

## **NAMING IN CELESTINA**

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The importance of names and naming has been universally recognized in human culture, from tribal to industrialized societies. This can be seen in everyday life in the decision of naming a child: in considering the impact that the name will have on the child not only in his/her life experience but in defining and representing the child's nature. Since Genesis, the process of naming has been clearly represented in Western, Judeo-Christian culture. The Bible describes the formation of words when God called the light 'day', the darkness 'night', the firmament 'heavens' the dry land 'earth', and the waters 'seas' (Genesis 1:1-10). In John 1:1-5, the Gospels describe that "in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Everything was made by the Word, and nothing that ever existed was made without it. In the Word was life and life was the light of mankind, illuminating the darkness with such power that the latter could not overcome it. As Christian theology teaches, of course, Christ is the Word, the Word made flesh, but the general importance of the word/words underlies the biblical message. The word passed from God to man after the divine creation, for man was charged with the responsibility of naming. Genesis 2:19-20 recounts how after God formed the animals of the field and the birds of the sky, He brought them before man to see what he would call them, and man gave every living thing its proper name. In an activity paralleling God's (Genesis 1:5-10), man named all the animals, beasts, and birds, and later, in Genesis 2:23, called his mate 'woman'.

In the Garden of Eden proper names were not necessary since a universal, generic language represented by common nouns sufficed in that idyllic, non-individualized setting. Even the name Adam is nothing more than the Hebrew common noun for 'mankind' ('ādām), which the writer(s) of Genesis used to designate generically the first man, the race

"mankind," as well as the proper name for the first man. *'Adam* is first used in Genesis 1:26: "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" The Vulgate substitutes the proper name *'Adam* for the common noun *'man* as early as the second chapter of Genesis (2:19); however, the first time man is clearly called by a proper name occurs after the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:25. According to *The New Interpreter's Bible*.

The point at which *'adam* becomes the proper name Adam remains uncertain. Genesis 4:25 provides the first unequivocal instance of *'adam* without the definite article (...) The movement of the meaning of *'adam* back and forth between generic humankind (1:26-27; 5:1-2), the first man, and Adam probably reflects an effort both to tell a story of a past and to provide a mirroring story for every age. (353)

After the Fall, with the acquisition of knowledge and the population of the earth, the word became more specific. Common nouns no longer sufficed as names, and man named woman *'Eve* (in Hebrew, *Javvah*), meaning the life-giving one, representing her status as mother of all living beings (Genesis 3:20). As represented by the first naming of Eve, proper nouns became more important after the expulsion from Eden. Names came not only to identify the specific person, being contextually referential for communication, but also embodied and symbolized the nature of the person. George Ramsey, citing Johannes Fichtner, states that a name is an "indicator of the distinction of different entities" as well as "the *determination* of the essence of the named entity" (30). In short, the named must conform to the nature expressed by the name, which "exercises a constraint upon its bearer[, an idea] rooted partially in the frequently asserted idea that the spoken word was 'an operative reality whose action cannot be hindered once it has been pronounced'" (Ramsey 30, citing E. Jacob). Ramsey concludes that in Genesis and other biblical texts the act of naming signifies discernment. Adam's naming of the creatures and woman shows him discerning their divinely established nature (Ramsey 34-35).

In essence, names held the power to define the person and represent his/her being. Not only in the case of Eve, but names throughout the Bible are specific to and stand for the signified. Some famous examples being the names Moses and Jesus. The name Moses (Hebrew *Mošeh*) was given to the child because it means 'to draw out,' as Pharaoh's daughter had drawn the babe out of the water (Exodus 2:10). Jesus was named by the Lord himself: "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name

Jesus" (Luke 1:31), "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus (in Hebrew, Yehošúa) means "Yahweh saves," likewise representing the person's circumstance and being.

The power of names is evinced elsewhere in the Ten Commandments where it is forbidden to mention the Lord's name in vain (Exodus 20:7), which forms part of a larger code of reverence restricting the use of God's name in general since it represents the most sacred of sacreds. To call on the Lord's name is to evoke the Lord himself and should be done only with the greatest of care, reverence, and only in the most solemn and holy of contexts.

Yet, not just biblical lore speaks of names. Words and the fascination with naming has been the object of philosophic, exegetic, etymological, and linguistic study since classical times. Saint Isidore, in his *Etymologies*, refers to common and proper nouns as follows:

Nomen dictum quasi notamen, quot nobis vocabulo suo res notas efficiat. Nisi enim nomen scieris, cognitio rerum perit. Propria nomina dicta quia specialia sunt. Vnius enim tantum personam significant. (I.vii.1)

In the Spanish Golden Age, Sebastián de Cobarruvias added:

*Latine nomen, quasi novimen (inquit Festus) a nosco, quod notitiam faciat, nam per id quo quicquid nominamus agnoscitur, vel a graeco .... ablato o primo. Si se huvieran conservado los nombres que Adán puso a las cosas, supiéramos sus essencias, sus calidades y propiedades; ya que esto no nos consta, es cierto que los nombres que ponemos a las cosas les vienen a quadrar por alguna razón, como en el processo deste trabajo se ha visto, de donde rastreamos sus etimologías. En la milicia, dar el nombre es assegurararse de los enemigos en la noche. Preguntando: ¿Quién vive?, han de responder el nombre que se ha dado; latine dicitur tesera militaris. Nombre quiere dezir algunas vezes la fama, que los antiguos dezían nombradía. Nombrar, llamar a uno por su nombre o presentarle, haziendo nombramiento dél. (830a)*

Additionally, with special reference to the topic at hand, the power and importance of names and naming is recognized by contemporary audience of *Celestina*, as witnessed by the anonymous sixteenth-century glossator of the *Celestina comentada* when he explains the name *Celestina* through law:

El autor compuso este nombre de una palabra latina que es *scelus* que quiere dezir traición o maldad para también manifestarnos por el nombre quán mala era esta mujer, porque los nombres de las cosas o personas an de ser semejantes e correspondientes a las mismas cosas como se prueba en [*Instituta*]. Y para muchas cosas en derecho es provechoso tener buen nombre y no malo o feo como lo tracta el abbad . . . Y también lo dize Jacobo de Velloviso en su *Práctica* en el principio. Y ansí refiere Juan Andrés que le dezía su mujer que si los nombres hermosos se vendiessen, que con gran precio los avíamos de comprar, como lo dize Castillo en el prohemio que haze a las *Leyes de Toro*, onde cerca de esto habla que sería largo referirlo. Y de esta Celestina refiere Joan de Nevizanes en su *Sylva nupcial*, lib. 4. 63, que andava con un manto roto y un gran sartal de quentas y que jurava siempre por su conciencia o por su ánima. (fol. 32r-v, Note 100; Sources: *Institutionum juris libri quatuor*, lib. II, tit. VII 'De donationibus'; *Abbatis antiqui super quinque libris Decretalium*, II, 'De iudicis', De quouult Deo; Jacobus de Belviso, *Practica judiciaria*, Alphabeticus index principalium sententiarum, De litera N, 'Nomen habere bonum est bonum et utile'; Diego del Castillo, *Super leges Tauri*, Proemium, 'Doña Juana'; Johannes Nevizanis, *Sylvae nuptialis libri sex*, III, no. 63).

In modern philosophical thought, proper names are considered to have a stable character: that is to say that "[i]n each context of use, the character of a name determines the same content. This means that names, unlike indexicals, are not context-sensitive. This does not mean that the denotation of a name is not dependent (at least in part) on its context of use" (Fitch 68). Some consider the denotation of a name as determined by its origin, linking the name's use back to its introduction (Fitch 68). Thus, the meaning of Celestina, from 1499 on, would be determined by its initial appearance in the 15th-century text as it is passed from receiver to receiver with the same connotation.

Through biblical lore, law, grammar, and philosophical semantics, a name fits the character and quality of the person or thing and represents its essence, nature, or fame. It is through the signifier that we come to a knowledge and understanding of the signified. Perhaps in Castilian letters the most famous example of naming to define and identify, if not also mystify, comes from the Archpriest's book, commonly called *Libro de Buen Amor* (299-300, strs. 924-27).

A la tal mensajera nunca le digas maça;  
bien o mal commo gorgee, nunca le digas picaça,

señuelo, cobertera, almadana, coraça,  
altaba, trainel, cabestro nin almohaça.

Garavato nin tía, cordel nin cobertor,  
escofina, avancuerda..., nin rrascador,  
pala, aguzadera, freno nin corredor,  
nin badil nin tenazas, nin anzuelo pescador.

Canpana, taravilla, alcayata nin porra,  
xáquima, adalid, nin guía nin handora;  
nunca le digas trotera, aun que por ti corra;  
creo que si esto guardares, que la vieja te acorra.

Aguijón, escalera, nin abejón nin losa,  
trailla, nin trechón, nin rregistro nin glosa;  
dezir todos sus nonbres es a mí fuerte cosa,  
nonbres e maestrías más tienen que rraposa.

As John Walsh has shown, this list of nicknames is comic and parodic in light of both religious artifice listing the deity's names and legal lists of insults punishable by law. Moreover, according to Walsh:

Several of the nicknames whose precise sense now seems obscure were meant to be illuminated in Juan Ruiz's numerous other passages about the go-between. It is thus possible to restore the association of things that served as nicknames...and the activities of the bawd as they were comprehended by the audience...To some extent, then, the list of names in the interpolation is a rehearsal of the images of the bawd that Juan Ruiz uses elsewhere in his work. (159-161)

The nicknames used by the Archpriest are a description and representation of the bawd's essence (i.e., seduction), evoking the nature of the person and her profession through comic parody.

In *Celestina* we see the power of naming in various contexts. First, there is direct naming in *Celestina*. As described earlier, there is the perceived belief that the spoken word or name sets into motion an operative reality that cannot be hindered and that evokes the spirit of the object or person named, such as in chants and incantations. We see this in Act 4 when Lucrecia resists saying *Celestina*'s name as if it were an offensive word or had power to cause harm.

ALI. Pues, ¿por qué no le dizes?

LUC. He vergüença.

ALI. Anda, bova, dile. No me indignes con tu tardança.

LUC. Celestina, hablando con reverencia, es su nombre.

ALI. ¡Hy, hy, hy! ¡Mala landre te mate si de risa puedo estar, viendo el desamor que debes de tener a essa vieja, que su nombre has vergüença nombrar! (303-304)

Since naming Celestina is representational of her nature as infamous *alcahueta* and *hechicera*, Lucrecia shies from mentioning the shameful name. Celestina's name is as powerful an image as her actual self and could cause as much dishonor to Lucrecia and Pleberio's house as would her visit. D. J. Gifford (36) points out that once Lucrecia has spoken Celestina's name, the bawd is given access to the house. Uttering her name puts into action an operative reality empowered by her conjured spell at the end of Act 3.

In Act 7, the act of naming is again seen, but here the name is unspoken precisely because of the power it wields. As Celestina seduces Pármeno to her alliance with Sempronio, she calls Pármeno her quasi-adoptive son and plays on this relationship to win Pármeno to her side. Pármeno comments:

PAR. Agora doy por bien empleado el tiempo que, siendo niño, te serví, pues tanto fruto trae para la mayor edad. Y rogaré a Dios por el ánimo de mi padre, que tal tutriz me dexó, y de mi madre, que a tal mujer me encomendó.

CEL. No me la nombres, hijo, por Dios, que se me hinchen los ojos de agua. ¿Y tuve yo en este mundo otra tal amiga, otra tal compañera, tal aliviadora de mis trabajos y fatigas? (363-364)

Celestina then enters into a series of elegiac remarks about Claudina, which anger Pármeno, who would rather not be reminded of his family background. He retaliates by taunting Celestina with his memory of her and his mother being arrested together. Eventually, when he speaks of Celestina persevering in her sin, the bawd repays him in kind as she describes Claudina's four arrests and public shaming.

Although in this scene Claudina's name is silent, it was mentioned earlier in Act 1, when Pármeno reveals to Celestina his identity as "hijo de Alberto, tu compadre" (255), and she exclaims in response: "¿Y tú eres Pármeno, hijo de la Claudina?" (255). Claudina was also named in Act 3, when Celestina explains to Sempronio how it is that

she knows Pármeno. She says regarding the latter's mother: "En mi ánima, descubierta se yva hasta el cabo de la ciudad con su jarro en la mano, que en todo el camino no oya peor de '¡Señora Claudina!'" (285). In Act 7, as cited above, Claudina is not named so as not to bring forth her memory and power over Celestina, who claims that the reminder of such a loss of a dear friend and comrade would be more than she could emotionally bear. However, given the power of the name to evoke the physical image and nature of the signified, perhaps Celestina also forbids mentioning Claudina's name for other reasons. As Celestina reveals in the same speech, Claudina was her better both as *alcahueta* and *hechicera*:

Pues entrava en un cerco mejor que yo, y con más esfuerço, aunque yo tenía farto buena fama más que agora; que por mis pecados todo se olvidó con su muerte. ¿Qué más quieres sino que los mesmos diablos la havían miedo? Atemorizados y espantados los tenía con las crudas bozes que les dava. Assí era ella dellos conocida como tú en tu casa. Tumbando venían unos sobre otros a su llamado. No les osavan dezir mentira según la fuerça con que los apremiava. (364-365)

Given the description of Claudina's abilities, sentimental nostalgia may not have been the only reason Celestina was hesitant to hear her name uttered. She may have feared that doing so would evoke the superior powers of her former *comadre* and thus conjure her being and put into play her essential force.

Other names are also powerful. In Act 10, Celestina speaks of the power of Calisto's name over Melibea.

CEL. ¿Cómo, señora, tan mal hombre es aquél? ¿Tan mal nombre es el suyo, que en sólo ser nombrado trae consigo ponçoña su sonido? tan virtuosa como Calisto, que si conocido fuese...

MEL. ¡O, por Dios, que me matas! ¿Y no te tengo dicho que no me alabes esse hombre, ni me le nombres en bueno ni en malo? ...

CEL. ... y si, como prometiste, lo sufres, tú quedaraás sana y sin debda y Calisto sin quexa y pagado. Primero te avisé de mi cura y desta invisible aguja que, sin llegar a ti, sientes en sólo mentarla en mi boca.

MEL. Tantas vezes me nombrarás esse tu cavallero, que ni mi promessa baste ni la fe que te di a sufrir tus dichos. ...

CEL. ... Mayormente que sé yo al mundo nascida una flor que de todo esto te delibre.

MEL. ¿Cómo se llama?  
 CEL. No te lo oso dezir.  
 MEL. Di, no temas.  
 CEL. ¡Calisto! ... (430-436)

Calisto's name affects Melibea as if she were in the presence of the man himself. Her similar reaction was seen earlier in an important exchange in Act 4, when Celestina first mentioned Calisto's name to Melibea, a pivotal moment in the two women's conversation: "¡Jesú! ¡No oyga yo mentar más esse loco, saltaparedes, fantasma de noche, luengo como ciguñal, figura de paramento mal pintado; si no, aquí me caeré muerta!" (316).

Melibea's reaction in both acts manifests that the name symbolizes the person: to hear the name is as if to be under the person's power. As Gifford has concluded, "the formal surrender of Melibea in Aucto X gives us the best example of how Rojas saw the name as possessing magical power" (36). As cited above, Celestina uses Calisto's name three times in Act X in a very deliberate manner, which Melibea clearly recognizes and to which she reacts with growing uneasiness and continued unwillingness to hear the name spoken, culminating in the final utterance of "Calisto," at which point Melibea swoons (Gifford 36-37).

Moreover, in Act 11, after leaving Melibea's house, Celestina spies Calisto, Sempronio and Pármeno in the street, talking as they make their way to the Church of the Magdalene. She catches up with them to give them news of Melibea. She appears to them precisely as Sempronio pronounces her name.

SEM. Señor, mira que tu estada es dar a todo el mundo que decir. Por Dios, que huygas de ser tray'do en lenguas; que al muy devoto llaman ypócrita. ¿Qué dirán sino que andas royendo los sanctos? Si pasión tienes, súfrela en tu casa; no te sienta la tierra. No descubras tu pena a los estraños, pues está en manos el pandero, que lo sabrá bien tañer.

CAL. ¿En qué manos?

SEM. De Celestina.

CEL. ¿Qué nombráys a Celestina? ¿Qué dezís de esta esclava de Calisto? Toda la calle del Arcidiano vengo a más andar tras vosotros por alcançaros, y jamás he podido con mis luengas haldas. (444-445)



As if by magic, Celestina appears exactly on cue as her name is spoken. Not only is this good dramatic effect, but it brings to fore the power of words. Her name evokes her being and causes her to materialize on the spot, as if by command. Sempronio does not suspect that he will conjure Celestina by saying her name, but he does so all the same.

This example from Act 11 relates naming to another concept: the magic word or conjure. Words of incantations are as old as human civilization itself. The role of the sorcerer or wizard in the Middle Ages has been studied by such scholars as Richard Kieckhefer, who shows that two fifteenth-century books, in which magic plays an important role, the household management book from Wolfsthurn Castle and a manual of demonic magic from the Bavarian State Library in Munich, draw from the Christian liturgy for their charms and spells. Sometimes lengthy passages from the Christian liturgy are adopted or new models are formulated based on Christian precedent. Some elements in the handbooks involve magical incantations of the names for God, based on Jewish precepts, or the Christian equivalent using the names for Christ (2-6). The importance and power of names in magic and spells, then, relates to the Judeo-Christian, biblical tradition of names and naming. The word embodies the essence of the object signified and has the power to create through representation.

The power of naming functions not only to conjure up images or beings, such as Celestina or Claudina, but also to bring about actions in *Celestina*. As already mentioned, in Act 7 Claudina enters into the fabric of the text as Celestina entices Pármemo into her alliance with Sempronio. In Act 12, Claudina's memory is again evoked by Celestina but not as a representation, rather as a threat against Pármemo.

Y tú, Pármemo, ¿piensas que soy tu cativa, por saber mis secretos y mi pasada vida y los casos que nos acaescieron a mí y a la desdichada de tu madre? ¡Y aun así me tratava ella, quando Dios quería. (483)

As Joseph T. Snow has discussed in his study of Claudina, Celestina misreads how Pármemo will react to the mention of his mother and her past. She expects him to withdraw in the face of exposing his ignominious background so as not to affect his standing in Calisto's household and his hopes for social advancement. However, rather than shrink from the threatening words, he lashes out against the bawd with greater malice.

No me hinchas las narizes con esas memorias; si no, embiarte he con nuevas a ella, donde mejor te puedas quejar. (483)

It is important that Celestina does not mention Claudina by name in this passage and only refers to "la desdichada de tu madre," and she admits that Claudina was wont to threaten her just as Pármeneo now does. Celestina may yet harbor some fear of Claudina's former threats and power. She does not risk conjuring Claudina's physical presence through the mention of her name as she threatens Pármeneo with his mother's renown. Ironically, the evocation of Claudina's memory, even without the name, does not assist Celestina in her battle against Sempronio and Pármeneo but rather brings about her demise. Celestina should have heeded more closely her own recollections, remembering Claudina as a threatening *comadre*, and been more wary of her as a means to manipulate Pármeneo, for it is through Pármeneo that Claudina may have won the final victory over Celestina.

There are also prophetic threats in *Celestina* where the word as curse conjures the action willed by the speaker. For example, in her *maldición* in Act 1, Elicia prognosticates Sempronio's death:

¡Ay! ¡Maldito seas, traydor! ¡Postema y landres te mate y a manos de tus enemigos mueras, y por crímines dignos de cruel muerte en poder de rigurosa justicia te veas! ¡Ay! ¡Ay! (235)

This later will come true at the end of Act 12, when Sempronio and Pármeneo jump from Celestina's window to escape capture after murdering the old bawd, and in Act 13 we learn from Sosia's account that after jumping from the window to flee from the authorities, they were brought, half-dead, to justice and beheaded. Elicia's feigned jealous anger and curse upon Sempronio in Act 1 cast their spell and come to fruition 11 acts later.

Another example of the power of words occurs in Act 3, with the famous conjuring scene, which ends as a form of threat against Pluto:

Yo, Celestina, tu más conocida cliéntula, te conjuro por la virtud y fuerça destas vermejas letras, por la sangre de aquella noturna ave con que están escriptas, por la gravedad de aquestos nombres y signos que en este papel se contienen, por la áspera ponçoña de la bívoras de que este azeyte fue hecho, con el qual unto este hilado: vengas sin tardança a obedescer mi voluntad y en ello te enbuevas y con ello estés sin un momento te partir hasta que Melibea, con aparejada oportunidad que aya, lo

compre. Y con ello de tal manera quede enredada que, quanto más lo mirare, tanto más su corazón se ablande a conceder mi petición, ... Y, esto hecho, pide y demanda de mí a tu voluntad. Si no lo hazes con presto movimiento, ternásme por capital enemiga; heriré con luz tus cárceres tristes y oscuras, acusaré cruelmente tus continuas mentiras, apremiaré con mis ásperas palabras tu horrible nombre. Y otra y otra vez te conjuro. Y así, confiando en mi mucho poder, me parto para allá con mi hilado, donde creo te llevo ya embuelto. (293-295)

The spell is in play in Act 4, as Celestina notes:

Por aquí anda el diablo aparejando oportunidad, arzeziando el mal a la otra. ¡Ea, buen amigo! ¡Tener rezio! Agora es mi tiempo o nunca. No la dexes, llévamela de aquí a quien digo. (305)

¡En hora mala acá vine, si me falta mi conjuro! ¡Ea, pues bien sé a quien digo! ¡Ce, hermano, que se va todo a perder! (315)

As she walks to Calisto's house at the beginning of Act 5, Celestina acknowledges the role of the conjure in her success with Melibea:

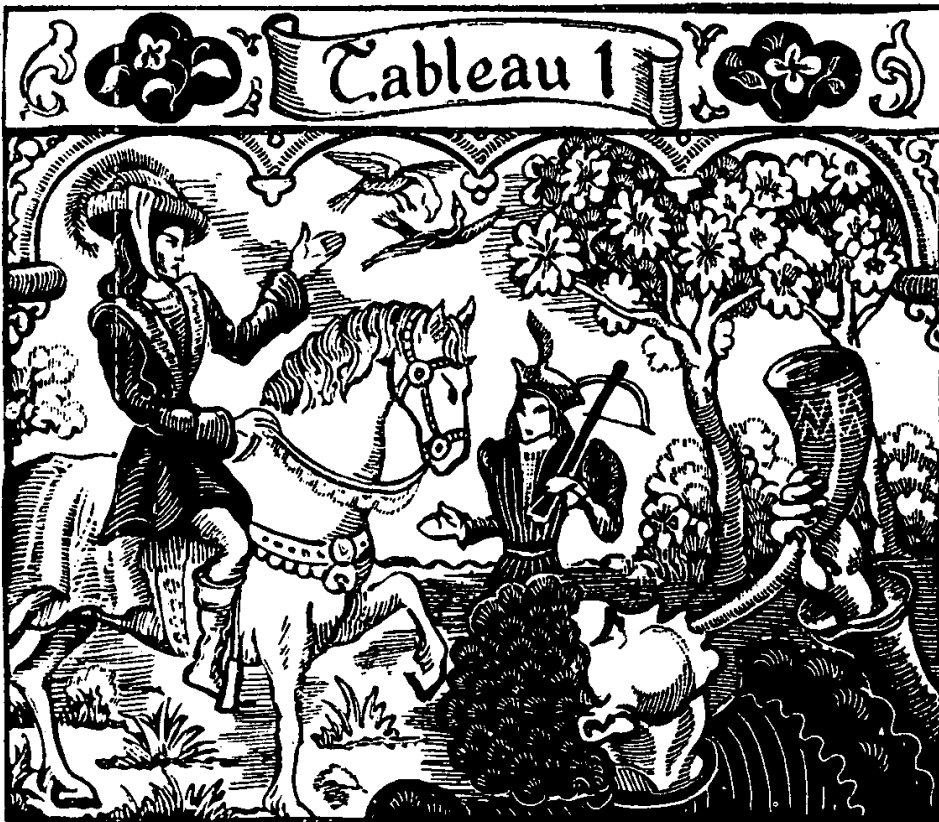
¡O diablo a quien yo conjuré, cómo cumpliste tu palabra en todo lo que te pedí! ¡En cargo te soy! Así amansaste la cruel hembra con tu poder y diste tan oportuno lugar a mi habla quanto quise, con la ausencia de su madre. ... ¡O serpentino azeyte! ¡O blanco filado! ¡Cómo os aparejastes todos en mi favor! O yo rompiera todos mis atamientos hechos y por fazer, ni creyera en yervas ni en piedras, ni en palabras. (328)

It is interesting to note that in the last words cited from this passage Celestina recognizes the power of incantations through herbs, stones, words and proclaims her belief in their conjuring effect.

Scholarship has been divided over the actual effect of the spell that Celestina has cast in Act 3. In Act 1, in Pármeno's description of Celestina's profession and arts, he has already told us that all of this is a sham: "todo era burla y mentira" (247). However, in spite of this textual caviat, critics such as Peter Russell; Alan Deyermond, Javier Herrero, and Dorothy Severin, among others, see the workings of the spell in the text as either black or white magic. Even though it can be debated whether the spell truly affected Melibea, it cannot be denied that a spell was cast; that the obstacle of Alisa's presence is removed; and that Celestina obtains Melibea's good will in the end and secures the possibility for

later entry to Melibea's house to obtain the prayer. Celestina's belief in the conjure has worked, either as magic spell or psychological confidence to aid her successfully in the endeavor. Celestina has aptly used conjured words, or "linguistic sorcery" as Olga Valbuena has called it, to bring Melibea's will in line with the bawd's wishes.

From these few examples, we see, then, that names play a significant role in *Celestina*, bringing characters to life and making them materialize on the spot. Words conjure tragic actions of love and death. Naming, curses, and bewitchments all merge in a web of incantation, power, manipulation, death and tragedy. Names conjure up people, memories, and power through their representational force. Curses weave their spell to bring the characters to a tragic end. Even memories of those unnamed can have dire consequences and undo the best of plans. As Gifford has rightly concluded (36), names in *Celestina* occur at turning points in the plot, invoking principles of magic — and even more precisely, the magical power of names.

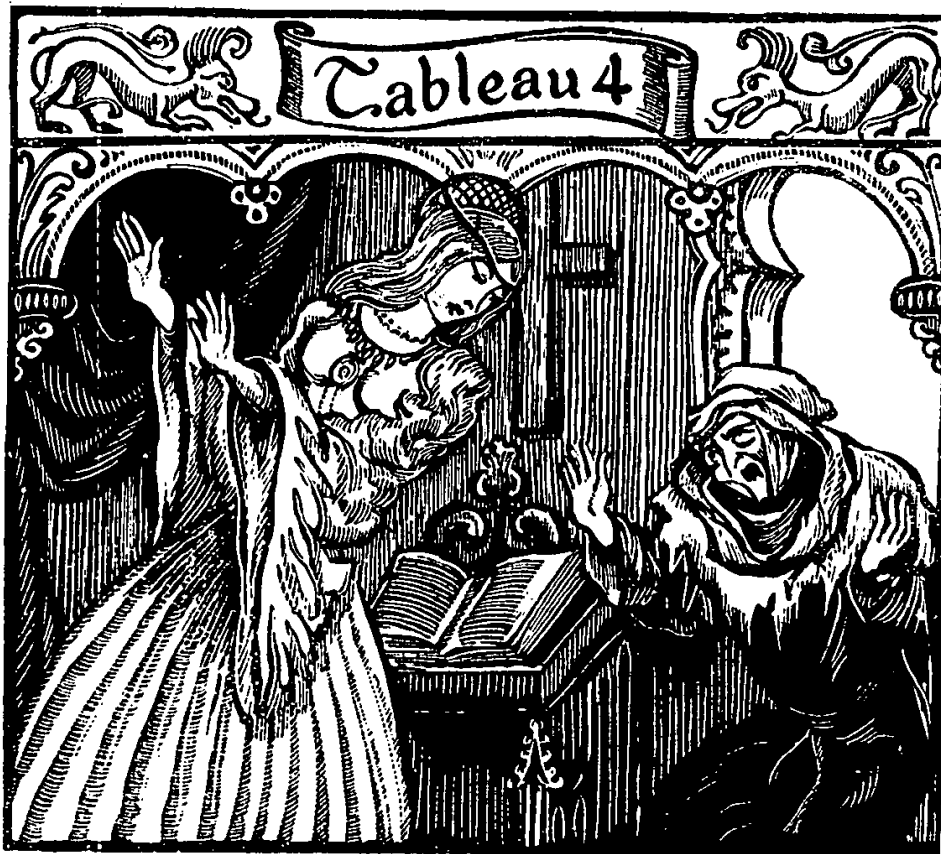


Primera escena. Adaptación de Paul Achard (1943).  
Ilustración de Maurice L'Hoir

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