

Some Early Celestina Drawings by Picasso

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Picasso's early drawings of *Celestina*, are cursorily alluded to, if at all, recognized in the many catalogues and books devoted to his work. It is intended here to present only a few of the various examples and to discuss some of the fascinating issues involved in identification of the maleficent heroine who intrigued him in separate stages of his life. Picasso created images of *Celestina* according to his own interpretation into his early twenties. Starting in the mid-1950s when he was in his mid-seventies, the famed procuress resurfaced in his art. Print-making was of major importance to him during most of his last decade. Between April and August of 1968 when he was 87 years old as his health and sexual prowess declined, his beloved *Celestina* reappeared in his art as a kind of self-portrait in a series of sixty-six etchings inspired by Fernando de Rojas's text. Originally this series formed part of a larger collection of 347 engravings known as *Suite 347*.¹ (He was particularly enamored with act 7 in his old age.) In 1971, when Picasso was 90 years old, two years prior to his death, *Celestina* still appealed to him and dominates an amusing brothel scene in an etching.

Celestina's character undoubtedly embodied for Picasso lusty, carnal humor and memories of Spain. As an elderly Spaniard he shared by then several problems, searches for lost youth, and voyeuristic pleasures similarly expressed by the aged former whore. I intend here to clarify one of

1. William Nowak, «Picasso's *Celestina* Etchings: Portrait of the Artist as Reader of Fernando de Rojas», *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, Volume 9 (2005): 1-17. Examples of Picasso's late *Celestina* imagery, part of series of 347 etchings are fully reproduced in the following publications: *Picasso 347 Gravures* 13/3/68-5/10/68 (catalogue 23, Serie A), Galerie Louise Leiris, Paris, December 1968; *Picasso 347* (2 vols.), New York, Random House/Maecenas Press, 1970; Georges Bloch, *Pablo Picasso, Catalogue of the Printed Graphic Work II*, 1966/1969, Berne, 1971. See also the 66 etchings and aquatints in the artist's book, *La Célestine*, (Paris: Atelier Crommelynck, 1971).

Picasso's first *Celestinas*. I also want to add a new reading for a painting in which Celestina or a celestina-like figure supposedly appeared as previously presented in these pages.

In a wonderfully thoughtful article, «Las primeras Celestinas de Picasso»,² Francisco Rico, the distinguished scholar, editor, and member of the Spanish Royal Academy, was the first to articulate the cultural significance of Celestina in Spain in our modern world. According to Rico, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, *La Celestina* was far from occupying the clear and indisputable place that it is given today among the half dozen absolute gems of Spanish literature. One hundred years later, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, *La Celestina* was still in no way considered one of Spanish literature's uncontested masterpieces (unlike today).

In order to judge Picasso's exposure to the text, it is necessary to look at a few facts regarding his early education and environment. It is first important to establish that Picasso was born in 1881 in Malaga and in 1890 his family moved to Corunna where they lived until 1895. Rico documented four textbooks Picasso kept from his childhood years in Corunna and donated to the Museo Picasso de Barcelona in 1970. These books were from among all those that must have passed through the young Pablo's hands in the «Da Guarda» Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza of Corunna during 1891-1895. The artist kept a French primer, with seventy-six words translated in his own hand. The four titles are those with which he began his theory training in Spanish language and literature. The fact that until 1970 he did not part with these four books shows that he felt a special fondness for them as well as for the subject matter that he found within them. They are, specifically, *Elementos de gramática castellana*, by Miguel de la Iglesia y Diego; *Literatura preceptiva o Retórica y poética* by Emilio Álvarez Jiménez, *Trozos selectos, latinos y castellanos* by Eduardo Raboso de la Peña, and finally *Ejercicios de análisis literario* by Ramón Casal y Amenedo.

The 646 pages of *Literatura preceptiva* are the most handled of the books and Jose Palau i Fabre, the major biographer of Picasso's early years, indicated that Pablo wrote on the cover «1890 to 1894» meaning that the artist already owned the book in Malaga. It is significant that Picasso spelled out in 1894 a name of a love object on page 97 of this book and adorned it with geometric sketches. This page is part of a larger section that contains a short chapter, «Different Types of Dramatic Compositions.» This chapter expressly references the

2. Francisco Rico, «Las primeras Celestinas de Picasso», *Bulletin Hispanique*, 92 (1990): 609-626.

form designated «tragicomedy» and includes a concise history of world theater with prominent attention, of course, to that of Spain. Not even in that section, nor even in the section dedicated to novels (to which Rojas' play is sometimes attributed), nor in any other place in the manual, can be found the slightest allusion to *La Celestina*. I have also searched for it in vain in other language and literature books used by Pablo. What I have found in both *Literatura preceptiva* and *Ejercicios de análisis literario* are repeated admonitions to the effect that «under no circumstances, written or otherwise, (...) should dishonest, repugnant, disgusting or inferior ideas be tolerated, and even less, applauded» (*Literatura*, 41). They also contain warning that the theorists could «present many passages taken from the classic authors as examples of immorality,» but they refused to do so «for reasons easy to understand» and because that was «something that, in addition to not demanding explanation, can only be dealt with lightly» (*Ejercicios*, 114). Therefore, in none of Picasso's texts, not a word of *La Celestina* can be found, or better, deliberate silence, along with shocking and generic condemnations.³

Importantly, John Richardson, Picasso's famed biographer and friend, notes that while we know virtually nothing about his education in Corunna beyond these books, we do know that his teachers were priests.⁴

Rico pointed out the obvious that the banning of certain books leads to the delight in reading them. Undoubtedly, this is what happened a century ago with *La Celestina*. The importance of the «*Tragicomedia*» was known, and the protagonist was known even by the uneducated thanks both to the proverbial «magic formulas» as well as loose sheets, songs, and enduring popular works. It is interesting to note that there even existed a «Moorish shadow play, in one act and three scenes, entitled *Celestina o los trabajadores*, published in Barcelona in 1865. However, anathemas and the spell of modest silence hung over the great dramatic work. Must I add that these were ideal conditions for Picasso to feel drawn to the book?⁵ According to Maria Teresa Ocaña, the former long-time director of the Museo Picasso, the artist would certainly have been familiar with the character of the old madam. She had entered into common parlance.⁶

3. Rico, 611-612.

4. John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso, 1881-1906*, 1 (New York: Random House, 1991): 42.

5. Rico, 613.

6. Maria Theresa Ocaña, «Del 'Mal Amor', 1902-1904» in *Picasso Érotique, exhibition catalogue*, edited by Jean Clair. New York, Prestel: 2001: 91.

Celestina was clearly a known figure as her name appeared in a puzzle in *Blanco y Negro: Revista ilustrada*, a weekly Spanish art magazine published in Madrid from 1890. John Richardson, by contrast, referred to it as, «Spain's most popular weekly magazine of the period».

In Corunna as a boy, he produced handwritten «newspapers» modeled, he said, on *Blanco y Negro* and, *Teatro Crítico*, a theatrical journal to which his family subscribed, and to which he wanted to contribute.⁷ Picasso, in fact, had a deep interest in the printed and illustrated press, fairly recent scholarship has shown that the journal acted as a manual of iconography for the young Picasso, leaving a long-lasting mark on his visual formation.⁸ The journal set out on an ambitious programme of artistic and literary education.⁹ Originally based around numerous drawings, *Blanco y Negro: Revista ilustrada*, offered an opportunity for the best Spanish graphic artists to make names for themselves. This journal published special reports, illustrated headlines, advertisements, grotesques, caricatures, charades, games which involved multiple meanings, words, and images, rebuses, and anagrams.

In November 28, 1896 issue of *Blanco y Negro: Revista ilustrada*, a numerical riddle, appeared in which the answer was Celestina. The *logogrifo numérico* is duplicated below (figure 1) as well as a figure containing the answers (figure 2). Rows of numbers spell out the image of a bottle and wineglass.¹⁰ There are 16 horizontal rows in the bottle, going from top to bottom; additionally, there are 6 rows in the cup. We already know that the bold-faced numbers 1 through 9 spell Celestina, therefore 1=C, 2=E, 3=L, 4=E, 5=S, 6=T, 7=I, 8=N, 9=A. Through the use of these letters and correctly plugging them into each row, the following answers are shown below resulted. This puzzle is fascinating in that it points to the visibility of Celestina even in the popular press.

7. Richardson, 46.

8. Anne Baldassari, *Picasso: Works on Paper*, (London: Merrell Publishers, Ltd., 2000): 29. The author points out how Picasso's identity as reader of the printed press throughout the twentieth century is revealed through two principal sources: first, the numerous newspapers and magazines kept by him and found today in the Picasso archive, and secondly, the graphic works on newsprint, using press clippings.

9. Baldassari, 28. This book has wonderful examples from *Blanco y Negro*. The author explains the artistic/ literary goals, for example: front pages on the issues of 1892 deal with the Spanish school of painting, Gustave Courbet, Ernest Meissonier or Victor Hugo. The journal was outstanding, too, owing to its outstanding techniques of reproduction. Hollow engraving and stereotypography combined to make a truly fine artistic journal that must have impressed both Picasso's father who was an art teacher and his young son Pablo.

10. For this puzzle and other fascinating games and visual material that were part of Picasso's world, see Natasha Staller, *A Sum of Destructions: Picasso's Cultures and the Creation of Cubism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001): 169-172.

Figure 1

3
 3 9
 2 5
 6 4
 5 7
 9 8 9
 7 8 4 5
 6 4 **1** 3 9
 9 6 **2** 1 9
 1 2 **3** 5 9
 2 3 **4** 8 9 5 2 8 2 8
 1 9 **5** 6 9 3 7 8 9
 9 5 **6** 9 5 3 7 9
 4 3 **7** 9 5 4 3
 5 9 **8** 6 9 1
 9 8 **9** 8 9 3 7 5

Figure 2

3 L
 39 LA
 25 ES
 64 TE
 57 SI
 989 ANA
 7845 INES
 64**1**39 TECLA
 96**2**19 ATECA
 12**3**59 CELSA
 23**4**89 ELENA 52828 SENEN
 19**5**69 CASTA 3789 LINA
 95**6**95 ASTAS 379 LIA
 43**7**95 ELIAS 43 EL
 59**8**69 SANTA 1 C
 98**9**89 ANANA 375 LIS

Léase horizontalmente en la botella: 1. cifra romana; 2. nota musical; 3. signo aritmetico; 4. bebida; 5. nota musical; 6. nombre de mujer; 7. idem; 8. idem; 9. villa de Zaragoza; 10. nombre de mujer; 11. idem; 12. idem; 13. en los toros; 14. nombre de varón; 15. idem de mujer 16. fruta.

Verticalmente, ó sea el todo, se leerá un nombre de mujer.

Horizontalmente en la copa: 1.nombre de varón; 2. idem de mujer; 3. idem; 4. pronombre; 5. punto cardinal; 6. flor.

Several Celestina figures appear in freely inspired drawings by Picasso from his teen years and into his early twenties in which he transformed the character from Rojas and Spanish art, into contemporary scenes, brothels or taverns. Picasso knew Celestina as a literary form. Richardson writes that Picasso knew Rojas's *Tragicomedia* from adolescence, if not before. In later life he collected various editions, the earliest dating from 1601.¹¹ He also had familiarity with Celestina from her appearance in several Goya paintings as well as many scenes in *Los Caprichos* (1793-96), a set of eighty aquatint etchings, whose aim was the censure of human error and vice.¹²

11. Richardson, 288. For other references to his 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, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1976): 176.

12. José López-Rey, *Goya's Caprichos: Beauty, Reason, and Caricature*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). For illustrations of Goya's treatment of the Celestina theme, see vol. 2 for the following *Caprichos* and preliminary drawings: 15, 17, 19, 20, 28, 31, 73.

In 1898, when he was seventeen years old, he was registered at the Academia de San Fernando. During this year in Madrid he spent hours at the Prado studying, sketching, and copying the great masters. He copied in 1898 from Goya's *Bien tirada está* (figure 3) («This is nicely stretched»), which shows Celestina checking a young prostitute's well pulled-up stocking, as well as the slang expression «well laid.»¹³ Celestina and her clothing reflect the eighteenth-century characterization he saw in Goya. The witch-madam-sorceress is depicted as an old lady with a skull-like head and pinched lips. She sits stooped over and has a round, shapeless body wrapped in a long cape. Her head is covered by the hood of the cape.

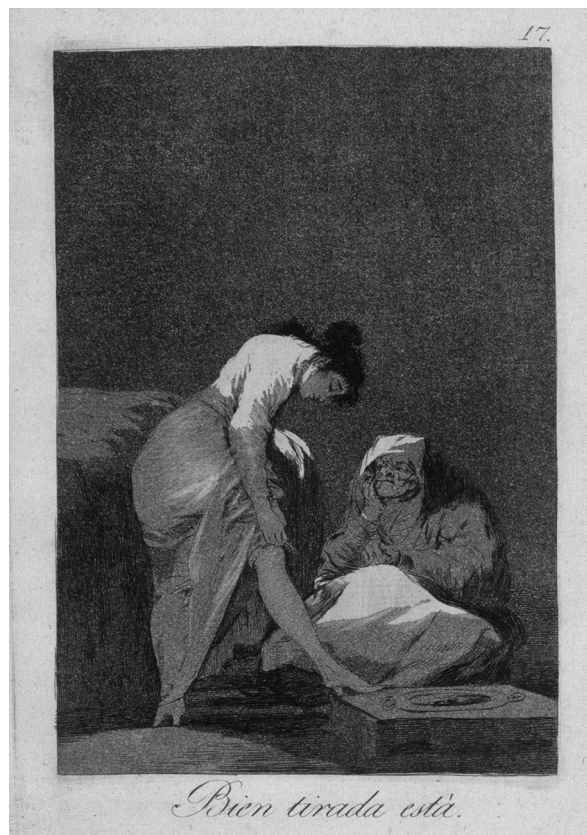


Figure 3

13. Natasha Staller, 104. For Picasso's copy see: *Picasso Érotique, exhibition catalogue*, ed. Jean Clair, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Musée National Picasso, Paris; Museo Picasso, Barcelona, 2001, p. 80.

Picasso was thinking of Goya in creating his own version of the heroine in one of a number of drawings in which his own imagination comes to play in her visualization. *The Divan* (1899-1900) (see http://www.museopicasso.bcn.es/eng/collection/index_collec.htm) is of particular interest for a number of reasons from this early body of works. In *The Divan*, a charcoal, pastel, and colored crayon drawing on paper, Celestina appears in a modern brothel. It is an example of one of Picasso's *dibujos fritos* («fried» drawings). These were drawings that were fried in oil in order to give them the patina of age.¹⁴ The setting could very likely be based upon the fin-de-siècle taverns and brothels he saw in Barcelona. There is an appropriate crudeness in Picasso's application of line used to depict the central characters: Celestina and a couple in a moment of intimacy on a sofa in the center of the composition in this scene of prostitution.

The eighteen-year-old Picasso shows Celestina as an old lady with a stout, flat face and tight lips appearing on the left behind the curtains or entranceway of a contemporary brothel as she watches one of her workers and a client amorously touching on a couch. The *puta vieja* wears a red scarf on her head, while a long dark cape covers her amorphous hunched over body as she clasps her hands together. The prostitute, with a rouged cheek and a red flower in her hair, wears a yellow dress with puffy sleeves and caresses the chin of her client. Picasso, to contrast the use of primarily warm colors, depicts him in a black jacket and white pants. The client embraces her and fondles her breast. The use of modeled line defines their forms as both the figures and the objects are outlined with firm strokes. The red-orange sofa is set against a green wall. A pipe and a liquor bottle are set on a table in front of the couple. Above them on the wall are cropped views of an oval mirror and a painting of a reclining nude. The presence of Celestina adds a narrative dimension to the sexual ambience of the setting. Picasso wrote his own fiction for the character who fascinated him repeatedly in his lifetime.

Picasso does not retain some of the attributes and characteristics associated with Celestina that are present in the play. The quintessential celestina iconography –the large facial scar, rosary beads, and beard are missing from Picasso's depiction. But she does appear with a cloak and covered head scarf. After the initial and striking description of «bearded,» the appearance of Celestina in Rojas' play is immediately enriched with a precise mention of her clothing: «Take the cloak and let's go...» (108). This was, of course, typical at the end of the fifteenth century. Away from home, a woman protected herself with a cloak. The «worn skirt» (177) of the procuress or the «damned long skirts» (170) in the *Tragicomedia* can be read into Picasso's portrayal of this nineteenth-century bor-

14. Richardson, 135-7. See also p. 163 *Old Woman* (1900) for another example of a «fried drawing».

dello celestina. The skirts hinder her way the more of a hurry she is in. But Celestina is always on the go, visiting from house to house, and the cloak is part of her identity –it is her uniform in the text.

Celestina, in accordance with the custom that women covered their heads on every occasion, undoubtedly wore out «those large wimples» (97) that Rojas called archetypal of her sex; Picasso here put a scarf on her head. In other works he folded her cloak over her head, in the manner of a hood. It is this cloaked and hooded figure who appears in his treatment of Celestina in his graphic works of the late 1960s. It is interesting to observe how Celestina is dressed in his 1971 etching –his last rendition of the procuress. (It is this etching created in his ninth decade which is mentioned in the opening paragraph.) In *Brothel Scene*, the procuress is a descendant of his famous shrouded 1904 *Celestina* (figure 4). The old bawd wears the same dark mantilla and hood as seen in the Blue Period portrait.¹⁵ The archetypal greedy figure holds out her gnarled, open hand as she waits for her payment from her customers while the sensuous prostitutes chatter and laugh.

His art, from his early renditions of Celestina to these late life examples, allowed him to act out his love for this great literary masterpiece and perhaps he saw embodied in the old whore's character such personal concerns as mortality and impotency as he aged.¹⁶ From among his early images of Celestina there is frequently cited the appearance of the procuress in *The Harem* (figure 5). In my own article in these pages I identified the crouching old woman over a wash basin in the corner who guards over the four nudes in *The Harem* as an «old greying Celestina-type bawd» in a bordello and want to rethink this interpretation.¹⁷

From her appearance in the back, the shriveled old woman is dressed and looks worn and forms a strong contrast with the graceful women. This magnificent rose-ochre oil painting, which is traditionally considered to belong to Picasso's Rose period, displays four beautiful nudes in various attitudes, modeled, after Fernande, Picasso's mistress during these years, —one combs her hair, one washes in a small bowl, one stretches voluptuously, one gazes into a hand mirror. Some of these images appear in earlier toilette scenes. The nudes are unconnected, each involved in her own private ritual of bathing and personal grooming. Typically it has been wrongly described as a harem setting. More specifically, the canvas is considered to be Picasso's transposition of Ingres' *Turkish Bath* which he had seen at the Ingres retrospective that formed part of the celebrated Autumn Salon of 1905.

15. For *Brothel Scene*, see *Late Picasso: Paintings, Sculptures, Drawings, Prints, 1953-1972*, The Tate Gallery, exhibition catalogue, fig. 142, p. 126. See also my article, Carol Salus, «Picasso's Version of *Celestina* and Related Issues», *Celestinesca*, 15, 2, (noviembre 1991): 3-17.

16. Richardson, 288.

17. Carol Salus, «Picasso's *Celestina Knitting*», *Celestinesca* 18: ii (novembre 1994): 133-144.



Figure 4

La Celestina (1904), Musée Picasso, Paris

As Robert Rosenblum described:

The Harem signals the start of Picasso's never-ending infatuation with Ingres' *Turkish Bath*, freshly topical, thanks to its inclusion in the major Ingres retrospective at the 1905 Salon d'Automne. Picasso recreates not only its theme and figural postures, but, more subtly, its precariously constructed corner view of an enclosed space confined to sensual delights...

He has added two new characters to Ingres' theater of pleasure: a clothed woman crouched in the corner over a wash basin (a relative of Blue Period *La Celestina*), it appears, and the archetypal Spanish procuresses of Picasso's early work); and prominent in the foreground, an anatomically under-sexed and overmuscled male... he holds a flower in his

limp right hand and enjoys the simplest of working-class lunches. But the meal has been emphatically Hispanized, thanks for the conspicuous porrón, nearly emptied of red wine, the most earthy and popular drinking vessel of Catalonia... that reflect Picasso's reawakened awareness of his national roots while summering in Gosol.¹⁸

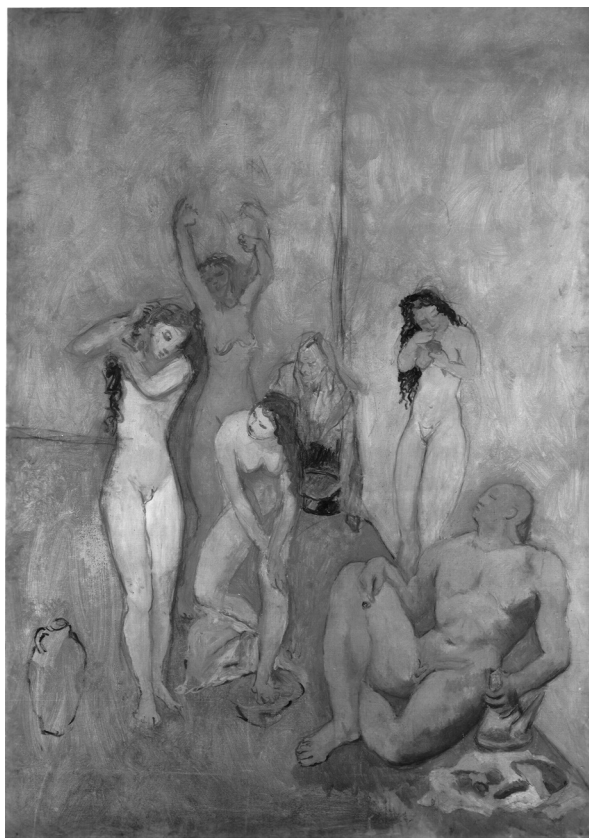


Figure 5

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). *The Harem* (1906). Oil on canvas: 154,3 x 110 cm.
© The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. 1958.45

This needs to be explained and therefore why this is not Celestina in this painting in the Cleveland Museum of Art. In the foreground the nudes are guarded by a colossus, a naked eunuch, with diminutive genitals who draws attention to his impotence as he grasps a large, erect

18. Robert Rosenblum, «Picasso in Gosol: The Calm before the Storm,» in *Picasso: The Early Years, 1892-1906*, exhibition catalogue, edited Marilyn McCully, Washington, D.C., The National Gallery of Art, 1997: 263-64.

porrón. All his life, as in the play that had inspired him, Picasso associated the Celestina figure with prostitutes. Careful reading of the iconography indicates these are not prostitutes, nor is the elderly figure their madam. The setting of the painting is a bathhouse in Gosol in northern Spain. There is also a possibility of other locations and eras for the empty room. Because of Picasso's interest during this time period in ancient Greek art, it has been suggested that this could be a Greek or Roman 'tepidarium' as well as a modern bath house in France.¹⁹ Picasso with Fernande spent about nine or ten weeks during the summer of 1906 when he was poor in the steep and rugged south slope of the Pyrenees, in this area accessible only on mules. John Richardson describes more precisely «Gosol is as unfrequented and as unspoiled today as it was in 1906».²⁰ Whatever quarters Picasso could afford during this near penniless period of 1906, when he and Fernande stayed in Gosol, would not have been furnished with heated water and a bathtub. He and Fernande stayed in a small rooming house, their window overlooked a fountain where cattle were brought to drink and from which the villagers drew their water. Fernande had to bathe.²¹ There was only one inn, Cal Tampanada, which had two rooms to rent. At least one public bathhouse was most likely in the village. It would have been attended by an old woman, for such roles were typically reserved by government decree for widows of war veterans. A male guardian would be expected in attendance, which, as a rule, alternated days for men and days for women.²²

Wayne Anderson presented a very convincing argument about the iconography of *The Harem*:

Those among us who were in Europe even as late as the early 1960s recall that toilets and bathhouses had an attendant, and to my knowledge no men were distressed over an old woman in attendance when showering naked or lined up at the urinal. The fact that the guardian is himself naked would be an artist's decision rather than a real-life fact, representing the difference between art and documentary picture making, or it could have some basis in reality. Fernande mentions that about the time that this painting was created, Apollinaire and Jacob, when visiting Picasso's studio, would strip naked and lounge around the house a good part of the time.

19. Susan Mayer, *Ancient Mediterranean Sources in the Works of Picasso, 1892-1937* (Ph. D. dissertation, New York University, 1986): 212.

20. Richardson, 436-38.

21. Wayne Anderson, *Picasso's Brothel: 'Les Demoiselles d'Avignon'* (New York: Other Press, 2002): 218.

22. Anderson, 218..

...If any art historical impulse came over Picasso when working out the picture, it could have been an association with a tepidarium, such as Ingres' *Turkish Bath*, but not with a brothel. And even then, Ingres' «bathhouse» picture was not a unique resource, had Picasso needed one. Engravings by the hundreds, depicting bathhouses, were sold along the quays then as today.²³

There are many nineteenth-century paintings of bathers. This painting is among the few significant pictures of women at a bath that comes after the final decade of the nineteenth century. The relative disappearance of the motif had much to do with women's hygiene altered by the advance of modern plumbing.²⁴

The old woman in the corner is attending wash pans in the corner. She is a custodial maid who prepares bath water, heats it, pours it into wash-basins, and cleans up after bathers. She is not counting money from her girls' customers, she is not a celestina, as too many have stated. While this painting is an unresolved attempt by Picasso to create a large-scale (154.3 x 109.5 cm) classical figure composition, it is for our purposes a study in which the image of Celestina has been mistakenly identified. The appearance of Celestina would not resurface in Picasso's art for another fifty years, and when she does her role fulfills a variety of functions in his creative and emotional worlds.

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23. Anderson, 218-19.

24. Anderson, 221.

SALUS, Carol, «Some Early Celestina Drawings by Picasso», *Celestinesca* 30 (2006), pp. 111-123.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se presentan algunos dibujos de Celestina de Pablo Picasso pertenecientes a su primera época artística. Francisco Rico dio información sobre los primeros años de escolarización de Picasso en La Coruña y también examinó los libros de texto que el artista conservó de aquellos años. No se encuentra citada *La Celestina* en ninguno de aquellos textos y Rico aclara que a fines del siglo XIX en España la prohibición de ciertos libros los hacen más atractivos al lector. Sin embargo, puntualizó que hasta las personas con menos educación eran conscientes de la importancia de *La Tragicomedia* y su protagonista debido a su alcance en la cultura popular. Es cierto que resultaba familiar al artista el personaje de la alcahueta. A la edad de dieciocho años, mientras estudiaba en el Prado, Picasso pintó la Celestina, una copia de uno de *Los Caprichos* de Goya.

En otro dibujo de aquella época, *The Divan*, Picasso la colocó en un burdel contemporáneo. A los 23 años, en el retrato famoso de la Época Azul, la retrató ciega. Picasso incluyó su propia ficción en estas obras posteriores; se desvió de la tradición literaria en cuanto al escenario, el aspecto y los accesorios de la alcahueta. Una nueva interpretación es *The Harem*, en el cual se supone que la alcahueta arquetípica aparece, pero no se representa como Celestina sino como encargada de un baño público.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Celestina*, Picasso, Barcelona, Francisco Rico, Goya, *The Harem*.

ABSTRACT

A few drawings of Celestina are presented from Picasso's early oeuvre. Francisco Rico carefully examined Picasso's early education in Corunna and the books the artist kept from these years. *Celestina* was not mentioned in any of his texts as Rico explained the banning of certain books in late nineteenth-century Spain obviously leads to the delight in reading them. Rico pointed out, however, the importance of *La Tragicomedia* and the protagonist were known even by the uneducated thanks to popular culture. The artist certainly would have been familiar with the character of the old madam. As an eighteen-year-old learning in the Prado, Picasso made a copy of Celestina from one of Goya's *Los Caprichos*.

In another early drawing, *The Divan*, Picasso placed her standing in a contemporary Barcelona brothel. At age 23, in his famed Blue Period portrait, *La Celestina*, she appeared blind in one eye. Picasso wrote his own fiction as, in these later works, he deviated from the literary tradition in regard to her locale, appearance, and props. A new interpretation of his Rose Period painting, *The Harem*, in which supposedly the archetypal Spanish procuress appeared, is identified not as Celestina but rather a public bathhouse attendant.

KEY WORDS: *Celestina*, Picasso, Barcelona, Francisco Rico, Goya, *The Harem*.

