in dialogue, which parodies earlier genres, is a precursor of the modern novel.

In *Celestina*, the hero Calisto parodies the courtly lover, the heroine Melibea lives through classical examples and popular song, Calisto's servants Sempronio and Parmeno parody students' knowledge, the bawd and go-between *Celestina* deals a blow to the world of wisdom literature, and Melibea's father Pleberio gives his own gloss on the lament. There is also a fatal clash between two literary worlds, that of the self-styled courtly lover (the fool) and the prototype picaresque world of the Spanish Bawd and her mentors (the rogues). The voices of *Celestina* are parodic, satiric, ironic and occasionally tragic, and it is in their discourse that the dialogic world of the modern novel is born.

In order to make this book accessible to a wider English-speaking readership, quotations from the text are accompanied by English translations, mainly from the seventeenth-century English version by James Mabbe.

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Celestina knocks on Melibea's door while Melibea and Lucrecia are in the garden awaiting the arrival of Calisto and his servants; Calisto and Elicia chat with Sempronio and Pármeno in the foreground.

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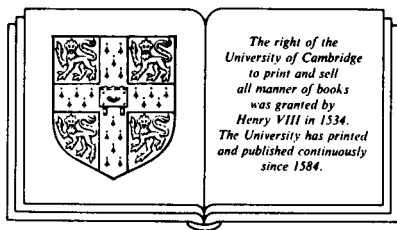
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# Tragicomedy and Novelistic Discourse in *Celestina*

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*University of Liverpool*



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Frontispiece from Valencia 1514 – Celestina knocks on Melibea’s door while Melibea and Lucrecia are in the garden awaiting the arrival of Calisto and his servants; Calisto and Elicia chat with Sempronio and Pármeno in the background. *frontispiece*

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Act I – Pármeno opens the door to let Sempronio and Celestina into Calisto’s house (Burgos 1499). *page 8*

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## Preface

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If some of the chapters of this monograph look strangely familiar, it is because, during a long gestation period, they have appeared, usually in a different form, or have been delivered orally and occasionally published in the *actas* of a learned conference. Textual antecedents and first drafts of some of the chapters in this book can be found in the bibliography. It was my original intention to concentrate on humour in *Celestina*, but the topic took some unexpected turns, and the relationship of *Celestina* with its sources – what we now, unfortunately, call intertextuality – became a prime consideration, along with the question of genre in its most recent manifestation as ‘novelistic discourse’.

I am indebted to my former Westfield colleague and dear friend Alan Deyermond, who has seen (or heard) much of this material and commented on it. My mentor Stephen Gilman, who disagreed with my conclusions about genre and *Celestina* but gamely agreed to look at them and discuss them with me, died before this little book went to press, and I would like it to dedicate to his memory. Without his teaching and influence I would never have come to *Celestina* studies.

Dorothy Sherman Severin

*Liverpool*

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## Abbreviations

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- BHS* *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*  
*Ce.* *Celestinesca*  
*Clas. Cast.* *Clásicos Castellanos*  
CSIC Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas  
CUP Cambridge University Press  
EUDEBA Editorial Universitario de Buenos Aires  
*HR* *Hispanic Review*  
*KRQ* *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*  
LCL Loeb Classical Library  
*Neophil.* *Neophilologus*  
*NRFH* *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*  
OUP Oxford University Press  
*PSA* *Papeles de Son Armadans*  
*RF* *Romanische Forschungen*  
*RFE* *Revista de Filología Española*  
*RoN* *Romance Notes*  
*RPh* *Romance Philology*  
TWAS Twayne's World Authors Series  
UNCSRL University of North Carolina Studies in Romance Languages and Literatures



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Calisto and Melibea's first encounter in the garden. Calisto's falcon is perched in a tree.