

Celestina's *veritas*: Fetishizing the Salve/*salve* of Healing Wine

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Y aún vulgarmente atribuyen la verdad al vino.
[Pliny, Book 14, chap. 22, II, p. 212]

The *Oxford English Dictionary* registers, among others, these definitions for the word *salve*: «healing ointment for application to wounds or sores; figuratively, a remedy for spiritual disease or sorrow; a salutation.» It is at the crossroads of the medical and spiritual significations of *salve* that a reader of *Celestina* can find some intellectually salutary applications. On the spiritual axis, Celestina can be seen as a mock priestess in the work; on the medical axis, the healing salve of wine is a palliative evoked with great frequency in the text: where the two coincide, a deeper meaning can be coaxed out.¹

The medical uses of wine have been explicated in medical treatises and other authoritative repositories of received knowledge since time immemorial.² It is little wonder then that Celestina, whose penchant for

1.— Research for this article was facilitated by my participation in a 2009 NEH Summer Seminar at the University of Virginia, directed by E. Michael Gerli, on *Celestina and the Threshold of Modernity*. I am most grateful to Professor Gerli for his careful reading and helpful suggestions.

2.— Marcelino V. Amasuno has observed that the study of medicine in Salamanca in the middle ages was an «Arabized Galenism» (*galenismo arabizado*, p. 45), but that by the early part of the fifteenth century, the direct study of Avicenna was almost a certainty, thanks to its introduction into the medical curriculum in Paris, Bologna and Montpellier (48-49). See: Marcelino V. Amasuno, «Saber médico, literatura loimológica y la Universidad de Salamanca en el siglo xv», in *'Nunca fue pena mayor.'* *Estudios de Literatura Española en homenaje a Brian Dutton*, eds. A. Menéndez Coller and V. Roncero López, Cuenca, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1996, pp. 45-70.

the distillation of the grape is unparalleled in late Spanish medieval literature, should possess some knowledge of its healing properties, especially in view of her talents as a *curandera*.³ Celestina's inordinate dedication to wine is further enriched in the text by the go-between's systematic depiction as a priestess. The imagery of Celestina as one who *officiates* (in the sense of performing or celebrating a religious service or rite), permeates the entire text. When she visits the members of her *congregation* in their homes, it is with the priestly greeting from Luke 10.5: «Paz sea en esta casa» (Act IV, p. 110).⁴ Celestina, as the negotiator between her clients and the sins they would commit, assumes by association the role of confessor, who mediates between sinners and the salvation they seek from their God. Indeed, Celestina displays a great penchant for eliciting the confession of the hidden and transgressive desires of virtually everyone she encounters. This is especially manifest in the confessional language of the textual asides, whispered snippets of unguarded truth.⁵

The associations of Celestina with wine, revelry and priestly mysteries seem to be a clear allusion to the ancient cult of Dionysus (in Greece) and Bacchus (in Rome).⁶ If the divine essence of Dionysus is madness, then his connection to Celestina is appropriate, to the extent that «in the art of prophecy, madness is represented as secret knowledge.»⁷ Celestina's art is precisely the ability to penetrate the innermost recesses of the psyches of the men and women she attends, to apprehend what motivates them, to see inside of them with her mind's eyes. In Act 1, when Pármeno utters his defamatory asides against Celestina, thinking that she cannot hear him, and ironically boasting of the «vision» that experience has given him («cosas he visto asaz y el seso y la vista de las muchas co-

3.— Much has been written on Celestina's medical knowledge of love melancholy, or *amor hereos*. For more general studies of Celestina's healing arts, see: Marcelino V. Amasuno Saragá's «Hacia un contexto médico para *Celestina*: dos modalidades curadoras frente a frente», *Celestinesca* 23.1-3 (1999), pp. 87-124 and Paloma Moral de Calatrava's «Magic or Science? What 'Old Women Lapidaries' Knew in the Age of Celestina», *La Corónica* 36.1 (Fall, 2007), pp. 203-35.

4.— Vulgata: «in quamcumque domum intraveritis primum dicite pax huic domui.»

5.— Patricia Finch has studied the function of textual asides in *Celestina* in her article «The Uses of the Aside in *Celestina*», *Celestinesca* 6.2 (1982), pp. 19-24.

6.— In his entertaining and informative study of wine in Spanish literature of the medieval and early modern periods, Piñero Ramírez notes that the banquet scene «rozará las fronteras de la bacanal» (p. 215). See: Pedro M. Piñero Ramírez, «In taberna quando sumus. De Berceo al Lazarillo», in *Historia y cultura del vino en Andalucía*, ed. Juan José Iglesias Rodríguez, Sevilla, Universidad de Sevilla, 1995, pp. 201-220. Pablo A. Cavallero posits as possible sources for Celestina's love of wine a tradition that evolves from Greco-Latin Humanistic comedy, especially Menander and Plautus, where there are antecedents of the old lady who works as a go-between and imbibes regularly. See his: «Algo más sobre el motivo grecolatino de la vieja bebedora en *Celestina*: Rojas y la tradición de la comediografía», *Celestinesca* 12.2 (1988), pp. 5-16.

7.— See: Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus. Myth and Cult*, tr. Robert B. Palmer, Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1965, p. 144.

«sas demuestran la experiencia», p. 60), she chides him with: «Bien te oí y no pienses que el oír con los otros exteriores sesos mi vejez haya perdido. Que no sólo lo que veo, oigo y conozco; mas aún lo intrínseco con los intelectuales ojos penetro» (p. 62). The magic elixir that inspires the intoxicating frenzy of divine and prophetic knowledge, for both the Dionysian priestesses and Celestina, is wine. Another parallel to be drawn here is that in classical antiquity, Dionysus was constantly surrounded by a sisterhood of women who were required to worship the phallus as an integral part of their rituals (Otto, 174).⁸ Celestina's retinue is, of course, primarily the women who render services on her behalf.⁹ What is more, Celestina shares with Dionysus a certain androgyny (Otto, 175-176). I will have more to say about snake imagery in *Celestina* later, but we should note that in the *Bacchae* of Euripides, each woman who dances in a frenzied manner to worship Dionysus has «wound a snake around her body beneath her clothes to protect herself from the lustful desires of men even when she is asleep or defenseless» (Otto, 177).

What exactly transpires in Celestina's isolated and mysterious house, «al cabo de la ciudad, allá cerca de las tenerías, en la cuesta del río, una casa apartada, medio caída, poco compuesta y menos abastada»? (Act 1, p. 52). Just as in the cult of Dionysus, when the Greek women assembled yearly on distant Mt. Parnassus to enact their arcane rituals, it is the lack of knowledge on the part of the uninitiated that flames the imagination to fear the wildest possible excesses. When Sempronio and Pármeno arrive at the open door of Celestina's domicile in Act 9 to indulge in the banquet, Pármeno has some trepidations: «Llama antes que entres, que por ventura están revueltas y no querrán ser así vistas,» to which Sempronio responds: «Entra, no cures, que todos somos de casa» (Act 9, p. 224). They are all complicit in whatever goes on there. The *Diccionario de autoridades* provides as one meaning for *revolver*: «Vale también inquietar, enredar, mover sediciones, causar disturbios y dessazones. Lat. *Turbare. Perturbare.*» Celestina's house is a place of real or imagined subversion, a threat to the prevailing social order. The Romans, under Livy, banned the Bacchanalia, fearing the sexual excess of these secret rites, which included

8.— Phallus worship at the bacchanalia was not only for the sake of fertility: «The sexual symbols of the cult were certainly not, as among simple people, thought of merely as bringers of fertility: for the well-to-do townspeople they had piquant attraction, allowed by the rites, even if not so crude as the Carmina Priapea» (146). See: Martin P. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*, Lund, Svenska Centraltryckeriet, 1957.

9.— The sisterhoods of *Celestina* exist in four types of female micro-society in the work, according to Deyermond: «Celestina's house is not only a brothel and house of assignation, but a center of commerce and light industry (manufacture of cosmetics, recycling of virgins), and it therefore has a varied and fairly complex economic base» (6). See: Alan Deyermond, «Female Societies in *Celestina*», in *Fernando de Rojas and 'Celestina': Approaching the Fifth Centenary*, eds. Ivy A. Corfis and Joseph T. Snow, Madison, Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1993, pp. 1-31.

homosexuality, an act of sedition: «These orgies, Livy insists, were a danger to the state, a conspiracy (*coniuratio*, 39.8.1, 39.15.10), and the matter was deemed to be so important that the consuls themselves investigated it [...] The purpose of their meetings is the pursuit of sexual license, and that in itself the authorities construe as seditious [...] Religious observance meant the meticulous performance of ritual, and self-indulgence was as incompatible with piety as it was with duty to the state.»¹⁰

As a bawd, then, Celestina officiates by arranging and presiding over the sometimes Bacchanalian orgies of her clients. Let us return to the several meanings of *salve*. Celestina's facial scar brands her as a marked transgressor. It functions as her stigmata in the word's primary sense of a distinguishing mark, or a mark of disgrace or infamy (*OED*). However, in her role as mock-priestess, the scar, paradoxically a wound sewn back together, also acquires the Christian connotation of stigmata as the never-healing wounds of Christ's passion. It is in this sense that we must read Lucrecia's curious description of Celestina's scar as «su Dios os salve» (Act 4, p. 118). In religious discourse, as in the well-known *Salve Regina*, *salve* is an antiphon, a versicle or sentence sung by one choir in response to another. Antiphonic (sounding against, etymologically), is an apt metaphor for the use of language throughout *Celestina*: almost every utterance is a dissonance evoking its opposite, words voiced in constant opposition to unarticulated suppressions. In the Catholic tradition, certain *Salves* were included as part of the office for the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin (*Alma Redemptoris* and *Salve Regina*).¹¹

Now then, Celestina claims as one of her offices (*oficios*), a term repeated incessantly in the work,¹² that of pouring wine: «Después que me fui haciendo vieja, no sé mejor oficio a la mesa, que escanciar» (Auto IX, p. 226). The rich and intentional ambiguity of *Celestina* allows for a sacrilegious reading here, since *office* can be interpreted from the liturgical point of view as well, with Celestina as the priestess who presides over the mock-eucharistic sacrament.¹³ Indeed, although *escanciar* now

10.— See: Hanneke Wilson, *Wine and Words in Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, London, Duckworth, 2003, p. 57.

11.— See the entry for *antiphon* in the *Catholic Encyclopedia Online*: [<http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/>]. It is surely no accident that Pleberio's lament and the text of *Celestina* end with a verse from the *Salve Regina*: «in hac lachrymarum valle» (p. 402).

12.— A search of the Julio Cejador y Frauca online edition of *Celestina* (Madrid: Ediciones de la Lectura, 1913) available on the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes website [<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=90>], yields interesting results. *Oficio* (or the variant *oficio*) occurs 29 times from the beginning of the work through Act XII. After Celestina's death in this act, it occurs only four more times in the remainder of the text.

13.— Manual da Costa Fontes, in his chapter on «Christian Prayer and Dogma in *Celestina*,» concludes that: «there is no question that the Scriptures, Christian prayer, and the saints are systematically turned upside down, being used in sacrilegious and heretical ways.» *The Art of Subversion in Inquisitorial Spain, Rojas and Delicado*, West Lafayette, Purdue UP, 2005, p. 151.

means simply to pour, or to serve, for a contemporary audience, its connotations were more ritualistic, and therefore more appropriate to the liturgical parody. The *Diccionario de autoridades*, for example, tells us that *escanciador* is: «La persona que ministra la bebida, y con especialidad, el vino en las mesas, y le echa de un vaso en otro.» Celestina is, then, a(n) (ad)minister(er) of wine. Covarrubias Horozco, in the *Tesoro de la lengua*, in one of his always fascinating etymologies, offers: «A otros les parece haberse dicho de la isla Scancia, que está cerca del polo ártico, y los habitantes della, por mucho frío, se deben de aforrar los estómagos con buen vino y emborracharse, que no es esto por allá afrenta; y así el beber bien se dijo scanciar.»

If in her ministrations, then, the bearded old lady officiates as a mock priestess over the banquet of Act IX, her encomium of wine can be read initially as the saying of grace, a kind of prayer to bless the meal to be served to those who commune around Celestina's dinner table.¹⁴ However, to take the Eucharistic imagery a step further, the doctrine of transubstantiation contends that the communal wine is transformed literally into the blood of Christ. One wonders if this is Celestina's analogical allusion when she intimates to Calisto that: «La mayor gloria que al secreto oficio de la abeja se da, a la cual los discretos deben imitar, es que todas las cosas por ella tocadas convierte en mejor de lo que son» (Act VI, p. 154).¹⁵ It is her application of the word office (*oficio*) in its Christian context to the secret, veiled and perhaps miraculous transformation wrought by the bee in converting nectar into honey, that calls the reader's attention to the parallel with both Celestina and the mysteries of transubstantiation.¹⁶

The initial salvo in Celestina's oration, an invocation if you will, both in the sense of prayer and conjuration,¹⁷ sings the general praises of wine, somewhat outside of the medical context, and culminates in a phrase lat-

14.—Rafael Beltrán has studied the parodic use of the language of prayer in other passages of the *Celestina* in his comparison of it to *Tirant el Blanc*. See: Rafael Beltrán, «Entre la parodia de la oración y el equívoco religioso: nuevas intertextualidades de la *Celestina* con la novela catalana», in *El mundo social y cultural de 'La Celestina.'* *Actas del Congreso Internacional, Universidad de Navarra, junio, 2001*, eds. Ignacio Arellano and Jesús M. Usunáriz, Madrid and Frankfurt, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, 2003, pp. 27-44.

15.—George Shipley reads this passage as an example of hypocritical incongruity between Celestina's words and her true nature. See: George Shipley, «Bestiary Images in *La Celestina*», in *Homenaje a Stephen A. Gilman, Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, 9 (1982), pp. 211-18.

16.—Lida de Malkiel has pointed out the classical association of priestesses with bees: «De ahí que las sacerdotisas de Deméter y de Ártemis se llamen *abejas* exactamente como en la página más antigua de la Biblia [...] se llama *abeja*, es decir, Débora, la profetisa que cantó las justicias de Jehová en la tierra prometida de Canaán» (p. 76). She sees in this passage from *Celestina*, however, only the go-between's pride in having wrought a transformation in Melibea's heart (p. 78). See: María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, «La abeja: historia de un motivo poético», *Romance Philology*, 17 (1963-1964), pp. 74-86.

17.—Celestina's literal conjuration to induce *philocaptio* in Melibea has been studied by Ana Vian Herrero, «Transformaciones del pensamiento mágico: el conjuro amatorio en *La Celestina*

er echoed in the *Lazarillo* (1554) when the procuress summarizes her food intake as a *cortezón de pan ratonado* that lasts her for three days: clearly a parodic allusion to the communal host and wine. We should also note that both *pan* and *ratón* are registered as medieval Spanish euphemisms for the phallus.¹⁸ It is surely no accident that the first property enumerated by Celestina lauds it for warming up the bed at night, and wine functions metonymically therefore, as a provocative of lust:

Pues de noche en invierno no hay tal escalentador de cama. Que con dos jarrillos de éstos que beba, cuando me quiero acostar, no siento frío en toda la noche. De esto aforro todos mis vestidos, cuando viene la navidad; esto me calienta la sangre; esto me sostiene continuo en un ser; esto me hace andar siempre alegre; esto me para fresca; de esto vea yo sobrado en casa, que nunca temeré el mal año. Que un cortezón de pan ratonado me basta para tres días.

The meaning of «De esto aforro todos mis vestidos» in this passage is not totally clear. The *Diccionario de autoridades* cites this very same passage under the primary meaning for *aforrar*: «Doblar la vestidura, tela, u otro qualquier género de ropa, o cosa por dentro con otra tela para mayor abrigo, o para más duración, o para que haga, y tenga más cuerpo.» If we are to interpret Celestina's comment about lining all her clothes with wine as soaking them, or perfuming them, Pliny, in Book 23 of his *Natural History* tells us that wool soaked in wine and applied to the body has medicinal uses: «aplicado por de fuera, en lanas húmidas, mitiga los apostemas e hinchazones» [II. 462]. Perhaps Celestina dips her clothes in wine to temper the fires of her lust. Pliny says in Book 14 that «Tiene el vino tal naturaleza que, bevido, calienta por de dentro, y resfría aplicado por de fuera» [II. 201].

Celestina's *beatitudes* on the virtues of wine are highly selective.¹⁹ If we compare her brief catalogue to the number of cures enumerated by Pliny

y en su linaje literario», in *Cinco siglos de 'Celestina': Aportaciones interpretativas*, eds. R. Beltrán and J. L. Canet, Valencia, Universitat, 1997, pp. 209-238.

18.— See Vicente Reynal, *El lenguaje erótico medieval a través del Arcipreste de Hita*, Madrid: Plator, 1988, p. 132. Sexual punning is rampant in *Celestina*. Delaney has argued that wordplay of an erotic nature is «normative in medieval literature» (p. 10). See: Sheila Delaney, «Anatomy of the Resisting Reader: Some Implications of Resistance to Sexual Wordplay in Medieval Literature», *Exemplaria*, 4.1 (1992), pp. 7-34.

19.— The encomium to wine by Fernando de Rojas pertains to a long literary tradition that dates back to classical antiquity (Cato the Elder: *De agri cultura*; Columella: *De re rustica*; Pliny the Elder: *Naturalis historia*; Varro: *De re rustica*; Virgil: *Georgics*; Palladius: *Opus agriculturae*, etc.). In the Spanish tradition, it goes back at least as far as the early 13th century, with the «Razón de amor con los denuos del agua y del vino» by Lope de Moros. Also known as «Razón feita d'amor», among other names, wine itself declares some of its virtues: «yo fago

or other authorities who elaborated the medicinal uses of wine, we are surprised by the conciseness of her list:

Esto quita la tristeza del corazón, más que el oro ni el coral; ésto da esfuerzo al mozo y al viejo fuerza, pone color al descolorido, coraje al cobarde, al flojo diligencia, conforta los celebros, saca el frío del estómago, quita el hedor del anhelito, hace potentes los fríos, hace sufrir los afanes de las labranzas, a los cansados segadores hace sudar toda agua mala, sana el romadizo y las muelas, sostiene sin heder en la mar, lo cual no hace el agua [...] No tiene sino una tacha, que lo bueno vale caro y lo malo hace daño. (Auto IX, p. 22)

Upon closer examination, however, Celestina proves to be highly selective and purposeful in relating the medicinal wonders of wine, as she focuses primarily (though not exclusively) on those properties that would make the imbiber better prepared for the venereal act (happiness, strength and endurance, courage and daring, potency, sweetness of breath, etc.).

The bawdy oenophile makes the humorous claim that her *modest* consumption of wine allows her to indulge in the best that money can buy: «Pero todavía con mi fatiga busco lo mejor, para eso poco que bebo; una sola docena de veces a cada comida» (Auto IX, p. 226). The text's silences are deafening in this entire passage. Not only are many medicinal properties of wine conspicuous by their absence, but Celestina's self-delusional temperance evokes a vast, largely absent discourse from the medical tradition on the health risks of the immoderate use of wine.²⁰ As Paul Strohm demonstrates in his analysis of Guinevere's bloody bed, this too is «a case in which meaning is both ostentatiously exhibited and arrantly

al çiego veyer / y al coxo coRer / y al mudo faubla / y al enfermo organar; / asi co dize en el scripto, / de fazen el cuerpo de Iesu Cristo». I cite from the Wikisource Online Edition: [http://es.wikisource.org/wiki/Razón_feita_d%27amor].

20.— Advocacy for the immoderate use of wine may have come down to Rojas through Lorenzo Valla's influential treatise on pleasure: *De voluptate* (Piacenza, 1431); substantial additions and revisions with the new title *De vero falsoque bono* appeared in 1433 (Milan) and 1444-49 (Naples). Wine and speech are lauded as two of nature's greatest gifts, for they are endowed upon man alone. Panizza Lorch finds in Valla's rationale a superiority even of wine over words: «With wine we have therefore a stability and a permanence of enjoyment, and a possibility of further enjoyment with a further refinement, that neither *risus* nor even words can give us» (91). See: Maristella de Panizza Lorch, *A Defense of Life. Lorenzo Valla's Theory of Pleasure*, Munich, Wilhem Fink Verlag, 1985. Valla's list of the properties of wine is less medical than what we find in Pliny: «O wine, author of delight, master of joys, companion of happy times, solace in adversity! You are ever the chief of banquets, leader and guide of nuptials, arbiter of peace, concord, and friendship, father of sweetest sleep, restorer of strength in tired bodies [...], liberator from anxiety and cares. Finally, you change us from weaklings into strong men, from craven into brave ones, from tongue-tied mutes into orators» (107). See: Lorenzo Valla, *On Pleasure. De voluptate*, tr. A. Kent Hieatt and Maristella Lorch, New York, Abaris Books, 1977.

withheld, in which a debate about meaning is foregrounded and fully thematized in the text, even as all the most promising interpretative avenues are blocked, rerouted and systematically disavowed» (202).²¹ Pliny, in Book 14, is adamant on the dangers of the immoderate consumption of wine: «De manera que, con razón, se puede dezir del vino no haver cosa para las fuerzas del cuerpo más provechosa si se beve con templanza, o que más abra la puerta a los vicios si destempladamente y con desorden se usa de él» [II. 201]. *Celestina* is, of course, the poster-child for the latter.²² The particular wines to which *Celestina* is devoted, those patron saints that she worships, are adduced towards the end of *Auto IX*, as the old lady reminisces about the good old days when priests would send endless provisions to her house to accompany their debaucheries with those *devout* girls of *Celestina's* brothel (*aquellas sus devotas*): «¿Pues vino no me sobraba? De lo mejor que se bebía en la ciudad, venido de diversas partes, de Monviedro, de Luque, de Toro, de Madrigal, de San Martín, y de otros muchos lugares» (*Auto IX*, p. 242).²³

It is beyond the scope of this study to try to grasp the slippery eel of *the* precise source(s) utilized by Rojas for the salutary properties of wine in the hallelujah of the *puta vieja alcoholada* (*Auto I*, p. 50). Since most books of this period that included information availed themselves of the same classical sources, it really does not matter that much where Rojas obtained his knowledge of the medicinal properties of wine.²⁴ However, a brief overview of the topic might prove useful. The popularity of florilegia and miscellanies in the early modern period suggest that they might provide us with a road map of where to initiate an inquiry of this nature.

21.— See: Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text*, Minneapolis and London, U Minnesota P, 2000.

22.— *Celestina's* total abandonment to life's pleasures (and she is not alone in this philosophy of life) has been branded neopieurean by Ángel Alcalá: «El mensaje neopieúreo de Rojas quedaría cifrado en el mismo de Epicuro: 'En un mundo vacío de Dios, buscar por el único método de la limitación de los deseos el medio de vivir feliz'» (p. 242). See: Ángel Alcalá, «El neopieureísmo y la intención de *La Celestina*. Notas para una selección», *Romanische Forschungen*, 88.2-3 (1976), pp. 225-245.

23.— Kathleen Kish has an excellent article on the role of wine in *Celestina*. In particular, she analyzes how the list of the best wines changes from country to country in the different translations. See: Kathleen Kish, «The Wines of *Celestina* and the Omnibibulous H. Warner Allen», in '*Nunca fue pena mayor*.' *Estudios de Literatura Española en homenaje a Brian Dutton*, eds. A. Menéndez Coller and V. Roncero López, Cuenca, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1996, pp. 359-365.

24.— The anonymous scholiast of the sixteenth century *Celestina comentada* refers the reader to quite a few sources, but not Pliny. He makes special mention of the *De secretis secretorum* of Aristotle: «quenta bien largo los provechos que se siguen del buen vino y son quasi todos de ellos los que aquí nuestro author quiso contar» (326). It is noteworthy that the commentator dedicates much more space to the condemnation of the evils caused by wine than he devotes to its virtues. See *Celestina comentada*, eds. Louise Fothergill-Payne, Enrique Fernández Rivera and Peter Fothergill-Payne, Salamanca, Universidad, 2002, pp. 326-328.

Pedro Mexía's widely circulated *Silva de varia lección* (Sevilla, 1540) points us in the right direction. Mexía generally names his sources (presumably the same sources consulted by all men and women of learning of the time) and copies shamelessly and almost verbatim from them. The main source utilized by Mexía for his extensive anecdotes on the medicinal properties of wine is Pliny's *Natural History*, which we have already cited.²⁵

Pliny's observations on wine are found throughout his treatise, but are most abundant and condensed in books 14 and 23. I reproduce here only a few passages that correlate best with the properties elucidated by Celestina (emphasis added):

Restaura el vino las fuerzas, sangre y color de los hombres, y en éstos difiere la parte media y más templada del mundo de las que tiene a la redonda. Y quanto a aquéllos da de fuerza la fiereza, tanto da a nosotros este liquor. [...] Con el vino templado se ayudan y favorecen los nervios y con el destemplado se dañan, y ni más ni menos los ojos, recrease el estómago, despiértase el apetito, embótase el cuidado y tristeza, expélese la orina y frialdad, y provócase sueño. Fuera de esto, detiene el vómito, y aplicado por de fuera, en lanas húmidas, mitiga los apostemas e hinchazones. [II. 462]

25.— See: Pedro Mexía, *Silva de varia lección*, ed. Antonio Castro, Madrid, Cátedra, 1989, 2 vols. [Sevilla, 1540]. The passages of greatest interest follow:

Y assí, dize Platón (según refiere Macrobio, segundo libro) que el vino, templado y en poca cantidad, abiva y adelgaza el ingenio del hombre, aumenta la fuerza y esfuerça y alegra el corazón, quita la congoxa y cuydado. Plinio, en el libro veynte y tres, dize también que, con el vino templadamente usado, se multiplican las fuerzas y la sangre y la color del rostro, fortifícanse los nervios, ayuda a la vista de los ojos, esfuérçase el estómago, despierta el apetito, provoca la urina, atrae el sueño, quita el vómito, quita la tristeza y pone alegría en el corazón y haze otros muchos provechos. Asclipiades, médico, hizo también libro particular de las virtudes del vino [...] aconseja que, para esfuerçar el estómago, beva un poco de vino templado.

En muchas medicinas usan los médicos del vino, porque el vino templado todos los humores rectifica y repara, pone sangre al que le falta, alegra al melancólico y ayuda a gastar la melancolía, corta y destruye la flema, humedescer al colérico y ayuda a purgar la cólera. (Silva III.16). Vol. 2, pp. 103-04.

[...] y allende del apetito y gusto que da en infinitas cosas, para la salud humana y para curar algunas enfermedades, es de maravillosa fuerza: tiempla el calor en el cuerpo, quita el fastidio del estómago; y, beviendo un trago dél, quita el hypo y singulto y, con su olor, el estornudar demasiado. Al que rescibe baño, es muy provechoso tenerlo en la boca, para reprimir el excessivo calor. E, siendo muy aguado, deffiende del calor del Sol, y cura del ya rescebido. Y también es provechoso para los ojos y para la sarna y toda manera de lepra. Es remedio para las mordeduras de los perros y de los alacranes y para la de qualquier savandija o abispa o otra cosa que pica con aguijón [...] Estanca la sangre, estriñe el muy suelto de estómago; e, assí, tiene otras virtudes muchas que, por no hazer recepta, dexo de contar. (Silva III.16). Vol. 2, pp. 109-110.

...a los enfermos del corazón por comunicación del estómago es cosa muy excelente ponerlo sobre la teta izquierda en una spongia, y para todo, principalmente, lo blanco que se vaya añejo. Foméntaseles los miembros viriles a las bestias provechosamente con vino cálido, por el cual, echado por un cuerno en melecina, se les quita el cansancio. [II. 463]

Este género de vino caliente cuece, purga, y es al pecho y vientre provechoso. También al dolor de la madre si viniere sin calentura [...] flaqueza de nervios, hinchazones, tose, dificultad de aliento, y a los huesos desconcertados puesto en lana sucia. [II. 463]

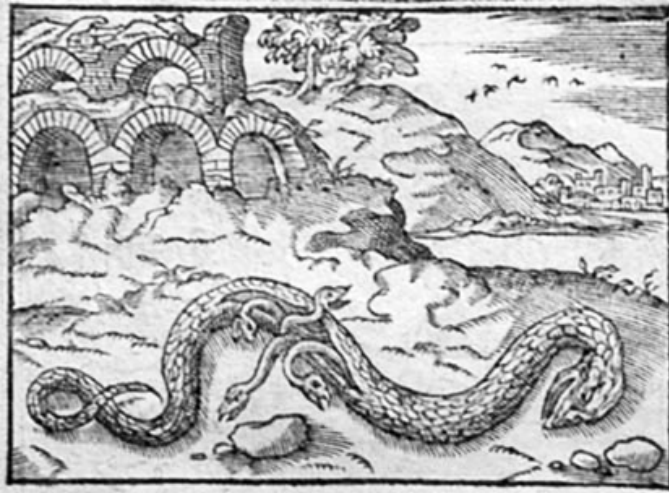
Y es cosa cierta estar puesta la última esperanza de los que padecen mal de corazón por compasión del estómago en el vino. [II. 463]

[El vino bieo] Aprovecha al estómago relajado o que no puede digerir, a las preñadas y hombres flacos, paralíticos, trémulos, vaguidos, dolores de vientre y sciática. [II. 464]

More to our purpose, it is in Book 14 that Pliny further explains the relationship between the immoderate consumption of wine and venery: «De esta destemplanza viene [...] sueños desatinados, noches desasosegadas, y lo que se tiene por mayor premio de la embriaguez, luxurias contra natura y monstruosas y una deleitosa maldad» [II, chap. 22, p. 212]. Celestina's censorship of the deleterious consequences of excessive imbibing is an intentional strategy. In her old age, voyeurism and bibulosity have become the displacements for her halcyon days of sexual indulgence, days she recollects with nostalgic pride: «Camino es, hijo, que nunca me harté de andar; nunca me vi cansada; y aún así, vieja como soy, sabe Dios mi buen deseo» (Act 3, p. 100).

At this juncture I would like to interrogate another of Celestina's many strategical silences. In chapter 1 of book 23 of the *Natural History*, Pliny observes that pure wine is effective against the bite of serpents [«Es el vino puro remedio contra (...) picaduras de serpientes y escorpiones» (II, 463)]. Why would Celestina decline to include this remedy in her catalogue? If the Dionysian pseudo-priestess self-identifies with the serpent on some level, she would not want the cure to her bite to be widely known. In Act V, once Sempronio comes to the realization that Celestina has reneged on her promise to share the spoils of their machinations, he lets loose with a series of invectives and vituperations. One of his imprecations reads: «Más seguro me fuera huir de esta venenosa víbora, que tomalla. Mía fue la culpa» (Act V, p. 144). In his prologue, Fernando de Rojas cleverly interweaves his seemingly innocuous anecdotes with

key threads which, when tugged upon, unravel coded meanings. Among these is an observation drawn from natural history: «La víbora, reptilia o serpiente enconada, al tiempo del concebir, por la boca de la hembra metida la cabeza del macho y ella con el gran dulzor apriétale tanto que le mata [...]... y, quedando preñada, el primer hijo rompe los ijares de la madre, por do todos salen y ella muerta queda y él casi como vengador de la paterna muerte» (Prologue, p. 17). Fernando de Rojas could have been acquainted with these beliefs from any number of sources. Mention is found in Pliny's *Natural History* (Book 10, 82), the *Physiologus*, Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* (Book 12, 4: 10-11), etc. It was also widely illustrated in medieval bestiaries.²⁶ Both of these bits of lore became commonplaces in the emblem tradition and in Spanish Golden Age literature.²⁷ In the first instance, Théodore de Bèze's *Icones, id est verae imagines virorum doctrina simul et pietate illustrium* (Geneva: Jean de Laon, 1580), provides a wonderful example of the matricidal viperlings avenging the death of their father by shredding their mother's side during childbirth.²⁸



26.– For examples, see the website: *The Medieval Bestiary: Animals in the Middle Ages* [<http://bestiary.ca/index.html>]. Vicenta Blay Manzanera studies much of the same serpentine imagery in *Celestina* from a very different perspective. She identifies the concrete source here as Petrarca's preface to book II of *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (134). See: Vicenta Blay Manzanera, «Más datos sobre la metáfora de la serpiente-cupiditas en *Celestina*», *Celestinesca* 20.1-2 (1996), pp. 129-154.

27.– See, for example, Alan Deyermond, «Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*: A Postscript», *Celestinesca* 2.1 (1978), pp. 25-30 and John T. Cull, «Calderón's Snakes: Emblems, Lore and Imagery», *MIFLC Review*, 3 (1993), pp. 97-110.

28.– This and the following emblem have been taken from the excellent website on *French Emblems at Glasgow* [<http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/index.php>].

In his 1565 emblem book *Emblemata*, Junius Hadrianus portrays the reason for the revenge of the viperlings, as the sharp-fanged²⁹ female viper bites the head off of her lover during intercourse. The emblem's motto, *Femina improba*, means «the monstrous female»:



Celestina is (or perhaps *used to be*) the female viper that is so lascivious and wanton that, in seeking her own pleasure in the procreative act, kills her male lovers with her bite.³⁰ If Claudina had an identified male partner who helped raise Pármeno (pp. 66-68), there are few textual mentions

29.– The sexual connotations of teeth in *Celestina* have been amply studied. See, for example, Geoffrey West, «The Unseemliness of Calisto's Toothache», *Celestinesca* 3.1 (1979), pp. 3-10 and Javier Herrero, «The Stubborn Text: Calisto's Toothache and Melibea's Girdle» in *Literature among Discourses: The Spanish Golden Age*, eds. Wlad Godzich and Nicholas Spadacini, Minneapolis, U of Minnesota P, 1986, pp. 132-147.

30.– When Melibea confesses her malady to *Celestina* in Act x, she does so with curious serpentine imagery: «Madre mía, que comen este corazón serpientes dentro de mi cuerpo» (p. 248). This is not a symptom from the medical discourse of *amor hereos*. If *Celestina* does indeed constitute a pseudo-Mother for Melibea, these serpents devouring her heart are the viperlings of desire that will gnaw through her own side and result not only in her death, but in that of *Celestina* in revenge. For *Celestina* has figuratively copulated with Melibea, implanting in her those seeds of desire that lead to the destruction of both. When Melibea further clarifies that her «mal es de corazón, la izquierda teta es su aposentamiento» (250), one wonders if Rojas was recalling Pliny's cure for the *enfermos del corazón* cited above: of applying wine «sobre la teta izquierda en una spongia» (II, 463). Indeed, serpentine imagery is pervasive in *Celestina*, from the mentions in the prologue to the oil made from viper poison

of Celestina's past partners. She drains the vital fluids of her mate and moves on to the next one. This is perhaps why her husband is remembered by Pármeno in Act 1 as such a great «comedor de huevos asados» (p. 52).³¹ Celestina does, however, have a figurative son who wreaks revenge for her sexual slayings: Pármeno. Celestina refers to him countless times as her *hijo*, or son, just as he and other characters in the work usually call her *madre*. And the very first time that they meet up again, years after his lurid childhood experience sleeping at the foot of her bed, she ridicules him with a series of diminutives that include a none too veiled allusion to his sexual organ, which by association with the diminutives, is *belittled*: «¡Neciuelo, loquito, angelico, perlica, simplecico! ¿Lobito en tal gesticó? Llégate acá, putico, que no sabes nada del mundo ni de sus deleites. [...] Mal sosegadilla debes tener la punta de la barriga» (Act I, p. 64). But if Celestina is no longer what she used to be, and must resort to wine as a substitute for sex, it is because age has made her toothless. As she herself observes, however, if she can no longer chew on a phallically charged *barbiponiente* (200) as she did in the good old days, she can at least savor the taste nostalgically with her gums: «Que aun el sabor en las encías me quedó; no le perdí con las muelas» (Act VII, p. 302).

There is perhaps something else at play here. In mythology, Tiresias stepped on a pair of copulating snakes, and as punishment, was made to inhabit a woman's body for a period of time. As a consequence, he/she was able to arbitrate in the dispute between Zeus and Hera as to which gender derived more pleasure from the sexual act. The response of Tiresias was that women derived 90% of sexual pleasure, and men only 10%. Out of anger, Hera blinded Tiresias, but Zeus made him a seer. The parallels with Celestina are striking: the androgyny; the poor vision; the clear carnal delight in both sexes, and the role as mediator between the two sexes.³² In a different version of the myth, related by Callimachus, Tiresias is blinded for seeing Athena naked. And it is here that Celestina as Dionysus and Celestina as Tiresias start to overlap. Nicole Loraux says: «Here we are, as close as we can be, to the 'terrifying childhood anxiety' about losing one's sight that Freud detected in *The Sand Man* [...] In this way we may question the secret law by which seeing Athena's body means losing one's sight but also, perhaps, acquiring the gift of divination» (pp. 211-212). The loss of concupiscence in the physical

used to anoint the *hilado* (Act 3, p. 104) to the serpents in the meadow that populate Pleberio's final lament (Act 21, p. 396).

31.— Miguel Garci-Gómez reviews prior criticism to date on this passage and analyzes the aphrodisiacal properties of *huevos asados* in his study: «*Huevos asados*: Afrodisiaco para el marido de Celestina», *Celestinesca* 5.1 (1981), pp. 23-34.

32.— See: Nicole Loraux, *The Experiences of Tiresias. The Feminine and the Greek Man*, tr. Paula Wissing, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1995, pp. 10-12.

arena has been transmuted into a new kind of potency for Celestina: her visionary understanding of the dynamics of human desire.

In a world practically devoid of Christian consolation, a world not fashioned by a merciful God, but rather by the characters themselves,³³ it is somewhat perplexing that Pleberio would invoke the *Salve Regina* as the conclusion of his memorable lament in Act 21 («¿Por qué me dejaste triste y solo in hac lachrymarum valle?» [402]). But we must interpret it as the final ritual in a mock liturgy that is parodied throughout the work. His cries and weeping are not heard. There is no mercy to be found, and no *Assumption* of Melibea's soul to heaven.

Part of *Celestina's* modernity is that it is a work fraught with anxieties. And to the extent that these anxieties are displaced onto inappropriate objects, they become fetishes in the Freudian sense. Henry Krips argues that: «fetishism plays a subversive role in reversing the tendency to 'abstraction' (in the sense of the erasure of difference), which is so characteristic of modernization.»³⁴ Several aspects of fetishism in *Celestina* have received critical attention, such as the voyeuristic gaze³⁵ and Melibea's *cordón*.³⁶ I believe that wine for Celestina constitute's another of the text's fetishistic anxieties. Impervious to any possibility of spiritual consolation, and with her carnal appetites only partially satisfied through voyeuristic indulgence, Celestina's desires are displaced to the only substitute that can provide her with both a spiritual and corporal sublimation: wine. Freud's early theory of anxiety sheds great light on what exactly troubles Celestina:

Freud identified anxiety with the energy of repressed libido. In this view, anxiety was taken to be an alternative mode of release for instinctual energies denied expression by the secondary agencies of the psychic apparatus. Refused discharge along preferred pathways, energies

33.— The bibliography on Pleberio's lament and whether or not the world view of Rojas can be extrapolated from it has grown to be substantial. Some fundamental studies include Peter N. Dunn, «Pleberio's World», *PMLA* 91.3 (1976), pp. 406-19; Alan Deyermond, «Pleberio's Lost Investment: The Worldly Perspective of *Celestina*, Act 21», *MLN* 105.2 (1990), pp. 168-79 and Joseph T. Snow, «Celestina and Pleberio: When Value Systems Collide», *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 17 (1990), pp. 381-93.

34.— Henry Krips, *Fetish. An Erotics of Culture*, Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1999, p. 4.

35.— See James F. Burke's Lacanian reading of this theme in *Vision, the Gaze and the Function of the Senses in 'Celestina'*, University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State UP, 2000 and E. Michael Gerli, «El placer de la mirada: voyeurismo, fetichismo y la movilización del deseo en *Celestina*», in *El mundo social y cultural de 'La Celestina'*, eds. A. Arellano and J. M. Unsuñáiz, Madrid/Frankfurt, Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2003, pp. 191-210.

36.— See: Alan D. Deyermond, «Hilado-cordón-Cadena: Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*», *Celestinesca* 1.1 (1977), pp. 6-12; Ángel Gómez Moreno and Teresa Jiménez Calvente, «A vueltas con Celestina-Bruja y el cordón de Melibea», *Revista de Filología Española*, 75 (1995), pp. 85-104, and Herrero's article «The Stubborn Text...» cited above.

subject to repression undergo a transformation and are experienced in characteristic somatic reactions [...] Freud associated the genesis of anxiety with sexual abstinence or *coitus interruptus* and asserted that «anxiety has arisen by *transformation* out of the accumulated sexual tension.»

But who needs Freud? Medieval medicine intuited very well this theory of the cause of anxiety and prescribed a very apt remedy. The last cure offered by Francisco López de Villalobos for unrequited lust in his chapter «Del mal de amores que Avicena llamó flisei y los griegos le llaman hereos» is: «y tinto con blanco le deuen aguar / que siempre emos visto del enborrachar / caer los amantes y amores en tierra.» Celestina's response to the anxieties produced by a world without order or transcendence, by a world that no longer offers her the consolation of the flesh and cannot deliver the salvation of the soul, is to indulge in the spiritual and corporal salve of wine.

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RESUMEN

Este artículo estudia el encomio que hace Celestina al vino en el Auto 9 como una manifestación más de su papel a lo largo de la obra de pseudo-sacerdotisa, ya en su vertiente cristiana, donde preside la celebración de la «eucaristía» durante la escena del banquete, ya en su dimensión dionisiaca, en la que, como parte fundamental del culto a este dios pagano, el vino desempeña un papel clave. Se analiza además el papel de las imágenes serpentina en la obra, sobre todo en relación con el mito de Tiresias.

PALABRAS CLAVE: vino, mito de Dionisio, mito de Tiresias, eucaristía, serpientes

ABSTRACT

This article studies Celestina's encomium of wine in Act 9 as a manifestation of the role she plays throughout the work as a pseudo-priestess, whether in its Christian aspect, when she presides over the «Eucharist» during the banquet scene, or in its Dionysian aspect, in which as a fundamental part of the cult of this pagan deity, wine played a key role. The article also analyzes the importance of serpent imagery in the work, especially with respect to the myth of Tiresias.

KEY WORDS: wine, myth of Dionysus, myth of Tiresias, Eucharist, serpents.

