

**Was Calixto's Grandmother a Nymphomaniac Mamlūk Princess?
(A Footnote on "Lo de tu abuela con el ximio" [La Celestina, Aucto 1])**

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After his initial encounter with Melibea, in her garden, at the beginning of the first act of *La Celestina*, Calixto comes home sizzling on the hot coals of lust and, as is entirely consistent with a pre-modern culture that viewed love (with which he confuses his own feelings) as a disease, he immediately retires to his bedchamber. There, he begins to rave, in keeping with the courtly models that he himself will eventually violate, that Melibea is not human, but divine, and that he himself is not a Christian, but a "Melibeian." Cynical Sempronio is driven into a misogynous fit by his master's histrionics and points out to him that it is absurd for a knight more courageous than Nimrod and Alexander to despair of winning the favors of a (mere) woman, "muchas de las cuales, en grandes estados constituidas, se sometieron a los pechos y resollos de viles acemileros y otras a brutos animales" (Lobera, Rico, et al. eds. 38).² Elaborating further on the theme of feminine bestiality, he adds: "¿No has leydo de Pasife con el toro, de Minerva con el can?" (Rico 38, nn.125-26)³; to which Calixto objects that such stories are based on lies, thereby implying that they are implausible. To his master's excessive skepticism Sempronio retorts: "Lo de tu abuela con el ximio, ¿hablilla fué? Testigo es el cuchillo de tu abuelo" (38, n. 128).⁴ We are thus reminded of three instances of feminine bestiality: Pasiphaë with a bull, Minerva with a dog, and Calixto's grandmother with an ape. To the third instance, the claim is added that the knife of Calixto's grandfather, in some enigmatic way, bears witness to the authenticity of the tale. The first example cited refers to a well-known Classical

¹This article is the outcome of a series of lengthy discussions held by the three of us over the course of several years. A preliminary, written version was completed on October 8, 1988, and a second one on January 26, 1989, but reasons beyond our control prevented it from seeing the light of day. Sadly, and some twenty years later, now that the article is finally ready to appear, in a greatly revised and updated form, one of us, namely Joseph H. Silverman, is no longer alive. Therefore, the two of us who have survived him, respectfully dedicate it to his memory, insofar as he was a loyal friend, a colleague whom we both greatly admired, and a person whose loss we deeply mourn.

² For quotations from *La Celestina*, we use the 2000 ed. by Lobera, Rico, Serés, Díaz-Mas, Mota, & Ruiz Arzálluz, which we will refer to hereafter as "Rico." Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are ours: "many of whom, although they were of lofty estate, submitted to the breasts and heavy breathing of lowly muleteers, and others to brute beasts. . . ."

³ "Haven't you read about Pasiphaë with the bull and Minerva with the dog?"

⁴ "As for the matter of your grandmother with the ape—was that a lie? Your grandfather's knife bears witness [to its truth]." In his English translation of *La Celestina*, Mack Hendricks Singleton states: "In a recent article ('Lo de tu abuela con el ximio [Celestina, Auto I]' in *Hispanic Review*, 24:1-12 [1956]), Professor [Otis H.] Green very thoroughly discusses this phrase . . . and concludes that the evidence he has presented points 'to an unbroken Pan-European tradition extending over centuries' . . ." (262, n. 20). As we hope to show, this claim is far from accurate.

legend: Pasiphaë was the wife of Minos, King of Crete. Because the latter failed to sacrifice a beautiful white bull to Poseidon, the god caused Pasiphaë to conceive a lustful passion for the animal, by which she bore the Minotaur. The second example betrays a blunder in Classical studies, for the virginal Minerva / Athene is not known to have ever committed an act of bestiality –least of all with a dog. There are, however, scandalous reports to the effect that she may have had an affair with Vulcan/Hephaistos, and these reports have led one scholar to emend the text to “Minerva con Vulcán” (Green, 1953 471-74). Unfortunately for that scholar, and much to the credit of Minerva, the alleged affair with the god Vulcan can hardly be considered an act of bestiality, hence the proposed emendation is as much out of context as it is inappropriate.⁵ The third example is non-Classical, and has no precise analogues, either in Spanish or in any other European language. It stands as an isolated reference to some tale, otherwise well known to contemporary audiences, that has subsequently been lost. The allusion is further couched in a form typical of a notorious genre of Spanish and Arabic insults in which obscene remarks are made about the female family members of the male individual being insulted; usually his mother and / or grandmother.⁶ In his eagerness to demonstrate the universal unworthiness of womankind, Sempronio has ranged from the heights of divine depravity, to the depths of human monkey business. Along the way, he has exhibited a servant’s dubious knowledge of the Classics, by confusing a god with a dog.

Instances of bestiality involving women and apes abound in ancient and medieval literature,⁷ while this theme still enjoys a latent existence in the far more circumspect version, suitable for general audiences, that was portrayed in the three film productions of *King Kong* (Cooper and Schoedsack; Guillermin; Jackson, dirs.).⁸ No

⁵ In their recent edition of *La Celestina*, Marciales, Dutton, and Snow point out that “‘Minerva con Vulcán’ es inaceptable porque en castellano no es ‘Vulcán’, sino ‘Vulcano’” (I, 24, n. I.42).

⁶ Often, in this form of insult, the sexual organs of the victim’s womenfolk are ritually invoked. Examples in Spanish are legion. Here, instead, is one by the twelfth-century Andalusī-Arabic *zajal* poet from Córdoba, Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Quzmān (d. AH 555 / AD 1160): “‘ayyāman milāḥ šarṭ al-falā’ / ḥirr umm allāḥi ya’mal šinā” (Corriente, 1995 96-97). Corriente is able to translate this passage quite literally into Spanish as: “Los bellos días son del disoluto condición; / ¡El coño de la madre del que ejerce profesión!” (1989, 79).

⁷ Those relevant to the passage we are considering, have been collected and discussed in Otis H. Green (1956), who, in turn, borrowed all his examples from “The Sexuality of Apes,” in Janson (261-86). For further examples of human / ape sexual relations, see Stith Thompson VI, 366, B29.9 Man-ape; 461, B601.7 Marriage to monkey; 463, B611.6, Monkey paramour; Uther 224b, Monkey; El-Shamy I, 70, B601.7.1 Man marries female-monkey; B611.6 Monkey [(ape)] paramour.

⁸ See Nicholls 330-31. The theme is also developed in *Planet of the Apes*, (Schaffner; Burton, dirs.). In *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (Wanamaker, dir.), a Persian prince is turned by a sorceress into a baboon. The prince’s betrothed hires Sinbad to take her and her ape to Hyperboria, where a solution to the curse may be found. Along the way, the ape-prince begins to lose his humanity, acting more and more ape-like as the story progresses. On the literary side see Lovecraft’s story, “Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family” (14-23). In this story, a man investigates his roots only to find that his great grandfather had been an explorer in Africa, who had mated with an ape-goddess. It is an unusual pleasure to thank John Benjamin Monroe for the above references. See too, the science-fiction novel by the Danish author Peter Høeg, *The Woman and the Ape*. In this work, a woman falls in love

doubt, the subject strikes a chord deeply rooted in the human psyche, inviting exploration of a Freudian kind that goes far beyond the scope of this article.⁹ All the same, none of the many stories about apes mating with women that have been identified to date, can account for the main points of reference mentioned in the *Celestina* text. In a previous article on Calixto's grandmother and her ape, Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman collected some Spanish analogues to this pan-European theme, and showed that they all shared a common feature: the woman is an unwilling partner in the relationship; she submits to the ape's advances only out of fear lest he tear her limb from limb, and she proceeds to escape from him as soon as she is able to do so, thus demonstrating that she is a woman of virtue, trapped in circumstances that are not of her own creation or choice. She is, in short, an innocent victim of the ape's proverbial lechery (11-18).¹⁰ Clearly then, such stories cannot bolster Sempronio's argument that women are, by and large, depraved creatures and, therefore, collectively unworthy of Calixto's extravagant worship of one of their gender. In order for an ape-has-sex-with-a-woman analogue to inform the *Celestina* passage being considered, it must star a depraved woman who lusts *after* an ape, as Pasiphaë lusted *after* a bull. It cannot star a virtuous Europa who is lusted *after by* a bull. Furthermore, in the article cited above, on Spanish analogues to our *Celestina* passage, none were found in which a knife is featured, or in which a husband, to whom that knife belongs, makes his appearance. In seeking out analogues, we must therefore look, not only within "Spain and the Western tradition," but far beyond that tradition itself.¹¹

with an ape that has escaped from the London Zoo. In the end, she discovers that her lover is a member of a race of apes that has evolved far beyond the level of mankind.

⁹ According to Thomas French (1E), in 1966, an American named Ed Schultz purchased a baby male chimpanzee in Liberia, where he was working. He brought the baby home and handed it over to his wife, who gave it milk from a bottle and otherwise fed and pampered it. Later, upon the Schultzes' return to the United States, the chimpanzee grew too big to control, and became potentially dangerous, so that in 1971 the family donated it to Lowry Park Zoo, in Tampa, Florida. Having been brought up by a human mother, however, the chimpanzee (whose DNA differed hardly at all from that of its human cousins) had become imprinted with an attraction toward the latter, particularly those of the opposite sex, so that whenever a blond woman passed by its cage, it would blow kisses at her, it would rock and sway, puff up its chest, bristle the thick black hair on its shoulders and back, all to make itself look strong and powerful. Similarly, in 1926, as a contribution to the Soviet effort to stamp out religion, a Soviet Scientist named Ilya Ivanov tried to prove that humans descended from apes, by inseminating female chimpanzees with human sperm, in order to produce a human-chimpanzee hybrid. Needless to say, his experiment failed (Wynne A29).

¹⁰ In some of the analogues provided, the woman gives birth to children begotten of her union with the ape. When she escapes, it attempts to persuade her to return by threatening to drown their offspring should she fail to do so. Although it proceeds to carry out its threat by actually drowning the children, one by one, before her very eyes, the mother refuses to return to it. In this way, virtue is made to triumph over her very strong maternal instinct. On the proverbial lechery of the ape in Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance literature, see Green 1956, 11 (relying on Janson).

¹¹ None of the seventeen major editions of *La Celestina* cited here provides us with a satisfactory source for the passage under consideration. The Fothergill-Payne edition includes a valuable sixteenth-century commentary of *La Celestina* that, in turn, cites numerous misogynous sources both Classical and Biblical, on the lechery of women, none of which are relevant to the above passage (25, 33-34). We are

In the *1001 Nights*, there is a tale that satisfies all our requirements to the letter. It was translated into English by Payne and by Burton, but not by Lane, the prudish Victorian (Kirby 458, no. 58). Since neither of the available translations is entirely satisfactory, we provide our own version, as follows:

The Princess and the Ape

“A certain Sultan had a daughter whose heart became enamored of a black slave. After he had deflowered her, she became so passionately fond of sex¹² that she could not abstain from it for a single moment. She complained of her condition to one of her ladies-in-waiting, who informed her that no creature was sexually more potent than an ape.¹³ When an ape-

thus justified in suspecting that the source of that passage is neither Classical nor Biblical. Patricia Finch is the only one on the right track in stating: “This reference to *that business of your grandmother and the monkey*, witness to which is *your grandfather’s knife*, is so insulting that it must surely refer to some folk tale or other popular source, as yet unidentified by previous editors” (19, n. 50). In what follows we hope to show that Professor Finch’s assumption is absolutely correct.

¹² We prefer this modern English equivalent of the neutrally charged Arabic word *nikāḥ* to Burton’s Victorian euphemisms: *futtering* (Gallic), *poking*, *stroking* (Anglo-Saxon), *copulating* (Latinized), and *swiving* (Chaucerian), not to mention Payne’s *serving* (courtly) and *clicketing* (vulpine). *Li-kulli maqāmin maqālun*.

¹³ Compare the proverb *aznā min qirdin* (‘more incontinent than an ape’), applied “because the qird [‘ape’] is the most incontinent of animals” (Lane 1885, VII, 9512c). ‘Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ adds to this: *Al-qirdu zānin wa-lā yaḡtasilu min janābatin* (‘the ape fornicates and does not wash after major ritual impurity’), (Hārūn VI, 46). Littmann adds: “Der Affe galt und gilt im Morgenlande als eine Erscheinungsform des Teufels” (1953, 3.1, 347). In the medieval Muslim view of creation, the apex of the animal kingdom was occupied by creatures whose intelligence was closest to man’s: “Muslim authors studied this gradation from the point of view of the reflection of cosmic qualities rather than just anatomical resemblances. That is why the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* considered the elephant and not the monkey as the creature which stands just below man in the scale of being” (Nasr 71). See too, Janson. According to Arab legend, there was a creature called *nisnās* or *nasnās* who was a “half man,” either because it possessed a single eye, arm and leg, or because it was a hybrid of man and ape (the word itself may possibly derive from *nisf nās* [‘half human’]). On the *nisnās*, see Viré 133a-34a; Lane 1885, VIII, 2785a-b. For more on the ape and *nisnās* in Arabic folklore, see Buzurg ibn Shahriyār of Ramhormuz, especially chaps. 40-45, “A Sailor Seduced by a Monkey” (40-41); “Monkeys and a Gold Mine” (41-45); “A Domesticated Monkey” (45); “A Blacksmith’s Mate” (45); “An Intelligent Monkey” (45-46); “A Guardian of Chastity” (46-49). On the *nisnās*, see “Mermaids” (23-24): “Someone who had been to Zaila and the land of the Ethiopians told me that in the Ethiopian Sea there is a fish just like a human being, in body, hands and feet. Fishermen who go afar, unhappy men who spend their lives in unexplored regions, on desert shores, in islands and mountains where they never meet another human being, sometimes find this fish with a human face. They hold congress with the females. From them are born beings that look like men, and live in the water and in the atmosphere. Perhaps these fish with human faces originally derive from a union between a man and some sort of fish, a union that would have produced these creatures like men: after which similar unions would have gone on for centuries. It is in the same way that men, by coupling with panthers, hyenas and other land animals, have given birth to monkeys, *nasnas* and other animals that look like man. It is in the same way that the union of pigs and buffalo have produced the elephant, dogs and goats the wild boar, and the ass and mare the mule. If we let ourselves tell all the results of these sorts of union, it would amaze the reader, but we digress from our subject, which is the wonders of India.” For more on the proverbial lechery of simians, see the

trainer happened to pass by, beneath her window, with a large ape in tow, she unveiled her face and glanced at it, signaling to it with her eyes.¹⁴ Breaking its tether and chains, the ape climbed up to her, and she concealed it in a place she had at hand, after which it began to devote itself, night and day, to eating, drinking, and having sex. Her father became aware of the situation and wished to kill her . . .” –And Shahrazād perceived the light of day, and ceased from her permitted say.

When it was night 356, she said: “It has reached me, O auspicious king, that when the Sultan became aware of his daughter’s activities and wished to kill her, she divined his intentions, donned the uniform of the Mamlūks,¹⁵ mounted a horse, took with her a mule laden with gold, jewels, and woven stuffs beyond description, carried the ape along, and set forth until she reached Cairo, where she took up residence in a certain house in the desert.¹⁶ She began to purchase meat, on a daily basis, from a young butcher, yet she never came to him until after midday, when she would invariably appear with a wan complexion and a disheveled face. The young man said to himself: ‘There must be some strange reason for this Mamlūk’s appearance.’ So when she came, as usual, to get her meat,

following anecdote heard by Ibn Battūta, the famous traveler from Tangier (b. 703/1304-d. ca. 770/1368), during the course of his journey through Ceylon: “Some trustworthy persons told me as a fact that when one of these monkeys [macacus silenus] seizes a girl who is unable to defend herself he has intercourse with her. I was told by one of the inhabitants of this island that there was in his house a monkey of this kind; one of his daughters went into a chamber and the animal followed her in, and though she screamed at it, it got the better of her, and he added: ‘When we came into the room after her it was between her legs and so we killed it’” (Gibb IV, 852). See too, the remarks on this passage in Harvey 94. It is known that Ibn Battūta used to finance his travels by convening sessions with interested audiences he encountered along his route who, in turn, paid him to hear his adventures. During his visit to Granada, upon his return from the East, this is one means through which Eastern tales about sexual relations between monkeys and women could have been transmitted to the Iberian Peninsula.

¹⁴ Based on the Qur’ānic injunction to behave modestly, including the advice to “cast down the eyes” (Sūra 24, 30-31), a tradition of writings on love developed, in which gazing at someone intentionally, for a second time, after an accidental first glance, was proscribed from the standpoint of the religious law of Islam. See the discussion in Giffen 117-32. See too, Bell 19-29, 133. In this story, the Princess is thus violating a basic Islamic doctrine.

¹⁵ The Mamlūks dominated Egypt from 1260 to 1517. Under Ottoman rule, they continued to maintain their hold upon the country until, in 1811, their leaders were massacred in the Citadel of Cairo by Muḥammad ‘Alī (Muir). Payne translates the Arabic term *mamlūk* as ‘slave’ which is its literal meaning, but not the one it has in the context of this tale. By so doing, he obliterates an important clue to the story’s time and place of origin. The reason the Princess dresses as a Mamlūk is that she is a woman traveling with a large treasure, alone and unprotected. Had she dressed as a ‘slave’ she would have been suspected of being a runaway, arrested, and returned to her father, who was planning to kill her. By dressing as a Mamlūk, i. e., as a member of a ruling warrior caste, she is less likely to be challenged on her way to Cairo. Payne also gets his narrators hopelessly garbled, and has the tale told by the protagonist of the previous tale (IV, 141-43). Burton, as is his wont, exaggerates the tale’s obscenity far beyond what the Arabic text can support and is, therefore, misleading (IV, 297-99). Both English versions are couched in an archaic style that is, today, awkward to read.

¹⁶ That is, in the eastern outskirts of the city, located by Burton as being “upon the verge of the Suez-desert” (IV, 297).

he followed after her, undetected, saying: 'I continued following after her, undetected, from place to place, until she reached her dwelling in the desert, and entered it. I spied on her from one side, and saw her settle down, light the fire, cook the meat, eat her fill, and offer the rest of it to an ape she had with her, which also ate its fill, after which she took off all her clothes and put on the most magnificent women's garments she possessed, from which I learned that she was a female. Next, she fetched wine, drank part of it, and poured some for the ape. Then the ape had sex with her close to ten times, until she fainted, whereupon it spread a silken coverlet over her and retired to its space.

When I landed in the very midst of the place, the ape detected me and sought to tear me to pieces, so I fell upon it with a knife I had on me, with which I slit its belly lengthwise. Seeing the state the ape was in, the girl awoke in a terrible fright. She emitted a loud cry that almost caused her to perish, and fell down unconscious. When she had recovered from her fainting spell, she asked me: "What has caused you to do this? I implore you, by God, to let me join the ape." But I went on speaking kindly to her, and reassured her that I would have as much sex with her as the ape had done, until her fear subsided. I married her, but, proving unable to meet her demands, or to withstand her onslaughts, I complained of my predicament to a certain old woman, mentioning my wife's condition to her. The old woman agreed to take control of the situation for me, and said: "You must bring me a cooking-pot, fill it with virgin vinegar, and provide me with a pound of *'ūd al-qarh*."¹⁷ Accordingly, I brought her all she required, she put it in the pot, set the pot on the fire, and boiled it briskly. Then she ordered me to have sex with the girl. This I did until the latter fainted, whereupon the old woman lifted her up, while she was still unconscious, and placed her vagina over the mouth of the pot. When its steam rose and entered the girl's vagina, something emerged from that organ, which I examined, and found to be two worms, one of which was black, and the other, yellow.¹⁸ The old woman said: "The former developed from having sex with the slave, and the latter, from having sex with the ape." When the girl recovered from her fainting spell, she

¹⁷ Literally, 'ulcer-wood.' It is pyrethrum, also known as bastard, or Spanish pellitory, and is described in the Arabic translation of Dioscorides as "a plant having a stalk and leaves like those of the wild variety of daucus and like the plant called fennel, with a crown like that of dill, which is like hair. It has a root as thick as a finger that burns the tongue severely when it is crushed. It draws out phlegm, and for this reason, when it is boiled with vinegar and applied as a poultice, it is beneficial for toothache. When it is chewed, it draws out phlegm, and when it is heated, mixed with oil and rubbed on, it causes sweat to flow. It is beneficial for lockjaw, when the teeth are clamped firmly shut by it, and it is appropriate for limbs that are overcome by cold, and for those whose feeling and movement are paralyzed, in both of which cases it is extremely beneficial" (Dubler and Terés II, 272).

¹⁸ Burton indicates that "Easterns attribute many complaints (such as toothache) to worms, visible as well as microscopic [. . .]. Nymphomania, the disease alluded to [in this tale] is always attributed to worms in the vagina" (298, n. 1).

remained with me for some time without requesting sex, for God had removed this urge from her. I marveled at it all . . . ” –And Shahrazād perceived the light of day, and ceased from her permitted say.

When it was night 357, she said: “It has reached me, O auspicious king, that the youth said: ‘. . . for God had removed this urge from her. I marveled at it all, and gave her an account of what had happened.’ She remained with the young man, enjoying a life of unparalleled luxury, along with the greatest of bliss, and adopted the old woman to be her mother. She, her husband, and the old woman continued to live in joy and happiness until the Destroyer of delights and Sunderer of social groups came to them—praise be to the Living One who does not die; in whose hand both the earthly and the heavenly kingdoms lie.”¹⁹

Because of the unreliable character of most manuscripts, editions and translations of the *1001 Nights*, the nature of the relationship between the tale of the “Princess and the Ape” and the passage from *La Celestina* on bestiality, cannot be evaluated without a brief discussion of the textual transmission of the *1001 Nights*.

The Šī‘ite historian al-Mas‘ūdī, who was born in Baghdad at some time before 280 / 893, and who died in 345 / 956, composed his famous work entitled *Murūj al-ḡahab* (‘The Golden Meadows’) in Egypt, in the year 332 / 943 (Pellat 784a-89a). In it he writes:

There are collections of stories that have reached us after having been translated from Persian [Pahlavi], Indian, and Greek texts. We have stated how they were composed. Such is the case of the book entitled *Hazār Afsāna*, translated from the Persian to the Arabic as a *Thousand Surāfāt* [‘Fantastic Tales’] for a *furāfa* in Persian is termed *afsāna*, People call this book *A Thousand Nights*. It is the story of a king, his vizier, the latter’s daughter and her slave, named Šīrāzād [Persian ‘Lionhearted’] and Dīnāzād [Persian ‘Pure in Faith’] respectively (Maḡoudī IV, 89-90).

This statement is confirmed by Ibn al-Nadīm (ca. 325/936-385/995), a Šī‘ite bookseller from Baghdad, who composed a work entitled *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, intended to be an index of all books written in Arabic, either by Arabs or non-Arabs, and that includes valuable descriptions of the contents of each work listed. According to the author’s own statement, the *Fihrist* was completed in the year 377/987 (Fück 895a-96b). In it, al-Nadīm further declares:

The first people to collect stories, devoting books to them and safeguarding them in libraries, some of them being written as though animals were speaking, were the early Persians. Then the Ashkānian

¹⁹ Arabic text in al-‘Adwī (I, 533-34) and Macnaghten (II, 316-18) [= Calcutta II]. The text is identical in both editions. It does not appear in any of the other major editions.

kings, the third dynasty of Persian monarchs, took notice of this [literature]. The Sāsānian kings in their time adding to it and extending it. The Arabs translated it into the Arabic language and then, when masters of literary style and eloquence became interested, they refined and elaborated it, composing what was similar in content.

The first book to be written with this content was the book *Hazār Afsān*, which means “a thousand stories.” The basis for this [name] was that one of their kings used to marry a woman, spend a night with her, and kill her the next day. Then he married a concubine of royal blood who had intelligence and wit. She was called Shahrāzād [Persian *chihr azād* ‘of noble race’], and when she came to him she would begin a story, but leave off at the end of the night, which induced the king to spare her for a thousand nights, during which time he [the king] had intercourse with her, until because of him she was granted a son, whom she showed to him, informing him of the trick played upon him. Then, appreciating her intelligence, he was well disposed toward her and kept her alive. The king had a head of the household named Dīnār Zād who was in league with her in this matter. It is said that this book was composed for Ḥumā’ī, the daughter of Bahrām [r. AD 420-38], there being also additional information about it.

Thus saith Muḥammad ibn Ishāq [al-Nadīm]: The truth is, if Allāh so wills, that the first person to enjoy evening stories was *Alexander*, who had a group [of companions] to make him laugh and tell him stories which he did not seek [only] for amusement but [also he sought] to safeguard and preserve [them]. Thus also the kings who came after him made use of the book *Hazār Afsān*, which although it was spread over a thousand nights contained less than two hundred tales, because one story might be told during a number of nights. I have seen it in complete form a number of times and it is truly a coarse book, without warmth in the telling (Dodge II, 713-14).

Until recent times, the earliest surviving manuscript of the *1001 Nights* was a fourteenth-century copy from Syria, about which more will be said below. But, as if to confirm the accounts of al-Mas‘ūdī and Ibn al-Nadīm, in 1949 Nadia Abbott published a manuscript fragment containing the very beginning of a work entitled *Alf Layla* (‘A Thousand Nights’) found in the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (No. 17618). According to Professor Abbott this text represents a fragment from the earliest known extant Arabic paper book, dating from the first quarter of the ninth century, and is also of Syrian provenance (Abbott 130). In it, we are offered the beginning of the familiar tale, in which the two female protagonists are called by what seem to have been their original names as found in al-Mas‘ūdī, that is to say, Dīnāzād and Šīrāzād.

Modern scholarship has thus established that a Pahlavi work entitled *Hazār Afsāna*, which originally contained only some 200 stories, was translated into Arabic in the late eighth or early ninth century with the title of *Alf Surafāt* (‘A Thousand

Fantastic Tales’). The title was first changed to *Alf Layla* (‘A Thousand Nights’), and eventually came to be known as *Alf Layla wa-Layla* (‘A Thousand and One Nights’).²⁰ As the centuries went by, more stories were added to the collection, leading scholars to suggest that there are three major strata to the work as it appears today: (1) An ancient group of stories Indo-Persian in origin, (2) A later group that is of Syrian and Iraqi (Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd) provenance, and (3) A group that is of Egyptian (Fāṭimid, Mamlūk, and Ottoman) inspiration.²¹

All but one of the many printed Arabic texts of the *1001 Nights* in existence today, derive from four basic editions: Calcutta I (al-Yamanī), Breslau (Habicht and Fleischer), Būlāq I (al-‘Adwī), and Calcutta II (Macnaghten). Yet none of these four editions can claim “critical” status, in any strict sense of that word, for they regularly introduce changes in both the diction and the content of the manuscripts used, normally by classicizing what is colloquial in the sources, and by incorporating stories from manuscripts other than the one[s] serving as a basis for the edition. As a result, compilations that never existed in the manuscript tradition have been created, all without the slightest hint of a critical apparatus that might alert the unsuspecting reader to the alterations of the text that are being foisted upon him. Then too, as Professor Muhsin Mahdi points out, “the manuscripts of the *1001 Nights* which the four printings utilized had themselves been transcribed only a decade or two before being printed in that extensively revised fashion –all were transcribed during the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first four decades of the nineteenth” (Haddawy 35). This means that they were composed almost a century after Antoine Galland’s pioneering French translation (1704-17). Galland’s masterpiece was initially based on the oldest known manuscript, dating from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, to which he subsequently added stories derived from an oral source. There is good evidence to indicate that the modern manuscripts on which the four printed editions were based were even influenced by Galland’s translation, and that some of his French tales were retranslated into Arabic. Furthermore, the modern manuscripts on which the four earliest printings relied, were also compilations produced, upon request, by Eastern scribes eager to satisfy the demand being made upon them for “complete” versions of the text, by Western scholars who took the title of the book literally, and were disappointed to find that, in the older manuscripts, the nights hardly added up to the magic number of 1001 (Littmann 1979, 362a). Thus, no critical edition of a work as influential as the *1001 Nights* existed until 1984, when Mahdi published an edition based on the manuscript used by Galland. This means that the translations made into European languages, during the nineteenth century, rest on textual foundations that are not, strictly speaking, scholarly. If we consider only the three major translations made into English, we will find that Lane (1839-41) was

²⁰ On this point, see Oliver Asín. The author notes that, in Arabic, even numbers are considered unlucky, whereas odd ones are believed to be lucky. This has led to a tendency to round out even numbers with the addition of the word *one*; a tendency that was transmitted from Arabic to Spanish, and that Oliver Asín documents abundantly with texts of various kinds.

²¹ For a useful summary of *1001 Nights* scholarship, see Irwin.

translating (primarily) from Būlāq I (al-‘Adwī); Payne (1882-89) from Calcutta II (Macnaghten); and that Burton, when he was not plagiarizing wholesale from Payne, was also relying heavily on Calcutta II.²² At the same time, all three authors were not above incorporating stories from many other sources into their eclectic recensions. Thus, if the modern manuscripts used by the four earliest printers were actually compilations, then the printed editions relying on these manuscripts were compilations of compilations, and the nineteenth-century European translations of the printed editions only succeeded in raising the art of compilation to the third power. All this suggests rather strongly, that one overriding purpose in publishing and translating the *1001 Nights* during the past two centuries has been, primarily, to provide literary entertainment rather than scholarship. While this approach can in no way be faulted from a creative point of view, it does raise serious literary-historical problems that must be faced as we proceed.

Professor Mahdi’s pioneering edition (1984) is a most welcome departure from the remarkably confusing state of affairs that prevails in *1001 Nights* studies, insofar as it lays the foundation for a more reliable critical tradition than has hitherto been possible. In his examination of the early manuscripts, and on the basis of the colloquial diction employed in them, he distinguishes between two main families: the Syrian and the Egyptian. The earliest extensive source known, with which Galland worked, and which serves as a basis for Mahdi’s edition, belongs to the Syrian family and does not include the tale of the “Princess and the Ape.” That story is found only in the Egyptian family of manuscripts and, among the printed texts, only in Būlāq I, and Calcutta II, both of which derive from the Egyptian recensions (Chauvin V, 178 no. 102). Certain features in the tale suggest further, that it may be of Egyptian origin. These are: The setting in Egypt, the familiarity with the topography of Cairo, and the Mamlūk disguise worn by the Princess. The Mamlūks ruled Egypt from 1260 to 1517, after which the country passed into Ottoman control, but even under Ottoman rule, the power of the Mamlūks was never decisively crushed. It was not until 1811, when Muḥammad ‘Alī had the Mamlūk leaders massacred in the Citadel of Cairo, that their influence came to a dramatic halt. If the story of the “Princess and the Ape” originated in the Mamlūk period, it would be roughly contemporaneous with *La Celestina*, but it could also have originated in Ottoman times. All we can say with certainty is that we are dealing with a story concerning which both the manuscript tradition and the internal evidence suggest that it is very probably Egyptian. It may be Mamlūk, but could conceivably be either Ottoman, or even an ancient tale that came to be garnished, in later times, with Mamlūk or Ottoman trimmings.

But the fact that the story of the “Princess and the Ape” is not found in the Syrian manuscript of the *1001 Nights* cannot be used to rule out the possibility that it may well be a perfectly authentic and very traditional Arab tale for, in his attempt to reconstruct the *1001 Nights* according to the earliest sources, Professor Mahdi is not arguing that extraneous tales, eventually incorporated into that work, do not contain material that is ancient or authentic. Instead, he is only trying to sort out traditional

²² On Burton’s plagiarism of Payne’s earlier translation, see Christopher Knipp’s article.

material that *was* originally part of the *1001 Nights*, from equally traditional material that was *not* part of it. And this is a basic step that must be taken before we can proceed to study the profound literary value of this uniquely Arab contribution to world literature. On a more modest level, and in light of the factors discussed above, we must view the story of the “Princess and the Ape” as an analogue to our *Celestina* passage rather than as a direct source for it.²³ This being the case, we must proceed to ask ourselves to what extent the parallels between the two texts are significant.

The tale of the “Princess and the Ape” could not fit the parameters specified in *La Celestina* any better than it does: It provides us with a woman who lusts after an ape, along with a butcher to whom knives are everyday tools of the trade, with one of which he slaughters the ape. He then proceeds to marry the girl and rehabilitate her. Assuming that the young couple had offspring, we may imagine Calixto as being their grandson. In the *1001 Nights*, this story is immediately preceded by a close variant, also involving a young butcher who follows a girl into a cave south of Cairo, where he observes her having sexual intercourse with a bear. He kills the bear with his knife, at which point the girl awakens and, like the Princess, begs to be put to death so that she too, may join her bestial lover. The butcher responds by urging her to give up her appetite for bears and to repent, promising to marry her if only she will do so. When she refuses, he kills her. In this version of the story, since the girl dies young and without issue, it is hardly possible for her to qualify as Calixto’s grandmother, but the two tales do form a unit insofar as they explore the two possible consequences of sin: when it is followed by repentance, the sinner is forgiven and rehabilitated, but when repentance is not forthcoming, punishment is meted out swiftly and inexorably.

In an important contribution to our understanding of the *1001 Nights*, Professor Ferial Jabouri Ghazoul points out that the Chinese-box structure of its stories provides a key to how the work should be read:²⁴ In the frame-tale, Shahrazād is not narrating stories to King Shahriyār merely in order to prolong her own life, but also to reform him, for the tales she tells him often allude, directly or indirectly, to the initial act of infidelity committed by his first wife; an act that has driven the maddened King to pursue and put to death all the women in his kingdom. In this respect, Shahrazād is functioning as the medieval equivalent of a modern psychiatrist, with the King as her patient. Following Professor Ghazoul’s argument, let us note that, in the story of the “Princess and the Ape,” Shahriyār is being told that the Princess, like his own adulterous wife, begins her career by having sexual relations with a black slave. In so doing, both Queen and Princess violate three cultural taboos: they engage in sexual relations outside the marriage bed (*zinā* ‘fornication’), they do so with a social inferior (a slave), and with a member of another race (a negro). Unlike Shahriyār’s Queen, however, the Princess graduates from slaves to apes, thereby violating an even stricter

²³ Elements of the *1001 Nights* were, however, known in the West as early as the fourteenth century, and thus, long before Galland’s translation. On this point, see Abbott 164a; Armistead and Monroe; and Rouhi. See too, Hamilton, especially chap. 4, 89-102: “Turning Tricks: The Go-Between in Western Europe.”

²⁴ In addition to Ghazoul, see Gerhardt; also Todorov 67-79.

taboo involving sex between different species. This element is added to show that the Princess is even more depraved than the Queen. But unlike Shahriyār, who kills his adulterous Queen without an adequate investigation, and without granting her a fair trial when he finds her in the arms of the black slave, the young butcher proceeds to rehabilitate the Princess when he discovers the true nature of her proclivities. Furthermore, the butcher thoroughly investigates the situation, by consulting the medieval equivalent of a gynecologist, who discovers the cause of the Princess's unusual enthusiasm for apes to be physiological, and succeeds in ridding her of it. Thus, Shahrzād is telling King Shahriyār the story of a woman far more depraved than his own errant wife, yet who was given a chance to reform, and was eventually rehabilitated because she took that chance and repented. In contrast, the story of the “Lady and the Bear” explores the opposite case: that of an obdurate sinner who refuses to repent. The lesson that Shahriyār will eventually learn from many such stories is that, by killing his innocent wives over breakfast, on a daily basis, merely because of the uncommitted sins they possess the mere potential of committing in some vague future, he is upholding a travesty of justice that will eventually ruin either him or his kingdom, for he can either continue to implement his policies unchecked, in which case his outraged subjects will eventually rise up against him in defense of their daughters, or else the entire population of the kingdom will inevitably die out, for lack of women to produce offspring. From this analysis it would appear that, in the *1001 Nights*, exceptional importance is placed on the act of repentance. This is consistent with the Aš‘arī theological system, which was adopted by the Sunnī confession of Islam, according to which an omnipotent God, who preordains all events is, simultaneously, merciful in forgiving humans for those sins He compels them to commit. In contrast, in the Mu‘tazilī theological system, adopted by the Šī‘ī confession, God is primarily just, and grants human beings freedom of choice, but rewards or punishes them in strict accordance with their acts, without allowing His mercy to interfere with His application of justice. Since there is thus no room for repentance within the Šī‘ī/Mu‘tazilī system, the *1001 Nights* is, ideologically speaking, a work of Sunnī/Aš‘arī inspiration.²⁵

The above point is confirmed by the fact that, in the story of “The Lady and the Bear,” after the hero Wardān has secretly killed the unrepentant and ‘ursoerotic’ lady, he encounters the ‘Abbāsīd puppet-Caliph of the Mamlūks, al-Ḥākim bi-‘Amrillāh (r. 741/1341-753/1352).²⁶ The latter informs Wardān that he, the Caliph, had been granted prescience of the event. This implies, of course, that Wardān’s murder of the lady has been predetermined by God and, therefore, is not an act for which he can or should be held accountable.

Keeping the above considerations in mind, the strong possibility arises that the tale of the “Princess and the Ape” has been adapted at some point to fit into the particular

²⁵ This may be the true reason why Ibn al-Nadīm, a Šī‘ī and Mu‘tazilī sympathizer, considered the *1001 Nights* “a coarse book, without warmth in the telling” (Dodge II, 713-14).

²⁶ The appearance of this historical figure helps to date this version of what may very well be a much older story.

context of the *1001 Nights*, and that other analogues now lost, such as the putative version current in Spain to which we think *La Celestina* alludes, may have been slightly, or even significantly different, as commonly occurs in oral literature. Specifically, the initial episode involving the black slave may well have been added by the compiler[s] of the *1001 Nights* in order to make the tale relate more pointedly to the framing story about Shahriyār and his adulterous Queen.

There are, as has been mentioned above, many tales about apes and women, in the Western literary tradition, that have been reviewed by Otis H. Green (1956).²⁷ In fact, Green refers directly to the tale of the “Princess and the Ape,” stating that: “An elaborate tale of the *Thousand Nights and a Night* tells of a Sultan’s daughter who took a baboon as her lover. This story, says Jansen, seems to date from the first centuries of Mohammedan civilization . . .” (Green 1956, 9-10). As will be shown, it is clear that Green never read the story, but is relying on Janson. Without any further commentary on this tale, which he summarily dismisses, Green immediately proceeds to say that

. . . a closely related Western version appears in the eleventh century in the chapter on apes in Peter Damian’s *De bono religiosi Status et variorum Animalium Tropologia*: the wife of a certain Count Gulielmus had taken a male ape as her lover. This creature, seized with a jealous rage as the Count was lying with his wife, attacked and killed the unfortunate Gulielmus. Peter relates this horrible tale on the authority of Pope Alexander II, who had shown him the monstrous offspring sired by the ape, a *grandiculus puer* called *Maimo*, ‘ape’ (10; Janson 268).²⁸

²⁷ Green’s flawed article gave rise to at least three further attempts to solve the crux found in this passage: Forcadas, Burke, and Bershas. Forcadas argues that “ximio = simio = mono = Maimón-ides = judío” and that Sempronio is, therefore, implying that Calixto’s grandmother slept, not with an ape, but with a Jew, as a result of which Calixto’s lineage is “impure” (570). Burke appeals to the Ancient and Medieval medical doctrine according to which instincts prevalent in any given individual can be imprinted upon an as yet unborn descendant. Thus the grandmother’s lust for the ape stimulates Calixto’s animal instincts (88). Bershas argues that “Sempronio’s remark may be construed to suggest that Calisto’s grandfather had a casual affair with the grandmother during her youth, rewarding her with the traditional knife, and that she subsequently became pregnant. Such an interpretation, not only defaming the grandmother as a prostitute, but making Calisto’s descent illegitimate, makes us wonder at Sempronio’s temerity” (10). Clearly, it would seem, the tale of the “Princess and the Ape” offers a far more straightforward and less convoluted explanation of the passage in question.

²⁸ Here, unfortunately, Green overlooks the fact that the word *maimo* ‘ape’ derives from Arabic *maymūn* (‘fortunate’), an epithet specifically applied to apes (Viré 132b). The publication in 1992 of three shadow plays written in Egypt in the thirteenth century by the Iraqi author Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl of Mosul (d. 710/1310) has added much to our knowledge of minstrels in the medieval Arab world. The second of these plays, namely *‘Ajīb and Ġarīb*, provides us with a parade of twenty-five minstrels, tricksters, and entertainers of the sort found in the streets of medieval Cairo, some of whom were still flourishing in the nineteenth century, when they were described by Lane. One of Ibn Dāniyāl’s minstrels is called Maymūn al-Qarrād (‘Fortunate, the Ape-Trainer’), who causes a trained monkey to perform several tricks, one of which would involve masturbating in public if, as we suspect, the Arabic word for ‘mace’ (*dabbūs*) is here being used as a euphemism for ‘penis’:

Then Maymūn al-Qarrād [‘Fortunate, the Ape-Trainer’] appears with his demon, ape, and devil, saying: “The Najdī master has come to you. My drum has sounded, my reed has piped, and my monkey has danced,” and he sings, saying [*kāmil*]:

“Because of its understanding, my monkey can almost speak, and because of its graceful beauty, it is almost loved passionately.

It pounces like a eunuch slave who behaves hypocritically, and continues at times, to dance, and to clap its hands.

It does not pass through a home, leaping along its highest summits, without clinging to the ceiling.

It has the hand of a dyer: the surface of its palm is blue, when it points something out in response.

It is dressed in the fur of dogs; moreover, the fur and waistband of the grey squirrel clothe it,

And when I am sitting down, my candle is in the palm of its hand, so that it is anxious to keep the candle from burning it.

Through it, I earn my living, from what I taught it to do, ever since the little piebald kid was slaughtered.

It saw what my hand did in slaughtering the kid, hence it has obeyed me and hastened to furnish me whatever I desire.”

Then Maymūn makes the monkey dance in a veil and dunce cap, and makes it go around, attached to a rope, while the monkey leaps and turns about. Then Maymūn says: “Entertain your masters, and show them your habits,” after which he sings, saying [*zajal*]:

*“I conjure you by God, monkey,
To show me how the fat lady dances.*

I conjure you to entertain whoever is present,
And to grab these balls,
And to don a Tartar hat,
*I conjure you by God, monkey,
To dance for us like a balancing artist,*

And to jump on my head, then topple off,
To play with your ‘mace’ and give it your all,
Then lower your head and relax.
*I conjure you by God, monkey,
To collect the customer’s small change.”*

Then he says: “O notables of the people, have mercy on one whose daily bread depends upon the hands of monkeys, and on those of this specific ape,” after which he exits. (Kahle and Hopwood 81-82).

From Green's account of the story of Count Gulielmus, which we reproduce below, it is the ape that kills the Count, rather than the reverse, doing so with tooth and nail, not with a knife, thereby leaving the Count without the issue necessary to beget Calixto's parent. As for the hybrid ape-boy Maimo, it is the offspring of the Countess and the ape, and not of the Countess and the Count, hence the Count cannot be accused of being Calixto's grandfather. These details make it clear that the Latin tale has nothing whatsoever to do with the Arabic "Princess and the Ape," and that Green had not actually read the latter, but was merely alluding to it from hearsay. We therefore think that the *1001 Nights* prototype explains the allusions in *La Celestina* far more satisfactorily than the Latin analogue Green proposes, which is the following:

Sed et illud nunc subsequenter occurrit, quod mihi domnus Alexander papa necdum emenso, ut ita loquar, mense narravit. Ait enim quia nuper comes Gulielmus in Liguriæ partibus habitans marem habebat simiæ, qui vulgo maimo dicitur, cum quo et uxor ejus, ut erat impudica prorsus ac petulans, lascivius jocabatur. Nam et ego duos ejus filios vidi, quos de episcopo quodam plectibilis lupa pepererat; cujus episcopi nos exprimere nomen omittimus, quia notare quemlibet infamia non gaudemus. Cum igitur petulanti feræ mulier sæpe colluderet, ulnis astringeret, amplexibus demulceret, sed et ille nihilominus quædam libidinis signa prætenderet atque ad nudam illius carnem pertingere quibusdam gestibus anhelaret, dixit ei cubicularia sua: Permite, si placet, quidquid vult agere, ut liquido pateat quid nititur attentare. Quid plura? permisit, et quod turpe dictu est, cum femina fera concubuit; deinde consuetudo tenuit, et commercium inauditi sceleris inolevit. Quadam vero dum se comes uxori conjugali more misceret, maimo protinus, tanquam zelotypo concitatus spiritu, super utrumque prosiliit; virum velut rivalem brachiis et acutis unguibus arpaxavit, mordicus apprehendit et irrecuperabiliter laceravit. Sic itaque comes exstinctus est. Innocens igitur homo dum fidem thalami servat uxori, dum animal suum quotidianis alit impendiis, nil ab utroque

For a modern parallel to this performance, see Lane 1860; reprint 1966, 395:

The "Kureydátee" (whose appellation is derived from "kird," an ape, or a monkey,) amuses the lower orders in Cairo by sundry performances of an ape or a monkey, an ass, a dog, and a kid. He and the ape (which is generally of the cynocephalus kind) fight each other with sticks. He dresses the ape fantastically, usually as a bride, or a veiled woman; puts it on the ass; and parades it round within the ring of spectators; himself going before and beating a tambourine. The ape is also made to dance, and perform various antics. The ass is told to choose the handsomest girl in the ring, and does so; putting his nose towards her face, and greatly amusing her and all the spectators. The dog is ordered to imitate the motions of a thief, and accordingly crawls along on its belly.

For a close Medieval Andalusi parallel to the above performance, involving an ape, a dog, an ass and an oboe, see Monroe 388-91.

suspiciatur adversi, nimirum qui clementiam præbebat officii. Sed, ah scelus! et femina turpiter jus conjugalii violat, et bestia in jugulum domini gladium vibrat.

Enimvero nuper allatus est præfato papæ, et simul et nobis grandiusculus quidam puer; et si jam, ut dicitur, vicennalis, tamen prorsus elinguis et maimoni forma consimilis, ita ut eodem vocabulo nincupetur. Unde sinistra posset oriri suspicio, si hujusmodi, non jam dicam ferinus, sed ferale portentum paterna tunc aleretur in domo (Damian 789-90).²⁹

That the “abuela con el ximio” passage is a crux in *Celestina* studies cannot be doubted. Modern critics have attempted to solve it in various ways. For example, the edition of *La Celestina* published by Marciales, Dutton, and Snow gets around the problem of the knife by appealing to a Spanish children’s song: “Tu agüelo / taita / era un mono, un sapo, etc. / mírale el moño (*scilicet* coño) a tu agüela / mamá . . .” (25, n. I:42).³⁰ Since this analogue does not account for the knife, the editors find themselves in the position of having to emend *cuchillo* (‘knife’) to *cuclillo* (‘cuckold’), though how the cuckolding of Calixto’s grandfather (in itself a mere allegation *quod est demonstrandum*) can be adduced as proof that his grandmother has cuckolded him with an ape, is something we fail to grasp, given the circularity of the argument, which goes: “Your grandmother had sex with an ape, because your grandfather is a cuckold,

²⁹ “But what Sir Alexander, the Pope, told me hardly a month ago, if I may say so, happened thereafter. He said that recently, Count Guglielmus, who dwelt by the sea in the regions of Liguria, owned an ape commonly known as a *maimo*, with which his wife used to play wantonly, for she was utterly lewd and unchaste. I myself saw two of his sons whom that whore had borne to a certain reprehensible bishop, whose name we refrain from mentioning because we take no pleasure in singling out anyone’s infamy. Since the woman of whom I was speaking often used to play with the lecherous beast, hugging it in her arms and caressing it through her embraces, while it too, showed no small indications of lechery, and even lusted, through certain gestures, to get at her naked flesh, her chamber-maid said to her: ‘If you please, allow it to do its will, so that what you should try to do will become clear.’ Need one say more? She let it have its way and, what is foul to report, once the woman had lain with the beast, she persisted thereafter in that habit, and settled into a relationship unheard of in its wickedness.

In fact, one day, as the Count was joined in conjugal union with his wife, the ape immediately leapt upon the former of the two, as though its soul were aroused by jealousy, and overpowered the husband with its arms and sharp claws, as if he were a rival, seizing hold of him with its teeth, and tearing him to pieces, beyond all recovery. Thus, then, did the Count perish. Blameless without a doubt is he, therefore, who offers the kindness that is his duty, as long as he is a man faithful to his wife’s marriage bed, and feeds his animal at his own daily expense, while no hostile act is suspected from either. But, – Oh evil deed!– the wife lewdly violates the law of spouses, while the beast brandishes a sword against the throat of its master.

Recently, indeed, there was brought to the abovementioned Pope, and also to us, a somewhat largish boy who, if he is by now twenty years of age, as is claimed, is nonetheless utterly without speech, and similar in appearance to the *maimo*, so that he is called by the same name. From this the suspicion may arise that, if he is indeed of such a descent, I will no longer say that a wild creature, but rather, a deadly monster, is currently being fed in that home by a sinister paternal hand” (our translation).

³⁰ “Your grandfather / daddy / was an ape, a toad, etc. / look at the bun (*scilicet* vagina) of your grandmother / mummy. . . .”

since your grandmother had sex with an ape, because your grandfather is a cuckold, since . . .” We therefore venture to suggest that the story of the “Princess and the Ape” provides the closest known analogue, so far discovered, to the *Celestina* passage under discussion.

In what way do our findings shed new light on *La Celestina* as a whole? Here again, Professors Marciales, Dutton, and Snow argue that it would be unthinkable for a Spanish speaker such as Calixto, either in his own age or today, to react as mildly as he does to so offensive an allusion to his grandparents. To get around this problem, they proceed to water down the allusion by emendation, thereby turning it, from an insult, into a joke (25, n. I:42). In one respect, they are absolutely right: such a reference to Calixto’s grandparents is an extremely offensive one in Spanish, and would probably have sounded even more offensive in a medieval context, being applied, as it is, by a servant to a member of the nobility. But that is precisely the point. The fact that Calixto reacts so mildly to an insulting remark shows just how far gone he is; it shows that, in his present state, he has completely lost control of his life. Seen from another perspective, the passage is equally instructive. To illustrate his argument that all women are unworthy, Sempronio has invoked three examples of bestiality: Pasiphaë with a bull, Minerva with a dog, and Calixto’s grandmother with an ape. Modern criticism has tended to view the second example as an error, and to emend “Minerva con *el can*” to “Minerva con *Vulcán*” (Gilman and Severin, eds.), largely on the basis of Green’s linguistically dubious remarks (1953 470-74). But, as we have argued, such an emendation simply does not fit into the context of a string of examples involving bestiality. And here, our elucidation of the ape reference only confirms that we are dealing with such examples in this passage. There is no doubt, of course, that “Minerva with the dog” is a mistake, since no legend about Minerva having committed an act of bestiality with a dog is known to the Classical tradition. The question we should ask ourselves is not whether it is a mistake, but whose mistake it is: that of the author, or that of the literary character? It is not likely to be the author’s, for Fernando de Rojas’s knowledge of the Classics was impressive. If, instead, that mistake was deliberately put into Sempronio’s mouth by the author, it must be telling us something about Sempronio’s character. Here, there are two possibilities: either Sempronio’s mistake is unintentional, or it is deliberate. If the former, it suggests that he is being portrayed as a pretentious individual whose education is not as solid as he would have us believe. Furthermore, there is something vaguely ridiculous about a man who aspires to impress us with his education, yet confuses *Vulcán* with *el can*.³¹ If the latter, it suggests that he is not above distorting facts in order to prove a point. Put differently, his rhetoric is of the cheap variety. Either way, he cannot be trusted, nor can his advice be relied upon. If, in his speech on the unworthiness of women, Sempronio’s facts are distorted, the argument he builds on them is also fatally flawed for, in his advice to Calixto, he reasons as follows: (1) How can you pine over a woman when (2) Women have been known to

³¹ On this point we are very much in agreement with the persuasive conclusions reached by Billy Bussell Thompson, at which we have arrived by a slightly different route.

sink to the depths of depravity, of which there are many examples? (3) This does not, of course, include many women “santas, virtuosas y notables cuya resplandeciente corona quita el general vituperio” (Rico 39); nevertheless, (4) As far as depraved women are concerned, of which many examples exist, read St. John, where he says: “Ésta es la mujer, antigua malicia que a Adám echó de los deleytes de paraíso” (41).³² It should not be lost upon us that Sempronio is arguing that *all* women (‘la mujer’) are evil, on the authority of St. John, after having just admitted that *some* of them are “santas, virtuosas y notables.” Similarly, he advises Calixto not to waste his time in pining over Melibea. In so doing, he makes no attempt to determine to which of the two categories of women she belongs. Thus Sempronio is unjustly assuming, on the basis of her sex, not on that of her conduct, that Melibea is a depraved woman. All in all, what we have here is a situation in which a prejudiced, ignorant, and unscrupulous servant offers unreliable advice to a spineless master, who, in turn, foolishly accepts it. The interaction between these two mindless individuals, both of whom are made for one another, is a sure recipe for the splattering of innermost brains on the cobblestones that will eventually ensue.

³² “Saintly, virtuous, and remarkable [women], whose resplendent crown voids the overall condemnation ...”; “This is womankind, an ancient wickedness that expelled Adam from the joys of Paradise.”

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