

**THE MAL DE LA MADRE AND THE FAILURE OF  
MATERNAL INFLUENCE IN CELESTINA**

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In Act VII of *Celestina* Fernando de Rojas devotes his attention to a medical problem which was thought in ancient and medieval times to afflict women. Areúsa is suffering from the *mal de la madre*: "Mal gozo vea de mí, si burlo; sino que á quatro oras que muero de la madre, que la tengo sobida en los pechos..." (II, 133). Critics heretofore have taken very little notice of how significant is the mention of this difficulty, doubtless understanding it as but yet another of the many references from the culture of the quotidian which are so common in *Celestina*. In addition, of course, Areúsa is a relatively minor character and the scene in which the *mal de la madre* is mentioned appears to have no great relevance to the overall structure of the work.

The *mal de la madre* or "wandering womb" was a malady familiar to both lay and medical people in ancient times and it was widely commented upon in medical writings. The womb was thought of as a kind of animal, a frog or a toad, and it was believed that this being could at certain times wander about within the body of a woman producing a number of unpleasant symptoms such as

shortness of breath, aphonia, pain, paralysis, choking and suffocation as well as a violent seizure of the senses (Veith, 10, 12, 23, 29). The concept was accepted as valid by both Plato (Veith, 7) and Hippocrates (Zilboorg, 47) although denied by Galen (Veith, 31). The idea was firmly rooted in folk culture and it has continued to exist there down to modern times. Rabelais mentions it in *Pantagruel* (Veith, 107-108), it is referred to in *Mamotreto* 23 of Francisco Delicado's *La Lozana andaluza* (108), and the modern historian of Spain William Christian states that the belief in the wandering womb was still held to be a cause of madness at the shrine of La Balma in Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century (196).

Celestina's remedy for the discomfort is completely in accord with the advice of ancient physicians who believed that strong odors, both pleasant and unpleasant, could be effective in relieving symptoms (Veith, 3, 5, 13, 23, 30). "Todo olor fuerte es bueno: assí como poleo, ruda, axiensos, humo de plumas de perdiz, de romero, de moxquete, de encienso: recebido con mucha diligencia, aprovecha y afloxa el dolor, y buelve poco a poco la madre a su lugar" (Act VII; II, 134). But she also realizes, as did most medieval doctors (Jacquart and Thomasset, 174) that the only permanent cure for the infirmity is indulgence in sex and eventually motherhood: "mientras no parieres, nunca te faltará este mal y dolor que tienes agora (II, 135). And, indeed, such is seen to be the case at the beginning of Act VIII when Areúsa finds that her night of love with Pármeno has availed her little in regard to her suffering: "...no se me á quitado el mal de la madre" (II, 145).

It is also in Act VII of *Celestina* that Fernando de Rojas begins to establish firmly the idea of Celestina as "mother" or perhaps, better, "stepmother" to Calisto and Melibea and also to the various servants.<sup>1</sup> In her lengthy discourse to Pármeno at the beginning of the Act the old bawd attempts to convince him (and by extension all the others) that they should accept her as a strong and positive maternal figure: "porque yo te tenía por hijo, a lo menos casi adoptivo" (II, 121). She then entwines a long series of images and themes which she uses to associate herself with ideas related to the caring and protective mother:

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<sup>1</sup> See Jane Hawking's article which shows how firmly Rojas establishes Celestina as a mother figure, albeit a negative one.

Pues mira, amigo, que para tales necesidades, como estas, buen acorro es una vieja, conocida, amiga, madre y más que madre, buen mesón para descansar sano, buen ospital para sanar enfermo, buena bolsa para necesidad, buena arca para guardar dinero en prosperidad, buen fuego de invierno rodeado de assadores, buena sombra de verano, buena taverna para comer y beber. (II, 122)

This imagery suggests that Celestina is an affirmative mother figure in two ways: First, she is interested in and capable of fulfilling the needs of her "children" in very real and concrete terms. For Calisto and Melibea this means that she will be able to facilitate a relationship between them, the desire for which will become the only object of their existence. Calisto has accepted her in this role from Act I when he refers to her as "la madre" (II, 42). When Celestina arrives at Melibea's house in Act X, the young woman who was previously so full of disdain now immediately accepts her in the maternal role of alleviator of illness: "Madre mía, que me comen este coraçón serpientes dentro de mi cuerpo" (II, 176-77).

Second, the imagery implies the possibility of a return to or an existence in a safe and protective ambience which would resemble the womb. Such a restoration would bear all the implications for positive rebirth and regeneration which have been and still are associated with this idea. Again Calisto has seen Celestina in such terms from Act I: "¡O salud de mi pasión, reparo de mi tormento, regeneración mía, vivificación de mi vida, resurrección de mi muerte" (II, 41); and it is clear that in Act X Melibea has reached the same conclusion: "¡O mi madre y mi señora!, haz de manera como luego le pueda ver, si mi vida quieres" (II, 184).<sup>2</sup>

Celestina does, of course, help to facilitate the trysts in Melibea's garden which produce short-term sexual satisfaction for the lovers. But the result of her actions is negative in extreme for practically all the characters in the work. Far from being a positive mother figure who secures the well-being of her children in both

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<sup>2</sup> See my 1977 article in which I attempt to relate these themes to the imagery of alchemy.

physical and metaphysical terms, the old woman initiates a course of action which brings ruin and destruction to those who have been foolish enough to seek metaphorical shelter under her mantle.

There is textual evidence to suggest that the phrase *mal de la madre* can imply both the wandering womb and the negative influence of the old woman herself. In Act I Pármemo has accused his master of a most heinous variety of idolatry because he has expressed such strong admiration for Celestina: "¡Y en tierra está, adorando a la más antigua y puta vieja [tierra] que fregara sus espaldas en todos los burdeles del mundo!" (II, 42).<sup>3</sup> Calisto does not hear or understand what his servant has said as his mind is fixed only on what he hopes will be the palliative words of Celestina who has just finished whispering something to Sempronio. "¿Qué dezía la madre?" (II, 42) asks Calisto. This phrase, with its article "la" sets a kind of grammatical identification of Celestina as "madre" with the image of the womb as "madre."

When Fernando de Rojas introduces the theme of the "wandering womb," the *mal de la madre* in Act VII, he does so, I believe, to suggest far more than just the physical illness which afflicts Areúsa. He means to associate the pretensions of "la madre Celestina" and her supposed positive role with the themes and images which for centuries had been connected with a disease which bore important symbolic meanings in ancient and medieval civilization. My thesis is that Areúsa's "wandering womb" serves as a symbol which demonstrates the failure of affirmative maternal functions in *Celestina*. The unhappy endings for all the characters in the work result then from a metaphorical "mal de la madre," centered in Celestina, which is the opposite of all that which metaphorical positive motherhood can imply.

The possibility for a return to a positive and stable protective womb which has been suggested by Celestina's presentation of herself in Act VII disappears as the author continues to develop the mood of carelessness and flight which will soon characterize the drama. After

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<sup>3</sup> Marciales chooses the word "vieja" over the "tierra" of several other editions. But if one takes the phrase as "puta tierra," then Pármemo is identifying Celestina with the the earth, one of the most basic symbols for the matrix.

the characters in the work accept Celestina as a motherly refuge, they begin to move toward that situation which will eventually result in the destruction of many of them.

In Act VIII the text brings forward those images of sleep, forgetfulness, and abandonment of responsibility which will so color the work thereafter. Pármeno awakes after his night of love with Areúsa suddenly aware that he has neglected his responsibilities to his master: "¡En qué gran falta é caído con mi amo! De mucha pena soy dino. ¡O qué tarde es!" (II, 145). A bit later in the same Act Calisto will also awaken and will find it difficult to believe that it is so late: "¿Qué dizes, loco? ¿Toda la noche es pasada?" (II, 152). The eventual result of the process initiated here will be Calisto enclosed in his darkened house during the day sallying forth in the evening not for some knightly enterprise but only for the felicities of Melibea's garden. He has in fact fashioned a womblike atmosphere for himself but it is hardly one that can result in rebirth or regeneration.

It is also true that those patriarchal foundations which we would normally associate with works produced in Western culture are not presented as successful in *Celestina* (Burke, 1993). Calisto as "diestro caballero" should have been the epitome of what late medieval civilization might have desired in a young man of aristocratic birth. But it is evident in his diatribe against the "crüel jüez" in his beautiful soliloquy in Act XIV that he has certainly abandoned this role if he ever had embraced it. Pleberio throughout his life seems to have been an exemplary embodiment of patriarchal accomplishment since it is obvious from his long declamation at the end of the work that he had labored intensively to fulfil the mandates imposed upon him by culture. But it is equally clear that he is convinced that he has not succeeded: "Del mundo me quexo, porque en sí me crió" (Act XXI; II, 267).

It is important to remember, however, that the failure of both Calisto and Pleberio to accomplish what they should results from the interventions of Celestina. It is her negative influence which is responsible for the severe problems which beset them the characters in the work. A question perhaps implied, or at least latent in the text, is whether an exercise of positive maternal force might have yielded affirmative results. This idea apparently did not interest Rojas, so that we are left only with the principle that the *mal de la madre* has produced disaster. The failure of the maternal function in *Celestina*

is in line with what Dorothy Severin sees as the overall message of the work--there is no human system which can be understood as well-ordered and which yields positive results (120).<sup>4</sup>

Pleberio ends his complaint not with some final reference to his failure as father and executor of grand patriarchal designs but with an allusion which effectively associates the nonfulfillment of both maternal and paternal functions in *Celestina*: "¿Por qué me dexaste penado? ¿Por qué me dexaste triste y solo in hac lacrimarum valle?" (II, 267-68). This Latin phrase is from the antiphon "Salve Regina" sung in praise of the Virgin and it implies within itself very well both the positive and negative poles of the maternal image and by extension those of the paternal as well. Pleberio's question is one which seems to have been constantly posed in the Middle Ages, as is evident from this commentary on the antiphon done by in the twelfth century by the Austrian monk Odo of Morimond: "Heu! mater mea: cur me genuisti filium doloris et amaritudinis, indignationis, plorationis?" (Canals, 232). Mary as positive female figure can, of course, aid in freeing the suffering sinner from the condition of misery. But as M. M. Davy has shown, the Virgin not only symbolically represents within herself images and themes relating to protection, salvation, and renewal but also bears within an "aspect ténébreux." This "aspect ténébreux" should bear no connection to evil but is one rather which would suggest the natural processes of all life (375).

Nevertheless on occasion certain symbols linking the idea of the mother to themes of destruction and annihilation were attracted to a locus of images related to the Virgin. Such negative imagery is illustrated by Odo a few lines above the one previously quoted: "Contremisce a dentibus bestie infernalis, a uentri inferi a rugientibus preparatis ad escam." These teeth of this hellish beast and this lower belly are not simply images that imply a situation contrary to the one suggested by the succour of the Virgin, but are ones, I believe, that relate to and derive from various ancient precepts having to do with the idea of the "destructive mother" which find representation in *Celestina* in terms of the *mal de la madre*.

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<sup>4</sup> In her article in this volume Severin suggests that there is a magical empowerment of women in *Celestina*. But again the advantage can be seen only as temporary.

A. A. Barb has studied a large number of ancient symbols of what he has termed the "*Matrix*-archetype" (1953, 210) and has found that in many cases such representations herald the kind of ambivalence sensed above in the citations from Odo of Morimond. On the one hand the womb-symbol suggests rebirth and fulfilment. On the other it is connected with a whole series of images linked with the earth, the abyss, the nothingness to which active, organic life is always slated to return. Critics of a psychoanalytical bent explain such symbolism as resulting from a desire on the part of the human being for a return to the unconscious to find renewal or, in its negative aspect, for an escape from the painful striving of life (Rank; Jung and von Franz).

Barb presents a great array of symbols from ancient cultures which have been used to represent this *matrix* in both its positive and its negative terms. One of the strong negative emblems is the animal-like uterus which supposedly roamed through the woman's body (211). Certain Byzantine amulets which he describes are concerned with taming this wandering creature which "coils like a serpent," "hisses like a snake," and "roars like a lion" and seek to direct it to "settle down like a lamb" (1953, 210-211).

Marija Gimbutas, in her study of archaeological remnants that support her thesis that matriarchal cultures preceded Indo-European civilization in Europe, has found that the figure of the mother goddess as life-giver was frequently represented in the shape of a toad or a frog (1982, 174; 1991, 244), animals which sometimes were used to represent the theme of fertility.<sup>5</sup> But she hastens to remark that the toad also bore negative connotations and she mentions that it was often connected with the idea of the wandering womb. The implication here is that there existed some variety of link between the concept of the mother goddess in her negative aspects and the image of the roaming uterus.

The power that the image of this roaming uterus might obtain in the popular and literary imagination finds superb illustration in

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<sup>5</sup> Celestina is associated with frogs in Pármeno's long denunciation of her in Act I when he says that all the sounds and noises of the world proclaim her as "puta vieja." "Las ranas de los charcos otra cosa no suelen mentar" (II, 35).

*King Lear* when the aged father begins to realize fully what evil his treacherous daughters Goneril and Regan are capable of perpetrating. As one critic has noted, Shakespeare has taken the symbol of the wandering womb from its usual feminine context and has used it to imply that Lear carries hell within him and that it should be called "Mother" (Aronson, 227):

O, how this mother swells up toward my heart  
*Hysterica passio* down, thou climbing sorrow;  
 Thy element's below (II, iv, 54-56).

The positive side of maternal influence alluded to in the phrase which Pleberio quotes from the antiphon from the *Salve Regina* figures the Virgin as the ultimate protector of the human race. In *Celestina* the role of the Virgin is not greatly stressed although Calisto does call upon her for succour just after he has fallen from the ladder (II, 250).<sup>6</sup> The text does make reference, however, on a number of occasions to St. Mary Magdalene who by her very name enters into close figurative association with the mother of Christ.

The Middle Ages believed that the locution *Eva-Ave* was a brief formula that compressed a long sequence of events from Sacred History into one simple phrase. The transgressions of the first mother Eve were rectified when the Angel Gabriel addressed Mary with an "Ave" which signalled that she would bear the Christ-child. This process of conversion is an extremely important positive, spiritual trajectory embodied in the feminine and epitomized in those women who mirror in their lives the sequence established for the benefit of human beings by the Virgin who reverses the harmful effects of the actions of Eve. This paradigm of conversion expressed in *Eva-Ave* was extended in hagiography to apply to the lives of a number of other women such as Mary Magdalene and Mary of Egypt who bore the same name as the Virgin. In this re-writing of the *Eva-Ave* scheme the beautiful, but morally corrupt young prostitutes Mary Magdalene and Mary of Egypt undergo a conversion to become either the figure

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<sup>6</sup> And this is despite the fact that Barb says that she was often invoked to help against the wandering womb (1966, 23, n. 153). Fontes has argued, nevertheless, that *Celestina* is to be seen as the antithesis or, perhaps better, antitype to the Virgin.



weeping at the foot of the Cross or the old and grotesquely deformed, but saintly, penitent in the desert.

In Act VIII Areúsa and Pármeno awake with the former still complaining about the *mal de la madre* and the latter wondering whether she could be pregnant or not (II, 149). A bit later Calisto arising late from sleep, will decide to go to the Church of St. Mary Magdalene to pray to God for help in his quest for Melibea (113). This is a pivotal point in the text because if Areúsa is indeed pregnant, she should be cured of her real physical problem. If Calisto could remember and accept as valid for him the critically important message of conversion implied in the life of the Saint whose name is borne by the church where he will pray, he and the others might escape from the effects of the metaphorical *mal de la madre*. But the thought never enters his mind: "Agora lo creo, que tañen a missa. Daca mis ropas; iré a la Madalena. Rogaré a Dios aderece a Celestina y ponga en corazón a Melibea mi remedio o dé fin en breve a mis tristes días" (II, 152). He, of course, will see his first two wishes completely fulfilled and ironically the final one also which he had thought to be an alternative.

At the start of her excellent article dealing with the legend of St. Mary of Egypt, Dayle Seidenspinner-Núñez studies the image of St. Mary Magdalene in *Celestina* and demonstrates that the common topic of conversion for the Middle Ages, figured in the phrase *Eva-Ave*, is unsuccessful in the work. Seidenspinner-Núñez in my view has understood the full import of what the author has accomplished with his introduction of the theme of St. Mary Magdalene at this point: "Fernando de Rojas grotesquely subverts the topos of the harlot-saint to illustrate instead humanity's penchant for nonconversion, its propensity for sin, its moral blindness, and its boundless capacity for self-delusion" (115). Thus a critically important formula which could help the sinner to reform his or her life is shown to fail in *Celestina* and its disfunction becomes apparent shortly after the introduction of the theme of the *mal de la madre* to the text.

In addition to the failure of the conversion formula as explained by Seidenspinner-Núñez, I believe that the work also demonstrates a problem with another scheme associated in Spain with positive maternal functions. The *Eva-Ave* phrase has important implications for the metaphysical destiny of the characters in the

drama and for humanity in general. The second process has to do with the socio-political workings of Hispanic communities.

Manuel Delgado Ruiz has studied and has attempted to explain the significance of an activity which takes place during festivals all across the Peninsula. A young bull, some other sexually potent animal seen as equivalent or a male dressed to resemble one of the two is suddenly released upon society to be countered by a feminized figure, which is sometimes called "la madre" (129) or "la dama" (120).<sup>7</sup> He believes that the *novillo* stands symbolically for the aggressive young male whose only desire is to be satisfied sexually. The adversary with its feminine attributes is an actant whose role is to utilize the blindness induced by overwhelming desire to lead the male by a kind of "seducción femenina" either toward an acceptance of "conducción social y femenina" or to destruction and death as typically represented in the bull ring (121). The *toreador* with his striking *traje de luces* is seen as the most elegantly developed type of the basic feminized opposant; and "la victoria en el ruedo no es la del macho," it is "el triunfo de la comunidad" (134).

Delgado Ruiz believes that ceremonies of the *vaquilla* and the *corrida de toros* in symbolic form represent a pattern and figure a process which necessarily takes place in the everyday life of Spanish society.<sup>8</sup> He believes that the mother and the female community in general seek to enhance the aggressive and domineering tendencies of the young male in a wide variety of ways. This is done in order to help him to develop the strength and drive which can be of use to

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<sup>7</sup> See also Caro Baroja (252-261) for a discussion of this phenomenon, which was even extended by the Spanish to the New World. In one place in Spain the feminized male opposant is called "la Madre cochina"—a phrase which might allude to possible negative qualities in what was supposed to be a positive figure.

<sup>8</sup> Delgado Ruiz has gathered evidence from a wide variety of sources to provide proof for his consideration that Hispanic society in its basic aspects functions as a matriarchy (128-129). But many anthropologists doubt that true matriarchy has ever existed (see Carroll, 36). But the positive cultural roles for female figures which Delgado Ruiz describes could exist whether the theoretical base for the society was, indeed, matriarchal or not.

the community. The result is "un varón joven sexualmente agresivo, que exige ser satisfecho instintualmente" (82). But ultimately the young male must understand that it is absolutely essential that he submit himself to the rules and regulations of society, he must be "enculturado" (132.) It is the responsibility of women, the mother and especially the sweetheart, to make sure that the aggressive young male accepts his final role. If he refuses to do so, the lesson from the ritual process is that he must be destroyed.

One example of this process in literary form which Delgado Ruiz mentions, but which he does not develop to any great degree, is that given in Lope de Vega's drama *Peribáñez*. The play begins when a *novillo* comes tearing through the streets of the town to encounter, down, and render unconscious the Comendador, the local lord, who has deigned to grace the wedding festivities of his vassal with his presence.<sup>9</sup> At that point the image of driven, savage instinct transfers from its primordial symbol, the young bull, to the Comendador who quickly forgets the dignity of his position and his responsibilities to launch himself in mad pursuit of that object which he first sees upon regaining consciousness, the young wife Casilda. Much later in the play, when Peribáñez pleads his case before the King and Queen, he makes the identification of the Comendador with the bull explicit: "Vine yo, súpelo todo, / y de las paredes bajas / quité las armas, que al toro / pudieran servir de capa" (3060-3063).

The action sequence of the play basically is a drawing out of the ritual process as described by Delgado Ruiz. The Comendador is not tamed, he does not repent of his errors and accept the rule of law and the code of conduct expected by the community until he is wounded to death at the end of the play.

When the Comendador goes to the house of Peribáñez hoping to seduce Casilda, he hears a group of "músicos" singing the kind of popular refrain which may have served as inspiration to Lope in composing the play:

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<sup>9</sup>I have studied the function of this process in greater detail in "The Ritual Structure" and provide here only a summary of my conclusions as well as the relevant connections and references to *Celestina*.

Cogióme a tu puerta el toro,  
 linda casada;  
 no dijiste: "¡Dios te valga!"  
 El novillo de tu boda  
 a tu puerta me cogió;  
 de la vuelta que me dio  
 se rió la villa toda;  
 y tú, grave y burladora,  
 linda casada,  
 no dijiste: "¡Dios te valga!" (2718-27)

This song encapsulates two major themes, that of the charging bull whose energy merges into the passion of the sexual aggressor and the scornful, inattentive young woman who will become the misplaced object of that passion and who must, in some fashion, help to tame that passion. I believe that one can also perceive the same two ideas at the beginning of *Celestina* when Calisto rushes into Melibea's garden. The overflowing animal energy is here portrayed in terms of the hawk, a bird obviously identified with the brutality and rapacity of the hunt.<sup>10</sup> It is clear that this energy also transfers to Calisto. And, of course, Melibea will react to his advances in a scornful manner. From the very beginning of *Celestina*, because of the powerful image of the hawk, the young knight is associated with the idea of the rapacious animal and the text continues to underline such a connection throughout the early portions of the first act.

Immediately after his return home in his conversation with Sempronio, Calisto expresses his preference for his animal passions rather than those of higher nature: "más querría que mi espíritu fuese con los de los brutos animales, que por medio de aquel ir a la gloria de los santos" (II, 22). Sempronio in an aside makes clear what kind of animal image now informs the energy of the young lover: "Parece al amante que atrás queda, y que todos le pasan; todos rompen, pungidos y esgarrochados como ligeros toros; sin freno saltan por las barreras" (II, 23).

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<sup>10</sup> On the image of the hawk within the tradition of the medieval hunt, see Gerli. For a broader survey of animal imagery in *Celestina*, and its mainly indirect relationship with the bestiary tradition, see Shipley (1977 and 1982).

The bull symbol returns again as Sempronio continues to attempt to convince his master to abandon his mad pursuit: "¿No as leído de Pasife con el toro, de Minerva con el can?" (II, 24-5). Calisto does not accept the veracity of these old tales, retorting "No lo creo, hablillas son." But Sempronio counters with a response which seems to establish some absolute connection between bestial nature and Calisto's lineage: "Lo de tu abuela con el ximio, ¿hablilla fue? Testigo es el cuclillo [cuchillo] de tu abuelo" (II, 25). In accord with medieval and renaissance theories of conception, if Calisto's grandmother had indulged in sexual dalliance with an ape, simian features and characteristics could have been incorporated into her line and transmitted to her descendants (Burke, 1977-78; Jacquart and Thomasset, 85, 165).

There is also the matter of the young knight's name, Calisto—an appellation applied in Greek and Roman mythology to a young nymph beloved of Zeus (Jupiter) who is transformed into a bear and cast into the skies as a constellation. Medieval zoological works grant an important place to the description of the bear which they describe as indulging in sexual practices analogous to those of the human being (Jacquart and Thomasset, 162). This animal thus becomes an important symbol of unnatural affection and cohabitation between species and of the strange offsprings which tradition believed could be engendered during such couplings. It is then understandable that the name of the object of Calisto's affection, Melibea, should be related to the food that has frequently been recognized to be the primary object of the bear's physical appetite.

Sempronio toward the end of Act I will realize that it is hopeless to try to convince his master to abandon his mad pursuit of Melibea and he suggests that he knows someone who can help the young knight to fulfil his fantasies. Calisto will then encounter not the adversary described in the ritual process but another androgenous figure, the "vieja barbuda" Celestina (II, 30), who will not oppose the bestial desires of the young knight but, on the contrary, will do everything that she can to further them. Sempronio's admonitions for sensible behavior are now subtly metamorphosed into maxims which no longer challenge Calisto's intended course of action. At the beginning of Act II Sempronio supports his master's decision to give money to Celestina with an allusion to a basic tenet of Aristotelian thought: "Cuanto es mejor el acto que la pasión, tanto es más noble el dante quel recipiente. Entre los elementos, el fuego, por ser más

activo, es más noble, y en las esperas es puesto en más noble lugar" (II, 55).

But a bit further along he effectively reverses the image of the aggressive animal which previously has characterized Calisto. The young knight should abandon his active stance for the passivity and forgetfulness inherent in the state of the supine lover: "en el contemplar, está la pena de amor; en el olvidar el descanso. Huye de tirar coces contra el aguijón; finge alegría y consuelo, y serlo á" (II, 58). Calisto should cease his struggles and accept a passive role. He must become "enculturado," but not in the positive sense explained by Delgado Ruiz. His culture will be that of the negative maternal context engendered by Mother Celestina.

In the civilizing process, the aggressive male is either assimilated into the structure of the community as a productive member or he is killed. In *Celestina* the result is to be the same for Calisto who has constructed a role for himself, as becomes clear in his soliloquy in Act XIV, which obviously is not acceptable to society. At the beginning of his long interior monologue the young knight seems satisfied with his situation, declaring, "¡Cuánto me es agradable de mi natural la solitud y silencio y escuridad!" (II, 233). But immediately thereafter he laments his fate and his lack of activity. He is particularly concerned about his failure to struggle against those forces which might penalize him for what has happened. He portrays his predicament in a series of images, several of which show him to be in the position of the previously aggressive actant now tamed and submissive. But here, of course, what he has submitted to is a grouping of negative role structures.

Calisto, like the *novillo*, the *vaquilla*, or the bull in the ring has been wounded. "Esta herida es la que siento agora que se á resfriado, agora que está elada la sangre, que ayer hervía" (II, 233). No longer the raging bull or the marauding bear, he is, in his passive state, like a sheep ready to be shorn. "¡Tresquílanme en concejo, y no lo saben en mi casa!" (*ibid.*)<sup>11</sup> The image of the rapacious hawk which

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<sup>11</sup> Covarrubias explains the proverb as referring to "los que están infamados en toda la república, y quieren encubrirlo a los propios de su casa y parentela" (345, b, 40). As far as the text is concerned, Calisto seems to have no family and very little household from whom

launched him on his course has vanished, to be replaced by that of the crow which in traditional Spanish proverbial context figures the treacherous child. Calisto, with an ironic twist, applies the symbol to the cruel judge, creature of his father, who now oppresses him: "¿Quién pensara que tú me avías de destruír? No ay, cierto, cosa más empecible quel incogitado enemigo. ¿Por qué quesiste que dixessen: del monte sale con quien se arde, y que crié cueruo que me sacasse el ojo?" (II, 234). Soon, of course, he will fall from the ladder to his death.

In the ritual process the sweetheart of the young man to be tamed also had an important role to play. She, along with the mother, was to share in the task of forcing the aggressive young man to accept his place in a well-ordered, well-functioning society. Melibea, after her initial period of resistance, had done nothing to dissuade Calisto or to convince him that his desired course of action was wrong. Her inactivity and her acceptance of the negative circumstances contrived by Celestina help to explain, perhaps, the significance of a somewhat puzzling portion of her final declamation to her father in Act XX:

Bien oyes este clamor de campanas, este alarido de gentes, este aullido de canes, este estrépito de armas. De todo esto fue yo la causa. Yo cobrí de luto y xergas en este día casi la mayor parte de la ciudadana cavallería, yo dexé muchos sirvientes descubiertos de señor, yo quité muchas raciones y limosnas a pobres y envergonçantes. (II, 258)

Perhaps she feels so responsible because, in becoming the willing tool of Celestina, the symbol and embodiment of the negative maternal circumstances, she failed to fulfill her proper role in the process by means of which young men are positively initiated into the structures of society.

Ironically, at the end of the work we are left with the voice of unsuccessful patriarchal culture proclaiming failure to an equally unsuccessful positive mother. Both of Melibea's parents, for whatever

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to conceal his misfortune. This would, perhaps, imply that the force of the first part of the saw is what disturbs him.

reasoned, remembered their responsibilities far too late.<sup>12</sup> But Alisa recedes as a personage into non-existence after Pleberio begins his long lament "¡Ay, ay, noble muger!" (II, 261). And what we remain with at the end of his declamation is that strongest of images which reminds us of the powerful negative maternal function which has brought all to grief and woe in *Celestina*: "¿Por qué me dexaste triste y solo in hac lacrimarum valle?"



## Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea.

En la qual se contiene de mas de su agradablez dulce estilo muchas sentencias

De la portada de British Library C.20.c.17  
Sevilla: J. Cromberger, hacia 1511.

<sup>12</sup> In Act IV Alisa seems incapable of understanding the danger that Celestina poses for her daughter although Lucrecia clearly alludes to it: "Más conocida es esta vieja que la ruda. No sé cómo no tienes memoria de la que empicotaron por hechizera, que vendía las moças a los abades y descasava mil casados" (II, 77-78). In Act XVI when Pleberio and Alisa finally recall that they should make suitable arrangements for Melibea according to the acceptable modes of society, Lucrecia comments "¡Tarde acordáis!" (II, 241).



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