

# Spectatorship, Dead Bodies, and Medical Discourses in *Celestina*

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## ABSTRACT

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This article examines the intersection of spectatorship, literary imagination, and medical discourses as they converge in *Celestina*. The representation of dead bodies in this text projects Rojas' work into Early Modernity as a literary forerunner of the anatomical discourse that scrutinizes the interior of the body and which would not emerge in the Iberian Peninsula until the 1540s. Drawing on Visual Studies, Body Studies, and Literary Studies, the present essay interrogates the notion of the gaze and the representation of cadavers in *Celestina* as a transgressive narrative that in 1499 tests the boundaries between real and metaphorical anatomies. From this perspective, Rojas' literary imagination vis à vis the shift from a medieval to a pre-modern medical gaze inform a post-medieval understanding of the concept of the dead body at the dawn of modernity in Iberia.

KEY WORDS: Cadavers, Gaze, Medicine, Modernity, Spectatorship.

## Espectadores, cadáveres y discursos médicos en *Celestina*

## RESUMEN

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Este artículo examina la convergencia de la noción del espectador, la imaginación literaria y los discursos médicos en *Celestina*. La representación de cadáveres en este texto proyecta la obra de Rojas hacia la modernidad temprana como precursor del discurso anatómico que examina el interior del cuerpo y que no surgiría en la Península ibérica hasta la cuarta década del siglo XVI. A través del marco teórico de los Estudios visuales, los Estudios del cuerpo y los Estudios literarios, este artículo analiza el concepto de la mirada y la representación de cadáveres en *Celestina* como una narrativa transgresora que en 1499 pone a prueba los límites entre anatomías reales y metafóricas. Desde esta perspectiva, la imaginación literaria de Rojas vis à vis con la transición de una mirada médica medieval a una premoderna permiten profundizar en una comprensión post-medieval del concepto del cadáver en los albores de la modernidad en Iberia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cadáveres, Espectadores, Medicina, Mirada, Modernidad.

What pleasure can there be in looking at a mangled corpse, which must excite our horror? Yet if there is one near, people flock to see it, so as to grow sad and pale at the sight. They are actually frightened of seeing it in their sleep, as though anyone had forced them to see it when they were awake or as if they had been induced to look at it because it had the reputation of being a beautiful thing to see. (Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Book x, Chapter 35, 246)

Following in the wake of what W. J. T. Mitchell has called the «pictorial turn» during the mid-90s (1994: 11), scholarship on *Celestina* since then has analyzed the connections between desire and the act of looking. Seeing, watching, gazing, and looking at living bodies has been well documented by recent work that builds on Body Studies and Visual Studies to examine the complexities of the visual field in *Celestina*. In this context, gazing is largely approached as a manifestation of what Saint Augustine defined as *concupiscentia oculorum*; that is, the lust of the eyes; the capacity of vision to ignite a kind of desire that medieval religious thought condemned as a distraction from spiritual matters (1963: 245). In fact, he further criticizes the tension between spiritual detachment and sensory visual attraction because «by the lust of the flesh the lovers of the lowest kind of pleasure are signified, by the lust of the eyes the curious and inquisitive, by worldly ambition the proud» (2005: 77). For Saint Augustine, the appetite for knowing is placed in the sense of sight because «the eyes are the chief of our sense for acquiring knowledge» (1963: 245).

In his discussion of the connections between desire and knowledge, Peter Brooks points out that «the desire for possession will be closely linked to the desire to know, itself most often imagined as the desire to see» (2009: 9). For the medieval mind the epistemological connection between sight and knowledge derives from the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve who before eating from the Tree of Good and Evil are assured by the snake: «De ninguna manera moriréis. Es que Dios sabe muy bien que el día que comáis de él, se os abrirán los ojos y seréis como dioses, concedores del bien y del mal» (*Biblia de Jerusalén*, Gen. 3:5, 16). Upon eating from the tree, the text reads, «Entonces se les abrieron a entrambos los ojos. Y se dieron cuenta de que estaban desnudos» (Gen. 3:7, 17). In this foundational narrative, seeing and knowing become integral elements of desire leading to self-knowledge and shame.

In *Celestina* the desire to see inhabits the ins and outs of language and imagination which work together to pave the way to 'knowing' bodies. In this text, erotic desire, the «epistemophilic urge,» as Peter Brooks has called it, oscillates between words to be heard and bodies to be seen, and ultimately possessed. *Celestina* masters the art of manipulating characters with words thus turning desire into a linguistic construct. However, as the pervasive presence of the semantic field of vision reveals through-

out the text, sight vies with language as a catalyst of desire. In fact, as Michael Gerli points out, «in *Celestina* everyone is driven by a need to see, a compulsion to grasp the objects of desire with the eyes, that is portrayed as an extension of the erotic imagination, a need to apprehend visually and thus possess what is caught by the field of vision» (2017: 99).

Along these lines, the present essay shifts the attention from gazing at living bodies to contemplating dead bodies in *Celestina*.<sup>1</sup> The literary representation of cadavers in *Celestina* positions Rojas' work as a text that hinges between the medieval collective imaginary of the corpse controlled by religious discourses and the emergent early modern mindset that constructs cadavers as sites of confrontation and competing visually-oriented practices. In addition to the moralizing use as cautionary tales and *memento mori*, the representation of dead bodies in *Celestina* in conjunction with the discourses on sight transgresses this medieval worldview by signaling the paradigm shift of early modernity that turns these lifeless bodies into sites of knowledge through direct observation. Rojas' renderings of cadavers positions *Celestina* as a literary forerunner of an anatomical discourse which manifests a shift from focusing on representations to scrutinizing the interior of the body itself.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on Visual Studies, Body Studies, and Literary Studies, the present essay examines the notion of the gaze and the representation of corpses in *Celestina* contextualized within an overarching question: what is to be learned about dead bodies in *Celestina* through the intersection of spectatorship, bodily fragmentation, and medical discourses at the dawn of modernity in Iberia?

## Dead Bodies in *Celestina*: From Moralization to Knowledge

Multiple studies have examined the representation of death in *Celestina* and have shed light on the ways in which the playful narrative

1.— The association between knowledge and sight is also an integral part of the traditions of death that the Middle Ages inherited from Antiquity. As Philip Ariès notes in his examination of French epic poems, upon regaining consciousness after having taken a bad fall, King Ban looks up to Heaven and cries out «Ah, Lord God, help me, for I see and I know that my end has come» (1974: 3).

2.— This discourse would not emerge in the Iberian Peninsula until the 1540s. In 1542 Luis Lobera de Ávila publishes his *Remedio de cuerpos humanos y silva de experiencia* which includes a treatise on anatomy. Then, under the influence of *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* by Andreas Vesalius (1543), Iberia would see the proliferation of anatomical texts such as Bernardino Montaña de Monserrate's *Libro de la Anatomía del hombre* (1551) or Juan Valverde Amusco's *Historia de la composición del cuerpo humano* (1556). As a result of the intellectual battle that, as Miguel Vicente Pedraz points out, the universities of Valladolid, Alcalá, Valencia, and Salamanca sustained between the medieval tradition and the new methods of Early Modernity around the human body (2009: 602), these manuals advocated for a more rational and direct view of the human body in order to offer «una simple relación en manera de comentario delo que yo é visto en los cuerpos» (Valverde 2005: 5).

that begins in Act I gradually grows tainted by darkness with the violent deaths of five characters.<sup>3</sup> Act XIII serves as the point of inflection in the plot in which bodies are transformed from being enjoyed as a whole to being broken into fragments. From this moment onwards, the audience is confronted with bodies that are violently cast out of the symbolic, social, and visual order of the cultural conventions of the time.

The deaths of Celestina, Sempronio, Pármeno, Calisto, and Melibea share several elements. They are connected to a mortal sin: greed and lust. They are also extremely violent: a murder, two executions, an accidental fall, and a suicide. These deaths are excessive in the way they are staged: Celestina is stabbed thirty times, Sempronio and Pármeno are executed after sustaining a fall that deforms their bodies, Calisto's brains are scattered across the pavement, and Melibea's body is fragmented into pieces. Five violent deaths that produce five dead bodies with their instrumental «thereness» —a characteristic that, as Katherine Verdery explains, transforms cadavers into an «important means of localizing a claim» (1999: 28)— thus allowing Rojas to exemplify the consequences of what seems to be a society in crisis.

Rojas' social diagnosis led him to underscore «la necesidad que nuestra común patria tiene de la presente obra por la muchedumbre de galanes y enamorados mancebos que posee» who in the presence of love lack «defensivas armas para resistir sus fuegos» («El Autor a un su amigo,» 69). Rojas is building on the model of *amor hereos* that has infected the high social classes of Castile in 1499; that is, he is using the metaphor of bodily health/illness taking as a referent social order/disorder for which the cure seems to be the very text of *Celestina*.<sup>4</sup> As Elaine Scarry has observed, moments of social crisis are often accompanied by a reconfiguration of the role of the human body. «When there is within a society a crisis of belief —that is, when some central idea or ideology or cultural construct has ceased to elicit a population's belief [...],» this scholar notes, «the sheer material factualness of the human body will be borrowed to lend that cultural construct the aura of 'realness' and 'certainty'» (1985: 14). It is within this context in which medicine, society, and body mutually inform each other that the representation of dead bodies in *Celestina* can be read in a twofold manner: as a literary strategy that relies on the body as a response to and a commentary on political and social crisis, and as a

3.—Among them, Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida's work on the representation of dead bodies in *Celestina* is of particular interest to the present essay. Within the morbid eroticism that characterizes the late medieval macabre culture, Sanmartín Bastida argues that the morality of *Celestina* is to be found in the presentation of corpses, in particular that of Melibea, that serve as symbols for murder, punishment, lovesickness, and matchmaking.

4.—According to Jeremy Lawrance what underlies the narrative of *Celestina* is concern for social order rather than religious motivations. See his «The *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* and its 'Moralitie',» *Celestinesca* 17.2, (1993), pp. 85-110.

signifying practice that anticipates a pre-modern medical gaze by transgressing what is often dismissed as a merely dramatic device within the macabre discourse of death of late medieval Iberia.

The cornerstone for these representations rests on the instrumentalization of dead bodies that during the Middle Ages was the prerogative of the ecclesiastical establishment which had used them as an effective tool for indoctrination. This hegemony is contested during the thirteenth century as a result of an emerging attitude that reformulated the role cadavers played in the institutionalization of medical knowledge. As Romedio Schmitz-Esser observes, «the rapid development of anatomy as part of medical education led to an expansion of the knowledge about the embalmmnt of corpses based on practical experiences in the treatment of dead bodies» giving rise to the medical-educational dissection of cadavers (2020: 273).<sup>5</sup> However, at this point in time for the most part medical treatises lacked accuracy as they were based on the anatomical observation of animals. The human body represented in them was more a product of imagination than direct observation. Medieval physicians in Iberia acquired their knowledge about the human body through their study of the medical texts by Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna rather than through direct examination. As Enrique Fernández points out, the common practice consisted of having a professor read from a medical text while an assistant opened the body to confirm the information contained in the book. When there was no correlation between the physical evidence and the text, «the differences were disregarded or attributed to pathologies» (2018: 22).

Nevertheless, after the advent of Early Modernity, physicians systematically defied this methodological approach by emphasizing the direct and unmediated examination of dead bodies in order to acquire practical experience in their medical techniques. We find an example of this revisionist tendency in the *Fasciculus Medicinae* published by Giovanni and Gregorio de Gregori in Venetia in 1491. This was one of the first texts that «proporcionaba una crítica razonada de las descripciones anatómicas de Galeno, basada en la observación directa» (Durán 2018: 39). This shift coalesced in the methods proposed by Andreas Vesalius in *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) who encouraged the direct observation of the cadaver as a way to «reconfirm, discuss, and correct everything that had been said previously about the different parts of the body» (Skaarup 2015: 13).

5.— Along these lines, according to Enrique Fernández the beginning of the teaching of anatomy that would spread throughout Europe since the sixteenth century can be found at the University of Padua in the fifteenth century (2018: 22). In Spain the University of Valencia pioneered the study of anatomy by creating a permanent position for this field. The universities of Alcalá, Salamanca, Valladolid, and Barcelona followed. In fact, between 1475 and 1599, 541 medical treatises were published in Spain (2018: 23).

## Celestina's Dead Body: The Invisible *Corpus Delicti*

It is within this context that the discourses of sight and dead bodies first converge in the narrative of *Celestina* in the murder of the old bawd. In spite of being such a central character in the plot, the audience does not have access to a visually detailed rendering of Celestina's cadaver. Elicia, who is a direct witness to the murder, does not reveal anything about the state of her mistress' body at the moment of her death. The only description is provided by Sosia who, asked by Calisto to confirm whether or not Celestina has been killed, explains that «Ella mesma es: de más de treynta stocadas la vi llagada tendida en su casa, llorándola una criada» (XIII, 280). It is through Sosia's eyes that both Calisto and the audience imagine Celestina's dead body, which turns to be the object of a mediated gaze.

Several elements stand out in Sosia's narrative. First, the audience is confronted with the violence of Celestina's death. The fact that she is stabbed thirty times not only underscores the viciousness of her murder but also inaugurates the hyperbolic style of deaths in Rojas' text.<sup>6</sup> It is also important to notice that in his version Sosia makes an allusion to Elicia who is holding an improvised wake. This reference suggests that Rojas seems to be more preoccupied with highlighting the emotional devastation elicited by Celestina's death than with providing physical details of her dead body. Sosia has seen this body but he places the focus on Elicia's grief rather than the state of Celestina's corpse which, after having been stabbed thirty times, must have been presumably covered in blood. The audience is left with the old witch's last words asking desperately for confession thus privileging a linguistic representation over a visual description of her death. This lack of visual specificity suggests that there is no need to describe Celestina's dead body because, as the master of linguistic manipulation, over the course of the story her interactions with other characters are related to language and not the flesh: it was her tongue and not her body that led to her own destruction. Instead of an intricate rendering of its physical state, Rojas chooses to «hide» Celestina's cadaver from the visual field.

## Sempronio's and Parmeno's Dead Bodies: Looking at the Deformed Body

The next dead bodies that irrupt in Rojas' narrative are those of Sempronio and Pármeno. Immediately after informing Calisto about Celestina's murder, Sosia shares with him the account of the other servants' death:

6.— This sense of exaggeration is further emphasized when, referring to Celestina, Elicia tells Areúsa: «Mil cuchilladas le vi dar a mis ojos; en mi regaço me la mataron» (XV, 296).

¡O Señor, que si los vieras, quebraras el corazón de dolor!<sup>7</sup> El uno llevaba todos los sesos de la cabeça de fuera sin ningún sentido, el otro quebrados entramos braços y la cara magulada, todos llenos de sangre, que saltaron de unas ventanas muy altas por huyr del aguazil, y assi quasi muertos les cortaron las cabeças, que creo que ya no sintieron nada. (XIII, 280)

There is a salient contrast between this account and that of Celestina's demise. Here, the young servant frames his report of Sempronio's and Pármeno's death as a highly ocular experience. He leads with an improbable conditional clause that sets the dramatic tone of his account by contrasting the visual and the linguistic. In the gruesome depiction of these dead bodies the visualization of pain defeats language as this rendering exteriorizes signification by means of an optical discourse. Sosia's narrative feeds on the visual by drawing attention to the severe damage inflicted on Sempronio's and Pármeno's head, arms, and face as a result of the fall. All the bruising and blood of the scene stands as an exponential increase in gruesome detailing that contrasts the description of Celestina's cadaver. The chromatic discourse in Sosia's narrative leads to the phrase «quasi muertos,» which signals that these two bodies have been placed at the liminal space between life and death turning them into what Rosie Marie San Juan has coined as «phantasmatic life;» that is, «the horror of that which is neither dead nor alive, and disrupts the comforting idea of an organic passage from life to death» (2013: 96). Calisto finally learns that his servants have been executed after all the gore that pervades the representation of their slaughtered bodies has been detailed in a scene characterized by a «great effusion of blood.»<sup>8</sup>

7.—Sosia's words foreshadow Pleberio's reaction upon seeing Melibea's dead body: «¡O duro corazón de padre! ¿Cómo no te quiebras de dolor?» (XXI, 337). The fragmented heart is a recurrent image used by characters to express their emotions. Evoking her younger years Celestina laments: «¡Ay, quien me vido y quien me vee agora, no sé cómo no quiebra su corazón de dolor!» (IX, 234). Likewise, in a foreshadowing moment, Melibea tells the old bawd: «Pareceme que veo mi corazón entre tus manos hecho pedaços, el qual, si tú quisieses, con muy poco trabajo juntarías con la virtud de tu lengua» (X, 240).

8.— As Meyerson, Thiery, and Falk point out, this phrase was used typically by judicial scribes to render the perpetration of interpersonal violence as it took place in battles, blood-baths, and mayhem (2004: 3). These outpourings of blood, align, no doubt, with a dramatic effect that responded to the horizon of expectations of the audience as it provides a good idea of the late medieval mindset regarding violent scenes. Along these lines, Ted Bergman's examination of the woodcuts in editions of *Celestina* confirms this point. The exponential increase of plates depicting violent criminal attacks, stabbing or slashing indicates that, while the Burgos edition exhibited more decorum as a way to soften the macabre details employed by Rojas in the text, the printers of the Seville and the Valencia editions seem to have been seduced by the communicative potential of violent images. As this editorial shift reveals, violence emerges as a commercial value that increased both production and consumption and

The depiction of these two dead bodies rests heavily on spectatorship. Rojas' description oscillates between the verisimilitude of something that plausibly could have happened and the hyperbolically graphic representation aimed at leaving a lasting impression on the audience.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps inspired by the portrayal of violence in chivalric romances, the rendering of these cadavers is «precisely realistic on the one hand, bizarrely surreal on the other» (Harney 2004: 303). Here the excessive violence inflicted upon a human body serves as a communicative practice that is firmly attached to reality and yet also struggles to break free from realism due to its exaggerated depiction. In this instance, verisimilitude is both challenged and reaffirmed visually by means of the violent staging of these two bodies. Spectators are therefore placed in the «interstice between an aesthetic and an empathetic response» (Bronfen 1992: 44). Simultaneously posited as existing between morally involved viewers who experience a kind of *memento mori* by beholding a monstrous image which is made possible by Elisabeth Bronfen's conception of a spectator who treats «the represented body as though it were the same as the material body it refers to,» and aesthetically involved viewers who see the cadaver as a signifier pointing to other signifiers (1992: 44-45).<sup>10</sup>

As Bronfen notes, these two positions do not need to be mutually exclusive (1992: 45). In *Celestina*, the scenes that depict dead bodies gradually move from eliciting an empathetic response (*Celestina's* cadaver) to provoking an aesthetic reaction (Sempronio's and Pármeno's corpses). From this perspective, *Celestina* anticipates a popular trend in early modern theatrical productions in which «stage managers and artisans took great pains to render violence, torture, and death as realistically as possible» (Enders 2002: 193). Sponges drenched in red liquid, rocks, swords, and daggers dipped in red dyes and paints were used as special effects to recreate as believably as possible an outpouring of blood to «lend realism to the multiple stonings, beatings, stabbings, and scourgings» (Enders 2002: 193).<sup>11</sup> Within this context, Sosia's account necessarily rests on the perverse sensuality of the forms and the vibrant colors of the mangled dead bodies of Sempronio and Pármeno, thus transgressing their linguis-

therefore «suggests a reading/listening public that demanded more violent criminal spectacles in its *Celestinas*, and that the printers were happy to oblige» (Bergman 2012: 63).

9.— This excess serves as a stylistic resource that highlights the oral transmission of *Celestina*. The text needs to create meaning by means of images so that those who «se juntaren a oír esta comedia» could retain them easily as they listened to the text (Prologue, 81): the oral account leaves ephemeral traces but the visual message is imprinted tenaciously into the listeners' mind.

10.— In the case of Sempronio's and Pármeno's deformed bodies the audience is referred to the concept of sin which, as Jacques LeGoff observes, «manifested itself in the form of physical deformity and disease» (1988: 84).

11.— The sense of smell was also involved in these performances. In some cases, stage managers recreated the stench of burning flesh in order to create verisimilitude (Enders 2002: 194).



tic representation by a hyperbolic emphasis on the visual. Both cadavers seem to exist outside the realm of language. In fact, it is through their deformed corporality that they are woven into the storyline as objects of a narrative discourse of visual rather than linguistic nature.

The visual component of this event is furthered emphasized when Sosia is asked first by Tristán «¿Vístelos o hablaronte?» (XIII, 277) and then by Calisto «¿Vístelos tú?». «Yo los vi» answers Sosia (XIII, 278). Since neither Calisto nor Tristán are direct witnesses of Sempronio's and Pármene's death their questions are charged with an illocutionary force that goes beyond the mere request for information. Within the air of improbability with which Sosia has framed his narrative, Calisto's inquiry in particular desperately seeks to cast doubt on the validity of the servant's account. His question highlights a visual confirmation of the tragic event as recounted by Sosia who becomes for his master what Freddie Rokem has called a 'hermeneutic focalizer' (2022: 177). Only when the servant corroborates that he has seen the corpses can Calisto finally accept the impact of Sosia's account: Calisto reacts to the event as if seeing it through Sosia's eyes had conferred existence to the cadavers.<sup>12</sup>

With the dead bodies of Celestina, Sempronio, and Pármene, Rojas is showing his audience the effects of greed while he remains faithful to the purpose of his text as announced at the beginning: «hecho en aviso de los engaños de las alcahuetas y malos y lisonjeros sirvientes» (82). That is, these three corpses serve as cautionary exemplars that recreate the medieval discourse of the *miseria hominis*, which characterized the individual as a «base, weak and fragile creature who is born and dies in filth and sorrow, is ruled by animalistic passions (greed, drunkenness, lasciviousness) and subject to the vicissitudes of nature, the elements, and fortune» (Scott 2017: 17). However, the progressive attention to bodily details from the description of Celestina's dead body to those of Sempronio and Pármene suggests that a visual discourse grounded on bodily deformation is infiltrating the linguistic narrative of *Celestina*.

## Calisto's Dead Body: Scrutinizing the Body of Knowledge

In Act XIX the audience is confronted with the staging of Calisto's dead body. The dramatic effect of this representation rests on a perverse

12.—In order to fully understand the epistemological transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, José Antonio Maravall considers sight and touch the senses of modernity: «Ojos y manos son los instrumentos de que se vale el hombre de la modernidad para conquistar el saber de las cosas, cuyo acceso, en cambio, el hombre medieval reservaba a los oídos» (1978: 461). In this regard, in Sosia's words we can perceive the echo of the formulas used by the chroniclers of the Americas who, at the advent of modernity, often used the expression «testigo de vista» in order to merge sight and truth.

pleasure derived from gazing at a corpse in which visuality and medicine converge to produce a spectatorial text.

It is through Tristán's eyes that the audience gets to 'see' Calisto's cadaver for the first time when, after the fatal accident, he asks Sosia: «Coge, Sosia, esos sesos de esos cantos:<sup>13</sup> júntalos con la cabeça del desdichado nuestro amo» (XIX, 327). Tristan continues his description specifying that «su cabeça está en tres partes,» and concludes by asking Sosia for help: «Toma tú, Sosia, dessos pies; llevemos el cuerpo de nuestro querido amo donde no padezca su honrra detrimento» (XIX, 327). As if this level of detail were not enough, in Act XX Calisto's dead body is focalized by Melibea who confirms the grotesque aesthetics of the scene when in reference to her deceased lover she shares with her father that «...sus más escondidos sesos quedaron repartidos por las piedras y paredes» (Act XX, 334).

Tristán's words paint a highly macabre image whose visual force emerges from a combination of the parodic overtones of *Celestina*, medical discourses, and the symbolism of the head. Within the narrative that constructs Calisto as a parody of a courtly lover, the young man's fragmented body serves as an ironic inversion of his previously unified «cuerpo glorificado» (Act I, 86). Along these lines, the parodic echoes of the death of the saint can be perceived in Calisto's demise when contrasted with the well-known representation of Edward Grim's account of Thomas Becket's murder:

But as he [Thomas Beckett] lay prostrate the third knight inflicted a grave wound. With this blow the sword was dashed on the pavement, and the crown, which was large, was separated from the head, so that the blood white from the brain, and the brain equally red from the blood, brightened the floor with the colors of the lily and the rose [...] But the fifth, -not a knight but a clerk who had come in with the knights, so that a fifth stroke was not lacking to the martyr who in other things had imitated Christ, put his foot on the neck of the holy priest and precious martyr, and, horribly to say, scattered the brains with the blood over the pavement. 'Let us go, knights,' he called out to the others, 'this fellow will not get up again' (2001: 203).

Against the backdrop of the death of a saint, the rendering of Calisto's demise takes on further parodic significance. In light of the religious imagery used by Calisto in his encounter with Melibea in Act I, the image of the scattered brains and splattered blood becomes a unifying narra-

13.- This scene is foreshadowed in a moment of prolepsis by Pármeno's words in Act II which now take on special significance: «Por mi ánima que si agora le diessen una lançada en el calcañal, que saliessen más sesos que de la cabeça» (137).

tive principle that turns the young lover into an erstwhile saint.<sup>14</sup> From this perspective, parody yields to the discourse of bodily partition to tell a paradoxical story that oscillates between fragmentation and restitution, between division and wholeness. Calisto's shattered corpse threatens the idea of bodily unity and identity that constitutes personhood and yet fragmentation becomes a necessary condition for the creation of meaning.<sup>15</sup> In fact, as Rainer Guldin points out, «without any previous idea of a unity that can be lost through dismemberment, the concepts of fragment and fragmentation would be meaningless» (2002: 224). Along these lines, the pieces of Calisto's skull serve as surrogate versions of what used to be a person.

Sosia's attempt to reassemble his master's broken head becomes a significant part of the visual narrative crafted by Rojas. As Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida points out, the influence of the macabre is manifested in these actions due to «la calidad voyeurista de sus testimonios y la importancia del espectador, a través de la presencia de ese intermediario que muestra y recoge el cuerpo hecho pedazos, o, en otras palabras, la ruina del cuerpo» (2006: 189). However, by means of Sosia's action the audience witnesses an uncanny relationship between fragmentation and desire in such a way that the former cannot exist without the latter because fragmentation manifests the longing for what is missing: wholeness, unity, individuality. From this perspective, fragmentation is visually captivating because the viewer can recall bodily unity and, as a result, it serves as a catalyst of the compulsion to gather those parts to reconstruct the whole.

Not only does the audience visualize the blood spilled all over the place and the disgust in handling Calisto's brains to return them to his skull, but also, as Ted Bergman points out, although readers are not direct witnesses to this fall, «the image of scooping up brains from the pavement is inseparable from the moment that they splat upon the ground» (2012: 61). Similarly, Sosia's attempt to restore what has been disturbed from the natural order becomes a transgressive action as it evokes the frustrated attempt to unsee what has already been seen. Rojas' rendering of Calisto's dead body serves as a close-up view aggressively oriented towards creating a permanent image impossible to ignore, a kind of image that provokes a sense

14.– The parodic tone in Rojas' description of Calisto's «heroic» death is further emphasized when compared, for example, to the episode of the battle of Lapiths and the Centaurs in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which blood and brains were spattered everywhere when Theseus kills Eurytus by smashing a bowl over his head. As a result, «he, spewing equally clots of blood and brains and wine from his wound and from his mouth lay face upon the soaking sand and kicked (1999: 115).

15.– As Miri Rubin observes in reference to the post-mortem uses of the bodies of kings, martyrs, saints, and criminals during the Middle Ages, «the body in parts, broken, dismembered, fragmented was all too present, its significations threatening and troubling to the images of personal and corporal wholeness» (1994: 113).

of repugnance, a physical response that «operates as a moral emotion, a motivator of discipline and social control» (Miller 1997: 80).

The explicit stylistic description of Calisto's broken cranium, the actual precision and detail in its representation suggests that Rojas assigns to the eye the function of the scalpel of a surgeon, which evokes what Michael P. Harney has called «the ring of medical and anatomical authenticity» applied to the violence found in Spanish Chivalric romances (2004: 304).<sup>16</sup> The verisimilitude of Calisto's death scene rests on the representation of the brain, which is charged with a symbolism that recreates the medical discourses surrounding this organ. The three parts into which Rojas breaks the young lover's skull correlate with the three chambers or ventricles that contained «la virtud ymaginativa,» «la virtud extimativa,» and «la virtud memorativa,» into which physicians divided the brain. That is, Rojas' tripartite division of Calisto's brain achieves verisimilitude by reproducing an accepted medical principle of the time.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Calisto's ignoble death becomes realistic both from the medical and physical point of view because, as medical treatises such as Bernardo Gordonio's *Lilium medicinae* indicate, «el coito demasiado deseca e el tal no conviene a los hereos o enamorados ni a los tristes y a los melancólicos, pero a los que es permiso el coito, bien conviene si templadamente se hiciere, según Avicena» (Gordonio 1991: 302).

In light of this diagnosis, as critics examining the image of Calisto's broken skull have insightfully pointed out, it may seem strange «cómo se puede romper en trozos por el impacto de la caída el cerebro, órgano que es naturalmente húmedo y elástico. La única explicación posible es que el cerebro de Calisto haya sufrido un proceso de desecación que haya ocasionado la pérdida de su ductilidad y elasticidad y se haya vuelto frágil y quebradizo. Este parece ser el caso y la causa no es otra que el coito excesivo» (Lacarra 2000: 143).<sup>18</sup> Given the fact that Calisto has been engaging in sexual relations with Melibea every night for a whole month, it seems plausible that his cranium would break into pieces which, as Marcelino Amasuno notes, would establish as official cause of death «una afección

16.– It is interesting to note that this medical overtone around the brain is absent from the rendering of Sempronio's and Pármeno's dead body in spite of the fact that, as Sosia explicitly informs Calisto, «El uno llevaba todos los sesos de la cabeça de fuera sin ningún sentido» (Act XIII, 280).

17.– In 1575 physician Juan Huarte will rectify this division to clarify that «todas tres potencias están juntas en cada ventrículo, y que no está solo el entendimiento en el uno, ni sola la memoria en el otro, ni la imaginativa en el tercero, como los filósofos vulgares han pensado» (1946: 169).

18.– Along these lines, Bienvenido Morros Mestre draws our attention to the fact that in his *Lilium medicinae*, Bernardo Gordonio recommended to those suffering from melancholy not to engage in intercourse «para evitar quedarse más secos» (2009: 135). For her part, Maja Šabec reminds us that Alberto Magno goes as far as to affirm that «la segregación excesiva del semen vacía y deseca sobre todo el cerebro y los órganos contiguos» (2012: 322).

cerebral, ya que —a juicio de los médicos— el principal órgano afectado es el cerebro» (2005: 287). Hyperbole and parody then meet accepted medical facts of the time as discourses contributing to the creation of meaning in the image of Calisto's broken skull. The irony of Calisto's potentially heroic action (he goes to help his servants leaving behind his armor) that ends up being unnecessary finds its aesthetic expression in the spectacular overflow of encephalic mass that reveals both the absurdity and the medical knowledge that characterizes Calisto's death.

Rojas' rendering of young lover's cadaver continues producing visual meaning by means of the word «escondidas.» This adjective suggests a bodily transgression as Calisto's brain is depicted outside its natural condition; that is, remaining unseen. As Aristotle argued in *History of Animals*, the internal parts of the human body must remain unknown as the «fact is that the inner parts of man are to a very great extent unknown, and the consequence is that we must have recourse to an examination of the inner parts of other animals whose nature in any way resembles that of man» (2000: 16). By exposing that which naturally should be hidden, Rojas' representation of Calisto's broken skull violates the natural order by revealing the secrets of the body.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, Calisto's opened cranium becomes a visual metaphor for the unthinkable that informs the desire to see and to know as a structural element in Rojas' narrative. The kind of gaze that this image demands must necessarily be transgressive and a catalyst for self-awareness because it rests on the «very impossibility of gazing within our own bodies which makes the sight of the interior of other bodies so compelling. Denied direct experience of ourselves, we can only explore others in the hopes (or fear) that this other might also be us» (Sawday 1995: 8).<sup>20</sup> This transgressive gaze violates the taboo that, as Jonathan Sawday reminds us, is «one of the oldest known to human beings —that the interior recesses of the body are not merely private to others, but peculiarly private— that is expressly forbidden — to the owner or inhabitant of the body» (1995: 14-15).

By drawing attention to Calisto's desecrated body with such visual force, Rojas is implicating the action of looking itself in the body's violation by feeding on a desire to gaze at what is prohibited, thus leading to

19.—Additionally, the word «escondidas» prefigures the role assigned to anatomy by Charles Estienne in *La Dissection des parties du corps humain* (1546). The purpose of anatomy, he wrote, is to open to sight «par dissections de corps mortz exactement faites des parties diceulx/lesquelles nes se peuvēt bonnement appercepuoir a loeil et desquelles sans ce moyens en aurions trop incerteine et obscure congnoissance» [Through the precise dissection of dead bodies those parts that cannot be perceived well by the eye and from which without this procedure would have been too uncertain and obscure knowledge] (2016: 20; my trans.).

20.— This is what Jonathan Sawday refers to as «the sense of interiority;» that is, «we may look into other bodies, but very rarely are we allowed to pry into our own» (1995: 7).

what Sawday has coined as «autoptic vision:» «a form of eye-witnessing, which allowed Renaissance individuals to better know the self through the probing of the bodies of others» (1995: 8). In Rojas' portrayal of Calisto's death gazing at the forbidden draws attention to the very act of looking as a medium to create self-awareness and uneasiness for the viewer.

By revealing the internal bodily mechanism, the representation of Calisto's broken skull recreates a kind of anxiety that informs what Enrique Fernández has called «dissective narratives» which «are osmotic exercises that try to re-establish the balance between the inside and the outside —between the individual and the state— through the creation of dissective scenarios in which sacrificial victims have their interior exposed» (2018: 3). This tension between the interior and exterior of the body produces a kind of anxiety in the viewer «resulting from a widespread awareness of complex interiors in the oppressive ambience of the early modern Spanish state» (Fernández 2018: 3). From this perspective Rojas' rendering of Calisto's dead body oscillates between the medieval medical tradition in regards to physiology and simultaneously announces an early modern approach to looking at the cadaver.

Calisto's dead body continues to produce meaning when read against the backdrop of its specific historical moment because, as Schmitz-Esser points out, «the corpse cannot be viewed without out its context, first and foremost, because it in itself constitutes by default part of the human social fabric» (2020: 19). The emphasis placed on the young lover's fragmented skull reveals its visual status as a literary motif that defies the order of things within its socio-political context and threatens the cultural construct of the body as a unity. From Antiquity to the early Middle Ages it was accepted that the head held a physical privileged symbolism over other body parts because from a Christian perspective, it «enjoyed a particular significance because it was that body part that had been blessed through the baptism and upon which other dedicatory acts (such as the crowning) were also carried out above all» (Schmitz-Esser 2020: 647). Additionally, in medieval political thought, metonymy and physiology work together to construct the head as the governing representative of society. At a time when unification was the political, linguistic, and religious goal under the Catholic Kings, Rojas' text subverts this official discourse by using the symbolism of the fragmented head of a nobleman. The representation of Calisto's dead body defies the model of political unity: it reinforces the criticism against nobility by means of a deformed body that serves as a metaphor for the degradation of the social class that it represents. After all, as Keith Whinnon observes, *Celestina* is a direct attack towards nobility «disguised as an attempt to alert about the perils of love» (1981: 65).

As constructed by Rojas' literary imagination, Calisto's cadaver serves as a physical emblem to the fatal consequences of lust and a reminder of the great danger of society when moderation is lost. Physical illness and

social disease converge in Calisto's body to illustrate the chaotic behavior of Castilian high classes as was documented, among others, by Dr. Francisco López de Villalobos, who in his *Sumario de Medicina* (1498) refers to the Castilian court as an institution «devorada por el ansia de placeres» (Fabié 1886: 233). As Calisto gave himself to the relentless pursuit of extreme pleasures, the excess scripted in his dead body became exemplary: a spectacular cautionary tale for those «locos enamorados que, vencidos en su desordenado apetito, a sus amigas llaman y dizen ser su dios» (84). As a nobleman, Calisto's fragmented skull exemplifies a body that has lost its governing principle, just like the social class that Rojas is criticizing. This narrative illustrates that if due to his inordinate pursuit of love Calisto has literally lost his head, by way of metaphor the social body of the nobility has lost its head as well at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

As they converge in Calisto's dead body, parody, medical discourse, and social criticism work together to highlight the aesthetics of the visual discourse in Rojas' representation. The complexity of the visual implications of Calisto's broken skull underscores the force of the grotesque to craft permanent messages: attention to gory detail aids Rojas in making an example of the young lover as it incites spectatorship.<sup>22</sup> It is as though Rojas were aware of the instrumental value of the public's simultaneous morbid fascination with and repulsion towards the cadaver. As William Miller points out, «images of deformation are further unsettling because they are disordering: they undo the complacency that comes with disatendability; they force us to look and notice, or to suffer self-consciousness about not looking or looking. They introduce alarm and anxiety by virtue of their power to horrify and disgust» (1997: 82).

The traumatic exposure of the interior of Calisto's cadaver confronts spectators with an ambivalent visual paradigm that hovers between a sense of fascination and repugnance thus creating one of those «moments of unease» that will become a salient characteristic of the Baroque visuality (Jay 1998: 18). From this perspective, Calisto's fragmented skull

21.— As Sanmartín Bastida has pointed out, in Calisto's broken head Rojas' audience «podría entender una referencia a la falta de seso en esos amores locos de Calisto [...]. De hecho, la falta de seso es mencionada de modo metafórico durante muchos momentos de la obra, relacionándola generalmente (tópico de la época) con la locura de amor y la pérdida de la cordura» (2005: 118). As this scholar observes, to the contrary of what happens in the romance novels, in which the effects of love remain abstract, in *Celestina* they are expressed realistically: «Si se habla de que el amor mata y de que hace perder los sesos, acaba sucediendo» (2005: 119).

22.— In his examination of the influence of the *Rethorica ad Herennium* on Rojas' literary craft, Ted Bergman has identified a particular passage that lays the foundation for the use of violent images to engrave messages in the minds of the audience: «We ought, then, to set up images of a kind that can adhere longest in the memory. And we shall do so if [...] if we assign to them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness [...]; or if we somehow disfigure them as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more striking» (2012: 53).

thus serves simultaneously as a message and messenger, as the locus and the instrument of a visual narrative that in Rojas' hands becomes an abject entity as its representation «disturbs identity, system, and order» and «does not respect borders, positions, and rules» (Kristeva 1982: 4). Beholding the abject then has positioned the young lover's remains as a moral and moralizing body that disturbs the unquestioned harmony among physical, social, and moral being. This highly visual narrative suggests the emergence of a new mode of spectatorship in *Celestina*: whereas Sempronio's and Pármeno's cadavers were staged as objects of a medieval public gaze in the context of an execution, Calisto's broken body calls for a transgressive gaze that foreshadows the medical discourse of Early Modernity on how to look at dead bodies.

### Melibea's Dead Body: Beholding the Body in Fragments

Threats to the concept of bodily unity as a metaphor for social order and visibility are further complicated in the representation of Melibea's dead body, which ends up broken into pieces after she throws herself from a tower. Pleberio, who has witnessed this tragic event, shares his horror and heartbreak with his wife. However, once again words are insufficient. The narrative crafted by Rojas insists upon the necessity of having characters behold the material outcomes of violent deaths by means of their visual recreation. The emphasis on visibility in the representation of cadavers in *Celestina* not only suggests that language is an insufficient vehicle for fully capturing the communicative potential of dead bodies, but also underscores the pervasive presence of sight that goes beyond the bodies of the living.<sup>23</sup>

The summary that opens Act XXI emphasizes the importance of the morbid gaze when Pleberio tells Alisa about Melibea's death «mostrándole el cuerpo della todo fecho pedaços» (XXI, 335).<sup>24</sup> As Pleberio's gesture indicates, Alisa must become a self-aware witness who cannot only learn from her husband's verbal account what has happened but must also behold—through an attentive, active, and participatory gaze—the physical ruins of her daughter's body. For Alisa, then, beholding, unlike observing or watching, serves as the basis for self-awareness because, as W. J. T. Mitchell reminds us, it combines «fascination (literally, a 'bind-

23.— Along these lines, Michael Gerli notes that in *Celestina* «the imperative to see and to look achieves such intensity that it displaces desire onto the lifeless objects associated with the desired person» (2017: 104).

24.— As Sanmartín Bastida observes, although we can find representations of broken dead bodies prior to the fifteenth century, «la forma en que se presentan los cuerpos al final del Medievo nos enseña una mentalidad y una piedad especialmente mórbida y obsesiva» (2006: 188).



ing') with certain distance or detachment» (2016: xvii).<sup>25</sup> Alisa becomes aware of her loss and subsequently of her new identity as a mother who has lost her daughter. What is of importance here is that this realization happens through vision, the medium that «more than anything else, was understood as basic to the process of the constitution of the subject, the self, as this entity was perceived in the medieval world» (Burke 2000: 33).

As the object of a gaze, Melibea's dead body reveals the complexity of the dynamics of seeing in *Celestina*. The visual continues to dominate Pleberio's account when he tells Alisa «ves allí a la que tú pariste y yo engendré, hecha pedaços;» and at the end of his monologue, he refers again to Melibea as «mi hija despedaçada» (XXI, 336, 343). Seeing becomes gazing through the use of the deictic adverb. Pleberio is not asking Alisa to merely view Melibea's cadaver but to behold it, an action that simultaneously constitutes experience and validates the tragic event because beholding «involves a certain resistance to time and motion, a slowing down of experience in acts of contemplation, meditation, and devotion» (Mitchell 2016: xvii). Rojas thus seems to be aware that the very act of looking produces meaning in the beholder who is understood «not as a passive recipient of visual information, but rather as an active participant in the production of a visual experience. Through this participation, the beholder becomes aware of the self in relation to what is represented» (Labbie and Terry-Fritsch 2016: 7).

Pleberio's insistence on beholding and showing Melibea's fragmented cadaver to Alisa suggests that death becomes a spectacle to be viewed rather than narrated.<sup>26</sup> In *Celestina*, dead bodies attain protagonism by resisting representation merely through language: they are displayed in all their gruesome splendor as objects of visual contemplation. This emphasis on the gaze suggests that language is at the service of the visual which has infiltrated itself into the linguistic creating a «viewing text» (Jay 1996: 3). Within this theoretical framework, in Rojas' rendering of Melibea's cadaver the graphic narrative competes for attention with the textual account. The visual has gradually taken control over the linguistic in the dynamics of representation as a way to compensate for the insufficiency of language to capture the object of perception. In *Celestina*, dead

25.– This tension between attachment and detachment is what leads Mitchell to argue that «perhaps beholding finds its truest vocation, then, in scenes of violence, where its structural ambivalence finds a natural home in what can only be described as a sado-masochistic complex» (2016: xviii).

26.– The linguistic and the visual converge in Melibea's dead body which stands in a delicate balance between what Elaine Scarry has defined as the «problematically abstract» and the «problematically concrete.» The first concept questions «the ability of language to accommodate conceptions of truth and cognition, subjects whose immateriality or alacrity might place them beyond the reach of speech and writing» (1994: 3). Death could very well fall under this category. The second concept is concerned with «phenomena such as physical pain and physical labor whose materiality might leave them outside the reflexes of language» (1994: 3).

bodies go through an aesthetic transformation within the narrative structure of the text from linguistic elements to visual objects.

By asking Alisa to behold Melibea's dead body, Pleberio transforms her into a focalizer of this scene, which in turn evokes the participation of the audience as external viewers. In her role as witness, Alisa is «part of the fictional world of the performance and the witness serves as a mirror image, a kind of filter or lens, or focalizer for the real spectators watching a performance» (Rokem 2002: 168). This kind of spectatorship produces two levels of vision, one internal (characters seeing other characters), and another external (the audience seeing what other characters see). First, we have the gaze of characters who become spectators from within. Second, we have the audience as an outside onlooker who 'sees' the dead bodies both through their own eyes and through that of other characters thus becoming a 'second-degree' witness, «one step removed from the fictional world» (Rokem 2002: 169). This double visual model creates a dialectical dynamic between the characters and the audience that further ignites the production of meaning. The internal drama of this network of gazes is unified by the cadaver which provides a site of confrontation with one own's mortality both in the fictional and the real world. The visual interplay among Pleberio, Alisa, and Melibea's dead body lends coherence to Rojas' narrative by emphasizing the dramatic effect of seeing by means of «constellations of watching» which, as Freddie Rokem notes for theatrical performances, «not only exist on the stage during the performance itself, but have frequently been inscribed in the dramatic text itself» (2002: 168).<sup>27</sup>

This *mise-en-abyme* technique in Rojas' descriptions underscores the aesthetic dimension of gazing as it draws the audience's attention to the very medium of the message: the visual. Melibea's fragmented cadaver challenges assumptions about how to look at the body, particularly the dead body. Anatomy manuals of the time emphasize the hierarchy of body parts suggesting a vertical reading of the human body from head to feet. However, far from adhering to this optic convention, Melibea's corpse presents a jumbling of this order, a dismantling and re-presentation of the body according to a chaotic visual criterium that calls for an uneven horizontal view rather than a rectilinear gaze. The sight of this body defies the Western medieval Christian perspective that «saw the body, not the soul, as carrier of certain basic particularities of personhood» as the base for the individual which is composed by indivisible and inseparable parts (Bynum 2017: xvii). In contrast, Melibea's dead body corresponds to a radical break in this harmonious gaze: physical deformity collides with a symmetrical and geometrically balanced gaze.

27.— Sanmartín Bastida argues that this combination of gazes corresponds to the ternary model that Paul Binski assigns to the organization of the macabre image; that is, a model that rather than merely playing on antithesis is based on the implication of a third-party viewer (2005: 122).

The enjoyment of looking has been turned into the horrors of visual contemplation in a sort of reverse scopophilia: the repulsion, not the pleasure, of looking at a grisly and an unglorified fragmented body that gives rise to a morbid visual effect.

Under the shadow of the organic metaphor of the body politic based on uniformity and unity in 15<sup>th</sup> century Castile, Melibea's fragmented cadaver suggests that the idea of a political center is as shattered as her body.<sup>28</sup> There is no single center to fix the gaze; the new gaze is necessarily multiplied and divided by means of the proliferation of centers which challenges ocularcentrism. Under this premise, Melibea's dead body becomes what Linda Hutcheson calls an «ex-centric» body, a body that is pushed to the margins and yet still «relies on the center for its definition» (1988: 73); a body that visually «undermines such principles as value, order, meaning, control, and identity» (Hutcheson 1988: 13).

Far from the elegant proportion of classical bodies, Rojas casts Melibea's corpse as a fragmented body that belongs to modernity because, as Rainer Guldin observes, «dismemberment is the fundamental paradigm of modernity» (2002: 225).<sup>29</sup> As an object that prefigures an incipient pre-modern gaze, Melibea's cadaver—along with those of Sempronio, Pármeno, and Calisto—exists fragmented into pieces rather than achieving coherence as single compact unities. That is, «in lieu of a formerly complete 'body', a new 'body' of knowledge and understanding can be created. As the physical body is fragmented, so the body of understanding is held to be shaped and formed» (Sawday 1995: 2). These are the principles of the new science that breaks away from the ideas «coligidas y sacadas de aquellos antiguos libros que por más aclarar mi ingenio, me mandavas leer» as Melibea tells Pleberio before embracing her own death (XX, 334).<sup>30</sup> These words resonate with the emergent practice within the medical field that advocated the abandonment of old methods of approaching the dead body along with an increased skepticism of me-

28.— As Miguel Vicente Pedraz observes «los afanes centralizadores de la corona de Castilla encontrarían en la simbología organicista un excelente instrumento ideológico contra la resistencia de los reinos 'periféricos' a ser asimilados (in-corporados) y, también, contra las fuerzas centrífugas de disgregación de los aún poderosos señores feudales (2016: 45).

29.— The emphasis on dismemberment in *Celestina* evokes «a network of practices, social structures, and rituals surrounding this production of fragmented bodies, which sits uneasily alongside our image (derived from Burckhardt) of the European Renaissance as the age of the construction of individuality—a unified sense of selfhood» (Fernández 2018: 3-4).

30.— Among these old books we could surely find the medical treatises by Hippocrates, Avicenna, and Galen whose ideas were being corrected by the new avalanche of anatomy texts that drew their knowledge from the direct observation of the dead body. Along these lines, although the recreation of Calisto's love sickness is informed by a galenic model, Rojas was already questioning the medical theories of Arnaldo de Vilanova and Valesco de Taranta «al seguir caracterizando a su protagonista igual de enfermo que al principio después de haber seducido a Melibea y haber aplicado la terapia que ellos consideraban como más eficaz» (Morros 2009: 175).

dieval doctors following the Galenic model. Melibea's complaint about «antigos libros» anticipates «the initial stages of new forms of knowledge, not only to comply with moralizing expectations, but also, and primarily, for a new mode of knowledge about to emerge» (San Juan 2013: 107).

## Conclusions

In the intellectual milieu of late medieval Iberia, the representations of dead bodies in *Celestina* underscore that «the corpse is a material thing frightened with immensely powerful cultural meaning» (Schwartz 2015: 1). This text was already testing the boundaries between real and metaphorical anatomies by imagining ways to stage and look at the cadaver. Rather than merely affirming medieval cultural and religious paradigms, the discourses of bodily fragmentation and sight in *Celestina* combine to prefigure a change attributed to early modern anatomical imagery which «did not simply bring the human body into full visibility, it actually shifted the terms of visibility under which the body would now be understood» (San Juan 2013: 98). From this perspective, Rojas' literary imagination and the emerging scientific gaze already in the making meet in *Celestina* to inform a post-medieval understanding of how to look at the cadaver in the Iberian Peninsula. After all, as Rachel Scott notes «Rojas' work is both the product of and response to a multitude of conventions from the Middle Ages and incipient Renaissance. What makes it so interesting is the way in which it reinterprets the concepts and discourses from which it is created for the humanistic environment of the late fifteenth century in which it was produced» (2017: 12).

The spectacular display of dead bodies in *Celestina* foreshadows the medical-visual turn around the cadaver within Humanism. Within this philosophical framework, *Celestina* prefigures in literature the emergence of a gaze that «sustituye el mito clásico por una racionalidad científica supuestamente atenta a los datos de la experiencia pero cuya primera consecuencia fue el desmembramiento del cuerpo humano así como la visión cadavérica y estática del organismo» (Vicente 2009: 606). This approach «no solo corta el cadáver sobre el que estudia sino que disecciona el concepto de cuerpo sobre el que construye la nueva racionalidad del organismo; lo divide en partes, lo descompone en trozos tan disasociados como en la propia estructura social que emerge, lo estarían los súbditos con su soberano» (Vicente 2009: 606).

When we read literary representations of the cadaver in *Celestina* through this lens, the ill-fated lover's tale emerges once again as a text ahead of its time. The dynamics of gazing in Rojas' renderings gradually move away from medieval models to point towards a discourse that aligns his work with the empirical horizon of modernity. If during the

Middle Ages the Church had the authority over corpses, *Celestina* anticipates the contestation of this privilege by freeing the dead body from the confines of theology and repositioning it as catalysts of humanistic knowledge. The way this text proposes looking at cadavers informs their reintegration into the medical discourse that, over the course of the Renaissance, posits the corpse as a credible object of direct observation and study beyond their traditional religious domain. Rojas' representations of dead bodies bring together an aesthetic and a discourse that signals the shift in the acquisition of medical knowledge through the direct observation of the cadaver; a change that, in the advent of anatomical dissection in Renaissance, implied «a confrontation between an abstract idea of knowledge, and the material reality of the corpse» (Sawday 1995: 3).

Additionally, the emphasis on the various forms of looking at cadavers in *Celestina* suggests that in this text interactions with bodies, particularly those of the dead, transcend the linguistic and are presented in visual terms. Gazing at dead bodies in *Celestina* decentralizes the process of learning through the word by drawing attention to the visual as the conduit to modernity. The deformed bodies of Sempronio and Pármeno, the scattered contents of Calisto's skull, and the fragmented cadaver of Melibea elicit an aesthetic response from the audience. Rojas' gruesome detailing of these characters' undignified end suggests that he seemed to be aware that in contrast to what is beautifully represented—thus hindering interrogation of reality and favoring oblivion—the morbid image can be inscribed in the spectator's mind as a way to question larger issues of social order and conflict. Whereas beauty is fleeting, the grotesque creates permanence which, in the case of the corpse, rests on a paradox: the impermanence of the cadaver whose very existence depends on the fact that it cannot longer be.

As in many other aspects examined by scholarship on *Celestina*, the emphasis on directly gazing at the dead body offers signs of modernity. Rojas' renderings of the cadaver both imagine and anticipate the scientific turn that would advocate for the unmediated observation of corpses to arrive in Iberia in print half a century later. Reading the literary representation of the cadaver in *Celestina* within the field of vision offers a paradigm in which Humanism meets Empiricism and Literature converges with Medicine allowing dead bodies to take on a new life of fascination, inquiry, and knowledge at the dawn of modernity in Iberia.

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