

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
RIVERSIDE

The Intermediality of Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina* Through Adaptations and  
Translations From Literature, Cinema, and Art

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Spanish

by

Carissa Alexandra Conti

December 2023

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Benjamin Liu, Chairperson

Dr. Marta Hernández Salván

Dr. Carlos Varón Gonzalez

Copyright by  
Carissa Alexandra Conti  
2023

The Dissertation of Carissa Alexandra Conti is approved:

---

---

---

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*And you call me up again just to break me like a promise  
So casually cruel in the name of being honest  
I'm a crumpled-up piece of paper lying here  
'Cause I remember it all, all, all  
Too well*

– Taylor Swift, *All Too Well*

Through a lot of emotional and personal strife this dissertation was a total roller-coaster to complete. A lot of time, energy, and un-productive worrying went into this dissertation, but it was a process that I will never forget, especially because of certain people who helped make this possible – or more so, let me wander in emotional distress from the inner turmoil to complete this work.

Thank you, mom, I would not be here if it weren't for your constant support. Thank you for letting me be when I was clearly too busy spiraling while working, although it took a while for you to truly understand that *la tarea* was never going to end, you finally did accept it and provided comfort and space when needed. To my sister Amber, who is all the way across the country, who called and provided support and love whenever I needed it, especially hearing all my long rants. You are the best big sister ever, thank you for all your support.

I need to acknowledge my grandparents; they are a big part of the reason I loved school as a child and continued a path in academia. Without their constant presence, and all their lessons they taught me, I do not think I would have been as determined to succeed, I would not be the person I am today without them. My gama's constant love through food and my pop's devotion through school; both have always made sure that

education was never on the back burner, they wanted more for me than what they grew up with, I thank them, for all their sacrifices they made for our family.

A good part of me is my very close extended family, all my *tías, tíos, primos* and *primas*, thank you for all the laughs when all I wanted to do was stay home and stare at a blank document and maybe cry a little. My family made sure that I continued to keep my head leveled and not forget the reason I loved my work. They inspire me every day to be myself and be the best I can be. My *tía* Minerva, *tío* Fernando, and Janeya; I am truly honored to your fourth family member. Thank you for feeding me and letting me crash with you when I was too nervous or stressed to be alone. You have always made me feel included, loved, and I will always cherish our family Disneyland trips and hope for more in the future.

Thank you *tía* Mirna, you are a force to be reckoned with, you have been my example for the type of woman in the workforce and in academia I want to be and have constantly been showing up and making time for what matters. I hope to be like you and support and be there for our family as well. When everyone in our family did not understand why I could not go to family events, or why I had to stay late to work, you never judged and always understood. We are bad-ass women succeeding and leading by example to the rest of our family's generation.

To my very patient, encouraging, and supportive dissertation advisor, Dr. Benjamin Liu, thank you for everything. Without all your constant emails, phone calls, and Zoom meetings I probably would not be here. I appreciate you always being there and readily available to help me through anything. You have read all my work and have

believed in me from the very beginning, especially when I lacked the confidence in myself. Thank you for all that you do, not just for me, but for all your students. Thank you, Dr. Marta Hernández Salván and Dr. Carlos Varón Gonzalez for offering your knowledge and support during this lengthy process. Both of you have always been available and easy to talk to and always were supportive during this journey. I am finally leaving and will be out of your hair! Thank you to my Alma Matter UCR, I came back after being gone for my master's and it was nice being welcomed back into a familiar place and making new friends and meeting new professors. To all the faculty and staff that helped guide me as a graduate student, and to those who are now retired – Dr. Herzberger, Dr. Williams, Vonnie, Seabrook, and Dawn – thank you all!

Thank you, Dr. James Parr. I did not know what I wanted to do with my BA degree back in undergrad, and you and your wonderful wife, Dr. Patricia Parr, believed in my studies and suggested graduate school – a concept I had never heard of as a first-generation student – and I have never forgotten you both since. Rest easy Dr. J. Parr, you were a motivation for me to pursue this and I thank you for that. I hope to pay it forward and become someone's mentor like you were for me.

My good friend and now fellow colleague, Judit, we are doing it and getting it done! Having you through this process has been such a great support, someone who understands everything that is happening. Loved our end of quarter “girl time cry time” to relive all the pent-up stress. Our podcast voice notes to each other are epic and shall never end.

Thank you to Colleen and Cristina, who are always there for our C3 time, no matter how much our lives have changed – and they have changed so much – we always come back and make time for one another.

Mugg and Eli, what can I say? you two are my absolute favorite people ever. You both always think of me even being farther away, and I love and appreciate all your support and understanding throughout this whole process. I am beyond honored that I get to be part of your new family and will always want cuddles from my boyfriend Atari.

Thank you also to Juan, Pachita, Ismael, Isaiah, Brianda, AJ, Adam, Abel, Susie, Abelito, Alena, Aace, Robert, Pedro, Ricky, Karen, Logan, The Fallon's, Malakai, Uriah and Andrea, for all the love, support, cries, laughs, and everything.

Elias, I love you, thank you. Our friendship means so much to me, you became my friend at a time where I was questioning a lot about myself; you included me when I felt like I should not feel included. Even though our friendship has gone through some ups and downs, I know now that I have never felt more at peace and at home than when I am with you. Thank you for those pick me up texts when I was low, for those morning phone calls to make sure I got to work or school on time, thank you for your patience and for listening to everything I have to say, and above all, thank you for letting me be part of Logan's life.

My plus one to everything, Chunk. Thank you for your love and always keeping me company through all hours of the day and night, you are a great dog and forever my *Chunkyboy*.

Finally, my Spotify playlist for writing, thank you, Sofiane Pamart, Son Rompe Pera, and having *All Too Well* by Taylor Swift in constant repeat. Also, my go to podcasts to keep me focused when I needed a mental break: *All Fantasy Everything*, *My Favorite Murder*, and *I Saw What You Did*.

Finally, a special shout out to my kitchen. Baking and cooking all kinds of breads and desserts to relive the stress of writer's block. Creating something from scratch and having an end-product was always soothing and made me feel accomplished. So, thank you oven for not giving up on me.

## DEDICATION

*So can you understand  
Why I want a daughter while I'm still young?  
I want to hold her hand  
And show her some beauty  
Before this damage is done  
But if it's too much to ask  
If it's too much to ask  
Then send me a son*

– Arcade Fire, *The Suburbs*

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom, sister and gama. You have been there from day one and continue to be there always.

To my pops, Antonio Elias, you showed me poetry and taught me to love my Spanish. This is for you and for all the education you always wanted to have but were never able to continue.

To all the people who have been there with me every step of the way and to those who are no longer with me physically but have been there for me spiritually.

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Intermediality of Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina* Through Adaptations and Translations From Literature, Cinema, and Art

by

Carissa Alexandra Conti

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Spanish  
University of California, Riverside, December 2023  
Dr. Benjamin Liu, Chairperson

Exploring various renditions in film, literature, and art inspired by *La Celestina* – 1499 – this dissertation analyzes the afterlives of Fernando de Rojas's singular work through several visual adaptations from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite being Rojas's only creation, it has sparked extensive discourse and creativity. The project looks closely into *Celestina*'s visual avatars, and how the adaptation to the pictorial and filmic media changes the way the inherent psychoanalytic dynamics adapt to the structures of desire that infuse these cinematic gazes. Translations, spanning German, Italian, and French, date back to the early days of publication, fostering a cascade of adaptations to keep the narrative alive. Beyond language, wood carvings and tapestries have visually immortalized scenes from *La Celestina*. Remarkably, amid these diverse interpretations, the central theme of inevitable death for the main characters remains unwavering.

Chapter 1 - The translatability and adaptations of César Fernández Ardavín's 1969 and Gerardo Vera's 1996 versions of *La Celestina*. Both versions adapt Fernando de Rojas' classic work into the big screen utilizing different lenses, such as the historical context in which they were being made. Chapter 2 - Art form adaptations of *La Celestina*, starting

from the wood carvings, tapestries, and subsequent paintings. All these various forms of art become part of the celestinesque cannon. *La Celestina* has given the artists from these various artforms different ways of interpreting and reinterpreting Rojas' classic work.

Chapter 3 - There is a craving for the nostalgia aspect of what these works provide readers and viewers. The nostalgia for the same stories even when the plot is known.

Viewing different versions based on the original form in various modes of media.

Chapter 4 - Death and falling of the main characters; Calisto, Melibea, Celestina, Sempronio, and Pármene. These characters are linked by death and are driven by lust and riches to Thanatos. The desire for more becomes their doom.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
References .....	8
Chapter 1: The Translatability and Adaptability of César Fernández Ardavín and Gerardo Vera's <i>La Celestina</i> Films, Based on Fernando de Rojas' Classic, <i>La Celestina</i> .....	9
References .....	38
Chapter 2: The Representations of <i>La Celestina</i> : From Wood Carvings, Tapestries, and Classic to Modern Art .....	40
References .....	81
Chapter 3: Keeping the Story Alive: Nostalgic Repetition and Adaptation .....	83
References .....	95
Chapter 4: Thanatos, Falling, and the Representation of Death in <i>La Celestina</i> .....	97
References .....	119
Conclusion .....	121
References .....	127

## LIST OF FIGURES

### Chapter 1

Figure 1.1: Poster for Fernández Ardavín’s 1969 film.....	17
Figure 1.2: Poster for Vera’s 1996 film.....	26
Figure 1.3: Melibea’s sleep-like death.....	36

### Chapter 2

Figure 2.1: “Portada de Sevilla, 1518-1520 (1502)” .....	47
Figure 2.2: “Grabado del acto III de la edición de Burgos (1499)”.....	51
Figure 2.3: The hanging of the guilty.....	55
Figure 2.4: “Portada de la edición de Sevilla (1523)” .....	57
Figure 2.5: “Celestina” .....	63
Figure 2.6: “Melibea” .....	65
Figure 2.7: “Calisto” .....	67
Figure 2.8: “Areúsa” .....	69
Figure 2.9: “Elicia”.....	71
Figure 2.10: “Sempronio” .....	73
Figure 2.11: “Pármeno” .....	75
Figure 2.12: Celestina haciendo virgos.....	77
Figure 2.13: Celestina’s death.....	80

### Chapter 4

Figure 4.1: After Calisto’s death, Melibea’s reaction.....	114
Figure 4.2: Melibea’s <i>jump</i> .....	115

Figure 4.3: Melibea's determination.....117  
Figure 4.4: Melibea's *leap*.....118

## INTRODUCTION

*Behind every exquisite thing that existed,  
There was something tragic.*

– Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*

*Mirando sin mirar*

– Shakira, *No*

The *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* is one of the most notable works that came about towards the end of the fifteenth century in Spain. It has all the main elements to keep readers entertained and spark future analysis through different scopes of criticism. The authorship of the *Tragicomedia*<sup>1</sup> is a topic that has been widely studied since the first act was written by an unidentified author, and the rest of the acts, II – XXI, were written by Fernando de Rojas, a University of Salamanca educated *converso*<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, the work has succeeded in remaining relevant, and to this day is one of the most read works of medieval literature from the Iberian Peninsula. As a result for such prominence in the medieval Spanish literary canon, there have been many studies and work done based on the *Tragicomedia*; some of these topics of study range from character analysis – Calisto, Melibea, Celestina, Sempronio and Pármeno – the language within the *Tragicomedia* – such as humor, desire, etc. – the authorship, the themes such

---

<sup>1</sup> *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* by Fernando de Rojas, also known (shortened) as *La Celestina*, or *Tragicomedia*.

<sup>2</sup> *Converso*: According to the *Real Academia Española*, “1. Dicho de una persona: convertida a una religión distinta de la que tenía.; 2. Dicho de una persona: que ha cambiado de ideología o de corriente. [1. Said of a person: converted to a religion different to the one had; 2. Said of a person: who has changed ideologies].”

as political/government criticism, economic studies on the conditions of the various characters based on how and where they live, feminist issues that arise from Celestina's "practices", moral issues, topics of sex and primal themes such as "(courtly) love, honour, and money" (Bidwell-Steiner 123).

This dissertation started out with a myriad of ideas on the impact and importance of Fernando de Rojas's *La Celestina*. Although a broad topic, a main source of intrigue and inspiration was E. Michael Gerli's<sup>3</sup> book, *Celestina and the End of Desire*, where the concept of desire within *La Celestina* is looked at through different lenses: the language of desire as a means to an end, desire as both a driving and destructive force, carnal pursuit, desire in the gaze – seeing incites action, feminine desire, and the desire of objects that are not one's to possess – have become part of Gerli's criticism into the celestinesque canon. As mentioned before, there have been different aspects written regarding the text, and one of the main topics has been on the language in *La Celestina*, however, Gerli also analyzes this topic but putting into focus the language of desire that is encountered. Gerli notices that there is a connection between the use of language and its objective to fulfilling a desire, mainly by the characters in *La Celestina*. This idea of language comes forward from Foucault's<sup>4</sup> relationship of words to things (the signified

---

<sup>3</sup> Commonwealth Professor of Spanish at the University of Virginia. His book, *Celestina and the Ends of Desire* was awarded the Modern Language Association of America's twenty-second annual Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize for an outstanding book published in English or Spanish in the field of Latin American and Spanish literatures and cultures.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault was a French historian and philosopher, one of his major works that he is most known for *Les mots et les choses (The Order of Things)*, which mentions the importance of language and its relation to knowledge and how even more important than language is the figure of man.

and the signifier), and Gerli goes on to note Freud's contribution towards language and the relation it carries with images, stating that "[l]anguage and images... became nothing less than vehicles for conveying and disclosing the presence of concealed desire" (Gerli 22). But the main use of language analysis by Gerli is focused on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Jacques Lacan<sup>5</sup> begins his writings as a re-imagination of Freud's original teachings and realizes a linguistic reading of the psychoanalytic edifice which results in the critique and creation of a new and unique body of work. Lacan pays homage to Freud: "[i]f Freud had brought to man's knowledge nothing more than the truth that there is such a thing as the true, there would be no Freudian discovery" (Lacan 119) and acknowledges the importance of Freud's work and the contributions to literary criticism. Gerli takes note on how the use of language in the *La Celestina* not only represents the language of medieval courtly love of Spanish literature but also there are a myriad of aspects that should be acknowledged and studied, such as linguistic representation, the domain of language, and the separation of words and things that goes in accordance with Lacanian theory. Gerli connects the language with the characters in the *La Celestina* and notes that the main characters,

... seek to articulate their desires in a torrent of dialogue that only leads to a deepening sense of estrangement, distance, and despair in the work. In both Fernando de Rojas and Lacan, the definitive thing signified is thus lost in the process of symbolization and the human subject remains divided from itself, alienated by the effect of language, desire, and the signifier. All desire is in this way a desire for what is lost in the subject itself (Gerli 25)

---

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Lacan. French psychoanalyst whose ideas had a significant impact on post-structuralism, critical theory, linguistics, 20th century French philosophy, film theory, and clinical psychoanalysis. Lacan is widely known for his work "return to Freud" where he critiques Freud's original texts.

In a way, the desire for what is lost is re-directed to acquire and fulfill another desire, or a transformation of said original desire.

The dissertation began to transform into the adaptations of *La Celestina* through the years after re-watching the films. Looking into the different versions of films, literary continuations, and art that have been created of *La Celestina*, as well as versions and adaptations it has inspired throughout time. Rojas's work, though the only work he ever produced, has remained part of the Medieval Spanish Literature canon and as such, there has been much talk and inspiration based upon it. Translations of the work go back to almost the beginning of publication; being translated into German, Italian, and French. These translations led to continued adaptations of *La Celestina* – so as not to let the story end. Wood carvings and tapestries depicting scenes from the work also become a representation and depiction of Rojas's classic. All the while, the main themes within *La Celestina* never waiver, death is still the end game for the main characters, regardless of all the adaptations made. Death is inevitable.

The topic of translatability, as this dissertation looks to explore; will be discussed not just in the aspect of translating from language to another language – which is briefly mentioned in chapter 2 – but also, translatability with films – literature to screen – and can be applied to art as well. How is the work translated onto the screen? Is it translatable? Are there some changes in the script compared to the original work? How about adaptability? Was the work adapted well? Was it faithful to the original? Did they convey all the themes the original work did? Are the characters adapted and represented appropriately?

The first chapter of the dissertation discusses the film adaptations of *La Celestina*. More specifically, César Fernández Ardavín's<sup>6</sup> and Gerardo Vera's<sup>7</sup> films of the same name, respectively. Film becomes an integral part of the dissertation, because it is a medium of interpretation of a literary work. Although Fernández Ardavín and Vera's films were not the first ones to be adapted into the big screen, they are, however, the most popular adaptations that are still studied and shown to students in the classroom to this day. Film becomes a new mode of translation – translating what is in the text onto film – and the chapter looks to analyze the translatability of one medium onto another. How faithful can the writers and directors be when adapting literature into film?

The second chapter delves into the artistic depictions of *La Celestina*, from its first interpretations of wood carvings and tapestries to actual full painting inspiration based on the work. The artist's interpretation of a scene onto a canvas, like Teo Puebla's depiction of the main characters, all become part of the *La Celestina* influence into the everyday world. Adapting *La Celestina* into various forms of media, such as art, helps bring this classic work to new audiences, offering different perspective and interpretations. Because of these adaptations and interpretations, they enrich a cultural dialogue and allow the timeless themes of love, morality, and societal norms to resonate in contemporary settings. The visual and emotional impact of art adaptations can enhance the understanding and appreciation of the original text while fostering creativity and innovation.

---

<sup>6</sup> Director of *La Celestina*, 1969 (*The Wanton of Spain*).

<sup>7</sup> Director of *La Celestina*, 1996 (*La Celestina*).

Chapter three discusses the topic of nostalgia within the realm of adaptations. It is because of nostalgia that works of literature are constantly being re-worked and adapted into new mediums; readers and then audiences are not ready to let the material go and crave a continuity to it. Those similar stories are being depicted and/or told through different mediums. There is a familiarity with knowing the story, even while watching different versions. The enduring appeal and adaptation of *La Celestina* across a myriad of mediums can be attributed – as mentioned above – to its timeless themes and relatable human emotions and elements of greed, desire, love, lust, jealousy, etc. The story’s exploration of love, desire, and the complexities of human relationships resonates across different periods and cultures. Each adaptation offers a fresh perspective, allowing audiences to connect with these themes in a way that feels relevant to their own context. Additionally, the richness of the characters and the narrative’s depth provide ample creative opportunities for reinterpretation, making *La Celestina* a source material that continues to inspire and captivate diverse audiences.

The final chapter discusses the desire of the characters delving into death in *La Celestina*. It is relevant to note that *La Celestina* has been the motivation for a myriad of analysis and criticism through various lenses that spark new ideas into a reading that was not just a success for the late fifteenth century, but that also created its own time rather than be another work of literature of that time and abide by tradition (Gilman 5). Gavriel Reisner criticizes in *The Death-Ego and the Vital Self: Romances of Desire in Literature and Psychoanalysis* that,

[d]esire is the keenest threat to the sovereignty of the ego; the ego, both serving and mastering the id, its master and subject, its shadow and double, is the demon-director who terrifies us out of desire (Reisner 34)

which is what Freud identifies as the reality principle. In his work, Reisner calls into attention Freud's obsession with the duality of the "drives" and their constant oppositional conflict with one another (Reisner 14). These "drives" (*Eros* and *Thanatos*) are part of human nature, which is why it is highly engaging to read them as a central motif in *La Celestina* because of the time it was written. The main characters in the work are constantly looking to appease their own desires, however, as mentioned before, they seem to lack the auto-preservation trait that is found within *Eros* and, as a result, let their desires take control of them entirely. On the other hand, where Freud says that these "drives" are in constant battle, Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon argue in "Death Drive: Eros and Thanatos in Wagner's 'Tristan and Isolde'" that the drives of life and death work together, for death is the final consummation of an absolute love, for it brings peace and tranquility to the end of the work (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 292–93). Death becomes the outcome of a desire fulfilled and especially a desire that was obtained without the measurement of consequences such as in *La Celestina*. J. E. Barnhart continues in "Freud's Pleasure Principle and the Death Urge" that the human organism is naturally predisposed to want and acquire positive experiences in relation to desire and pleasure, and it is because of these positive experiences that they try and prolong the pleasure as long as possible (Barnhart 113).

### Work Cited

- Barnhart, J. E. "Freud's Pleasure Principle and the Death Urge." *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1972, pp. 113–20, <https://doi.org/43154869>.
- Bidwell-Steiner, Marlen. "Sex Acts in *La Celestina* : An *Ars Combinatoria* of Desire." *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2015, pp. 121–43, [www.jstor.org/stable/43918949](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43918949).
- Gerli, E. Michael. *Celestina and the Ends of Desire*. University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- Gilman, Stephen. *The Spain of Fernando de Rojas; the Intellectual and Social Landscape of La Celestina*. Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Hutcheon, Linda, and Michael Hutcheon. "Death Drive: Eros and Thanatos in Wagner's *Tristan Und Isolde*." *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1999, pp. 267–93, <https://doi.org/823612>.
- La Celestina*. Directed by César Fernández Ardavín, Paramount Films, 1969.
- . Directed by Gerardo Vera, Lolafilms, 1996.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits: A Selection*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Norton, 1977.
- Reisner, Gavriel. *The Death-Ego and the Vital Self: Romances of Desire in Literature and Psychoanalysis*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE TRANSLATABILITY AND ADAPTABILITY OF CESAR FERNANDEZ ARDAVIN AND GERARDO VERA'S *LA CELESTINA* FILMS, BASED ON FERNANDO DE ROJAS'S CLASSIC, *LA CELESTINA*

*Cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn't give you what you desire - it tells  
you how to desire.*

– Slavoj Žižek

Film theory and analysis has become a prominent incorporation into film studies, although the public is more intrigued with Academy Award worthy mentions and nominations, it is important to acknowledge the role film has brought into the critical analysis field in literature. For even though film is not considered a work of literature, there are however, films based on great works that have been adapted to the screen for the masses. But how is this accomplished? How can a work of literature be translated -in a way- into another medium, all the while keeping its main source respected and intact? Before the idea of film adaptation comes into play, the idea of translatability<sup>1</sup> must first be addressed; Emily Apter, a professor of French and Comparative Literature and one of the pioneers of Translation Studies, highlights the need for and importance of translations, for they share works of literature to other readers who would not otherwise

---

<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin's *The Task of the Translator* is the impetus for translatability. It explores the challenges and complexities of translating literary works. Benjamin emphasizes the importance of preserving the original text's unique qualities and argues that a translation should convey the spirit rather than a literal representation. Benjamin delves into linguistic and cultural considerations, making a case for the transformative nature of translation.

be able to encounter them. Apter has the respite to acknowledge that “[n]othing is translatable” while also noting that “[e]verything is translatable” (Apter, *The Translation Zone* XI-XII), for when translating the original source into another language, there is always something lost in the process; this is why there is the discussion of texts not being translatable, however, in being translated in the first place -even with information lost in the process- there is still that connection between the main ideas of the text to the reader. Apter does raise caution to being readily available to translate in literature, “[t]he challenge of Comp Lit is to balance the singularity of untranslatable alterity against the need to translate *quand même*. For if translation failure is acceded to too readily, it becomes an all-purpose expedient for staying narrowly within one’s own monolingual universe. A parochialism results, sanctioned by false pieties about not wanting to ‘mistranslate’ the other” (Apter, *The Translation Zone* 91). Translation depends on language and the knowledge of said language, and with the availability of resources to aid in translation -the internet- we have that knowledge at our fingertips, “... translation theory has become newly serviceable. Instead of fixating mournfully on the supposition that nothing is translatable (the original always and inevitably lost in translation), translation studies increasingly explores the possibility that everything is translatable” (Apter, *The Translation Zone* 226). The importance of studying translation is that it also means the incorporation of philosophy, which according to Apter is a type of intellectual exercise when doing translated works (Apter, *Against World Literature* 249).

Apter’s work is the basis of the idea, what is translatable? In this chapter, I will delve into the translatability of literature into film. Coming in with a starting thought that

“[t]ranslation is the traumatic loss of native language” (Apter, *The Translation Zone* XI), then how is the translation of a novel perceived when adapted for a film? What original words continue and what words or phrases are changed or even entirely erased? Already established written and heavily described scenes, must now be condensed into a screenplay -and later film- that must remain under two hours. In a sense there is a loss of a type of language just as Apter states, but there also seems to be some gain with the visual adaptation of the original text. Some writers of film adaptation as translation are concerned with the *fidelity* of the film to the original text, causing a divide between actual analysis into film adaptation as translation and film critique, as a result “[t]he problem with most writing about adaptation as translation is that it tends to valorize the literary canon and essentialize the nature of cinema” causing some works to be translatable over others and preferred to be adapted (Naremore 8). Film adaptations have become much more prominent since the twentieth and twenty-first century. There is a business in creating films that are based in beloved works of literature -whether they be old or new- classic works from Jane Austen like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Mansfield Park*; Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, and *A Christmas Carol*; and even new popular novels such as Suzanne Collin’s *The Hunger Games Trilogy* or Jenny Han’s *To All the Boys I Loved Before Trilogy*, etc. The novel adaptation has resurfaced and is being brought to new light, bringing in new viewers and even new readers into the fold. The novel to film,

... offers a sense of being engaged with the reassuring durability of a classic: this story is already known and has proven to work. But through the fact of it being a new version, a version made for a contemporary audience, it promises changes and transformations not only of the original source but also of the screen adaptations that have preceded it (Geraghty 15)

Film adaptation is not a new trend, since the early 1900's there is evidence of film adaptations of books, "[c]ulturally speaking, historians of Western book illustration largely agree that film replaced the illustrated book" (Elliot 10).

Literary film adaptations though a great source of incarnation of such beloved read characters are not always considered the best films, as the expectations of keeping the film as close to the original work of literature by readers is a tall order for any screenplay writer and director to accomplish. As a result, there has been a certain distaste between literary film adaptations when compared to their original sources -novels-, George Bluestone proposes in his book, *Novels into Film* that film adaptations of works of literature should be acknowledged. Bluestone contradicts all that was said before against adaptations and posits that film adaptations do not necessarily have to be exact replications of the original literary work, but rather, he believes they should be inspirations of the literary work and should be presented in a way that brings about the original themes of the main source material but with a new view. There is a "mutation" that Bluestone mentions that occurs when the film is created, and as a result, the public will have their own input on whether the film was better or the book was "butchered", or if the "film is true to the spirit of the book",

What is common to all these assumptions is the lack of awareness that mutations are probable the moment one goes from a given set of fluid, but relatively homogeneous, conventions to another; that changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium... The film becomes a different *thing* in the same sense that a historical painting becomes a different thing from the historical event which it illustrates (Bluestone 5)

Hence, a film adaptation should be a new creation of the original while keeping intact the main themes and ideas present in the text.

As mentioned before, adaptations of famous literary works have been happening for a long time, the novels, stories, plays, etc. become inspirations for a film adaptation, and in doing so, the adaptation brings about more audiences aware – and maybe interested – to the original source of inspiration. The first consideration in adapting a story, according to Ben Brady in his book *Principles of Adaptation for Film and Television* is,

What amount of material can be covered in conventional dramatic form as compared to other literary forms? In television, particularly, the time period is rigidly and inflexibly controlled. Even in the most expanded motion picture form, the length of a screenplay is clearly limited... Consequently, a dramatic adaptation of a story is first and foremost a shortening or cutting process: removing scenes and characters without damaging the story. In the best sense, an adaptation improves the story. Since an adapter cannot excise individual characters and scenes without affecting the overall plot and purpose, the project is inevitably reduced to a wholesale revision of the entire story: an original screenplay (Brady 204)

An example of this type of re-imagining adaptation would be Baz Luhrmann's<sup>2</sup> 1996 screen adaptation of the Shakespeare classic *Romeo and Juliet*. The story follows Shakespeare's original play but with a twist; the diegetic<sup>3</sup> world differs from the text in that it is centered in a modern time; swords are depicted with guns, horses with cars, the combination of music, the modern setting, drugs, and parties, are all existing in the same space along with Shakespeare's original writing. Luhrmann's adaptation, though not the typical *Romeo and Juliet* adaptation, keeps the main themes of the text while re-

---

<sup>2</sup> Baz Luhrmann, an Australian writer, director, and producer with projects in film, television, opera, theatre, music, and recording industries. His 1996 film, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* is an adaptation and modernization of William Shakespeare's tragedy of the same name starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes in the leading roles.

<sup>3</sup> Diegetic or diegesis, in film, is the objects, events, spaces, and the characters that inhabit them, including things, actions, and attitudes not explicitly presented in the film but inferred by the audience.

imagining it with a modern lens. Luhrmann accomplishes to bring about a new set of young viewers into the spectrum, not just sparking interest in the modern re-make of the film, but also in Shakespeare's work itself (*William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*). Luhrmann's adaptation is one example of what Bluestone intended in his book, using a unique imagination and creativity while maintaining the appropriate original themes to create a film adaptation that can stand on its own, "*Romeo + Juliet* is highly energetic, rhythmically quick, arresting cinema. Scenes and speeches are broken down into digestible snippets and sequences; their impact is created/supported/offset by visual paraphrases, music, and camerawork" (Walker 128). Although Luhrmann adapted Shakespeare's play with a modern flare, that is not always the case. Most novel to film adaptations remain in the same space and time that the original is based in, trying to be faithful for the author, the characters, the time, and the reader. However, it is important to keep in mind that adaptations, whether "faithful" or with a twist offer the audience a different view of the novel,

[a]lthough it is tempting to discuss and evaluate a cinematic adaptation of a literary text in terms of the former's fidelity to the latter... what emerges in the transition between the literary and the cinematic is a reading of the literary text, one of an infinite number of possible readings, yet one which is eternally put into play with the 'source' text as well as with other adaptations of that text (Montalbano 386).

Keeping in mind the aforementioned, the film adaptations of *La Celestina* -first adaptation done in 1969 and second adaptation and remake done in 1996- are both works by directors striving to maintain faithfulness to the original work itself. The themes, the characters, and the setting, are all represented in unique ways by their respective directors -Fernández Ardavín's 1969 version and Vera's 1996 version- while representing their

own vision of Rojas' work, the time of the films creation, the space they are centered in, the character's motivations, are all big parts to be considered in regard to the adaptability of the original source to film. The directors, -Fernández Ardavín and Vera- use film to as an expression of their take and vision from the play,

[b]oth literature and cinema have been regarded essentially as *modes of expression*, sites and ways of manifestation of an ability to give shape to ideas, feelings, and personal orientations; in other words, as sites in which an individual's perceptions are combined with the person's will/necessity to offer an image of him or herself and of his or her own world (Casetti 81),

essentially giving the directors artistic freedom to represent Rojas' text in a new way.

The representations of Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina* are numerous, aside from art depictions, there have been plays, television series, a musical, and film adaptations of the work. The films are among the most popular between all adaptations of Rojas' work, since the characters finally become tangible and real people to the viewer -who was most likely the reader before-. The first film adaptation of *La Celestina* that we will be discussing in this chapter is from 1969 and was directed by César Fernández Ardavín with the title characters of Celestina, Calisto, and Melibea interpreted by Amelia de la Torre, Julián Mateos, and Elisa Ramírez respectively. Fernández Ardavín's film was presented into nomination for Best Foreign Film in the 42nd Academy Awards but was not picked up to be part of the category nominees for the actual awards. The film adaptation not only tries to faithfully depict the original play, but also gives hints to the time that it was being filmed in as well. At the time, in 1969, Spain was under Francoist rule, and as such, much of media was scrutinized and censored, "... [Franco] controlled cinematic output by resorting to censorship" (Vieira 232) and including literary

adaptations was a way to portray the values that citizens should be aspiring to be, “[l]iterary works were a frequent source of plots for films in both countries [Spain and Portugal]... Authorities believed that literary texts encapsulated the timeless values of traditional Portugal and Spain. Therefore, the adaptation of these narratives for the big screen was regarded as a means to educate the population in these principles.” Religious films were also much more predominant in Spain, since Franco relied heavily on the support of the Catholic Church (Vieira 229). Fernández Ardavín takes some artistic liberties in order to best bring about the story of Fernando de Rojas’ *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (Rojas) while also staying within the societal constraints of Franco’s rule. The film gives life to the characters that have been read and imagined many times over, Calisto’s cocky lightheartedness, Melibea’s strong willed and barrier-breaking attitude, and even hearing the infamous phrase of “puta vieja” as Celestina walks the streets, are all finally heard and given life and seen through a new gaze by audiences - who are all living under Franco’s totalitarian rule. The film [Figure 1.1], just like the original text it is based on, maintains the original characters and themes of desire, love, and death, but it is represented by Fernández Ardavín through the censored lens that was enforced at the time.



Figure 1.1: Poster for Fernández Ardavín's 1969 *La Celestina*.

One of the first shots of Fernández Ardavín's film is of the city itself. The opening shots are from a high angle creating a frame in which the audience focuses on the perceived notion of looking down upon the city. This type of angle of framing<sup>4</sup> is continuously seen throughout the film; high and low shots of buildings and of the city and characters. The visual language of this shot communicates to the audience the height from where the camera angle is focusing on, and the different levels of the buildings, which alludes to the ending of the film -two of the main characters falling from high buildings to their death-. When in the beginning you see the city from above, at the end of the film the viewer is completely turned around by the opposition of angles and looking upon the building from the ground up; a way in a sense to see from how far the characters have all fallen, literally and figuratively. Even though in the text the reader is never given an actual descriptive account of the city where the characters reside, the film sets the city as the main space of where the main characters live and navigate. The introduction to the city commences fifty-eight seconds into the film and lasts for another minute of slow juxtaposing shots of the city and the people and then back to the church bell, which is constantly ringing throughout the city montage of shots. The church bell is a symbol of time ticking and passing by and is also seen as a closing shot (as well as hearing it) for the end of the film; the church bell is the constant reminder of religion and the influence of Catholicism, not just in 1499, but also in 1969 Spain. The ringing of the church bells comes into full circle, for it starts off the introduction of the meeting of our

---

<sup>4</sup> In film, angle of framing is possible to film from a position that is significantly lower or higher than the dominant element of the shot.

main characters, Calisto and Melibea, and then it ends with their death. The entire cityscape<sup>5</sup> is given a new light through the various shots and camera angles. The city shots are constantly re-introduced throughout the film, either with the characters in focus or out of focus<sup>6</sup>, or through a crane shot scene<sup>7</sup> or even a quick panoramic shot<sup>8</sup> of the city before continuing with the plot of the film.

A particular scene where the play with camera angles is of notice in the film is thirty-six minutes into the film, when Celestina comes to Calisto's house and has news of Melibea -after Celestina talking to Melibea about Calisto's sickness of love for her-. Pármeno and Sempronio are there and watch as Celestina is guided by Calisto upstairs, "subamos" Calisto says ("let's go up") to discuss his future with Melibea. The choice of words, "subamos" separates Celestina and Calisto from his servants -Pármeno and Sempronio-, the inclusivity of just the "you" and "I" (*nosotros*), and again echoed by Celestina herself, "subamos, señor" ("let's go up, my lord") as she looks on to Pármeno and Sempronio and leaves them behind. The total detachment of the "they" (*ellos*) creates a barrier between the two pairs of characters and settles in doubt as to Celestina's original promises to Pármeno and Sempronio; "subamos" elevates Calisto and Celestina and distances them from the rest of the scene, as they are going up, the audience sees a shot of

---

<sup>5</sup> A representation of the visual aspect of the city, either by a painting, a drawing, a photograph, etc.

<sup>6</sup> In film, the focus is the degree to which light rays coming from any particular part of an object pass through the lens and reconverge at the same point on a frame of the film negative, creating sharp outlines and distinct textures that match the original object.

<sup>7</sup> A crane shot is a change in framing by having the camera above the ground and moving through the air in any direction.

<sup>8</sup> A camera movement with the camera body turning to the right or left showing the entirety of the shot.

Pármeno's and Sempronio's faces as they look up to their master, in a way, leaving them down, behind, and in the same predicament as they first started in the film. The play with the camera angles in this section of the film conveys the language that Calisto and Celestina set forth, the angles are also setting that distance from the pair of characters; Calisto and Celestina in the higher angle, while Pármeno and Sempronio remain in a lower angle. Immediately after Calisto and Celestina set that boundary with the word "subamos", Pármeno and Sempronio do not stay down where their master has left them, but have followed pursuit and climbed to earshot of their exchange to listen-in to what Celestina has to say about Melibea, who is "más desgastada en rendirse en su caída" ("more worn to surrender in her fall") for the love of Calisto and grants him her "cordón" as a show of her affection. "Subamos" is not just a division between Pármeno, Sempronio, and Celestina, but it is also showing the fickleness of the two men and Celestina and how far their desire for riches will take them. Calisto's "subamos" does only make Pármeno and Sempronio suspicious of what is to come, but it also makes them question and turn their back easily on Celestina, and just as well it foreshadows their untrustworthiness towards Celestina, with is especially ironic since they are the reason (more so Sempronio) for bringing her to Calisto's aid.

Celestina's death in particular is the catalyst to the rest of the events which end up occurring in the film -exactly what occurs in the novel-, and there is a constant cut and edit shots between Pármeno, Sempronio and Celestina, fighting to obtain their desired object, Melibea's "cordón" and Calisto's "cadena de oro", the payment that Celestina was awarded by Calisto, and that which Sempronio and Pármeno believe that they deserve

their share of as well. The scene has constant shots of windows, and goes between the windows and Pármeno, Sempronio and Celestina arguing, to the windows, and then back to the characters but now behind and in front of the windows. The constant back and forth shots of the windows and the three characters arguing is foreshadowing Pármeno's and Sempronio's method of escape after the murder of Celestina. The high and lows from the camera angles aid in not just alluding to Calisto and Melibea's death later in the film, but also to Pármeno and Sempronio's escape and subsequent death after the murder of Celestina. Celestina's home is shown through background shots, in particular of the stairs, where characters constantly go up and down from to get to their destination or escape for a moment of privacy -like previously seen in Calisto's home with Calisto and Celestina leaving Pármeno and Sempronio behind and continuing their conversation upstairs and "away from earshot"- . The stairs are not just a way of changing from levels and escaping the designated space, but most of the time the viewer does not see the other end of the stairs, they are only inferred as to where they could lead; such as in Celestina's home, the stairs lead to her other jobs that she practices, and the stairs also lead to Elicia's room where other entertainment -sex work- is also provided but is not seen, the space remains solely in the main room, and all other activities happening up the stairs or in other rooms are not seen but are to be inferred by the context clues and the imagination.

The scene after murdering Celestina becomes dark and fast paced as the cinematography cuts from shot to shot of Pármeno and Sempronio jumping out the window from Celestina's house and leaping from rooftop to rooftop to avoid being

caught by the law for the murder of Celestina. The audience's focus is on constant quick shifts of perspective shots between Pármeno and Sempronio, to shots of the ground, to brief glances of the city, and then finally back again to shots of the characters as they look down to avoid a falling amid their escape. The lighting is much darker during those shots of the ground and the gaps between the rooftops as Pármeno and Sempronio are escaping; the constant shift of shots and angles causing some dizziness to the audience. In Rojas' text, after Pármeno and Sempronio murder Celestina, yes, they escape, however, we as the readers are not privy to their escape nor their capture. The escape and capture are all done out of scene in the text, gifting the director some artistic liberty to be able to adapt and translate their own version of the escape.

After Celestina's murder, the deaths start pouring in; Pármeno and Sempronio are caught by justice -after Elicia and Areúsa betray them to avenge Celestina- and are punished by death; and then Calisto's death takes place. Although Calisto's death is tragic, there is a comedic aspect that is not lost to the viewer. Calisto climbing down from Melibea's *huerto* to help his servants at the bottom, and yet, it is the exact opposite of helping, Calisto slips and falls on his way down and dies, all the while Melibea is watching. The shot in the film of Calisto's descent is a high low angle, already keeping the viewer looking down and being above Calisto, from this angle, the viewer has the vantage point and is all seeing and able to anticipate the outcome. Calisto is looking back as he starts stepping down -already not paying attention in his descent- there is a small glimpse of the city behind Calisto, but it is far, he and his lustful meeting with Melibea are far away from the city and society, of what would be considered acceptable, a

reminder of the separation between where Calisto and Melibea are in the film in comparison to the rest of the city and society.

A pivotal scene in the film that represents all the elements that have been mentioned before is the death of Melibea, though tricky since the audience does not actually get to see her fall from the tower to her death, yet the panoramic camera shots along with the point-of-view shots between Melibea and her looking to the ground while giving her monologue. She reflects upon the death of her lover Calisto and as such has concluded to end her life along with his and join him in death. There is the vantage point of seeing a part of the city and the audience can also gauge the intent of Melibea with her constant looking down from the tower, reminiscent to the death of Calisto falling while leaving the garden and climbing down from the tower. The shot of Melibea is also one where the camera is at a low angle where Melibea seems to be slightly higher in the viewer's perspective; the audience is looking up towards Melibea while Melibea is looking down to the bottom of the tower, creating a type of link between the observer - the audience- and the observed -Melibea- who also becomes the observer -Melibea looking to the ground-. The viewer is left with the screams of Melibea's mother begging for her to not jump, however, all the audience gets in the end is an angled framed shot from the ground as we see a shot from where Melibea is at the tower then where she no longer is there. Melibea's leap to death is only inferred and never witnessed; a censored outcome of the religious society of the time, where suicide is considered a sin in the catholic church. What is left behind as a representation of Melibea's body falling is her white scarf slowly falling/gliding through the wind and being pulled down by gravity to

where Melibea lies dead. Melibea's suicide is the only death by choice of the character, and as such, the director took some creativity in the way of showcasing the suicide without showing the act itself to the audience. As mentioned, the white scarf becomes a form of Melibea herself, giving the audience the visual of her suicide without seeing her jump, fall, and land; her sudden and almost quick act of leaping from the tower is depicted by the oppositional slow descent of the scarf. The shot of the white scarf's descent is focused through a low angle shot, instead of seeing the fast-paced fall, the audience experiences a slow, almost floating like, descension, a big contrast to what an actual fall would be, it is an almost delicate and peaceful scene. The violence of Melibea's choice to leap versus the softness of the white scarf make the scene much more impactful to the viewer. The scarf becomes a perfect metonymy of Melibea herself as she falls. The final shot of the film is both Calisto and Melibea laying side by side but in death.

The 1969 film version of *La Celestina* is a filmic depiction of Rojas' original work, and does justice to the text from the time that it was produced and filmed; as a result from this literary adaptation, almost thirty years later, in 1996, after the democratic transition and the cultural corollary of the eighties, a new version was filmed, under the direction of Gerardo Vera and the titular characters performed by Terele Pávez, Juan Diego Botto, and Penélope Cruz. This version of the classic work plays more with the dramatic story of the characters and highlights the love -i.e., lust- that Calisto, Melibea, Pármeno, and Sempronio exude. The film differs aesthetically from the 1969 film, it has a darker theme and seems to play more on the dramatic tone and incorporates more love

scenes than anything else, eroticism is at its highest in Vera's film, with less leaving it to the imagination of the viewer -big events are not left out of scene-, in comparison to Fernández Ardavín's film [Figure 1.2], where a lot of the erotic scenes, and as well as Melibea's suicide are inferred and are left to the imagination of the audience. Vera's film takes more artistic liberty in showcasing scenes that are also not in the original work, and as such, Vera's "transition from [text] to film changes the medium of communication" to a more visually intricate story where the characters of Celestina, Calisto, Melibea, Pármeno and Sempronio have a more impactful presence in Vera's representation of Rojas' text (Montalbano 386). Since Vera's film is a second adaptation of Rojas' classic, there is a need to incorporate a modern style for the late twentieth-century public, and as a result, film adaptations of novels and other classical works of literature become much more popular and frequent during this time (Jost 71). It is without question why most Spanish literature classes show the 1996 version to students vs. the 1969 version, its style and cinematography appeal to a younger audience, and the main characters – Calisto and Melibea – are also more youthful looking; the film is a "... work of recall [and] positions an adaptation precisely as an adaptation, and studying it involves both textual and contextual analysis" (Geraghty 4), and can bring in a comparative analysis as well from film to the original text (*La Celestina* 1969).

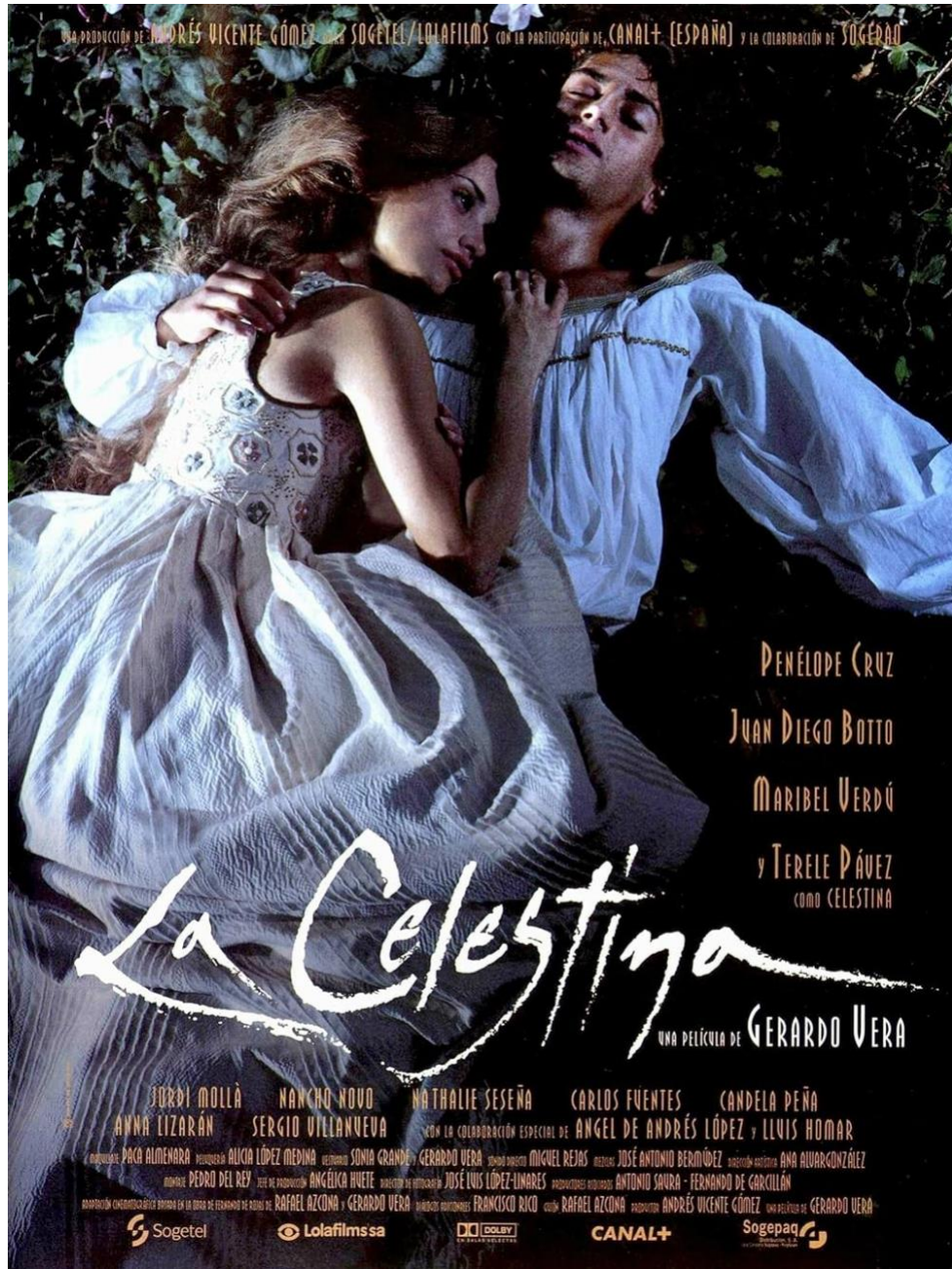


Figure 1.2: Poster for Vera’s 1996 *La Celestina*.

The beginning of the film starts with movement, an action sequence with a chivalric theme; horses running through water and are being ridden by Calisto and his servants. This is a difference from the 1969 film since it starts with various static shots of the city, whereas there is a bigger focus in the city of where the story takes place in Fernández Ardavín's film, Vera's film is more focused on the characters and the plot and relationship they develop with one another. The film continues to shots of the market where Calisto lays eyes on Melibea, the camera cuts and turns to shots of the church - religion being a constant reminder of the faith in Spain- and of Calisto and Melibea finally interacting. The camera angles that Vera decides to use for his film follow a similar motif to Fernández Ardavín's film, high and low angle shots are constant, and in Vera's film, also is used to establish a certain class and moral hierarchy. Once Calisto makes his intentions for his desire of Melibea known to his servants Pármemo and Sempronio, then the plot of the film starts developing. However, the argument between Pármemo and Sempronio about the possible involvement -and later inclusion- of Celestina is a constant topic within the conversations of the three men, so much so that even during dinner it is discussed. Pármemo disagrees on the recruitment of Celestina and can be seen in the scene as standing and being on high ground above Sempronio and his master Calisto. This outline view of the scene, showcasing the three male characters at different levels of sitting and standing represent the high ground of righteousness, Pármemo is placed in a standing position in this scene -he is above Sempronio and Calisto- and wanting the best for his master -being the ever faithful servant-, and that includes not wanting to bring the "alcahueta" and "puta vieja" Celestina into the mix. Calisto and

Sempronio, who are already morally ambiguous -placed at a lower sitting level-, what with Calisto wanting Melibea in a lust-driven passion without any promises of marriage, and Sempronio simply acting in his favor so he can obtain payment from his master by bringing Celestina in to sedate his master's lust and take advantage of him for money.

The camera angles in Vera's film are like the 1969 film, these angles of high shots and low shots become a motif in the film and start to establish an importance for the audience, not just for the director's filmic style but also to thread the theme of the plot itself. Vera's camera shots not only allude to the character's deaths, but also interlace the status of the characters, not necessarily a class status, but more so a societal morality and a personal inner status. The high and low is seen previously by Pármeno -mentioned in the paragraph above- when he disagrees with his master and Sempronio about involving Celestina, and then again later with the introductory scene of Celestina and Elicia in the brothel house. The play between Celestina being down the stairs who is calling up to Elicia while she is upstairs is a sort of echo to where the business is being conducted and who manages the business. Elicia is upstairs *working* and hides the man -her customer, Crito- she is with, and tells Crito that her cousin is visiting her and that he -Sempronio- will be mad if he sees him. In this scene, Celestina is looking up to Elicia -a scene in the film that is depicted comedically, making fun of the situation of almost being caught *working* when there is another customer downstairs waiting, even though most everyone is aware of the type of business Celestina conducts in her home, so the lie is sillier to begin with-, similar to when Pármeno and Sempronio are there towards the end of the film to kill Celestina and she calls up to Elicia to help her. There is only looking up the

stairs, there is no real action happening in going up the stairs. The foreshadowing between these different heights of where these two characters are located in the house, Elicia in the higher ground, is in a way in an untouchable area where she witnesses everything, in comparison to Celestina, who from the first moment we see her in the home she is yelling up to Elicia to come down and assist and comes full circle at the end of her life as she is yelling to Elicia to come and help her from Pármeno and Sempronio.

In the 1969 film, the viewer does not get to see very much of Celestina's witchcraft talents, which are only implied and in Rojas' work it is mentioned, but in the 1996 film, Vera incorporates an actual scene of Celestina practicing her *hechicerías* [witchcraft]. In this deep focus<sup>9</sup> shot of Celestina is using her talents to help accomplish her deed of convincing Melibea to be with Calisto; Celestina's chants are seen through the boiling cauldron and the smoke that is emanating from the fire, creating an ominous ambiance, the mise-en-scene<sup>10</sup> elements aid in enhancing the significance of the scene, for it plays on the witchcraft notion that is understood in the modern world, and by the viewer, so there is a relatable understanding of the action taking place in the scene. All the while when Celestina is downstairs conjuring, there is a constant shift between scenes of Celestina below on the first floor and Sempronio with Elicia upstairs in the middle of their sexual exploits. The subsequent set of shots between Celestina downstairs and Elicia and Sempronio upstairs amid their sexual act is a sort of reminder of the outcomes of

---

<sup>9</sup> Deep focus: All the different planes of the image are given equal importance, believed to achieve a true representation of space.

<sup>10</sup> Mise-en-scene: "Put in the scene", the setting, the decor, the lighting, the costumes, the performance, etc. Narrative films often manipulate the elements of mise-en-scene, such as decor, costumes, and acting to intensify or undermine the ostensible significance of a particular scene.

Celestina's involvement in asking for her aid, the fulfillment of pleasure -for Calisto and Pármeno- and desire -for Calisto, Sempronio, and Pármeno-. The juxtaposition of the two shots is shown interchangeably in a matter of seconds, Celestina's talents of being the owner of a brothel house, being a "witch", and facilitating people in their sexual desire for one another as an "alcahueta" and the never-ending need for her services.

It is important to note, though film adaptation from literary works do take some creative liberties when adapting said works, the screenplay writer or director can choose to change key scenes or plot points from the text to the film. Television and film adaptations such as *Game of Thrones* and the *Harry Potter* series remove characters, change lines, adjust plot points, or even modify entirely the ending of a character or characters. This is mostly done because a character is popular, or the audience has a voice -mostly for television-, or because the director or writer simply prefers a different ending to the original. Fernández Ardavín and Vera, who are also the screenplay writers for their films, did not take such liberties, they both kept Rojas' original plot intact, maintaining the fidelity to the text, not just by keeping the period of the original text intact -unlike Baz Luhrmann's version of *Romeo and Juliet*- but also following through with the plot of events. The characters that die and even the order of each of their deaths are in parallel to the text, the only liberties the directors take in the characters' deaths are the ways they chose to portray them on screen. So, just like Rojas' work, Celestina's death is the beginning of all the deaths; Vera's camera focus is on Pármeno and Sempronio in this scene because they are angered with Celestina and begin to demand their share of the *cadena de oro* [gold chain] that Calisto paid her with for helping him with Melibea.

Celestina, again, calls on Elicia to come to her aid, however, this time it is to help her save her own life, but it is to no avail, Celestina is pinned to the wall, and she is literally *entre la espada y la pared* [between a rock and a hard place] as Pármeno succumbs to his intense emotions of hatred towards Celestina and stabs her to death in her own home. The drama of Celestina's death, though in Rojas' narrative seems overly exaggerated, it is for a purpose to demonstrate to the reader the act of violence that has just occurred towards Celestina, and in comparison to the 1996 film, though not as over the top, there is still that level of overly exaggerated death that goes perfectly with the mood of the film since it seems to be a relevant theme of dramatic and dark events in the film. The shot of Celestina's death is in focus, keeps every one of the characters involved in the frame, in the audiences' view as to not lose sight of any of the characters' body and reactions. The camera follows these characters throughout Celestina's home, as she is being questioned by Pármeno and Sempronio about Calisto's payment to her, Celestina falls victim to her own avarice (Ayllón 45). After Celestina's death, Sempronio and Pármeno are captured and killed, however, the whole escaping from justice after they murder Celestina is a whole scene that is omitted entirely from the 1996 film, as opposed to the older 1969 film where the audience is given the suspenseful escape through the darkness and jumping through roofs of these two characters in the hopes of not getting caught. As a result of Celestina's death, and Pármeno's and Sempronio's treason towards Celestina, Elicia and Areúsa take matters into their own hands and try to exact revenge in Celestina's sake, for they are now the women of the house.

Calisto is the fourth character to be taken by death, for someone who has found out the outcome of his servants Pármeno and Sempronio being killed and their involvement in Celestina's murder, he is able to relinquish those thoughts and forget them by the joys of being with Melibea for one final night of fatal lust, however, the scene of his death is one that is on the comedic side, for he is running and overly confident to go and help his servants, but in turn, slips and falls straight onto death's awaiting darkness. Calisto's accidental death leaves the audience in comic disbelief until the face of Melibea appears and reality of what has occurred is realized, that Calisto has died and left his love Melibea. Calisto's death, and Melibea's shock and sadness. In Vera's film, Calisto falls so dramatically it almost seems in slow motion, with the constant change in shots between Calisto's face in disbelief as he slips and Melibea and Lucrecia also confused by the situation. It seems a shame to see at the end the outcome of these two lovers, if Calisto and Melibea had not been interrupted by Lucrecia's warning Calisto that his servants are being attacked and need his help, he and Melibea would have continued with their sexual encounter with one another and most likely no other fatality, whether it be accidental or deliberate, were to occur. But Lucrecia does tell Calisto, in the presence of Melibea (so she hears) and he must act, even with Melibea's constant pleading of not going to help his servants; it is an interesting scene to take in, for at first it seems only rational for Calisto to go to his servants' aid, however, before his meeting with Melibea, Calisto was made aware of the transgressions of his previous servants, Pármeno and Sempronio, and the murder of Celestina, and yet, Calisto did not bat a single eye to try and help them, nor visit them when captured, he continued on with his

plans to visit Melibea in the *huerto*. It is Calisto's need to show off his bravery to Melibea that slowly guides him to his death. His desire to placate his lust for Melibea, his over-confidence and cockiness are a part of his downfall. The constant shots of his fall and finally landing to his doom halts all the fighting that was occurring, and the frame becomes still and focuses on Calisto dead, eyes open and looking up to where Melibea is looking from above in shock. Calisto's death is undoubtedly tragic, more so because of the aftermath of what his death consequently causes in the remaining of the film; Melibea's reaction to everything is what stands out the most, especially since she seems to descend into a non-real state and almost floats and stumbles around in distress over the death of her lover; the ego is not accomplishing its job of balancing the id, superego, and reality, and as a result Melibea is roaming unconsciously for the loss of Calisto. Melibea is in absolute depression and walks around as if transfixed on getting to that tower and commit suicide and be reunited with Calisto. Comparing this scene to the 1969 version scene of the aftermath of Calisto's death, Melibea is shocked by the sudden tragedy of it all, and still portrays the distress of losing her love, she is not over dramatic nor is she seen to be a hysterical Melibea. Fernandez Ardavín's Melibea is put together and shows her emotions through her monologue (auto XIX) before she jumps, meanwhile, Vera's Melibea (performed by Penélope Cruz) portrays the character as fragile and almost unstable after she witnesses Calisto's fall, (a traumatic event to be sure) and it is to the point where Melibea's reaction seems out of place for someone who is willingly entering into a clandestine relationship and even for that time have a feminist attitude to decide for

themselves what they want instead of doing what their parents want, and see that same character descend into madness.

After Melibea's spiral into her sadness going up to the tower, Pleberio, Melibea's father, is woken up and comes down and looks up at his daughter as she is on the precipice of death. Pleberio is the character that stands out in the 1996 version of the film, because in the 1969 version he is not seen during Melibea's suicide, it is only the sounds of Melibea's mother that are heard as she is delivering her monologue. The whole scene goes back and forth between Pleberio below looking up at his daughter who is on the ledge of the tower and ready to jump, and Melibea delivering her monologue. Melibea's suicide scene, the camera is directed from a low angle, as if the audience is below to where Melibea's father is positioned watching his daughter on the tower looking up. Melibea's monologue is heard concurrently as Pleberio starts running up the stairs to the tower to try and rescue his daughter, leaving his wife, Alisa and Lucrecia down and staring up at Melibea, the constant high and lows and seeing the characters at constantly different levels, almost as if Melibea can never be a part of the same space as her parents, and as her father is running up to her, the suspense of the constant change in scenes begins building and has the viewer (just as in the narrative and the 1969 film) that there where be someone or something that stops her jump, but just as it has it, moments before her father reaches her, it's as if they cannot remain in the same space, that she jumps and falls and joins Calisto, Celestina, Pármeno, and Sempronio in death. During Melibea's entire suicide scene, the camera changes focus from Pleberio running to Melibea, to Alisa and Lucrecia trying to talk and reason to Melibea, then back to Melibea. Melibea's jump

is quite a graphic and impactful scene in this film since it is the first time her suicide is seen on screen. In the 1969 film, Melibea's suicide is only inferred, and it is also personified by her white scarf slowly falling, however, when watching the newer 1996 film, Vera does not use a scarf to symbolize Melibea's jump, instead he opts to visually show the violent act of Melibea willfully jumping towards her death. The leap shot is filmed from a low angle, maintaining in the frame Melibea, the tower, and the blue morning sky in all deep focus and as a result asserting the viewer that the entire space in the shot is important, for it gives a truer representation of the surroundings of Melibea and everything else around. The final shot of Melibea [Figure 1.3], delicately placed in almost a similar symmetry as Calisto when he fell, matching him and fitting into Calisto, even in death. Though it is visible to see Melibea laying over the green grass, of what the audience can assume is her *huerto* where she would have her encounters with her lover Calisto, but it is Melibea that is the main focus, and this is accomplished by having a shallow focus and keeping one plane, Melibea in this shot, in sharp focus, creating a space to the viewer of where the importance of the shot needs to be (*La Celestina* 1996).



**Figure 1.3:** Melibea's almost sleep like death after her leap in Vera's 1996 version of *La Celestina*, her body is delicately placed upon the green grass and she is illuminated by the light of the rising sun (*La Celestina*).

The importance of film adaptations is not just of the representation of the original text but of the portrayal of the of the original text and how it is re-imagined in order to promote new ideas from the writer, director, and audience, “[e]veryone who sees films based on novels feels able to comment, at levels ranging from the gossipy to the erudite, on the nature and success of the adaptation involved (McFarlane 3). Film adaptation on beloved works of literature can be difficult to translate, not just to an audience member who has never read the original text it is based on, but also for the reader, “[d]iscussion of adaptation has been bedeviled by the fidelity issue, no doubt ascribable in part to the novel’s coming first, in part to the ingrained sense of literature’s greater respectability in traditional critical circles” (McFarlane 8). A note in literary adaptations is that “... most writing on adaptation as translation... betrays certain unexamined ideological concerns because it deals of necessity with sexually charged materials and cannot avoid a gendered language associated with the notion of ‘fidelity’” (Naremore 8). *La Celestina* is part of the Spanish Literature canon, it is still important, especially to see it adapted and portrayed not just in one film, but in two films by two different directors and during two distinct and opposite time periods in Spain. When a story is adapted, it can highlight its literary roots, making the audience or reader think about the original,

With the advent of an explosion of world language usage on the Internet, translation theory has become newly serviceable. Instead of fixating mournfully on the supposition that nothing is translatable (the original is always and inevitably lost in the translation), translation studies increasingly explores the possibility that everything is translatable (Apter, *The Translation Zone* 226)

But at the same time, the comparison may trigger memories and connections to different versions of the original story in various forms of media.

## Work Cited

- Apter, Emily S. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. Verso, 2013.
- . *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*. Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Ayllón, Cándido. "La ironía de la *Celestina*." *Romanische Forschungen*, vol. 82, no. 1/2, 1970, pp. 37–55, <https://doi.org/27937634>.
- Bluestone, George. *Novels into Film*. University of California Press, 1961.
- Brady, Ben. *Principles of Adaptation for Film and Television*. 1st ed, University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Casetti, Francesco. "Adaptation and Mis-Adaptations: Film, Literature, and Social Discourses." *A Companion to Literature and Film*, edited by Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, Blackwell Pub, 2004, pp. 81–91.
- Elliot, Kamilla. "Novels, Films, and the Word/Image Wars." *A Companion to Literature and Film*, edited by Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, Blackwell Pub, 2004, pp. 1–22.
- Geraghty, Christine. *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
- Jost, François. "The Look: From Film to Novel - An Essay in Comparative Narratology." *A Companion to Literature and Film*, edited by Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, Blackwell Pub, 2004, pp. 71–80.
- La Celestina*. Directed by César Fernández Ardavín, Paramount Films, 1969.
- . Directed by Gerardo Vera, Lolafilms, 1996.
- McFarlane, Brian. *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Montalbano, Margaret. "From Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to *Bram Stoker's 'Dracula'*." *A Companion to Literature and Film*, edited by Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, Blackwell Pub, 2004, pp. 385–98.
- Naremore, James. "Introduction: Film and the Reign of Adaptation." *Film Adaptation*, edited by James Naremore, Rutgers University Press, 2000, pp. 1–16.

Rojas, Fernando de. *La Celestina*. Edited by Dorothy Sherman Severin, Vigésimocuarta edición, Cátedra, 2016.

Vieira, Patrícia. “Cinema in Totalitarian Iberia: Propaganda and Persuasion under Salazar and Franco.” *Beyond Tordesillas: New Approaches to Comparative Luso-Hispanic Studies*, edited by Robert Patrick Newcomb and Richard A. Gordon, Ohio State University Press, 2017, pp. 220–33. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv18b5q5q>.

Walker, Elsie. “Pop Goes the Shakespeare: Baz Luhrmann’s *William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet*.” *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*, edited by James Michael Welsh and Peter Lev, Scarecrow Press, 2007, pp. 125–48.

*William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet*. Directed by Baz Luhrmann, 20th Century Fox, 1996.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE REPRESENTATIONS OF *LA CELESTINA*:

#### FROM WOOD CARVINGS, TAPESTRIES, AND CLASSIC TO MODERN ART

*Tai: Do you think she's pretty?*

*Cher: No, she's a full-on Monet.*

*Tai: What's a Monet?*

*Cher: It's like a painting, see? From far away, it's OK, but up close, it's a big old mess.*

– *Clueless*, 1995

*La Celestina* has become an inspiration for many forms of media, where the words are now given an image to the characters. As discussed in the previous chapter, Rojas' original work of *La Celestina* has had several adaptations, and not just on the silver screen, In the many versions of *La Celestina*, there have been an abundance of artistic depictions and visual representations of this iconic work, whether as woodcarvings, paintings, illustrations, tapestries, and so forth. There has been a myriad of editions published of *La Celestina*, each edition improving -at least hoping to do so- upon the next. Towards the end of the fifteenth century “the introduction of printing... marks the advent of modernity” and helps connect the verbal and the visual on a single page (Montero 197). The first known publication of *La Celestina* -known at the time as *Comedia*- was in Burgos in 1499 by the printer of Fadrique de Basilea, later, after some additions on Rojas' part, the second edition and publication of the work -known as the *Tragicomedia*- is published in Toledo in 1500; in 1502 it is published in Seville by the

printer of Jacobo Cromberger, and then in Valencia in 1514. Each edition<sup>1</sup> added to what the previous edition lacked, either clarity, illustrations, editorial notes, etc. Later, once the work has moved around and shared, translations of the *Tragicomedia* began to emerge. These translations<sup>2</sup> added their own version of illustrations to the text.

There is an entertaining aspect that accompanies most of these editions, and that is the illustrations that accompany the *autos* -acts-, for example, after the original publication of *La Celestina* took flight and was an absolute success, readers wanted more of the characters and to the story, because of this Rojas made some adjustments for the next publication, adding scenes and dialogue to appease the eager reader (Montero 200). After the initial publication and Rojas' subsequent editing and adapting for the new -and old- reader, "the *Tragicomedia* was translated into Italian (1505), beginning the innumerable list of versions and translations" but now, with the addition of illustrations in these new translations and editions of the *Tragicomedia* gave the text much more "marketability" (Montero 200). This means that after Rojas' adjustments to the original *Comedia* and the change to *Tragicomedia* that illustrations became the norm for all future publications, "... in the second known presentation of *La Celestina*, literary and aesthetic considerations have been added to the previous didactic justification. Not only is the moral intention of the work underlined but also the artistry whereby that purpose

---

<sup>1</sup> For the many critical studies done on *La Celestina* there is usually a specific edition that it is being derived from, either from the Burgos (1499) edition, the Toledo (1500) edition, Seville (1502), or Valencia (1514). The choice of edition becomes the basis of study for the editor or writer.

<sup>2</sup> There have been many translations done of *La Celestina* and as a result from the different formats and editions, the collection and study of these translations become part of the *celestinesque* cannon. These translation aid in adding more readers and hopefully more scholars into the world of *La Celestina*.

achieved” (Gilman 5), the visual additions in the different editions of *La Celestina* are an overview of what is to occur in the upcoming acts. These illustrations are not only visually absorbing, but they are also thought-provoking in the sense that they give life to the characters and invite the reader to critically think with the text and the illustrations and the description Rojas has for the characters and their actions. The reader becomes as much a part of the interpretation of the story, it is not all left to the text itself; meaning the text stimulates the reader into critical analysis. Reading is no longer a passive activity but rather a dynamic, thoughtful, and engaging activity (Montero 198). This idea where the reader becomes involved with the text is based on reception theory<sup>3</sup>.

Just as we discussed with the film adaptations of Fernández Ardavín’s film and Vera’s film, each represented their *La Celestina* read in their own way and with different styles and techniques<sup>4</sup>. The paintings and illustrations of the depictions of the different acts are as close to visualization of the characters of such a classic work especially during that time. In what better way to represent these characters than by interpreting them with illustrations? Representing these beloved characters into another means that goes beyond the language of the page, gives an actual picture of these popular characters of Calisto, Melibea, Celestina, Pármeno, Sempronio, etc. The reader has already been imagining

---

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Iser was a German literary scholar who is commonly associated with reader-response criticism in literary theory. He is considered to be the founder of reception theory. He found that the text also makes assumptions about the reader. In cases of narrative, the personal pronoun assumes a certain reader through the narrator. Finally, the actual reader possesses a horizon of expectations which contain the possible expectations set forth by the reader. Reception history considers the history of how people have received the text historically.

<sup>4</sup> Fernández Ardavín’s 1969 version of *La Celestina* filmed during Franco’s dictatorship in Spain; and Vera’s 1996 version of *La Celestina* filmed after Franco’s death under democratic government.

these characters and with the illustrations -especially during that period, where illustrations and paintings were the source of representation- give the reader's imagination an actual image to compare the in-text description to and put another visual layer to what that they had been imagining. Rachel Schmidt claims that representation brings about a new set of eyes to the original written work,

[a]l trasladar al personaje literario a un medio que depende de un aporte visual, ya sea representándolo como figura en un grabado o a través de la actuación de un actor/cantante en un escenario, se le cambia radicalmente por el mero hecho de hacerlo presente ante los ojos de un espectador (86).

[ENG: in transferring a literary character to a medium that depends on a visual output, whether it be representing it as a recorded figure or through the acting of an actor/singer on a stage, it is radically changed for the fact that it is making the visual present for the eyes of the spectator].

Schmidt reinforces this statement saying that the characters that are read and imagined by readers, through the aid of visual representation, become actual flesh and bone, *los personajes se hacen carne*, to the eyes of the reader that brings the work as a whole together and highlights certain aspects that are present in the reading that are not always as clear until they are seen via illustration, art, film, or theater (Schmidt 87).

In this chapter, the focus will be on how the text is adapted into paintings and illustrations. These are visual aids to literary representation that attract new perspectives onto the characters of *La Celestina*. As “[i]mages were necessary instruments for human cognition in the process of textual elucidation” these make characters and scenes much more clear to the reader who may require that added visual aid (Montero 198). There will be two artistic representations that will be discussed in this chapter, the first being the iconographic illustrations of *La Celestina* that are presented in Dorothy S. Severin's 2016

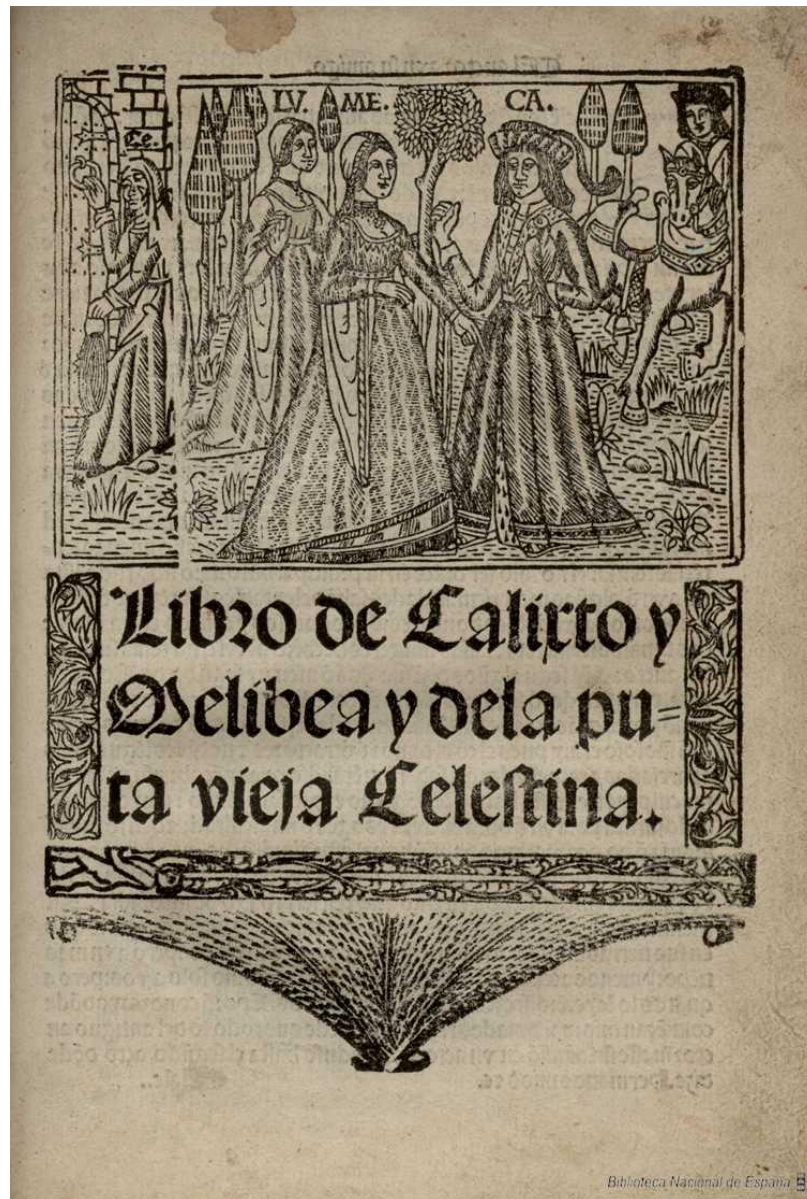
edition of the book; and the second art representation that will be examined are Teo Puebla's 1999 collection inspired by Rojas' masterpiece. The illustrations from Severin's 2016 edition are a compilation from older printed editions of *La Celestina*. Both forms of art take inspiration from Rojas' language and the description of each of these characters, their actions that drives them, their desires, lust, and societal norms all attribute to their depiction in these different artforms because, "[a]ll human societies engage in some form of activity that may be called *artistic*. All human societies have language; no matter how basic it may be, language is fundamental to the most primitive human social group" and paintings, illustrations, etc., can be a source of language and can be inspired by language to create more, "[t]he concept of art is not some universal truth that inhabits a world of superreality. It has evolved and become engrained in language as part of the cultural tradition of which we are the heirs" of such art forms (Simpson 47–48).

Art depictions that are drawn from literary inspirations bring about a new view to beloved works of literature, it is another form of art being inspired by art, and as such there is a new vision given to said art, all based on the time of creation the medium, and the author, and the viewer or spectator of this new medium. These new adaptations draw again what was previously mentioned in chapter 1 on adaptability, can this work of literature be adapted -not just in film- but in other art forms, such as medieval illustrations and paintings? For Rojas' *La Celestina* having been around for many years and been adapted and edited since its publication in 1499, there are bound to be inspirations and varieties of art based on the varieties of the text. Instead of seeing this adaptation and translation as a downfall, it is actually something positive that brings

awareness to the importance that *La Celestina* has had in the canon of literature, not just because of the text itself, but because of the varieties of ways it has been adapted over the years and the many research and work -past, present, and future- it has developed, “[t]he distinctive ways in which each medium reinterprets an idea or a scene prompt a brief discussion of the debate on the fundamental differences (and similarities) of literature and the visual arts...” (Landwehr 11).

The first forms of images that will be analyzed are the illustrations in Dorothy S. Severin’s 2016 edition of *La Celestina*. The first image [Figure 2.1] that we are starting out with is a depiction of the main characters and the title of the book right below it, *Libro de Calixto y Melibea y de la puta vieja Celestina*, the image is a title page, most likely a cover from an older edition, and showcases the two main lovers of the story at the very center of the illustration, Calisto -on the right side- and Melibea -to the left-. The characters are dressed in their regular fare, Melibea in a dress with embellishments on the edges -a sign of money for the addition of extra fabric for details- and a necklace. Meanwhile, Calisto is dressed in his noble’s garb, almost like a gown itself, and topped off with a large hat and feather. Calisto and Melibea are placed in the semi-center of the scene and appear to be in conversation. Calisto and Melibea are outside, this is indicated by the grass and trees around them, while there is a sort of castle on the far left of Melibea. The view of the lovers talking outside is most likely a representation of Calisto and Melibea’s future trysts together in the story, because all their encounters are done in the outside -e.g., Melibea’s *huerto* (garden)-. This depiction of Calisto and Melibea’s

meeting brings some corporal form to these two characters specifically, because their lust/love is the prime impetus of the story.



**Figure 2.1:** “Portada de Sevilla, 1518-1520 (1502)” Jacobo Cromberger edition. The illustration is used through various edition of *La Celestina* as an initial title page for the text.

The original image, that is commonly seen as a title page introduction to the text, was printed in the Burgos edition (1499) with just the lovers -Calisto and Melibea- represented at the center, and as Montero mentions, over time, as the importance of the characters of *Celestina* and of the servants began to come to the forefront of popularity, the illustrator for new editions of the text would add on these characters to the already established illustration (Montero 204). As the story is shared it evolves and different readers start creating their own perspectives and ideas about the text, the characters, and the author -very similar to fan-art or fan-fiction-. It is no wonder there are so many variations and transformations of *La Celestina* because from the beginning it was a text for the reader, and as such, it is the reader who has helped in the extensive variations of Rojas' *Tragicomedia*. This early illustration gives readers another level of connection to Calisto and Melibea, turning images that readers only had in their heads to actual visual representations of said characters. The characters are doing exactly what the reader has envisioned, the image is depicting their countless meetings, and even when knowing the story, and reading it, the image provides a new medium to absorb the same story, "... the very possibility of telling the same story in many different ways that provokes us [the reader] to make attempt [at adaptations]" (Hutcheon 109). The other characters in the image that surround Calisto and Melibea are Celestina, who is on the far left knocking on a door as if in secret, between Celestina and Melibea there is another female figure, this is most likely Melibea's maid Lucrezia, her right-hand woman and confidant for the entirety of the work. To the right side of Calisto, there is a male figure who appears to be

on a horse, his servant Sempronio, some of the main characters all in the frame depicting the job that they do in the story itself.

The first image that is introduced of Celestina is not until the third act of Severin's edition. This is already after the fact that the reader has become familiar with the character and her a little more of her personality. In the image [Figure 2.2], Celestina is outside and placed between two buildings in what seems like a residential neighborhood, depicting it seems the house calls she makes in her line of profession. Celestina herself is portrayed standing, she is dressed in layers of clothing and even seems like her neck is covered, a sense of modesty -which is ironic because her line of work is anything but modest- and her hair is also covered by a shawl or scarf. Celestina has a large bag attached to her belt and hanging from her hip, and has her right hand raised as if in a salutation while the other is holding an unrecognizable object, most likely something useful for what she has planned for her outing that is in her line of work. As aforementioned, this first image of Celestina is presented after the reader has already become aware of her existence and her major role in the plot of the story. Celestina's name is first mention is by the character of Sempronio, with the description of "... una vieja barbuda que se dize Celestina, hechizera, astuta, sagaz en quantas maldades hay. Entiendo que passan de cinco mil virgos los que se han hecho y desecho por su autoridad en esta cibdad" (Rojas, *La Celestina* 104) ["... a bewhiskered old beldame who calls herself Celestina, a witch, astute and wise in all evil things. They say the number of maidenheads broken and repaired under her authority in this city passes five thousand" (Rojas, *The Celestina* 11–12)]. Already Celestina has been given power for the

effectiveness of her abilities, she is sought after by many, making her a staple in the community for all secret affairs and desires. Rojas gives Celestina masculine descriptors, her being *barbuda*, as Sempronio first describes her, is usually part of the masculine complexion and goes against a traditional feminine image for medieval literature of the time; the *barbuda* becomes a direct contradiction to the feminine ideal, which is what Celestina is in the story, she is already a character that goes against the grain of traditional society (Sanz Hermida 18–19). Celestina is the first and only person Sempronio thinks of to be able to provide what his master Calisto most desires... Melibea. Celestina's age -sixty five- is mentioned by Pármeno and later Celestina herself -an old woman by medieval standards- and yet, she is more than capable to accomplish the task that Calisto desires; Celestina is not only a *vieja* who is also *barbuda*, she is wise and powerful, Celestina can create relationships, and just as easily Celestina can break those same relationships (Sanz Hermida 23).



**Figure 2.2:** “Grabado del acto III de la edición de Burgos (1499)” Fadrique de Basilea and anonymous illustrator.

With this first description of Celestina, *hechizera, vieja barbuda, astuta*, the reader starts creating an image of what Celestina might look like, someone older, with life experience, and knowledge of all good and bad of what society has to offer. After Sempronio's mention of Celestina, the reader is finally able to experience her firsthand. One of the main things noticed is the friendly relationship between Sempronio and Celestina, to the point where she calls him her *hijo* and he calls her *madre*, this closeness is the result of Sempronio's frequent visits to Elicia -a sex worker who lives with and works for Celestina-. The conversation that follows between Sempronio and Celestina informs the reader on other trades she is accomplished in and sought to do,

SEMPRONIO. Pues, ¿quién está arriba?

CELESTINA. ¿Quiéreslo saber?

SEMPRONIO. Quiero.

CELESTINA. Una moça, que me encomendó un frayle (Rojas, *La Celestina* 106–07).

[ENG: SEMPRONIO. But who is upstairs?

CELESTINA. Do you really want to know?

SEMPRONIO. Yes.

CELESTINA. It's a girl that a friar left with me (Rojas, *The Celestina* 13–14)].

The reader becomes aware of more than just Celestina's side job of repairing virginities, she also -as it is subtly implied- performs abortions for those who can acquire her services.

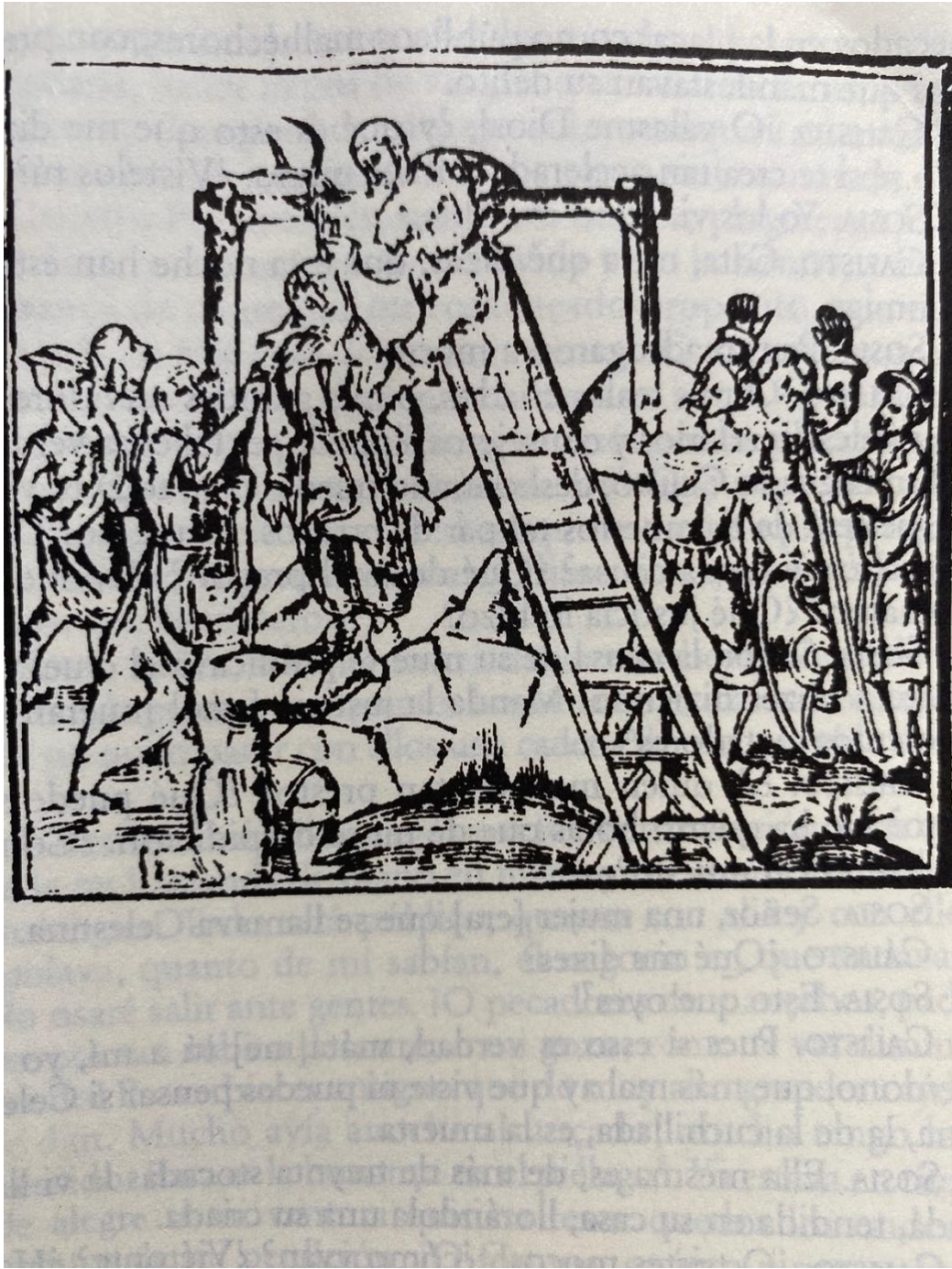
The second character to provide another description of Celestina, is Pármeno. Pármeno speaks of Celestina in a not so positive light -an opposition to Sempronio's praises earlier- and based upon his description of her, the reader learns of the past relationship Pármeno had with Celestina, it is in this instance where we see the famous line of *puta vieja* that is associated with Celestina, "... Si entre cient mugeres va y alguno

dize <<¡Putá vieja!>>, sin ningún empacho luego buelve la cabeça y responde con alegre cara” (Rojas, *La Celestina* 109) [“If she’s among a hundred women and someone says: ‘Old Whore!,’ with no embarrassment whatever she turns her head and answers with smiling face” (Rojas, *The Celestina* 16)]. Pármemo continues his barrage against his master acquiring the aid of Celestina by explaining his childhood with her and his mother. Pármemo’s disdain towards Celestina is apparent, and it is never hidden. By this, the reader now has four views of Celestina, first is Sempronio’s view: Celestina and her many jobs that she does around the city; the second is of Celestina herself, the third is the image [Figure 2.2] portraying Celestina: giving a face to the character; and finally, the fourth view -and should be the most insightful since he had a long childhood experience with her- of Pármemo’s.

The third image [Figure 2.3] that will be looked into is the portrayal of the death of Sempronio and Pármemo. Both characters die towards the end of the book, they are punished by law for having murdered Celestina. The only mention of the death of these two characters are by Calisto’s other servants, Sosia and Tristán. The scene of their death is heard from afar by the first-person perspective of Tristán, “... Alguna justicia se haze o madrugaron a correr toros. No sé qué me diga de tan grandes bozes como se dan. De allá viene Sosia el moço despuelas; él me dirá qué es esto” (Rojas, *La Celestina* 279) [“... Either someone’s getting hanged, or the people have got up early to run the bulls. But here is Sosia; he’ll tell me what’s going on” (Rojas, *The Celestina* 145)], and later Sosia enters the scene and relays to Tristán the capture and deaths of Pármemo and Sempronio,

“Que quedan degollados en la plaza” (Rojas, *La Celestina* 280) [“They’ve been beheaded in the square!” (Rojas, *The Celestina* 145–46)].

Without ever reading of their capture and their death, the reader can imagine the scene with the description that Sosia provides Tristán and Calisto, and the woodcarving [Figure 2.3] depicting their hanging also enhances the vision of the actual occurrence. In the woodcarving there are many people around -the noise that Tristán hears from afar- there is a post at the center of the frame while the crowd surrounds it, at the post there is a ladder with someone -an executioner- tying the rope securely around the neck of either Pármemo or Sempronio. There is a woman with a cross to the left of the image, providing sanctification for the sins committed, there is also a man on one knee holding the punished person’s feet and looking up as if in prayer. The image itself is violent, as it is showcasing the hanging of a character, which is a contrast to the way Pármemo and Sempronio die in Rojas’ original version, which is by getting beheaded. There is no doubt that the artist for this woodcarving used some liberties to depict the death of these two characters, perhaps for reasons to make it more visually violent and clear to the reader and viewer.



**Figure 2.3:** Hanging of the guilty. Dorothy S. Severin edition (Rojas, *La Celestina* 281).

The final illustration [Figure 2.4] that will be looked into is towards the end of the nineteenth act of Severin's edition, Calisto's death, however, unlike the previous illustrations in this edition of the text, where there is actual death and violence depicted, this woodcarving is nothing like that, it not only does not portray Calisto's death, but it is a call back to the first image discussed at the beginning of this chapter [Figure 2.1]. The characters of Calisto and Melibea are present and at the center, with Lucrezia slightly behind Melibea and directly to the back left of them is Celestina -she has already been murdered at this point in the act- and at Calisto's back right is Sempronio on a horse - also already deceased. This image has incorporated a dog beside Calisto, and there is also a bird perched on Calisto's left hand. The image itself is much clearer, the characters are at a close-up and their facial expressions are visible to the reader/viewer. Above the character's heads there are initials signifying who each figure in the image is; CE for Celestina, LV for Lucrezia, SEM for Sempronio, ME for Melibea, and CA for Calisto. The attire that the characters are wearing are much different than the first woodcarving [Figure 2.1], they are way more detailed and intricate, the lines distinguishing between the layers of clothing and the embellishments in the clothes. The hair of both Lucrezia and Melibea is up and done with the typical hairstyle of the time. Melibea is more modestly dressed than Lucrezia, signifying her status and still virtuous state at the encounter being depicted.



**Figure 2.4:** “Portada de la edición de Sevilla (1523)” by Juan Bautista Pedrezano and anonymous illustrator.

For this next section of this chapter, the focus will turn now to a more modern interpretation of *La Celestina*. The previous illustrations were all created and slowly added to the various editions of *La Celestina* over the years after its initial publication, transforming the text itself into a whole new text that is the same yet updated for the new generation of readers, “[e]l resultado general ha sido que el de *La Celestina* fue un texto en constante movimiento, que se transformaba a medida que iban saliendo sus ediciones” [the general result has been that *La Celestina* was a text in constant motion, it kept transforming as soon as new editions would come out] (Botta 135). These *transformations* of the text have now become catalogued<sup>5</sup> as a way to preserve them as close to Rojas’ original text, what with endnotes, footnotes, etc. An addition though, that has greatly been appreciated are the images as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Having the different perspective of art in the form of woodcarvings from after 1499 to around the 1600’s depicting Rojas’ characters and story to the now modern paintings of the twentieth and twenty-first century truly highlights how this story has impacted readers, it has not only become a canonical piece of literature, but also has transcended into other mediums of art form.

In Puebla de Montalbán<sup>6</sup>, Toledo, Spain, at the Museo La Celestina, there is a collection of paintings depicting various acts and characters of *La Celestina*. The art

---

<sup>5</sup> Celestina Visual ([celestinavisual.org](http://celestinavisual.org)) is a great source of catalogues illustrations, both antique and modern. This web catalogue not only focuses on illustrations, but also catalogues modern art, film, tv, comics, etc. Anything that a Celestina enthusiast can apport to the page is appreciated, organized, and uploaded for future *celestinesque* readers, authors, researchers, etc. to peruse.

<sup>6</sup> Puebla de Montalbán was the birthplace of Fernando de Rojas, as the author notes in his introductory acrostic: “e fue nascido en La Puebla de Montalvan”.

representations are all done by the artist Teo Puebla<sup>7</sup> and are arranged to depict the various scenes and characters in Rojas' famous *Tragicomedia*. The collection in the Museo La Celestina tries to convey the life of Fernando de Rojas during that time in Spain. Teo Puebla's paintings of the various "autos" in *La Celestina* are an important addition to the bibliography for it brings alight a new network of representations of art that depict a popular work of literature. These paintings offer a different -and more modern- vision to the scenes that have already been depicted in films, woodcarvings, illustrations, theater -yes, there has been stage adaptations-, and television; the importance of the modernization and representations of classics such as *La Celestina*, is considering that it is an old work from the fifteenth century,

[p]osiblemente... forme parte del bagaje intelectual del sector renovador, puesto que es una obra que, si bien procede de la tradición humanística universitaria del XV, contiene suficientes innovaciones como para que no agradara a los retóricos tradicionalistas, pues modificaba las teorías de los estilos medievales (Canet 48).

[ENG: possibly... it forms part of the intellectual baggage of the renovation sector, since it is a work that proceeds from the traditional university humanistic approach of the XV<sup>th</sup> century, it has enough innovations for it not to be liked by traditionalists, since it modified the theories of the medieval style].

*La Celestina* is still being read, written about, and critically discussed in the literary field, as well as the artistic world. *La Celestina* renditions in art is not a new phenomenon; Pablo Picasso<sup>8</sup> also had a constant eagerness to draw and paint about *La Celestina*.

---

<sup>7</sup> Teo Puebla is an illustrator and Spanish painter. Puebla has dedicated most of his work to book illustrations, most of them being children's books. He has cultivated the art of painting and as a result developed a series of relative works associated with Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina*.

<sup>8</sup> Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881-1973) was a Spanish painter, sculptor, ceramicist, etc. Picasso is mostly known for his Cubist movement and his collection of paintings known as his Blue Period in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of his most memorable works is the Cubist painting *Guernica* (1937) which is a dramatic depiction of the bombing of the town of Guernica, Spain by German forces during the Spanish Civil War.

Picasso's interest in Rojas' work, and throughout his life would draw images inspired by the text. A big source of inspiration for Picasso was studying the *great masters*, like Goya -who also incorporated Celestina in some of his paintings and even in some scenes in *Los Caprichos* (1793-96)<sup>9</sup>-, "Picasso was thinking of Goya" and drawing inspiration for his Celestina (Salus, "Picasso's Version of *Celestina* and Related Issues" 115-17). The renditions of Picasso's various Celestina's are his way to "act out his love for this great literary masterpiece" and his fascination with the character Celestina is so much ingrained, that his work of *La Celestina* (1904) becomes part of his Blue Period of works, standing out in a sea of hints and shades of blue, Celestina is "the only figure during this period who is inspired by a literary work" (Salus, "Picasso's Version of *Celestina* and Related Issues" 118; Salus, "Some Early Celestina Drawings by Picasso" 4). This relevance just shows how relatable Rojas' text is, and how it continues to inspire new ideas through different mediums of expression. Teo Puebla's interest in *La Celestina* has resulted in a whole collection of paintings dedicated to the text of *La Celestina*, adding a new perspective and dialogue into the cannon.

The beauty of the collection is that it still maintains the main themes of the original work, such as desire, lust, love, and death. The collection *La Celestina desde la pintura* is composed of 32 paintings and 73 drawings that were done in 1999 by Puebla as a celebration of the V<sup>th</sup> Centennial edition of *La Celestina*. These paintings represent a

---

<sup>9</sup> *Los Caprichos* is a series of 80 prints by the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya. The prints are a satire of Spanish society towards the end of the XVIII, it especially criticizes the noble class and the clergy. The first half of the prints there a realistic and satiric representation from the side of reason, while the second part of his prints take on a more fantastic route and abandon all rationality while focusing on the extreme and absurd of beings.

modern adaptation of the classic narrative and reintroduce it to the public with a new artistic style while still being able to convey the original sentiment of the scenes and acts. Although Puebla does not have a painting for each act of Rojas' work, he does represent the essence of the missing acts through stand-alone works that convey to the viewer - those familiar with the original narrative- the previous scene and hence, the vision of the painting is seen as a full storyline of what has occurred in the scene and giving the viewer a colorful and yet dark visual of Rojas' classic text. Puebla's style is quite unique, giving an almost rushed aspect to the paintings, as if in a frenzy to get his imagination of the scene and/or characters down on the canvas as fast as possible before it disappeared. Almost all the canvases have rapid and long, dark brushstrokes and in the center of all the darkness is the focal point of the work. The focal point of the frame is also usually painted with the same long brushstrokes, almost violent in instances, as if slashing into the canvas, and mostly painted in a lighter color, like white, or very bright colors such as blues, reds, oranges, and yellows. As a result, the main subject is often either seen in darkness and evil doing, or in light and sexual ecstasy, or in a vulnerable moment of sincerity or openness. Whatever situation the characters seem to be in, Puebla accommodates their presence in the canvas accordingly and introduces feeling into the painting, the feeling and knowledge that is usually obtained when reading the text (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 4–38).

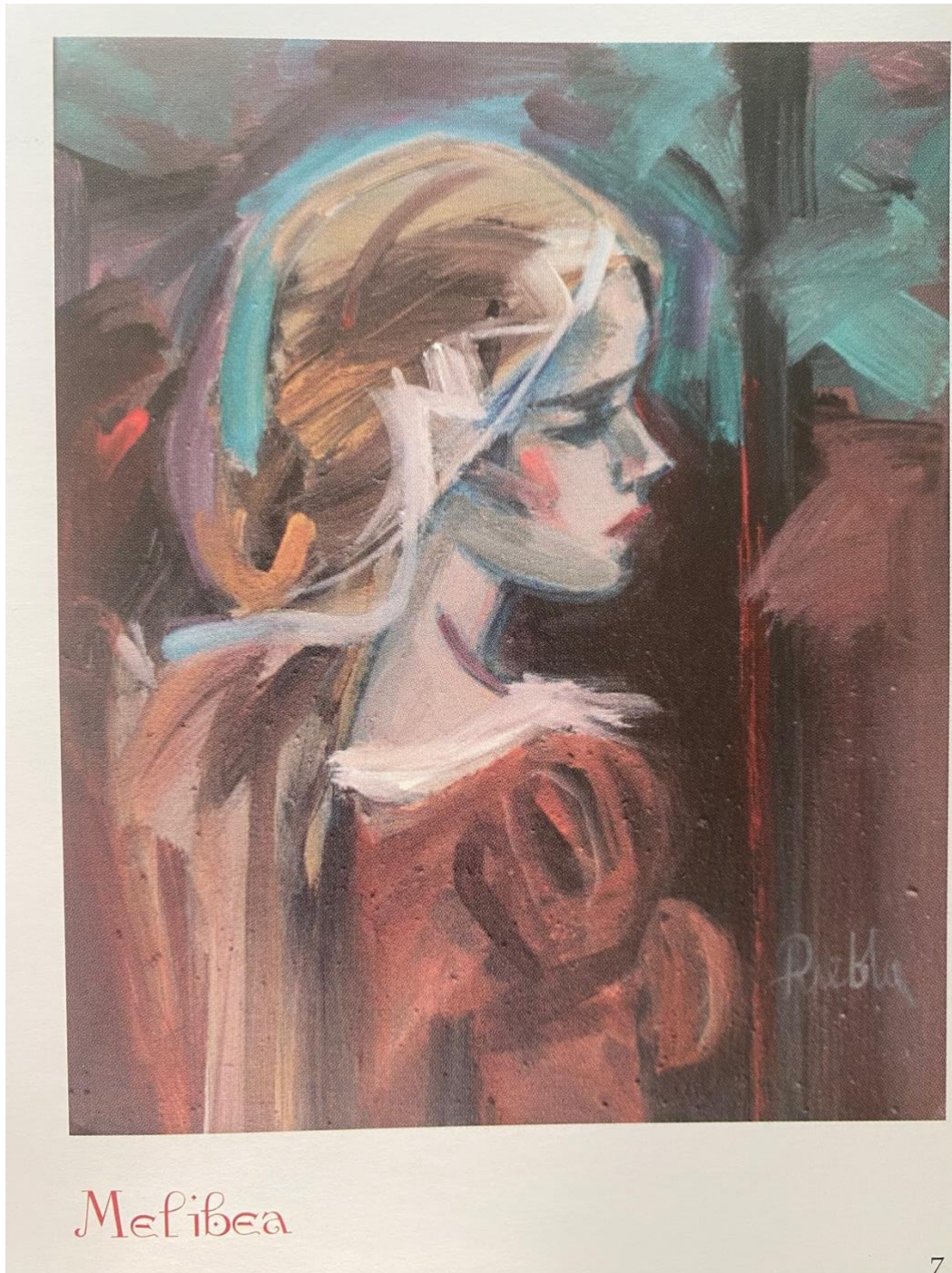
The painting of Celestina [Figure 2.5] as is mostly expected, leaves the viewer with almost the same looking picture that has been done of her over the course of Rojas' work. Celestina, even in the *Tragicomedia*, is described as old looking and cunning in

accomplishing the realization of pleasure for her clients. Celestina is often depicted as a very old and ugly woman, a former prostitute herself, it is hard to imagine her as a young woman at all, that is completely disappeared to the imagination, she is forever the old *puta vieja* that does sorcery and many other well sought after jobs. Her many *oficios* make her of usefulness to the town and she is as busy as can be. Puebla depicts her just so, she is neither that old frail ugly woman, nor is she plain and friendly looking; Celestina is represented as older but very body abled and with a knowing look of cunning and diabolical intelligence, she is after all the reason Melibea decides to recant her previous thoughts of Calisto and give him another chance to woo her. An intentional aspect by Puebla to give Celestina such intense characteristics, some even to accommodate to the modern world as having “witchy” traits. Even though she looks older, she has an elegance to her that Puebla engraved in her image, giving her wisdom that is reflected with her secretive and seductive gaze. Celestina is surrounded by reds and even her wardrobe is made of red shades blended with darker tones of blue and black. Celestina’s dress is low cut, an aspect that is new in the depiction of this “puta vieja” where most of the time she is seen covered -as if representing her retirement from being a prostitute- and keeping a conservative attire, however, Puebla painted Celestina opposite of what it has been accustomed to, she is almost elegant and good looking, her hair is covered -same as other popular images of her and the films- and her features are older, yet delicate, and wearing earrings that frame her face and give a sense of maybe Celestina having vanity of her appearance as she is aging. Celestina’s hand is raised to her chest, drawing even more attention to her exposed bosom.



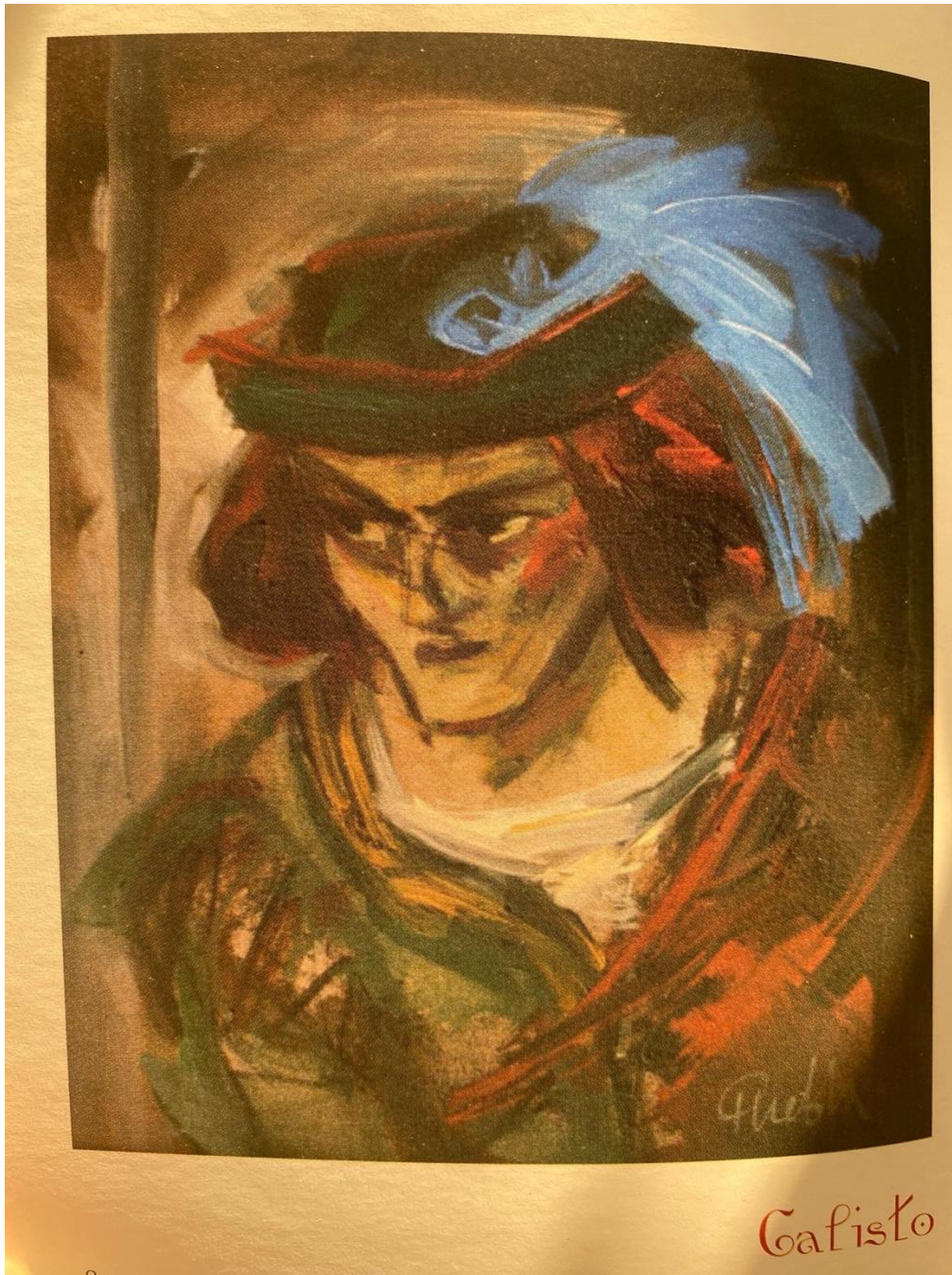
**Figure 2.5:** “Celestina” (1999) by Teo Puebla. Exhibited in the Museo La Celestina in Puebla de Montalbán, Toledo, Spain (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 6).

The classical character of the young and beautiful Melibea [Figure 2.6] is the one that Puebla maintained with that innocence and light purity and devotedness that is associated to Melibea. Puebla's Melibea is centered in a semi dark background that is lighter at the top of the canvas and turns darker as it gets closer to the bottom of the canvas; Melibea is turned away and looking almost to the side showing her profile (unlike Puebla's other paintings of the main characters where they are facing forward, or their torso is slightly angled but keeping the face straight forward). Melibea has sorrowful features and is painted with her eyes closed as if in contemplation of her actions (Puebla maybe painting her with her despair of losing Calisto and her imminent suicide). The colors used are subdued colors from previous seen portraits by Puebla, dark blues mixed with whites to give different lighter shades of blues and purple, conveying Melibea a lighter and delicate tone, an almost celestial aura.



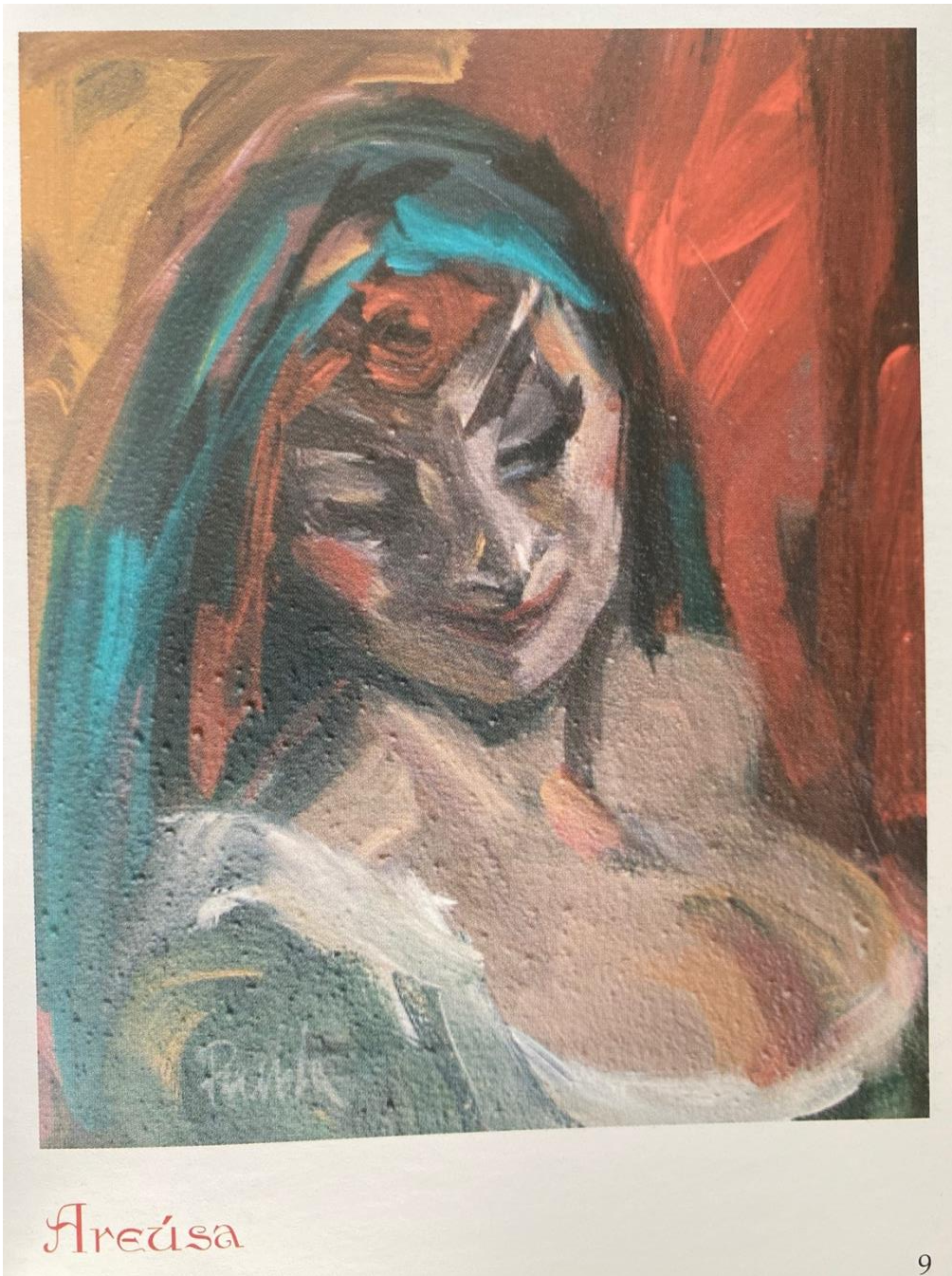
**Figure 2.6:** “Melíbea” (1999) by Teo Puebla. (1999) by Teo Puebla. Exhibited in the Museo La Celestina in Puebla de Montalbán, Toledo, Spain (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 7).

Calisto [Figure 2.7] is usually seen dressed as a nobleman and in Rojas' work, he is mostly given the air of a very young (and almost boyish) man; even in the films he is depicted as such and embodies it with his mannerisms and lack of forward thinking that is usually associated with one who is wiser. Puebla keeps Calisto's young boyish good looks but incorporates an intense gaze as if he is in hard concentration, which makes him seem slightly older and serious. Calisto's attire is also similar to other representations and Puebla plays with various regal colors: red, green, and blue; and brushes them into one another while still maintaining their original composition and color. Calisto has handsome and sharp features, and the background is light and not as menacing as other characters' backgrounds.



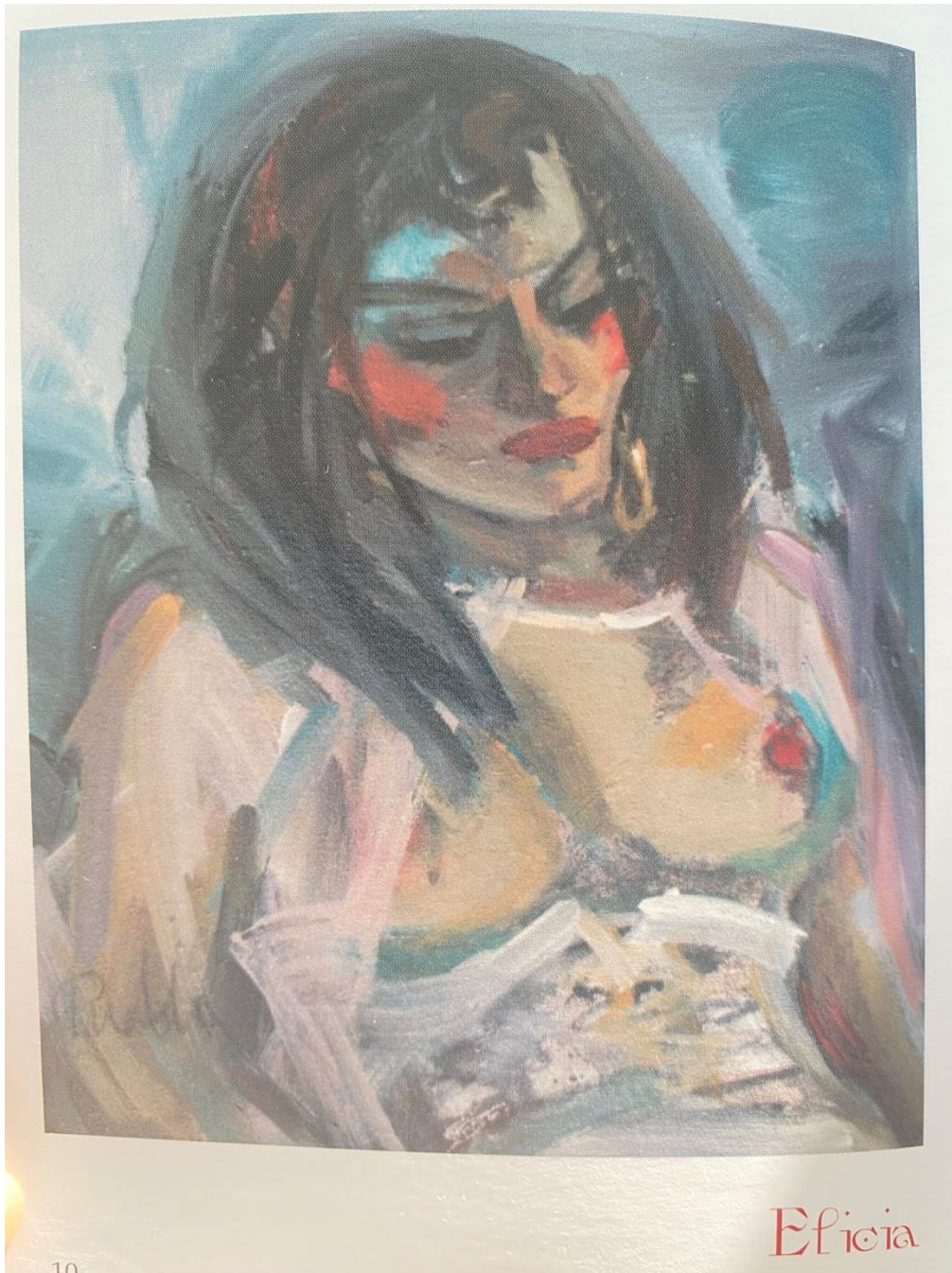
**Figure 2.7:** “Calisto” (1999) by Teo Puebla. Exhibited in the Museo La Celestina in Puebla de Montalbán, Toledo, Spain (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 8).

Areúsa [Figure 2.8] is one of the most vibrant portraits that Puebla has in the collection, it is reminiscent of a field with an array of wildflowers, full of red, yellow, blue, and green; all wonderfully in harmony with one another. In comparison to Elicia, Areúsa is scantily covered in her breast area (unlike Elicia who is completely uncovered) and has a “manta” over her hair. Areúsa is depicted with her eyes closed, however, she has a small smile as if content with her life, and although her eyes are shut, her face is straight on. The background is also colorful and lacks all that darkness that all the characters seem to be enveloped with. Puebla seems to have wanted to give Areúsa a joyful representation and almost fun; the color is pleasing to the eye and invite the spectator into the bosom of Areúsa, much like Pármene being struck by her presence and turned into the side of Celestina and Sempronio. Puebla paints her in this irresistible way, almost as if to recreate Pármene’s difficulty to deny himself his desire of Areúsa.



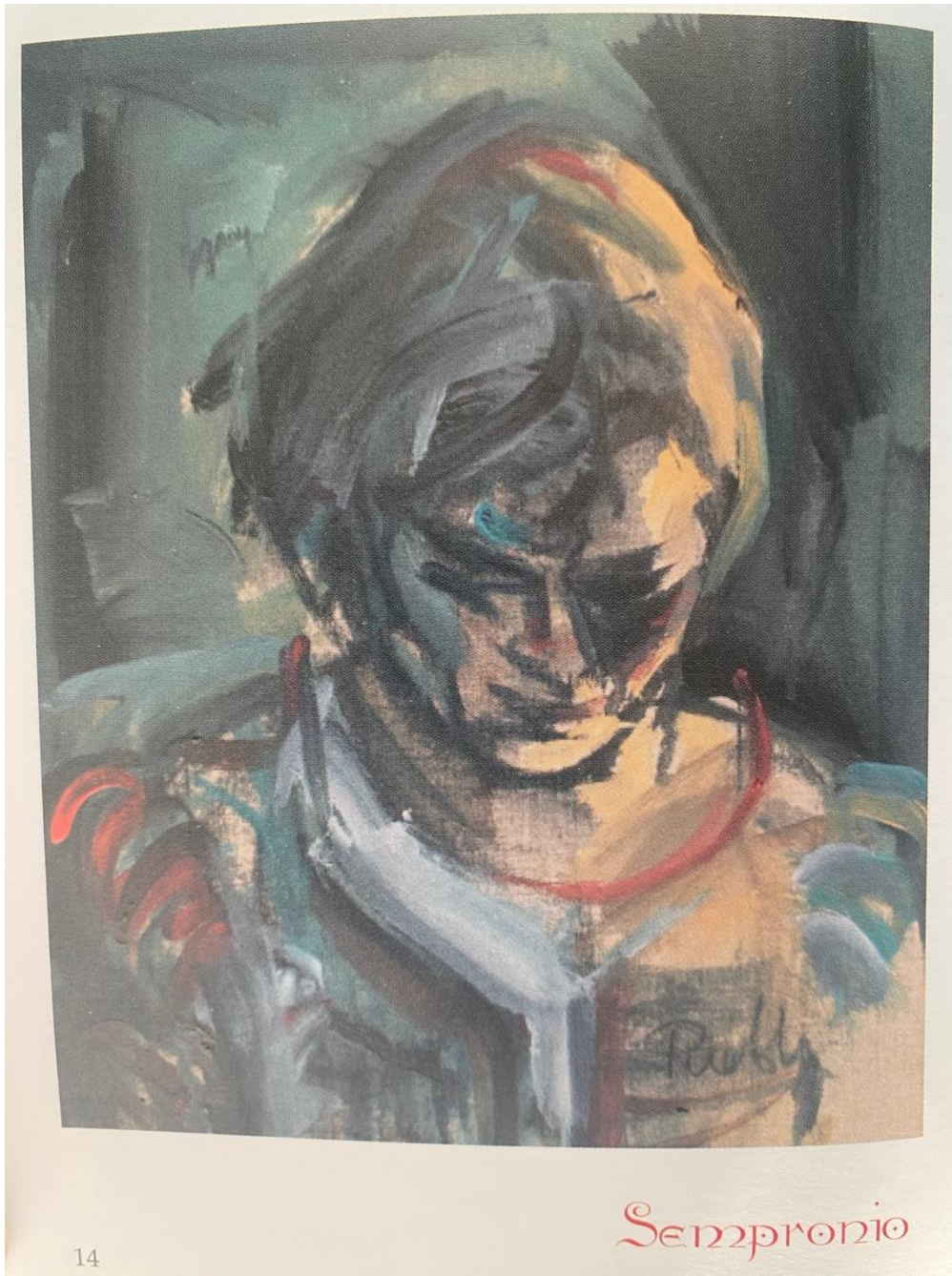
**Figure 2.8:** “Areúsa” (1999) by Teo Puebla. Exhibited in the Museo La Celestina in Puebla de Montalbán, Toledo, Spain (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 9).

Elicia's painting [Figure 2.9] at first glance is revealing and depicts the character's job as a sex worker ("prostituta") in the narrative without having to give much thought to it. The subject, Elicia, has her breasts exposed while it seems that her arms and the rest of her body are covered by a thin white material. Elicia's face is painted with bright and alluring colors that call attention to her herself and to what she offers; with such slight brightness in her face, it is intriguing to notice her eyes are closed, and as a result, the observer is automatically entranced by the alluring of her breasts instead of her eyes. Puebla is meticulous enough to incorporate makeup, blush her cheeks, rouge her lips, and even incorporate earrings, yet it is the focus of her breasts that take control of the painting. Elicia's facial features, even though her eyes are closed, are that of being in deep concentration, almost tired from the day and ready for some peace. This painting of Elicia by Puebla is dark and light all at once, the margins and background are dark and almost give an element of herself living within darkness, and it is Elicia herself that is light. Puebla uses long and almost hurried looking brushstrokes to give an image/visual of Elicia and the job that she performs in this dark world of need, desire, and lust.



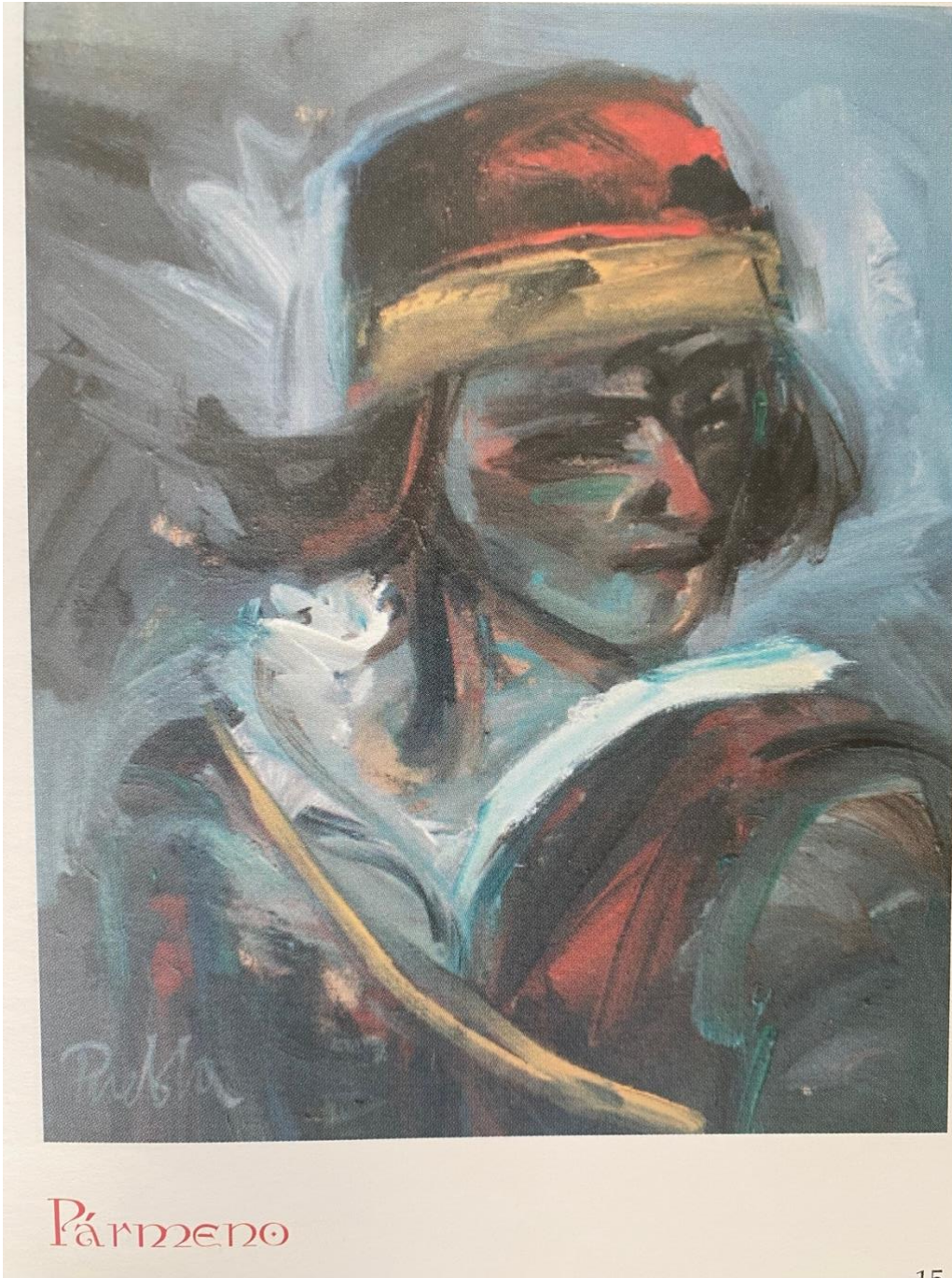
**Figure 2.9:** “Elicia” (1999) by Teo Puebla. Exhibited in the Museo La Celestina in Puebla de Montalbán, Toledo, Spain (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 10).

The character of Sempronio [Figure 2.10], in contrast to that of Pármene, is from the beginning trying to outsmart his master and obtain wealth without caring how. Sempronio is the most ruthless of the two servants and the one who is more mischievous, and even in films is seen darker and menacing in comparison to Pármene's constant inner struggle. Puebla's representation of Sempronio does not even have his face lifted, it is bent at the chin and looking as if to the ground, however, Puebla seems to have painted Sempronio's eyes closed, as if in repent of his actions in the story. Sempronio's face and background is overshadowed and dark, there is barely any (almost none) light radiating from him or even around him.



**Figure 2.10:** “Sempronio” (1999) by Teo Puebla. Exhibited in the Museo La Celestina in Puebla de Montalbán, Toledo, Spain (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 14).

Pármeno [Figure 2.11] is one of the most diverse characters in Rojas' work and subsequently is given various physical aspects of often battling between his inner desires (or inner demons), with his troubled past and his wanting to stay loyal to his master Calisto and still obtain more and have his love for Areúsa fulfilled; Pármeno is being pulled in two directions. Puebla's painting of the iconic tortured character is exactly that, it looks as if he made a portrait of the moment of Pármeno's inner dilemma and his struggles to want to remain loyal and want to obtain money and Areúsa. Pármeno is looking away and keeping his eyes shut from something, there can even be detected the motion of his shaking his head rapidly from turning away, his hair is slightly lifted from the moment. Pármeno's background is dark, with grey highlights as to lighten the outline of Pármeno himself, as if he is emanating all the darkness that is encompassing the canvas.



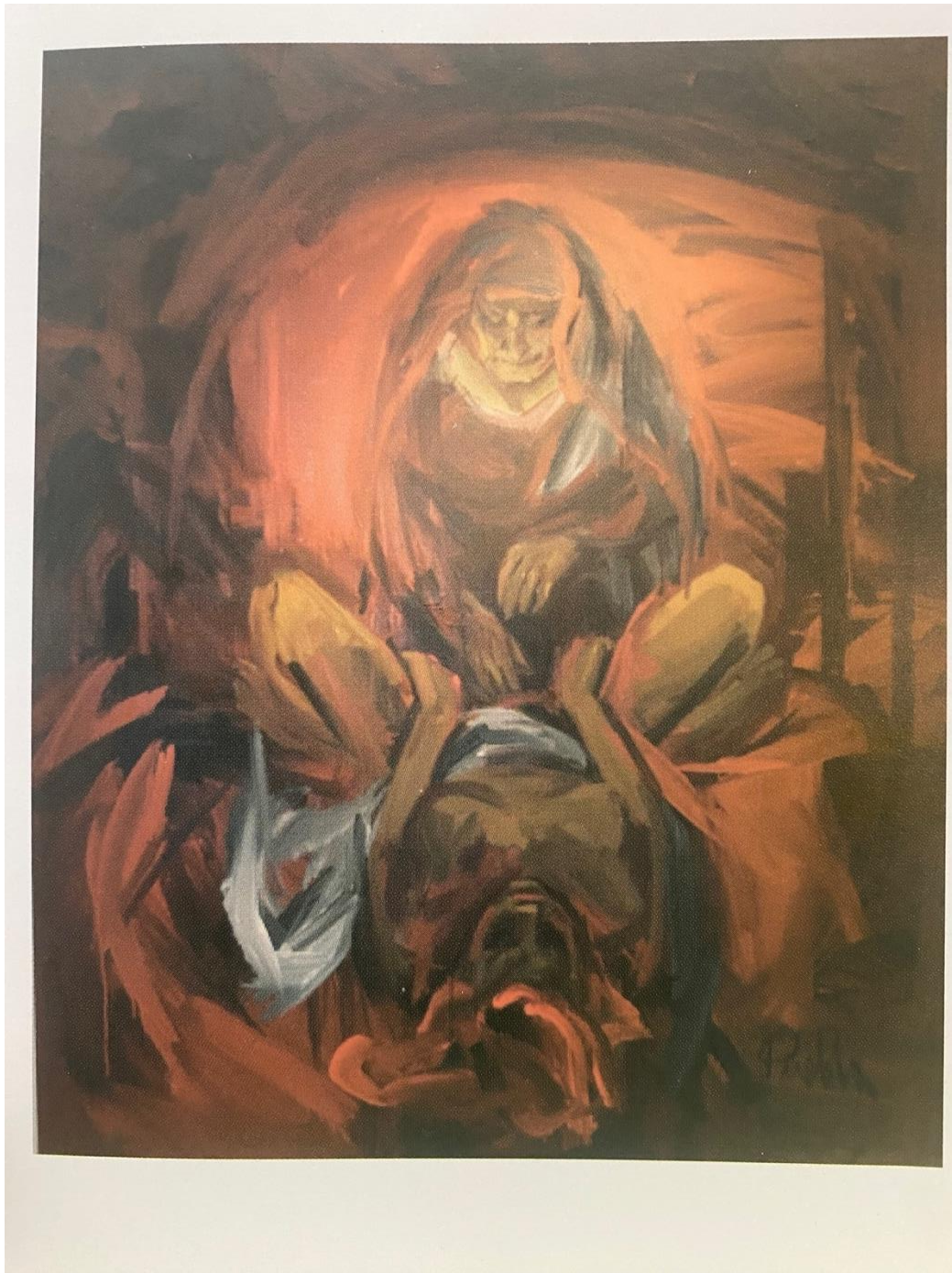
**Figure 2.11:** “Pármeno” (1999) by Teo Puebla. Exhibited in the Museo La Celestina in Puebla de Montalbán, Toledo, Spain (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 15).

Puebla's introductory painting for *Celestina* [Figure 2.12] is not her portrait that has been mentioned above, however it is *Celestina* in the middle of work, which perfectly interprets Pármeno's description of her to his master Calisto,

“[t]iene esta buena dueña al cabo de la cibdad, allá cerca de las tenerías, en la cuesta del río, una casa apartada, medio caýda, poco compuesta y menos abastada. Ella tenía seys officios, conviene [a] saber: labranderá, perfumera, maestra de hazer afeytes y de hazer virgos, alcahueta y un poquito hechizera” (Rojas, *La Celestina* 110–11)

[This good woman used to have, on the outskirts of town near the tanneries, a house somewhat removed from the street, half tumbled-down, badly repaired and worse furnished. She had six trades, to wit: laundress, perfumer, a master hand at making cosmetics and replacing damaged maidenheads, procuress, and something of a witch (Rojas, *The Celestina* 17)]

the painting has *Celestina* enacting one of those many jobs that Pármeno tells Calisto that she is known for, *hazer virgos*, -the process of *remaking virgins*-. Puebla's painting plays on the erotic tone with the painting of the client -a woman- naked and at *Celestina*'s capable hands; the woman's nakedness can be attributed that she may be part of the sex worker environment or even the act of any woman bearing oneself to have your virginity remade -or mended- is just as well as being naked, whether or not the woman has her clothes off or on, that openness, regardless of clothing, is still an all bare-naked act. The brushstrokes are long and quick with most of the frame being encompassed by reds all around the painting, keeping *Celestina* and her client in the center and as the focus of the painting. The slim white cloth that is supposedly “covering” the woman's lower half does nothing to hide but rather highlights more the job that *Celestina* is performing.



**Figure 2.12:** *Celestina haciendo virgos* (1999) by Teo Pueblo. Exhibited in the Museo La Celestina in Puebla de Montalbán, Toledo, Spain (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 5).

Celestina's murder in act XII [Figure 2.13]; for those who have studied the many works of the *Tragicomedia* have meticulously investigated the death of Celestina by Pármeno and Sempronio. In Rojas' work it is Sempronio who is assumed to have fatally stabs Celestina, and Pármeno is on his side, encouraging him to finish the job, "[d]ale, dale, acábala, pues començaste; que nos sentirán; muera, muera de los enemigos los menos" (Rojas, *La Celestina* 277) [Hit her! Hit her! Finish her off, now you've begun! What if they do hear us! Let her die! One enemy less! (Rojas, *The Celestina* 143)]; in contrast to Fernández' 1969 film and Vera's 1996 film, the character to mortally wound Celestina is Pármeno, which seems fitting since Pármeno is the one that has a past relationship with Celestina, and that previous relationship was not in good faith in Pármeno's eyes, so it is natural for him to hold over that anger and see it represented as an adult. Pármeno's anger is seen from the moment Celestina is mentioned in the plot, and it does not dissipate until the promise of Aerúsa is on the table, but the moment something did not go as planned in regard to payment, and with Sempronio also fueling the rage, Pármeno's anger is brought up once again, making it logical for him to be the one to lose his cool and stab Celestina. Since Puebla up to this point has been keeping true to Rojas' original work, it is a painting that portrays Celestina's murder as it was in both films. The avid audience can discern the Pármeno as the killer because of Puebla's previous depiction of him in a portrait where he is wearing a red cap, unlike Sempronio who is capless, Puebla grabs inspiration not just by Roja's work but also by the films. The painting itself is done in all dark greys tones with violent strokes of white highlighting the murder of Celestina, Pármeno's red cap and Celestina's red top are what

jump out from the frame maintaining these two characters as a primary focus in the portrait while Sempronio is slightly behind with a sword in his hands, participating in the murder, but dulled in comparison to Pármeno and Celestina.



**Figure 2.13:** Celestina's death (1999) by Teo Puebla. Exhibited in the Museo La Celestina in Puebla de Montalbán, Toledo, Spain (Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada* 28).

## Work Cited

- Basilea, Fadrique de. "Grabado del acto III de la edición de Burgos (1499)," *CelestinaVisual.org*, <http://celestinavisual.org/items/show/2355>.
- Bautista Pedrezano, Juan. "Portada de la edición de Sevilla (1523)," *CelestinaVisual.org*, <http://celestinavisual.org/items/show/242>.
- Botta, Patrizia. "El Texto En Movimiento (de La Celestina de Palacio a La Celestina Posterior)." *Cinco Siglos de Celestina: Aportaciones Interpretativas*, edited by Rafael Beltrán Llavador and José Luis Canet Vallés, Universitat de València, 1997, p. 238.
- Canet, José Luis. "La Celestina y El Mundo Intelectual de Su Época." *Cinco Siglos de Celestina: Aportaciones Interpretativas*, edited by Rafael Beltrán Llavador and José Luis Canet Vallés, Universitat de València, 1997, p. 238.
- Gilman, Stephen. *The Art of La Celestina*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 1956.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "On the Art of Adaptation." *Daedalus*, vol. 133, no. 2, 2004, pp. 108–11, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20027920>.
- Landwehr, Margarete. "Introduction: Literature and the Visual Arts; Questions of Influence and Intertextuality." *College Literature*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2002, pp. 1–16, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25112655>.
- Montero, Ana Isabel. "Reading at the Threshold: The Role of Illustrations in the Reception of the Early Editions of *Celestina*." *Celestinesca*, vol. 39, 2015, p. 197. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.39.20185>.
- Rojas, Fernando de. *La Celestina*. Edited by Dorothy Sherman Severin, Vigésimocuarta edición, Cátedra, 2016.
- . *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada*. Ed. ilustrada, Ayuntamiento de La Puebla de Montalbán, 2005.
- . *The Celestina: A Fifteenth-Century Spanish Novel in Dialogue*. Translated by Lesley Byrd Simpson, 6. print, Univ. of California Pr, 1974.
- Salus, Carol. "Picasso's Version of *Celestina* and Related Issues." *Celestinesca*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1991, p. 3. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.15.19742>.
- . "Some Early *Celestina* Drawings by Picasso." *Celestinesca*, vol. 30, 2006, p. 111. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.30.20063>.

Sanz Hermida, Jacobo. “«Una Vieja Barbuda Que Se Dice Celestina»: Notas Acerca de La Primera Caracterización de Celestina.” *Celestinesca*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1994, p. 17. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.18.19843>.

Schmidt, Rachel. “La cultura visual y la construcción de la tríada de mitos españoles: *Celestina, Don Quijote y Don Juan*.” *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2016, pp. 85–111, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26310083>.

Simpson, Alan. “Language, Literature, and Art.” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1988, p. 47. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3333122>.

### CHAPTER 3

#### KEEPING THE STORY ALIVE:

#### NOSTALGIC REPETITION AND ADAPTATION

*They will see us waving from such great heights  
Come down now, they'll say  
But everything looks perfect from far away  
Come down now but we'll stay*

– The Postal Service, *Such Great Heights*

The influence and continued adaptations of *La Celestina* can be seen as a certain indulgence to maintain the story alive; whether that be through film, literature, or art, it is the constant want of experiencing the same story or versions of the story through different lenses and perspectives. Intermediality in literature-to-film adaptation involves the dynamic exchange of elements between different mediums. It's not a straightforward translation but a creative dialogue where storytelling techniques, themes, and aesthetics are reinterpreted across various forms. This process allows for unique expressions of the narrative, taking advantage of the strengths of each medium. As discussed in chapter 1, Emily Apter explores the intersection of translation and adaptation, emphasizing the transformative nature of both processes. Apter delves into how these acts involve more than linguistic conversion, extending to cultural, historical, and contextual shifts. Apter's perspective emphasizes the dynamic and creative aspects of translation and adaptation, viewing them as complex acts of re-creation rather than mere reproduction (Apter, *The Translation Zone* 226; Apter, *Against World Literature* 249). Laura Marks invites translation when in relation from medium to medium,

How can the experience of a sound, a color, a gesture, of the feelings of arousal, anxiety, nausea, or bereavement that they provoke, be communicated in words? They have to be translated. Like synesthesia, the translation of qualities from one sense modality to another, writing translates particular, embodied experiences into words (Marks, *Touch*)

There is a craving for the nostalgia aspect of what these works provide us as readers and viewers. The nostalgia for the same stories remains even when we know the plot.

Viewing different versions based on the original form in various versions. Svetlana Boym characterizes nostalgia as the abdication of personal responsibility, a return to a home free of guilt, a total ethical and aesthetic failure (Boym 10).

Nostalgia functioned according to an associative magic, of which everyday life stayed subjected to an obsession. In this sense, nostalgia is similar to a paranoia, however, instead of developing a paranoid mania, nostalgia was driven by the mania of yearning (Boym 18–19). Boym distinguishes between two forms of nostalgia: restorative, which seeks to revive the past, and reflective, which embraces a more nuanced and contemplated engagement with memories. Restorative nostalgia in literature might lead to idealized depictions of the past, while reflective nostalgia could inspire more complex, introspective narratives that explore the nuances of memory and longing. Each perspective shapes the tone and themes within literary works. Boym's two approaches can be applied to adaptations: a restorative approach to film may prioritize a faithful reproduction of the source material, idealizing the past depicted in the literature. On the other hand, a reflective approach might encourage filmmakers to capture the essence of the story while interpreting it through a contemporary lens, allowing for a meticulous exploration of nostalgia (Boym 57).

Adaptations of classic literature fulfill a human craving for familiar stories presented in new, engaging ways. They also provide a bridge between the past and the present, making timeless narratives accessible to contemporary audiences. Indulging in nostalgia has the capacity to idealize and embellish past experiences, creating a romanticized version of events that may not entirely align with reality. *La Celestina* has endured across various media due to its timeless themes and rich characters. The adaptability of the work speaks to a nostalgic desire to explore and reinterpret the complexities of love, power, and human nature. Works like Rojas' remain an inspiration, as seen in various adaptations such as films, artworks, and books. *La Celestina* becomes part of not only the literary canon tradition, but also part of the tradition to resonate with different generations and maintain an enduring appeal to its reader and audience. Some examples of famous sources of literature that are beloved, endured the passing of time and are being constantly adapted for the new generation are: J. R. R. Tolkien<sup>1</sup>'s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and its subsequent *The Hobbit* trilogy, J.K. Rowling<sup>2</sup>'s *Harry Potter* series, Jane Austen<sup>3</sup>'s myriad of adaptations in both film – *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, and its recent television series adaptation

---

<sup>1</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien i.e. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, was the author of the famous high fantasy novels of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of The Rings*. His novels have been adapted into films and the third film, *The Lord of The Rings: The Return of The King* was awarded an Academy Award for Best Film in 2003, showing the impact of a fantasy adventure novel adaptation into the big screen.

<sup>2</sup> J.K. Rowling is the author of the famous *Harry Potter* series. The novels were adapted into feature films of the same name and became a cultural phenomenon even to audiences who have never read the series.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Austen was an English writer and novelist. She is best known for her novels *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. Many of her novels have been a source of film adaptations, whether keeping the setting into its original period or modernizing it entirely. The film *Bridget Jones' Diary* is an adaptation and modern take on the novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

of her unfinished novel *Sanditon* – and novelistic inspirations based on her original work – *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*<sup>4</sup>, *Death Comes to Pemberley*<sup>5</sup>, etc. These are just some examples of the pursuant need to constantly indulge in these works through new mediums. Just like the beforementioned adaptations of influential literature, the celestinesque influence into modern works of literature as well as other art forms. Adapting a concluded literary work can offer readers a fresh perspective into the original narrative. Discovering these new adaptations is a creative journey that taps into human desire for imagination and the want for more. The need to repeat and recreate the story and its characters even in the modern age. There has been a crossover not just from medium of consumption, but also from location, and now from a new generation.

The intermediality of *La Celestina* has created this new sense of nostalgia, not just for the new celestinesque influences, but also for the original. Since the introduction of *La Celestina*, it has generated countless continuations, imitations, adaptations: novel, film, theater, art; from its original home country in Spain, all the way to Japan. *La Celestina* has become a beacon and a true inspiration to those who come in contact with it (Marks, *Touch*). The popularity of literary adaptations now has more audiences discovering works of literature that they would most likely not have realized the film was inspired or adapted from. It is also more likely that those same audiences will watch the film and know about the adaptation but will never read the original work that it is based

---

<sup>4</sup> *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is a 2009 parody novel by Seth Grahame-Smith. It combines Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* with zombie fiction. A film was adapted with the same name in 2016.

<sup>5</sup> *Death Comes to Pemberley* is a 2011 mystery fiction novel by P.D. James that continues Jane Austen's 1813 novel *Pride and Prejudice* with a murder mystery.

on. Adaptations have invited a new fan base into the world of the film and introduce them to the characters, the world, the story, etc. Now, there are most likely more people who have seen the work rather than actually have read it (Fernández Rivera 78). The cultural permeation of classic works shapes the collective understanding, even if the audience hasn't directly engaged with the original texts. With literary medieval works, this is impactful as it contributes to the preservation and dissemination of historical narratives, themes, and cultural values embedded in those medieval works. Adaptations, discussions, and references create a shared cultural knowledge that transcends the boundaries of time. The diverse artistic elements in *La Celestina* evoke a sense of longing for the past. The blending of poetry and prose, for instance, may resonate with a desire to bridge classical traditions with emerging literary forms, creating a nostalgic ambiance. Furthermore, exploring these adaptations across various media, such as stage performances, films – as explored in chapter 1 – and visual arts – chapter 2 – highlights the enduring impact of Rojas' work and its permeance into modernity. These adaptations often reinterpret the work, offering new perspective on the timeless themes of love, power, morality.

Continuing with the new mode of absorbing literary works in other formats – so much so, that one can know everything about *La Celestina* or *Romeo and Juliet* without ever reading them – again, highlights the relevance these types of work have within the society. The cultural permeation of classic works shapes the audience's/viewer's collective understanding, especially in the case if the audience has never engaged with the original text before. This can be seen as impactful and a way of preservation and dissemination of historical narratives, themes, and cultural values embedded in those

classic works. Hence, adaptations and the craving for them create a shared cultural knowledge that transcends the boundaries of the time and direct readership. In the case of medieval works of literature, which at times can be seen as distant and challenging to the modern reader, these indirect exposers to classical works by mode of adaptation serve as bridges connecting in a way, the past to the present. They help sustain interest in the themes and stories of classic medieval works all the while fostering a sense of continuity. All in all, these adaptation and repeated references can reinterpret medieval works, making them – like mentioned in previous chapters – more accessible to new audiences and sparking new discussions about their relevance. This “...reappearance is a new discursive event that locates itself in a certain time and space in society, on that, at the same time, carries within itself the memory of an earlier discursive event”, suggesting that when something reappears, it’s not just a repetition but a new occurrence embedded in a specific societal context. This event not only exists in the present but also holds memory of a similar past event. Essentially, it highlights the interconnectedness of current and past discourses (Casetti 82).

Two inspirations for this chapter come from Jennifer M. Barker’s *The Tactile Eye*, and Laura U. Marks’ *The Skin of the Film*. Barker explores the sensory and tactile dimensions of cinema. Barker delves into the ways films engage our senses beyond sight, providing a nuanced perspective on the multisensory experience of cinematic storytelling. Baker’s exploration of the tactile aspects of cinema in her book may connect with nostalgia by highlighting how certain sensory elements in films evoke memories and emotions,

Exploring cinema's tactility thus opens up the possibility of cinema as an *intimate* experience and of our relationship with cinema as a *close* connection, rather than as a distant experience of observation, which the notion of cinema as a purely visual medium presumes. To say that we are touched by cinema indicates that it has significance for us, that it comes close to us, and that it literally occupies our sphere. We *share* things with it: texture, spatial orientation, comportment, rhythm, and vitality (Barker 2)

Meanwhile, Marks delves into the interconnection between the body, the screen, and the image. Marks investigates the tactile and sensory aspects of cinema, emphasizing the corporal experience of film – i.e. we are experiencing the film not just with our eyes but with our full being,

Certainly, the simplest way for movement-image cinema to appeal to the viewer's sense is through narrative identification. Characters are shown eating, making love, and so forth, and we viewers identify with their activity. We salivate or become aroused on verbal and visual cue. Beyond this, it is common for cinema to evoke sense experience through intersensory links: sounds may evoke textures; sights may evoke smells (rising steam or smoke evokes smells of fire, incense, or cooking). These intersensory links are well termed *synesthetic*<sup>6</sup> (Marks, *The Skin of the Film* 213)

Certain film genres create nostalgia to the viewer, as such, the predisposition to enjoy or find a film more appealing is heightened since it plays with the viewers emotions. Films like Disney Pixar's *Toy Story* (1995), utilize the familiarity of what they are referencing to attract the emotions of the audience. The certain toys in Andy's room, for example – the toy soldiers, the monkeys in a barrel – are all real representations of the toys from the childhood of the audience, that even if they did not own them growing up, they most likely knew about these toys, saw them, or even knew someone who had them. The immersive and sensory nature of cinema has the potential to trigger nostalgic responses,

---

<sup>6</sup> Synesthesia: "is the perception of one sensation by another modality, such as the ability to distinguish colors by feel" (Marks, *The Skin of the Film* 213).

transporting audiences to different times and places through a tactile engagement with the medium.

Adaptations make their literary roots known by presenting the new version in a way that may draw comparisons,

[it] ... might draw attention to its literary origins in its presentation of its own material, but the act of comparison invited by an adaptation might also draw on memories, understandings, and associations with other versions of the original, in a variety of media (Geraghty 4)

It emphasizes how adaptations create a dynamic interplay between the source material, its new form, and the audience's nostalgic connections to different interpretations. Within the context of nostalgia – which this chapter looks to explore – indicates that when an adaptation reveals literary source, it can evoke a sense of nostalgia. Additionally, comparing the adaptation to the original may not only bring back memories but also elicit a nostalgic response, tapping into the audience's recollections and associations with various versions of the source material from different media forms. In essence, it highlights how adaptations can serve as triggers for nostalgic reflections on familiar narratives.

Film adaptations give that nostalgic pull because the audience has some idea and semblance to the original work. There is already some knowledge of what the work is about. As already mentioned, just because someone has not read the original source material, it does not mean they have no knowledge of what it is about. This is exactly the case with *La Celestina*, a narrative that has been part of the Spanish Literature canon and has not wavered. The film adaptations have only helped with spreading the story to more audiences, making new viewers feel connected and almost nostalgic for the original work

as well. Jost's notion of the parallel occurrences in film, that "cinema has two physical tracks – the image track and the sound track-" between watching the film – "express what is seen" – through the image track and hearing the film – "what is thought" – through the sound track. There is a correlation between Jost's cinematic tracks with the reading the work of literature to watching the work. In this sense, the reading is the sound track, where the reader/viewer comes with their own ideas of the work itself; and the film is the image track where the representations of images are depicted to the reader/viewer. Both work together in tandem, even though the "difference between seeing and feeling and knowing is almost a semiotic difference: it is possible to show someone or something and at the same time express something completely different through the voice" (Jost 73). The distinction between seeing, feeling, and knowing is akin to a semiotic difference, implying that communication involves more than just visual perception. It highlights the idea that one can present something visually while expressing a different meaning through voice or language.

As already noted above on the impact that nostalgia has on the aspect of telling stories, I shall be looking deeper into how these nostalgic tendencies have been the reason into the creation of *La Celestina* continuations, art – as discussed in chapter 2 – and films – as previously mentioned in chapter 1 – have all been part of the topic of re-telling and not letting the story end once the reader is done; it is more so keeping the story alive by re-inventing it through various mediums, and as a result, making the story accessible to many other audiences regardless if they have read Rojas' original work or not. *La Celestina* became so popular after its first publication – 1499 – that when it was

published again in Toledo in 1500 and in Sevilla in 1502, Fernando de Rojas added more chapters and another final chapter to the story. Rojas' was caving into the craving the readers were seeking of wanting to know more of the characters. Jesús Fernando Cáteda Teresa explores in his article on the third adaptation of *La Celestina* and the continuous want of the public for another continuation even after the conclusion of the second continuation / adaptation of the narrative. There was that craving for more of the story, maybe not the same characters, but to be taking place in that same world with at least some of the characters from the original. The impact of this desire for more of *La Celestina's* narrative, revealing insights into the continuation of its literary legacy (Cáteda Teresa 12).

Another reason *La Celestina* is a popular story for inspiration of continuations and adaptations is because it could have maybe been avoided entirely if Calisto and Melibea would have gotten married. For the time of *La Celestina*, it is always a subject of discussion of the fact Calisto and Melibea could have avoided all this death by getting married, however, they never acknowledge it as an idea to be able to be together and decide instead to be lovers. Melibea's parents, Pleberio and Alisa, discuss that it might be time to marry their daughter,

PLEBERIO. ... Demos nuestra hazienda a dulce sucesor; acompañemos nuestra única hija con marido, cual nuestro estado requiere, por que vamos descansados y sin dolor deste mundo. Lo qual con mucha diligencia devemos poner desde agora por obra, y lo que otras vezes havemos principiado en este caso agora haya execusión. No quede por nuestra negligencia nuestra hija en manos de tutores, pues parecerá ya mejor en su propia casa que en la nuestra... (Rojas 305)

Pleberio and his wife want to make sure their daughter is left in good hands and will be married and protected once they are no longer there themselves; having a husband

secured for Melibea is their solution, however, Melibea, listening to their conversation, does not agree. Melibea herself remarks beginning of act 16 while listening to her parents plan her life, “[n]o piensen en estas vanidades ni en estos casamientos, que más vale ser buena amiga que mala casada” (Rojas 307) – she would rather be a great friend (great lover) than badly married – and yet, even with Melibea’s parents speaking of marriage, Melibea never even thinks of Calisto as a possible husband, Calisto is solely thought of as a lover. This topic of marriage is what Bernard Dulsey argues that *La Celestina* has no actual tragedy whatsoever, and in comparison to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* the characters are never impeded to marry, and because as such, they create their own personal tragedy (Dulsey 27). With this turning point of decision from Melibea, the reader and audience – those who especially already know the outcome – long for the reconsideration of that decision. That longing to go back and try to change certain unraveling of events for Calisto and Melibea to remain together in life, rather than in death. This section in *La Celestina* evokes a pang of that “what if?” A sense of that restorative nostalgia that Boym mentions; wanting to return to that moment where there can be a chance for the lovers to live together happily and even maybe Celestina, Pármeno, and Sempronio would be saved from their fate of death.

Some adaptations are done to change the story slightly, make characters that are beloved be part of the narrative longer. Continuing literary works maintains a cultural and historical thread, allowing readers to explore evolving themes, characters, and perspectives. These adaptations enrich the understanding of the original work – in this case, *La Celestina* – and provide a bridge between different time periods, fostering a

connection between generations through shared narratives and storytelling traditions. Adapting a concluded literary work can offer fresh ideas, breathing new life into beloved characters and narratives. *La Celestina* has maintained a continuous – and steady – popularity within the celestinesque canon. The attribution to this is the combination of nostalgia and a desire for further exploration of a familiar world. Much like adaptations, they allow audiences to revisit beloved characters and settings, providing a sense of comfort and connection. These continuations also offer a chance to reimagine or extend the narrative, catering to the human fascination with stories that endure and evolve over time.

## Work Cited

- Apter, Emily S. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. Verso, 2013.
- . *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*. Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Barker, Jennifer M. *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*. University of California Press, 2009.
- Boym, Svetlana. *El Futuro de la Nostalgia*. Translated by Jaime Blasco Castiñeyra, 1st ed., vol. 38, Visor Distribuciones, S.A., 2018.
- Cáseda Teresa, Jesús Fernando. “La *Tercera Celestina* de Gaspar Gómez: Identidad Del Continuador de La Obra de Feliciano de Silva y Licencia Literaria Para Un Final Pactado.” *Celestinesca*, vol. 46, Dec. 2022, p. 9. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.46.24178>.
- Casetti, Francesco. “Adaptation and Mis-Adaptations: Film, Literature, and Social Discourses.” *A Companion to Literature and Film*, edited by Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, Blackwell Pub, 2004, pp. 81–91.
- Dulsey, Bernard. “La *Celestina*, ¿Versión Larga o Corta?” *Hispanófila*, no. 11, 1961, pp. 23–28, <https://doi.org/43806685>.
- Fernández Rivera, Enrique. “Introducción: La Cultura Visual de *Celestina*.” *Celestinesca*, vol. 39, 2015, p. 77. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.39.20180>.
- François, Jérôme. “*Celestina* En Hispanoamérica: La Nostalgia de Los Buenos Viejos Tiempos Como Tópico Celestinesco En Toro-Garland, Fuentes y Mosquera.” *Celestinesca*, vol. 42, 2018, p. 143. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.42.20219>.
- Geraghty, Christine. *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
- Jost, François. “The Look: From Film to Novel - An Essay in Comparative Narratology.” *A Companion to Literature and Film*, edited by Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, Blackwell Pub, 2004, pp. 71–80.

Marks, Laura U. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Duke University Press, 2000.

---. *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*. University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Rojas, Fernando de. *La Celestina*. Edited by Dorothy Sherman Severin, Vigésimocuarta edición, Cátedra, 2016.

## CHAPTER 4

### THANATOS, FALLING, AND THE REPRESENTATION OF DEATH IN

#### LA CELESTINA

*Que quiero brincar planetas  
Hasta ver uno vacío  
Que quiero irme a vivir  
Pero que sea contigo*

– Caifanes, *Viento*

Now that we have discussed the artistic and creative liberties of interpretation and translation of *La Celestina*, it is now time to explore the undeniable nature of death. It is of no surprise that the concept of death is a major factor, not just in Rojas' work but also in everyday life. Death is constantly around and can happen when least expected, which is why, during the fifteenth century, Spanish medieval literature was very much concerned on the topic of death, which resulted in many works of poetry being centered on the topic (Ayllón 161; Berndt 85–86). The inexorable act of death was such a focus that at times the theme of *ubi sunt*<sup>1</sup> started making appearances in order to create a sense of logic towards it all; some poets whose focus was on death are Juan de Mena<sup>2</sup>, Marqués

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ubi sunt qui ante nos in hoc mundo fuerunt?* – “¿Dónde están quienes vivieron antes que nosotros?” – *Where are those that lived before us?* Is used in classic literature and is the concept of life on earth as a simple means of passage to eternal life, life after death.

<sup>2</sup> *Laberinto de Fortuna (Labyrinth of Fortune)* is a major work by Juan de Mena (1411-1456). An epic poem written with verses of 12 syllables. As the title implies, the poem is an examination on Fortune - personified as a female character- and opens with the unfortunate things that happen to people.

de Santillana<sup>3</sup>, and Jorge Manrique<sup>4</sup> (Berndt 89). It is of no wonder that Fernando de Rojas also occupied the whole *Tragicomedia* with death, since almost all the main characters in the *Tragicomedia* die at the end. It is important to note that death in *La Celestina* does not follow the normal path of logic -“sin, moral justice, or punishment”- but rather death is brought upon Rojas’ characters by their surroundings and *inhuman forces* -basically, death just happens and there is nothing we can do about it (Vélez Quiñones 212). A lot of literature for *la Celestina* has dedicated time to death as being inevitable for the characters, since all have sinned and caused wrongdoing, it is only natural for everyone to receive their *just desserts*. As mentioned before, towards the end of the fifteenth century in Spain, the medieval allegory was at its height where it was weaved intrinsically with the love and moral allegory (Clarke 3), making death inevitable not just in real life but also in Rojas’ literary work.

This chapter will open the discussion of death and how the characters in *La Celestina* are literally and figuratively falling to their death; the usage of language to convey the action of falling, whether it be morally or physically, is also important to note in Rojas’ *Tragicomedia*. Keeping in mind also that “[t]he prime psychoanalytic question [should be]... what drives material generally analyzed according to such categories such as plot, character, narrator, sequence, closure, or levels of discourse” (El Saffar and de

---

<sup>3</sup> *Bías contra Fortuna* written by Íñigo López de Mendoza y de la Vega, and most commonly known as the Marqués de Santillana (1398-1458). The poem was written to console the Count of Alba, cousin of the marquis, while he was imprisoned by the order of Álvaro de Luna. In the poem Fortune is constantly threatening Bías with a myriad of disgraces and tragedies, the ideas in the poem are all *senequistas* (Kerkhof 33–34).

<sup>4</sup> *Coplas a la muerte de su padre – Verses of the death of Don Rodrigo Manrique, his Father* by Jorge Manrique (1440-1479), considered his best work. It is a eulogy dedicated to the memory of his father.

Armas Wilson 2), because these categories help direct in areas for further study. This chapter, as mentioned above, is not only looking at the text itself, but noticing the characters and their representations in other forms of media, what perspective of the story are we getting as the audience/reader? How is falling towards death part of the plot?

Before we continue the topic of death in *La Celestina*, it is important to note where this idea began... the death drive. *La Celestina* is a smorgasbord of a “museum of death, dying, mourning, and melancholy” that has inspired many scholars to continued studies -and almost never-ending works- in the subject (Vélez Quiñones 211). In Freud’s text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*<sup>5</sup>, he describes that human beings are constantly fighting between their impulses, specifically *Eros*<sup>6</sup> and the death-instinct -*Thanatos*<sup>7</sup>- and it is this constant back and forth between these impulses that drives the reactions of human beings to act and react in a certain way,

We have made the antithesis between life and death instincts our point of departure. Object-love itself displays a second such polarity, that is love (tenderness) and hate (aggression). What if we could succeed in bringing these two polarities into relation with each other, in tracing the one to the other! We

---

<sup>5</sup> According to the *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* by Laplanche and Pontalis, the *pleasure principle* is one of two principles that, according to Freud, govern mental behavior; it tries to avoid at all costs the displeasure y procure pleasure. Given that displeasure is linked to the augmentation of arousal, and pleasure to the diminishing of it, the pleasure principle constitutes an economic principle (Laplanche and Pontalis 322).

<sup>6</sup> In the *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* by Laplanche and Pontalis, *Eros* is a Greek term that was designated to love and the God of Love. Freud uses this term in his last theory about impulses, to designate the conjunction of life’s impulses and its opposition with the death impulse; it is not exclusively the sex drive, but our life force, the will to live. It is the desire to create life and favors productivity and construction (Laplanche and Pontalis 153).

<sup>7</sup> According to the *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* by Laplanche and Pontalis, *Thanatos* is a Greek word used in occasions to designate the death drive, in symmetry to *Eros*, its radical character is controlled entirely by impulse. In Greek mythology, *Thanatos* was the personification of death. According to Freud, humans have a life instinct - named *Eros* - and a death drive called *Thanatos*. It compels humans to engage in risky and self-destructive acts that could lead to their own death. These types of acts can be thrill seeking and aggressive actions and behaviors that stem from the *Thanatos* instinct (Laplanche and Pontalis 447).

have long recognized a sadistic component of the sexual instinct: it can, as we know, attain independence, and as a perversion, dominate the whole sexual trend of a person... But how is one to derive the sadistic impulse, which aims at the injury of the object, from the life-sustaining Eros! Does not the assumption suggest itself that this sadism is properly a death-instinct which is driven apart from the ego by influence of the narcissistic libido, so that it becomes manifest only in reference to the object? (Freud 68–69)

The Eros impulse is where creativity, harmony, sexual connection, and auto-preservation are located and are an important make-up of the human being. On the other hand, Thanatos -the death-instinct- is where repetition, aggression, compulsion, and auto-destruction are ever present. These drives are in constant contact with one another since they are part of human nature, and therefore must be living in a sort of harmonious balance so that humanity may survive, because, as said before, one cannot succeed without the other -a sort of yin and yang principle-. In Freud's views, there exists in the mind of each human being the tendency to satisfy one's desires, and it is because of this tendency that the distinction between what is good and bad, morality, ethics, and social courtesies begin to emerge and are taught; the pleasure principle in then in turn replaced by the reality principle<sup>8</sup>, which to Freud is not a complete abandon to obtaining one's desire, but rather it is a type of mechanism that prolongs the desired pleasure, all the while maintaining the social demands of the moment (Freud 6–7). The actions of a person's behavior is a taught process, and is something that has been institutionalized since childhood, therefore, if a human being is not taught or does not learn certain

---

<sup>8</sup> The Reality Principle, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, write in the *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, that it is one of two principles that is governed by mental behavior. It forms a pair with the pleasure principle -mentioned above- of which it modifies. It is the principal regulator, the search for satisfaction is no longer accomplished through shortcuts, but through arduous work, and extends the fulfillment based upon imposed conditions by the exterior world (Laplanche and Pontalis 379).

behaviors, they lack the knowledge of being able to incorporate into the majority of society,

... the life-instincts have much more to do with our inner perception, since they make their appearance as disturbers of the peace, and continually bring along with them states of tension the resolution of which is experienced as pleasure; while the death-instincts, on the other hand, seem to fulfil their function unostentatiously. The pleasure-principle seems directly to subserve the death-instincts; it keeps guard, of course, also over the external stimuli, which are regarded as dangers by both kinds of instincts... (Freud 82–83)

The pleasure principle is the seeking of pleasure, all in the effort to try to avoid the dissatisfaction and hurt of not receiving the desired “pleasure” and of not getting fulfilled, it “remains... the method of operation of the sex impulses, which are not so easily educable, and it happens over and over again that whether acting through these impulses or operating in the ego itself it prevails over the reality-principle to the detriment of the whole organism” (Freud 5). Essentially, the pleasure principle is the force that guides the *id*<sup>9</sup>, which is where all the basic and natural human instincts that come to the human/person since birth. The id is the root to all human necessities, desires, and impulses -including sexual impulses-. Therefore, the id is the natural part of a human being that tends to remain at an unconscious level.

As previously mentioned, during childhood, behavior is for the most part controlled by the id; children act upon their own desires, either biological or psychological, that of which, according to Freud, can cause the child to try and satisfy

---

<sup>9</sup> The *id* is the part of the mind in which innate, instinctive impulses and primary processes are manifest (Laplanche and Pontalis 197).

these desires at whatever cost possible and without a single concern for the way they go about to acquire these desires. For the most part, this sort of behavior for a child -usually a newborn or infant- is acceptable up until a certain point in their life, which means that the id is the main source of control; and it is at this point that the *ego*<sup>10</sup> comes into play. The ego is the opposite reaction to the id; and takes the id into account and suppresses the “natural” way of obtaining and satisfying a desire, and instead, uses rationality and common sense -most commonly seen as learned traits- as a way of fulfilling those basic human urges and desires; the ego is more preoccupied by the reality. Therefore, the ego basically keeps the id in line to the acceptable standards of society.

Death starts becoming a predominant figure towards the end of the *Tragicomedia*, it starts looming over the characters as their desires start being fulfilled and vices start getting in the way. Sempronio and Pármeno start letting greed and their desire to obtain more money get into their heads and set forth a deadly motion of events -*auto* XII specifically-, the death of Celestina. As death becomes the thread that unites Rojas’ characters, so does the motif of falling, it is a popular outcome in the text, Calisto falls and dies, Melibea jumps off the tower and falls and dies, Pármeno and Sempronio, though not necessarily have fallen, they do escape by jumping out the window after murdering Celestina and try to avoid falling doom. The “characters [have] a profound concern with life and death. Celestina constantly reminds her friends and followers, as well as her enemies, that they must enjoy life and experience fully each moment of

---

<sup>10</sup> The *ego* is the part of the mind that mediates between the conscious and the unconscious and is responsible for reality testing and a sense of personal identity (Laplanche and Pontalis 130).

pleasure and happiness” (Ayllón 160), a very *carpe diem*<sup>11</sup> and *ubi sunt* thematic approach for Rojas to occupy his characters with. Celestina’s reminder of taking advantage of life is a seduction technique and part of her rhetorical strategy to convince Melibea to pay attention to Calisto and to gain Pármeno’s acceptance as well. With death being present, which the characters are aware of with the help and reminder of Celestina, it becomes the impetus for them to pursue their passions -fulfill their love and desires- (Berndt 92). The idea of death being at the forefront is interesting since it gives death an actual role in the plot of the story; however, death seems to be disguised as other wants and desires that Rojas’ characters are in want to acquire. The concept of death

... is conceived as a result of conflict as it emerges intimately related to love. If *La Celestina* is a great love story, it is also a work of death and tragedy, a work in which sorrow and destruction are the results of love. Calisto’s love motivates him and his immediates into action, and this action leads them all to their destruction. All the death in *La Celestina* are directly or indirectly caused by Calisto’s love for Melibea (Ayllón 164)

Although it is Calisto’s love for Melibea that inspire the events in *La Celestina*, it is still Celestina herself that has the task to accomplish this fulfillment of love. Without Celestina’s help, there is no one for Sempronio to recommend helping his master, no in-between character for Calisto to connect with Melibea. Pármeno also would never have had the chance to be with his romantic interest Areúsa. So yes, love is a big factor for the start of the plot, but Celestina is crucial in creating the proper rhetoric of taking life and enjoying it before death -Thanatos- comes knocking on their door.

---

<sup>11</sup> *Carpe diem* – Latin for “pluck the day” though commonly translated to “seize the day” which basically means to enjoy life while you can, live with no regrets.

A factor to consider is the motif of *falling* present in *La Celestina*. The action alone is one that requires a great overview since most of the characters die by falling; whether it be willingly or unintentional, the end game is the same, death. So, what is it that brings about the impulse to fall? Thanatos, or as Freud calls it, the death-instinct. It is the magnet that is pulling the characters down, something that they do not fight at all to escape from but let themselves be drawn down and abruptly fall into the abyss of darkness. Thanatos is present in every aspect of the world of *La Celestina*, and it all seems very out of nowhere, however, one can argue that maybe it is the luck of the draw of the main characters. How can all the main characters just fall into their own demise? It is their fortune, it seems, to be led by desire and Thanatos and spiral down into a situation that does not indicate any means of being able to escape. Makes one think, how much is it the characters doing to their own fate, or another being entirely, much like Thanatos (the Death Drive), the outcomes and serendipitous nature of the character's lives has most to do with Fortuna. As mentioned before, falling encompasses a compulsive theme within the *Tragicomedia* and as such, it is worth looking into that theme not as just written aspect of falling, but also as the visual aspect, especially the change of such visual violence of falling causes when taking into account the already flesh and bone characters that are being formed along with the incorporation of their personalities and histories that we learn of said characters in the *La Celestina* itself.

Many of the main characters in the *Tragicomedia* are “pulled”, “pushed”, or “falling” into the remnants of the outcome of their own choices. The gravitational boundaries are constantly present and a threat to the characters, and as such they try and

defy these boundaries to accomplish their desires and avoid death -Thanatos-.

Adaptations of the *Tragicomedia* create their own depictions of death in *La Celestina*, each artistic medium adapts the death of Rojas' characters in distinctive ways, they convey death, but it is performed or illustrated for a viewer/audience. The films - discussed in chapter 1-, artwork, theater, wood carvings/tapestries -previously mentioned in chapter 2-, and television shows, have been created and depict scenes of sections of Rojas' work and as a result lend more to the critical eye as well as provide a new way of thinking of *La Celestina*, especially when looking at the adaptations of death from Rojas' *Tragicomedia* into another form of media. A big impetus to the subject of death in *La Celestina* is the trope of desire. E. Michael Gerli discusses the impact of desire within *La Celestina* and especially what that desire leads to at the end – death;

*Celestina* registers and advocates definite ways of being and thinking about the world while it thwarts others; and it constitutes itself as a site of struggle and a catalyst for change whose implications are ineluctably political, ideological, and cultural. The law, love, money, orality, ambition, the body, nutrition, and sexuality in particular are all intertwined and become the loci where dramatic early modern battles of caste, rank, class, and ethics are played out and where desire is revealed to be the thriving, driving force behind all human action, the unstoppable motor of the human spirit (Gerli 15)

Although desire seems to be harmless emotion, in the case of the characters in *La Celestina*, desire is their actual doom, and they are slowly going down a dark tunnel and knocking on death's door. Gerli's work on desire is the inspiration of death within the *Tragicomedia* because death is a constant figure from the beginning of story, it is constantly mentioned when characters don't get their desires met... especially in the case of Calisto, who burns and must obtain Melibea's love or he will die (Rojas, *La Celestina*

90–91; Rojas, *The Celestina* 2–3). Although Thanatos is not a visible figure in the *Tragicomedia*, its presence as a main theme is still important to not acknowledge, for Thanatos is the representation of death and as such, every time death is discussed it is looming over the main characters of Calisto, Melibea, Celestina, Pármeno and Sempronio. Their deaths in the text are alluded to from the beginning, with reminders of life being short and dramatic acts of dying if someone -Calisto- is not satisfied. In the text, death is disguised with the rhetoric of language, Celestina's speech on taking advantage of life, Calisto's exaggerations of dying, Pármeno and Sempronio's vengeance, etc. However, death in other forms of media, like the films discussed in chapter 1 and the illustrations and art assessed in chapter 2, is represented differently since there is the advantage of the visual medium. The *intermediality*<sup>1213</sup> of the films and art draw the viewer into a new way of looking and interpreting death for *La Celestina*. In the films, death is implied or highlighted with moving pictures and objects at times, all seen by the different shots and filming sequences filmed at different levels in which the characters are in and how they fall and die. For example, Melibea's suicide is a scene that is not shown in the film, it is only inferred that she leaps from the tower into Thanatos' awaiting arms. In the illustrations, with less of the moving pictures that film can grant us, death is stagnant, at a continuous freeze-frame between the action of falling, killing, or dying.

---

<sup>12</sup> Intermediality in film: grounded in the (inter) sensuality of cinema itself, in the experience of the viewer being aroused simultaneously on different levels of consciousness and perception.

<sup>13</sup> Intermediality in art: the strategies of interdisciplinarity that occur within artworks existing between artistic genres.

The first character this chapter will focus on will be on Pármeno. Pármeno is a fascinating character in the *Tragicomedia*, as previously discussed in past chapters; Pármeno is the one character that holds off the most into succumbing to his wishes. Celestina tempts Pármeno with three different key temptations in order for him to no longer be loyal to Calisto: first, “she [Celestina] tempts Pármeno with the pleasures of the flesh”, the promise of Areúsa; second, with the “... promise of further gains she tempts him with avarice”; and lastly, “she tempts him to presumption or pride of life”, leaving behind the idealized image of his master Calisto and betraying him (Truesdell 267). Celestina succeeds in turning Pármeno to her, however, like Truesdell mentions, it is not an easy feat to accomplish for Pármeno already has a past with Celestina and as a result has issues with his mother for having left him with Celestina when he was younger. However, he also sees Celestina as a sort of mother figure, a replacement of the mother he didn’t get to actually have; Celestina herself put herself in that position of a mother not just to Pármeno, but to Sempronio as well; calling Pármeno *hijo* [son] and that she wishes he and Sempronio were *hermanos* [brothers] and that she has *mucho amor* [a lot of love] for him and wants only the best for him -Pármeno- and his “brother” Sempronio (Rojas, *La Celestina* 194–96). It is important to note that,

... Celestina is often referred to as Mother by her charges, she is childless. She is, at best an aunt, as others call her. Celestina’s role is maieutic, rather than maternal, but what she helps bring about is only pleasure or pain or both and ultimately death, never life. A mistress of love, Celestina is hardly the agent of social restoration and continuity. She is the enabler in a commerce of bodies, desires, and reputations that is the opposite and sometimes the parody of the rituals through which society renews itself: courtship and marriage (González Echevarría 9–10)

Pármeno's life has been a rough one, his mother, Claudina, was a prostitute and a great friend to Celestina. He is one of the only characters in Rojas' novel that does not give in to temptation right away -Melibea is another-, and resists her as long as he can, hiding behind the hatred he had of her when he was a child, but the hatred starts subsiding, and temptation starts settling in. Celestina woos him with the words of family, until Pármeno himself starts feeling the familial pull of having Celestina in his life again especially with what she promises him,

PÁRMENO. Celestina, todo tremo en oyрте; no sé qué haga; perplexo estoy. Por una parte, téngote, por madre; por otra a Calisto por amo. Riqueza desseo, pero quien torpemente sube a lo alto, más aina cae que subió. No querría bienes mal ganados (Rojas, *La Celestina* 123)

[ENG: PARMENO. Celestina, your words make me tremble. I don't know what to do. I'm puzzled. I owe you my love as a mother, but I owe Calisto my love as a master. I'd like to be rich, but he who climbs by foul means falls more quickly than he climbed. I don't want any ill-won wealth (Rojas, *The Celestina* 27)]

Pármeno is second guessing his desire and what is right, but the temptation of what Celestina is offering is calling to him *todo tremo en oyрте* which is causing him to denounce his humble and content life that he imagined for himself and obtain more. Pármeno accepts his new *mother* Celestina into his life and forgives her for all past experiences he endured as a child, however, he still maintains doubts about betraying his master, Calisto. With Pármeno's qualms about Celestina slightly settled, he transfers over his new hesitation onto Sempronio, and starts not wanting to accept him as a new addition into the makeshift family that Celestina has created for him. Celestina's image, once as a "puta vieja" has now been replaced as his mother,

PÁRMENO. Madre, [para contigo digo que] mi segundo yerro te confesso, y con perdón de lo pasado quiero que ordenes lo porvenir. Pero con Sempronio me parece que es imposible sostenerse mi amistad; él es desvariado, yo malsofrido; concértame esos amigos (Rojas, *La Celestina* 196)

[ENG: PARMENO. Mother, just between us, I confess I did you wrong and I hope you'll forgive me. I'll obey you in the future. But I think it's impossible for me and Sempronio to be friends. He babbles too much and I'm too impatient with him. How can you make friends out of two such? (Rojas, *The Celestina* 79)]

Pármeno has now accepted a mother into his life to guide him and has abandoned his loyalty to his *amo*, a foreshadowing of this taking place at the end of the second act, with his epiphany of his life next to his master, “¡O desdichado de mí!; por ser leal padezco mal. Otros ganan por malos, y yo me pierdo por bueno” (Rojas, *La Celestina* 138) [“Poor fool that I was! It's what I get for being loyal, while others profit by their treachery” (Rojas, *The Celestina* 36)], he is aware of how cruel and unfair life can be and starts realizing that he needs to accept to do things that are not exactly loyal and right. However, Celestina's observance of Pármeno's demeanor, her rational language usage, and the lust he has for Areúsa, is all the arsenal she needs to convince him to join her and Sempronio in scamming Calisto, and in doing so, betraying his master, and forgoing that simple and humble life he had planned for himself,

CELESTINA. ¿Qué es razón, loco? ¿Qué es afecto, asnillo? La discreción, que no tienes, lo determina, y de la discreción, mayor es la prudencia. Y de la prudencia no puede ser sin experimento, y la experiencia no puede ser más que en los viejos. Y los ancianos somos llamados padres, y los buenos padres bien aconsejan a sus hijos, y especial yo a ti, cuya vida y honra más que la mía desseo... (Rojas, *La Celestina* 127)

[ENG: CELESTINA. What is reason, you idiot? What is desire, you little donkey? You'll learn what they are only by using the discretion you do not yet possess. And wisdom is better than discretion; it comes only with experience, and experience only with age. We old ones are called parents, and good parents give

good advice to their children, as I give you, whose life and honor are more precious to me than my own (Rojas, *The Celestina* 29)]

Celestina rationalizes that to obtain what is desired there must be a risk, and it is only within that risk that you acquire experience and knowledge, two things that Celestina surely knows a lot about and had in abundance. Pármeno's fall from grace, though a metaphorical fall, is compelling and telling not just on the character but also for the theme of the *Tragicomedia*, falling to death. The temptation of the flesh -lust- is Celestina's weapon of choice to entice and secure Pármeno's side. Pármeno's *fall from grace* in a sense is succumbed to the promise of Areúsa, which which in turn becomes his nail on his coffin (Heusch 35). Celestina has offered Pármeno an "exchange of gifts" (Lacan 142) which is the "material wealth as well as the love of Areúsa" (Sutherland 183); in exchange for what Celestina has offered him, he must be her "hijo" as well as Sempronio's "hermano" and give up his loyalty to his master, Calisto,

PÁRMENO. Agora dexemos los muertos y las herencias [que si poco me dexaron, poco hallaré]. Hablamos en los presentes negocios que nos va más que en traer los passados a la memoria. Bien se te acordará, no ha mucho que me prometiste que me harías aver a Areúsa, quando en mi casa te dixes cómo moría por sus amores (Rojas, *La Celestina* 202)

[ENG: PARMENO. Never mind the dead and their money. If I was left nothing I shall inherit nothing. Let's talk about immediate matters, which are of more concern to us than recollections of the past. You remember, don't you, that not long ago you promised me I should have Areusa, that time at my house when I told you I was crazy about her? (Rojas, *The Celestina* 84)]

Celestina's promise of Areúsa to Pármeno is the final nail in the coffin to his future outcome in the text. Pármeno leaves behind the life he so rationally thought out for himself, a humble one that he could be proud of, and instead, let's himself fall into desire

-along with the other characters- of which he can never come back from. He accepts Celestina as his new mother, and Sempronio as a brother and constructs a new family of which he is hoping only to gain pleasures; a very form-extrinsic<sup>14</sup><sup>15</sup><sup>16</sup> approach that he takes on into his new life.

The aggression and brutal murder of Celestina by Sempronio and Pármeno is the perfect embodiment of their desires not being fulfilled the way they wanted; what with Sempronio and Pármeno not obtaining what they deem their part of the pay out, they demand Celestina to give them their portion of her earnings -Calisto's "cadena de oro"- and she in turn, refuses to do so, causing a shift in the relationship that affect Pármeno's and Sempronio's need of her to obtain their believed share,

CELESTINA. Gracioso es el asno; por mi vejez, que si sobre comer fuera, que dixiera que aviémos todos cargado demasiado. ¿Estás en tu seso, Sempronio? ¿Qué tiene que hazer tu galardón con mi salaio, tu soldada con mis mercedes? ¿Só yo obligada a soldar vuestras armas, a complir vuestras faltas? A osadas que me maten, si no te as asido a una palabrilla que te dixie el otro día viniendo por la calle, que quanto yo tenía era tuyo y que en quanto pudiesse con mis pocas fuerças, jamás te faltaría, y que si Dios me diesse buena manderecha con tu amo, que tú no perderías nada. Pues ya sabes, Sempronio, que estos ofrecimientos, estas palabras de buen amor no obligan... (Rojas, *La Celestina* 272–73)

[ENG: CELESTINA. The ass is funny! By my old age, if it were only a matter of eating, I'd say we've all done pretty well! Are you out of your mind, Sempronio? What has your reward got to do with my wages? Or your wages with my gifts? Is it up to me to mend your armor? Or make good your mistakes? Sink me if you haven't taken me up on a little word I let slip the other day, to the effect that everything I had was yours, and that to the limit of my meager strength I'd never fail you, and that, if God gave me a good hand with your master, you'd not be the

---

<sup>14</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Spatial Systems in *North by Northwest*" in *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan but were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*, edited by Slavoj Žižek (Jameson 47).

<sup>15</sup> Form-extrinsic: doing something for external rewards or to avoid negative consequences (Jameson 47).

<sup>16</sup> Form-intrinsic: when you do something because you enjoy it or find it interesting (Jameson 47).

loser! Well, Sempronio, you must know that such offers and polite words carry no responsibility (Rojas, *The Celestina* 140)]

Celestina's outrage of what belongs to her, what she fairly earned in what she deems as "honest" work starts becoming the reason for such displeasure in her home. Her speech to Sempronio, trying to reason with him, letting him know that his demands are humorous "[g]racioso es el asno" and that he has no claim over her "salario". Celestina knows that she has to convince Sempronio, for if she gets to him then she can convince Pármeno as well, however, that all falls on deaf ears, for Sempronio and Pármeno are overcome by the power of their own desire for money and as a result, let themselves be led by their impulses and murder Celestina, which, in turn, commences a whole spiral of death.

After the meticulous discussion of Pármeno's descent towards Thanatos, and Celestina's murder, I would like to pivot the focus of the last death in *La Celestina*, Melibea's death -her suicide-. The death of Melibea was discussed briefly in chapter 1, with looking at the differences of how her death was portrayed in Fernández Ardavín's 1969 film of *La Celestina* and Vera's 1996 film of the same name. It is interesting to look at her death through these two scenes from different films, directors, and time periods; since the focus of this dissertation is interpretation and translatability, it is only logical to include an in-depth analysis of the variations and representations of Melibea's death in comparison to Rojas' original depiction of it because "... interpretation is the conclusive moment of the very act of reception" (Žižek 1), and the audience becomes the receptor between the intermediality of the text and the films and illustrations.

Looking first at Fernández Ardavín's scene of Melibea, her suicide is represented by the slow descent of her white scarf gliding down from the top of the tower -Melibea is no longer in the scene after her monologue-. The image of the white scarf is accompanied by the background noise of church bells, a reminder of the Catholic church and how it is a sin to commit suicide. After Calisto's fall and death, Melibea laments on her *gozo* [Figure 4.1] and it is where the turn and determination of her next action come into effect, death. Melibea's happiness has been disrupted and taken from her -taken by Thanatos- so in turn, Melibea is searching for that happiness again, and her solution is to jump to her death to reclaim that lost happiness she shared with Calisto (Fernández 50–51).

Fernández Ardavín's interpretation of Melibea's death [Figure 4.2] demonstrates the Spain of the late sixties, an era of censorship and where the Catholic church held much power -as discussed in chapter 1 in more detail- however, the inclusion of her death, and not just passing it on as an action occurred off screen, shows how important it was for the director to include this visual for the audience.

It is impactful and strong, the body of Melibea is replaced by material, making the death a slow motion action, the death drive in movement, “[d]eath as a trope that embodies the narrative's stillness, its return to an inanimate form...” (Mulvey 70), death is heading towards an end as the desire to return to an earlier state.



**Figure 4.1:** After Calisto's death, Melibea is in shock and determined to reunite with her love. She is looking down at the proceedings of Calisto's body being carried to the church [Fernández Ardavín's *La Celestina*] (*The Wanton of Spain*).



**Figure 4.2:** Melibea's *jump*. The white scarf representing her fall and death [Fernández Ardevín's *La Celestina*] (*The Wanton of Spain*).

Melibea's death in Vera's film, however, is represented in a much different way. Her choice to make the leap to her death [Figure 4.3] is more vulnerable in the image, Vera's Melibea after Calisto's death is portrayed with devastation on her part, her entire movement towards the top of the tower is of Melibea stumbling and not being able to gain her own center of gravity. Melibea's remedy for her pain and imbalance is to jump [Figure 4.4] and join Calisto in death -and for Melibea, peace and happiness-. The leap in Vera's film is shown from a low angle shot -from the ground up- giving the audience the view of what Lucrezia and Alisa are seeing while looking up towards Melibea. Her body is in mid-air for just a small moment before the camera pans out to show Melibea in a peaceful repose of death.



**Figure 4.3:** Melibea's determination to die and join Calisto [Vera's *La Celestina*] (*La Celestina*).



**Figure 4.4:** Melibea's *leap* in Vera's 1996 version (*La Celestina*).

### Work Cited

- Ayllón, Cándido. "Death in *La Celestina*." *Hispania*, vol. 41, no. 2, May 1958, pp. 160–64. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.2307/335442>.
- Berndt, Erna Ruth. *Amor, Muerte y Fortuna en "La Celestina"*. Editorial Gredos, 1963.
- Clarke, Dorothy Clotelle. *Allegory, Decalogue, and Deadly Sins in La Celestina*. University of California Press, 1968.
- El Saffar, Ruth Anthony, and Diana de Armas Wilson, editors. *Quixotic Desire: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Cervantes*. Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Fernández, Sergio E. "*El Estiércol de Melibea*" y Otros Ensayos. 1. ed, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Coordinación de Humanidades, Dirección General de Publicaciones, 1991.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Translated by C. J. M. Hubback, Martino Pub., 2009.
- Gerli, E. Michael. *Celestina and the Ends of Desire*. University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- González Echevarría, Roberto. *Celestina's Brood: Continuities of the Baroque in Spanish and Latin American Literatures*. Duke University Press, 1993, [http://bvbr.bib-bvb.de:8991/F?func=service&doc\\_library=BVB01&local\\_base=BVB01&doc\\_number=006077834&line\\_number=0001&func\\_code=DB\\_RECORDS&service\\_type=MEDIA](http://bvbr.bib-bvb.de:8991/F?func=service&doc_library=BVB01&local_base=BVB01&doc_number=006077834&line_number=0001&func_code=DB_RECORDS&service_type=MEDIA). WorldCat.org.
- Heusch, Carlos. "Las Desviaciones de Pármeno o La Caída de Un Ángel." *Celestinesca*, vol. 26, no. 1–2, 2022, p. 29. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.26.19986>.
- Jameson, Frederic. "Spatial Systems in *North by Northwest*." *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan: But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*, edited by Slavoj Žižek, Updated ed., 2nd ed, Verso, 2010.
- Kerkhof, Maximiliaan Paul Adriaan Maria. "Introducción: Vida de don Iñigo López de Mendoza." *Comedieta de Ponça; Sonetos "al itálico modo"*, edited by Maximiliaan Paul Adriaan Maria Kerkhof, Cátedra, 1986.
- La Celestina*. Directed by César Fernández Ardavín, Paramount Films, 1969.
- . Directed by Gerardo Vera, Lolafilms, 1996.

- Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits: A Selection*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Norton, 1977.
- Laplanche, Jean, and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis. *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*. Karnac, 1988.
- Mulvey, Laura. *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*. Reaktion Books, 2007.
- Rojas, Fernando de. *La Celestina*. Edited by Dorothy Sherman Severin, Vigésimocuarta edición, Cátedra, 2016.
- . *The Celestina: A Fifteenth-Century Spanish Novel in Dialogue*. Translated by Lesley Byrd Simpson, 6. print, Univ. of California Pr, 1974.
- Sutherland, Madeline. "Mimetic Desire, Violence and Sacrifice in the 'Celestina.'" *Hispania*, vol. 86, no. 2, May 2003, p. 181. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20062828>.
- Truesdell, William D. "Parmeno's Triple Temptation: 'Celestina,' Act I." *Hispania*, vol. 58, no. 2, May 1975, p. 267. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/338949>.
- Vélez Quiñones, Harry. "Labyrinth of Errors: Celestinesque Ploys against Death." *Celestinesca*, vol. 29, 2005, p. 211. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.29.20052>.
- Žižek, Slavoj, editor. *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan: But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*. Updated ed., 2nd ed, Verso, 2010.

## CONCLUSION

*Cada uno da lo que recibe  
Y luego recibe lo que da  
Nada es más simple  
No hay otra norma  
Nada se pierde  
Todo se transforma  
Todo se transforma*

– Jorge Drexler, *Todo se transforma*

This dissertation looked to analyze the translatability and adaptations of Fernando de Rojas' only work, *La Celestina*. The importance of it is the dynamic study that is still prevalent in *La Celestina* as of now, there are constantly new things to be found, whether it be an analysis of desire (Gerli), or the representation of the female figure, or the economic representation of Spain during Rojas' time, there is still more to find. And just like that, there is the representation of Thanatos in the work, and as such must be given a proper platform and time to evaluate. Thanatos though grim, is almost a whole character within the *La Celestina*, even though Thanatos does not have a voice or a body, yet it is present in the characters language and actions that defy death until they can no longer do so. Thanatos is their falling aid, and it is important to try and pin its presence down. A way of accomplishing this is considering the extensive representations of the work that the *La Celestina* has inspired, such as paintings (artwork), theater, and films. Among one of the most popular to examine are of course, the films, especially the ones mentioned before, *La Celestina*, 1969 version and 1996. Language and representation in the text of the *La Celestina* become increasingly important because it is through those lenses that critical analysis can occur, such as looking into the *Death Drive* and the motif of falling

in both versions of the work. The *Death Drive* becomes a symbol for the work in a way, it is the representation of the outcome of the main characters and as such can be seen in its depictions of artwork and film (Rojas, *La Celestina*; Rojas, *The Celestina*; Rojas, *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada*).

The first chapter of this dissertation did a side-by-side look into two film adaptations of *La Celestina*. César Fernández Ardavín's 1969 and Gerardo Vera's 1996 renditions of *La Celestina* showcase distinct approaches in bringing Fernando de Rojas' timeless piece to the cinematic realm. Ardavín's interpretation, crafted against the backdrop of its era, reflects the socio-cultural nuances of the late 1960's. Meanwhile, Vera's 1996 adaptation, rooted in a different historical context – outside of Franco's dictatorship – weaves the narrative through a lens shaped by the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These cinematic translations not only capture the essence of *La Celestina* but also serve as mirrors of reflecting the filmmakers' unique perspectives on the enduring narrative (*The Wanton of Spain; La Celestina*).

*La Celestina* has transcended its literary origins, inspiring a rich tapestry of artistic adaptations that span diverse mediums, beginning with intricate wood carvings that brought Rojas' narrative to life in a tangible, tactile form. Subsequently, this celestial influence permeated the realm of paintings, as artists sought to capture the essence of the story on canvas, each stroke conveying the nuanced emotions and complexities embedded in Rojas' classic work – very much like Teo Puebla's artistic renditions of *La Celestina* and the characters within it. These various artistic manifestations have seamlessly woven themselves into the expansive folder of the celestinesque cannon. As a result, these art

forms have established a visual dialogue that extends beyond the written word. The artists, fueled by the timeless allure of *La Celestina*, have found innovative ways to interpret and reimagine Rojas' narrative, infusing it with fresh perspectives and breathing new life into its enduring themes through the language of images. In this ongoing dialogue between literature and art, *La Celestina* continues to be a muse, sparking creativity across different forms of expression (Puebla).

The enduring allure of *La Celestina* lies in its ability to satiate the nostalgic yearning of readers and viewers, offering a timeless narrative that, despite familiarity with the plot, beckons like an old friend. This yearning is uniquely quenched by delving into diverse adaptations across many forms of media, as each rendition breathes new life into the well-known story. The appetite for revisiting the same tales, even when the trajectory is anticipated, finds fulfillment in exploring different iterations across literature and visual media. Witnessing the narrative unfold in varied artistic expressions not only satisfies the nostalgia for the familiar but also unveils fresh perspectives, nuances, and interpretations that add depth to the beloved source material. In this dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, *La Celestina* becomes a reservoir of endless nostalgia, continually replenished by the diverse ways in which its essence is captured and reimagined across the artistic spectrum (Boym).

A common thread of mortality weaves through the narrative as the main characters of Calisto, Melibea, Celestina, Sempronio, and Pármemo, all meet their demise. Death, akin to the beckoning of Thanatos, the embodiment of mortality, serves as a unifying force in their fates. The inevitability of their individual downfalls becomes a

poignant symphony of tragedy that resonates through the lives of each character. Calisto, Melibea, Celestina, Sempronio, and Pármeno – disparate in their paths and destinies – converge in the shared inevitability of death. The narrative unfolds as a dance with Thanatos, exploring the intricacies of human existence, desires, and the inescapable embrace of death. In the poignant intertwining of these characters' fates, the story not only narrates the fragility of life but also delves into the universal human experience of confronting the unavoidable journey towards the realm of Thanatos.

There is always more room for analysis, *La Celestina* will always inspire new ideas and takes as it continues to remain important. Knowing what will happen seems to be the best route for succeeding in life, however, that is a hard thing to achieve, especially if fortune – luck – is not on your side. Some future work that can be delved into and added into the celestinesque repertoire is the topic of Fortune. A seemingly simple aspect of life that for some reason most people cannot hold on to, comes in and out of lives unwelcomed – for the most part – and by surprise. Fortune was often personified as the Goddess Fortuna<sup>1</sup> in most medieval literature and was often depicted as a Goddess of justice – a grand being able to establish order. In literature, Fortuna was depicted and described by some “as pure chance, but others, perhaps most others felt that there was a design, however inscrutable, in her workings and that she was, in effect, not just Fortune but also Fate” (Pollitt 14). Fortuna becomes the deciding factor on whether a person succeeds or fails; she can take away all the accolades and glory and let misery be

---

<sup>1</sup> Fortuna: equivalent to the greek goddess Tyche, was the goddess of fortune and the personification of luck; often depicted with a “Rota Fortunae” or more commonly known as wheel of fortune. Bringer of good or bad luck and has come to represent life’s capriciousness.

overtaken. The image of Fortuna in the *La Celestina* is interesting since it can be said that all the characters end up with such bad luck and die at the end, however, maybe it is that exact presence of Fortuna that welcomes the Death Drive and sets everything in motion to establish a sort of cosmic balance.

Fortuna as a motif has been a subject of great study and discourse in medieval literature. She – Fortuna – is a deity that is sought after for personal gain and later cursed when no longer blessed and betrayed. A great influence into the appearance of Fortuna in literature is by Francesco Petrarca<sup>2</sup>, Fortuna has a prevalence in medieval works of literature and is mentioned time and time again when there is something of great scale occurring (whether good or bad) and she is almost always blamed for the bad luck entirely. Fortuna can be the cause of greatness as well be the cause of destruction, whole countries and Empires can fall and succumb to her wrath, whether by failure or death, Fortuna can be way more than just a deity of luck and chance, she can also be the reason for falling and death. Fortuna, in a way, is ever present and keeps Thanatos in proximity. The poem *Bías contra Fortuna*, by Marqués de Santillana, takes Petrarca's focus of Fortuna and establishes a dialogue with Fortuna. It makes for a great establishment as to why Fortuna can cause such destruction as well such amazement in just a blink of an eye. In the poem, Bías, the questioner, keeps seeking answers from Fortuna, using examples of literature and history to bring his point across, such as the falling of empires and great kings, and all because of what? Because of some chance occurrence? Santillana's *Bías*

---

<sup>2</sup> Petrarca or Petrarch, a scholar and poet of the Italian renaissance who is considered one of the earliest humanists of the time and who was an influence on great authors such as: Garcilaso de la Vega and William Shakespeare.

*contra Fortuna* is a great example of the good or bad luck Fortuna can bring and emulates the greatest problem humans seem to encounter and feel when in the presence of Fortuna. It is something that even now one can continue having an argument about. This is also a subject and idea even that is necessary to explore in more depth, not just in the form of Santillana's poem, but in other works of literature, such as *La Celestina*. Fortuna's presence in *La Celestina* is overwhelmed by the desire of the characters in the text, and as such, can be considered hidden within the repetitive, accidental or purposeful falling of the characters in *La Celestina*.

### Work Cited

- Boym, Svetlana. *El Futuro de la Nostalgia*. Translated by Jaime Blasco Castiñeyra, 1st ed., vol. 38, Visor Distribuciones, S.A., 2018.
- Gerli, E. Michael. *Celestina and the Ends of Desire*. University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- La Celestina*. Directed by César Fernández Ardavín, Paramount Films, 1969.
- . Directed by Gerardo Vera, Lolafilms, 1996.
- Pollitt, J. J. "An Obsession with Fortune." *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 1994, pp. 12–17, [jstor.org/stable/40514499](http://jstor.org/stable/40514499).
- Puebla, Teo. *Puebla: Museo La Celestina*. Estudios Gráficos Europeos.
- Rojas, Fernando de. *La Celestina*. Edited by Dorothy Sherman Severin, Vigésimocuarta edición, Cátedra, 2016.
- . *La Celestina: Edición Ilustrada*. Ed. ilustrada, Ayuntamiento de La Puebla de Montalbán, 2005.
- . *The Celestina: A Fifteenth-Century Spanish Novel in Dialogue*. Translated by Lesley Byrd Simpson, 6. print, Univ. of California Pr, 1974.