

## PICASSO'S VISION OF 'CELESTINA' AND RELATED ISSUES

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It is an art-historical commonplace that Fernando de Rojas's *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (=TCM) inspired Picasso's "La Celestina" (1904) (fig. 1). The figure of the famed procuress fascinated the artist long before this Blue Period (late 1901-early 1904) masterpiece and still held his attention in his final years.<sup>1</sup> Pierre Daix, the French art historian and critic, in his excellent study of Picasso's *La Celestina* has discussed the appearance, dress and identity of the artist's Celestina model as well as the revival of Celestina iconography in his late oeuvre.<sup>2</sup> I intend to provide a comparative analysis of Picasso's characterization with that of the TCM. Moreover, the reasons for his highly individualized portrayal merit further exploration.

First, a brief look at the unique position of *Celestina* within the Blue Period is needed. During these four years Picasso's images are marked by a pervasive monochromatic blue palette that primarily emphasizes, through the use of intense saturation of color, indeed, in some of these paintings it is the only color, the tragic condition of impoverished men and women. Set against indeterminate zones of blue, these figures are typically nameless and resigned outcasts who are lost in private sorrow. With their frequently drooping heads and their isolated positions, whether standing or seated on the ground, they are by virtue of their withdrawal and the

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<sup>1</sup> For Picasso's earliest *Celestina*, a copy after Goya's *Capricho*, "Ruega por ella," see Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *Picasso: Birth of a Genius* (New York: Praeger, 1972), fig. 110. Examples of Picasso's late *Celestina* imagery, part of a series of 347 etchings executed by the artist in Mougins, March 16 to October 5, 1968, are fully reproduced in the following publications: *Picasso 347 Gravures 13/3/68-5/10/68* (catalogue 23, Serie A), Galerie Louis Leiris, Paris, December 1968; *Picasso 347* (2 vols), Random House/Maecenas Press, New York, 1970; Georges Bloch, *Pablo Picasso, Catalogue of the Printed Graphic Work, II, 1966/1969*, Berne, 1971. See also the 66 examples included in the recent German translation of *Celestina* by Fritz Vogelsang: *La Celestina oder Tragikomödie von Calisto und Melibea*, Frankfurt a/Main: Ed. Insel, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Daix, *La Célestine*, Didier Imbert Fine Art, Paris (20 May-13 July 1988): 5-27.

otherworldly blue color, removed from human contact. *La Celestina* stands out from this gallery of low-life street people—beggars, prostitutes and vendors—many of whom are emaciated and totally blind.<sup>3</sup> Surrounded by the same cold and pallid blue, Celestina is partially blind and does not appear emaciated; in fact, the procuress has rounded cheeks and a forceful, assertive presence. In regard to the total Blue Period works, including even the portraits of the artist's friends, similarly treated in all blue, *La Celestina* is by far the most picturesque character. Furthermore, she is the only figure during this period who is inspired by a literary work.

Typical of his Blue Period portraits of late 1903 to early 1904, Celestina appears in isolation and is placed centrally on the canvas. Her visage, painted in light colors—whites, pinks and greys—sharply contrasts with the dark blues and provides an odd sensation of a person suddenly appearing from an indistinguishable background. The use of monochromatic blue—blue attire set against a blue background—a disregard of local color, is but one of many affirmations of Picasso's own subjectivity in this portrait.

Several Picasso biographers reiterate the painter's interest in Rojas's text. Daix told that "Picasso was extremely fond of the picaresque style of Spanish literature and especially of the *Tragicomedia de Calixto y Melibea*."<sup>4</sup> His most recent and highly acclaimed biographer, John Richardson, noted that "Picasso knew Rojas's book from adolescence, if not before. In later life he collected various editions; the earliest dating from 1601."<sup>5</sup> Yet his vision of this demi-monde figure was formulated by numerous factors.

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<sup>3</sup> For the most complete catalogue raisonné of the Blue Period, see Pierre Daix and Georges Boudaille, *Picasso: The Blue and Rose Periods, The Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, 1900-1906*, trans. Phoebe Pool (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1967): 51-65, 196-249.

<sup>4</sup> Daix, *La Celestine*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso, 1881-1906, I* (New York: Random House, 1991): 288. For other references to his collection of various editions of *Celestina*, see Louis Aragon, "The Verve of Picasso," translated A. D. Simons, in *Picasso in Perspective*, ed. Gert Schiff, The Artists in Perspective Series, gen. ed. H. W. Janson (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976): 152.

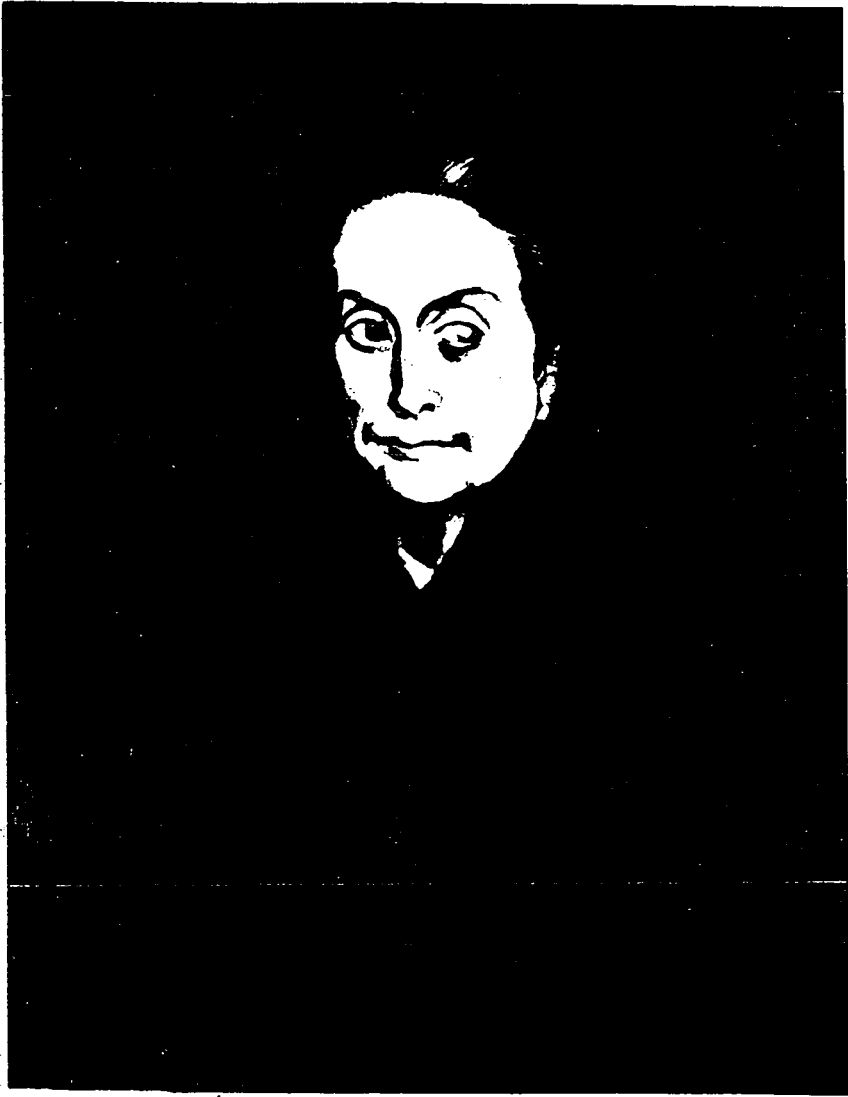


Fig. # 1 "La Celestina" de Pablo Picasso (1904).

The images of Celestina portrayed by Rojas and Picasso reveal stark contrasts. Physically, Rojas's Celestina is described repeatedly as an old grey-haired woman, who is between sixty and seventy-two years old.<sup>6</sup> Her face is distinguished by wrinkles, a scar and whiskers. She wears long tattered skirts, a frayed old cloak and she has a shawl. Perhaps the most critical objects associated with the bawd are her rosary beads and her skein of yarn. Psychologically, Celestina's character is complex: she is both crafty and greedy, yet because of her vast experience, she is also, as Melibea states, "an astute and sage old woman" (230).

Picasso's Celestina differs markedly from the literary figure. She is depicted alone so that the full strength of her character is now the focus, not one of her supporting cast of figures appears. In Picasso's painting she is an old woman whose appearance is overshadowed by the opaqueness which veils her left eye. Celestina stares directly at the viewer with a penetrating look of her single good eye, while her blind eye gives the strong impression of what we now consider to be its glaucomatous condition.<sup>7</sup> Devoid of her shabby attire in this bust-length portrait, Celestina wears a tailored dark cowl, a shapeless long cape hugs her body and makes her face, treated with painstaking realism, stand out in contrast. Lace in her cowl, which a recent cleaning has allowed to come out more clearly, is a delicate touch also not found in the textual description of her garments. Furthermore, the pale rose coloring of her cheeks and the pearly radiance of an earring which adorns her one exposed ear are among Picasso's additions to Rojas's procuress. In comparison to the other Blue Period figures, Picasso seems to indicate by such finery as Celestina's pearl earring and lace, her elevated stature among the urban poor.

Like the literary Celestina, Picasso portrays the 'puta vieja' by the inclusion of the following features: lightly greying hair partially exposed under the cowl, thin hairs on the corners of her lips, whiskers on her chin and traces of wrinkles around her mouth. Her face, with its smooth, almost lineless complexion, indicates she is not as old as described in the text. The knife scar, a feature so intimately connected to her crude image and notorious reputation, is missing in Picasso's interpretation. Telling props are also deleted: Her rosary beads, first and foremost, emblems of her

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<sup>6</sup> Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina*, ed. D. S. Severin (Madrid: Alianza Ed., 1976). All references are from this edition. Celestina refers to herself as 60 (p. 183); Parmeno refers to her as 72 (p. 78).

<sup>7</sup> Her blindness is identified by Daix (39-40) as a leucoma. Obviously, her condition is impossible to diagnose without a biopsy; however, it may be caused by an inflammatory lesion from a previous infection or by pterygium. [Interview with Dr. Robert Spurney, ophthalmologist, University Hospital, Cleveland, Ohio, 16 June 1990.

religious hypocrisy, with which she calculated the number of maidenheads needing repair and used also for other purposes, are not represented. Celestina's skein of yarn, or thread, together with her accompanying needles and pins, all of which have important narrative functions and strong sexual connotations, are absent.<sup>8</sup>

The evolution of Picasso's *La Celestina* is complex. Three preparatory drawings, colored in monochromatic blue, exist for "La Celestina": *Sketch for 'La Celestina'* (fig. 2), *Picasso with Sebastià Junyer-Vidal and 'Celestina' in a Tavern* (fig. 3) and *Self-Portrait Painting 'La Celestina'* (fig. 4). In all three sketches the same model posed for the figure of Celestina wearing her hooded cloak. While it is difficult to determine precisely in which order Picasso drew these sketches in 1904, his continuing thought process regarding the image of Celestina becomes evident.

In *Sketch for 'La Celestina'* a caricature-like one-eyed Celestina, rendered in three-quarter length view, is cast face-on in her role of matchmaker, one of her six *oficios*, between a young coquettish made-up woman and Sebastià Junyer-Vidal, Picasso's painter friend, who is portrayed as one of her clients. Here she appears far less grave than in the final portrait. In *Picasso and Sebastià Junyer-Vidal with 'Celestina' in a Tavern*, the two artists are seated at a table in the bistro, while Celestina is shown in profile at the next table.

In *Self-Portrait Painting 'La Celestina'* the artist sketched himself in the process of working on the final painting with his model seated opposite him. This drawing provides important visual information. Here the model is shown in profile and full-length with her long skirts. However, in the final canvas, Picasso intensified his expression by presentation, again, of a full view of her face and by elimination of her long garments. Clearly discontent with the anecdotal nature of the earlier two sketches, Picasso found in the frontal bust-length portrait a solution.

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<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of Celestina's skein and its crucial symbolic role in a series of exchanges central to the narrative, see Alan Deyermond, "Hilado-Cordon-Cadena: Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*," *Celestinesca* 1:i (mayo 1977): 6-12; id., "Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*: A Postscript," *Celestinesca* 2:i (mayo 1978): 25-30. For in-depth analysis of her thread, needles and pins as a metaphor of the sex act and its implications in the narrative, see Manuel da Costa Fontes, "Celestina's *Hilado* and Related Symbols," *Celestinesca* 8:i (mayo 1984): 3-13; id., "Celestina's *Hilado* and Related Symbols: A Supplement," *Celestinesca* 9:i (mayo 1985): 33-38. I wish to thank Manuel da Costa Fontes for his time and care in helping me with this project.



Fig. # 2 Sketch for 'La Celestina.'

One of the main questions to clarify is the profession of Picasso's model. The painter's inscription that could be read on the back of the canvas before it was remounted raises this issue and others. Picasso identifies his sitter, her location and the date of the painting: "Carlota Valdivia, calle Conde Asalto, 12-4, la Escalera interior—Marzo 1904." Here she must have had her own home or her meeting place for clients. Carlota's address is that of the renowned Eden Concert, a cabaret in Barcelona's *barrio chino*. Significantly Picasso frequented this nightspot that was very near his studio, which was located at number 10, calle Conde del Asalto.<sup>9</sup>

Carlota's occupation and startling appearance add to the content of *La Celestina* and have understandably attracted the attention of critics. Pierre Daix writes, "The concrete appearance of the one-eyed Carlota inspired Picasso's pictorial imagination and he transformed her into la Celestina."<sup>10</sup> Picasso carefully noted this transformation by his precise titles for the painting and the three preliminary studies.

Opinions vary regarding Carlota's activities; letters to the author indicate three discrepancies as follows: Daix reported,

Carlota was not a procuress and it was because of this peculiarity [her blind eye] that Picasso thought of painting the famous *alcahueta*.<sup>11</sup>

Joseph Palau i Fabre, the Catalan poet and historian of Picasso's earlier works, stated,

Carlota directed, or was involved with a center for amorous rendezvous, as it seems evident from her address, 12 Conde de Asalto, which is the same as the Eden Concert, a Barcelona night club which was famous for more than a century; [this] is, I think, more than a sufficient reason for Picasso to convert her into a Celestina.<sup>12</sup>

John Richardson in his study (290) related how Picasso remembered Carlota:

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<sup>9</sup> See Richardson (n. 5), page 67, for a photograph of this cabaret. My thanks to Harvey Sharrer for his guidebook: Jose Maria Carandell, *Nueva Guía Secreta de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Martinez Roca, 1982): 186.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Daix, letter to the author, 19 March 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Daix, letter. See also Daix, *La Celestine*, 30, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Josep Palau i Fabre, letter to the author, 24 February 1991.

When in 1959 I told him I was going to Barcelona to do some research on his early portraits, he insisted on writing down the name and address of this long-dead procuress in my diary: "she could always fix you up," he said, as if she were still in business.

Apparently both the bad reputation of the locale and Carlota's blindness seem to have turned the painter's attention and thoughts to the literary *Celestina*.

A second critical issue to be discussed is the date of *La Celestina*. Picasso's inscription on the back of the canvas has led to much debate. The painting had been assigned to 1903, an opinion still held in 1980.<sup>13</sup> This judgment was based on a lack of careful scrutiny of details with other works of that year. The 1904 date, now accepted by the Musée du Louvre and Musée Picasso, Paris, is founded on two premises: previously overlooked but undeniable stylistic similarities to other firmly dated portraits painted in the early months of this year and the discovery in the preliminary drawings for *La Celestina* of various telling details, such as Picasso's moustache, features, cap and the use of distinguishable techniques in the rendition of Sebastia that match those known in other dated sketches.<sup>14</sup>

Picasso's heroine of the fifteenth-century *TCM* has been described as "true to the letter of the play, as a greedy, malicious witch."<sup>15</sup> This sinister quality of Picasso's *La Celestina* is particularly conveyed by her haunting blinded eye. Her blindness has several levels of meaning; it functions both as metaphor and as physical condition. Picasso's portrayal of Celestina is more than a sensory response to Carlota's presence. His choice of blindness is intellectual in conception. Since Celestina's blindness is not a part of the fifteenth-century text, it is important to determine Picasso's reasons for this altered image of Celestina.

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<sup>13</sup> William Rubin, ed., *Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1980): 47.

<sup>14</sup> Josep Palau i Fabre, *Picasso: Life and Work of the Early Years 1881-1907*, transl. Kenneth Lyons (Oxford: Phaidon, 1981): 366-367. The argument against the 1903 traditional dating is fully documented here.

<sup>15</sup> Gert Schiff, "Picasso's Suite 347 or Painting as an Act of Love," in *Woman as Sex Object*, *Art News Annual* 38 (1972), eds. Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin, at page 239.





Fig. # 3 Picasso with Sebastià Junyer-Vidal and 'Celestina in a Tavern.

Picasso may have been influenced by a variety of sources in his decision to portray Celestina as blind. First, her blindness can be linked to the notion of the "evil eye." This form of imagery is appropriate for the characterization of Celestina—sorceress and procuress, who casts magical spells and mixes potions. According to Stith Thompson D2071, the *mal de ojo* indicates "bewitching by means of a glance," a perfect description of *La Celestina's* fixed gaze.<sup>16</sup> Her blind eye embodies the powers of this witch whose supernatural contacts bring the Devil into the action. As Deyermond demonstrated, it is Celestina who places Melibea and others, including herself, under diabolic possession.<sup>17</sup> Her frightening maleficent eye, a sign of witchcraft, a superstition rich in folkloric and mythic traditions, can appropriately be linked to one whose machinations are marked by the demonic. Celestina's evil nature is further epitomized in her ultimate avarice which leads to her own murder. Picasso penetrates to Celestina's essence and shows her as a figure of diabolical forces.

Furthermore, among the sources for Picasso's *La Celestina*, the theme of blindness—well-known to hispanists—can be associated with its treatment in several Spanish picaresque novels. Blind characters appear in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and in such works of the Generation of '98 as Benito Pérez Galdos's *Marianela* (1878) and Pío Baroja's *El Mayorazgo de Labraz* (1903).<sup>18</sup> Picasso and Baroja were colleagues; a number of Picasso's subjects in his early works coincide with those of Baroja, and among them is the appearance of a partially blind female beggar in *Aurora roja*.<sup>19</sup> The blindness of Picasso's *La Celestina* can be connected to these literary precedents and needs to be recognized for its place within this genre.

Blindness also had a personal meaning for Picasso, who lived so predominantly by his eyes. In the late Blue Period, from 1903 and continuing into 1904, blindness received intense consideration in his work. He equated this affliction

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<sup>16</sup> Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1955-1958).

<sup>17</sup> Deyermond, "Hilado-Cordón-Cadena," 9-10 (see note 8).

<sup>18</sup> Gail Scott, "Pablo Picasso: The Theme of Blindness and the New Perception" (M. A. thesis, University of California-Berkeley, 1967), pp. 11-13.

<sup>19</sup> On the similarities in the works of Picasso and Baroja, see Patricia Leighton, *Re-Ordering the Universe: Picasso and Anarchism, 1897-1914* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989): 26-27, 35-36. This text is a superb study of the relationship of Picasso's early art to his political ambience. For a drawing of Baroja by Picasso, see Richardson, 188.

with a sharpening of the senses, as he expressed, "And they should put out the eyes of artists as they do to goldfinches to make them sing better."<sup>20</sup> The comment, a metaphor of artistic vision, indicates blindness for him signifies a deeper vision, a truer glimpse of reality, without the restrictions of physical sight.

Also blindness was a favorite Symbolist theme. Picasso, whose immersion in the Symbolist movement is well documented, found in the blindness of *La Celestina* a means to indicate her astute character.<sup>21</sup> Symbolism, a late nineteenth and early twentieth century movement (ca 1885-1905) in art and literature was not a conventional art movement, school of artists or writers, or style, but more an intellectual tendency of an idealistic nature. Opposing the ideas of Naturalism, which had as its purpose the scientific documentation of life and a strong sense of realism, Symbolism sought the elusive, the evocative and the mysterious.<sup>22</sup> In Symbolist thought, blindness, because of the lack of visual experience of the world, suggested the development of a more profound grasp on the true nature of things.

The sources of the blindness of Picasso's *La Celestina* can be further traced to Symbolist influences in Barcelona. Living in Barcelona from 1895 to 1904, from age fourteen to age twenty-two, Picasso entered the art scene of the Catalan capital in the midst of its cultural resuscitation, a period between 1890 and 1910 in Catalonia that was characterized by a spirit of cultural and political optimism. A preoccupation with the countries of northern Europe was an aspect of this cultural *renaixensa* for Catalan Modernistas.<sup>23</sup> Symbolism was one of the movements to which Catalan intellectuals turned as they looked for inspiration toward the achievements of artists, playwrights and poets in France, England, Scandinavia and

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<sup>20</sup> Roland Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981): 92.

<sup>21</sup> Ronald Johnson, *The Early Sculpture of Picasso, 1901-1914* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976): 27-29. For a view of Symbolist art currents in different European countries, see Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (New York: Praeger, 1972), esp. chapter on Picasso, 201-208.

<sup>22</sup> Eunice Lipton, *Picasso Criticism, 1901-1939, The Making of an Artist-Hero* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976): 16.

<sup>23</sup> Marilyn McCully, *Els Quatre Gats: Art in Barcelona around 1900* (Princeton: The Art Gallery, 1978): 13. This cultural renaissance, McCully's term for Modernismo, is discussed in the following: McCully, 13-15; Richardson, 110-115; the best study on Modernismo, in which Symbolism is analyzed among other movements important to Spanish painters, is Joseph Phillip Cervera, *Modernismo: The Catalan Renaissance of the Arts* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976), esp. chapter on Picasso, 219-231.

Germany.

The Modernistas, the avant-garde of Barcelona, of which Picasso was considered to be second-generation, referred to *The Intruder*, a play by the Belgian Symbolist, Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), as "a symbolic call-to-arms for Modernisme."<sup>24</sup> In the play the greater perceptive powers of the blind are central to its theme with its octogenarian protagonist. Performed at the second Fiesta Modernista in the nearby seaside village of Sitges in 1893, only two years after its debut in Paris, it is not known whether Picasso saw the play. However, it is entirely possible that he might have heard or read the play which was translated into Catalan (as *L'intrusa*) in the 1890s.<sup>25</sup> Significantly, historians specializing in Picasso's early years agree that the play "had obsessive appeal to Picasso's generation."<sup>26</sup>

It is essential to explain the changes in Picasso's concept of Celestina from the text to the final painting; there are aesthetic as well as other reasons. His involvement with Symbolism is integral to his painterly transformation. Eunice Lipton has described the Symbolist vision, a vision manifested in Picasso's portrayal of Celestina:

[The Symbolist artist] saw [that] art's ultimate goal is to express Ideas by translating them into a special language. To the eyes of the artist (...) objects are valueless merely as objects. They can only appear to him as signs (...).<sup>27</sup>

Picasso's abstracted characterization of the famous procuress, with the blue color, the blind eye and without her scar or rosary beads, reflects his involvement in this movement in which conditions of the soul were among the basic interests of Symbolist artists.

Picasso's choice of arbitrary, emotive color echoes Symbolist practices as

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Raeburn, ed. *Homage to Barcelona: The City and Its Arts: 1888-1963*, Hayward Gallery, London (14 November-23 February 1986): 257

<sup>25</sup> Youngna Kim, "An Iconographical Study of *La Vie* by Pablo Ruiz Picasso" (M. A. thesis, The Ohio State University, 1976), page 30.

<sup>26</sup> Phoebe Pool and Anthony Blount, *Picasso: The Formative Years* (London: Studio Books, 1962): 7.

<sup>27</sup> Lipton, *Picasso Criticism*, 12.

necessary to express an ideational view. Blue is used in *La Celestina* to suggest a human condition, not for descriptive or structural reasons. Furthermore, his interest in blue has been traced to a variety of possible psychological, artistic and literary sources; among the latter, some curiously associate this color with a distinct taste for evil.<sup>28</sup> The inclusion of the all pervasive blue adds to her spiritualized portrait.

Picasso became aware of these Symbolist aesthetic ideas, critical to the formulation of his *La Celestina*, through the strong cultural ambiance in Barcelona and in Paris. On his 1900, 1901 and 1902 trips to Paris he saw many Symbolist paintings. In Barcelona, the most culturally active Spanish city around the turn of the century, the interest in blindness—as we have seen—, evocative Symbolist paintings and the *Celestina* theme were timely topics. Here, examples of Symbolist art were available to the young Picasso in both local and imported versions, particularly through his patronage of the cafe-meeting place, Els Quatre Gats, the center of Modernista activity for avant-garde artists, musicians and radical writers of several generations in the Catalan capital from 1897 to 1903. Furthermore, in Barcelona Picasso had the chance to peruse numerous art journals with reproductions and artistic theories from outside of Spain and, after 1897, at Els Quatre Gats.<sup>29</sup>

Also through his coterie of friends at this cafe, Picasso would have known about the November 1903 publication of the text of *La Celestina*, an opera by Felipe Pedrell (1841-1922), thoroughly examined by Joseph Snow, and this, too, may have turned the artist's thoughts to the celebrated literary figure. From among the musicians cited in Snow's survey of Pedrell's musical career, Picasso, of course, knew some of his famous students, Falla, Granados, Albeniz and, less well-known, Morera. The artist also was in the same circle as Joan Maragall, Catalonia's major poet, who praised Pedrell's *Celestina*. It is very possible that he even attended the private performance heard by a few friends and students, of a partial selection of music from

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<sup>28</sup> The interested reader is referred to Pool and Blunt's study; they present the image of no fewer than two dozen painters and half-a-dozen literary figures on the formation of Picasso's blue style. They, too, discuss identification of blue with the connotation of evil, an idea popular among *fin-de-siecle* Decadent circles in Paris and Barcelona, see 6-20. For more thoughts on the visual sources of this color in his art, see Richardson, 216; on the psychological basis of the blue color, see Daix, 34.

<sup>29</sup> Cervera, *Modernismo*, 223-224. During the six years or so of its existence the cafe was visited at one time or another by almost all the important figures in the literary and artistic worlds of Barcelona, and by many from elsewhere. For a catalogue of Symbolist works there, see McCully, *Els Quatre Gats*, 44-47, 62-63, 84-85, 114-115, 126-129.

the opera.<sup>30</sup> Even if he missed the performance, he certainly would have heard subsequent discussion of it at Els Quatre Gats. *La Celestina* would not be the first painting inspired by a performance; earlier Picasso has responded to Zacconi's *Othello*.<sup>31</sup>

Picasso's *La Celestina* is also rooted in the painter's political concerns. Barcelona in the 1890s, when the artist lived there at the turn of the century, was the most politically agitated city in Spain. Picasso was highly aware of the strong anarchist movement. He spent his time with anarchist sympathizers at Els Quatre Gats, his second home during that period, and contributed to some of their numerous publications. In Picasso's circle revolutionary politics and revolutionary art were intertwined. Symbolism especially came to be associated with the anarchist movement and its creed of extreme individualism as a stand against bourgeois society.<sup>32</sup> Picasso's selection of a one-eyed brothel woman from the *barrio chino*, a representative of the degraded urban poor, indicates a strong social conscience; a social outcast, she epitomizes the anarchists' view of a bourgeois society that discards what it cannot co-opt.<sup>33</sup> The radical artist Picasso could not be impervious to her plight. With her inner vision, *La Celestina* still recalls those who have been cast out in poverty, a major theme in Picasso's early art.

Because of these influences, Picasso, not solely bound to Rojas's text, articulates his vision of the famed procuress in his own concrete terms. Picasso saw particularly in blindness a way of indicating Celestina as a woman of great shrewdness whose operations were rooted in her knowledge of how passion drives men beyond reason. Her haunting visage reveals the woman, who alone in the text, "because of her contact with the spirits of evil [is able] to override nature and alter the normal course of events."<sup>34</sup>

All these interpretations of Picasso's *La Celestina* have contributed to our

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph T. Snow, "La Celestina of Felipe Pedrell," *Celestinesca* 3:i (mayo 1979): 19-32, esp. 19, 30 n8, and 31 n14. I wish to thank Joseph Snow for his thoughtfulness and persistent effort with this project.

<sup>31</sup> Josep Palau i Fabre, *Picasso in Catalonia* (New York: Tudor Publishing, 1968): 122.

<sup>32</sup> Leighton, *Re-Ordering*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Inez MacDonald, "Some Observations on the Celestina," *Hispanic Review* 22 (1954): 272.

understanding not only of the work's preoccupations but of its significance to the painter. His transformation of Rojas's word portrait, with its departures from and additions to textual details, still conveys the same presence, the same psychological character of Celestina as a woman of tremendous force and possessed of extraordinary skills. The proverb "a picture is worth a thousand words" applies to Picasso's portrait. His painted vision of Celestina, with her one good eye open to the carnal pleasures of men and women, reaffirms Rojas's creation.



Fig. # 4 Self-Portrait Painting 'La Celestina.'



PRESIDENT DU CONSEIL D'ADMINISTRATION, RAYMOND SOUBIE  
ADMINISTRATEUR GENERAL, JEAN-LOUIS MARTINOTY  
DIRECTEUR GENERAL, JEAN-PHILIPPE SAINT-GEOURS  
DIRECTEUR DE LA DANSE, RUDOLF NOUREEV  
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