



"¡ADIOS PAREDES!": THE IMAGE OF THE HOME IN 'CELESTINA'

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¿Qué sé yo quién está tras las puertas  
cerradas? ¿Qué sé yo si hay alguna traición?

The paranoid world of *La tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* evokes all the insecurity of fifteenth-century Spain. In itself it is a new form, a hybrid "novel in dialogue" whose tension of form is matched by the theme of conflict throughout the book. Rojas most often expresses this conflict by a consistent imagery of the destruction of the home. This is a motif peculiarly applicable not only to the author, who observed his changing society from the peripheral vantage-point of the *converso*, but to that society as a whole, for "... in Rojas' Spain the difference between inside and outside, between being provided for and abandoned to chance, between shelter and exposure was so great as to be almost palpable."<sup>2</sup> Rojas uses the theme of the destroyed house to unite the world of personal isolation to that of social alienation, and he provides an introduction to his complex interrelationship of theme and narrative pattern in the Toledo edition of 1500. The long opening sentence of his introductory "El autor a un su amigo" leads into a characteristic labyrinth. Untangled into some of its component parts, this sentence summarizes many of the book's deepest concerns and prepares us to trace some of Rojas' consistent patterns of imagery.

Rojas begins his 'letter' with the idea of exile, so prominent throughout *Celestina*, and he links the exile of the *desterrado* to that of the *retraído*. Alienation can occur within doors as well as without: the exile of "los que de sus tierras ausentes se hallan" becomes through a narrowing focus the isolation of the author, "retraído en mi cámara, acostado sobre mi propia mano" (35). House imagery is perhaps the most consistent and evocative background through which the *tragicomedia* is projected, and this first sentence prepares us both to understand the later significance of Calisto's behavior as another *retraído en la cámara*, and to expect clarity of perception from the various alienated characters in the book. For Rojas' main point here is that distance alone allows a true perspective. On both a large and a small scale, distance permits the recognition of the obligations: "Suelen los que de sus tierras ausentes se

hallan, considerar ... [cómo] servir a los conterráneos, de quien en algún tiempo beneficio recibido tienen ..." (35); "... y viendo que legítima obligación a investigar lo semejante me compelia para pagar las muchas mercedes de vuestra libre liberalidad recibidas, asaz veces retraído en mi cámara ..." (35). Rojas goes further than establishing a simple connection between distance and observation (ausentes ... considerar; retraído ... investigar); he tells us that perception, in the form of diagnostic ability, is also a result of exile. "Suelen los que de sus tierras ausentes se hallan, considerar de qué cosa aquel lugar donde parten mayor inopia o falta padezca ..." This diagnostic ability of exiles on a grand scale is transmuted *in parvo*: "... retraído en mi cámara ... me venía a la memoria no sólo ... la muchedumbre de galanes y enamorados mancebos que [nuestra común patria] posee, pero aun en particular vuestra misma persona ..." (35-36). The author picks his benefactor out of the crowd and identifies his disease, much as his exiled countrymen had recognized and diagnosed their lost country. But then, having moved in two parallel lines from his central assumption that distance allows perspective, Rojas circles around to contrast the alien and mechanistic "grandes herrerías de Milán" with the 'homely' (that is, native and human) "claros ingenios de doctos varones castellanos" (36). The latter, not the former, provide the arms with which his young friend can defend himself from love. Paradoxically, Rojas has prepared us to accept the idea that illness can be cured only when a proper distance has been established, and then has undercut that expectation by telling us that healing can come only from one's home.<sup>3</sup> It is this paradoxical juncture of within and without that contains the major force of the work, and that provides the key to Celestina's character as she tries to merge *casa* and *calle*.

But before taking us into the *Tragicomedia* proper, Rojas pauses again for a set of introductory verses, containing an acrostic for his own name, and he follows those verses with the famous Petrarchan discussion of *la contienda* in life. As Gilman suggests, these verses reinforce the idea of alienation and distance that underlies the book as a whole. "El ambiente que rodea al hombre es *ajeno y extraño*, nos dice Rojas en sus versos preliminares, y en él estamos expuestos a la destrucción."<sup>4</sup> Rojas uses these two words to describe the newly winged ant, "El aire gozando ajeno y extraño, / Rapiña es ya hecha de aves que vuelan ..." As the proverb says, "Por su mal nacieron alas a la hormiga." But Rojas turns the proverb into something rich and strange, incorporating many of his symbolic motifs: the fall; fateful motion; the combination of belonging both to earth and air, and so to neither; and the idea of self-generating destruction. In the course of *Celestina* all of these ideas are expressed through house imagery, and most of them are associated with Celestina herself, who in turn is the one character most identified with her house.

Rojas introduces birds of prey into his introductory essay as well: "Hasta los groseros milanos insultan dentro en nuestras moradas los domésticos pollos y debajo las alas de sus madres los vienen a cazar" (42). Houses, families (especially mothers), friends and society in general prove themselves inadequate refuges throughout *Celestina*. Yet this image, precisely applicable though it is, does not compare in complexity to the parable of the ant, with its multifold applicability to Celestina. Celestina, as we shall see, transforms her home into a world half within

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doors, half on the street; threatened in both settings, she can find some security only in a combination of the two. Like the winged ant, she too brings on her own destruction after an inexorable journey. And Celestina is associated with insects, primarily the bee and to a lesser extent the spider, throughout the *Tragicomedia*. By linking ant, bee and spider in a traditional medieval manner, we can approach a full appreciation of Celestina's complex relationship with her house.

Critics have long recognized the diabolical element in Celestina's character.<sup>5</sup> What is perhaps less immediately striking is the solid grounding of this diabolical element in house imagery. Celestina is seen as poisoning and corrupting the houses she enters; Alisa, in a typical minimizing of danger, recognizes this when she tells Melibea, "A tres veces que entre en una casa, [Celestina] engendra sospecha" (162). Once they are corrupted, all these houses are linked together into Celestina's web. There is more than a suggestion that Celestina is not only a witch, but a sort of gate-keeper of hell whose house acts as a passageway to the devil. Her house is not only a fulcrum for the corrupted houses around it, and the entrance to damnation for Celestina's victims, but also a parasite thriving on those other houses, as though it were weirdly and independently alive. Celestina's relationship with her house is complex and varied, but one of its clearer elements is in this diabolical aspect, for Celestina's *hechicerías* work only within-doors. Rojas first demonstrates this process in Celestina's initial approach to Calisto's house.

Calisto's relationship to his house is at least mildly perverted from the beginning; he is almost always, for instance, confined to one room, the *cámara*, and can function nowhere else in the house. His bedroom is itself a shrine to heresy. All this makes his house an easy target for Celestina's demonic captivation of it. There is a subtle transference of attitudes from her house to Calisto's. As Celestina leaves her own house, telling Elicia to shut the door--all the dominant characters in this book spend much of their time bidding others to open and close their doors, commands as emblematic of social power as of social intercourse--she almost personifies the house with her "¡Adiós, paredes!" (58). As soon as she and Sempronio reach Calisto's house, Sempronio copies her personifying attitude: "Callemos, que a la puerta estamos y como dicen, las paredes han oídos" (59). Although Sempronio lives in the house, he apparently has no keys and must demand entrance. His exclusion is underscored by Calisto's unique endearment: "¿Qué haces, llave de mi vida? Abre" (64). Celestina herself, like Leonor Alvarez de Rojas, would no doubt as a "symbol of her authority" have carried a "great bunch of keys ... at her waist" and from the dialogue we can imagine Sempronio similarly equipped.<sup>6</sup> Almost immediately after Celestina has entered his house, Calisto must assuage her doubts about payment by going to his coffer; he tells Sempronio, "... trae las llaves, que yo sanaré su duda" (65). This inconsistency in characterization, shifting the emphasis on Sempronio from exclusion to control, seems less surprising in view of the fact that those who associate with Celestina eventually share her powers. After Celestina's death, Areúsa plays celestinesque tricks and Elicia begins her own close identification with Celestina's house: "Qué allí, hermana, soy conocida, allí estoy aparrochada ... esos pocos amigos que me quedan, no me saben otra morada" (203).

Sempronio, then, comes to share Celestina's power of easy entrance into houses. Celestina can go in and out of other people's houses like a spider or like a bee. Like the spider, she is "arrinconada" (111); like the spider again, she is associated with thread and spinning: "... tomaba estambre de unas casas, dábalo a hilar en otras, por achaque de entrar en todas" (61). She enters Melibea's house easily, "Vender un poco de hilado, con que tengo cazadas más de treinta de su estado ..." (109). And once she has entered Calisto's house, we can see her poison at work in a magnified version of the parasitic attack that Sempronio has already threatened: "... traérgela he hasta la cama ..." (55). Pármemo recognizes early that "en casa [de Calisto] habrán de ayunar estas franquezas. [a Celestina]" (76), and each character in turn comes to recognize the same parasitic relationship between the two houses as well as the two people involved. Calisto indeed is the first to tell us that their houses are as involved in the situation as are he and Celestina: "Ve agora, madre, y consueta tu casa, y después ven y consueta la mía, y luego" (73). This has an especially ironic texture since it follows immediately upon Pármemo's "No hay pestilencia más eficaz, que el enemigo de casa para empecer" (73). Calisto's house, already weakened by its owner's excesses, has fallen victim to Celestina's corrupting influence, and there is a sense of complete fitness in Calisto's later impatient exclamation to Celestina: "¡O, por Dios, toma toda esta casa y cuanto en ella hay ...!" (113). It seems doubly plausible that in converting (or rather subverting) Pármemo, Celestina should use the expression "A tuerto o a derecho, nuestra casa hasta el techo" (69), for even at that point in the book the two of them do, to some extent, share Calisto's house. Celestina's later ambitions and ultimate fall stem from her first evil entrance into Calisto's house, more diabolical by far than her first approach to Melibea's house despite all the latter's "Conjúrote triste Plutón" overtones. By the time Pármemo raids Calisto's larder for the party at Celestina's house, the parasitism and infection are more than clear, and Celestina's fantasies do not need to include any gratuitous killing off of the host house: "[Calisto es] ... hombre tan rico, que con los salvados de su casa podría yo salir de lacería, según lo mucho le sobra" (147).

Celestina can always elicit some sympathy as a victim of *lacería*, even from Pármemo who knows her so well. Answering Sempronio's "Que no sé quién diablos le mostró tanta ruindad," Pármemo replies, "La necesidad y pobreza, la hambre, que no hay mejor maestra en el mundo ..." (143). But this aspect of Celestina's life does more than place her in a literary picaresque tradition; it also humanizes her wickedness: It is true, for instance, that Celestina (abetted by a corrupt society) pimps in the church: "Allí se concertaban sus venidas a mi casa ..." (151). But her church-going is connected in an absolute way with her house and so with her vulnerability as well as with her diabolical quality. "Cuando hay que roer en casa, sanos están los santos; cuando va a la iglesia ... no sobra el comer en casa" (142). In an odd way, the roles of the church and Celestina's house are reversed, as the two become linked in Celestina's city-wide net of buildings. If the church gives an opportunity for pimping, so Celestina's house acts metaphorically to give salvation through identity. Although she lives "en una casa media caída" on the outskirts of town and thus seems the most peripheral character in the book, she becomes a defining center for the town. Those who do not know her must be

strangers: "En esta ciudad nacida, en ella criada, manteniendo honra como todo el mundo sabe, ¿conocida pues, no soy? Quien no supiere mi nombre y mi casa, tenle por extranjero" (81). There is blatant irony in this picture, as with most of Rojas' references to honor, but there is also consistency, for Celestina in the midst of her roving is a center of stability for the citizens. "A quien no me quiere no lo busco. De mi casa me vienen a sacar, en mi casa me ruegan ..." (182). This interdependence of stability and wandering is what gives Celestina's relationship to her house--a relationship that continues past her death--its special quality.

Celestina has an ambivalent relation to street-life, yet on balance her attitude towards the street is one of more security than her attitude towards her own house. It is true that in one of Rojas' great set pieces, Pármeno describes the general uproar that greets Celestina's progress through the streets:

Si pasa por los perros, aquella suena su ladrido, si está cerca las aves, otra cosa no cantan; si cerca los ganados, balando lo pregonan; si cerca las bestias, rebuznando dicen: '¡Putá vieja!' ... Sino que, si una piedra topa con otra, luego suena: '¡Putá vieja!' (59-60)

On the other hand, in this same speech Pármeno recognizes Celestina's complete satisfaction in her own rogue's progress: "Si entre cient mujeres va y alguno dice: '¡Putá vieja!', sin ningún empacho luego vuelve la cabeza y responde con alegre cara" (59). And the other characters also recognize the joy Celestina takes in being on the street. As she walks along in unwonted meditation, Sempronio asks her, "¿Quién jamás te vido por la calle, abajada la cabeza, puestos los ojos en el suelo, y no mirar a ninguno como ahora?" (103). Although, as Gilman points out, "el mundo de *La Celestina* ... está caracterizado por esa falta de techo o de refugio ..." (21), Celestina sees the ultimate failure of refuge not within but without doors: "¿Qué haré, cuitada, mezquina de mí, que ni el salir afuera es provechoso ...? (86). Celestina's panegyrics about Pármeno's mother, the only friend she ever mentions, are full of proud memories of her friend's air of being at home on the street: "En mi ánima, descubierta se iba hasta el cabo de la ciudad con su jarro en la mano, que en todo el camino no oía peor de 'Señora Claudina'" (82). This is, of course, an ironic echo of the "puta vieja" speech, and yet it also conveys Celestina's own confidence when out of doors. People in other houses are dangerous, and they must be placated and deceived; their very houses listen to Celestina's plots. Real neighbors are not those who live in nearby houses--after all, Areúsa's house is visible from Calisto's window--and in fact neighborhoods as such provide only gossips, spies and invidious comparisons: "... conozco yo en la calle donde ella vive," says Areúsa of Melibea, "cuatro doncellas, en quien Dios más repartió su gracia ..." (145). The real neighborhood is defined by the street. Celestina's ideal, as remembered of her alter ego Claudina, is to wander through friendly streets: "Si salíamos por la calle, cuantos topábamos eran sus ahijados" (123).

Yet it is also significant that Celestina's formulaic expression of friendship with Claudina is a double one: "En casa y fuera, como dos her-

manas ..." (81). It is this mixture of house and street that provides the most security, for each alone is a vulnerable setting. Celestina is always aware of the physical dangers of the street, and its potholes take on some of the force of personified evil that characterizes houses: "Nunca he tropezado como otras veces. Las piedras parece que se apartan y me hacen lugar que pase" (87). Symbiosis rather than parasitism is what most characterizes the relationship of street and house. For Calisto, the house acts primarily as a stage in which to act out his role as a lovesick youth, and the street acts as its extension " ... déjame ir por las calles con esta joya [el cordón] porque los que me vieren, sepan que no hay más bienandante hombre que yo" (116). Celestina uses the street to enhance her business pose, making street and house work for her in concert. As Rojas the law student has her point out, " ... es necesario que el buen procurador ponga de su casa algún trabajo, algunas fingidas razones ... ir y venir a juicio ..." (80). Despite her pleasure in being outdoors--a pleasure that Elicia attacks with "Éstas son tus venidas? Andar de noche es tu placer ... Nunca sales para volver a casa" (132)--she will not stir from her house without a business reason. Lucrecia cannot believe that Celestina would visit Alisa and Melibea for old times' sake: "¿A eso solo saliste de tu casa? Maravíllome de ti, que no es ésa tu costumbre ni sueles dar paso sin provecho" (88). And we have Celestina's own words to prove Lucrecia's point: "De mi casa mi vienen a sacar ..." (182).

It is natural for Celestina and her heir, Elicia, to link house and street in their lives and work. Celestina knows she has succeeded with Melibea, for instance, because she knows she can move freely between her street and Melibea's house. "Buena [esperanza] se puede decir, pues queda abierta puerta para mi tornada" (197). She had admitted to Melibea that she had worried about her success, "así en el camino, como en tu casa" (160), and Elicia after Celestina's death mourns with the same almost formulaic association, "Poco se visita mi casa, poco se pasea mi calle" (208). In fact, Elicia provides the clearest example of this interaction among individual, house, and street in her decision to rid herself of grief. In a description that spirals inward from yard to home to heart and back out through door and street, incorporating in one sentence the entire world of *Celestina*, she says, " ... contaré mis gallinas, haré mi cama, porque la limpieza alegra la corazón, barreré mi puerta y regaré la calle, porque los que pasaren vean que es ya desterrado el dolor" (209). It is significant that Rojas uses one of his most evocative words--*desterrado*--to characterize the grief that Elicia is too alienated to suffer. This linking of street and house, then, provides as total a refuge as anyone can experience in Celestina while at the same time showing the ultimate failure of such refuge.

One typically complex way in which Rojas expresses this ambivalence is in comparing Celestina to a bee. In the Middle Ages as a whole, the bee was particularly associated with the formation and maintenance of a stable home: "They live in definite houses. They build their homes with indescribable dexterity ..." <sup>7</sup> The early Middle Ages esteemed the bee not only for its industry but for its chastity, associating it with the Virgin Mary. <sup>8</sup> Francis Bacon summed up a long tradition of insect imagery in his comparison of insects with scientists:

The men of experiment are like the ant: they only collect and use; the reasoners resemble spiders, who make cobwebs out of their own substance. But the bee takes a middle course; it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and the field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own.<sup>9</sup>

Rojas had all three of these insects in mind as he wrote *Celestina*.<sup>10</sup> The ant provides a touchstone for the work as a whole, since its alienation and victimization in the preliminary verses foreshadow events in the *Tragicomedia*. Spiders are indirectly associated with *Celestina*. When she drives Melibea into a frenzy, she herself remains "Arrinconada, encogida, callando, muy gozosa de su ferocidad ..." (111), like the spider who waits for its prey to become fully entangled. Spiders, like *Celestina*, never stop working, are associated with doorways and corners, and seem never to be adequately fed: "A Spider ... is provided with nourishment from the air ... It never stops working ... [It] minutely and skilfully hangs [its] roomy webs in the doorways ..." <sup>11</sup> Spiders are traditionally associated with weaving and thus with women: God "gave women the knowledge of weaving and does not leave even the spider destitute of that wisdom."<sup>12</sup> *Celestina* too is specifically involved with weaving and with thread.<sup>13</sup> Rojas associates *Celestina* with cobwebs by the technique in which one character in describing another reveals himself, as when he has *Celestina* tell Melibea: "No semejes la telaraña, que no muestra su fuerza sino contra los flacos animales" (98). But Rojas is most explicit in comparing *Celestina* to a bee.<sup>14</sup>

The spider represents the negative, destructive, house-hugging side of *Celestina*: she is so identified with her house that her potions and webs do seem to come 'out of her own substance.' Conversely, the bee represents her positive side, linking outdoors and indoors and producing honey from the garden. The irony here is that the garden, belonging in a apian pun to Melibea, is violated, for *Celestina*'s honey is poison. As Pármeno complains, "A la vieja todo, porque venga cargada de mentiras como abeja ..." (113). Lies are indeed what *Celestina* harvests and transforms. She herself refers to her corruption of Melibea as the work of a bee: "La mayor gloria, que al secreto of'cio de la abeja se da ... es que todas cosas por ella tocadas convierte en mejor ... De esta manera ... su rigor [de Melibea] traigo convertido en miel ..." (108). But it is in Elicia's lament for *Celestina* that this bee imagery, transformed into part of Rojas' extensive house imagery, becomes most potent.

Tú trabajabas, yo holgaba; tú salías fuera, yo estaba encerrada; tú rota, yo vestida; tú entrabas continuo como abeja por casa, yo destruía, que otra cosa no sabía hacer. (201)

The comparison between bee and drone is clear. Elicia, though acting as a wage-earner within, never appears outside the house before *Celestina*'s death and is seen ultimately as the parasitic drone in the hive. *Celestina* is the productive member of this corrupt society, and her powers depend on her ability to go in and out of the house, to establish other houses as hers, and to make an alien street into a welcoming refuge. She is most

deadly when using her sting to control others' gardens.

Celestina is more identified with her house than the other characters are with theirs, especially when it is considered in isolation, without the extra element of the street. Where the houses of Calisto and Melibea are deceptive refuges, Celestina's house is a real one--if not for herself, at least for others. Sempronio and Pármeno offer hospitality to their lovers in her house, and flee to it when they are threatened (175). Elicia is completely protected there. It serves as a parody of the protected garden, reflowering dozens of ex-virgins, just as comparing Celestina to a bee parodies the medieval tradition. Celestina's house is in fact a complete extension of herself. Every corner of it, as Pármeno suggests, is devoted to some aspect of her work:

Y en su casa hacía perfumes, falsaba estoraques ...  
tenía una cámara llena de alambiques ... Aparejos para  
baños, esto es una maravilla, de las hierbas y raíces  
que tenía en el techo de su casa colgadas ... (61)

Yet Celestina is alienated from this complex expression of her work. She gives the impression that she knows every inch of her house, and that every room has a special purpose for her, but Rojas undercuts this impression immediately. "Pues sube presto al sobrado alto de la solana y baja acá el bote del aceite serpentino que hallarás colgado ..." (84), she tells Elicia, and with further precision, "Entra en la cámara de los ungüentos ..." (85). But Elicia's reply is, "Madre, no está donde dices. Jamás te acuerdas a cosa que guardas" (84). In addition, Celestina is most threatened in other people's houses: "Nunca me ha de faltar un diablo acá y acullá; escapóme Dios de Pármeno, y topóme con Lucrecia" (157), and her own home acts as a perverted home as well as a diabolical factory. There, as she says, "... tengo que mantener hijas ajenas ..." (88). Celestina feels isolated and threatened in all houses. Even her lies use this theme, as when she protests to Melibea, "¿Mías [necesidades], señora? Antes ajenas, como tengo dicho; que las mías de mi puerta adentro me las paso, sin que las sienta la tierra ..." (93). And again, when denying the chain to Sempronio and Pármeno, she tells them, "Entraron unos conocidos y familiares míos en aquella sazón aquí; temo no lá hayan llevado ..." (181). In Celestina's world, it is perfectly natural to assume that one's friends and allies have robbed one's own house; such people can be trusted only out in the street, where the mock-family world of *los ahijados* has more validity.

When Sempronio tells Pármeno, "... déjala barde sus paredes, que después bardará las nuestras ..." (107), he is using Celestina's own frame of reference. Celestina's sense of reality centers in her house: "Habíame de mantener del viento? ¿Heredé otra herencia? ¿Tengo otra casa o viña? ¿Conóceme otra hacienda ...?" (81). She constantly refers to houses in her metaphors and descriptions, often to invoke a sense of wholeness: "Nunca tú harás casa con sobrado" (129). That her own sense of wholeness and of integrity is expressed in her house appears most clearly in her death scene, where her outrage is for the simultaneous violation of herself and her house. After she fails to conciliate Pármeno and Sempronio, she defends herself within the limits of her own dignity:



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... soy una vieja cual Dios me hizo, no peor que todas  
... A quien no me quiere no le busco. De mi casa me  
vienen a sacar, en mi casa me ruegan ... Dejame en mi  
fortuna. (182)

As the threat grows, Celestina's indignation at being attacked in her own house approaches frenzy:

¿Qué es esto, qué quieren decir tales amenazas en mi casa? ¿Con una oveja mansa tenéis vosotros manos y braveza? ¿Con una gallina atada? ¿Con una vieja de sesenta años? (183)

In fact, of course, she *is* "una vieja," very likely "de sesenta años" at that, but the paradox fits into the scene as a whole. Celestina, who had never felt comfortable in her house, who always had to ask Elicia for admission, who spun her webs from its corners and did not even own but rather rented the half-rotten building (203), nonetheless expected invulnerability within her house. Her sense of shock at the failure of that invulnerability resounds in her dying words, "¡justicia, justicia, señores vecinos; justicia, que me matan en mi casa estos rufianes!" (183). Her profound identification with her house persists even after her death. Our last glimpse of her is as "... llagada, tendida en su casa, llorándola una su criada" (187). And that same *criada*, Elicia, by taking over Celestina's house tries to take over her identity. She knows, after all, that "Jamás perderá aquella casa el nombre de Celestina ..." (203).

The houses of Calisto and Melibea offer no more security to their owners than Celestina's had, but Rojas develops this theme on an entirely different level with the two lovers. The identification between Calisto and his house is developed with simple irony. Calisto is always withdrawing into his bedroom, where he sets up elaborate scenes to express his lovelorn state. He begins on a relatively small scale: "Cierra la ventana y deja la tiniebla acompañar al triste" (47). When he is not in self-imposed exile in his bedroom, someone else will send him there: "... tórnate a la cámara y reposa, pues que tu negocio en tales manos está depositado" (74). Other parts of the house are mentioned only insofar as Calisto cannot cope with them. He cannot find the stableboy to get his horse out of the stable, his larder is raided to supply Celestina's table, he enters the *estrado* only to find the twilight zone, "Que ni ha dormido ni está despierto" (138). As his affair with Melibea progresses, his confinement to his bedroom takes on a more sinister aspect. The *cámara* had been since Act I a setting for heresy, but there it had been an exuberant and fantastic heresy, expressive of the future rather than the present: "Melibea soy y a Melibea adoro ..." (50). But once these boasts have become true, he renounces the outside world completely and opposes it to those two enclosed refuges, the bedroom and the garden. "No quiero ... otro padre ni madre, no otros deudos ni parientes. De día estaré en mi cámara, de noche en aquel paraíso dulce ..." (195-96). The parallel reversal of spending the day in the bedroom and the night in the garden links those two violated spaces: Melibea's *huerto* violated by Calisto, and Calisto's *cámara* violated by Celestina. Calisto's parallel victimization with Melibea's is suggested in his description as "... todos los días encerrado en casa ..." (206). He

has reversed roles with Melibea, who was never successfully *encerrada*. Calisto becomes more and more alienated from his own house, and eventually his entrance into it echoes Celestina's first stealthy approach: "Entrad callando, no nos sientan en casa" (193). While before he had wanted his servants to be an audience for his posturings in his room, now his solitude is complete: "... yo me quiero subir solo a mi cámara ... Id vosotros a vuestras camas" (193). As Celestina's poison takes a deeper hold on Calisto, he--like all the other characters she influences--comes to resemble her more and more, in this case by his deepening paranoia and alienation. The exception to this rule of general contagion is Melibea. Although she allows Celestina to corrupt her, she retains more of her original identity than do the other infected characters. A possible explanation of this anomaly is that Melibea's relationship to her house never changes. She was always alienated from it, because it always was not her own but rather her father's. It is in Melibea's house that we find the most coherent example of an aspect of house imagery dominant throughout *Celestina*, the house as a symbol for destruction.

Rojas introduces the theme of house as destruction in his preliminary essay. He presents this idea on two levels: a mock-heroic defense of the home ("Hasta los groseros milanos insultan dentro en nuestras moradas los domésticos pollos ..." 42), and the far more frightening casual destruction of buildings by fickle humanity: "¿quién explanará sus guerras ... Aquel mudar de trajes, aquel derribar y renovar edificios ...?" (42). The destruction of buildings is linked immediately by the topos of mutability and the rhetorical device of zeugma to the lack of proper perspective in mankind. Rojas uses rhetoric and irony here to support the implication of his imagery: that chaos necessarily invades both micro- and macrocosm, the house and the world. The house in *Celestina* acts throughout as a three-fold metaphor linking the failures of home, family, and society. Gilman apparently perceives this triad as one of increasingly wide scope, with the house providing the introduction to an alienating infinity, when he refers to Rojas' "visión del hombre en casa, en la sociedad y en el universo--del individuo en peligroso enfrentamiento consigo mismo, con otros y con las dimensiones de tiempo y lugar ..." (8). This clear parallelism stops short of capturing the full role of the image of the home as an emblem of destruction, for Rojas has it both ways. It is precisely the tension of crossed boundaries, when the "visión de casa" becomes the "enfrentamiento con otros," that makes the house into such a powerful symbol. The house thus serves both to define integrity and to signal collapse. Its underlying paradoxical quality derives from Rojas' initial assumption that isolation allows recognition and alienation, perception.

Several variants of this house-as-destruction theme have already become obvious. For instance, one cannot examine the diabolical aspect of Celestina's house without recognizing that in some senses her house appears to participate actively in sin, both as parasite and as progenitor, as we see from Pármeno's description (p. 61). Again, it is clear that one symptom of Calisto's increasing alienation and corruption is his inability to use the house as a whole rather than as a series of isolated rooms. And Rojas has also already suggested the failure of adjacent houses to be aligned into any kind of real neighborhood. This theme, strong enough in peripheral suggestion, becomes almost overpowering as a central motif.

Rojas initially sets up a different atmosphere than had appeared in Act I. There, the original author had befogged us as the house appears in turn as personified evil, an intricate stage, an extension of self, an inadequate refuge, and a series of disjointed parts (we gradually assume a picture of Calisto's house from the door, stairs, etc.). By Act II, house imagery is still strong but has become more consistently that of destruction. Pármemo, in deciding to go along with Celestina, says "Que si dijere comamos, yo también; si quiere derrocar la casa, aprobarlo; si quemar su hacienda, ir por fuego" (78). Sempronio, in asserting that it would be impossible "quemarnos con las centellas que resultan de este fuego de Calisto" (79), finds reassurance by comparing his master to a toppling house, in a phrase of brilliant foreshadowing: "El tiempo me dirá qué haga; que primero caiga del todo dará señal, como casa que se acuesta" (80). Early in *Celestina* Rojas adds another dimension to this image. He joins the assumption that control of one's home is control of one's self--the home: integrity equation that appears so clearly in Celestina's expectations--to its obverse, that lack of control over one's home leads to the destruction of both self and house. This dependent chaos is revealed most clearly in *Celestina* through discussions of the plight of servants. With masterful irony of structure, Rojas shows alienation through the eyes of alienation. Distance, he suggests once more, allows for diagnosis, though not a cure.

Most of the characters in the book suffer alienation and abuse in the homes of others, and this in fact is a characteristic expectation of service. Celestina praises Calisto by opposing him to other masters who reject their obligations: "Que no es de los que dicen, 'Vive conmigo y busca quien te mantenga'" (180). This is Rojas at his most ironic, for not only have Calisto's servants become the real retainers of Celestina, but also Calisto himself has less notion of his obligations than anyone else. His reaction to the deaths of Pármemo and Sempronio is adequately distraught but purely selfish: "veo la mengua de mi casa, la falta de mi servicio, la pérdida de mi patrimonio, la infamia que tiene mi persona ..." (193). Here Calisto is only reiterating the viewpoint of the other masters in the book, who (often *in absentia*) make artificial connections between service, house and honor. Their connections are even more artificial when viewed against the real interdependence of those three aspects of the home, an interdependence as real for the servants as for their masters. The servants in *Celestina* have their own sense of honor, maintained despite their alienation within another's house. Forged through a suitably Petrarchan conflict, it is thus stronger than the sense of honor of their masters, which must be maintained through the appearance of an integral home. And Rojas undercuts any such appearances by presenting us with the servants' point of view. Pármemo makes the obvious connection between domestic work and alienation in his comment, "... he andado por casas ajenas harto tiempo y en lugares de harto trabajo" (176). Celestina herself formulates the escape from alienation that all these characters seek: *vivir reposado* means "... a vivir por ti, a no andar por casas ajenas ..." (121). In describing maidservants abused by their mistresses, Elicia makes an unconscious comparison of the idea of *honra* in these two classes. The mistresses, rather than meeting their obligations, throw their servants out of the house, "diciendo: 'Allá irás, ladrona, puta, no destruirás mi casa y honra'" (149). The servant, on the other hand, finds that whatever self-respect she has is

not in the rotten world of the upper classes, but out on the street. "La mejor honra que en sus casas tienen," says Elicia ironically, "es andar hechas callejeras, de dueña en dueña, con sus mensajes acuestas" (149). This is the same house/street tension that characterizes Celestina, and it is here widened to embrace all those in her social class: The perquisites of the home--honor, security, identity--are transmuted into the world of the street. Rojas shows us only two roads of escape from the alienation of servitude in another's house. One is independence within one's own home: "Por esto me vivo sobre mí, desde que me sé conocer ... Por esto, madre, he querido más vivir en mi pequeña casa, exenta y señora, que no en sus ricos palacios sojuzgada y cativa" (149, 150). The other is by seeking refuge outside the house, either by combining street and house, as do Celestina and the maids, or in the complete rejection of boundaries. It is a short step for Melibea from the garden to the outside world, for any space outside of the house is equally disorienting: "Si pasar quisiere la mar, con él iré; si rodear el mundo, lléveme consigo; si venderme en tierras de enemigos, no rehuiré su querer" (206).

Calisto's lament for his servants--"veo la mengua de mi casa"--conjoins every aspect of the upper class's alienation from their homes. His first confusions revolve around the disparity between secrecy and publicity that is his version of the lower class's *casa/calle* tension. This concern for the opinions of others leads him naturally into a quest for someone at home in whom he might confide:

¿Qué haré? ¿Qué consejo tomaré? ¿A quién descubriré  
mi mengua? ¿Por qué lo celo a los otros mis servidores  
y parientes? Tresquilanme en concejo y no lo saben en  
mi casa. Salir quiero ... (194)

Calisto's own process of thought has led him to his first uneasy glimmer that his best security might be outside his own house. "Salir quiero ..." He begins to try to extend his domestic world outside his own walls and then immediately retreats from what he implicitly recognizes is a departed world of social order and obligations: "Y para proveer amigos y criados antiguos, parientes y allegados, es menester tiempo ..." (194). He focuses his rage at the loss of this world against the judge who had sentenced Pármeno and Sempronio to death. "¡O cruel juez, y qué mal pago me has dado el pan que de mi padre comiste!" (194). The judge, who by his very role is most important in holding the bonds of society together, paradoxically appears to Calisto as the epitome of social anarchy.<sup>15</sup> In typical Rojas fashion, Calisto by accusing another condemns himself: "Mirarás que tú y los que mataste, en servir a mis pasados y a mí, érades compañeros; mas, cuando el vil está rico, no tiene pariente ni amigo" (194). Having lost Pármeno and Sempronio, Calisto has no one to turn to, neither companion, friend nor relation. He has, as in the words of the proverb he himself quotes, created his own demons within his own walls: "del monte sale con que se arde y que crié cuervo que me sacase el ojo" (194).

Calisto moves perilously close to a recognition of his own responsibility. We realize as he does that he is once more alone in his bedroom, isolated and alienated:

¿Pero qué digo? ¿Con quién hablo? ... Cata que estás en tu cámara. ¿No ves que el ofendedor no está presente? ¿Con quién lo has? Torna en ti. (194)

Rojas gives us a whole crumbling world in this brilliant sequence. Ultimately, Calisto is incapable of "tornar en sí" because he refuses to recognize that the offender is indeed present in the room with him. Only Calisto's *cámara* can be the appropriate setting for this edge and recoil from recognition. The bedroom is marginal to the house in the same way that Calisto is marginal to his society. According to Gilman, the *converso* "vivía al margen: observaba desde fuera: tenía una perspectiva y una capacidad de evaluación clínica ..." (14). Calisto, inspired to heresy by Melibea and converted to evil by Celestina, becomes alienated enough to see clearly from the periphery of events, but because he is ultimately entangled with and representative of the decaying social order in this world, he is denied the ability to understand what he observes. As he recoils from the edge of recognition, thus finally denying himself heroic status, he moves full circle to try and convince himself that, after all, perhaps the judge meant well. But this effort of imagination calls for a complete reversal of the social order: "... antes le quedo deudor y obligado para cuanto viva, no como a criado de mi padre, pero como a verdadero humano" (195). From this point on, Calisto can move only in the direction of increasing isolation, expressed in terms of alienation from his family, friends, and not least, his house. "No quiero ... otro padre ni madre, no otros deudos ni parientes. De día estaré en mi cámara ..." (196).

Melibea too reaches the same point of isolation: "... ni quiero marido ni quiero padre ni parientes ..." (207). But her isolation has taken a different route from Calisto's. He has changed his world (that is, his house) into a threat against himself; she has abused someone else's world (that is, her father's house) to try for a deceptive freedom. Melibea participates in the "world turned upside-down" motif by becoming enslaved to love:

... háncense siervas de quien eran señoras, dejan el mando y son mandadas, rompen paredes, abren ventanas ... a los chirriadores quicios de las puertas hacen con aceites usar su oficio sin ruido. (83)

Rather than becoming alienated from her house, as does Calisto, she extends her original alienation to the point where the house helps her to deceive her father. In Melibea's home, her servant is envious and discontented, her father is trapped in the honor-family-house nexus, and her mother is completely ineffectual. All these characterizations, particularly that of the mother, continue expectations previously set up by Rojas. From the introductory essay, when "los domésticos pollos" are hunted "dejabo las alas de sus madres" (42), mothers are portrayed as useless refugees. They are associated with perversion of the natural order--Melibea is described "así como corderica mansa que mama su madre y la ajena ..." (166). Melibea does in fact find a "madre ajena" in Celestina; this transference is suggested by dialogue, for all the characters call Celestine "madre" or, at worst, "tía," and it is confirmed by Melibea's actions.<sup>16</sup> She confesses to her father, "Descubría a ella lo que a mi

querida madre encubría" (230). Yet Rojas suggests that this filial perversity is at least as much as Alisa's fault as Melibea's, and he ultimately blames Pleberio. Not only does Alisa, though knowing better, abandon Melibea to Celestina's predatory visit, an act that "goes far beyond mere folly," but she is too useless even to appear at her daughter's death-scene.<sup>17</sup> "Tu madre está sin seso en oír tu mal: No pudo venir a verte de turbada" (226). Even Alisa's stymied activities here are the passive ones of hearing and seeing. The gift of diagnosis, let alone of cure, is denied Alisa; she is too far out on the margin of events.

Melibea destroys her home by destroying her parents, and her father's loss in particular is in turn expressed through the image of the destroyed house.<sup>18</sup> Melibea sums up a whole complex interrelationship when she cries, "¡o mi padre honrado, cómo he dañado tu fama y dado causa y lugar a quebrantar tu casa!" (192). For Melibea, it is always her father's house that she has destroyed. "Dile [a Calisto] entrada en tu casa. Quebrantó con escalas las paredes de tu huerto..." (230). She had in the beginning of her affair with Calisto tried to stop him by asking if he wished to "perder y destruir la casa y honra de mi padre" (96). Pleberio shares the same assumption; he asks Fortune, "¿por qué no quemaste mi morada?" (233) and "¿Quién acompañará mi desacompañada morada?" (235). Only on a small scale does the possessive pronoun change: "¿Qué haré, cuando entre en tu cámara y retraimiento y la halle sola?" (234). It is this sharp conflict between his space and Melibea's that makes his lament so poignant. Within his very walls, his own daughter had lived in "... un laberinto de errores, un desierto espantable, una morada de fieras ..." (233). The sudden loss of perspective is terrifying. Yet Pleberio is no more an innocent victim than is any other character. If Rojas identifies him with house and honor and destroys all three together, it is because of the intrinsic weakness of Pleberio's house.

All three of the women who live in this house--Alisa, Melibea and Lucrecia--are deeply alienated from any control over their lives. The word *ajeno*, so frequent throughout *Celestina*, seems even more frequently to characterize marriage, and Pleberio and Alisa are the only married couple in the book. Their discussion of marrying off Melibea is among the book's most ironic scenes, and not only because she is in effect already married. Pleberio's discourse on marriage moves with no sense of incongruity from grave to marital home: "... todos están en sus perpetuas moradas ... Demos nuestros hacienda a dulce sucesor ... [Melibea] parecerá ya mejor en su propia casa que en la nuestra" (204). Melibea does indeed prefer "su propia casa" but not surprisingly she interprets that home as the grave. She does not, after all, want "las maritales pisadas de ajeno hombre" (206). And she has a good model for disenfranchisement in her mother, who is alienated even from her natural office of matchmaker, leaving a vacuum which not Pleberio but Celestina must fill.<sup>19</sup> "Pero como esto sea oficio de los padres y muy ajeno a las mujeres ..." (204), Alisa says, contradicting (at the least) a long tradition of lyric poetry.<sup>20</sup> And Pleberio gives a further hint of the state of their marriage when he reminds an abstract Love, "Bien pensé que de tus lazos me había librado, cuando los cuarenta años toqué, cuando fui contento con mi conyugal compañera" (235). There is considerably more genuine sentiment, for all its parodic overtones, between Areúsa, the whore, and Pármeno, soon to be a murderer.

Pleberio, as the only example of a rich man with a family, belongs ultimately to the theme of the perverted house, in which the rich man's relatives "no ven la hora que tener a él so la tierra y lo suyo entre sus manos y darle a poca costa su morada para siempre" (91-92). It is perhaps significant that in this sentence the earlier reading for *morada* was *casa*: Rojas seems to have increasingly separated one's dwelling from one's home, for the latter is increasingly perceived as an illusory refuge.

Hilanderas, ¿Qué hicisteis o hilasteis,  
 si en marzo no curasteis?  
 Fui al mar, vine del mar,  
 hice casa sin hogar,  
 sin azada ni azadón,  
 y sin ayuda de varón ... 21

*Celestina* offers a rich and complex image of the home; but if any one idea predominates, it is, perhaps, that a woman alone has the ability to create a *casa* or an *hogar*, and only a woman can overcome the illusory refuges that pass as homes in the book. *Celestina* is a witch, *Elicia* and *Areúsa* are whores and *Melibea* is a suicide, but at least each of them consciously chose her own path. By contrast, *Calisto*, *Pleberio*, *Pármeno*, and *Sempronio* seem destroyed almost by accident, and none of them is able to find security even in a transient home. None of them is flexible enough to survive a world whose limits are disappearing and whose order is overturned. Each character in the book is threatened by this changing world, but each perceives it on a different scale: *Elicia*'s lament is for *Celestina*, *Celestina*'s for her house, *Calisto*'s for his identity, *Pleberio*'s for "his" world. Nothing could be further from *Pleberio*'s "un desierto espantable" than *Celestina*'s "Todo tiene sus límites, todo tiene sus grados" (150). Rojas creates a world of insecurity and destruction, but in this one aspect at least it bears comparison with the more stable world of the earlier Middle Ages. There too the women put everything into the making of a home, even "sin ayuda de varón"; and there too it is those on the margin of society who have the clearest vision and the most central roles.<sup>22</sup>



Zuzecia Melibea Bolo Arrius Calisto

La muerte de Calisto.  
 ¿Burgos, 1499?  
 Auto 149



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina*, ed. Dorothy S. Severin (Madrid: Alianza, 1969), p. 169. All quotations are from this edition and will be designated by page numbers in parentheses after the quotation.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Gilman, *The Spain of Fernando de Rojas* (Princeton: University Press, 1972), p. 425.

<sup>3</sup> For another perspective on the nature of healing in *Celestina*, see George Shipley, "Concerting through Conceit: Unconventional Uses of Conventional Sickness Images in *La Celestina*," *MLR*, 70 (1975), 324-32.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Gilman, *Introducción, La Celestina*, ed. Severin, p. 21. Subsequent quotations from this prologue will be designated by page numbers in parentheses after the quotation.

<sup>5</sup> Notably Lida de Malkiel, Russell, Deyermond and Sánchez.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from Gilman, *The Spain of Fernando de Rojas*, p. 422.

<sup>7</sup> T. H. White, *The Book of Beasts* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), p. 153.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 153.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Klingender, p. 492.

<sup>10</sup> Rojas' use of insect imagery is another manifestation of his general familiarity with bestiaries, already discussed by Alan Deyermond in "Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*: A Postscript," *Celestinesca*, 2:1 (May 1978), 25-30. As George Shipley points out in a note to this article, "Rojas is not here alluding to a bestiary tale (i.e. pointing out from text to source) ... The resultant image is not learned but part of an associational cluster in Rojas' psyche" (n. 7, p. 29).

<sup>11</sup> White, pp. 191, 213.

<sup>12</sup> White, p. 213.

<sup>13</sup> See Alan Deyermond, "*Hilado-Cordón-Cadena*: Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*," *Celestinesca*, 1:1 (May 1977), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> George Shipley mentions the incongruity of associating *Celestina* with a bee in his unpublished paper, "Bestiary References in Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina*: The Ironic Undermining of Authority" (p. 7 of mimeograph).

<sup>15</sup> As P. E. Russell has pointed out in "Estudios jurídicos de Fernando de Rojas," in *Temas de 'La Celestina'*..., esp. pp. 336-37, the judge did in fact act unjustly. Calisto's reactions, however, depend entirely on



his own desires rather than on any factual observations. He is entirely self-centered.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of Celestina's maternal aspect in the eyes of Melibea and, especially, Pármeno, see Jane Hawking, "Madre Celestina," *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, Sezione Romanza*, 9 (1967), 177-90.

<sup>17</sup> Deyermond, "*Hilado-Cordón-Cadena ...*", p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> On Melibea's destruction of her parents, see George Shipley's note to Deyermond, "Symbolic Equivalence ...", no. 10, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> Earlier medieval Spanish laws, codified in the early thirteenth century, establish the mother's traditional role in marriage negotiations. See Heath Dillard, "Women in Reconquest Castile: The Fueros of Sepúlveda and Cuenca," in *Women in Medieval Society*, ed. Susan Stuard (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), esp. pp. 79-80.


<sup>20</sup> See J. G. Cummins, *The Spanish Traditional Lyric* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1977), pp. 54-57, 89-98.

<sup>21</sup> Cummins, p. 109.

<sup>22</sup> I wish to thank Professors Dorothy S. Severin and Alan D. Deyermond, who read and commented on an early version of this article. It was originally presented as a paper to their Medieval Spanish Research Seminar at Westfield College (London University), from which I received many helpful suggestions.



[CELESTINA]  
**TRAGICO**  
MEDIA DE CALIS.  
to y Mehbés, en la qual se cotio  
né de mas de su agradable y dul  
ce estilo muchas tenencias phi  
losophales, y auisos muy meces  
sarios para mancebos, mostrá  
doles los engaños que ellá  
se cerrados en siruítas  
y Alcahuetas.



Con licencia impressa  
EN ALCALA  
En casa de Iuan de  
Yillanueua. 1569.  
Acosta de Pedro del Bosque B  
brero en Alcalá.

ALCALA, 1569