

CELESTINA'S HILADO AND RELATED SYMBOLS

Manuel da Costa Fontes
Kent State University

The "hilado" sold by Celestina, besides serving her as an excuse to enter the homes of the maidens that she, as a professional procuress, seeks to bring into her fold, has several additional levels of meaning. As shown by Alan Deyermond, it is related to the images of hunting, trapping, and captivity, and, since the devil conjured into it by the old bawd passes, symbolically, into Melibea's girdle and into the gold chain with which a grateful Calisto rewards Celestina, the "hilado" is at the center of an evil magic circle that connects and influences everyone who comes in contact with these objects, leading them to untimely, unnatural deaths. Even Celestina herself is not immune to the power of her own spell.¹

Rosario Ferré has also unravelled several new levels of meaning for this "hilado" and related symbols. She shows that "hilado" also constitutes a metaphor for "cupiditas," both as a "tejido de lujuria" and as a "tejido de codicia," being textually and metaphorically woven into the fabric of *LC* as a whole: "El hilado como metáfora matriz es . . . ante todo un tejido de 'cupiditas', del cual depende (en el sentido de des-enlazarse o des-envolverse) el discurso de la obra."² Finally, Otis Handy has presented us with a splendid reading of "The Rhetorical and Psychological Defloration of Melibea," showing through a perceptive interpretation of the language used that Melibea is "suffering from a burning fire for Calisto which can only be extinguished by the act of love" (p. 21) and that "she is not a victim, but a willing, eager participant in *loco amor*" (p. 25).³ The folkloric and literary evidence that I now intend to present will further support Rosario Ferré's and Otis Handy's findings, demonstrating, even more graphically, that "hilado" and the symbols associated with it also represent lust.

In 1976 I recorded the following joke from an immigrant from the island of Terceira, Azores, in Toronto, Canada:

O Bocage era muito de casa do senhô rei. E agora o sehnô rei tinha uma filha. E agora a filha, a mãe dizia à filha: --Tu nunca deixes home nenhum te tocá-te, porque se tu deixares um home tocá-te, tu perdes logo a tua honra. Nunca te deixes home nenhum te tocá.

O Bocage, sabido, muito batido, e sabia dessas coisas. Ela um dia sai a cavalo e ele a esperá-la no lugá ond'ela passava. E diz . . . E ela vai, chega lá a sai a cavalo. Ele vai, chega ò pé dela, e toca-le nã perna.

Diz ela assim: --Ah, pa! Bocage, tu nã me toques, porqu'a minha mãe diz que quando os homes me toco, as mulheres perdie logo a honra.

Diz ele: --Ê vou-te dá um *ponto* num lugá, que tu nunca mais perdes a tua honra.

Já sabe, ela, coitada, muito contente. Também era meia ignorante. E desce p'a'o chão, e ele deu-le o ponto. Ela gostou do sê ponto.

Chega a casa e diz à mãe: --Ah, minha mãe! Quero dizê a minha mãe qu'ê que nã perco mais a minha honra.

Diz a mãe: --Ah, minha filha, coma foi?

--Ah, minha mãe, muito bem. O Bocage dê-me un ponto, qu'eu 'tou muito contente e muito satisfeita.

Diz agora ela: --Mas então porque é qu'ele nã te deu mais?

--Ah, minha mãe, ele nã me deu mais porque diz que nã tinha mais *linhas*.

Mas tinha um rapazinho a vê isto tudo. Diz o rapaz desta maneira:

--Ele quando te 'tava a dá o ponto tinha dois *novelos* deste tamanho? (Gesture with clenched fists).⁴

The central motif here is Stith Thompson J86: *Rocks falling together and thread entering needle's eye suggest sexual intercourse: hence its beginning*, which is also indexed as Z186: *Symbolism: Needle and thread -- sexual intercourse*.⁵ As in many other off-color Portuguese stories, the poet Manuel Maria Barbosa du Bocage (1765-1805), who acquired a well-deserved reputation because of his notorious bohemian career, is made the hero and protagonist of this joke.⁶ In 1977, while doing field work in the island of São Jorge, Azores, I came upon a conundrum built upon the same motif:

--Que diferença há entre o bēbé e a capa que veste?

--A diferença que há é que a capa é feita com *um novelo e duas agulhas*. O bēbé deve ser o contrário: *dois novelos e ùa agulha*.⁷

The parallels with *LC* are clear enough. The "agulha" which is explicitly mentioned in the conundrum represents, as noted by Rosario Ferré (p. 12) and Otis Handy, a phallic symbol, and the "pontos," being a euphemistic way of designating coitus, confirm Handy's interpretation (pp. 21-22). Armed with this knowledge, readers of Fernando de Rojas's time certainly would not fail to appreciate the humor conveyed by the "agujas" and "puntos" that sprinkle Celestina's discourse when she attempts to show Melibea the remedy for the wound opened in her heart by her recently born love for Calisto:

Señora, no tengas por nuevo ser más fuerte de sufrir al herido la ardiente trementina y los ásperos *puntos* que lastiman lo llagado, *doblan la pasión*, que no la primera lisióñ, que dio sobre sano. Pues si tú quieres ser sana y que te descubra la punta de mi sutil aguja sin temor . . . (pp. 156-57).

Señora, éste es otro y segundo *punto*, el cual si tú con tu mal sufrimiento no consientes, poco aprovechará mi venida, y si, como prometiste, lo sufres, tú quedarás *sana* y sin deuda y Calisto sin queja y *pagado*. Primero te avisé de mi cura y de esta invisible *aguja*, que *sin llegar a tí, sientes en solo mentarla en mi boca*. (p. 158).⁸

Handy interprets "la ardiente trementina" as orgasmic fluid, "los ásperos puntos" as the breaking of the virginal hymen (pp. 21-22), and "llaga" as suffering or love (p. 18). I would like to add that the "llagado" of the first quotation is also a euphemism for the vagina whose passion will be doubled by the stitches that will satiate (i. e., cure) its desire. The use of "llaga" in this context borders on sacrilege, for that word also frequently designates the wounds of Christ. In the second quotation, the words "sana" and "pagado" refer to the post-coital satisfaction that Melibea and Calisto will feel after they sleep together. The needle's invisibility certainly "provides further evidence that what transpires here is a psychic seduction, with a clear physical subtext" (Handy, p. 23). The fact that Melibea is able to feel it despite its invisibility--just picture the facial expression that caused Celestina to utter these words--is indicative of her strong sexual arousal. Note also the double meaning of Celestina's last three words.

Celestina also tells Melibea that "lo duro con duro se ablanda más eficazmente" (p. 158). According to Handy, the first "duro" means the pangs of love, and the second one constitutes another phallic reference (p. 22). The last interpretation is confirmed by a somewhat cryptic burlesque version of the ballad *A Volta do Navegante*⁹ that I collected in São Jorge, Azores, in 1977:

--Deus 'teja com minhas tias,
sentadinhas a fiar.
--Deus venha com o sobrinho
com a sua verga tesa.
5 --A senhora dá-me licença?
Quem na toma é cabeludo
no seu rapado.
--Meta o senhor,
que 'tã destapado.
10 E sente o mole no duro
e diga-me se quer
do branco do cu
ou do alvo d'entre as pernas.¹⁰

Earlier on in the interview, Celestina has made it very clear that it was sexual desire, rather than love, that had caused Melibea's predicament. When Melibea had told her that she suspected that the cause of her pain had been Celestina's request for the prayer on Calisto's behalf, she had answered:

¿Cómo señora, tan mal hombre es aquél? ¿Tan mal nombre es el suyo, que en sólo ser nombrado trae consigo ponzoña su sonido? *No creas que sea esa la causa de tu sentimiento, antes otra que yo barrunto.* Y pues que así es, si tú licencia me das, yo, señora, te la diré. (p. 156)

It could be argued that Celestina is merely referring to love here, but I doubt it. If that were the case, she would not have needed to emphasize that Calisto was not the real cause for Melibea's suffering.

Melibea's reply shows that she is not as innocent as some critics would have us believe. Since no love was involved, at least at first, Calisto is merely used to cure her "llaga," thereby being assigned the role of "doctor," a word mentioned explicitly by Melibea herself, while coyly protesting that she did not want her "honor" to be tarnished:

¿Comó, Celestina? ¿Qué es ese nuevo salario que pides? ¿De licencia tienes tú necesidad para me dar la salud? ¿Cuál *médico* jamás pidió tal seguro para curar al paciente? Di, di, que siempre la tienes de mí, tal que mi *honra* no dañes con tus palabras. (p. 156)

This interpretation is reinforced by the frequent references to illness, remedies, cures and doctors throughout the interview. Naturally, Celestina herself is a physician only by proxy:

Celestina: Pero para yo dar, mediante Dios, congrua y saludable *medicina*, es necesario saber de ti tres cosas . . . Por ende cumple que al *Médico* como al confesor se hable toda verdad abiertamente. (p. 155)

Melibea: Mi *mal* es de corazón, la izquierda teta es su aposentamiento, tiende sus rayos a todas partes. (p. 156)

Celestina: Pero diga lo que dijere, sabe que no hay cosa más contraria en las grandes *curas* delante los animosos *cirujanos*, que los flacos corazones, los cuales con su gran lástima, con sus dolorosas hablas, con sus sensibles meneos, ponen temor al enfermo, hacen que desconfíe de la salud y al *médico* enojan y turban, y la turbación altera la mano, rige sin orden la aguja. (p. 157)

Celestina: Y dicen los sabios que la *cura* del lastimero *médico* deja mayor señal y que nunca peligro sin peligro se vence. (p. 158)

The final reference to medicine during this interview is truly sacrilegious, for it is implied that God, being the source (i. e., Creator) of the "wound," which, in this instance, can also mean "burning passion," is also the one who provides the "remedy" which is to be ministered through Calisto. Celestina assures Melibea of this:

No desconfíe, señora, tu noble juventud de salud. Que, cuando el alto *Dios* da la *llaga*, tras ella envía el remedio. Mayormente que sé yo al mundo nacida una flor que de todo esto te delibre. (p. 159)

Calisto, then, is the "doctor" whose ministrations will restore Melibea's health. Since he is suffering from the same infirmity, he will be able to cure himself in the process. In this context, it should be also remembered that medieval doctors really believed that love was a type of illness: "Médico tras médico discute solemnemente la causa de la enfermedad (inflamación del cerebro por el deseo insatisfecho), la diagnosis (por los mismos síntomas que presentan Arnalte, Leriano y Calisto), el pronóstico (en general se restablece el enfermo con el tiempo aunque hay casos desesperados en los que el mal puede ser mortífero) y el remedio."¹¹

Since Melibea knew perfectly well what she wanted, it does not take her long to discard most of her pretensions. While continuing to feign innocence, she makes it very clear that she desperately wants the medicine, even if it will taint her honor, tarnish her reputation, wound her body, and tear her flesh:

Agora toque en mi honra, agora dañe mi fama, agora lastime mi cuerpo; aunque sea romper mis carnes para sacar mi dolorido corazón, te doy mi fe ser segura y, si siento alivio, bien galardonada. (p. 157)

There are too many significant coincidences here for the reader to suppose that Melibea does not understand what she is getting into. Her willingness to have her flesh torn is especially suggestive. As observed by Handy, these are indeed piercing cries of surrender (p. 22).

The folkloric reference to the "novelos" and "linhas" also sheds new light on the symbolic meaning of the "hilado" that plays such a vital role in Celestina's career. Both the joke and the conundrum make it clear that the yarn balls (Celestina's "madejas") designate testicles, and that the thread is a euphemism for semen. The "hilado" that Celestina apparently uses to earn a living while hunting and trapping maidens like Melibea, then, is much more than it appears to be. In view of this, the fact that, together with the "hilado," Celestina also takes needles and pins into the homes of her prospective victims acquires a renewed and comical significance. At one point she tells Sempronio:

Aquí llevo un poco de *hilado* en esta mi faltriquera, con otros aparejos que conmigo siempre traigo, para tener causa de entrar donde mucho no soy conocida la primera vez: así como gorgueras, garvines, franjas, rodeos, tenazuelas, alcohol, albayalde y solimán, hasta agujas y alfileres. (p. 83)

The symbolic value of "hilado" also leads to a reinterpretation of the famous words pronounced by Celestina telling Sempronio that Melibea's seduction is far from being the first job of the sort that she has undertaken:

¿El primero, hijo? Pocas vírgenes, a Dios gracias, has tú visto en esta ciudad que hayan abierto tienda a vender, de quien yo no haya sido corredora de su primer hilado. (p. 81)

A fairly recent (and, I hasten to add, excellent) translation of this passage reads as follows:

My first? I should say it is not! There are few virgins in this town who have opened up shop without my help in selling their first yarn.¹²

However, when a virgin opens up shop, chances are that she is not going to be putting any yarn up for sale. The expression indicates availability for sexual commerce but, since Celestina finds it necessary to bring these maidens into her fold, what is meant here is that they have reached an age

appropriate to engage in sex. The yarn will be brought to them by the partners arranged by Celestina, the procuress ("corredora" still has that meaning). The other translations that I have consulted come closer to the original's intent, because they convey a clearer sexual connotation:

La prima, figliol mio? Poche uergene hai tu uiste in questa cita che habiano aperta botega auendere, dele quale io non habia guadagnata la prima sensalia.¹³

Le premier, mon filz? Tu as veu peu de jeunes filles pucelles, graces á Dieu! en ceste ville qui ayent ouvert boutique pour vendre de quoy que je n'aye esté la premiere courtiere.¹⁴

The first, my son? You haven't seen many virgins set up shop in this town, praise God!, whose goods I haven't been the first to peddle.¹⁵

The first, my son! You haven't seen many virgins set up shop in this city, thank God, whose wares I haven't been the first to peddle.¹⁶

The English translation of 1631, however, being the only one to preserve the reference to "hilado," offers a more precise rendition of the levels of meaning of Rojas' phrases:

The first, (my sonne?) Few virgins (I thanke Fortune for it) hast thou seene in this Citty, which have opened their shops, and traded for themselves, to whom I have not beene a broaker to their first spunne thread, and holpe them vent their wares.¹⁷

The modern oral tradition is not alone in providing a key to some of the symbols examined in *LC*. There probably is some significance to the fact that the idea of threading is used in relation to prostitutes throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. When Don Quijote tells Dorotea, whom he believed to be an unjustly dispossessed princess named Micomicona, that it is time to leave the inn so that he can regain and restore the kingdom stolen by her uncle, Sancho, who doubted her identity because he had seen her kissing Don Fernando, tells his master that "será mejor que nos estemos quedos; y cada puta *hile*, y comamos."¹⁸ Sanchó's words are inspired by the proverb documented by López Pinciano (1596) and Gonzalo Correas (1627):¹⁹

Cuando la puta *hila*, con mal anda.²⁰

Cada puta *hile* y devane y coma, y el rufián que pape o aspe, y devane.²¹

Cuando la puta *hila*, y el rufián devana, y el escribano pregunta cuántos son del mes, con mal andan todos tres.²²

In the first and third versions, there prevails the idea that when the prostitute spins she is either ill or unable to exercise her profession for some reason.²³ Cervantes' abbreviated use of the proverb would seem to indicate that it was so well-known that he did not feel that further

explanation was necessary. The popularity of this proverb is further confirmed by its apparently even more abbreviated use in *La Lozana andaluza* (1528) only twenty-nine years after the publication of the first known edition of *LC*. When Lozana writes to a group of fellow prostitutes about the sack of Rome by the forces of Charles V in 1527, she tells them: "Por ende, sosegad que, sin duda por muchos años, podéis hilar velas largas y luengas."²⁴ It is also significant that Lozana's aunt tells her at the beginning of the novel that the merchant Diomedes wants her to weave for him, because weaving is what logically follows the act of spinning the yarn that has been rolled up into skeins: "Descí, sobrina, que este gentilhomme quiere que le tejáis un tejillo, que proveeremos de premideras" (p. 41). That there is a double meaning here is confirmed by the Portuguese conundrum (the baby is made with two yarn balls and a needle) and by the words used by Lozana to tell Rampfín, while she is making love to him, to indicate that his prowess is beginning to get the best of her: "Mi vida, ya no más, que basta hasta otro día, que yo no puedo mantener la tela" (77).

La Lozana andaluza provides us with an even better correlation with some of the symbols examined in *LC*. When the orphaned heroine shows up at her aunt's house in Seville, the aunt, apparently preoccupied with her young niece's future--what she really wants is to get rid of her--informs her that the merchant (Diomedes), who had been there the day before, "me dará remedio para que vos seáis casada y honrada, mas querría él que supiésedes labrar" (40). The "remedy" that she suggests recalls the remedy or medicine that is frequently mentioned during the second interview between Celestina and Melibea. "Casada y honrada" is an oblique way of referring to coitus, for marriage implies consummation, and, although a woman can be "honrada" through marriage, the hasty juxtaposition of that word to "casada" causes it to mean precisely the opposite. "Labrar" (according to Bruno Damiani, it signifies "bordar" [p. 273], to "embroider" or "to perform anything prettily and artistically,"²⁵ which suggests fellatio; it can also be taken in the sense of "to plough," that is, being able to fornicate deeply and vigorously),²⁶ as evidenced by Lozana's response, is also related to coitus: "Señora tía, yo aquí traigo el alfilerero, mas ni tengo aguja ni alfiler, que dedal no faltaría para apretar, y por eso, señora tía, si vos queréis, yo le hablaré antes que se parta, porque no pierda mi ventura, siendo huérfana" (40). In other words, her vagina ("alfilerero," needle cushion) is more than ready, but she is still lacking a phallus, no matter its size ("aguja," "alfiler," needle, pin), for she certainly has the vulva ("dedal," thimble) that it would take to clutch ("apretar") it with (or "to urge" it with; when used with needles, the thimble's function is to push them into the fabric). Therefore, the meaning of "aguja" and "alfiler" in *La Lozana andaluza* further amplifies the symbolic value assigned to those terms in *LC*.

Two of the symbols in question can also be documented in Shakespeare. According to Eric Partridge, in *Henry V*, II. i. 33-36, the term [needle] bears its literal sense, then there is a reference to the eye of the needle, and there is an allusion to prick.²⁷ And in *The Passionate Pilgrim*,

"wound" has a meaning equivalent to that of Melibea's "llaga":

See in my thigh, quoth she, here was ths sore:
 She showed hers; he saw more *wounds* than one,
 And blushing fled, and left her all alone.²⁸

As noted by Partridge (p. 222), the pudenda is clearly implied.

The folkloric and literary evidence presented here, besides documenting the interpretations of Rosario Ferré and Otis Handy, suggests that Fernando de Rojas, Francisco Delicado and Shakespeare, rather than inventing the symbols²⁹ examined in *LC*, *Lozana andaluza*, *Henry V* and in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, were inspired by their widespread folkloric currency. The fact that the central motif, for which Stith Thompson lists a Chinese source, has served in Iberia as the basis for a joke, a riddle, and a proverb also testifies to its venerable antiquity (no pun intended) and great popularity at one time. The reduced number of known versions cannot be taken as indicative of its disappearance from the modern oral tradition, for field investigators are obviously reluctant to include material of this sort in their collections.³⁰ By using such allusions, Fernando de Rojas was not trying to embody in his text a sexual meaning hidden from most of his readers. On the contrary, he knew that, like practically anyone who hears the joke and the conundrum nowadays, they would be roaring with laughter, for he was drawing on a well known folkloric tradition. This may have had something to do with his early decision to call his work a *comedia*. Whatever his purposes in writing *LC* may have been, there can be no question that Rojas conceived the story of Calisto and Melibea as a tale of mutual, unadulterated and undisguised passion, for lust is what attracts them to each other. That is why they never think about marriage. In such a context the question of their respective lineages is irrelevant. The destructive nature of their self-centered, all consuming love and their frail humanity provide all the explanation that is needed. This aspect of *LC* constitutes, as Rojas states, an edifying "reprehensión de los locos enamorados" (p. 44). Here the lesson reflects didactic, universal values, and religious or ethnic background has no relevance at all.

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NOTES

¹ Alan Deyermond, "Hilado-Cordón-Cadena: Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*," *Celestinesca* 1:1 (1977), 6-12; id., "Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*: A Postscript," *Celestinesca* 2:1 (1978), 25-30. I am indebted to Samuel G. Armistead, who read an earlier draft of this paper, for his valuable observations and for important bibliographical information.

² Rosario Ferré, "Celestina en el tejido de la 'cupiditas'," *Celestinesca* 7:1 (1983), 3-16, at p. 4.

³ Otis Handy, "The Rhetorical and Psychological Defloration of Melibea," *Celestinesca* 7:1 (1983), 17-27.

⁴ Told by Francisco Machado de Castro, 62 years old, from the village of Ribeirinha, on 29 December 1976.

⁵ Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-58).

⁶ For an introduction to the life and works of Bocage, see Joaquim Ferreira, *Líricas e Sátiras de Bocage: Introdução e Notas* (Porto: Domingues Barreira, n. d.), pp. 7-59, and Antônio José Saraiva and Óscar Lopes, *História da Literatura Portuguesa*, 6th ed. (Porto: Porto Editora, n. d.), pp. 663-70.

⁷ Told by José Bento de Ramos, 68 years old, from Fajá dos Vimes, in Vila da Calheta, where he had resided for 42 years, on 16 July 1977.

⁸ Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina*, ed. Dorothy S. Severin (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1976). All references are from this edition, but I do not follow it in italicizing the first quote from p. 157, and the brackets around "hasta" (p. 83) are omitted.

⁹ For a description of the contents of this ballad and for bibliography, see Samuel G. Armistead et al., *El romancero judeo-español en el Archivo Menéndez Pidal (Catálogo-índice de romances y canciones)*, 3 vols. (Madrid: CSMP, 1978), 18.

¹⁰ Recited by Maria Augusta Barcelos, 75 years old. Beira, 22 July 1977. This poem will appear in my forthcoming *Romanceiro da Ilha de S. Jorge* (Coimbra: Universidade, 1983), no. 224.

¹¹ Keith Whinnom, "Introducción crítica" to Diego de San Pedro, *Obras completas*, II. *Carcel de amor* (Madrid: Castalia, 1979), 13-14. See also George A. Shipley, "Concerting Through Conceit: Unconventional Uses of Conventional Sickness Images in *LC*," *MLR* 70 (1975), 324-32.

¹² *Celestina*, a play in twenty-one acts attributed to Fernando de Rojas, translated by Mack Hendricks Singleton (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1958; 5th printing, 1975), p. 61.

- 13 Kathleen V. Kish, *An Edition of the First Italian Translation of the "Celestina"* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 85.
- 14 Gerald J. Brault, *"Celestine": A Critical Edition of the First French Translation (1527) of the Spanish Classic "La Celestina" with an Introduction and Notes* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), 59.
- 15 *The Celestina: A Novel in Dialogue*, translated from the Spanish by Lesley Byrd Sympson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), 39.
- 16 *"La Celestina": The Spanish Bawd*, translated with an introduction by J. M. Cohen (New York-London: New York University Press and University of London Press, 1966), 63. For additional editions of this translation, see Joseph Snow et al., "Un cuarto de siglo de interés en 'La Celestina,' 1949-75: Documento bibliográfico," *Hispania* 59 (1976), 610-60: no. 233.1.
- 17 *Celestina; or the Tragick-Comedy of Calisto and Melibea*, Englished from the Spanish of Fernando de Rojas by James Mabbe, anno 1631, with an introduction by James Fitzmaurice-Kelly (London, 1894; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1967), 70.
- 18 Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, 2 vols., ed. Luis A. Murillo (Madrid: Castalia, 1978), I, 552.
- 19 The information that follows is printed by Francisco Rodríguez Marín in his edition of *Don Quijote*, Clásicos Castellanos, IV (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1962), 199, n. 6. For further data on Rodríguez Marín's editions, see Luis A. Murillo, *Don Quijote de la Mancha (Bibliografía fundamental)* (Madrid: Castalia, 1978), p. 25: no. 013.
- 20 Alonso López Pinciano, *Philosophía antigua poética*, apud Rodríguez Marín.
- 21 Gonzalo Correas, *Vocabulario de refranes y frases proverbiales* (Madrid: "Rev. de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos," 1924), 99^b.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 138^a.
- 23 This is confirmed by another version collected by Correas, although it lacks the reference to threading: "Cuando la puta está a la puerta, y el oficial tiene cerrada la tienda, no anda buena la venta, o ten por cierta la fiesta" (p. 138^a).
- 24 Francisco Delicado, *La Lozana andaluza*, ed. Bruno M. Damiani (Madrid: Castalia, 1969), 258. Subsequent references will be indicated in the text.
- 25 I am quoting from *Cassell's Spanish Dictionary*.

²⁶ This term was already used with an identical meaning in ancient Greece. In the *Antigone*, when Ismene asks Creon if he plans to kill his son's betrothed, he replies: "Oh, there are other furrows for his plough" (l. 569; I am following Elizabeth Wykoff's translation in *The Complete Greek Tragedies. Sophocles. I*, ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, 3d ed. [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957], and would like to thank Rick M. Newton for bringing this to my attention). For a discussion and bibliography on sexual metaphors and various agricultural activities in several European traditions, see Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman, *Tres calas en el romancero sefardí (Rodas, Jerusalén, Estados Unidos)* (Madrid: Castalia, 1979), 109-11; id., *En torno al romancero sefardí (hispanismo y balcanismo de la tradición judeo-española)* (Madrid: Seminario Menéndez Pidal, 1982), 110-17.

²⁷ Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Literary & Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947; revised and enlarged, 1968), p. 153; I must confess, however, that I was unable to find any reference to the "eye of the needle" in *Henry V*, II. i. Melissa Ludvigsen has brought to my attention the colloquial American expression "to thread the needle," but I could not find it in any of the dictionaries of slang that I consulted.

²⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Passionate Pilgrim*, VII, vv. 12-14, in *Complete Works* (Roslyn, New York: Walter J. Black, 1937).

²⁹ There is something similar in the language of courtly poetry. See Keith Whinnom, "Hacia la interpretación y la valoración de las canciones del *Cancionero general* de 1511," *Filología* (Buenos Aires), 13 (1968-69), 361-81; id., *La poesía amorosa de la época de los Reyes Católicos* (Durham, England: University of Durham, 1981); Alan J. Foreman, "The *cancionero* poet, Quirós," MA Thesis, University of London, 1969; Alan Deyermond, "The Worm and the Partridge: Reflections on the Poetry of Florencia Pinar," *Mester*, 7 (1978), 3-8, at pp. 6-7.

³⁰ See Armistead and Silverman, *Tres calas en el romancero sefardí*, pp. 107-08.

+ - el Bachiller Fernando de Rojas, nombrado a través de un acróstico -

A Emilio

(1)

"olvidame de mí si te olvidare."

Amén Ros-
Buenos Aires, 3-XI-1949

ORIGINALIDAD de "LA CELESTINA"

A Francisca Chica Salas.

Nadie que tenga su bariz de letras españolas ignora que la Celestina es la obra maestra de la prosa castellana después del Quijote, y aun mucho más cercana que el Quijote al corazón de nuestro irracional, pesimista, dolorido siglo XX. Todos sabemos también que los problemas de autor, redacciones y ediciones de esta obra son otros tantos enigmas. Tras las ediciones de Burgos, 1497 y Sevilla, 1501, en dieciséis actos, aparece la de Sevilla de 1502 en veintidós. ¿Un mismo artista redactó el todo? ¿O es uno el autor de los dieciséis^{os} de las dos primeras ediciones y otro el de los cinco actos y las adiciones que agrega la tercera edición? ¿O son tres los autores, el del primer acto, el de los quince restantes, el de los cinco interpolados y las adiciones? ¿Por qué se escondría sin esconderse del todo el Bachiller Rojas? ¿Cómo era, qué pensaba el artista que tras crear una obra absolutamente singular en la literatura castellana (y también en la europea, en sus tiempos) y de inmenso éxito popular, vivió al margen de las letras, sin que se le conociera otra obra alguna?

Todas estas incógnitas - varias, múltiples - son naturalmente atractivas que se ha jugado no poco a resolverlas. Digo "jugado" porque en casi todas ellas el análisis interno no basta para dar solución satisfactoria. Son problemas tentadores, pero hasta ahora insolubles por falta de datos. Puesto que una condición de la sabiduría es saberse limitar, vale más renunciar a la fascinante pregunta ¿Quién escribió La Celestina? ¿Cómo era Fernando de Rojas?, y preguntar algo más accesible y urgente: ¿qui es, cómo es la Traficandina de Calisto y Melibea?

Si dentro de alguna tradición literaria de la Europa occidental se quiere encuadrar esta obra, que burla toda clasificación convencional, e idénticamente sólo puede pensarse en la Comedia Nueva, la de Menandro, transmitida a los tiempos medievales y modernos por el teatro de Plauto y Terencio y una que en términos genéricos puede bosquejarse así: el joven amo logra sus amores ya con una doncella de baja condición - reconocida al final como ciudadana, mediante alguna oportuna contrahata, lo que conduce inevitablemente a las bodas -, ya con una castita cortesana. Para llevar a cabo estos difíciles amores, el joven amo necesita dinero, que no posee. Cómo se lo obtiene es el seruus fallax, gracias a su ingenio, jehibitismo en contratemas para burlar al lenon dueño de la bella, o al durus pater del enamorado.

También en La Celestina el joven caballero cumple su amor gracias a la mediación de gente hija pero, a partir de esta identidad, no hay sino diferencias. Y la diferencia básica es que, para Plauto y Terencio, lo esencial de la obra dramática es lo ingenioso del artemiento, el introgito a cargo del seruus fallax: ambiente y caracteres apenas interesan. Plauto subraya tal situación amor tomando más dificultades que el esclavo intrigante tiene que vencer, y a tal punto en hete pasó a primer plano que en algunas comedias, como la Casina o la Moscellina, una vez resuelta, el desculace se

Sample page (autograph) of M.R. Lida de Malkiel's 1949 Ur. 'Celestina'