

Hombre Sciente and Docto Varón: A Profile of Fernando de Rojas's Authorial Persona

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The students of *La Celestina* or *Celestina*, titles by which Fernando de Rojas's masterpiece is readily recognized, soon become aware of a controversy of long standing, sparked by none other than Rojas himself.¹ It is Rojas, to be sure, who starts it all from the very preface of his non-pareil composition. He proffers, that is, some enigmatic remarks under the heading of «El autor a un su amigo», a hybrid statement, a blend of epistle and dedication, which accompanied the early sixteen-act version of the work, the so-called *Comedia*, and, according to extant documentation, first appeared in the edition of Toledo of 1500 (69-71).² The debate, which well-informed scholars have not been able to bring to a convincing

1. Is Fernando de Rojas (ca. 1470-1541) the sole author of *Celestina* in all its complex textuality? As will become apparent presently, the question, still unanswerable to the satisfaction of all scholars concerned, attests to the controversy that still surrounds, alas, that enigmatic *bachiller*, «nascido», as he himself avers, «en la Puebla de Montaván». Since I propose to analyze here the notion of an authorial persona, aside from the issues strictly related to the identity of a Rojas *de carne y hueso*, I am able to bypass, luckily, the morass of the aforementioned controversy. Bearing in mind that the question of authorship, otherwise of paramount significance, has little or no bearing on the present discussion, I tacitly attribute to Rojas both the «Carta a un su amigo» and the «Prólogo» proper. That attribution, contested by such critics as James R. Stamm, is adduced just for the sake of the argument. (See Stamm, *La estructura de La Celestina: una lectura analítica*, Acta Salmaticensia, Estudios Filológicos, 204 [Salamanca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Salamanca, 1988], p. 25 and, especially p. 33 [«Dudo mucho... que [el «Prólogo»] sea de Rojas»]).

2. See item C in Miguel Marciales, Introd., *Celestina: Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, by Fernando de Rojas, ed. Miguel Marciales, Illinois Medieval Monographs 1, I (Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1984), 6, 30-41. Throughout this essay I quote from Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina*. ed. Dorothy S. Severin, Letras Hispánicas 4 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1995). The ciphers between parentheses refer to the pagination of this edition. For an enlightening orientation on Rojas's life in the context of his age, see Stephen Gilman, *The Spain of Fernando de Rojas: The Intellectual and Social Landscape of La Celestina* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1972). For a recent update on Rojas's biography, see Nicasio Salvador Miguel, «La identidad de Fernando de Rojas», in «*La Celestina*: v Centenario (1499-1999), *Actas del congreso internacional (Salamanca, Talavera de la Reina, Toledo, La Puebla de Montalbán, 27 de septiembre - 1 de octubre de 1999)*, ed. Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez, et al. (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2001), pp. 23-47.

resolution, hovers around the author's allegation to have derived inspiration and what turns out to be the first act of *Celestina* from a manuscript («estos papeles») he has just chanced upon. At issue is, essentially, the identity of the author of that manuscript, who is often called, in Rojas's own words, «el antiguo auctor» (71) or «el primer autor» (81). Characteristically, hispanists have been asking: Is Rojas referring to a historical figure «de carne y hueso» —and, in that case, we would be curious to know who that individual actually is— or is he creating a persona, foreshadowing, in effect, Cervantes's ingenious invention of the prototypical narrator, Cide Hamete Benengeli?³

These questions, no doubt, are legitimate and of paramount importance. Unfortunately, though, the critics who have grappled with them for decades still have to come up with conclusive answers.⁴ In view of the cul-de-sac in which Rojas leaves us, one may argue, that we may as well avert our attention from the controversy altogether and concentrate, instead, upon other matters of significance that Rojas touches upon in the course of his extraordinary declarations. Recently, I myself have attempted to trace, within «El autor a un su amigo», the main clues that come to bear upon some distinctive traits of Rojas's creativity—namely,

3. For a sample of the conflicting views on the attribution of the first act of *Celestina*, see: Martín de Riquer, «Fernando de Rojas y el primer auto de *La Celestina*», *Revista de Filología Española*, 41 (1957), 373-95; Fernando González-Ollé, «El problema de la autoría de *La Celestina*: nuevos datos y revisión del mismo», *Revista de Filología Española*, 48 (1960), 430-45; Francisco Ruiz Ramón, «Nota sobre la autoría del Acto I de *La Celestina*», *Hispanic Review*, 42 (1974), 431-435.

4. As a background for his own study, Marcel Bataillon traces the history of the age-old controversy, while presenting a thorough survey of the leading trends of criticism on *Celestina* from the turn of the fifteenth century (the epoch of *Celestina*'s earliest editions) to Bataillon's own time. Bataillon's enlightening essay reads like a who's who of the influential hispanists that have been shaping Rojas's reputation throughout the centuries. We would remember Blanco White, Leandro Fernández Moratín, Ferdinand Wolf, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Américo Castro, Giulia Adinolfi among the representative critics identified by Bataillon. See «*La Celestina*» *selon Fernando de Rojas* (Paris: Didier, 1961), 13-53. See also: Stephen Gilman, *The Art of La Celestina* (Madison, WI: The U of Wisconsin P, 1956), pp. 3-16; María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, *La originalidad artística de La Celestina* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1962), pp. 12-26. As for the status of the authorship question in recent times, see: Emilio de Miguel Martínez, *La Celestina de Rojas* (Madrid: Gredos, 1996), especially pp. 9-30, 248-300; Nicasio Salvador Miguel, «La autoría de *La Celestina* y la fama de Rojas», *Epos*, 7 (1991), 275-290, and the aforementioned «La identidad de Fernando de Rojas». In this context, it bears citing the following remarks by Salvador Miguel:

en los últimos años, algunos críticos, de los que cabe considerar adalid a E. de Miguel, vuelven a abogar por la autoría exclusiva de Rojas, mientras que otros, más despistados, hablan de tres y hasta de más autores. En cualquier caso, la escritura separada del acto I resulta una diferencia que importa solo [sic] a los estudiosos, ya que su integración con los restantes es tan perfecta que, desde el siglo XVI, la obra quedó ligada al nombre de Fernando de Rojas sin necesidad de más especificaciones, de modo que, aun cuando tal peculiaridad deba ser recordada, se pueda hablar de Rojas, sin más, como el autor de la obra. («La identidad de Fernando de Rojas», p. 27)

the strains of egocentrism (or subjectivity) and the dramatic/theatrical dynamism.⁵ Here I should like to go a step further and take into account a second prefatory statement, the one usually referred to as the «Prólogo» proper, which Rojas added to the expanded version of *Celestina*, the so-called *Tragicomedia* of twenty-one acts.⁶ I shall dwell upon the interplay of perspectivism, which comes to light in the process of confronting the «Prólogo» of the *Tragicomedia* with its counterpart in the *Comedia*. The implications of this perspectivism, which oscillates from the general to the particular, from the cosmos to the individual, promise to be profound, especially since they lead to a profile of Rojas's authorial persona in terms of two basic notions, embedded in Rojas's concepts of the «hombre sciente» and the «docto varón». I believe the concepts are worth elucidating for the potential insights they may yield toward a fresh approach to *Celestina*.

Now, let us review in detail the fundamental data. These will enable us to extrapolate the contrasts and complementary relationship, which so far I have merely sketched out. As we may surmise from the foregoing discussion, Rojas's confessions regarding the authorship of the manuscript he purports to have found by lucky happenstance are less than candid. It is apparent that he shies away from any detail that could lead to a definitive identification. He chooses to focus not on the individual but on the type, not on who the writer is but on who he may be. He profiles the type in the broadest terms. For his purpose he only needs to attest to the talent (*ingenio*) of the person to be credited with the wondrous composition contained in the codex. Surely, he avers, such a gifted man of letters belongs to the select group of the «doctos varones castellanos» (69). Eventually, Rojas must have sensed the inadequacy of his sketchy portrait. Thus, in one of his most notable interpolations that make up the *Tragicomedia*, he anchored the aforementioned generalities on a couple of specific names: Juan de Mena and Rodrigo Cota.⁷ This unexpected name-dropping is, as I hope to show presently, an item of extraordinary significance, which warrants close analysis.

A word is in order about the «prólogo» proper. In these crucial pages Rojas does not mince words. He goes straight to the heart of the matter. He starts with:

5. «From Lyricism to Drama: The Evolution of Fernando de Rojas's Egocentric Subtext», *Celestinesca*, 19.1-2 (1995), 71-92.

6. The «Prólogo» (pp. 77-81 in Severin's edition) appears in the first complete extant edition of the *Tragicomedia* (actually of 1510, though bearing the date of 1502): see item G in Marciales, pp. 6, 244.

7. This is the critical sentence in which the two names appear: «Vi que no tenía su firma del autor, el qual, según algunos dizen, fue Juan de Mena, e según otros, Rodrigo Cota, pero quienquier que fuese, es digno de recordable memoria por la sutil invención, por la gran copia de sentencias entrexeridas que so color de donayres tiene» (70).

Todas las cosas ser criadas a manera de contienda o batalla, dice aquel gran sabio Heráclito en este modo: «Omnia secundum litem fiunt». (77)

After corroborating this resounding exordium with a kindred «sentencia» borrowed from «aquel gran orador y poeta laureado, Francisco Petrarca» (77), he expounds on a long series of exempla, which make up his entire argument. The conclusion itself does not bring closure; it bodes, instead, further *contienda*. It is not hard to detect a note of wry humor in the last sentence: «no han de faltar nuevos detractores a la nueva adición» (81). The reference is to the five new acts and the interpolations integrated into the *Tragicomedia*. Rojas suspected, that, sure enough, these additions would become a bone of contention for many a reader or auditor. In retrospect, we now realize that he was prophetic to an extent that, perhaps, he himself did not fully appreciate.

We may find enough details to provide those *detractores* and, for that matter, critics at large with considerable food for thought. Specifically, there are signs that point to a unique linkage between the «Prólogo» and «El autor a un su amigo». The bond between the two sections may be seen as a dialectic which informs the entire structure of *Celestina*. By reversing, for the sake of the argument, the chronological order of their publication and by a simple juxtaposition of the «Prólogo» and «El autor a un su amigo», we notice the interaction that Rojas establishes between the general and the particular. As we have just seen, the «Prólogo» exhibits a universal scope. The *Weltanschauung* of the author opens unto a cosmos ruled not by harmony—the harmony that many would say is generated by love—but by strife: «Omnia secundum litem fiunt». It is true that, in his concluding remarks, a notable exception to this macrocosmic perspective, Rojas takes up an individual case—that of «estos papeles», which, as he confesses, have instigated the polemic among his readers. Also, he hastens to add, these readers have obliged him to continue, willynilly, the work of «el primer autor» and to introduce a subtle change (from *Comedia* to *Tragicomedia*) in the title of the composition. All in all, despite this exception, the «Prólogo» remains consistent with its all-encompassing scope and sustains the tone of a theoretical disquisition. «[J]ust half [of it]», A. D. Deyermond explains, «is direct transcription or more or less close translation of Petrarch, being taken from the whole extent of the Preface»—the preface, that is, of the second book of *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae*.⁸ The point to be made here is one already stressed by Deyermond in the light of some seminal studies by Also S. Bernardo: in his own prologue Rojas recaptures the tone of one of the

8. A. D. Deyermond, *The Petrarchan Sources of La Celestina* (London: Oxford UP, 1961), p. 52. The specific borrowings of Rojas's «Prólogo» from Petrarch's preface are discussed on pp. 50-7.

least dramatic of Petrarch's dialogues.⁹ Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude with Deyermond that in the «Prólogo» «Rojas was likely to be more concerned with didactic statement and explanation than with the presentation of a scene and character».¹⁰

Whatever else we may say of Rojas's «Prólogo», we may safely state that it is not essentially dramatic. And neither is «El autor a un su amigo», one may safely observe. It bears remembering, nevertheless, that in his confessions to his friend, Rojas's scope becomes confined to the realm of the intimate, the persona of the lover and that persona's inner world. The author leads us, decidedly, to the realm of *psychomachia*, the inner theater of the psyche or, depending from the contemplator's point of view, of the soul. Rojas speaks specifically of the war to be waged by the *galanes* of his native land in general and by *el amigo* in particular against the flames (*fuego*) of love. In that battle the *papeles* serve as *defensivas armas*. Thus, although not dramatic by nature, «El autor a un su amigo» confronts us with the factors and the circumstance that give birth to the type of dramatic and, as some believe, fully theatrical text that Rojas has in mind.¹¹

We need not belabor the interaction between the «Prólogo» and «El autor a un su amigo» in terms of the alternation between the general and the particular. The dialectic is clear enough and virtually self-evident. Besides, it is paralleled by concomitant aspects, such as the ones we now begin to perceive: the theoretical, the discursive, and the abstract, say, in opposition to the pragmatic, the dramatic, and the concrete. Upon closer investigation, we discover that, as one of the signs of special significance I mention above, this antithetical pattern serves as an appropriate context for the basic correlation between two manifestations —contrasting and complementary all in one— of what turns out to be the role of the authorial persona in Rojas's universe. Not unlike the leitmotifs of a well-orchestrated musical composition, these key epiphanies underscore Rojas's insistence on the notion of the learned, sophisticated man, invoked as «hombre sciente» in the «Prólogo»¹² and as «docto varón» in «El autor a un su amigo».¹³

9. Deyermond, pp. 50-1.

10. p. 57.

11. See, for instance, Miguel Martínez, pp. 124-99.

12. Rojas links this appellative with Heraclitus's «sentencia» and underscores its significance by introducing the concept of the «pregnant word»: «Y como sea cierto que toda palabra del *hombre sciente* esté preñada, desta se puede dezir que de muy hinchada y llena quiere reventar, echando de sí tan crecidos ramos y hojas, que del menor pimpollo se sacaría harto fruto entre personas discretas» [underlining mine] (77).

13. Rojas uses the term in the plural in order to designate, metaphorically, the creators of the «defensivas armas para resistir sus fuegos» (69), namely, the flames of love, and adds: «las quales [armas] hallé esculpidas en estos papeles, no fabricadas en las grandes herrerías de Milán, mas en los claros ingenios de *doctos varones* castellanos formadas» [underlining mine] (69).

At first blush these two entities appear as nebulous figures. This notwithstanding, they can be defined largely by way of the distinctive traits that each of them derives from his own context. We begin to notice that, true to the discursive disquisition, which he expatiates upon in rich oratorical flourish, the *hombre sciente* stands for knowledge of a transcendent kind and universal applicability. By contrast, the *docto varón* operates at the level of immanence, within the pale of down-to-earth concerns. His focus is, as we have seen, exclusively on the individual *galán*. In the final analysis, rather than a farsighted philosopher, the *docto varón* is a sharp-eyed clinician. From these observations we can deduce yet another fundamental play of contrasts: the learned *hombre*, who may be characterized as a pure philosopher, champions *scientia*; the *varón*, who strikes us as a practical thinker, espouses *doctrina*.

To what effect does Rojas confront us with these complementary forms of knowledge? For one thing, he draws attention to the vast range of his creative enterprise. By virtue of *scientia*, his mind soars to the loftiest heights attainable by his intellectual faculties; by the guidance of *doctrina*, the author fathoms the psychological, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions of the human condition. *Scientia* stands out for breadth of scope; *doctrina*, for depth of insight. From a historical perspective, we come to realize that Rojas attends to the ebb and flow evidenced in the main ideological watershed of his time. *Scientia* points to the medieval background of Aristotelian-Scholastic metaphysics, while *doctrina* not only attests to the fifteenth-century surfacing of the Stoic-Senecan undercurrent¹⁴ but also looks forward to the revolutionary trends of the Renaissance, harbingered by Nicholas Cusanus and Lorenzo Valla.¹⁵

In an effort to gaining an understanding of this rather complex picture, we would be well advised to bear in mind, for a start, the powerful influence that Dante Alighieri exercised upon Spanish literature of the fifteenth century. The Florentine cast a pervasive shadow especially on the post-troubadour love-centered lyricism, amply represented in the famous and not-so-famous anthologies of the period, the so-called *cancioneros*. Though many historians of literature have acknowledged Dante's

14. For the diffusion of Seneca's stoicism in Spain during the Middle Ages and especially during the fifteenth century, see Karl Alfred Blüher, *Seneca en España: investigaciones sobre la recepción de Séneca en España desde el siglo XIII hasta el siglo XVII*, trans. Juan Conde (Madrid: Gredos, 1983). Of particular interest apropos of Rojas's intellectual background and artistic evolution is Louise Fothergill-Payne, *Seneca and Celestina* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).

15. For an introduction to Cusanus and Valla, see, respectively: Ciriaco Morón Arroyo, «A Historical Revolution: Lorenzo Valla's Attack on Scholasticism», in *Acta VIII: The Late Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Cocozzella (Binghamton: The Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies-State University of New York at Binghamton, 1984), pp. 23-45; and Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper Torchbooks-Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 7-72.

presence in the *cancioneros* and in *cancionero*-type poetry, we still have not come to measure, let alone explain, the full impact of that presence. The problem is that, from the individual perspective of even such gifted writers as Íñigo López de Mendoza, Francisco Imperial, Enrique de Villena, obviously indebted to the author of the *Divine Comedy*, we cannot attain to the global design conceived and developed by the Italian bard.

Ironically, the stellar figure, whose inspiration and broad vision do not fall short of Dante's insight and panoramic reach, does not belong, strictly speaking, to the constellation of the *cancioneristas*. He is Ausiàs March, the Valencian poet whose life spans the first six decades of the 1400s.¹⁶ Although his brilliant career signals the high point in the golden age of Valencian culture, March does not appear as prominent as many of his contemporaries of comparable and even lesser stature. Among other factors that we need not go into here, the fact that he writes in his native (Valencian) brand of Catalan, which, shortly after his lifetime, became a language of waning prestige and limited readership, tends to marginalize his stupendous literary production. In March's career we witness, all the same, a paradoxical twist of fate. Even though for linguistic reasons he remains outside the realm of the *cancioneros*, his literary output, thanks to his unsurpassed talent, epitomizes the *cancioneros* to a degree that sets him high above all those coetaneous lyricists, who wrote primarily in Castilian.

March's admirable achievement is commensurate to his unique comprehension of Dante's plan of creativity. He capitalizes upon the two defining facets of Dante's aesthetic, namely, the expanse of the epic and the confines of the lyric. As I have shown elsewhere, March rises to the challenge posed by the articulation of these two facets and converts them into the grist for his own poetic mill.¹⁷ In emulation of Dante's blend of the epic and the lyric, the Valencian poet comes up with his own artistic trademark, which I propose to call «syncretic lyricism».¹⁸

Here we need not go into a detailed description of Ausiàs March's distinctive métier. Suffice it to say that his «syncretic lyricism» foreshadows the aforementioned dialectic between the *scientia* and *doctrina*, which, in

16. For a manageable text of Ausiàs March's *cants*, see *Obra poètica completa*, ed. and trans. Rafael Ferreres, 2 vols. Clásicos Castalia, 99-100 (Madrid: Castalia, 1979-82). On pp. 16-41 of Ferreres's introduction we find a concise «biografía» of Ausiàs March.

17. See my «Ausiàs March's 'Encyclopaedic Form': Toward a Poetic of Syncretism» in *Romance Languages Annual 1989*, ed. Ben Lawton, and Anthony Julian Tamburri (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue Research Foundation, 1990), pp. 399-408; and «Trends of Syncretism in Castilian and Catalan Literatures of the Late Middle Ages: Ausiàs March and Other Exponents», in *Acta xviii: Old and New in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Clyde Lee Miller (Binghamton: State University of New York at Binghamton/The Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1993), pp. 93-110.

18. «Ausiàs March's 'Encyclopaedic Form'», and «Trends of Syncretism in Castilian and Catalan Literatures of the Late Middle Ages».

my judgment, holds for Rojas a special fascination. The common coordinates, along which the two authors operate, reveal an intriguing parallelism between the type of textuality represented, broadly, in March's *cants* and the one embodied in Rojas's *Tragicomedia*. Prominent in March's world view is a guiding notion of globalism, virtually a perfect match for what Northrop Frye calls «encyclopaedic form».¹⁹ Josep Torras i Bages and many other critics after him basically have it right when they judge Ausiàs comparable with Aquinas and Dante because he shares with these illustrious predecessors an abiding drive toward the writing of a *summa*. In one of the passages of his pioneering essay, Torras i Bages, who considers Ausiàs March a «filòsof poeta», observes:

Si el Poema del Dant és una divina Comèdia, les rimes del nostre poeta formen la Comèdia humana, són en forma poètica l'exposició de la doctrina psicològica de la *Summa* de Sant Tomàs; així com la Comèdia italiana ho és de la ciència metafísica i teològica del Doctor d'Aquino.²⁰

To be sure, we may feel the need to refine this categorical pronouncement. Nevertheless, Torras i Bages's perception of Ausiàs March's overriding ideological hypertext has become common currency among *ausias-marquistes* and we have no reason to reject it. The truth remains that Ausiàs March's «encyclopaedic form», with its characteristic traits of «vision, totality, integration» epitomizes a macrocosmic orientation, which, as it now appears, inspired many Spanish writers of the second half of the fifteenth century, Rojas among them.²¹ Arguably, the *hombre sciente*, who in a full-fledged novel would assume the role of omniscient narrator, may be seen as Rojas's own figuration of an author intent upon the «encyclopaedic form».

Though revealing enough, the main affinities between March and Rojas at the level of *scientia* or of the *hombre sciente* do not tell the whole story, however. Ausiàs March, for instance, is grappling with a high level of tension, which, time and again, infuses his text with the dynamics of a counterpoint of sorts. We sense here a recurrence of the same type of pattern we have alluded to above in our preliminary remarks apropos of the contrast between the «Prólogo» and «El autor a un su amigo». The very nature of his intense lyricism compels Ausiàs March to aim beyond the «encyclopaedic form» and its accouterments, such as the globalist orientation and the ideological superstructure. What Ausiàs March is driving at is a text which, while not abandoning altogether the macrocos-

19. Cocozzella, «Ausiàs March's 'Encyclopaedic Form'», pp. 403-6.

20. Josep Torras i Bages, «El poeta Ausias March», *La tradició catalana* (1892; rpt. Barcelona: Editorial Selecta, 1966), p. 321.

21. Cocozzella, «Ausiàs March's 'Encyclopaedic Form'», p. 403, and «Trends of Syncretism».

mic design of the summa or the compendium, becomes more and more distanced from it. We may say, in short, that, in contraposition to the «encyclopaedic form», March conceives a remarkable expression of egocentrism, which may be called the text of the «I». This verbal icon of the self becomes eminently dramatized in the last phase of the Valencian's literary output.

Emblematic of the egocentrism of Ausiàs March's advanced age is *Cant* 105, inappropriately entitled «Cant espiritual». In their perceptive analysis, both Robert Archer and Josep Miquel Sobrer effectively reveal the poem in the light of its true identity: not as the spiritual, uplifting experience suggested by the epigraph it has acquired but, rather, as an ontological correlative of a state of dejection and withdrawal, aptly described, I would suggest, by the Hispanic term *ensimismamiento*.²² The «Cant espiritual» in question is, in Archer's words, «a formal correlative to the mental attitude which it is meant to describe».²³ I myself have called attention to the innovative qualities of *Cant* 105.²⁴ I would reiterate here my theory regarding March's contribution, an important milestone toward the realization of Rojas's own *Tragicomedia*. To highlight the portion of my argument particularly relevant to the present discussion, I will quote the following observation:

From his revolutionary reinterpretation of egocentrism March derives the bearings for a new orbit in the universe of the artistic creation. It is fair to argue that in March's newly discovered universe the symbolic «volum» so often invoked has lost its quasi-magical virtues. Clearly, some five decades before the composition of *Celestina*, March explores the crisis of a desperate individual like Melibea, who, in her final speech addressed to her father, immediately before she takes her fateful leap, makes reference to «aquellos antiguos libros que [tú], por más aclarar mi ingenio, me mandabas leer» (334). Here, as George A. Shipley shows, «the breakdown of dialogue» signifies, on the one hand, «the breakdown of authority»,²⁵ and, on the other hand, «the fallibility of reason», that is, «the failure of reason and co-operative

22 See Archer, «'E ja en mi alterat és l'arbitre': Dramatic Representation in Ausiàs March's *Cant Espiritual*», *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 59 (1982), 317-23, and Sobrer, *La doble soledat d'Ausiàs March*, Assaig Minor, 2 (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1987).

23. p. 321.

24. «Ausiàs March's and Martorell's Egocentric and Historicist Modes», in *The Catalan Contexts of Columbus (Proceedings of the Third Catalan Symposium)*, ed. Josep M. Solà-Solé (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), pp. 26-8.

25. George A. Shipley, «Authority and Experience in *La Celestina*», *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 72 (1985), 104.

memory to deal adequately with her [Melibea's] quandary». ²⁶ And there is no more reliable repository of authority than «aquellos antiguos libros», which Shipley defines as «the authorized summas of right living in conformity with principles derived hierarchically from absolutes and immune from the effects of time and space». ²⁷

If we take as our point of departure the seminal symbolism I refer to here, pertaining to March's «volum / d'aquell saber que sens amor no dura» (*Cant* 5, vv. 19-20), we are struck by the enormous distance March has traveled by the time he composes, a hundred poems and many years later, *Cant* 105. ²⁸ The two semiotic fields to be associated, respectively, one with the core image of the book—in a sense, March's own *libro de buen amor*— and the other with the intricate texture of *Cant* 105, are, for all intents and purposes, worlds apart. The point not to be missed is that the slow, painful transition Ausiàs meticulously depicts in the lover's psyche from the contemplation of the reassuring *volum* to the savoring of bitter despair closely parallels Rojas's dramatic display of Melibea's shift from the nostalgic evocation of the «antiguos libros» to the much-too-real pangs of a tragic sense of life. In the fate of both personages—March's lover as well as Rojas's Melibea—we perceive a similar momentum of descent from the transcendence of an overriding ideological supertext to the immanence of a moment-to-moment account of an individual plight. We are back, I would submit, at yet another manifestation of the play of alternation and reciprocity that Rojas embodies in the dialectic between transcendent *scientia* and immanent *doctrina*.

With these affinities between March and Rojas as a backdrop, the controversy surrounding «el primer autor» may be seen in a new light. Now the inquiry may begin afresh. Scholars may ask, for instance, why Rojas mentions Juan de Mena and Rodrigo Cota in the first place. And now we can descry the answer within the field of investigation we have opened to exploration—the field of the dialectic between *hombre sciente* and *docto varón*.

We begin to realize that Mena appeals to Rojas because, not unlike Ausiàs March's *cants*, Mena's production exhibits the horizon of syncretic lyricism. Not unlike the coetaneous Valencian luminary, Mena capitalizes upon the shift from the general to the particular. He arrives at an

26. Shipley, p. 103.

27. p. 104. See my «Ausiàs March's and Martorell's Egocentric and Historicist Modes», pp. 27-8.

28. For a detailed analysis of the all-important symbolism of the «volum» see my «Ausiàs March's and Martorell's Egocentric and Historicist Modes», pp. 22-9, and «Ausiàs March's *Imitatio Christi*: The Metaphysics of the Lover's Passion», in *Romance Languages Annual 1994*, ed. Jeanette Beer, Ben Lawton, and Patricia Hart (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue Research Foundation, 1995), pp. 428-33.

articulation between a universal scope and a focus on the individual human being. This is plainly evident in Mena's most renowned poems. In 1444 Mena wrote his magnum opus, *El laberinto de Fortuna*, an allegory in verse truly of epic dimension.²⁹ Then, about a decade later, in reaction to the deaths of Alvaro de Luna (1453) and Juan II (1454), he switched to a composition of much less ambitious design: the *Debate de la Razón contra Voluntad* (also known as *Coplas contra los pecados mortales*).³⁰ In tracing the evolution of Mena's microcosmic perspective, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel underlines the *Debate's* stoic strain and the circumstances that give rise to Mena's *senequismo*. She concludes that the *Debate* is «una alegoría no montada sobre un esquema cósmico».³¹

Another reason for Mena's appeal to Rojas well may reside in the central and extensive treatment that Mena accords to *Fortuna* —a subject which resonates quite deeply at the heart of Rojas's own creativity. In all probability, Rojas's attention must have been caught by Mena's syncretic/lyrical dealing with *Fortuna's* two functions, which Otis H. Green, apropos of Spanish literature of the fifteenth century, defines as *de tejas arriba* and *de tejas abajo*:

The first is in the final analysis equated with God's will: *No hay más fortuna que Dios*, wrote Calderón. The second is a personification of the disorder, the vicissitudes, the ups and downs of human life, equated with human prudence during the up periods and with human stupidity or passionate willfulness during the down periods.³²

It is, we may recall, Juan de Mena, who in an epic mode on a grand scale in accord with the Florentine's grand design, envisages the existential *laberinto*. Here the whole of humankind —from royalty to the humble

29. See José Manuel Blecua, Introducción, *El laberinto de Fortuna o Las trescientas*, ed. José Manuel Blecua, Clásicos Castellanos, 119 (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1960), p. XLVIII. Also worthy of special attention are the following: *Laberinto de Fortuna y otros poemas*, ed. Carla de Nigris (Barcelona: Crítica, 1994); *Laberinto de Fortuna*, ed. P.A.M. Kerkhof, Nueva Biblioteca de Erudición Crítica, 9 (Madrid: Castalia, 1995); *Laberinto de Fortuna*, ed. Louise Vasvari Fainberg (Madrid: Alhambra, 1976). An updated account of Mena's life and works may be found in the introduction to each of these editions. For a summary of the *Laberinto* and pertinent commentary, see, especially, De Nigris, pp. L-LXV, Kerkhof, pp. 11-32, Vasvari Fainberg, pp. 19-27.

30. María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, *Juan de Mena: poeta del prerrenacimiento español*, Publicaciones de la Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica, 1 (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1950), pp. 110-24. For the *Debate*, see: *Coplas de los siete pecados mortales and First Continuation*, ed. Gladys M. Rivera (Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, 1982); and «Coplas que hizo el famoso Juan de Mena contra los pecados mortales [*Debate de la Razón contra Voluntad*]», *Cancionero castellano del siglo XV*, ed. R. Foulché-Delbosc, 2 vols., Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 19, 22 (Madrid: Bailly-Baillière, 1912-5), I, 120-52.

31. Lida de Malkiel, p. 112.

32. «Fortune and Fate», *Spain and the Western Tradition: The Castilian Mind in Literature from El Cid to Calderón*, 4 vols. (Madison and Milwaukee: The U of Wisconsin P, 1963-1966), II, 280.

crowd— has to face up to the immense powers of Providence and Fate, a caring Divinity and a blind Necessity. It is, in short, Juan de Mena who embodies the vision of a veritable *hombre sciente*. But, as we have seen, he is also the author of the *Debate de la Razón contra Voluntad*, which in *senequista* orientation and by the deft staging of *psychomachia*, makes him an exemplary *docto varón*. Mena's figure, then, looms considerable, indeed, in Rojas's admiration. Rojas sees in him an accomplished author of vast vision and commanding inventiveness, who can respond with equal efficiency to the exigencies of both *sciencia* and *doctrina*.

So much for Juan de Mena. And what about Rodrigo Cota, the other name suggested by Rojas as possible *primer autor*?³³ In answering the question we should point out, for a start, that Cota is the author of a famous *Diálogo entre el Amor y un Viejo*, which, being a piece fully viable for the stage, must have held a special attraction for Rojas.³⁴ This *Diálogo* is similar to Mena's *Debate* in that it falls squarely within the microcosmic horizon, which we have attributed to the *docto varón*. In this respect, Lida de Malkiel's broad description, already cited, of the *Debate* as «una alegoría no montada sobre un esquema cósmico» is perfectly applicable to the *Diálogo*. This in no way underrates the latter's remarkable, true-to-life effects —its *forza icastica*, to use Aragone's terms³⁵— which clearly sets it apart from Mena's *Debate*. At the core of Cota's distinctiveness is his portrayal of the protagonist, the *Viejo* of the title, as the embodiment of the «human stupidity and passionate willfulness» that, as we have seen, Green associates with the negative side of *Fortuna de tejas abajo*.

I have had occasion to call attention to Cota's less-than-flattering characterization of his protagonist, who turns out to be an anti-hero of sorts:

The curmudgeon, who, heedless of the lessons that a lifetime of experience would teach him, relapses in the folly of Eros, even after he levels some rather harsh reproaches at Amor, is left in a compromised position,

33. A sketch of Cota's biography may be found in Elisa Aragone, Introduction, *Diálogo entre el Amor y un Viejo*, by Rodrigo Cota, ed. Elisa Aragone (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1961), pp. 9-63. See, also, F. Cantera Burgos, *El poeta Ruy Sánchez Cota (Rodrigo Cota) y su familia de conversos* (Madrid: Universidad de Madrid, 1970). For the relationship between Cota and Rojas see Marciales, pp. 33-41. In these pages Marciales expounds an elaborate argument in an effort to demonstrate that the *primer autor* is none other than Cota.

34. Aragone, pp. 50-4; Cocozzella, «From Lyricism to Drama», pp. 77-9. The *Diálogo* is available in the edition of Aragone (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1961) and of Fernando Lázaro Carreter (in *Teatro medieval* [Madrid: Castalia, 1965], pp. 133-54). There exists for Cota's *Diálogo* an anonymous stage adaptation (*refundición*) of the sixteenth century. It bears a Latin title, «Interlocutores senex et amor mulierque pulchra forma». María Rosa Lida de Malkiel made the composition known as «Diálogo del viejo, el amor y la hermosa» (Cf. Ronald E. Surtz, Intro., *Teatro castellano de la edad media*, ed. Ronald E. Surtz [Madrid: Taurus, 1992], p. 52). The text is found in *Teatro castellano de la edad media*, ed. Surtz, pp. 173-99.

35. p. 54.

replete with ironic, moralistic, and humoristic overtones.³⁶

By his foolhardy recidivism the *Viejo* demeans himself, thus proving once again, if proof is needed, that there is no fool like an old fool! Here we begin to perceive the stroke of Cota's genius, which consists in presenting the lover not only as a disgraced victim of Eros but also, more importantly, as a ridiculous fool. Witness, for instance, how Amor gloats over his interlocutor's miseries and how he repays with merciless taunts the latter's relentless reviling:

¡Quién te viesse entretenido
en cosas dulces de amores,
y venirte los dolores
y atravessarte el gemido!
¡O quién te oyese cantar
«Señora de alta guisa»,
y temblar y gagadear
los gallillos engrifar,
tu dama muerta de risa!³⁷

What remains to be highlighted is the radical stoic tenor of Cota's *Diálogo* in its overall ethical orientation. For the time being it will suffice to ponder that the denouement of the composition abounds in moralizing pronouncements. In his concluding remarks Amor reprimands twice, explicitly, his erstwhile bitter critic for obstinacy in sin:

Depravado y obstinado,
desseoso de pecar,
¡mira, malaventurado,
que te dexa a ti el pecado
y tú no l' quieres dexar!³⁸

And these harsh words are met with a surprising reply. This is what the Old Man has to say, a few verses later, in his own *despedida*: «Pues en ti [Amor] tuve esperanza, / tú perdona mi pecar...».³⁹

How does Amor come to acquire, all of a sudden, the powers of forgiveness, prerogatives of the Christian God? Have we now come to a religious conversion? These questions broach a new line of enquiry, off limits to our present discussion. What we need to do at this juncture is to underscore, yet one more time, Cota's stoic strain and reassert the fundamental

36. «From Lyricism to Drama», p. 78.

37. p. 104. The pagination refers to Aragon's edition, from which I derive my quotations.

38. p. 105.

39. p. 105.

message that transpires, albeit in a negative way, through the example of the Old Man.⁴⁰ The message coincides with that of a memorable poem, in which the famed Íñigo López, Marqués de Santillana, extols the impressive equanimity of the philosopher Bías, one of the most admirable *doctos varones* of antiquity and of all time. According to the enlightening study by Karl A. Blüher, the poem in question, entitled «Bías contra Fortuna», stands as a monument to «el concepto de autarquía de la filosofía estoica y el heroísmo luchador propio del estoico, que llega a dominar el Hado».⁴¹ Within these noble qualities of the *virtus* that in Bías shines forth in a positive exemplification, Cota, for purposes of his own, would encompass, much more explicitly than does Santillana, a complete control over the *pathoi* or *affectus* —to use the ancient terms— namely, the *pasiones* that took to the limelight in the Spanish love-centered literature of the 1400s.

Quite a few are, then, the outstanding qualities that won for Cota's *Diálogo* a well-deserved visibility: the wry humor, the assertion of the stoic concept of *virtus* (especially the subjugation of the erotic drive), the ethical orientation, the dramatic/theatrical verve of it all. These would not be lost on Rojas and, certainly, would make their impact upon his own version of Love's fool —namely, the characterization of Calisto. Except for his young age, Calisto may be seen, in many essential aspects, as a counterpart of the notorious Old Man. It is as if Rojas set out to remind his *amigo* and kindred youths that, if a cantankerous fox twice or three times their age cannot escape the snares of Amor, so much more liable are they to disgrace themselves, transgressing in one fell swoop the Socratic imperative of «Know thyself» and the stoic commandment of «Thou shalt keep your emotions in check». In the final analysis, Calisto is Rojas's answer to Cota's «negative example»: a *docto varón's* vision of a self-doomed victim, a pathetic, grotesque, and, above all, ridiculous eyesore, marring a stoic meditation on the best of all possible worlds.

So far, we have been able to determine that the comic perspective —an integral element of the vision of the *docto varón*— is worth our attention as one of the primary signs of Cota's influence on Rojas. Thus, we may add the probability of this important source to the powerful argument aduced by Dorothy S. Severin, who, in accord with other notable scholars, views Calisto as a comic figure, specifically as a parody of Leriano, the star-crossed lover in Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de amor*.⁴²

40. A fitting analogue for this negative way may be found in what Enrique Muñoz-Mariño calls «contra-ejemplo». See «Metodología crítica e interpretativa de / y para la *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea de Fernando de Rojas*» in *'La Celestina' y su contorno social: actas del I Congreso Internacional sobre La Celestina*, ed. Manuel Criado de Val (Barcelona: HISPAM, 1977), p. 114.

41. p. 203.

42. Dorothy S. Severin, «Humor in *La Celestina*», *Revista de Filología Hispánica*, 32 (1978-9), 274-91, and Introducción, *La Celestina*, by Fernando de Rojas, ed. Dorothy S. Severin. *Letras Hispánicas*, 4 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1995), pp. 27-31.

In conclusion, it is well to hark back to the profile that Rojas draws of his own authorial persona. Such a profile is based on the significance the mention of the two authors, Mena and Cota, accrues in the light of the symbiosis, which we have been able to adumbrate between two figures: the *docto varón* and the *hombre sciente*. Starting from the latter and proceeding to the former, let us summarize what we have discovered concerning them both. From Cota Rojas learns the techniques of an unusual comedy, which employs a negative example in order to dramatize *virtus* as the highest stoic value, exhibited, mainly, through equanimity, self-control, and self-knowledge. In his anti-heroic stature, Calisto, a human being wrecked by inordinate love or passion run amuck, may be seen as a counterpart of Cota's *Viejo*. Just like the *Viejo* and unlike some other lovers —Leriano, say, or Romeo— of noble character and true heroic and, consequently, authentic tragic lineage, Calisto is unmasked for what he is and will ever be: a ludicrous «fool of Love». From Cota's perspective of the *docto varón* Rojas, then, derives a reliable code, according to which Calisto's conduct may be judged: Calisto does not learn from his life experience what he should learn —namely, to manage wisely and prudently his *fortuna de tejas abajo*.

To round out our argument we must put aside, temporarily, the strain of *senequismo*, which, as we have seen, accounts for the fundamental affinity between Mena's *Debate* and Cota's *Diálogo*. Far beyond the limited scope characteristic of Mena's own rendition of *psychomachia*, Rojas could not have missed the universal perspective, thanks to which the author of the *Laberinto* can show far and wide the epic confrontation between two mighty, superhuman forces, as redoubtable as any divinity from Classical Antiquity: *Fortuna* and Providence. The impact of this formidable clash, fraught with momentous and often mysterious repercussions upon human existence, may be perceived in the following comments by Carla De Nigris, a recent editor of the *Laberinto*:

La impresión que se obtiene de la lectura de buena parte del poema es que la Fortuna, lejos de estar sometida a la Providencia, constituye, por el contrario, un elemento extraño y perturbador del orden divino.⁴³

De Nigris segues with other insightful remarks, also worthy citing because they strike a familiar chord in the mind of the reader of *Celestina*:

Parece, por lo tanto, como si la solución conciliadora que intenta Mena no obtuviera el éxito esperado: él intenta asignar a la Fortuna un papel limitado, considerándola sujeta al orden establecido por Dios, pero no consigue

43. p. LXIV.

dominar su tendencia a juzgar la vida humana como algo sometido al arbitrio de una fuerza fuera de la ley.⁴⁴

We only have to invoke the maxim, «*Omnia secundum litem fiunt*», and we are back in the chaotic universe envisaged by Rojas's *hombre sciente*.

From this we may deduce that in the *Laberinto* Mena comes up with a notion of *Fortuna de tejas arriba*, a malevolent, capricious power, which, as the obverse of Divine Providence, coincides with Fate, the terrifying Demiurge that holds sway in the cosmogony of Classical Antiquity. Ultimately, from this baneful kind of *Fortuna* Rojas must have derived the main determinants—the dark atmosphere of doom, the palpable mood of pessimism, the compelling determinism—that come into play in the tragic mode of the *Tragicomedia*. Any doubt as to the authentic tragic dimension of *Celestina* will be dispelled, I believe, by a rereading of Act xx, where the mood is consistent with that created, throughout the centuries, by any one of the great practitioners of the art of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Particularly striking toward the creation of that mood is Melibea's reference to the Parcae moments before she takes her fatal leap from the tower:

Cortaron las hadas sus hilos [de Calisto]; cortáronle sin confesión su vida; cortaron mi speranza; cortaron mi gloria; cortaron mi compañía. (334)

Needless to say, Melibea's remarks are open to discussion. A perusal of the standard editions, such as those by P.E. Russell and Severin, will show that prominent critics, not surprisingly, offer us various interpretations for Melibea's speech. We recall the proverb that Melibea fires at Celestina in the course of her memorable sparring with the hag in Act iv: «Cada uno dize de la feria como le va en ella» (155). What we can add, for our part, is that the speech in question is symptomatic of a process of development, fully in accord with the point of view of *el hombre sciente*. Yes, Melibea, contrary to Calisto, develops as a character and grows in self-knowledge. Ironically, it is Celestina who leads her in her tortuous journey from naive damsel to mature woman, ready to come to grips with her passionate love. The trouble is that, as she comes to terms with her *yo* and her *circunstancia*, she acquires self-confidence and self-control and that—by another twist of irony—spells her doom. By the time she confronts her father in Act xx, we realize that in her case stoic *virtus* is too much of a good thing: it has turned into what the playwrights of old would call *hubris*. By her diabolic art of seduction Celestina has scored big, indeed. Under Celestina's influence Melibea ends up seeing herself as the divine being that Calisto from the very beginning takes her to be.

44. De Nigris, p. LXIV.

The mere fact that she accords such prominence to the issue of suicide in her final discourse —«the lady doth protest too much!»— would raise a red flag for any *docto varón*, let alone a *docto varón* who has learned to adapt stoic ethics to Christian *doctrina*. It is the compelling momentum of *hubris* that motivates Melibea to take charge in the belief or aspiration to be in complete control of her life. Thus, she disregards «aquellos antiguos libros», becoming estranged from the realm of Divine Providence, the Christian *Fortuna de tejas arriba*. In effect, she has just banished herself to the vast wasteland, the dark world and wide, of the *hadas*. It is pagan Fate and not Christian *Fortuna* that forever and a day will hold sway over her. Melibea is truly a tragic character basically in the Aristotelian sense of the term.

In sum, both the «Prólogo» and «El autor a un su amigo» belong, to a certain extent, to the same *stoic/senequista* tradition. Following are some of the distinctions that need to be made, nevertheless, between the two pieces: the «Prólogo» exhibits an orientation toward the concerns of *Fortuna de tejas arriba* and, therefore, maintains a universal scope, in which it coincides with the Aristotelian/Scholastic culture of the Middle Ages; in contrast, «El autor a un su amigo» keeps at a level of down-to-earth discourse in accord with the purview of *Fortuna de tejas abajo* and, therefore, attests to the new orientation that stoicism manifests at the dawn of the Renaissance. Moreover, Rojas converts each piece into an emblem of its own dramatic mode: tragic the one, comic the other. From another perspective, if we may use, metaphorically, some terms derived from algebra, we may describe the gist of our conclusion as an equation of sorts between two trinomials: *docto varón/comedy/Calisto* versus *hombre sciente/tragedy/Melibea*. The implications of the counterbalance between these two groups especially in relation to the structure and multifaceted dramatic textuality of *Celestina* bears analyzing in detail. At the very least, it constitutes an intriguing subject for further study.

COCOZZELLA, Peter, «*Hombre Sciente and Docto Varón: A Profile of Fernando de Rojas's Authorial Persona*», *Celestinesca* 28 (2004), pp. 7-24.

RESUMEN

En la «Carta a un su amigo» y en el «Prólogo» propiamente dicho —es decir, los textos añadidos a manera de prefación, respectivamente, a las dos versiones (Comedia y Tragicomedia) de la obra comúnmente titulada *Celestina*— se perfilan dos figuras de singular relieve: el «docto varón» y el «hombre sciente». En vista de estos personajes, cabe lanzar la hipótesis de dos perspectivas, una cómica y otra trágica, que entran en juego en la constitución de toda la obra. La hipótesis nos permite apartarnos de la peliaguda controversia, aún falta de resolución, relativa a cuestiones de autoría. Podemos, así, fijarnos en la presencia de una «persona autorial», que integre las características individuales de *auctoritates* como Heráclito, Petrarca, Ausiàs March, Juan de Mena, Rodrigo Cota, eminentes retratos, todos ellos, algunos del «docto varón», otros del «hombre sciente» en cuestión.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Celestina*: aspectos cómicos y trágicos, perspectivismo, autoría, senequismo, petrarquismo, fortuna, hado, psychomachia, tradición y ambiente cancioneril.

ABSTRACT

The «Carta a un su amigo» and the «Prólogo» properly called —the prefatory texts, that is, added, respectively, to the two versions (the Comedia and the Tragicomedia) of the masterwork commonly called *Celestina*— provide a profile of two outstanding figures: the «docto varón» and the «hombre sciente.» In view of these personages, we may launch a hypothesis concerning two perspectives, one comedic and the other tragic, which come to bear upon the very nature of the composition. The hypothesis allows us to sidestep the thorny controversy, still unresolved, about issues of authorship. We may focus, instead, upon the notion of an «authorial persona,» an integration of the individual characteristics of such *auctoritates* as Heraclitus, Petrarch, Ausiàs March, Juan de Mena, Rodrigo Cota. All these may be considered eminent embodiments, some of the «docto varón,» some of the «hombre sciente» in question.

KEY WORDS: *La Celestina*: comic and tragic aspects, perspectivism, authorial persona, Senecan and Petrarchan influences, Fortune, Fate, psychomachia, cancionero background.

