

The Role of the Fourth Deadly Sin in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*

Envy was a topic much in vogue in the Middle Ages, and both Juan Ruiz's *Libro de buen amor* (c.1343) and Alfonso Martínez de Toledo's *Arcipreste de Talavera o Corbacho* (1438), two masterpieces of that era, devote a considerable amount of discussion to this phenomenon in their works. In Juan Ruiz's *Libro de buen amor* envy is included as one of the seven deadly sins and is described as a malady: "Gula, envidia, açidia, que s'pegan como lepra" (50; verse 221), and Martínez de Toledo's *Arcipreste de Talavera* contains two chapters of description and analysis of this supposed illness. Although envy exists at all social levels, as *La Celestina* suggests, in this paper it will be traced through the characters of Pármeno and Areúsa to demonstrate the role envy plays in the death of Calisto.

It is often believed that "el loco amor" is what leads Calisto to his death for he is referred to by critics as the personification of the theory of "el loco amor" as described in the first part of *Arcipreste de Talavera* where "crazy love" keeps men from becoming closer to God, brings about physical impairment and even causes death. Stephen Gilman sees act I of *La Celestina* as an introduction for a work whose thesis is that of blasphemy and its punishment (169). Thus, "el loco amor" is presented as blasphemous, and death as a disciplinary measure. This conclusion is justifiable because Calisto's death in the *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea* (1499) lends itself to a variety of interpretations, some of which are offered in María Rosa Lida de Malkiel's chapter on "La motivación" in which there is a section subtitled "La muerte de Calisto en la *Comedia* y en la *Tragicomedia*" (ch. VIII). The present analysis, though, is based on the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* published in 1502 with an additional five acts. In this latter version Calisto's death is more defined because, as this paper will show, his death is caused by one of the deadly sins — envy. With the additional five acts, the influence of envy in Calisto's death can be traced back to the very first act of Rojas' work.

In act I Calisto accuses Pármeno of being envious: ". . . ruégote, Pármeno, la envidia de Sempronio, que en esto me sirve y complace; no ponga

impedimento en el remedio de mi vida, que si para él hobo jubón, para ti no faltará sayo. . .” (62; act I).¹ This accusation is unfounded, and Pármemo denies it by saying, “¿Cuándo me viste, señor, envidiar o por ningún interés ni resabio tu provecho estorcer?” (63; act I). Pármemo reaffirms his lack of envy when in conversation with Celestina he says, “Querría pasar la vida sin envidia, los yermos y aspereza sin temor, el sueño sin sobresalto . . .” (69; act I). What happens, therefore, in the first act is that Pármemo is accused of something that he is not; he is falsely characterized as an envious person when in reality there is nothing to substantiate this claim.

Envy is referred to twice in the second act. Calisto again accuses Pármemo of envy by saying “Pues pido tu parecer, séme agradable, Pármemo; no abajes la cabeza al responder. Mas como la envidia es triste, la tristeza sin lengua, puede más contigo su volutad que mi temor” (76; act II), and in the same conversation Pármemo is called “apostamiento de la envidia” (77; act II). At this point, though, the reader has no reason whatsoever to justify characterizing Pármemo as envious.

Calisto’s accusation puzzles the reader for it is apparent that Pármemo wants what is best for Calisto: “No hay cierto tan malservido hombre como yo, manteniendo mozos adevinos, rezongadores, enemigos de mi bien. ¿Qué vas, bellaco, rezando? Envidioso, ¿qué dices, que no te entiendo?” (113; act VI).

Pármemo is accused of being envious not only by Calisto but also by Sempronio and Celestina. In conversation with Pármemo, Sempronio says: “¡Oh, intolerable pestilencia y mortal te consuma, rijoso, envidioso, maldito!” (108; act VI). In act VIII Sempronio charges Pármemo again: “¿Ya todos amamos? El mundo se va a perder. Calisto a Melibea, yo a Elicia, tú de envidia has buscado con quien perder ese poco de seso que tienes” (136). Once again, Pármemo is accused of envying Calisto’s wealth this time by Celestina in act VII, “No llores tú la hacienda que tu amo heredó, que esto te llevarás de este mundo, pues no le tenemos más de por nuestra vida” (121). Despite the characters’ insistence on depicting a Pármemo moved by envy, the reader has no bases on which to justify this defamation of his character. As observed by the critic Dorothy Clarke in her book *Allegory, Decalogue, and Deadly Sins in La Celestina*, “If we were not told that Pármemo is jealous we would never suspect it” (7).

Establishing a relationship between Pármemo and envy serves two purposes. First, envy gets introduced from the very beginning, thus creating a climate of dramatic suspense for its own development. Second, by ascribing envy to an innocent character its presence is made conspicuous. In Rojas’ time it was common for books to contain a “verdad escondida.” That is, writers would present themes in the form of a puzzle for the reader to piece together. Thus, a suspicious reader would wonder about the insistence on Pármemo’s envy when in fact it seems to be more talked about than real.

It is not surprising, then, that Pármemo is paired with Areúsa in the work.

Although he is the one constantly referred to as envious, it is she who acts in envious ways. The plot of the story hinges on her envy from the beginning of the work through her association with Pármeno even though Areúsa does not enter until act VII.

The fourth deadly sin as found in *Arcipreste de Talavera* is envy (136; ch. IV, pt. 1). There is a remarkable resemblance (if not a literal resemblance) between Martínez de Toledo's chapter IV and Rojas' act IX. Areúsa personifies the envy as explained in *Arcipreste de Talavera*, chapter IV. As the narrator in *Arcipreste de Talavera* claims to have seen the object of envy undressed, similarly Areúsa claims to have seen Melibea undressed. In the same manner that the narrator in *Arcipreste de Talavera* mocks her enemy's cosmetics, Areúsa ridicules Melibea's face creams. But contrary to the narrator in *Arcipreste de Talavera* who describes the object of envy as in many ways the opposite of how the narrator appears to be, Areúsa ridicules Melibea's body which, as it is described by Celestina in act VII, seems to be quite similar to her own. If, in fact, Melibea's body were comparable to Areúsa's, one would wonder why she speaks of Melibea's body as grotesque. A reasonable answer can be found in *Arcipreste de Talavera*, chapter IV, pt. 1:

En tanto que non la puede alabar nin byen della dezir, que sy en algo algún bien della dize, que diez vezes después mucho más non la afee. Demás, pocas mugeres fallarás que sus lenguas fallar pudyesen en mal dezir con pura envidia; e piensan las cuytadas que mal diziendo de otras fazen a sy fermosas, e desonrando a otras acrescientan en su honra. (140)

Thus, it is Areúsa's envy of Melibea that does not allow for a kinder description of the later's physique.

Areúsa seems to be the most misunderstood character in *La Celestina*. Critics such as Stephen Gilman and María Rosa Lida de Malkiel feel that she undergoes a radical transformation in the *Tragicomedia*. For example, Gilman claims that "Rojas is perfectly aware that the process of continuation has resulted in a new Areúsa, an Areúsa typified for purposes of comedy" (203). He suggests that the intrigue carried on by Areúsa "tends towards the theatrical and the purely comic—with all the jesting, typification, and scenic maneuver thereby implied" (205), and he uses as an example the scene in which Centurio jokes about his own name. On the contrary, the comic relief rendered by Centurio's joke in act XVII reflects on his own stupidity and has nothing to do with Areúsa. She is not amused by it and immediately returns to the subject at hand. There is no change in her demeanor. Such an affirmation undermines the envy expressed by Areúsa in the acts before her machinations began.

An examination of Areúsa's dialogue with Celestina will show that she is as sly, devious and serious as Celestina herself as early as in act VII. Gil-

man characterizes Areúsa's behavior in this act as coy (203). Judging by the Latin sense of "coy," one assumes that Areúsa is bashful and shy. But further analysis of her behavior shows that she is merely pretending to be coy; just as Melibea pretends to be coy at the mention of Calisto's name when Celestina speaks of him in act IV. Areúsa's (as well as Melibea's) conversation with Celestina is masked. Not only does the reader know this, but Celestina makes Areúsa's hypocrisy more apparent by saying "¡Anda, que bien me entiendes, no te hagas boba!" (128; act VII). It is evident that Celestina sees through Areúsa's words: "A las obras creo; que las palabras, de balde las venden dondequiera" (128; act VII).

Another example of how Areúsa's character is misunderstood is Gilman's interpretation of her comment, "No digo por esta noche, sino por otras muchas" (Rojas 129; act VII). Areúsa says this as an excuse for not initiating a relationship with Pármeno and, although Gilman sees it as coyness, Celestina recognizes it as an excuse, disregards it and begins her long monologue on the advantages of having two lovers rather than one. This monologue is delivered in an effort to get Areúsa to allow Pármeno to stay with her overnight. But the fact that Pármeno stays with Areúsa is not due only to Celestina's ability to persuade. It appears that Areúsa had a pending indebtedness to Celestina. Although the nature of the obligation is not disclosed, it can be assumed that it was grave given Areúsa's expressed fear of Celestina: "antes me quebraré un ojo que enojarte" (132; act VII).

Undoubtedly, Areúsa's ability to deceive is as keen as Celestina's. This can be observed as early as in act VII. Here her question as to Celestina's visit is subtly hypocritical: ". . . dime a qué fue tu buena venida" (128). On this occasion Areúsa is assuming the position dictated by the society of her time. She treats Celestina diplomatically because cultural customs dictated a regard for older member of society. Moreover, despite (and/or because) of her reputation, she is well regarded, albeit superficially, by the other characters in the work. With the exceptions of Pármeno and Areúsa, none of the other characters are disrespectful to her. Pármeno, who is the most adamantly opposed to Celestina, keeps his animosity towards her at a minimum in her presence. Areúsa, does not insult her directly but the pretense with which she deals with Celestina is communicated to the reader/audience through her satirical, parenthetical expressions: "¡Válala el diablo a esta vieja, con qué viene como huestantigua a tal hora!" (126; act VII).

As mentioned previously, Lida de Malkiel also refers to Areúsa as "la nueva Areúsa" (664). The above analysis of the conversation Areúsa has with Celestina in act VII serves to show that the deceitful Areúsa of act VII is the same malicious Areúsa of act IX despite Lida de Malkiel and Gilman's depiction of her as having undergone a radical transformation. On the contrary, her character seems not to change but to flourish in act IX in the absence of Celestina. Areúsa feels more at liberty to do as she pleases after Celestina's death: "Quizá por bien fue para entrambas la muerte de

Celestina, que yo ya siento la mejoría más que antes. Por esto se dice que los muertos abren los ojos de los que viven, a unos con haciendas, a otros con libertad . . ." (209; act XVII).

The variation in the interpretations of Areúsa's character are perplexing for she gives quite an accurate account of herself to Elicia. There is no doubt in Areúsa's sincerity in warning Elicia not to judge her by her appearance: "no me hayas tú por hija de la pastelera vieja" (202; act XV). She has apparently deceived her critics just as she was able to deceive Celestina, for she later tells Elicia "aunque ella [Celestina] me tenía por boba, porque me quería yo serlo" (213; act XVIII). To ascribe a transformation to Areúsa's character would weaken the personal strength which Rojas intended for her to possess.

It is interesting to note, though, that there is a duality to Areúsa's character. Although she personifies envy, she also fears it: ". . . si yo soy sentida, matarme ha? Tengo vecinas envidiosas" (129; act VII). It is this duality which leads to the underlying force behind Areúsa's envy. Her envy is rooted in the fact that she longs to be a "señora" like Melibea. This is evident when Areúsa tells Celestina that she wants only one lover, her soldier friend, because ". . . me da todo lo que he menester, tiéneme honrada, favóreceme y tratame como si fuese su señora." (128; act VII). Her desire to be a "señora" is also evident in the act VII bedroom scene. Not only does Areúsa greet Pármeneo in a very polite manner, "Gentilhombre, buena sea tu venida" (130; act VII), but she expects him to be courteous in return: "No será él tan descortés . . . señor mío, no me trates de tal manera; ten mesura por cortesía; . . . quítate allá, que no soy de aquellas que piensas; no soy de las que públicamente están a vender sus cuerpos por dinero" (131; act VII). Celestina was aware of Areúsa's aspirations, for in trying to persuade her Celestina calls her "honrada" (131; act VII). But when she sees Areúsa demanding that Pármeneo play her game, Celestina angers: "¿En cortesías y licencias estás? . . . ¿Qué es esto, Areúsa? ¿Qué son estas estrañezas y esquividad, estas novedades y retrainimiento?" (131; act VII). Areúsa's monologue in act IX explains why she has not wanted to act as a servant, "he querido más vivir en mi pequeña casa, exenta y señora" (150). Her dream of being able to be a "señora" is also evident in act XV when she believes that Centurio would be most anxious to obey her orders, "¡Pues, qué gozo habría agora él en que le pusiese yo en algo por mi servicio, . . . y vería él los cielos abiertos en tornalle yo a hablar y mandar!" (202). Her envy, thus, is nurtured by the frustration that she feels given the fact that her aspiration of ascending in social status cannot be realized. The static nature of the feudal society in which she moves does not allow such an occurrence.

Be it in the *Comedia* or the *Tragicomedia*, Areúsa is the common denominator who plays an important role in the plot that leads to Calisto's death. In the *Tragicomedia* Areúsa initiates the series of events that lead to his death. She replaces Celestina as the head prostitute and instigator, which

thus puts her in a position as crucial as that of a protagonist. Areúsa's importance in the plot should not be underestimated. Of the five acts that were added in the *Tragicomedia* much time is devoted to Sosia's visit, Elicia's mourning and Centurio's character, all of which develop Areúsa's character and role. Interestingly enough, Lida de Malkiel points out, "de los cinco actos agregados, tres y medio se proponen hacer plausible la muerte de Calisto" (229). It is apparent that Areúsa's character, and therefore her actions, were meant to be an important part of the plot. Had Areúsa not spoken to Centurio, and had Centurio not sent someone to cause a distraction at Melibea's house, the course of events that led to Calisto's death would not have been triggered.

Pármeno is quite accurate when he says in act XII, "Porque soy cierto que esta doncella ha de ser para él [Calisto] cebo de anzuelo o carne de buitrera, que suelen pagar bien el escote los que a comerla vienen" (170), but although the bait may catch its prey, it is, in reality, the hook that actually kills. The hook in *La Celestina* is envy, and like all hooks it is masked by a bait. Pármeno says the bait is Melibea. The prey is Calisto.

In act X Tristán summarizes it very clearly. When talking with Sosia about his visit to Areúsa, he says,

Mira, Sosia, y acuérdate bien si [Areúsa] te quería sacar algún punto del secreto de este camino que agora vamos, para con que lo supiese revolver a Calisto y Pleberio, de envidia del placer de Melibea. Cata que la envidia es una incurable enfermedad donde asienta, huésped que fatiga la posada; en lugar de galardón, siempre goza de mal ajeno. Pues si esto es así, ¡oh, cómo te quiere aquella malvada hembra engañar con su alto nombre, del cual todas se arrean! Con su vicio ponzoñoso quería condenar el ánima por cumplir su apetito, revolver tales casas <cosas> para contentar su dañada voluntad. ¡Oh arrufianada mujer, y con qué blanco pan te daba zarazas! Quería vender su cuerpo a truco de contienda. (219)

Sosia immediately confirms Tristán's conclusions about Areúsa's evilness by saying: "Astuta sospecha has remontado y creo que verdadera" (219; act X).

Although Areúsa states that she wants to get revenge for the death of Pármeno when she talks to Centurio in act XVIII, "Yo te perdono con condición que me vengues de un caballero, que se llama Calisto, que nos ha enojado a mí y a mi prima" (215), it is apparent that she is most excited at the thought of ruining the love affair between Calisto and Melibea. Areúsa answers her own question in act XV when she asks "¿de quién mejor se puede tomar venganza?" (202). The answer is found at the end of that paragraph: "que yo le haré armar un lazo con que Melibea lllore cuanto agora goza" (202). She confirms her ill intentions towards Melibea in act XV when speaking with Elicia: "Hermana, no seamos nosotras lastimeras; haga

lo que quisiere, mátele como se le antojare. Llore Melibea como tú has hecho" (217). The wickedness of Areúsa's words reveal her desire to bring Melibea down from the status of "señora" to that of a prostitute mourning her lover. This thought, no doubt, causes Areúsa much pleasure for she realizes that she cannot elevate herself to Melibea's position.

Areúsa's character is undoubtedly a central one in the plot of the *Tragicomedia*. As Lida de Malkiel writes: "las dos [Elicia y Areúsa] son los agentes indirectos de la muerte de Calisto y Melibea quienes, por trágica ironía, apenas tienen noticia de su existencia" (686), and just as the deaths are subdued in Rojas' work, so is one of the driving forces behind them — envy.

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NOTES

1. I am using for page references Doroth S. Severin's edition of *La Celestina* (Madrid, 1991).

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