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## *Comedy of Calisto and Melibea* (Burgos, Spain, 1499), better known as *Celestina*

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### Short Introduction to *Celestina*

The Spanish masterpiece known as *Celestina* or *La Celestina* has engaged audiences uninterruptedly through the ages. Its first known edition (Burgos, 1499) was initially conceived as a comedy of two lovers titled *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea* with a trite plot: a young man, Calisto, falls in love with a sheltered woman, Melibea, and seeks the aid of an old bawd, Celestina. Its urban setting could have been the university town of Salamanca, with its world of idle, privileged nobles and deceitful, disenchanted servants and prostitutes. Its author—Fernando de Rojas, a graduate of the law school—had a good ear for sayings and proverbs, the traditional tools used to transmit wisdom and knowledge within a culture acquainted with the printing press for scarcely three decades.

Every aspect of *Celestina*—its genre; its authorship; the author's, or authors', intentions; how to interpret it; and the wisdom it may contain—has been a matter of controversy since its inception. For instance, the work's earlier readers and listeners first contended with the author that it was not a comedy but rather a tragedy because of its unhappy ending, which led the author to rename it *The Tragicomedy of Calisto and Melibea* (“comitragedy” would have been more precise). Such vacillation has more to do with the fact that Rojas blended for the first time two medieval genres. The first, courtly love romance, told sophisticated stories of frustrated love, which seemed to serve the interests of the dominant classes by attributing to noble characters a highly refined sensibility and values related to loyalty, faith or generosity. Incidentally, these values bonded members of different social groups and were in the process of disappearing in a pre-capitalistic society, as Rojas' work shows. The second, humanistic comedy, a theatrical genre in Latin, was about illicit love affairs involving active female characters and servants of independent personality. This genre offered realistic portraits of social vices and virtues, and, unlike courtly love romances, happy endings. Because Latin humanistic comedies—with their theatrical techniques such as asides, irony, or monologues—were part of the university curriculum, an important component was their moral teachings, their display of learned proverbs, and denunciation of sinful conduct. In sum, *Celestina's* earlier readers were most certainly surprised and amused by the blending of such disparate genres—courtly love romance, with its tragic and elevated tone and aristocratic atmosphere; Latin humanistic comedy, with its comic, moralizing features and urban setting.

Modern scholars have also discussed whether *Celestina* should be regarded as a theatrical composition or a prototype of the modern novel. Those supporting its theatrical nature point out that all the action unfolds in dialogue and monologue, though most likely it was intended to be recited rather than performed on stage, as Latin humanistic comedies were. Indeed, since the 1900s *Celestina* has been set on stage on numerous occasions, though not without difficulties. The characters' long speeches can hardly please contemporary audiences. However, in *Celestina's* fictional world, readers or viewers are confronted with an unstoppable flow of words—its characters' questionable moral fiber is mainly fleshed out through dialogues and monologues. And more interestingly, the author never intervenes to sanction, nuance or criticize the characters' choices and behaviors, or to clarify his own moral stance (except in the texts of the prologue). As in the modern novel, *Celestina* depicts ethical choices in complex situations in which God seems to be absent.

Another point of contention is the author's name and identity. Many scholars take at face value Rojas' words in the prologue—he claims that he found an anonymous, unfinished comedy and impressed by its quality, decided to finish it. Despite the unity of plot and characters, some obvious differences in language, style and



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sources support the existence of two distinct authors. Fernando de Rojas' identity as a descendant and relative of *conversos*—Jews who converted to Christianity—has led to wonder whether the distinctive point of view of somebody regarded as a social outsider could have infused *Celestina* with a somber, pessimistic conception of human nature.

*Conversos*, who often converted due to social pressure, were both suspect of being insincere Christians and envied because of their economic success. As a consequence, they were marginalized and eventually persecuted. A crucial element in the rise of a persecutory society was the establishment of the Inquisition in 1478 with its goal of punishing all those who defiled its orthodox interpretation of Christian faith. The Inquisition mainly prosecuted crypto Jews, *conversos* who covertly continued Jewish practices, sometimes not that different from Christian ones. The Inquisition, recent civil wars, political instability, and the perception that the end of times was approaching all contributed to create a harsh social climate, which may explain *Celestina's* hopeless outlook into the darker side of human nature. Actions are never spurred by faith, love or hope—the basic virtues of a Christian society as Spain claimed to be. On the contrary, the characters' prevalent attitudes have to do with greed, lust, egocentrism and cynicism.

Furthermore, some scholars have detected a subtle but intentional subversion of Christian figures and mentality which could amount to the denunciation of a corrupt Christian society. For instance, Celestina, an old bawd and sorceress, may be a conscious stratagem by a crypto Jew to ridicule the Virgin Mary. Other scholars consider the author a sincere Christian and attribute the characters' moral turpitude to the presentation of anti-model behavior, a common strategy in traditional, moralizing literature.

Finally, not all scholars consider Fernando de Rojas the author of this compelling creation. The inventory of his library at his death does not suggest a remarkable intellectual, although he owned a respectable collection of legal books and enough fictional works that are sources of *Celestina*. If Rojas was indeed *Celestina's* second author, it is strange that, after its publication, he did not engage in literary pursuits ever again. One may wonder whether he might have been overwhelmed by *Celestina's* editorial success. It is interesting that in the prologue materials added to subsequent editions, the author tries to control how *Celestina* should be read. He claims that the story and its humor are not the main value of the book; instead, its merit lies in the moral precepts or concise sayings, or rather the readers' ability to transfer the wisdom of these aphorisms to ethical contexts and make good use of them in real life. This is a common reading strategy of the time.

However, Rojas' advice may be tongue-in-cheek as a strategy to limit the number of interpretations. Indeed, much of *Celestina's* wisdom seems out of place. Maxims supposed to encapsulate the ethical advice of figures of Antiquity, such as Seneca or Aristotle, are placed in contexts in which their sense is distorted, questioned, or misapplied by characters with no moral authority. A case in point is a couple of dialogues between Celestina, the old bawd, and Parmeno, one of Calisto's servants in acts I and VII. Celestina's objective is profiting economically by negotiating a tryst between Calisto and the young, secluded Melibea. Parmeno initially strives to remain loyal to his master Calisto. Consequently, because the seduction of young maids was and act both morally reprehensible and punishable by law, Celestina must preempt Parmeno's criticism which obstruct her plans. And so she tries to persuade him by enumerating what resembles honest or pragmatic values at first sight: friendship with other servants, respect to the elders, obedience to parents, or economic advantages. Nothing works until she offers to arrange a hookup with a prostitute, and more specifically with a sick prostitute. Furthermore, the brazen display of illicit sexual behavior introduces two other relevant points: first, the idea of unhealthy sexual conduct as a metaphor for corruption at all levels of society, and second, the concept of illness and appropriate healing advice (there were a number of treatises at the time offering medical advice in sexual matters). More to the point, some scholars have described the plot in *Celestina* as the worst clinical nightmare—or, in other words, as an example of how disorder, chaos, destruction, and death can be wrought by pathological sexual desire that is improperly and incompetently treated.

## Medical Information in *Celestina*:

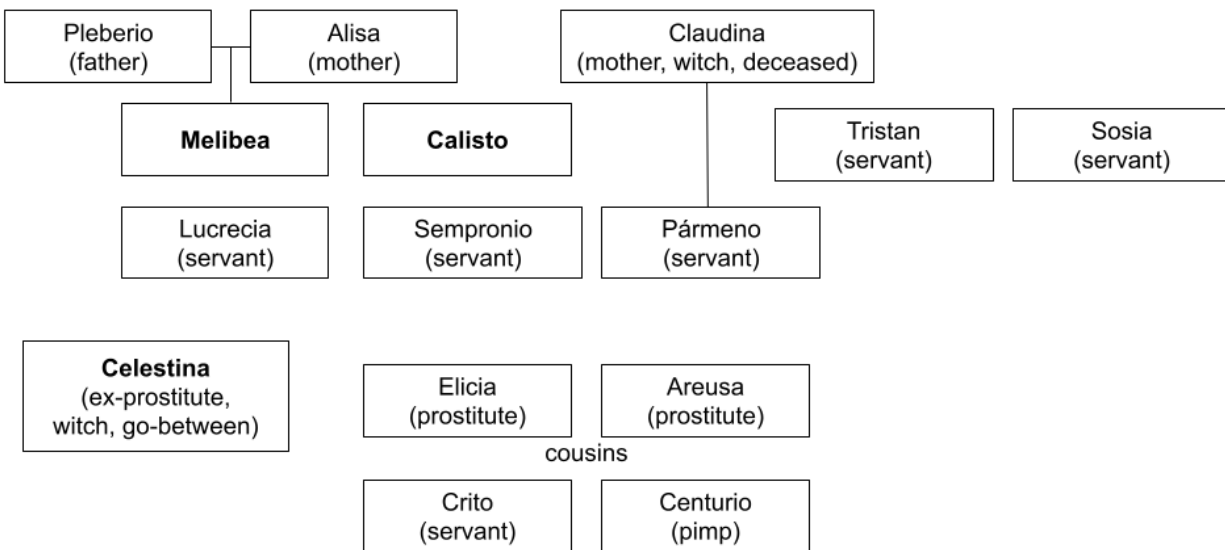
It may be that *Celestina* displays a special interest in medical assumptions intentionally. The fifteenth century saw the emergence of a more cultivated readership as literacy increased. The number of libraries (traditionally

owned by the nobility, university-trained bureaucrats, and the church) was on the rise; medicine was becoming professionalized, restricted to university-trained practitioners; and lay readers developed a growing interest in medical matters and treatments, partly spurred by the plague's repeated outbreaks since the fourteenth century. In addition, the printing press contributed to the dissemination of health guides, hygienic manuals, treatises on the plague, herbals, and surgical handbooks written in, or translated into, the vernacular with the explicit purpose of educating non-specialists.

Medieval medical practices may look primitive and outdated today; unfamiliar with modern discoveries in bioengineering, antibiotics, or medical technology, their view of germs or microorganisms as cause of disease advanced very slowly. On the contrary, rhetorical therapies or “logotherapy”—that is, healers’ reliance on the power of discourse to diagnose disease, facilitate therapy, and cure physical and mental afflictions—had a prominent role. For instance, cases of inordinate sexual conduct could be treated with a battery of arguments that could range from medical ideas to theological arguments of social chaos to spiteful denigration of women, sometimes seen as agents of disease and pestilence and symbols of destruction. Undoubtedly, perceptions and attitudes toward diseases were radically different from modern ones.

Three specific aspects reflect the presence of a different mental universe related to illness and invite us to delve deeper into the medical issues and health presented in *Celestina*. One is the conception of love (and/or sexual infatuation) as a dangerous mental illness that could lead to death. The second is the pathology of female illnesses that do not exist today, such as the notion that the uterus was a loose organ and therefore could move inside the body and suffocate a woman.<sup>1</sup> And the third is the hostility that university men, as a social group, felt toward healing women. Women were excluded from university classrooms, which promoted a legal monopoly of medical practices and facilitated discrediting the traditional figure of female healers. All these features inform the fragment of *Celestina* below.

### Summary of Relationships Among Main Characters in *Celestina*



<sup>1</sup> This is the origin of the word ‘hysteria’ from the Greek *hyster* (“uterus”).

## Selected fragment from *Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas: first dialogue between Celestina and Areúsa in Act VII<sup>2</sup>

AREUSA. ¿Quién anda ahí? ¿Quién sube a tal hora en mi cámara?

Who's there? Who comes up at this hour to my chamber?

CELESTINA. Quien no te quiere mal, cierto; quien nunca da paso, que no piense en tu provecho; quien tiene más memoria de ti, que de sí misma: una enamorada tuya, aunque vieja.

One, I assure you, that wishes you no ill; one that never treads step without thinking of your benefit;<sup>3</sup> one that is more mindful of you than of herself; one who is in love with you, though she is an old woman.

AREUSA.- ¡Válgala el diablo a esta vieja, con qué viene como estantigua<sup>4</sup> a tal hora! Tía, señora, ¿qué buena venida es esta tan tarde? Ya me desnudaba para acostar.

(Now the devil take this old woman for coming here like a spook at so late hour!) Aunt, gentlewoman, what good visit is this so late? I was already undressing so that I could go to bed.

CELESTINA.- ¿Con las gallinas, hija? Así se hará la hacienda. ¡Anda!, ¡Pase! Otro es el que ha de llorar las necesidades, que no tú. Yerba pace quien lo cumple. <sup>5</sup> Tal vida quienquiera se la querría.

What? To bed with the hens, daughter? So soon to roost? Fie for shame, is this the way to thrive? Think you ever to be rich, if you go to bed so timely? Come, walk a turn or two, and talk with me a little. Let others bewail their wants, not you. Herbs seed them that gather them.<sup>6</sup> Who but would, if he could, lead such a life?

AREUSA.- ¡Jesús! Me quiero tornar a vestir, que tengo frío.

Jesus! Let me return and get dressed for I am cold.

CELESTINA.- No harás, por mi vida. Métete en la cama, que desde allí hablaremos.

No, by my life, you will not get dressed. Go into your bed, we will talk more conveniently.

AREUSA.- Así goce de mí, pues que lo he bien menester, que me siento mala hoy todo el día. La necesidad, más que vicio, me hizo tomar con tiempo las sábanas por faldetas.

Yes indeed, I need to do so, for I have felt myself very ill all this day; so that necessity, rather than laziness, made me take to my sheets this early, instead of my petticoats.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Spanish version is adapted from: [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-celestina--1/html/fedc933a-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064\\_117.html#I\\_20](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-celestina--1/html/fedc933a-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_117.html#I_20) (Accessed on May 20, 2019). The English version is adapted from: <https://search-proquest-com.ezp.slu.edu/eebo/docview/2264221828> (Accessed on Nov 03, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The idea of benefit (*provecho*) brings attention to the materialistic outlook that permeates *Celestina's* world.

<sup>4</sup> *Estantigua* is used in modern Spanish to describe a shabby person. The original term used in *Celestina*, *buestantigua*, derives from Latin *hostis antiquus*, the old enemy, or the devil. It also indicated the resemblance to a ghost at night whose presence causes fear.

<sup>5</sup> The original proverb—*Yerba pace quien lo paga*—can be translated as: “those who pay will enjoy food.” There is also irony in *Celestina's* words, since Areusa, a prostitute, is ready to go to bed early when she should be working.

<sup>6</sup> For an explanation of this proverb, see footnote 5.

<sup>7</sup> Areusa explains that she put on the bed sheets as a garment or as a slip (*faldetas*) forced by an illness and not because of sloth.

CELESTINA.- Pues no estés sentada; acuéstate y métete debajo de la ropa, que pareces una sirena

Then do not sit up, but get underneath your sheets. Oh, how like a mermaid you look! <sup>8</sup>

AREUSA.- Bien me dices, señora tía.

What you say sounds good to me, aunt.

CELESTINA.- ¡Ay, cómo huele toda la ropa en cuanto te mueves! ¡A fe que está todo a punto! Siempre me pagué de tus cosas y hechos, de tu limpieza y ataúto. ¡Fresca que estás! ¡Bendígate Dios! ¡Qué sábanas e colcha! ¡Qué almohadas! ¡E qué blancura! Tal sea mi vejez, cual todo me parece perla de oro. Verás si te quiere bien quien te visita a tales horas. Déjame mirarte toda, a mi voluntad, que me alegro.

Oh how sweetly your clothes smell when you turn! I assure you that everything is in very good order! I have always been pleased with all your things and doings, and with your cleanliness and tidiness. You are so neat! May God bless you! What sheets and what a quilt! What pillows! And what whiteness! Let me live so in my old age! Everything appears to be a pearl of gold. You will see how much loves you who visits you at such time of the night. Let me look at you in your entirety, as I please, for I am delighted.

AREUSA.- ¡Paso, madre, no llegues a mí, que me haces cosquillas y me provocas a reír e la risa acreciéntame el dolor.

No, mother, do not touch me, because you tickle me and makes me laugh, and laughter increases my pain.<sup>9</sup>

CELESTINA.- ¿Qué dolor, mis amores? ¿Búrlaste, por mi vida, conmigo?

What pain, sweet heart? Are you teasing me?

AREUSA.- Mal gozo vea de mí, si burlo; que hace cuatro horas, que muero de la madre, que la tengo subida en los pechos, y me quiere sacar deste mundo. Que no soy tan viciosa como piensas.

Teasing? May evil come to me if I am. For four hours I have been dying from mom's pain.<sup>10</sup> The pain has been rising to my breast, and I think it will make me leave the world. I am not as full of vice as you think.

CELESTINA.- Pues dame lugar, tentaré. Que aun algo sé yo de este mal por mi pecado, que

Let me try, I will feel you. For I even know a little bit about this evil, for my own shame. Every woman has or has had mom's pain with all its burdens.

<sup>8</sup> Mermaids were mythological creatures (half human, half marine creatures) believed to deceive sailors with their sweet singing, and cause shipwrecks and the death of the sailors. A usual symbol of lust or lawless desire in medieval times, Celestina calls Areusa a mermaid deliberately, since she is planning to use Areusa's charms and seduction powers to her advantage to make Parmeno act in collusion with her plans.

<sup>9</sup> Areusa calls Celestina *madre* ("mother"). As some scholars have noticed, Celestina pretends to behave as a protective, caring, positive maternal figure in a world without children.

<sup>10</sup> *Madre* ("mother/mom") refers to *útero* ("uterus") or *matriz* ("womb") in Spanish. Areusa claims that her womb is displaced and is suffocating her. The *mal de madre* (freely translated as mom's pain) or "wandering womb" was a well-known ailment in ancient and medieval times. The womb was thought as a kind of animal that could wander about a woman's body producing a number of unpleasant symptoms such as shortness of breath, aphonia, pain, paralysis, choking and suffocation, or a seizure of the senses. The womb could be displaced because it was not hydrated enough and its dryness could be caused by sexual abstinence. Since it would be ironic to consider a prostitute as not sexually active, as Areusa first claims, a more accurate diagnosis for Areusa's discomfort may be uterine contractions due to menstruation.



cada una se tiene o ha tenido su matriz y sus zozobras de ella.

AREUSA.- Más arriba la siento, sobre el estómago.

CELESTINA.- ¡Bendígate Dios y señor SanMiguel, ángel! ¡Y qué gorda y fresca que estás! ¡Qué pechos y qué gentileza! Por hermosa te tenía hasta ahora, viendo lo que todos podían ver; pero ahora te digo que no hay en la ciudad tres cuerpos tales como el tuyo, en quanto yo conozco. No parece que tengas quince años. ¡O quién fuera hombre y tanta parte alcanzara de ti para lograr tal vista! Por Dios, pecado cometes al no dar parte de estas gracias a todos los que bien te quieren. Que no te las dio Dios para que pasasen en balde por la frescura de tu juventud debajo de seys dobles de paño e lienço. Cata que no seas avarienta de lo que poco te costó. No atesores tu gentileza, pues es de su natura tan comunicable como el dinero. No seas el perro del hortelano. E pues tú no puedes de ti propia gozar, goce quien puede. Que no creas que en balde fuiste criada. Que, cuando nace ella, nace él y, cuando él, ella. Ninguna cosa hay criada al mundo superflua ni que con acordada razón no proveyese de ella la naturaleza. Mira que es pecado fatigar e dar pena a los hombres, pudiéndolos remediar.

AREUSA.- Alábame ahora, madre, y no me quiere ninguno. Dame algún remedio para mi mal y no te burles de mí.

CELESTINA.- De este tan común dolor todas somos, ¡mal pecado!, maestras. Lo que he visto a muchas facer y lo que a mí siempre aprovecha, te diré. Porque como las calidades de las personas son diversas, así las medicinas hazen

I feel it higher up towards my stomach.<sup>11</sup>

May God and Saint Michael bless you, angel! How plump and fresh you are! What breasts and what grace! Until now I always thought you were fair because I could see what everybody else could see. I can say now that there are not even three bodies like yours in this city. You do not look a day over fifteen. Oh, who would be the man who is lucky enough to reach you and delight in such a sight! By God, it is a sin for you not to give part of your graces to all those who love you well. For God did not give them to you so that your fresh youth could go in vain underneath six layers of wool and linen. Take care that you should not be so miserly with what has cost you so little. Do not hoard up your charms. For it is within their nature to be shared as money.<sup>12</sup> Do not be the dog in the manger.<sup>13</sup> Since you cannot take any pleasure in yourself, let others take pleasure in you. Do not think that you were raised in vain. For when a woman is born, a man is born too, and when a man, a woman too. Nothing in this world was ever created superfluously, nor which nature did not provide for in a reasonable manner. Notice that it is a sin to torment and make men suffer when it is in your power to give them remedy.

Now, mother, these are but words, for nobody loves me. Give me a cure for my sickness and do not make fun of me.

In this so common a grief, unfortunately all of us are in a manner physicians to ourselves. That which I have seen practiced on others, and that which I found good in myself, I shall plainly explain to you. But as the qualities in persons are diverse, so are the medicines

<sup>11</sup> Areusa's words show that Celestina is touching her under her stomach, probably to arouse her sexually.

<sup>12</sup> Celestina's words replicate the *carpe diem* theme—the invitation to “seize the day,” enjoy life or make the most out of what one has. However, the commodification of beauty and sex becomes clear when Celestina equates beauty and money, and claims that they must circulate freely.

<sup>13</sup> In the Spanish version, Areusa is told “not to behave like the gardener's dog.” This is a reference to a well-known proverb (*El perro del hortelano, ni come las berzas, ni las deja comer*) which can be literally translated as: “The gardener's dog doesn't eat the greens and doesn't allow anyone to eat them.” Celestina uses this proverb to reinforce the idea that Areusa should share her sexual charms.

diversas sus operaciones y diferentes. Todo olor fuerte es bueno, así como poleo, ruda, ajeno, humo de plumas de perdiz, de romero, de mosquete, de incienso. Recibido con mucha diligencia, aprovecha y afloja el dolor y vuelve poco a poco la matriz a su lugar. Pero otra cosa hallaba yo siempre mejor que todas y ésta no te quiero decir, pues tan santa te me haces.

AREUSA.- ¿Qué, por mi vida, madre? Me ves penada ¿y me encubres la salud?

CELESTINA.- ¡Anda, que bien me entiendes, no te hagas la boba !

AREUSA.- ¡Ya!, ¡ya! Mala landre me mate,<sup>16</sup> si te entendía; pero ¿qué quieres que haga? Sabes que se partió ayer aquel mi amigo con su capitán a la guerra. ¿Había de hacerle ruindad?

CELESTINA.- ¡Verás y qué daño y qué gran ruindad!

AREUSA.- Por cierto, sí sería; que me da todo lo que he menester, me tiene honrada, me favorece y me trata como si fuese su señora.

CELESTINA.- Pero aunque todo eso sea, mientras no parieres, nunca te faltará este mal y este dolor que ahora sientes, de lo cual él debe ser causa. Y si no crees en dolor, cree en color, e verás lo que viene de su sola compañía.

AREUSA.- No es sino mi mala dicha. Maldición mala, que mis padres me echaron. ¿Qué, no está ya por probar todo eso? Pero

also diverse, and the operations different. Every strong scent is good: as pennyroyal,<sup>14</sup> rue, wormwood, smoke of partridge feathers, of rosemary, of muskroses, of incense, of strong perfumes. If diligently inhaled, it works much good, it eases the pain, and little by little it returns the mother to its proper place. But there is another thing that surpasses these, and that I ever found to be better than anyone; but what it is, I will not tell you, because you pretend to be such a saint.<sup>15</sup>

As you love me, mother, tell me. You see me in pain, and do you conceal my cure?

Come on, you understand me well enough. Do not play the fool.

Yes! Yes! May I be damned but I did understand you. But what is it you would have me to do? You know that my friend left for war with his captain yesterday; would you have me to wrong him?

Oh, pay attention! Great wrong, I promise you!

Yes indeed, for he supplies all my wants. For he gives me everything that I need, he honors me, favors me and treats me as if though I were his lady.

Suppose all this to be true, but until you give birth, you will never be rid of the sickness and the pain that you have now, of which he is surely the cause of. And if you do not believe in pain, believe in the color of it, and you will see what you get from keeping such solitary company.

It is but my ill luck, and a curse laid upon me by my parents, else had I not been put to prove all this misery

<sup>14</sup> Pennyroyal is a type of mint.

<sup>15</sup> Celestina behaves as a physician here. According to medieval medical theories, the inhalation of strong odors could be effective in relieving symptoms of the wandering womb ailment. Sexual intercourse and eventually motherhood were considered more permanent cures, as Celestina states. This type of medical recommendations can be found in some medicine handbooks, such as the *Lilium medicinae*, a popular health treatise in Latin composed in the early fourteenth century and printed at the end of the fifteenth.

<sup>16</sup> *Landre* is a small tumor. The expression *mala landre te mate* (literally, *may a bad tumor kill you*) expressed contempt and extreme dislike. The English translation is much softer.

dejemos eso, que es tarde y dime a qué fue tu buena venida.

CELESTINA.- Ya sabes lo que de Pármeno te hube dicho. Se me queja que aun verle no le quieres. No sé por qué, sino porque sabes que le quiero yo bien y le tengo por hijo. Pues por cierto, de otra manera miro yo tus cosas, que hasta tus vecinas me parecen bien y se me alegra el corazón cada vez que las veo, porque se que hablan contigo.

AREUSA.- ¿No vives, tía señora, engañada?

CELESTINA.- No lo sé. A las obras creo; que las palabras, de balde las venden dondequiera. Pero el amor nunca se paga sino con puro amor, y las obras con obras. Ya sabes el parentesco que hay entre ti y Elicia, la cual tiene Sempronio en mi casa. Pármeno y él son compañeros, sirven a este señor, que tú conoces y por quien tanto favor podrás tener. No niegues lo que tan poco hacer te cuesta. Vosotras parientas; ellos compañeros: mira cómo viene mejor medido, que lo queremos. Aquí viene conmigo; verás si quieres que suba.

AREUSA.- ¡Amarga de mí, si nos ha oído!

CELESTINA.- No, que abajo queda; le quiero hacer subir. Reciba tanta gracia, que le conozcas y hables, y muestres buena cara. E si tal te pareciere, goce él de ti, y tú de él; que, aunque él gane mucho, tú no pierdes nada.

AREUSA.- Bien veo, señora, que todas tus razones, estas y las passadas, se enderezan en mi provecho; pero, ¿cómo quieres que haga tal cosa, que tengo a quien dar cuenta, como has oído y, si soy sentida, me ha de matar? Tengo

and pain which I now feel.<sup>17</sup> But to let this pass, because it is late, tell me I pray, what wind drove you here?

You already know what I told you concerning Parmeno. He complains to me that you refuse to see him. What should be the reason, I know not, unless because you know that I wish him well, and I treat him as my son. But it is certain, that I have a better care of your affairs, and regard your neighbors in a kinder fashion. My heart becomes overjoyed whenever I see them because I know that they keep you company.

Are you sure about all that, aunt?

I don't know. I believe in deeds and not in words for those are sold everywhere for nothing. But love is never paid but with pure love, just as deeds are by deeds. You know the bond between you and Elicia, whom Sempronio keeps in my house. Parmeno and he are fellows and companions, because they both serve the gentleman that you know of, and by whom you may gain great good and grace.<sup>18</sup> Do not therefore deny him that, since it will cost you so little. You are kinswomen, and they, companions. See how well everything fits, far better than we ourselves could have wished. And to tell you truly, I have brought him along with me: Shall I call him up?

Now, heavens forbid. What if he has heard every word?

No, because he is downstairs. I will tell him to come up, for my sake show him good countenance; take notice of him; speak kindly to him; entertain him friendly; and if you think fit, let him enjoy you, and you him, and both one another, for though he gains much, I am sure, you shall lose nothing by the bargain.

Mother, I am well aware that all your reasoning, this as all other your former speeches, pursue my good and benefit; but how is it possible that I should do this. For you know to whom I am bound to give an account, as already you have heard. If he finds out, he will kill me.

<sup>17</sup> It is unclear whether Areusa is suggesting that she is not able to try the remedies Celestina offers, or that she already did (by having a child or an abortion at a younger age, which might explain why she was cursed by her parents). Very little information is disclosed about Areusa's background; however, this character will become more relevant later, especially in the *Tragicomedy of Calisto and Melibea*, to the point that she has been portrayed as a second Celestina.

<sup>18</sup> Celestina is suggesting that Areusa could also profit from Calisto.



vecinas envidiosas. Luego lo dirán. Así que, aunque no haya más mal de perderle, será más que ganaré en agradar al que me mandas.

CELESTINA.- Eso, que temes, yo lo proveí primero, que muy sigilosamente entramos.

AREUSA.- No lo digo por esta noche, sino por otras muchas.

CELESTINA.- ¿Cómo? ¿E de esas eres? ¿De esa manera te tratas? Nunca tú harás casa con sobrado. Si ausente le tienes miedo; ¿qué harías, si estuviese en la ciudad? En dicha me cabe, que jamás ceso de dar consejo a bobos y todavía hay quien yerre; pero no me marauillo, que es grande el mundo y pocos los experimentados. ¡Ay!, ¡ay!, hija, si vieses el saber de tu prima y qué tanto le ha aprovechado mi crianza e consejos e qué gran maestra está. Y aun ¡que no se halla ella mal con mis castigos!<sup>19</sup> Que uen la cama y otro en la puerta y otro, que suspira por ella en su casa, se precia de tener. Y con todos cumple y a todos muestra buena cara y todos piensan que son muy queridos e cada vno piensa que no hay otro y que él solo es privado y él solo es el que le da lo que ha menester. ¿E tú piensas que con dos, que tengas, que las tablas de la cama lo han de descubrir? ¿De una sola gotera te mantienes? ¡No te sobrarán muchos manjares! ¡No quiero arrendar tus escamochos!<sup>20</sup> Nunca uno me agradó, nunca en uno puse toda mi afición. Más pueden dos y más cuatro y más dan y más tienen y más hay en qué escoger. No hay cosa más perdida, hija, que el ratón, que no sabe sino un agujero. Si aquel le tapan, no habrá donde se esconda del gato. Quien no tiene sino un ojo, ¡mira a cuanto peligro anda! Una alma sola ni canta ni llora; un solo acto no hace hábito; un frayle solo pocas vezes lo encontrarás por la calle; una perdiz sola por marauilla vuela mayormente en verano; un manjar solo continuo presto pone hastío; una golondrina no hace

My neighbors are envious and malicious, and they will straightaway let him know. And say, that no great ill should befall me, save only the losing of his love; it will be more than I shall gain by pleasing him, for whom you entreat, or rather command me.

I thought of this fear of yours, for we entered in very softly.

I was not thinking of today, but of many other nights to come.

What? Is this your fashion? Is this the manner you conduct yourself? You shall never have a big enough house. What? Are you afraid of him now he is absent? What would you then do, were he in town? It has ever been my ill fortune to give counsel to fools, such as cannot see their own good. But I do not much wonder at it; for though the world be wide, yet there are but few wise in it. Ha, daughter! Did you but see your cousin's wisdom, and how much she has benefited from my training and counsel, how cunning, how witty, and what a mistress in her art she is. She hearkens to my advice. She will sometimes boast that she has one in bed with her, another waiting at her door, and a third sighing for her within the house; and yet she has given good satisfaction to them all. She is friendly to all of them and they believe they are much loved, that there is nobody else, and that he is the only one that gives her what she needs. And do you think the bed slats will reveal your having two friends? Do you think you can sustain yourself with just one leak? If this be your diet, you may go hungry. I do not envy your profit; I cannot live upon scraps. One could never please me, I could never place all my affection on one, two can do more than one, and four more than two: they give more, they have more to give, and there is more to choose. It goes hard, daughter, with that mouse that has but one hole to trust to, for if that be stopped, she has no means to hide herself from the cat. He that has but one eye, you see in what danger he goes? One sole act makes not a habit. It is a rare, and strange thing to see a partridge fly single. To feed always upon one dish, brings a loathing to the stomach; one swallow makes not a summer; one witness alone is of no validity in law. He that has but one suit of

<sup>19</sup> *Castigo* means “advice” or “teachings” in the fifteenth century. This sense is lost in contemporary Spanish.

<sup>20</sup> *No quiero arrendar tus escamochos* could be translated into modern Spanish as: *No te arriendo la ganancia* (“I don’t envy your profit”). In both cases the irony is that the expected benefits will be scarce or none.

verano; un testigo solo no es entera fe; quien sola una ropa tiene, presto la envegece. ¿Qué quieres, hija, de este número de uno? Más inconvenientes te diré de él, que años tengo a cuestras. Ten siquiera dos, que es compañía loable y tal qual es éste: como tienes dos orejas, dos pies y dos manos, dos sábanas en la cama; como dos camisas para remudar. Y si más quisieres, mejor te irá, que mientras más moros, más ganancia; que hora sin provecho, no es sino como anillo en el dedo. E pues entrambos no caben en un saco, acoge la ganancia. -Sube, hijo Pármeno.

clothes, and she that has but one gown to her back, quickly wears them out. What would you do, daughter, with this number of one? Many more inconveniences can I tell you of this single sole number (if one may be a number). If you be wise, be never without two, for it is splendid company, as you may see it in yourself, who have two ears, two feet, and two hands, two sheets upon one bed, and two smocks wherewith to shift you. And the more you have, the better it is for you, for still the more moors, the better the market.<sup>21</sup> And honor without profit, is no other but as a ring upon the finger. And because one sack cannot hold both honor and profit apply yourself to your profit. Son, Parmeno, come up.

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<sup>21</sup> The expression “the more moors, the better market” (*a más moros, más ganancia*) must be understood in the context of the frontier world between Christian and Muslim kingdoms in the Iberian peninsula where, after a battle or as part of pillaging, the number of captured Muslims (*moros*) could be exchanged for ransom or sold as slaves.