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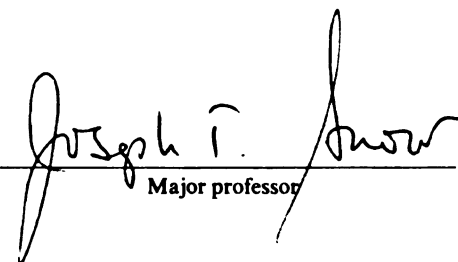
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THE GAME(S) OF LOVE AND LANGUAGE IN ANTON DE MONTORO,
RODRIGO DE COTA AND FERNANDO DE ROJAS.

By

Nathalie Kasselis

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ABSTRACT

THE GAME(S) OF LOVE AND LANGUAGE IN ANTON DE MONTORO, RODRIGO DE COTA AND FERNANDO DE ROJAS

By

Nathalie Kasselis

Following the theoretical precepts of French philosopher Jacques Derrida as well as the literary formulations of Argentinean thinker and writer Jorge Luis Borges, this study analyzes the conception of language underlying the works of three Spanish fifteenth-century *converso* authors: namely Antón de Montoro's poetic corpus, Rodrigo de Cota's *Diálogo entre el amor y un viejo*, and Fernando de Rojas' *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. It shows that these authors' view of language as an ever-changing and deceiving entity is intimately connected with their own feeling of instability and alienation in fifteenth-century Castile.

Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo de Cota and Fernando de Rojas choose the literary school of courtly love as the point of departure for their reflections on the treacherous nature of language. In fact the concepts, but more significantly the language, of *fin'amor* is hyperbolic by nature and therefore perfectly illustrates the power of language to manipulate reality and create fictions. The male protagonists of Cota's *Diálogo*, *Viejo*, as well as Rojas' male lover protagonist, Calisto, are parodic courtly lovers while *Amor* and the old bawd Celestina, are personifications of the deceit and treachery

involved in everyday language practices.

Such a vision of language did not originate in fifteenth-century Spain and is traced in some of the Midi troubadours' verses as well as in fourteenth-century Spanish author Juan Ruiz, author of the *Libro de Buen Amor*. Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo de Cota and Fernando de Rojas' respective texts reiterate an issue -the self-reflexivity of language -- already expressed by earlier Medieval authors; yet, their vision of language becomes a metaphor for their own social and religious status in pre-renaissance Spain. *Conversos* were scrutinized by the dominant caste of Old Christians and constantly submitted to higher levels of repression; as a consequence, they were condemned to wear successive masks in order to adapt to any new given situation. Similarly, language is a malleable and a-centric entity. It is ironical, yet highly logical, that these three authors should have chosen language as the means to express their sense of otherness; in fact, their "language practices" oftentimes were the cause of their tragic vision.

This study allows the reader to come to realize that self-reflexivity -- at the core of modern and post-modern literary debates -- is also of central importance in Medieval texts. Moreover, this dissertation demonstrates that the negative view of language shared by Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas -- and conveyed through the game(s) of love and language in their respective works -- unveils a human tragedy: that of the newly converted Jews in fifteenth-century Spain, condemned to dissimulate and pretend in order to survive.

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Introduction

One of the main issues raised by modern and post-modern literature and addressed by contemporary literary criticism is that of the deceitful nature of language. Such prominent works as that of the Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges in the literary field and of Jacques Derrida in the area of critical theory are two of the best exponents of the deceptive potential of language.

Jorge Luis Borges constantly challenges the reader's traditional concept of language -- be it written or oral -- as a reliable tool to represent reality, and his short stories *El Aleph*, *La Biblioteca de Babel*, as well as his poem *El Tigre*¹ among other examples, attest to the impossibility of language to capture reality. In Borges' view, language is incomplete by nature and writing is but a doomed effort on the part of the writer to attain the truth.² Borges further believes that the object of literature is to establish a dialogue between writer and reader but he is well aware that the written text is irremediably influenced by both historical and personal circumstances. Language is thus inevitably subjective as Borges' short story *Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote* illustrates.³

Jacques Derrida also believes that a text is the unavoidable product of given historical and personal circumstances but that it is also the sum of all the language intricacies and interactions not perceived by the writer himself:

. . . But in each case, the person writing is inscribed in the text . . .
[but] the writer writes in a language and in a logic whose proper system, laws and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself after a fashion

and up to a point, be governed by the system. And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses. This relationship is not a certain quantitative distribution of shadow and light, of weakness or force but a signifying structure that critical reading should produce.⁴

Jacques Derrida “de-constructs” the literary text in order to shed light on its inner contradictions and shows the different kinds of manipulations words are subjected to, in the hands of the writer, the speaker or the reader.⁵ Language is in a state of perpetual flux, constantly re-invented by those who use it. It is “a dangerous supplement” to borrow Derrida’s own words:

Writing is *dangerous* from the moment that representation claims to be presence and the sign of the thing itself. And there is a fatal necessity, inscribed in the very functioning of the sign that the substitute makes one forget the vicariousness of its own function and make itself pass for the plenitude of a speech whose deficiency and infirmity it nevertheless only supplements. The supplement (language) supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself in the place of; it fills, it is as one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which takes the place. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself. (*Acts of Literature*, 83; emphasis added)

According to the Derridian school of deconstruction, the written text becomes a self-reflective entity that focuses on its own system of language generation. The Derridian philosophical approach to language enables the scholar to find the contradictions underlying the literary text, and in the final analysis, to discover and comprehend the treacherous nature and artificiality of language itself. As Derrida explains in *l’Ecriture et la difference*, meaning does not exist *a priori*. It is elaborated by language users:

Tout commence par la reproduction. Toujours, déjà, c'est à dire dépôts d'un sens qui n'a jamais été présent, dont le présent signifié est toujours reconstitué à retardement, après coup, supplémentairement.⁶

In Derrida's view, language is used in order to make up for "absence" and is used in place of reality. Language occurs by essence after the fact, it is irremediably deferred and is differential according to who is writing and who is interpreting.⁷ For these very reasons, language is a "supplement" added to life. It is a construct and therefore can only pretend to re-create and imitate life.

The objective of this dissertation is to analyze the nature of language underlying the works of three Spanish fifteenth century authors: of selected poems of Antón de Montoro,⁸ Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo entre el amor y un viejo*⁹ and Fernando de Rojas' *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*.¹⁰ This study hopes to demonstrate that these three authors share a philosophy of language very akin to that of Jorge Luis Borges and Jacques Derrida. Not unlike the Argentinean writer and the French philosopher, Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas show in their respective works that their language practices are a product of historical and personal circumstances; yet, their works also demonstrate that language -- an autonomous and self-generating entity -- can only supplement reality.¹¹

As we shall see, these three authors were directly influenced by the concept of literature as game, in vogue in fifteenth century Spain, and for that reason they consciously and openly played with language. Their

objective was to challenge the spirit of their public and to establish an open dialogue with their readers, whom they invited to participate in the creative process of their respective works.

The objective of these three writers is not merely ludic in nature as this study will also analyze. By playing with language, Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas direct the reader's attention to the arbitrary and dangerous nature of language which has the power to constantly re-invent itself and reality.

By insisting on the ever-changing and unstable nature of language, those three authors also point to the instability of their own status as religious converts in fifteenth-century Spain. Language -- as it used by the converts Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas -- becomes a metaphor for the arbitrariness and instability of the converts' existence in fifteenth-century Spain. As we will see further on, Jewish converts were obliged to wear successive masks in order to fit in new social and religious circumstances, whence the comparison that can be established between their existence and language itself.

Montoro's poems, as well as the *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia*, become independent and self reflective entities and therefore anticipate issues at the core of modern and post-modern literary debates. Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' texts go beyond their authors' own intentions. In Derrida's words, these writers:

write in a language and in a logic whose proper system, [their] discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. [They] use

them only by letting [themselves] after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system. And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses. This relationship is not a certain quantitative distribution of shadow and light, of weakness or force but a signifying structure that critical reading should produce. (*Dangerous supplément*, 87)

The ultimate goal of this dissertation is therefore to analyze the social and personal circumstances as well as the specific language practices that constitute the substance of Antón de Montoro's poems, Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo* and Fernando de Rojas' *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. Moreover, we will also see how these three authors view literature as the product of a fruitful interaction between the writer and the reader. The study of these three Medieval writers will allow us to reach conclusions on the incomplete nature of language in general.

This study will first focus on the parodic and ludic uses of the language of courtly love and its philosophy in these three authors. In fact, the literary movement of courtly love that originated in twelfth-century Occitania lingers on in fifteenth-century Spain both in prose and in *cancionero* poetry for reasons that will be explored later in the study.¹²

Much has been written on the literary tradition of courtly love and studies on its origins and its historical and social background abound. The present investigation will focus on how Cota, Montoro and Fernando de Rojas de-construct and de-stabilize the traditional concepts, and the canonical language of courtly love.

First, by cultivating parody, ambiguity and contradictions, these three authors shed light on the fictitious nature of courtly love which ends up being a literary entertainment and performance. Second, by means of neologisms and wordplay, Montoro, Cota and Rojas unveil the artificiality and arbitrariness of the language of courtly love but also of language in general. In fact, these three writers show convincingly that language is constantly manipulated and that words are sculpted according to their users' needs and intentions.

Language, in the hands of Montoro, Cota and Rojas, becomes a malleable entity, in a constant state of evolutionary flux, manipulated by its specialist practitioners in oral and written form. Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' works, when seen up close, imply that language has no pre-determined fixed meaning and that it is in a perpetual state of *mouvance* - to borrow from Paul Zumthor's formulations.¹³

The manipulation of language and the awareness of its arbitrary and ever-changing nature, as reflected in these three fifteenth-century Spanish authors, is of particular importance in an age during which the Spanish political and social landscapes are also in a state of perpetual change.

A very brief overview shows that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Spain are rife with ongoing internal political turmoil, which we will analyze more extensively in chapter two of this study. In brief, the fourteenth century opened with the reign of Alfonso XI who obtained the grand victory of Salado against the Arabs in 1340 and conquered Algeciras in

1344, although the tendency of the Castilian kings of that century was to downplay the reconquest. In fact, the Trastámara dynasty, who came to power in 1369, was more dedicated to the solving of internal civil strife.

The most significant of these contentious conflicts was between Pedro el Cruel, the only legitimate son of Alfonso XI of Castile, and his illegitimate half-brother Enrique of Trastámara (son of Alfonso XI and his mistress Leonor de Guzmán). Their conflict ended with the murder of Pedro el Cruel in 1369, following which Enrique and the Trastámara family would determine fundamental patterns for the future of Spain.

The fourteenth-century also witnessed several outbreaks of the bubonic plague which struck almost everywhere in Europe at the middle and end of that century, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths and therefore inflicting heavy consequences on the economy of the kingdoms of Aragón, Castile and Portugal. In this century and the following one, Aragón and Castile competed for hegemony but were finally united with the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile (of the Trastámara line) in 1469.

Particularly relevant to my study of *converso* writers Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas is the rise of anti-Semitism in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Spain. The pogroms of 1391 that began in Seville -- and subsequently extended to Valencia, Burgos and Madrid -- resulted in the death of a large portion of the Jewish community and the conversion of thousands of others.

The growing feeling of anti-Semitism in the Spanish kingdoms in the fourteenth-and fifteenth-centuries was exacerbated by two major factors: first, the converted Jews, or *conversos*, were accused of practicing their old religion; second, some of the *conversos* occupied prominent positions in the court and, generally speaking, were involved with financial matters in more significant ways than any other religious group (old Christians, Muslims). Anti-Semitism grew increasingly more active during the fifteenth century and contributed to the creation of the Inquisition, whose prime objective was to unmask the false *conversos*.¹⁴

A significant trend of fifteenth-century Spain, with roots in the previous century, is the growing importance of a new moneyed class -- fiercely opposed to the powerful nobility, a trend that could only end by challenging royal authority. Moreover, the *privados* acquired great power at court and Alvaro de Luna (chancellor of Juan II of Castile) -- undoubtedly one of the most notorious *privados*-- took advantage of his king's lack of deep interest in governing and tried to usurp his power. His political intrigues finally resulted in his beheading ordered by the king himself in 1453.

The Catholic kings, Fernando and Isabel, restored the full power of royalty and managed to keep the nobility appeased by conferring on its members numerous honorific titles without great authority; yet, the struggle between royalty and nobility remains a major characteristic of that century.

The fifteenth century has oftentimes been characterized by historians as an era of prosperity in Spain. In fact, the Catholic monarchs united the

Spanish kingdoms, completed the Reconquest with the fall of Granada in 1492, and expanded the Spanish territorial possessions with the discovery and exploration of the “Indies” (the Americas) between 1492 and 1497. Nevertheless, historians also concur that the changes which occurred during that century announced the future fall of the Spanish empire.

The desire of the Catholic Kings to unite the Spanish kingdoms both politically and religiously resulted in the expulsion or forced conversion of the Muslims on January 1st of 1492, and of the Jews, on March 31st of that same year. In the name of the reason of state, then the Spanish kingdoms at that time ceased to be an example of *convivencia* among the main religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism.¹⁵

The expulsion of the Jews in particular created a serious economic crisis as well as a generalized feeling of mistrust which created an atmosphere of malaise originated in the previous century. That feeling of uncertainty and discontent was overtly expressed in three anonymous poems of protest, published before 1492: *Las Coplas de la Panadera*, *Las Coplas de Mingo Revulgo* and *Las Coplas del Provincial* that all attack the social ills of the century.¹⁶

In the literary field, the fifteenth century received signal influence from Italian humanist writers and thinkers who were particularly well received by the new moneyed class and were emulated by the members of the court, which became the center of culture. Grammar and rhetoric, humanistically oriented, became the nobility’s subjects of preference and

some members of that social class were writing in Latin by the time of Fernando and Isabel.

It is under the reign of Juan II (1406-1454), that the first manifestations of the Renaissance appeared in Spain. Nevertheless, that literary movement did not blossom in Spanish letters until after 1526. The poetic form of the sonnet was introduced in Spain but did not become the preferred form of poetic expression until the sixteenth-century, more particularly with the poet Garcilaso de la Vega. Some classical works were translated into Spanish and the Italians, Petrarch and Dante in particular, were sources of inspiration for a few Spanish writers of the second part of the fifteenth century. The poetry of the *juglares* still dominated the poetry of fifteenth-century Spain as the example of the *Cancionero General* attests.

Poetry became the preferred literary expression of the nobility as the examples of King Juan II and of the Marqués of Santillana attest.¹⁷ Yet, poets were from all social and religious origins as Antón de Montoro's "El Ropero" (The Tailor) prestigious literary career clearly shows.

Love, and the main tenets of the philosophy of courtly love especially, remained a theme of preference for the *cancionero* poets, but political satire was equally important. In fact, *cancionero* poetry can be characterized by its variety of form, tone and topics. A *cancionero* poet such as Alfonso Alvarez de Villasandino perfectly illustrates the different literary tendencies of fifteenth-century Spain.¹⁸ As we will further analyze in chapter two, *cancionero* poetry is the literary manifestation of a society still rooted in the

Middle Ages in many ways but also somewhat influenced by a pre-Renaissance spirit.

Amidst the literary fervor produced by the mingling of the traditional and the new, Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas each chose to parody the literary tradition of courtly love still dynamic in fifteenth-century Spain; each did so for specific social reasons. In fact, the nobility, immensely conservative, wished to preserve a world of chivalrous values of passé idealism in a society that did not offer them new opportunities to achieve fame in the traditional areas of battlefields and warfare. Courtly love represented such an escape mode for the Spanish nobility.

By parodying the philosophy of courtly love, Montoro, Cota and Rojas are indirectly poking fun at the idealism of the nobility, and therefore their literary practices acquire a vibrant social dimension. These three authors parody the hyperbolic nature of the language of courtly love by toying with its distinctive linguistic features. Wordplay primarily aimed at ridiculing poetic devices, frequent in courtly expression, is the point of departure for a more general reflection on the use of language itself. Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' works exemplify that words can be manipulated endlessly, that language is, in essence, ever-changing and therefore highly arbitrary. Language is in a state of perpetual flux; it has no center to hold.

The instability of language evinced in the works of these three authors can usefully be compared to the arbitrariness and instability of the same authors' identities in late fifteenth-century Spain. Despite the fact that these

three authors occupied positions of prestige, they remained at the margin of their society (see chapters 3, 4 and 5 for the authors' prestige). As Montoro openly explains in a poem dedicated to Queen Isabel, he cannot lose his identity as *converso*, despite all efforts to become fully integrated into fifteenth-century Castilian society:

Hice el Credo y adorar
ollas de tocino grueso,
torreznos a medio asar
oir misas y rezar,
santiguar y persinar,
y nunca pude matar
este rastro de confeso.¹⁹

Montoro uses auto-criticism in this specific poem in order to focus on his inability to conform to the ever-changing norms imposed by the ruling caste of Old Christians. In other instances, Montoro openly plays with language, a game that, in Montoro's poetry -- but also in Cota's *Diálogo* and Rojas' *Tragicomedia* -- fulfills a definite function: underline the treacherous and unstable nature of language. The concept of language as a dangerous and deceitful entity is one of the main issues raised by our three *converso* authors. Consequently, we will prove that Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' primary objective is to make the reader aware of that inherent characteristic of language. Nevertheless, in these three convert authors' case, the arbitrariness involved in language practice becomes a metaphor for the *conversos'* unstable and conflicting status in fifteenth-century Castile.

Montoro offers his public a highly pessimistic view of society by criticizing openly some of the prominent political figures of his times and by

insisting on the vain effort expended by *conversos* to integrate themselves into mainstream Castilian social affairs. His parody of courtly love, one of the literary forms of *cancionero* poetry, so prominent at Isabel's court, -- although undoubtedly recognized by many as a pure literary game -- can thus be interpreted as a reaction against the idealism of the nobility.

Cota chooses as the main character of his *Diálogo* a man who falls deeply in love in his old age. By using such a non-traditional character, Cota parodies one of the main requirements of the philosophy of courtly love -- the youth of the male lover -- and as a consequence, debases the language of courtly love itself.

The grotesque character of the old man does not belong to the Order of Love and to the world of courtly love precisely because of his age; thus, he can easily be associated with the status of the *conversos* themselves -- that of Rodrigo Cota in this particular instance -- who, under the pressure of conversion, became alienated in their own country.

Rojas also offers a pessimistic view of his society through the impact of Celestina's world, office and practices and shows how an illicit passion, presented under the cover of courtly love, can subvert the order of society. In fact, Rojas decides to have his two main characters, Calisto and Melibea, die separately to highlight the devastating effects of extreme passion.

Rojas' protagonist lover, Calisto, embodies the hyperbolic nature of the language of courtly love in Rojas' work. The old bawd Celestina is the antithesis of the courtly lady on the one hand; conversely, she is the perfect

personification of the author's views of the treachery involved in language practice. It is by means of language that Celestina manipulates her interlocutors and impacts the unfolding of the various events in the *Tragicomedia*. Her devilish practices used together with her expertise in rhetoric eventually lead the protagonists to their tragic ends.

The language used by Celestina is multi-faceted and allows her to adapt to any given situation. Treacherous and deceptive language practices used in conjunction with a vast knowledge of human nature allow the old bawd to enter the bourgeois home of Pleberio, father of Melibea. Language is what Celestina uses to manipulate Pármeno, one of Calisto's servants, but also Melibea and her mother Alisa.

The old bawd lives in an underworld governed by treachery, manipulation, love, and money intrigues and thus embodies duplicity and political intrigues so characteristic of Rojas' Spain. Celestina is also a marginalized person (Rojas metaphorically mentions in the *Tragicomedia* that she lives on the outskirts of town) and therefore can easily be compared to Cota's old lover protagonist, who becomes a marginalized person for having fallen in love in old age.

Rojas' protagonist matchmaker can easily be associated with the status of fifteenth-century Spanish converts. As we will fully explore in chapter two, Spanish *conversos* were irremediably marginalized in fifteenth century Spain and for this very reason were compelled to respond to new constant environments in Christian Spain. In fact, the norms of acceptance among the

the Old Christians changed continuously; they became stricter as time went by resulted in the establishment of the Inquisition and eventually in the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. Celestina, likewise, constantly adapts to any given situation in order to survive. Like the *conversos* themselves, she wears successive masks and the reality of her inner-self becomes lost to public view.

As I will hope to show in chapter five, the old bawd embodies the power of language to deceive; she also impersonates the marginalized status of *conversos* in Rojas' society. Both elements -- language and the converts' status -- are intimately connected in the *Tragicomedia* since they share the same attributes: they are both treacherous and arbitrary.

It is by means of two main practices -- parody and wordplay -- that Montoro, Cota and Rojas deflate two major components of their society: first, that of courtly love, which ends up being exposed as purely a literary game, a fiction and a form of escapism for Spanish fifteenth-century society; second, language considered by many as a reliable tool of communication which ends up being a "dangerous supplement," to borrow Derrida's formulation. By showing that language is an unstable entity, these three authors -- like the Midi troubadours in twelfth-century -- also react against the Church's (the Old Christian world) vision of the word as fixed in its meaning.

In these authors' view, language is communication act, incomplete and therefore treacherous since the author is free to manipulate meaning in order to cultivate ambiguity; language, once it is "performed," leaves a void

to be filled in by a multitude of nuanced receptions or interpretations on the part of the reader or the listener.

Fernando de Rojas was keenly aware of the multi-faceted and incomplete nature of words; he asserts in the prologue to the *Tragicomedia* that, “Y como sea cierto que toda palabra del hombre sciente esté preñada . . .” and was also conscious of the multiple manipulations words undergo in the hands of the reader when he goes on to note in the prologue that

. . . Y pues es antigua querella y visitada de largos tiempos, no quiero maravillarme si esta presente obra ha seydo instrumento de lid o contienda a sus lectores para ponerlos en diferencias, dando cada uno sentencia sobre ella a sabor de su voluntad . . .²⁰

In Rojas' view, the process of writing and that of receiving or interpreting become one; the metasemiosis between the two processes creates the text and each new reading of a given text builds on that text. This phenomenon inherent in language performance is explained by Paul Zumthor:

The recipient of the text has a role, inscribed in the text: reception and interpretation, concretization and reelaboration cannot be dissociated -- still less in oral performance than in written transmission. The text aims to intoxicate the one who receives it, even when it has to invent him. (*Speaking*, 61)

The *Tragicomedia* as it appears in its present form is ostensibly the product of Rojas' reading of the original anonymous first act. In fact, the author notes in *El autor a un su amigo* that

. . . leylo tres o quatro vezes, y tantas quantas más lo leya, tanta mas necesidad me ponia de releerlo y tanto más me agradava, y en su processo nuevas sentencias sentía. (69- 70)

It appears thus that Rojas, at the very beginning of his *Tragicomedia* openly exposes all the processes involved in written language practice. Words are manipulated by the writer and therefore become pregnant with a multitude of meanings. Readers are actively involved in creating the text since it becomes their prerogative to assign it meaning. The text as an entity becomes the product of a metasemiosis between writer and reader.

The first chapter of this study will analyze the concept of courtly love and its reflections in selected twelfth-century Midi troubadour verse. This analysis will show on the one hand that the Provençal concept of courtly love displays Ovidian characteristics but also sacred ones, of Platonic origin, greatly influenced by a flowering of the cult of the Virgin Mary at the end of the twelfth century which reached its apogee during the thirteenth century. All the characteristics of the early courtly love lyric were parodied successfully by the *trobairitz* or female troubadours, as we will see in this part of our study.

The chapter will then proceed to discuss how the contradictory nature of courtly love, profane and sacred at the same time, is reflected in the troubadours' linguistic practices. The troubadours play with language and manipulate it thus proving that it is a malleable matter, subject to multiple readings or interpretations, not unlike those same elements that Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas feature in the language of their respective works. To anticipate with one example, the conception of language expressed in Guilhem IX's "Farai un vers de dreyt rien," considered

by some as a parody of the literary school of courtly love, is very akin to that underlying many of Montoro's poems and Rojas' *Tragicomedia*.

Conversely, largely influenced by the Church's vision of the word as God given, many verses in the troubadours' lyric present language as fixed in its meaning. This conception of language too, can be found in some of Montoro's poems as well as in some parts of the *Tragicomedia*.

Such a shifting vision of language, also present in the fourteenth-century Spanish masterpiece, *El Libro de Buen Amor*, by Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita, reflects the sense of alienation and marginalization of their respective writers on the one hand and the changing nature of their respective societies on the other. The troubadours existed in a very arbitrary social structure that was soon to be organized by the Church. The Archpriest of Hita, author of the *Libro*, is also a member of a changing and contradictory society; later, Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas live in equally changing times; these three authors' positions in society was further complicated by the fact that they were all *conversos*. For this very reason, their social status was highly ambiguous and unstable.

The second chapter will first familiarize the reader with the social, political, religious and literary background of Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' times. More particularly it will concentrate on the rise of anti-Semitism and the creation of a new social class in fifteenth-century Castile -- that of the *conversos* -- to which all three authors belonged.

In the literary realm, this chapter will examine some fourteenth-and fifteenth-century works that underline the deceitful nature of language, the most representative of which is undoubtedly Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita's *Libro de Buen Amor*. The *Libro*, which is traditionally described as depicting the opposition between human and divine love, primarily parodies the literary trend of courtly love through the actions of Juan Ruiz's literary alter-ego, Don Melón de la Huerta. The latter is in many ways the antithesis of the courtly lover, not unlike Rojas' protagonist Calisto.

Conversely, the matchmaker Trotaconventos, one of the literary antecedents of *Celestina*, also subverts the traditional concepts of the literary school of courtly love. Therefore, the *Libro* prefigures the same preoccupations on display in the works of Montoro, Cota and Rojas.

Moreover, Juan Ruiz's masterpiece also illustrates that language is a game of multiple interpretations, a highly prominent concept in Montoro, Cota and Rojas. Like the three fifteenth century authors, Juan Ruiz subverts the traditional language of courtly love but also manages to engage the reader in an endless wordplay.

This chapter will also take up the Archpriest of Talavera's *El Corbacho*. Traditionally described as an anti-feminist work that focuses on the flaws and ills of women and their use of colloquial language, *El Corbacho* is particularly relevant for the purposes of this study since it debases the idealized vision of the courtly lady and chooses to attack the hyperbolic and metaphorical nature

of courtly love by emphasizing a realist-grounded presentation of women protagonists.

Florencia Pinar, one of the very few female voices in fifteenth-century Spanish literature represents an additional dissident voice in the literary school of courtly love. Pinar's verses exemplify a desire to explore a new language, below the surface of the traditional portrayal of love, a fossilized form of the traditional courtly lyric of the troubadours. Her literary endeavor is thus very similar to that of the earlier *trobairitz* and to Antón de Montoro's, Rodrigo Cota's and Fernando de Rojas', all contemporaries of Pinar.

The third chapter will analyze selected poems of Antón de Montoro, "El Ropero." Although his poetic corpus displays many courtly poems, characterized by the frequent use of the sacred hyperbole, Montoro follows the fifteenth-century poetic tradition of language as game and often parodies the literary language of courtly love; in doing so he offers the reader a variety of poetic devices, plays on words and concepts.²¹ He goes so far as to create new words and mischievously transform old ones. The act of playing with language, as it is observed in Montoro's work, implicitly demonstrates that words can be manipulated endlessly by the writer and by the reader or the audience who interpret language according to their specific circumstances. Words become slippery living matter and are constantly re-invented.

Special emphasis will be placed on the linguistic practices of the "Ropero" and how these practices reflect the author's search for identity and a

firm place in fifteenth-century Spain's new society. Parallels will be established between the fifteenth-century poet, Antón de Montoro, and the fourteenth-century author of the *Libro de Buen Amor* but also with the Midi poet Guilhem IX of Aquitaine. It will be shown that these three writers share an interconnected conception of love as a game and of language as treacherous, open-ended and ambiguous.

Chapter Four will concentrate on Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo entre el amor y un viejo*. Rodrigo Cota's extended poem perfectly exemplifies the parodic use of the philosophy of courtly love. In fact its protagonist, an old man in love, is a perfect foil to the traditional ideal of the young courtly lover. The amorous character of the old man is grotesque and the fact that courtly love language should be used to deceive such an unlikely lover, debases the foundation of the philosophy of *fin'amors*. As we observed earlier, this chapter will also establish a parallel between the old man's caricature in the *Diálogo* and the political and social circumstances of fifteenth-century Spain, more particularly those of the Spanish converts.

Chapter Five will analyze the use of the courtly love tradition in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. There, courtly language is the attainment of Calisto, the protagonist of the *Tragicomedia*, and is employed as a set of formulas, empty of their original meaning, a pure artifice, conceived only to deceive. Calisto is a parodic character, whose function in the work is to underline and to undermine the hyperbolic nature of courtly love.

Rojas analyzes the artifices of courtly love language through both of his protagonists, Calisto and Melibea, but more significantly analyzes all the treacherous practices involved in language performance and rhetoric through his main character, the bawd Celestina, who becomes a metaphor for the treacherous power of language. In fact, the *Tragicomedia* focuses sharply on the tragic consequences of language manipulation. This chapter will show that game and deceit are the attributes of both love and language in Rojas' masterpiece and that these characteristics eventually can be used to depict the existence of the Spanish converts.

Notes Introduction

¹ In *El Aleph*, Borges' protagonist, Carlos, intends to describe the world in its totality. The aleph is precisely this non-existent perfect sign that would allow the writer to contemplate universal truth:

- ¿El Aleph? - repetí.
- Si. el lugar donde están, sin confundirse, todos los lugares del orbe, vistos desde todos los ángulos . . .

. . . Los fieles que concurren a la mezquita de Amor, en el Cairo, saben muy bien que el universo está en el interior de una fe las columnas de piedra que rodean el patio central. . . Nadie, claro está, puede verlo, pero quienes acercan el oído a la superficie, declaran percibir, al poco tiempo, su atareado rumor . . . ¿Existe este Aleph en lo íntimo de una piedra? ¿Lo he visto cuando vi todas las cosas y lo he olvidado? *Obras completas de Jorge Luis Borges*, 1923-1972 ed. Carlos V. Frías (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974). 623; 628

In *La Biblioteca de Babel*, the Argentinean author insists on the same impossibility of attaining the truth through language. In fact the library is a metaphor for the universe, and not unlike the latter, is infinite:

Acabo de escribir infinita. No he interpolado ese adjetivo por una costumbre retórica; digo que no es ilógico pensar que el mundo es infinito. Quienes los juzgan limitado, postulan que en lugares remotos los corredores y escaleras y hexágonos pueden inconcebiblemente cesar -- lo cual es absurdo. Yo me atrevo a insinuar esta solución del antiguo problema: La biblioteca es ilimitada y periódica . . . (471)

The poem *El tigre* describes the poet's intent to paint a real tiger but as the author himself admits after his third attempt to do so, the poem is but a copy of the reality of the tiger. In fact, the simple act of naming the tiger destroys the tiger Jean Pierre Mourey explains. In Jean Pierre Mourey, *Borges, vérité et univers fictionnels* (Liège: Editions Pierre Mardaga, 1988) 60. In the words of the critic, Borges considers reality to be "en deca de la lettre, et l'écriture poétique naît et prolifère de cette faille" (61). This "faille" can easily be compared to Derrida's concept of *difference*. Borges also believes that reality itself is "not always probable, or likely and that when a writer writes a story; "[he] has to make it as plausible as [he] can, because otherwise the reader's imagination will reject it." Norman Thomas di Giovanni, Daniel Halpern and Frank Mac Shane (ed.) *Borges on Writing* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1973) 45.

² Borges' failed attempt to capture reality with language manifests itself in the use of many metaphors, in a condensed use of language in some instances; this pursuit is also evinced in other short stories by a proliferation of signs. Those two tendencies are not opposite but rather complementary since they both attest to the impossibility of language to copy reality. Jean Pierre Mourey summarizes Borges' philosophy of the word as follows: "La philosophie borgésienne du signe contient deux elements ocntradicoires: la conscience aigue de l'impossible union du Mot et la Chose cotoie le reve d'un Signe-Miroir du Monde, d'un Mot-Tout." In *Borges, vérite et univers fictionnels* 59 (see ref. note¹).

³ *Pierre Menard* . . . tells the story of a twentieth century French man's failed effort to re-write Cervantes' masterpiece. As the short story unfolds, the reader becomes aware of the impossibility of such a task since *Don Quijote*, in its original form, is the product of many centuries of reading. Language is, by definition, dynamic and the writer is irremediably influenced by his/her own circumstances. Borges explains that Pierre Menard tried to reconstitute Cervantes's personal and historical circumstances:

El método inicial que imaginó era relativamente sencillo.
Conocer bien el español, recuperar la fe católica, guerrear contra
los moros o contra el turco, olvidar la historia de Europa entre
los años de 1602 y de 1918, ser Miguel de Cervantes . . .

For these reasons, Menard's efforts resulted in:

una técnica del anacronismo deliberado y de las atribuciones
erróneas. Esa técnica nos obliga a recorrer la Odisea como si fuera
posterior a la Eneida . . . Esa técnica puebla de aventura los libros
más calmosos. Atribuir a Louis Ferdinand Céline o a James Joyce
la Imitación de Cristo . . . *Obras Completas* . . . (447; 450)

⁴ Jacques Derrida, "That dangerous supplement" *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1991). The article will be referred to as *Dangerous supplément*.

⁵ Jacques Derrida makes the following comments on Deconstruction:

Although it is not commentary, our reading must be intrinsic and remain within the text. That is why, in spite of certain appearances, the locating of the word "supplement" is here not at all psychoanalytical; by that we understand an interpretation that takes us outside of the writing toward a psychobiographical signified. This method has occasionally been opposed to the traditional doubling commentary; it could be shown that it

actually comes to terms with it quite easily. This security with which the commentary considers the self identity of the text, the confidence with which it carves out its contours, goes hand in hand with the tranquil assurance that leaps over the text toward its presumed content, in the direction of the pure signified. It is so little a matter of looking for a truth signified by these writings (metaphysical or psychological truth . . .) that if the texts that interest us mean (veulent dire) something in *That dangerous Supplement* (84).

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967). Will be referred to as *L'Écriture*.

⁷ In his interview, "Language (Le Monde on the Telephone)," Jacques Derrida gives the following example of a phone conversation to illustrate the ever-changing and arbitrary nature of language:

Q: Hello could you write an article on language for Le Monde dimanche?

J.D.: Are you asking me whether I am capable of it, which is doubtful or whether I would accept to do it? In the latter case, the question would be a request or an invitation. My interpretation will depend on intonation, on our relation at the two ends of the line, on a thousand other givens- in short on a context which is not immediately linguistic. It is larger and always an open text that is not limited to discourse. (*Points, Interviews, 1974-1994*, 171)

⁸ According to Marithelma Costa, Antón de Montoro *El Ropero* was born at the beginning of the fifteenth century, lived in Cordoba almost all his life and died around 1477. The social status of the convert Montoro is ambiguous since he was of humble origin, but was accepted among the literary circles of the nobility. He is considered today to be one of the major poets of *cancionero* poetry. Not unlike many other fifteenth century poets, Montoro wrote in different genres. His poetic corpus displays political satire, poems of circumstance and courtly love compositions. For more information on *The Ropero* consult chapter three. Antón de Montoro, *Poesía Completa*. ed. Marithelma Costa. (Cleveland: Cleveland State University Press, 1990)

⁹ Rodrigo Cota, author of *El Diálogo entre el amor y un viejo*, was also of convert origin but unlike Montoro had a higher social status. Cota was believed by his contemporaries to be one of the possible authors of the first act of the *Tragicomedia*. The *Diálogo* is an open caricature of courtly love since its protagonist, an old man, falls in love. According to Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo de Cota, denied his *converso* origins and tried to change his name.

For a more complete biography of Cota and analysis of the *Diálogo* consult chapter four.

¹⁰ The *Tragicomedia de Calisto and Melibea* was first published in 1499 under the title of *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*. In 1499, the work only had 16 acts. Its author, Fernando de Rojas, of convert origin and born in La Puebla de Montalbán declared that he had found the first anonymous act of *Comedia* which he finished in fifteen days. In 1502 appeared the *Tragicomedia* which according to Fernando de Rojas, owed its title to the tragic ending of the plot. The *Tragicomedia* which soon became known as *Celestina*, after the name of its main protagonist, is defined as a novel in dialogue. The genre of the work is indeed difficult to define since the *Tragicomedia* is divided into twenty-one acts, includes asides and is written in a dialogue form; nevertheless, the number of acts makes it difficult to represent as a play. As Rojas explains in the prologue to the reader, the work was written "en reprehensión de los locos enamorados y en prevención de los malos sirvientes y alcahuetas." The plot of the *Tragicomedia* can be summarized as follows: Calisto, a young man is madly in love with a young lady Melibea who at first resists his pressing advances but finally indulges in a passionate love affair with the young man. Celestina, the old match-maker, arranges an illicit love affair which eventually results in the death of all the protagonists. Consult chapter five on Fernando de Rojas and the *Tragicomedia*.

¹¹ In his essay, "That dangerous supplement" in *Acts of Literature*. ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1991), Jacques Derrida derives his analysis of language as a "dangerous supplement" from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*. Derrida borrows the term "dangerous supplement" from Rousseau himself. "Dangerous supplement": these are the words that Rousseau uses in the *Confessions*. He uses them in a context which is only apparently different, in order to explain, precisely, "a condition almost inconceivable to reason" (90). Rousseau uses the expression *dangerous supplement* here to refer to auto-eroticism. In Rousseau's words:

I had returned from Italy not quite the same as I had entered it, but as, perhaps, no one of my age has ever returned from it. I had brought back, not my virginity but my pucelage. . . Soon reassured, I learned that dangerous supplement which cheats Nature and saves up for young men of my temperament many forms of excess at the expense of their health, strength, and sometimes, their life. (111, qtd. by Derrida)

In Rousseau's view, writing is also a "dangerous supplement":

Languages are made to be spoken, writing serves only as a supplement to speech . . . Speech represents thought by conventional signs, and writing represents speech in the same way. Thus the art of writing is nothing but a mediated representation of thought (qtd. by Derrida in manuscript) included in the Pleiade edition of Rousseau's works under the title "Pronunciation" (II, 1248; 83).

In the words of Derek Attridge,

Rousseau is already engaged in a deconstruction of philosophical oppositions, and Derrida's reading attempts to draw out the deconstructive activity implicit in Rousseau's writing, though never explicitly articulated. Derrida considers Rousseau's shifting use of the word *supplément*, a word which can signal both the addition of something to an already complete entity and the making good of an insufficient. It is in the realm of Rousseau's erotic life, as narrated in his autobiographical *Confessions*, that the strange contradictoriness of this term is most startlingly evident, producing a structure that matches exactly the contradictory relations of speech and writing in his more philosophically oriented work. (*Dangerous Supplément*, 89)

¹² Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, *Historia social de la literatura española (en lengua castellana)* Vo. 1. Coordinator Julio Rodríguez Puertolas (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1979) 118. The critic defines *cancionero* poetry as thus: "The *cancioneros* are collections of poems, compiled under the protection of members of the nobility or kings at times. The poetry contained in the *cancioneros* expresses the new tastes and habits of a changing society" (my translation). Aguinaga also insists on the social value of those poetic collections which were read aloud in the courts. Aguinaga's work will be referred to as *Historia Social*.

¹³ *Speaking about the Middle Ages*. Trans. by Sarah White (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986). The book will be referred to as *Speaking*. The term "mouvance" was created by Paul Zumthor to describe the process of reconfiguration of medieval texts that were of an oral tradition. The texts conveyed orally were unavoidably re-invented by their users and listeners:

By *mouvance*, I mean to indicate that any work, in its manuscript tradition, appears as a constellation of elements, each of which may be the object of variations in the course of time or across space. The notion of *mouvance* implies that the

work has no authentic text properly speaking, but that it is constituted by an abstract scheme, materialized in an unstable way from manuscript to manuscript, from performance to performance.

¹⁴ The Inquisition: The Spanish Inquisition was in words of Joseph. O. Callaghan: "essentially a royal institution directed and controlled by the Consejo de la Suprema y General Inquisicion created in 1483. In this respect it differed from the papal inquisition established in the thirteenth century to deal with heresy." The Spanish Inquisition had the following attributes: "It operated secretly; the accused were not given the names of their accusers; torture was used to obtain confessions; those convicted were subject to confiscation of property for the benefit of the state, as well as exile, imprisonment, or burning at the stake." The Inquisition gave official sanction to the spirit of religious intolerance that had been growing ever stronger in the later Middle Ages, and it served as a forewarning to the Jews of their inevitable destruction. In Joseph O' Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975) 670.

¹⁵ Convivencia: Angus Mackay explains that

the word *convivencia* literally means "living together with others," and in general terms it has been taken to denote a context of coexistence characterized by Christian respect for Jewish and Islamic culture. But the concept of *convivencia* is also one which must be understood in medieval terms. At all times the fundamental religious issues which divided Christians and Jews were present, and a more precise definition of *convivencia* would stress that the Christians combined hostility towards the Jews with a certain degree of grudging tolerance. Moreover towards the end of the thirteenth century and during the fourteenth century *convivencia* broke down, and a rising tide of intolerance and persecution culminated in widespread and horrific massacres.

The critic adds that the *Cantigas de Santa María* of Alfonso X of Castile are an example of the optimistic view of the Jew held by thirteenth century Christians and that in 1422, the *Alba Bible* was the product of the collaboration of Jews and Christians but that "by this date thousands of Jews had already been massacred." In ed. Elie Kedourie, *The Jews in Spain during the Middle Ages in Spain and the Jews* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992) 33; 42.

¹⁶ Carlos Blanco Aguinaga explains that these three works reflect the political and social ills of their times. As the critic explains, *Las Coplas de la*

Panadera were written soon after the battle of Olmedo in 1446 during which Juan II and Alvaro de Luna's armies defeated the army of the nobility. Both political parties are described ironically and the objective of the work is to demystify knighthood.

Las Coplas de Mingo Revulgo, published in 1464, considered for a long time anonymous, were written by Iñigo de Mendoza, a franciscan poet. In these allegorical verses, two shepherds complain about the alarming situation of their herds (who metaphorically represent the Spanish people in the poem) and openly attack the political inability of the king, constantly challenged by the nobility.

Las Coplas del Provincial was created between 1465 and 1474. This poetic piece is an open critique of the nobility, including Enrique IV. Under the false pretext of inspecting a convent and monastery, the "Provincial" (the head of the religious order) accuses all the major political figures of the times. In *Historia social de la Literatura española* (en lengua castellana) Vol I. (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1979) 134; 135.

¹⁷ Iñigo de Mendoza, Marqués de Santillana, is one of the prominent political and literary figures of his times. This member of the nobility is particularly notorious for his fierce opposition to the chancellor Alvaro de Luna in his *Doctrinal de Privados*. Santillana is also famous for his "Sonetos fechos al italico modo" and was one of the authors who intended to adapt this new poetic form in Spain. This author is considered as pre-renaissance and was largely influenced by humanism and by the poets Petrarch and Dante.

¹⁸ Carlos Blanco Aguinaga explains that Alfonso Alvarez de Villasandino who writes from 1370 until his death, around 1424, is highly representative of all the different poetic genres found in *cancionero* poetry: "comienza por ser poeta en gallego y termina por insertarse en lo alegórico-dantesco; es autor popular y erudito, obscuro y religioso, político, satírico y amoroso, incluso juglaresco" (*Historia social*, 119). Antón de Montoro, one of our *converso* poets, displays a similar variety of poetic genres in his literary corpus (see chapter three).

¹⁹ Antón de Montoro, *Poesía Completa*, ed. Marithelma Costa (Cleveland: Cleveland State University, 1990) 98. Poems will be referred to by number.

²⁰ Fernando de Rojas, *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, ed. Dorothy Severin (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997).

²¹ The sacred hyperbole has been analyzed by María Rosa Lida de Malkiel in her article "La hipérbole sagrada en la poesía castellana del siglo XV," *Revista de Filología Hispánica* 8 (1946): 121-30. The sacred hyperbole is a recurrent device in courtly love poetry and consists of depicting the courted lady with divine attributes. The Argentine critic attributes the use of such a

poetic device in fifteenth century Spanish *cancionero* poetry to two main reasons: the frequent association of profane and sacred elements in medieval Spanish literature and the creation of the new social and religious caste of the *conversos*. Her analysis of the sacred hyperbole is mainly based on Montoro's poetry. Consult chapter three on that poetic device in Antón de Montoro.

Chapter One: Courtly Love Poetry: Definition and Linguistic Practices.

One of the dominant themes of world literature is undoubtedly love and one of its main literary reflections, courtly love, underlies many a European medieval text. Much has been written on the philosophy and language of courtly love. Among the earlier canonical works dealing with this subject matter, the following need to be noted: Pierre le Gentil's *La Poésie Lyrique Espagnole et Portugaise a la fin du Moyen Age*¹ as well as Albert Jeanroy's *La Poésie Lyrique des Troubadours*.² Among the earlier Spanish critics, Menéndez y Pelayo and Amador de los Rios studied the topic early on and rejected the theory according to which courtly love was of Hispano-Arabic origin.³ On the other hand, Menéndez Pidal in Spain accepted that theory and built on it. His ideas held sway for a long time.

Roger Boase in his more recent research on courtly love analyzes the influential criticism produced on the topic since the seventeenth century as well as the different theories on the origins and meaning of courtly love. Among the various theories of origins, Boase offers the following list: the Hispano-Arabic theory, the Chivalric-Matriarchal,⁴ the Crypto-Cathar⁵ and the Neoplatonic theories⁶ of origins as well as the Bernardine-Marianist,⁷ the Spring Folk Rituala,⁸ and the Feudal sociological⁹ theories. As for the theories of meaning, Boase explains that some critics see courtly love as a phenomenon of collective fantasy, others as a play phenomenon or a courtly experience, others as a stylistic convention and others as a critical fallacy.

Among other canonical critical studies on courtly love is Denis de Rougemont's *L'amour et l'Occident* in which the French critic defends the idea that courtly love was a literary construction, basing his analysis largely on Joseph Bedier's edition and study of *Tristan and Iseult*.¹⁰

C. S. Lewis, among the most widely-cited critics on the school of courtly love, views that literary school as a unique phenomenon, created by the troubadours of the Midi. Lewis acknowledges all the influences cited by Boase but explains that the philosophy and language of courtly love are literary manifestations unique to the south of France.¹¹

J. Denomy concurs with C. S. Lewis' opinion and agrees that courtly love is indeed a unique phenomenon; more particularly, Denomy focuses on the philosophical concepts underlying the literary manifestations of courtly love.¹² This analysis allows the critic to explain the contradiction to be found in Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore*, a contradiction that could be characterized as between the profane aspect of the work (the part dedicated to courtly love and its precepts) and the sacred nature of the love (the second part of the *De Amore* in which Capellanus condemns earthly love as a sin and a dangerous practice).

Courtly love displays both profane and sacred elements. This ambiguity of the nature of the philosophy is also reflected in its language. Such critical works as Laura Kendrick's *Troubadour Wordplay* or Sarah Kay's *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* have shifted our attention to the language of courtly love poetry.¹³ In their respective studies, Kendrick and Kay shed

light on the different manipulations words undergo in the hands of the first generation of Midi Troubadours. From their findings, one can deduce that many of these texts go far beyond some of the intentions outlined by de Rougemont, Lewis Denomy and others. Kendrick demonstrates in her critical work on the troubadours that the linguistic games involved in Midi poetry show that the troubadours considered words as malleable and open-ended and believed that language was an intrinsically incomplete act of communication and had to be continuously re-invented by its practitioners.

The objective of this chapter is to define the philosophy of courtly love but more particularly to focus on its linguistic byplay in the verses of the early troubadours. This chapter will hope to show the extent to which many troubadours viewed the poetic school of courtly love as a literary fiction and its language as a construct, subjected to many manipulations by both poet and reader. Guilhem IX's "Farai un vers de dreyt rien" will serve as the primary basis for my analysis. This chapter will allow us to establish a connection between the conception of language shared by some troubadours and the three *converso* authors studied in the subsequent chapters. In fact, Guilhem IX for example, but also Arnault Daniel believe that language is a mere fiction, and that writing is a game that implies a collaboration between writer and reader. Such is Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' view of language, also.

The study of other poems will demonstrate that the objective underlying the troubadours' poetic endeavor is to explore the dynamics of language and to "find"-- an idea implicit in the etymological meaning of

"trobar" (the equivalent of the verb "trouver" in modern French) -- the most ambiguous or multi-meaning word. By doing so, the troubadours invite the reader to participate in an endless game of interpretation(s). This poetic task, although ludic in nature, points to the essentially unstable and unreliable nature of language itself, and consequently, the troubadours' verses become self-reflective critiques of the treacherous nature of language itself.

Further, this chapter will show that such a revolutionary and modern conception of language was born out of a desire on the part of the troubadours to challenge the Church's vision of the written word as *fixed* in its meaning and form. In this light, the troubadours' poetic endeavor, although linguistic in nature, is rooted in their desire to challenge the conventionality of the *word* imposed by the Church. Not unlike the language practices of the Archpriest of Hita in fourteenth-century Spain, Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas, those of the Midi poets' become a form of religious and social rebellion.

The philosophy of courtly love owes much of its special nature to the human and universal feeling of love. Nevertheless, it is a distinct and well-defined literary phenomenon; its particular blend of profane and sacred characteristics accounts for much of its distinctiveness.

As is known, courtly love flourished in twelfth-century France, especially in the South. That land, Occitania, is defined by Linda M. Patterson, among other critics, as the regions of Aquitaine, Toulouse, parts of Aragón and Catalonia as well as the regions of Languedoc and Roussillon. It also

contained other territories such as Béarn, Bigorre, Cominges, Foix and the Auvergne. Owing to its geographic diversity, Occitania's identity was defined not by its political boundaries but rather by its language and culture, as Paterson explains.¹⁴

The language is termed “Occitan,” a romance language that was defined in opposition to other languages. The troubadours, Patterson adds, referred to it as “lingua romana” as opposed to Latin. Dante was the first to use the term “lingua d’oco” (langue d’oc) to refer to Occitan to oppose it to the languages of “oil” and “si” (*yes* in Occitan, French and Italian).

Occitania is now mostly famed for the poetry of the troubadours. It was opposed to the northern frontier of France, with its *trouveres* and Arthurian legends. The North and the South of what was to become the country of France, were, by nature and history, different in character. They were also different in the socio-political structures they displayed. The North was predominantly dominated by a feudal system whereas the seigniorial structures were very scarce in southern France.¹⁵ Occitania was identified with the *joi* of love whereas the inhabitants of the northern parts of France seemed more interested in prowess at arms. Therefore, Arthurian romance (which owes much to Celtic literature and culture, geographically northern) appeared in the North of France, and courtly love flourished in the South. The importance of that literary phenomenon was so overpowering that Occitania ended up being principally heralded as the birthplace of the philosophy of courtly love.

The first known troubadour was Guilhem IX, duke of Aquitaine, who came to power in 1089 and was a leader of the first crusade. His granddaughter, Eleanor of Aquitaine, fomented the cultivation of the courtly love philosophy of Occitania in the courts of King Louis VII of France and Henry II of England. From there, the literary tradition was exported to the north of France and to the Anglo-Normans. The *trouvères*, the poets of the North of France, became the northern counterparts of the troubadours; under their influence, the Arthurian and Celtic legends of the North and the philosophy of courtly love of the South became more connected.¹⁶ An example of such a connection can be found in Chretien de Troyes' *Lancelot* in which Celtic military legend and the principles of courtly love are commingled. Chretien de Troyes was Marie de Champagne's (daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine) court poet. Her chaplain was Andreas, known as Andreas Capellanus, who "codified" in writing the rules of courtly love. His *Arte Honeste Amandi* will be analyzed later in this chapter. (see p. 30)

Fin'amor was thus born in the courts of Occitania and the troubadours were poets in the service of a lord, a count or a duke. Paterson insists on the concept of court at the time: a court was not a defined place but rather "refers to the lord, count or duke and the people who surrounded him" (*The World*, 4).¹⁷ In times of warfare and territorial changes, the courts were moveable. The troubadours were individual artists who would follow their protectors. Most poets had patrons, but some troubadours were themselves of noble origin, as in the case of Guilhem IX.

Courtly love poetry became an institution in the twelfth century Midi and courtly poets held their own specific gatherings, celebrations and competitions. Poetry was aimed at entertaining; it was a ludic occupation and an exercise of virtuosity that duly exalted the conventions of courtly love. Courtly love poetry also fulfilled the purpose of educating and challenging the audience's intellect by means of wordplay essentially.

The basic concept underlying that philosophy was the desire of a male lover to obtain the attention and love of a lady, referred to as *midons* in troubadour poetry. The love relationship was to remain strictly secret. The only exception to that rule was the presence of a go-between who could facilitate the first encounter between the two lovers. The courtly lady was of exceptional physical beauty and, oftentimes, a married woman.

One of the ambiguities of *fin'amor* resides in the fact that the final objective of the lover was not to seek sexual conquest of the lady (by nature unattainable), since the kind of attachment that the philosophy of courtly love professed was platonic in nature (*amor purus*). Nevertheless, courtly love did not reject physical relationships (*amor mixtus*) but the physical encounter was not its primary objective. This contradiction is explained by the double nature of courtly love which was, paradoxically, profane and sacred at the time.

Courtly love became more significantly pure (*amor purus*) in the thirteenth century under the influence of the Church and the cult of the Virgin Mary. Some early troubadours such as Arnaut Daniel still mixed the

two conceptions of love in their poetry in the thirteenth century; others, such as Marcabru, opted always for a pure and religious conception of love and rejected any notion of carnal love in their poems.¹⁸

The characteristic that sets the ideal of courtly love apart from other conceptions of love is its aspiration to purify the lover through desire. By loving, suffering and pleasing his lady, the noble courtly lover reaches a higher moral state that places him above other men. For that very reason, not all men can qualify for the order of Love. Courtly love was indeed an order, a profane one, that had its well-defined rules. Its members were morally superior to those who did not belong to that select group. To be a member of the order of courtly love was a privilege, accessible only to those of refined character and aspiring to moral perfection.

The troubadour Aimeric de Peguilhan expresses this idea in the following stanza:¹⁹

De Berguedan, nuls hom desamoros,
Al mieu semban, non a gaug ni honor;
C'aissi cum sens val mais sobre follor,
Val mais qui serv e. n fai mieills ad honrar,
C'aicel qu vol penre e non donar.
Per q'ieu vuoill mais esse paubres, honratz,
C'avols, mamens e desenamoratz.

[De Berguedan, **no man who is not in love**, it seems to me, **has ever joy or honour**; for just as good sense is worth more than folly, so he who serves is worth more, and is more to be honored, than he who wants to take and not to give.

Wherefore I prefer more to be a poor man, honored, than a base fellow, **wealthy and not in love**] (emphasis added).]²⁰

Courtly love entails secrecy, a *domna* who is inaccessible because married, a platonic love, high moral values in the two lovers, and great suffering and endurance on the part of the male lover. Finally, through service without reward, the male lover acquires moral nobility and superiority.

The philosophy of courtly love considered Love as a supreme divine entity and the lovers were members who served in its order. To become a member of the Order of Love, the lover had to be ready to give proof of many a moral value: patience, courtliness, good manners, good speech, reserve and courage. The following chapters will analyze how some fifteenth-century Spanish literary characters are open parodies of the exemplary courtly lover: among them, Juan Ruiz's protagonist, Don Melón de la Huerta, and Fernando de Rojas' irreverent lover Calisto.

Courtly love involved a sublimation of physical desire. Desire to obtain the favors of the courted lady through service endowed the lover with necessary endurance and patience. Through the courtship and service without reward, the lover acquired his new strength and greater moral worth. Guiraut Riquier expresses those main concepts in the following verses:²¹

Fis e verays e pus fermes que no suelh
Suy vas amor endreg nom Belh Deport.
Non que m'aja fag semban de conort,
Mas que.m soven qui fuy ans que ames,

E que.m cossir qui fora ses amor,
Et aug per qui.m teno.I conoyssedor.
Per qu'ieu am fis, quar d'amar ay l'enans.

[**Noble and true** and more constant than is my wont am I towards love for my Fair Delight. Not that she's made me any show of comfort, but because I recall who I was ere I loved, and I consider who I would be without love and hear whom those who know take me to be,. **For this I love nobly, that by loving I am enhanced**] [emphasis added]. (*Anthology*, 312-313)

Central to the concept of courtly love is the idea that the *domna* resists the advances of her lover in the initial stages of the love relationship. This resistance is in fact aimed at testing the endurance and patience of the lover. As we will analyze later, Rojas' female protagonist, Melibea perfectly exemplifies this rule of courtly love since she does not admit her attraction to Calisto until the bawd Celestina, through her malicious linguistic practices, leads her to do so [Act X].

In the following two stanzas of one of his poems, Girault de Borneil laments the fact that his love is unrequited.²² The lady is indeed supposed to reject the lover at first, one of the main rules of the game of courtly love. The poetic persona of the following poem is a perfect courtly lover since he is "crying for mercy, seeks to please his lady, is patient and brave and despite his lady's resistance, hopes and endures":

Amars, onrars, e char-teners,
Umiliars et obezirs.
Loncs merceiars e loncs grazirs,
Long' atendens' e loncs espers
Me degron far viur'ad onor,
S'eu fos astrucs de bo sehnor.
Mas car no.m vir ni no.m biais,
No vol Amors qu'eu sia gais.

[Loving, honoring and cherishing, acting humbly and obeying, long crying mercy and long seeking to please, long expectation and long hope ought to cause me to live in honor, if I had been

blessed with a good liege lord. But since I veer not nor waver,
Love wants not that I should be gay]. (*Anthology*, 130-131)

Despite all the moral virtues that he displays, the lover of Borneil's poem is denied *Joi* (Joy) ("No vol Amors qu'eu sia gais"), a key concept in the philosophy of courtly love, one that Denomy defines as a feeling produced by the desire to possess, not the possession itself: "rather it is desire and yearning for one's lady that is productive of Joy, for thereby is the lover ennobled" (*Heresy*, 24).

Another concept that defines the literary school of courtly love is that of *vasselage*. Courtly love is an order, a profane one that worships *Amor*, the "God of Love" and exalts the beloved. It therefore displays a hierarchy; the male lover considers himself inferior in moral worth to this lady. Not unlike a *serf* to his *seigneur*, the courtly lover acts according to his lady's will and lives at her mercy. The relationship between male and female lovers thus appears patterned according to the feudal society of the troubadours although one has to be reminded that the seigniorial system was weaker in Occitania than in Northern France. The concept of *vasselage* is expressed by Aimeric de Peguilhan:

Autra vetz fui en la preizon d'Amor,
Don escapei, mas aora.m repren
Ab un cortes engienh tan sotilmen
Que.m fa plazer mo mal e ma dolor;
Q'un latz me fetz metr'al colh ab que. m lia,
Don per mon grat mai no.m desliaria;
E nulhs autr'om qu fos liatz non es,
Qui. l deslies, que ben no li plagues.

[Once I was in Love's prison and I escaped from it, but now it
recaptures me with a courtly device so subtly that it makes

pleasing to me my pain and my sorrow; for it had me put a leash around my neck with which it might bind me and from which, by my own will, I'd never unbind myself, and there is no other man, were he bound, who if one unbound him would not be pleased indeed]. (*Anthology*, 222-223)

The poetic voice compares the state of being in love with that of being imprisoned: "Autra vez fui en la preizon d'Amor" yet the lover longs to be imprisoned "Que. m fa plazer mo mal e ma dolor." The concept of vassalage and subjugation are expressed in this specific piece with the repeated use of the verb "to bind": "Don per non grat mai no.m *desliara*." The courtly lover is bound to his lady and wants to remain bound.

The lover is thus imprisoned, willingly, by his own desire. The idea of imprisonment is recurrent in the courtly love lyric. In fact, as Andreas Capellanus explains in the third chapter of Book One of his *De Arte honeste Amandi*: "Love gets its name (amor) from the word for hook, 'amus' in Latin which means "to capture" or "to be captured" because as Andreas further explains: "who is in love is captured in the chains of desire and wishes to capture someone else with his hook."²³

Capellanus elaborates on this idea and sees love thus:

Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love's precepts in the other's embrace. (*Arte*, 28)

Physical attraction is indeed a defining factor in provoking love and it occupies the center stage in courtly love lyric. The courtly lady is the embodiment of perfection. As an example, Calisto praises primarily the

physical beauty of Melibea and how he becomes obsessed with her physical attributes. Calisto is, undoubtedly, a parody of the traditional courtly lover and his words of praise overwhelm Melibea, his pretended *domna* (chapter five).

Hyperbole is an intrinsic characteristic of the courtly love lyric. Courtly love being a path to moral virtue for the male lover, the object of his praise, the courted lady, cannot but be perfect. Beauty is certainly an attribute of the young woman in Cota's poem, and of several female protagonists of Montoro's poems. In addition to being beautiful, these ladies are also young, yet another condition for love to flower according to the courtly rules. The lover in Cota's poem, an old man, is therefore a parody of the ideal courtly lover.

Love ennobles the male lover. Indeed, according to Capellanus "love causes a rough and uncouth man to be distinguished for his physical beauty" (*Arte*, 30). The male lover also becomes generous under the influence of love: "the man in love becomes accustomed to performing many services gracefully for everyone" (31). Calisto is an exemplar of such generosity when he gives Celestina his gold chain as a remuneration for her services (see chapter 5). Don Melón, the poetic persona protagonist of Archpriest of Hita's *Libro de Buen Amor* is equally generous with the go-between Trotaconventos (see chapter 2).

Capellanus warns the young lover against any excess of passion. The courtly lover must be self-restrained. The lack of such a quality brands Calisto

as a parody of the courtly lover since his excess of passion infuriates Melibea during their first encounter (chapter 5).

Andreas Capellanus summarizes the rules of the game of Courtly Love in Chapter VIII of the *De Amore*. The Breton knight, protagonist of the tale told in this chapter, is victorious in the many combats he has had to endure to successfully woo his courted lady and finds the rules of courtly love:

- I. Marriage is no real excuse for not loving.
- II. He who is not jealous cannot love
- III. No one can be bound by a double love.
- IV. It is well known that love is always increasing or decreasing.
- V. That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish.
- VI. Boys do not love until they arrive at the age of maturity.
- VII. When one lover dies, a widowhood of two years is required of the survivor.
- VIII. No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons.
- IX. No one can love unless he is impelled by the persuasion of love.
- X. Love is always a stranger in the house of avarice.
- XI. It is not proper to love any woman whom one would be ashamed to seek to marry.
- XII. A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.
- XIII. When made public love rarely endures.
- XIV. The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.
- XV. Every lover regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved.
- XVI. When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved his heart palpitates.
- XVII. A new love puts to flight an old one.
- XVIII. Good character alone makes any man worthy of love.
- XIX. If love diminishes, it quickly fails and rarely revives.
- XX. A man in love is always apprehensive.
- XXI. Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love.
- XXII. Jealousy, and therefore love, are increased when one suspects his beloved.
- XXIII. He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.

XXIV. Every act of the lover ends in the thought of his beloved.
XXV. A true lover considers nothing good except what will please his beloved.
XXVI. Love can deny nothing to love.
XXVII. A lover can never have enough of the solaces of his beloved.
XXVIII. A slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved.
XXIX. A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.
XXX. A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.
XXXI. Nothing forbids one woman being loved by two men or one man by two women. (*Arte*, 184-186)

These rules are the foundation on which the courtly lyric develops in twelfth century Occitania. These rules will also affect the literary conduct of the fifteenth century Spanish courtly lover but, as we will see in the main thesis of this work, they are not infrequently parodied by Castilian poets. The vision of love contained in Capellanus' rules lend themselves naturally to parody since they are first and foremost, hyperbolic in nature.

The fact that courtly love should be governed by such a well-defined code of rules implies that it is a construction and a game. In fact, both participants in the courtly exchange follow a sort of ritual, expressed in poetic form that Midi lyric only perpetuates. A. Monson describes the game of courtly love as thus:

The lady's adamant resistance is countered by various ploys on the part of the lover: he praises her, appeals to her pity or her sense of justice, protests his own sincerity, disclaims (temporarily) the desire for any "reward," complains of suffering and death, even threatens to leave the game.²⁴

Courtly love derives its ludic nature partly from Ovid. In his *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid offers extensive practical advice to the male lover to obtain

the favors of a lady.²⁵ Although the philosophy of courtly love is idealized in nature, So does Andreas Capellanus in his *Arte Amandi* , as previously nature, Capellanus' *Arte Amandi* is also pragmatic since in its first part, it offers the lover practical advice on how to deal with all the different situations and obstacles he can possibly encounter.

Moreover, the idea of love as warfare contained in Ovid's writings surfaces in many images favored by the courtly writers and poets. The *midons* is time and again compared to a castle or tower that the lover has determined to assail and conquer. This image is prevalent in fifteenth-century Spanish *cancionero* poetry as will be taken up later. The Marqués de Santillana's poem, *Castillo de amor*, is built on that very metaphor.²⁶ The walls surrounding Melibea's house in Rojas' *Tragicomedia*, where Calisto ironically meets his death, are reminiscent of that image favored by courtly lyric.

Courtly love is, then, a game with a well-defined strategy to interact with the *domna*. Aimeric de Peguilhan's previously-cited poem exemplifies the ludic essence of courtly love. The poet tells us that he is again in Love's prison from which he had previously escaped. The poet thus implies that he is a repeat offender, who, as a consequence, knows the rules of the game. He indeed knows them so well that he has willingly put a leash around his own neck.

This act of binding oneself is highly ironic since it implies that the lover decides, by his own will, to become a prisoner. The reference to the

leash that clearly identifies the poetic persona with an animal expresses clearly the state of servitude of the courtly lover, but also indirectly ridicules him.

The poet mentions in the first stanza that he was recaptured by love "ab un cortez engienh"(with a subtle courtly device). The word 'engienh' (device) implies that becoming a part of the Order of Love or in the poet's words, to be in Love's prison, involves a certain technique, a device. The fact that courtly love is a literary construct is reflected in the words 'courtly device,' an expression that implies that the love the poetic persona expresses is the mere product of the principles (devices) of the tradition of courtly love.

The male lover chooses to be a victim of love since he says that he is not willing to be unbound. The last verse that reads as follows: "and there is no other man, were he bound, who if one unbound him would not be pleased indeed" is ambiguous, in my understanding, since the poetic persona declares on the one hand that he is willingly a member of the Order of Love at the outset of the poem but on the other hand refutes that very argument when he asserts that any other man would be pleased to be unbound from that same order. This contradiction as well as the irony present in the poem, seem to indicate that Aimeric de Perguilhan is poking fun at the rules of courtly love.

The fact that courtly love was a game is further illustrated by those verses of a certain Ademar written to Raimon de Miraval and cited by Gérard

Gouiran in his article, *The Classical period: from Raimbaut d'Aurenga to Arnaut Daniel*.²⁷

Miraval, tenzon grazida
voil que fassam, si'us sap bon,
e digatz mi ses faillida
s'om deu laisser per razon
sidonz, pos es veillezida
ses negun'autr'uchaizon
Respondetz d'oc o de non!

[Miraval, I would like us to make a pleasant *tenso*, if it please you; tell me truly whether it is fair to abandon one's lady for no other reason than that she has grown old. Answer yes or no!]
(95)

The poet clearly implies that the primary objective of the poem is to "tenzon grazida vil que fassam" (make a pleasant *tenso*). Next, he develops the theme of the poem which consists of asking whether "it is fair to abandon one's lady for no other reason than that she has grown old." The literary creation (the writing of a pleasant *canço*) is therefore more important than the theme itself. It comes first in the poet's mind. His intention is thus to create a poem on the theme of courtly love or rather dealing with one of the rules of its code (i.e., the age of the female lover); yet, the literary creation in concert with the desire to entertain his audience come first for Ademar. This poem is a literary construct based upon a rhetorical question and aimed at providing entertainment. The answer given by Miraval to Ademar is as follows:

N'Aesmar, tost hai chausida
la part del prec e del pron:
drutz q'a domma conaezida
no'n deu moure partizon,
q'ades val mais la gaudiza

qan dura longa sazon;
perqu'aqi non veig tenzon.

[Lord Ademar, I have quickly chosen the side of merit and advantage: when a lover has conquered a lady, he must not provoke a separation between them, for pleasure is worth more the longer it lasts; I don't think there is anything to be discussed in this matter]. (95)

As the critic Gouiran observes, Miraval was older when the poem was written and Ademar is undoubtedly poking fun at the troubadour's old age. Miraval clearly understands this ironic allusion to his age and therefore defends himself by affirming that old age should not be an obstacle to love, thus contradicting one of the main tenets of *fin'amor*. Ademar answers, making explicit his desire to make fun of the older troubadour that:

Miraval, molt m'es estragna
dompana, pos ha-l pel ferran;
perqu'eu lau q'ab vos remagna,
q'ambdui seretz d'un semblan:
veils e veilla s'acompana,
e joves ab joves van;
perqu'eu veill dommei desman

[Miraval, I find a lady repugnant once she has gray hair; therefore I suggest that she should stay with you, because you two will be of one appearance: the old man and the old woman go together, whereas young people suit other young people; I refuse to court old women]. (95)

The irony underlying this poem is also at the core of Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo entre el amor y un viejo*, whose protagonist is a man who falls in love in old age (chapter 4). Ademar's attitude towards love is also reminiscent of the go-between's, Celestina, who advocates for love among young people. In order to find pleasure, the old bawd watches Calisto and Pármeno' love embraces with Areúsa and Elicia and therefore recreates her

own youth and the sensual pleasures she was accustomed to (ch. 5). Celestina is jealous precisely because her age prevents her from practicing the game(s) of love as she once had done.

Ademar's poem also shows that the literary school of courtly love was a rhetorical game as well. In fact, Ademar is challenging Miraval the better to see how well he can defend himself. The bawd Celestina, as we will analyze in detail in chapter five, is indeed a specialist practitioner of rhetoric and more particularly of the rhetoric of love.

The male troubadours were not the only adherents of the philosophy and poetry of courtly love. The *trobairitz*, the female troubadours, offer a distinct perspective on that philosophy. Their verses, characterized by the open expression of their feelings, as well as a poetic expression from which linguistic games are absent, unveil the ludic nature of this poetry.

The *trobairitz*' verses present a very different image of the idealized *domna*; their poetry expresses their frustrations on the one hand and often challenge the knight-lover's courage and courtly virtues on the other. Writing allowed the *trobairitz* to be active participants in the game of love, to acquire their own voices and to offer a contrary view within the domain of courtly lyric. As Tilde Sankovitch notes, "When the *domna* turns *trobairitz* this is exactly what occurs: woman changes from object to subject of enunciation."²⁸ In the following translated verses, Castelloza, one of the best-known *trobairitz*, expresses her disappointment in love:

You stayed a long time, friend,
and then you left me,

and it's a hard, cruel thing you've done;
for you promised and you swore
that as long as you lived
I'd be your only lady:
if now another has your love
you've slain me and betrayed me,
for in you lay all my hopes
of being loved without deceit. ("The Trobairitz", 115)

Here, Castelloza expresses the male lover's lack of perseverance and faithfulness: he "stayed a long time and then left [her]." According to the rules of courtly love, the male lover **must** be faithful [emphasis added]. While the lady may have several suitors, once he is engaged in the game of courtly love, the man should dedicate all of his efforts towards his chosen beloved.

The linguistic expression found in this poem is very direct (the lady is directly addressing her lover) and the words she uses are unequivocal: her lover is cruel, cannot be trusted and is deceitful. The attitude described by the *trobairitz* at the beginning of the stanza "for you promised and you swore/that as long as you lived/I'd be your only lady" is what was expected in a constant traditional courtly lover. By denouncing the lack of perseverance and constancy on the part of the male lover, this poem implies that his original words of love are devoid of any meaning. The lady has been betrayed by her lover.

In the following anonymous poem -- a dialogue between a man and a woman -- the female speaker openly describes the pain caused by her lover. It is interesting to note how the lover ironizes the lady's pain, refers to love as a

game and finally puts the blame on the *lauzengiers* to explain his attitude and loss of "breath and sanity":²⁹

Friend because of you I'm filled
with grievous sorrow and despair.
but I doubt you feel a trace
of my affliction.
Why did you become a lover,
since you leave the suffering to me?
Why don't we split it evenly?
Lady, such is love's nature
When it links two friends together,
that whatever grief or joy they have
each feels according to his way.
The way I see it, and I don't
exaggerate, all the worst pain's
been on my end of the game.

-- Lady, it's the *lauzengiers* --
our spiteful enemies - who've robbed
my breath and sanity . . . ("The Trobairitz," 147)

Tilde Sankowitch as well as Genevieve Bruenel-Lobrichon, among the critics who have dedicated studies to the *trobairitz*, believe that those poems were actually written by women, while other critics express doubts. The important point is that these poems -- supposedly written by women -- represent a dissident voice in courtly love lyric. These verses unveil the artificial nature of the philosophy of courtly love, on the one hand, and subscribe to different linguistic practices, on the other hand. The vision of love they display as well as their direct expression of feelings anticipate that of Florencia Pinar, one of the few female voices in *cancionero* poetry. The Castilian female poet, not unlike the *trobairitz*, gives free expression to her feelings and uses a language free of artifice.

Courtly love derives its elevated conception of love from Plato. Both Plato and, later, Plotinus, both develop the idea according to which human love is a way of perfecting oneself and that same concept gave birth to the known concept of platonic love present in the philosophy of courtly love.

Human love, according to Plato and Plotinus, only allows the human soul to elevate itself to the world of Ideas. According to Plotinus, the lover has to go beyond mere physical beauty of the beloved on the one hand. On the other hand, the lover knows that the person loved is the reflection of God. Love's object is the person loved but its final objective is to attain perfection. Love for Plotinus is thus a progression and an evolution towards Truth.

Courtly love is, at one level, an aspiration on the part of the male lover to better himself and through the nobility of his feelings to achieve excellence. The lady in the philosophy of courtly love oftentimes retains divine attributes precisely because she fulfills the mission of intermediary between the lover and God. In the following lines of Guiraut Riquier, the poetic "I" asks for the help of God since the object of his love is so honorable:

S'al rey degues dire que ieu l'ames!
Assatz sembla que. l porti fin'amor,
Quar per sos ops dezir mil tans d'onor
Que per lo mieu, si.m sia Dieus enans.

[If only she were to tell the king that I loved her! It's clear enough that I bear her noble love because, for her sake, I desire a thousand times more honor than for my own, so help me God].
(*Anthology*, 314-315)

Guiraut de Borneil's following verses also establish a clear link between a knightly attitude and the Christian values:

Mais no podetz jurar
Qu'egas de fust no vitz,
Ni vilas, velhs, fronitz
Esters grat chavalgar.
Lachs es l'afars, e fers e malestans,
Don hom pert Deu e rema malanans.

[But you cannot swear that you've not seen wooden mares, nor lowborn churls, old and broken, unwilling to act as knights. Such behavior is ugly and hateful and unseemly, and by it one loses God and remains wretched]. (*Anthology*, 146-147)

It is clear that behaving like a knight and displaying courtly values is a *camino de perfección* to use the expression of seventeenth-century Spanish mystics. It allows the lover to achieve moral and religious excellence.

It is easy to understand that because of its profane side, courtly love was attacked by the Church. In fact, the Church only accepted love if it would lead to marriage.³⁰ As mentioned earlier, courtly love does not consider marriage as its primary objective and many a troubadour's verse celebrates *amor mixtus* (i.e. a love that respects the major behavioral tenets of *courtoisie* but does not exclude physical relationships).

Book III of the *De Amore* is diametrically opposed in purpose to its first two books. Here, Capellanus condemns carnal love violently and follows the precepts of the Church. For Capellanus carnal love deprives a young man of God. Therefore, a young man "must learn . . . to retain [his] purity of body and to overcome the pleasures of the flesh . . ." (*Arte*, 197). Capellanus'

words in this part of the *De Amore* are largely influenced by Christian doctrine.

The opposition between the first two books of Capellanus and the last one of his treatise seem to have a definite purpose: Capellanus acknowledges the presence of carnal love and its rules but strives to convince young men to stay away from it. In other words, the part of his book dedicated to courtly love becomes an example of rules not to follow. The purpose underlying the twelfth century French Chaplain's work is not so very different from the purpose of *Celestina*, a work ostensibly written "en reprehensión de los locos enamorados" as we will illustrate in chapter five.³¹

Capellanus bases his rejection of carnal love on his hatred of women to whom he dedicates the last book of his treatise. This section of the *De Amore*, which has been characterized by critics as an anti-feminist manifesto, is a destruction of the idealized image of the woman so central to the courtly love fostered in Occitania.

Andreas considers first that women are not able to love and describes them thus:

every woman is also envious and a slanderer of other women, greedy, a slave to her belly, inconstant, fickle in her speech, disobedient and impatient of restraint . . . a drunkard, a bubbler . . . prone to every evil, and never loving any man in her heart. (*Arte*, 201)

This view of women, diametrically opposed to that expressed in the Troubadour *canço*, is very akin to the Archpriest of Talavera's vision of women in *El Corbacho* as we will elaborate in chapter two. Capellanus'

graphic description of women is also reminiscent of some of the characteristics of the women protagonists of the *Tragicomedia* (the prostitutes Elicia, Areúsa and the bawd, Celestina) as well as the *serranas* or mountain girls in Juan Ruiz's *Libro de Buen Amor*.

Because of its carnal nature, courtly love would soon acquire the religious characteristics that were aimed at masking it. This shifting occurred principally towards the end of the twelfth century and was developed fully in the thirteenth century.

The thirteenth century in Medieval Europe is the apogee of the cult of the Virgin Mary. In fact, the mother of God is seen as an intermediary between the Deity and humankind and is presented as such in well-known literary texts (see Alfonso the Wise's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* as well as Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*). The courted lady, Mary, is praised in the language of courtly love poetry. She plays the part of intermediary between humanity and God and intercedes in their favor, much as the courtly lady becomes for the lover his means to moral excellence. Through sacrifice, abstinence, perseverance and effort, the courtly lover purifies himself and comes closer to God.

Courtly love thus reconciles the mundane and the sacred by idealizing the courted lady and by imposing strict rules on the lover. Courtly love becomes a *camino de perfección*, by which the lover acquires many requisite virtues. Marina Warner notes that "heaven or the other world was also a court, where Christ rules with his mother as Queen of Heaven beside him."³²

The critic adds that the cult of the Virgin Mary and courtly love were at first independent, but

were reconciled in the thirteenth century by one of the Church's most successful intellectual operations, whereby the pagan joy of the troubadours was transmuted into the typical quest for the other world through denial of the pleasures in this. (Warner, 135)

Arnaut Daniel clearly identifies the profane and the sacred in the following verses where he explains that entering in the order of *fin'amor* is equivalent to being in Paradise:³³

Qu'en paradis n'aura doble joi m'arma,
Si ja nuils hom per ben amar lai intra.

[. . .] Hence in Paradise will my soul have twofold joy, if ever a man through fine loving therein enters]. (Anthology, 191)

Nevertheless it would be inaccurate to imply that all the troubadours followed the same evolution. In fact, each of the troubadours' work displays a different pattern. Paterson cites the example of the troubadour, Peire d'Alvernha, who "seem to have been troubled by competing claims of *fin'amor* and religion" (32) and adds that

Peire bade a fond farewell to "cortez amors de bon aire" - the only occurrence of the phrase "courtly love" in the whole of the troubadour corpus- in favor of the love of the Holy Spirit, and in a crusading song defended Marcabru's rejection of carnal amar. (The World, 38)

Other troubadours such as Arnaut Daniel continued to use both profane and sacred elements in their lyrics, or rather played with the ambiguity of the words. As Paterson astutely observes, courtly love could survive in a Christian world precisely because of its linguistic ambiguity:

The term *fin' amors* itself was highly slippery and meaning was further destabilized by the ubiquitous potential for irony in troubadour lyrics. (37)

Or in Sarah Kay's words, "[b]eing evasive about satisfaction was, paradoxically, a way of satisfying everyone" (qtd. by Paterson, 37).

It is in fact through irony, wordplay and language manipulation that the troubadours could celebrate a profane love in a world dominated by Christian values. The poetry of the troubadours for the most part is based on metaphor and wordplay which allows for many a double-entendre. Such language allowed the troubadours to elude the scrutiny of the Church.

Paterson comments:

Their articulation of love were often vague and ambiguous, encouraged by the permeability of erotic and mystical language in the Middle Ages. (37)

In his poem cited above, Arnaut Daniel is playing with the word "paradise." In my understanding, the poet could very well refer to the physical pleasures he has experienced or will experience with his lady (comparable to that of being in Paradise). In fact, as the following verses make clear, the poet alludes to the bed or the bedroom where the act of love has been or will be performed:

C'aisi s'empren e s'enongla
Mos cors en lieis com l'escors' en la vergua;
Qu'ill m'es de joi tors e palais e cambra,
Ez am la mais no fas cozin ni oncle.
Qu'en paradis n'aura doble joi m'arma,
Si ja nuils hom per ben amar lai intra.

Arnautz tramet son chantar d'ongl'e d'oncle.
Ab grat de lieis que de sa vergua l'arma,
Son Dezirat, c'ab pretz en cambra intra.

[For thus my heart cleaves and clings with its nail to her, as (close as) the bark to the rod; for she is to me joy's tower and palace and bedroom, and I love her more than I do cousin or uncle. Hence in Paradise will my soul have twofold joy, if ever a man through fine loving therein enters.

Arnaut sends his song of fingernail and uncle, for the pleasure of her who arms him with her rod, to his Desired One, who with merit in bedroom enters]. (*Anthology*, 190; 191)

Arnaut Daniel plays with the words "fingernail" and "uncle" which both in Occitan and modern French are almost identical in sound: "ongle" and "oncle." By such a practice, Daniel not only shows that troubadour poetry is for the most part based on *double-entendre* but that it is also an entertaining game; the final verses provoke laughter on the part of the reader since to attribute such a title to a poem (a song of fingernail and uncle) is rather comical.³⁴

The nature of this poem is twofold, not unlike the *joi* of the poetic persona: "will my soul have twofold joy." The poet describes how his heart cleaves and clings with its nail to her as (close as) the bark to the rod (an expression that clearly implies physical contact). Yet, he refers to his lover as the Desired one, implying that their love has not yet been consummated. The adjective "Desired," in its capitalized form, describes the longing of the male lover to obtain his lady's favors. The reader is therefore unsure of the general meaning of the poem. Did the poetic persona indeed consummate his love with his beloved?

The poem consistently contradicts itself, insinuating a pure love on the one hand, yet clearly describing carnal love on the other. This clever

contradiction of courtly love is key to the understanding of such a character as Calisto who declaims the purity of his love, yet cannot resist revealing his sexual desire toward Melibea.

The same juxtaposition between the profane and the sacred can be found in Juan Ruiz's *Libro de Buen Amor* (ch. 2) in Montoro's work and in the *Tragicomedia*. In fact, Montoro dedicates solemn poems to the Virgin Mary on the one hand yet, on the other hand, uses very graphic language in other poems dealing with miscellaneous themes. The same dichotomy in language practices can be found in Rojas' work. Pleberio, as well as his wife, Alisa, represent Christian values in the *Tragicomedia*. Their language practices as well as their behavior reflect Christian doctrine. Celestina and her underworld represent an opposite view of the world and of language which could be characterized as acentric and instable.

Melibea is the example *par excellence* of the evolution away from a formal Christian attitude toward the world and language to a more profane and ambiguous one. The presence of the profane and the sacred in these works -- that manifest themselves not only morally but also linguistically -- thus seem to serve an ironic purpose as we will explore in the sections on Montoro and Rojas (ch. three and five).

By means of Arnault Daniel's wordplay, we see how he expressed the conflictive nature of courtly love. Moreover, he showed how words can be sculpted in order to fit the writer's needs. Arnault Daniel's purpose in this particular case was to entertain his audience by playing with the similar

sounds of "ongle" and "oncle" in the final verses of the stanzas. As discussed earlier, the association of these two words is comical and lets us see how wordplay takes precedence over establishing a fixed meaning or message. Language, thus appears to be -- in this specific composition -- arranged to fit its user's purpose (i.e. to entertain the poet's audience).

Many of the troubadour poems are thus self-reflective of the nature of language itself. The use of wordplay, metaphor, irony and layered meanings shows that language is a living matter that can be sculpted according to the creative artists' needs. Such a conception of language is ludic in essence since the troubadours play with language through their superior poetic skill; yet, the manipulations that words undergo in the hands of the Midi poets serves to remind us that language is a construct of one version of reality.

By focusing on the multi-faceted nature and sounds of words (the example in Arnaut Daniel's poem is the word "ongle" for example that rhymes with the word "oncle") and by showing that language is malleable, in a state of perpetual flux, the troubadours challenge the Church's vision of the Word as fixed in meaning. The Church considered the written word to be God-given and therefore rejected any notion according to which language is self-generating, or subject to a multiplicity of interpretations. As Kendrick avows:

Troubadour verse began with a provocative intention: to challenge the authority of writing, the instrument through which the Church, along with the French and Anglo-Norman kings, was trying to impose its centered, hierarchizing moral and social order . . . Troubadour foolishness deauthorized and destabilized the written vernacular text by finding or inventing

multiple, conflicting senses, by accepting and valorizing indeterminacy, variation and difference and by insisting on the primary importance of context(s) in determining meaning, with the chief of these being the will or desire of the interpreter, his intention. (*The Game*, 35)

The troubadours' linguistic revolution has powerful social and religious undertones. By creating language with a multiplicity of meanings and by experimenting with its elastic nature, the troubadours' aim was to subvert order or at least to resist it.

Such a philosophy of language is surely at work in Guilhem IX's *Farai un vers de dreyt rien*. The poem reads as follows:

Farai un vers de dreyt nien:
Non er de mi ni d'autra gen,
Non er d'amor ni de joven,
Ni de ren au;
Qu'enans fo trobatz en durmen
Sobre chevau.

No sai en qual guiza.m fuy natz;
No suy alegres ni iratz,
No suy estrayns ni sui privat
ni no-n puesc au,
Qu'enaissi fuy de nuetz fadat
sobr' un pueg au
No sai quora.m suy endormitz,
Ni quora.m velh, s'om no m'o ditz.
Per pauc no m'es lo cor partitz
D'un dol corau.
E no m'o pretz una soritz,
Per sanh Marsau!

Malautz auy e tremi murir,
E ren no sai ma quan n'aug dir;
Metge querrai, al mieu albir,
E no.m sai tau;
Bos metges er si,m pot guerir,
Mas ja non, si amau.

Amigu'ai ieu, no sai qui s'es,

Qu'anc non la vi, si m'ajut fes!
Ni.m fes que.m plassa ni que.m pes,
Ni no m'en cau,
Qu'anc non ac Norman ni Frances
Dins mon ostau.

Anc non la vi et am la fort,
Anc no n'aic dreyt ni no,m fes tort;
Quan non la vey, be m;en deport,
No.m pretz un jau,
Qu'ie.n sai gensor et bellazor,
E que mais vau.

Fag ai lo vers, no say de cuy',
E tametrai lo a selhuy
Que lo-m tametra per autruy
Lay vers Anjau,
Que,m tramezes del sieu estuy
La contraclau.

[I'll make a poem of sheer nothingness; it will not be about me,
or about any other; it will not be of love, or of youth, or of
anything else; it was rather composed while sleeping on a horse.

I know not in what way I was born; I am neither gay nor down-
hearted, neither a stranger nor a familiar friend, nor can I do
aught else, for thus was I charmed by night, on a high hill.

I know not when I sleep, or when I wake, unless someone tells
me so; by very little has my heart not broken with a deep sorrow.
And I care not a mouse for that, by Saint Martial!

Sick I am and fear to die, and know nothing but what I hear tell
of it; I'll seek a doctor, of my way of thinking, and I know not
such a one; he'll be a good doctor, if he can cure me, but never, if
I grow worse.

I have a loved one, I don't know who she is, for I've never seen
her, so help me my faith! She has done nothing to please me, or
to grieve me, nor am I bothered about it, for I never had
Norman or Frenchman in my house.

I've never seen her and I love her dearly; I've never had right
from her, nor has she done me wrong; when I do not see her, I
get along quite well, I don't think it's worth a rooster! For I
know one more noble and more lovely, and who is worth more.

I've made this poem, I know not of what; and I'll send it to him who will send it on for me by another, yonder, towards Anjou, that he might send back to me, from his own wallet, the key to it]. (*Anthology*, 14-17)

Guilhem IX, count of Poitiers, was the most rebellious troubadour of all. He is described as follows in the *Vidas* of the troubadours:

The count of Poitiers was one of the most courtly man in the world, and one of the greatest deceivers of women, a very capable knight and very liberal in gallantry. And he knew how to invent poetry and how to sing very well, and he wandered around the world in order to deceive the ladies. And he had a son whose wife was the Duchess of Normandy, who had a daughter who was the wife of King Henry of England and the mother of the Young King and of Richard and of Count Geoffrey of Brittany.³⁵

His poem is a series of double negations: “no.suy alegres ni iratz”: the poet is “neither happy nor unhappy.” The poet adds: “Farai lo vers, no say de cuy”: “he will compose a poem the subject of which is unknown.”

The verses are not written for the poet's lady although he asserts that he has a beloved; yet there are many other women who are better than her. The person to whom the poem is destined is not defined either: “e tametrai la selhuy que lo-m- tametra per autrui lay vers Anjou.” The poem will be given to that person who will in turn give it to another person around the region of Anjou. Guilhem ends his poem by saying that it is this unknown person who will decipher the meaning of the verses: “Que.m tramezes del sieu la contraclau.”

Uncertainty is at the center of that poem's energy. By denying *any* form of truth, the poem becomes a self-reflective entity which responds to the

desire on the part of the poetic persona to open the words of the poem to a multitude of possible readings. This idea is most clearly explained in the last two verses of the poem: “que lo-m tametra per autrui/lay vers Anjou.” The uncertainty of the poem’s final destination becomes a metaphor of the ambivalence of its meaning.

Once out of the hands of the poet, the poem will acquire its own meaning which will vary according to each reader/hearer. Such a conception of the word is relevant in an era -- that of the early troubadours -- when poems were transmitted orally, either by the troubadours themselves or by *joglars*. The poems that were sung were therefore subject to many variables and manipulations on the part of the people who would sing them and consequently on the part of the different members of the audience. Guilhem implies that his poem will be transmitted not by him but by other people when he says: “que lo-m-tametra per autrui, lay ves Anjou.” In fact, these troubadour songs were not only transmitted orally and therefore open to distortions but also were copied and transmitted in written form. Both oral and written transmission therefore imply an inevitable chain of modified meanings. Uncertainty is not only the prevalent theme of this poem; it is also the main attribute of both oral or written language, in Guilhem IX’s view.

In this light, we can assume that the poet wrote the composition precisely to provide a demonstration of how interpretation is an open-ended process, not only controlled by the writer or the composer. As anticipated by

Guilhem himself, his poem has elicited many interpretations on the part of critics which confirms that any text is irremediably interpreted according to the reader's differing circumstances. For example, Peter Dronke sees a parody of courtly love in the poem when he asserts that "the poem is an outright parody of idealized love for an inaccessible lady."³⁶

It is logical to assume that Guilhem IX was indeed parodying the tradition of courtly love since this poem is opposed in style to other poems originating under the aegis of *fin'amors*. In "Farai un vers de dreit rien," the poet uses an everyday language to undercut the hyperbolic and metaphorical nature of courtly composition. The poet further wants to demonstrate that it is indeed possible to write about nothing since he himself is writing about "rien." Might we assume therefore, that some courtly love poets, writing in their pretentious, often obscure and stylized language, were also writing about "nothing" or, better still, about something that indeed did not exist and was merely a literary construct (i.e. courtly love)?

The parody of the courtly world of Guilhem IX is expressed by the fact that the poetic persona is mounted on a horse -- a clear allusion to the courtly knight -- and that the poem is written for a *domna*. Nevertheless, the poetic persona is half asleep; metaphorically, the speaker finds himself in a dream (i.e., in a fictitious world). By these references, the poet succeeds in debasing some of Andreas' codes and rules of courtly love: plain language opposed to the more usual hyperbolic language cultivated by the Midi troubadours. He

clearly sets the scene in a fictitious world and finally presents the beloved as a mere abstraction.

By these three devices, Guilhem parodies the excesses of courtly love. By contrast, the poet implies that the language of courtly love is hyperbolic, that it is a fiction and that the courted lady is but a necessary, yet abstract, presence in the fictional game of courtly love. Guilhem expresses this when he says that "I have a loved one, I don't know who she is, for I've never seen her, so help me my faith." These words imply that the courted lady is an abstraction and that her qualities are those already fossilized by the literary tradition. As the poetic persona says, he loves but he knows not who she is. The irony reaches its climax when, in the following stanza, the persona asserts that he loves her dearly but has not ever seen her. Here, Guilhem explicitly demonstrates that the feelings expressed in courtly lyric were fossilized. They were constructed from a mold meant to fit every courtly situation.

Not unlike Arnaut Daniel in his poem, Guilhem IX not only intends to provide his reader no pre-determined meaning but actively encourages the reader to discover meaning. His choice of words is subordinated to rhyme. The following stanza will exemplify how Guilhem favors rhyme over meaning:

Amigu'ai ieu, no sai qui s'es,
Qu'anc non la vi, si m'ajut fes!
Ni.m fes que.m plassa ni que.m pes,
Ni no m'en cau,
Qu'anc non ac Norman ni Frances
Dins mon ostau. (*Anthology*, III)

[I have a loved one, I don't know who she is, for I've never seen her, so help me my faith! She has done nothing to please me, or to grieve me, nor am I bothered about it, for I never had Norman or Frenchman in my house.] (14)

The rhyme scheme in A-A-A-B-A-B uses two sounds -es- and -au. The last verse "Qu'anc non ac Norman ni Frances" (for I never had Norman or Frenchman in my house) is not a logical continuation to the previous line, "Ni.m fes que.m plassa ni qu.m pes,/Ni no m'en cau" (She has done nothing to please me, or to grieve me, nor am I bothered about it).

Don A. Monson sees the poem as a "facetious display of poetic virtuosity" (200). The poem, as I see it, goes beyond mere ludic intent. The poet clearly implies that one can actually write about "nothing" and yet produce competing interpretations on the part of the reader.

More than a mere parody of the tradition of courtly love, this poem can also be seen as a reflection on the nature of language. Guilhem IX's poem, pretending no pre-determined meaning, provides an empty space to be filled by all interpretations imaginable. In this light, "Farai un vers de dreyt rien" illustrates the unstable nature of a language: it is malleable, shaped by its users' needs and fancy. By expressing a notion of void in his poem, the poet also alludes to the impossibility of language ever fully translating reality. In fact, the poetic speaker is neither happy nor unhappy. His condition is impossible to translate with words. Meaning therefore is self-generating precisely because language is insufficient to reproduce it.

The language of courtly love, because it is codified to fit the rules of the game, therefore becomes fossilized. By writing such a poem as “Farai un vers de dreyt rien,” Guilhem IX wishes to counteract the tendency of the language of courtly love and language in general to stereotype reality and wishes to show that, on the contrary, language is malleable and is capable of generating itself indefinitely and to create pure fictions.

The objective underlying Guilhem IX's “Farai un vers de dreyt rien” foreshadows a similar objective underlying the texts of Montoro, Cota and Rojas. As mentioned earlier, the indeterminacy of the content of the literary work expressed in “Farai un vers de dreyt rien,” is similar to Rojas' conception of the written book. The parodic use of courtly love in this specific poem, although different in its devices, fulfills the same purpose as Cota's parodic use of *fin'amor* s in his *Diálogo*. Cota, like Guilhem IX, mocks the hyperbolic style of courtly literature. Finally, the conception of language as wordplay present in “Farai un vers de dreyt rien” is at the heart of Montoro's best poems.

Having come thus far, we hope to have shed light on one key feature of the literary phenomenon known as courtly love. That is an artificial construct, principally a literary game, whose linguistic practices as exemplified here by Guilhem IX's “Farai un vers de dreyt rien,” were meant to challenge the Church's vision of the Word as being fixed in meaning. Many a troubadour shared Guilhem's acentric vision of the word, and saw language as shapeless, subject to endless manipulations and interpretations. In fact,

their view of language was based on the very organization of their society which as Kendrick explains was also in a state of *mouvance*:

Until about the mid-eleventh century, this acentric model of order also reflected fairly accurately the dominant social, political and popular theological systems of the south and west of France. Among the most powerful extended families or clans of these regions, marriage alliances were more often temporary than permanent; brothers and even sisters shared inheritances on a co-proprietary basis; politics was local and loyalties could shift quickly; religious beliefs were divergent, and a host of local saints and relics competed at garnering public devotion. (*The Game*, 8)

The Church tried to impose order upon that acentric system. The rebellion expressed in the troubadours' linguistic practices represent a reaction against such an imposition.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the mixture of the profane and the sacred -- as it appears in the troubadours' verses -- is a reflection of the state of the troubadours' larger society. On the one hand, as Kendrick explains, the socio-political system of Occitania was loose and highly volatile; on the other hand, and more specifically in the thirteenth century, the church tried to impose a "centered, hierarchized, stabilized order" on that society. The conflict between these two opposite forces "one that was changeable" and another that was "centered and hierarchized" accounts for the unstable nature of the game of courtly love as well as the language it favored and employed.

The philosophy and language of courtly love are, as we have shown, both profane and sacred. The poets refer to their beloved as the "Desired One" (Arnaut Daniel) and describe their state of joy as being in Paradise.

These two words -- Desire and Paradise -- appear fixed in their meaning and confer an obvious sacred nuance. On the other hand, in this same poem, Arnaut Daniel, plays with the words "ongle" and "oncle" that are profane in nature. Arnaut Daniel shapes words according to his will, as he states in another poem of his: "To this light and graceful little air I fashion words, I carve and plane them, so they'll be true and sure when I've given them a touch with the file" (*Anthology*, 183). Not unlike a jeweler, he says, the poet fashions the words of his song using skill and craft.

A similar approach to language shapes the Archpriest of Hita's *Libro de Buen Amor*. This fourteenth-century work plays with the courtly concept of love -- its aspiration to the divine and its purely human condition -- surfacing time and again in Ruiz's ambiguous language practices. As Malcom K. Read comments,

The pervasive ambiguity of the *Libro* is normally explained in terms of a basic opposition between medieval morality and laughter ... This failure of synthesis stems from an uncertainty of attitude to language on the part of Juan Ruiz, notably with respect to two intuitively attractive but mutually contradictory views of the nature of the word present in the Western tradition. Firstly, the word has often been considered to be God-given, and by virtue of its "natural" correspondence with the thing it signifies, a source of wisdom and learning. This is an assertion which is especially characteristic of the primitive mind, and eloquently expresses man's appraisal of the fundamentally mysterious nature of language. Secondly, however, and scarcely less remarkable an achievement, is man's explicit rejection of such a vision, and his assertion of the conventionality of the name. Indeed, insofar as it presents itself as a more reflective claim, this view professes to convey a more authentic image of the nature of the word. It is the underlying conflict between these two philosophies of language which explains to a great extent the curiously shifting surface of Ruiz's work, its general unevenness of tone, and its apparent inconsistency of purpose.³⁷

This conflictive view of language, nurtured by the troubadours and Juan Ruiz's socio-political circumstances, was later shared and exploited by our three fifteenth-century Castilian writers, Rodrigo Cota, Antón de Montoro and Fernando de Rojas.

Stephen Gilman comments in his chapters dedicated to the *converso* families of Fernando de Rojas' time that

No podemos más que maravillarnos ante la situación paradójica de una casta que está a un tiempo en el centro y al margen de la sociedad. Es una paradoja de importancia crucial . . .³⁸

In fact, as we will further explain in chapter two, the *conversos* were made to live in a paradoxical situation since they were constantly accused of being false Christians, while at the same time, they occupied prestigious positions in fifteenth-century Castile, some even in the Church hierarchy.

Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' view on language can be seen, in part, as a reflection of their marginalized status on the one hand, but also as a metaphor of the changing and contradictory nature of their society, on the other. In fact, those authors, despite their literary prestige, are located in an uncertain, transitional world, not unlike the world of the troubadours. Their language practices to be analyzed in the following chapters frame a rebellious attitude counter to the established order of the Christian faith that is viewed as treacherous because of its inquisitory system.

Language thus becomes an outlet used by these authors to question their position and identity in fifteenth-century Castile and to challenge the arbitrariness of the law to which *conversos* are subjected. The uncertainty

that they must live with accounts, at least in part, for the ambiguity, the numerous *double-entendres*, plays on words and ironies found in their work. The principal practitioners of such a view of language are several of Montoro's poetic personae, the protagonist of Cota's *Dialogo* and undoubtedly, the bawd Celestina.

They are opposed to other characters in these works who function with a more traditional view of language (i.e. fixed in its meaning). Pleberio, for example, will represent for us a view of the world and of language that stands for the old Christian mentality governing Castile at the end of the fifteenth century. Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' works are a protest against such a view of the world and language since these authors experience ambiguity in their daily lives.

The world of the troubadours was also acentric with its changing political and social structures soon to be organized by the Church. To quote Kendrick, "politics . . . could shift quickly; religious beliefs were divergent . . ." in Occitania (*Game*, 8). The troubadours' linguistic games reflect the highly transitional stage of their society. Similarly, Rodrigo Cota's, Antón de Montoro's and Fernando de Rojas' ludic language practices are a reflection of the political changes, but also of the religious intolerance and arbitrariness of fifteenth-century Spain, a society of sweeping transitions as well.

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Chapter one

¹ Pierre Le Gentil. *La Poésie Lyrique Espagnole et Portugaise à la fin du Moyen-Age*. (Paris: Slatkine, 1981).

² Albert Jeanroy. *La Poésie Lyrique des Troubadours*. 2 vols; (Toulouse, 1934).

³ Roger Boase explains in *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love: A Critical Survey of European Scholarship*. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1977) p. 70, that the Hispano-Arabic theory was first developed in sixteenth century Spain. G. Barbieri (1519-75) was the first scholar to advocate the theory that contact with Moorish Spain contributed to the rise of the troubadour lyric in the twelfth century. He believed that the Arabs, in the sixth or seventh century invented rhymed verse and that Provence learned the art from Spain. The moment when this cultural transmission occurred was, he proposed, the year 1112, when Ramon Berenguer IV, Count of Barcelona succeeded Gilbert, Count of Provence, thus bringing about the union of two linguistically unified territories.

⁴ Chivalric-matriarchal: This theory is defined by Roger Boase:

Courtly love was the product of the interaction of Christianity and a primitive Germanic/Celtic/Pictish matriarchy, which ensured the survival of pre-Christian sexual *mores* and a veneration for women amongst the European aristocracy. (Boase, 75)

⁵ Crypto-Cathar: This theory considers that courtly love grew out of the Cathar or Albigensian heresy, either as an actual vehicle for Catharist doctrines or as an indirect expression of Cathar sentiments. (Boase, 76)

⁶ Neoplatonic theories: According to Boase and others, courtly love was largely influenced by Platonic philosophy:

which conceived of "the soul as a substance, divine in origin, yearning to be liberated from the prison of created matter in order to ascend to the First principle, the source of Beauty and Greatness." (Boase, 81)

On the platonic influences on courtly love, see p. 48.

⁷ Marianist-Bernardine: Boase notes that: The mysticism of St Bernard and the cult of the Virgin Mary influenced the ideas and sentiments of troubadour poetry, and contributed to the birth of courtly love. (Boase, 83)

Canet-Vallés further comments that St Bernard's comments on the *Song of Songs* is highly reminiscent of the eloquence and metaphoric style of the literature of courtly love:

O amor arrebatado, impetuoso, abrasado, apasionado, que no permites pensar en nada fuera de ti, que todo lo vuelves desdeñable, que haces despreciar a todo menos a ti . . . (Sermon 79, cited Canet-Vallés, 194)

Also present in St Bernard's work is the notion of secrecy applied to the love of God. Secrecy also governs the love of the courtly lover:

¿Hay algo tan codiciado por el pudor como el secreto? Por eso a los que deseamos orar se nos manda que entremos en el aposento por razon del secreto. (Sermon 86, cited by Canet Vallés, 195)

The cult of the Virgin Mary largely influenced the literature of courtly love in its precepts and language as will be studied in this chapter.

⁸ Spring Folk Rituals: Boase explains that some believe courtly love to have evolved

out of the folk traditions and ritual dance songs of Europe, particularly those associated with the rites of spring, or that it was an actual survival of the pagan cult of Cybele or Maia, the Great Mother of the Gods. (Boase, 86)

⁹ Feudal Sociological: Yet another theory on the origin of courtly love, the feudal sociological theory believes that:

courtly love may be explained by certain sociological factors operating within the feudal environment of twelfth-century Europe, chief of which was the rapid promotion of new men into the ranks of the nobility. (Boase, 89)

¹⁰ Denis de Rougemont. *L'Amour et l'Occident*. New York: Pantheon, 1956.

¹¹ On courtly love also consult, C. S Lewis: *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1938).

¹² Alexander J Denomy. Boston College, Candlemas Lectures on Christian Literature: *The Heresy of Courtly Love*. Peter Smith, 1965. Will be referred to as *Heresy*.

¹³ Laura Kendrick. *The Game of Love: Troubadour Wordplay*. Los Angeles: U of California P, 1988. Will be referred to as *The Game*. Sarah Kay. *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP: 1990). Will be referred to as *Subjectivity*.

¹⁴ Linda M. Paterson: *The World of the Troubadours*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) p. 2. Will be referred to as *The World*.

¹⁵ On the socio-political structures of Occitania, Ruth Harvey notes that:

Only a few, marginal areas in Occitania displayed seigniorial structures analogous to the Northern French feudal model, whereby vassals held land from a lord in return for the obligations of military service and counsel and homage, involving the subordination of vassal to overlord and close vassalic ties of personal dependency. Rather the norm among the aristocracy seems for a long time to have been *convenientae*, egalitarian contracts between individuals in which each party promised fidelity and non-aggression, respect for the life, limb and rights of the other" (*Courtly culture in medieval Occitania*, p. 10) in Paterson (see note 14) Harvey's article will be referred to as *Courtly Culture*.

¹⁶ On the mutual influence of Northern and Southern France, Jack Lindsay notes that:

The first known story-teller of Arthurian themes on the continent seems to have frequented Guilhem's court. The second continuator of the *Conte du Graal*, telling of the adventures of Gawain and a dwarf-knight, cites as his authority Bleheris, "who was born and bred in Wales," an who told the story "to the Count of Poitiers, who loved it and held it more than any other firmly in memory" (*The Troubadours and their World of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*. London: Frederick Muller Editions, 1976). p. 23

Linda Paterson, also comments on the influence of the south on the northern part of France:

In the eleventh century it was the people from Auvergne and Aquitaine who, according to ecclesiastical fulminations, corrupted the morals of the French and Germans by their jongleuresque fashions in dress and shaving. (*The World of the Troubadours*, 7)

Patterson specifies that it was under the impulse of the marriage of King Robert (from Northern France) and Queen Constance of the region of Aquitaine, that the "habits from the south" invaded the Northern part of present-day France. The critic further explains that the troubadours traveled extensively: "Their geographical world is bounded by Iceland to the north, the Nile to the south, and

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Hungary and the Holy Land of the Crusades to the east" (3). It is easy to imagine that the Occitan philosophy of courtly love that originated in the South easily penetrated the Northern part of France.

¹⁷ Ruth Harvey further explains that, "a court was made up of the *familia* of his (the count or duke) household, his companions, advisers, servants, officials, clerks, household knights and followers, including entertainers. All these persons surrounding a nobleman depended on his patronage for their promotion and remuneration. This could take various forms: food, clothing, money, a mount, income from land and or appointment to an office which in turn could bring rights, income and 'perks' and securing such rewards required personal contact and presence at court (Harvey, 11).

¹⁸ Linda Paterson notes how Marcabru distinguishes *fals'amor* or *amar* (a pun on loving and bitter since "amer" means sour in modern French) from *fin'amor* which is based on joy, patience, self-control and purity. His idea of pure love or *fin'amor* is close to the Church's vision of marriage. Marcabru influenced the other troubadours who started to make serious claims for the moral virtues of love (*The World*, 32).

¹⁹ Aimeric de Peguilhan was born in Toulouse (1190-1221). He made most of his career in the Iberian Peninsula and then Italy and was the author of c. 50 poems, mainly *cansos*, and a number of occasional pieces and exchanges with other troubadours. *The Troubadours: An Introduction*. Ed. Simon Gauntand, Sarah Kay. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), p. 279. Will be referred to as *The Troubadours*.

²⁰ The poems are cited from *The Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry*, ed. and trans. Alan R. Press. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971). The poems will be referred to by numbers. The same anthology will be used throughout this chapter. The Anthology will be cited as *Anthology*.

²¹ Guiraut Riquier (1254-1292) was a prolific troubadour from Narbonne. His 101 surviving compositions include *cansos*, *sirventes*, epistles, six pastorelas, devotional lyrics, and poems from minor genres. (*The Troubadours*, 286)

²² One of the major figures among the troubadours, Girault was from the Limousin. His output with seventy-seven surviving lyrics is the largest of the twelfth century and above all is remarkable for its variety in style, verse form and genre. (*The Troubadours*, 284)

²³ Andreas Capellanus *The Art of Courtly Love*. Introduction, translation and notes by John Jay Parry. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) p. 31. Will be referred to as *Arte*.

²⁴ Don A. Monson. "The Troubadours: irony, parody and burlesque" in Linda Paterson *The Troubadours* (see note 19) 201.

²⁵ In his introduction to Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love*, John Jay Parry notes that,

Among Ovid's poems are *The Art of Love* (*Ars amatoria*), *The Cure for Love* (*Remedia amoris*) and the *Amours* (*Amores*), all deal . . . with the subject of love. *The Art of Love* was a sort of parody on the technical treatises of Ovid's day - a bit of fooling which should never have been taken seriously, but often was. *The Amours* supplement this with accounts of some of Ovid's own experiences in the art, and *The Cure for Love* shows those who are anxious to terminate a love affair how they may do so. Ovid does not present his ideas as a formal system (although he does speak of his "system") but from his writings men in later times were to construct a system. (4)

²⁶ The image of Love as a prison is at the heart of Diego de San Pedro *Cárcel de Amor* published in 1492 in which the courtly love protagonist Leriano, in love with the princess Laureola, dies of love at the end of the work. The *carcel* (jail) in the work metaphorically stands for the state of servitude in which Leriano finds himself. Consult chapter two for a more ample analysis of this work.

²⁷ Raimon de Miraval (1191-1229) was a prolific troubadour from near Castre who was well known among his contemporaries. His corpus of forty-five surviving songs includes a few *sirventes* but is dominated by *cansos* in which he presents himself as an anguished and fawning courtly lover. (*The Troubadours*, 290).

²⁸ Tilde Sankovitch, "The Trobairitz," in Paterson's *The Troubadours* (see note¹⁹), p. 115.

²⁹ The *lauzengiers* are slanderers or spies and, together with the *gilos* (jealous ones, are obstacles within the courtly system (Paterson, 37).

³⁰ The *Song of Songs* celebrates feminine beauty in detail and so does the Old Testament on many occasions; yet, the lady protagonist of the Song is referred to as "the bride." Clearly, love in the Bible can be sensual; yet, it is meant to lead to marriage.

³¹ Capellanus' view of women is very akin to that expressed in the Bible (Ecclesiastes):

I find more bitter than death
the woman who is a snare

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whose heart is a trap
and whose hands are chains.
The man who pleases God will escape her,
but the sinner she will ensnare (*New International Version of The Holy Bible, Old Testament*, 476)

In the Holy Bible: New International Version. (Colorado Springs: International Bible society, 1984).

³² Marina Warner. *Alone of All her Sex*. (New York: Knopf, 1976) 135.

³³ Arnaut Daniel: (1180-95). This troubadour was originally a cleric from the Perigord, and he composed 18, possibly 20 songs characterized by intricate rhyming and unusual vocabulary. One is an obscene *sirventes*, others draw on so many discourses (including the religious) that their meaning is ambiguous. Arnaut was influenced by Marcabru and Raimbaut d'Aurenga and in turn influenced Dante and Petrarch and later Ezra Pound (*The Troubadours*, 280).

³⁴ This literary practice that consists of playing with language and meaning is referred to as "trobar clus." Kendrick notes that it is "clus" or "closed" only to the extent that we refuse to participate in the game of elaborating the meanings of the verbal matter (*Troubadour Wordplay*, 19).

³⁵ In her introduction to the translation of the *Vidas*, Margarita Egan explains that "the *vidas* of the troubadours appear in the manuscripts as short introductions to and commentaries on the poets' lyrics. Some of the collections of troubadour poems -*chansonniers*- present *vidas* as prefaces to the verse selection. The earliest *chansonniers* with *vidas* date from the middle to the late thirteenth century. The first collection is generally placed between 1250 and 1280. However later evidence suggests that by the fourteenth century the *vidas* had achieved the status of an independent literary genre (. . .) In any case, we do not know when the *vidas* were first composed, since the texts may have passed through several stages of formulation prior to their appearance in the first *chansonniers* " (Egan, XIV). *The Vidas of the Troubadours*. (New York: Garland Publisher, 1984) 54.

³⁶ Peter Dronke. *The Medieval Lyric*. 2nd edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977) 112.

³⁷ Malcolm Read. *The Birth and Death of Language: Spanish Literature and Linguistics: 1300-1700*. (Madrid: Porrúa Turanzas, 1983) p. 24.

³⁸ Stephen Gilman. *La España de Fernando de Rojas*. (Madrid: Taurus, 1978) p. 127.

Chapter two: The game(s) of politics, love and language in fourteenth and fifteenth century Spain

The philosophy of love and language underlying the works of *converso* writers Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas was undoubtedly influenced by their religious past but also by their social, political and literary circumstances which, for the most part, were inherited from the fourteenth century. As I intend to demonstrate in this chapter, Montoro's poetic corpus, Cota's *Diálogo* and Rojas' *Tragicomedia* reflect the period in which they were written, and they serve as one expression of the marginalized status of their respective authors. Not unlike some of the troubadours who parodied the school of courtly love and who reacted against the Church's vision of the word as fixed in its meaning, the three fifteenth-century Castilian writers clearly show that the philosophy of courtly love was a form of escapism for the fifteenth-century literate society and that its special language, as well as language in general, was to them a mere construct, a fiction imposed upon reality.

Therefore this chapter will introduce the historical, sociological and literary conditions that shape this ludic conception of language on the one hand, and the concept of language as a deceitful entity, on the other in *converso* authors, Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas. these authors. The first section will concentrate on the internal political turmoil of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries that favored the rise of anti-Semitism and its impact on our three authors, Montoro, Cota and Rojas.

In the literary realm, this chapter will first take up the development of amatory literature in Spain and the political circumstances that favored the resurgence of the literary school of courtly love in fifteenth-century Spanish letters. This survey will highlight such works as Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de Amor*, but also the Archpriest of Talavera's *Corbacho*, a work that illustrates a literary movement that debases the idealized vision of the *domna* so characteristic of courtly love: misogynist literature. In fact, definite elements of both works, diametrically opposed in their vision of women and in their language practices, are reflected in Montoro's poetic corpus, Cota's *Diálogo* and Rojas' *Tragicomedia*.

Florencia Pinar's vision of courtly love and its language offers an alternative to the antithesis of courtly love and misogyny. Not unlike the *Midi trobairitz*, Montoro, Cota and Rojas, Florencia Pinar -- one of the few female voices in *cancionero* poetry -- de-stabilizes the concepts and language of love fossilized in the literary conceits and commonplaces of the revived *arte de trobar* (see chapter one for *trobairitz*, 48-50)).

Finally, I will focus on how both the ideal of courtly love as well as its subversion on the one hand, and the treacherous and ambiguous nature of language on the other, are already at the core of fourteenth-century *Libro de Buen Amor*. In fact, the Archpriest of Hita's masterpiece, highly influenced by its unique social and political circumstances, is a forerunner of Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' vision of the written word.

As Joseph O' Callaghan reminds us, the fourteenth century in the Spanish kingdoms is usually characterized by historians as the century of the plague (Black Death), royal family hatreds, the end of feudalism, the fall of the petty nobility, and the rise of a new economic system based on the use and exchange of money which in turn gave rise to a new social class: that of the *bourgeoisie*.¹ The fourteenth century is also characterized by peasant revolts and finally by violent anti-Semitic pogroms at its close.

At the opening of the fourteenth century, the Christian kingdoms -- Castile, Aragón and Portugal -- were ruled respectively by Alfonso XI of Castile, Alfonso IV of Portugal and Alfonso IV of Aragón. Throughout the century, the kings fought for the hegemony of their respective kingdoms. The relations between Portugal and Castile were tense owing to the fact that Alfonso XI of Castile was married to María of Portugal but carried on an illicit relationship with Leonor of Guzmán. One of the illegitimate sons of this liaison was Enrique of Trastámara, he who was to play a prominent part in the political life of the later years of the century. The relations between Aragón and Castile were aggravated by the assistance that Alfonso IV of Aragón lent to Enrique of Trastámara, half brother of the legitimate heir Pedro I, called *el Cruel* who succeeded his father, Alfonso XI of Castile.

Determined to wrest the throne of Castile for himself, and supported by Aragón's Pedro IV, Enrique of Trastámara invaded that kingdom and was proclaimed king in 1366 in Calahorra. Infuriated, Pedro ordered two of his own illegitimate brothers, Juan and Pedro, to be executed. Castile and Aragón

had agreed to a peace settlement in 1361 but with the help of Bertrand du Guesclin and the support of King Charles V of France, Enrique of Trastámara once again invaded Castile and won the decisive battle of Nájera in 1367 and the battle of Montiel in 1369. Pedro tried to bribe du Guesclin but after failing to do so, died -- assassinated by his half brother, Enrique, in 1369, at the age of thirty-five. Enrique Trastámara ascended the throne of Castile as Enrique II.

It was under Enrique of Trastámara (Enrique II) that the nobility acquired much new power and its flamboyance contributed to the turmoil of the times. In fact, Enrique, known also as *Enrique de las Mercedes*, granted generously new privileges, rents and lordships. A new caste -- that of the *privados* -- acquired great power and directly influenced the governance of the kingdom.

Juan I (1379-1390) succeeded Enrique II. As Joseph O' Callaghan explains, the new monarch undertook a review of all the privileges that had been granted to the nobility by his father and tried to reduce the expenditures of the kingdom, under the pressure of the Cortes.

Mainly due to the effects of the Black Death, anti-Semitism grew stronger during Juan I's reign and the monarch felt obliged to enact an ordinance that secluded Jews in ghettos and "suppressed the autonomous Jewish tribunals that handled cases involving Jews accused of crime" (*A History*, 528). It is also during his reign that the Western schism occurred.²

In addition to family hatreds, the end of the fourteenth century as well as the fifteenth century witnessed major social conditions. The traditional

division of society among the *defensores* (the nobility), specialized in warfare, the *oradores* (the clergy), devoted to religion, and the third estate (los *laboratores*) or laborers dedicated to agriculture, progressively disappeared. In fact, as Roger Boase observes,

The competitive meritocratic ethic, which gradually emerged with the development of a monetary economy, eroded traditional status barriers by introducing class divisions based upon income and upon the fluctuations of the labour market, and disseminated bourgeois values . . . The activities of the urban middle classes began to encroach on those which had previously been reserved for the nobility and the clergy.³

The determining economic factor that redefined class division was money.

As Boase explains, "Wealth, whether earned or inherited, became the conventional basis of esteem." (77)

Juan Ruiz' *Libro de Buen Amor* openly criticizes the importance of money in his century (fourteenth) and deplores the fact that nobility and esteem are directly connected with wealth and the power derived from it:

Clérigos, monjes, frailes no toman los dineros,
pero guiñan el ojo hacia los herederos
y aceptan donativos sus hombres dispenseros;
mas si se dicen pobres ¿para qué tesoreros?

Toda mujer del mundo aunque dama de alteza
págase del dinero y de mucha riqueza,
nunca he visto una hermosa que quisiera pobreza:
donde hay mucho dinero allí está la nobleza.

El dinero es alcalde y juez muy alabado,
es muy buen consejero y sutil abogado,
alguacil y merino, enérgico, esforzado;
de todos los oficios es gran apoderado.

En resumen lo digo, entiéndelo mejor:
el dinero es del mundo el gran agitador,
hace señor al siervo y siervo hace el señor;

toda cosa del siglo se hace por su amor.⁴

R. A. Shoaf also reminds us that the appearance of money had a religious and moral impact since “the triumph of money led to a revision of the hierarchy of the seven deadly sins so that avarice came to share with pride the position of root or beginning of evil.”⁵

With the introduction of money within the economy and the subsequent redefinition of social classes, feudalism disappeared. About that medieval institution, Roger Boase notes that

Feudalism was a form of patronage based upon land tenure and solemnised by an act of homage, involving an exchange or military services for protection, which developed as a consequence of instability and decentralization after the collapse of the Carolingian empire . . . (*Troubadour Revival*, 57)

Roger Boase further explains that despite the fact that “the Iberian Peninsula did not possess a network of feudal relationships such as that which existed in France, nor were the ties of dependence so binding . . .” (57- 58), the nobility found itself dispossessed of its protective role. As a consequence, the high nobility moved to the court and the petty nobility became an idle class. In the words of Joseph O’ Callaghan:

The principal changes in the status and character of the nobility were the displacement of old families by new ones, the transformation of the great lords into courtiers residing with the king rather than on their estates, the extraordinary aggrandizement of a few great families, and the depression of the petty nobility. (*A History*, 423)

Boase shares O’Callaghan’s view when he says that:

individualism and the satisfaction of personal aspirations, but also depersonalized social relations created the need for new forms of patronage. These changes encouraged nobles to neglect

their self-appointed role as the protectors of the oppressed and made inequalities of wealth and privilege more visible and harder to justify on moral and ideological grounds. Insecurity thus became the dominant feature of life at every social level. (*Troubadour Revival*, 78)

This social change bears primarily important political and social consequences; the nobility, because of its privileged position in the court, becomes increasingly powerful. Life at court is also synonymous with political intrigues which are a permanent characteristic of fourteenth-and fifteenth-century Castile.

In the literary realm, the creation of a court elicited the resurgence of the philosophy of courtly love, as we will delve into in the second part of this chapter. Its practitioners were, for the most part, members of the nobility, who had just lost their traditional role of protectors and were looking nostalgically towards a social past that was irremediably gone. In Boase's words: "The troubadour revival must be understood as part of this general nostalgia for the stability and idealism of a past which was of course largely imaginary" (*Troubadour Revival*, 81). The literary school of courtly love allowed the nobility to reenact some of the principles of feudalism. In fact, within the hierarchical order of the philosophy of courtly love, the male lover became the vassal of his lady. Conversely, the order of courtly love -- within the limit of its purely fictitious world -- encouraged its members to cultivate all the traditional knightly virtues, namely: honor, courage and moral perfection, traditionally associated with the caste of the *defensores*.

Yet another consequence of the circulation of money and the disappearance of feudalism is the formation of a urban proletariat and increased social unrest. In the words of Roger Boase:

This urban proletariat regimented and exploited by industrial entrepreneurs vented its grievances and its sense of frustration in a series of popular uprisings which occurred throughout Europe . . . In Spain popular unrest took the form of anti-Semitic pogroms. (78)

Despite the fact that anti-Semitism reached its climax in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with periods of great hostility, and the Inquisition began in 1480 and finally non-converted Jews were expelled in 1492, it appears that Jews were satirized from the earliest times in Spain. Jews were traditionally accused of the death of Christ, as Montoro himself reminds us in his poem "Otra del ropero a su caballo . . .":

Agora señor Antón
porque me temporizastes,
yo vos otorgo perdón
por honra de la Pasión
daquel que crucificastes.⁶

Jews were also commonly associated with the commerce of money. Indeed, the most prominent financial advisors at court in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were Jews, or of Jewish origin. Moreover, most tax collectors were also Jewish.⁷ Precisely for these reasons were the Jews criticized by the dominant class of the Old Christians. Caste envy was indeed one of the traditional foundations of anti-Semitism on Spanish soil. As a consequence, the economic and social ills of society were easily blamed on the Jewish community.

The strong anti-Semitism that led to the pogroms in 1391 and 1449 was of popular origin. Repeatedly during those centuries, the kings took advantage of the popular hatred for Jews in order to realize their own political schemes. Nevertheless, the kings knew how to recognize that the Jews were invaluable in the economic life of the Kingdoms. An example in point of such an attitude is that of Enrique of Trastámara who used the popular anti-Semitic feelings before ascending the throne in 1369.

The future monarch easily found many supporters of anti-Semitism during the spread of the Black Death. In 1355 Enrique of Trastámara massacred the *judería* of Toledo and as a consequence rallied the support of the masses because of his apparent anti-Semitism. Joseph O' Callaghan explains that when Enrique became king, he needed able financiers to help him and saw no need in pursuing his anti-Semitic policy. The Jewish financiers of Pedro did not want to betray their monarch; their hope was that he would regain the throne. Therefore, Enrique used the services of other Jews who had not served Pedro. One of them was Pichón who became a favorite of the king and acquired much power.

The return of Pedro to the throne ended with Pichón in exile but when Pedro *El Cruel* was assassinated by Enrique of Trastámara, Pichón was re-hired by the latter. The new ascendancy of Pichón provoked the jealousy of some of Enrique's Jewish courtiers who convinced the king that Pichón had embezzled large amounts of funds. Pichón was put behind bars and subjected to a harsh interrogation. Once released, the financier put all the blame on

Jewish conspirators but less than a month later he was sentenced to death as an informer. (*A History*, 436)

Pichón's history clearly shows that there were also rivalries among the Jews themselves. In fact, Pichón's success and prestigious position in the court provoked the jealousy of other Jews. The jealousy also existed among the *conversos*. As we will see in chapters three and four, Antón de Montoro as well as Rodrigo Cota were openly attacked on the basis of their religious origins but were also attacking their fellow converts.

Louise Mirrer's analysis of two famous literary figures, Rachel and Vidas, the money lenders in the anonymous twelfth-century *Cantar de Mio Cid*, clearly exemplifies how Jews were viewed as early as the twelfth century. The critic explains that Rachel and Vidas are ridiculed, presented as comic relief; yet their actions underscore the superiority of Old Christians:

The Jew, in the Middle Ages, could be a comic as well as a vile creature. The caricatured presentation of Rachel and Vidas offers no exception, fully exploiting the stereotype by supplying a humorous example of two greedy usurers who fall prey to a Christian's hoax. Such a stereotype of course also underscores the cleverness of Christians who are able to out-smart others.⁸

The *Cantar* was created in order to advance the Christian ideals during a rallying point of the Reconquest. The parts that Rachel and Vidas play are indeed similar to those of the women characters in this epic poem. Not unlike Jimena and the two daughters, doña Elvira and doña Sol, the two Jewish money lenders are passive figures and do not participate in the business of the Reconquest of Spain. Mirrer notes that there is a consistent

tendency in the Spanish Middle Ages to feminize Jews or to accuse them of homosexuality:

Male Jews were, in fact, routinely stripped of their markers of masculinity and symbolically transformed into women in medieval Castilian literary, legal and folkloric texts. The popular notion that sodomy originated with the Jews (validated in late medieval theological writing -- e.g. in the declaration of the *Libro llamado alborayque* that "La sodomia es venida de los judios . . . De los judios vino a los moros, a los malos cristianos . . .), the equivalence in thirteenth-century legal works between the word Jew and such sexual epithets as *cornudo* (cuckhold) and the proverbial image of the Jew as coward (e.g. the saying "Muy cobardes más que judios" all link images of male Jews to the praxis of patriarchy -- that is the dominion of men over women and of certain more manly groups of men (i.e. Christian Castilians) over others in Medieval Castile. (*Women Jews*, 73)

Antón de Montoro repeatedly alludes to such words used by old Christians to address Jews in various of his compositions: The Jews are indeed "logreros," "zafios" and "putos" in the eyes of the dominant caste (see chapter three for more on those particular poems).

The Archpriest of Hita also alludes to the condition of Jews in the opening verses of his "Oración a Dios y plegaria a la Virgen":

Señor, que a los judíos, pueblo de perdición.
cautivo, rescataste del fuerte Faraón . . . (*Libro*, 33)

In his description of the *Décimocuarta Dama*, a moorish lady, the Archpriest seems to emphasize the climate of tolerance between the three religions:

Después escribi coplas de danza y callejeras,
para moras, judías y para recaderas,
para todo instrumento, de vulgares maneras;
el cantar que no sepas, óyelo a cantaderas. (211)

Although the Spanish Middle Ages are often referred to as the period of *convivencia* among the three religions, Jews as well as Muslims were subjected to many Christian laws and prohibitions. As the *Siete Partidas* reminds us,

the reason that the church, emperors, kings and princes permitted the Jews to dwell among them and with Christians is because they have always lived, as it were, in captivity, as it was constantly in the minds of men that they were descended from those who crucified our Lord Jesus Christ. (qtd. in O' Callaghan, 465)

The Jews lived in cities for the most part, in their own quarters, the *juderías*, which they governed themselves. The King appointed a *rabi mayor* who presided over several provinces. As Joseph O' Callaghan reminds us, the Jews were subject to taxes and to paying thirty *dineros* monthly "in memory of the thirty pieces of silver paid to Judas for the betrayal of Christ." (*A History*, 464)

Jews enjoyed relative religious freedom but were obliged to wear distinctive dress, usually a yellow badge or a six pointed star on front and back. This law was rarely enforced in Spain; nevertheless, Jews were forbidden to have sexual relationships with Christians and mixed marriages were not tolerated.

One of the most tragic occurrences in Spanish Jewish history was undoubtedly the violent pogroms of 1391. The initiator was the preacher Fernando Martínez who encouraged the masses to rebel through his anti-Semitic preaching.⁹ As many as four thousand Jews were killed in Seville and the massacre extended to Aragón. The king's counselors condemned the

crimes, but the perpetrators were not punished. The status of the Spanish Jewry became extremely precarious since those who survived had to convert and those who refused to accept Christian baptism were forced to leave Spain in 1492.¹⁰ Anti-Semitism did not stop with the pogroms; the *conversos*, for the most part, accused, often falsely, of practicing their former religion, maintained their involvement with royal finances and continued to provoke a hostile reaction on the part of the Old Christians.¹¹

Juan II's reign (1406-1454) is highly redolent of the political intrigues that characterized most of fifteenth century in Castile. Juan II was but two years old when his father passed away and the kingdom was governed by the regents Fernando de Antequera, the king's uncle (and a member of the Aragonese royal family) as well as the Queen Mother, Catalina de Lancaster. Fernando managed to maintain peace and strengthen the relationships between Castile and Aragón. He died in 1416 and Catalina was the sole regent of Castile until 1418. The peace between Aragón and Castile, however, ceased shortly after Fernando's death.

Alfonso V (king of Aragón and first cousin of Juan II), and his brothers Juan and Enrique (called the *Infantes de Aragón*), fought for the throne of Castile. Enrique abducted the young king Juan II of Castile in 1420 at Tordesillas. Alvaro de Luna, a grandnephew of Pope Benedict XIII, liberated the king, and as a consequence became his *privado*. The power and influence exercised by Alvaro de Luna was so sweeping that many historians have concluded that Juan II was but a puppet king. Originally the Castilian nobles

supported Alvaro de Luna since they believed that he would be eager to share his power with its members. Although the *privado's* power was constantly being challenged by the Infantes of Aragón and by Alfonso V, he did succeed in governing with his King's acquiescence and in accumulating a large fortune.

The nobles, who felt betrayed by the *privado*, finally demanded that the king govern in his own person. As a result, Juan II exiled Alvaro de Luna for six months in October of 1439. During that period, in the words of O' Callaghan, the kingdom of Castile was "filled with a bewildering complex of conspiracies, intrigues, shifting alliances all directed towards the destruction of Alvaro de Luna" (*A History*, 565). The *privado* had organized a second marriage for Juan II with Isabel of Portugal, who soon developed a strong hatred towards him. Under the influence of Isabel, Juan II, once again expelled Alvaro de Luna and finally had him arrested in 1453 in Burgos. Alvaro de Luna was subsequently beheaded on June 2, 1453 because "he had usurped the royal crown and ruled as a tyrant" (565). The Marqués de Santillana, a fierce opponent of the *privado*, dedicated a poem, "Doctrinal de privados," to Alvaro de Luna. The strong irony of this composition resides in the fact that the *privado* is made to confess his own faults:

Lo que non fize, fazed,
fauoridos y priuados:
si queredes ser amados,
non vos teman, mas temed;
tremperad cupida sed.
consegat rectos juycios . . .

Fuy de la caridad

y caridad me fuyó:
¿quién es el que me siguió
en tanta nessesidad?
Si buscáys amor, amad;
si bonas obras, fazedlas,
e si malas, atendeldas
de cierta certenidad.¹²

Alvaro de Luna's political intrigues were later emulated in Castile by the Marqués of Villena, *privado* of Enrique IV, who succeeded Juan II, who died soon after Luna, in 1454. Unlike Juan II, Enrique IV soon realized that Villena's actions were motivated by his thirst for power and, as a result, bestowed all of his favors upon another noble, Beltrán de la Cueva.

The Marqués of Villena's response was to declare Enrique IV's only child, daughter, Juana, illegitimate, and to assert that Beltrán de la Cueva was her biological father. As a result of the putative illegitimacy of Juana, the nobility demanded that Alfonso, Enrique's half brother, be named heir to the throne. Enrique IV first acceded to this demand but soon after changed his mind. As a consequence, the king was "deposed" in June of 1465. Alfonso was proclaimed king, leading to civil war in Castile. Eventually, Enrique IV agreed to proclaim Isabel, his half sister, as his heir. Isabel, against Enrique's expressed wishes, chose Fernando of Aragón as her husband, mainly intending to unite the kingdoms of Aragón and Castile (Ferdinand became king of Aragón in 1479). Enrique IV's decision provoked yet another crisis in Castile since the kingdom was divided between Juana's (*la "Beltraneja"*) partisans and Isabel's. The latter's rights to the throne were finally acknowledged in 1478.

The position of the *conversos* in this Castile is illustrated by several of Montoro's compositions. These poems are a dialogue between him and the *comendador* Roman.¹³ The *Comendador* openly accuses Montoro of being a Jew, despite his conversion, as the last verses of the poem titled *Respuesta de Roman*, illustrate:

Porque, si bien lo miráis,
aunque estáis acristianado,
yo me creo,
que si atavana pasáis,
vos sereis apedreado
por hebreo. (*Costa*, 73)

In the light of these accusations by Roman, el *Ropero* asks for peace in "Respuesta del Ropero queriendo paz con Roman":

Vos, el mejor nació,
hombre de muy gran capaz,
con quien todos quieren paz
no es razón que riña yo; (81)

to which Román replies, reiterating his accusation of Jewish origins:

Roman a Montoro no queriendo paz

Record Antón que dormís;
sois las islas de Guinea,
o las momias dAlanquís,
o la tierra de Judea,
con su cuento de rabís;

vos, figura de baúl,
hombre de mala razón,
bien sabéis qués cingurpul,
aunque ahora sois Antón,
primero fuistes Saúl. (82)

Caro Baroja makes the following distinctions about the new caste of the *conversos*:

Conversos buenos católicos y conversos heterodoxos dentro del christianismo, conversos talmudistas, conversos heterodoxos dentro de la ley mosaica y conversos incrédulos en el fondo. He aquí las categorías esenciales que vamos a encontrar en lo futuro y a las que acaso hay que añadir la de los vacilantes como una de las más nutridas.¹⁴

Stephen Gilman explains in his *La España de Fernando de Rojas* that there were three distinct generations of *conversos*:

Podemos dividir de un modo general la historia de la casta conversa en tres períodos. En los tiempos de violencia anteriores al establecimiento de la Inquisición, también los conversos fueron violentos... Después encontramos a los atormentados, imprudentes e inadaptados compañeros de Alvaro de Montalbán que . . . intentaron vivir su propia vida bajo la presión de una institución y de una situación social que no comprendieron totalmente. Finalmente vinieron los encubiertos, los clientes del licenciado Fernando de Rojas de la últimas décadas del siglo XVI y del siglo XVII.¹⁵

What was the situation of an author such as Antón de Montoro? The few documents dealing with Montoro's life reveal that he was born in Córdoba at the beginning of the fifteenth century and died in the same city in 1477. Antón de Montoro was a *ropero* (a clothes merchant) but more likely a tailor in the court. His poetic talents allowed him to become a member of the most prestigious literary circle of his times. Marithelma Costa believes that the conversion of Montoro's family was a result of the pogroms of 1391 (XII). Despite this historical data, Montoro clearly implies in the following text that some members of his family still go to the temple:

Montoro al portero de Santa Cruz delante de la Reyna

Reprehensor de prudentes
de los discretos espanto
temido de los valientes,

como cuando mis parientes
entran en el templo santo

a adorar su criador;
yo, con mis simples fechos,
ante vos hiero mis pechos
deciendo: "Yo pecador." (*Costa*, 16)

Judaism and conversion are two main themes of the poet Antón de Montoro's poetic corpus, who, if we are to follow Marithelma Costa's judgment had converted to the dominant religion:

Si se analizan minuciosamente sus textos, no hay por qué dudar de su conversión al cristianismo y, si se acepta la distinción que hace Márquez Villanueva para los conversos no judaizantes, entre aquéllos que aceptaron la religión más formalista de los cristianos viejos y aquéllos que abogaban por un cristianismo más auténtico - con la base ideológica de San Pablo y Seneca - habría que colocar a Montoro en el segundo grupo. (XII)

Nevertheless, the *Ropero's* critique of the hypocrisy of the Old Christians as well as his description of the climate of anti-Semitism surrounding him lead us to believe that the *conversos* remained marginalized in fifteenth-century Spain (see ch. 3). The *Comendador* Roman's words in his "Respuesta a Montoro" point to its pervasive anti-Semitism:

Porque si bien lo miráis,
aunque estáis acristianado,
no me creo,
que si atavana pasáis
vos seréis apedreado
por hebreo. (*Costa*, 73)

El Ropero openly reveals his religious origins but at the same time seeks acceptance among the dominant caste, as he clearly expresses in a well-known poem dedicated to Queen Isabel (see ch. 3). In his verses, Montoro

implores the help of the Queen because, despite his efforts to be a true Christian, he is seen as a “puto judío.”

Montoro was well respected in the court as were many Jews and other converts. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the kings, although not anti-Semitic, used the Jews to their own advantage. In fact, soon after the death of Montoro in 1477, the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabel, took the first steps to solve the *converso* problems and in 1480 the National Inquisition was created with the main purpose of uncovering the judaizing *conversos*.

In his critical work, *La España de Fernando de Rojas*, Stephen Gilman investigates the Jewish origins of Fernando de Rojas, author of *Celestina*, and explains that, despite the fact that Rojas was not the direct victim of anti-Semitism, his father-in-law was denounced for heresy. Gilman strongly believes that the *Tragicomedia* is an expression of the status of converts in fifteenth-century Spain. In Gilman's view, the pessimism of the work (expressed among other examples in Pleberio's soliloquy) as well as the dissimulation that characterizes most of the players on Rojas' stage are reflections of the malaise experienced by converts:

El disimulo y el camuflaje a que recurren constantemente los personajes de Rojas [es] un reflejo del disimulo y camuflaje que él así como sus amigos y parientes encontraron necesario para sobrevivir. Los conversos sobreviven porque el fingimiento o la disimulación llegan a ser para ellos una segunda naturaleza. (*La España*, 191)

As we will have occasion to see in chapter five, the character of the bawd, *Celestina*, embodies these very characteristics: dissimulation and pretense. In fact, she generates so many discourses and conflicting attitudes

that her inner self becomes lost to public view. As we will hope to prove, Celestina becomes a metaphor for the arbitrariness in *converso* existence.

Rodrigo Cota's denial of his own origins is highly characteristic of the attitude of a large majority of *conversos*. Montoro openly criticizes Cota's attitude and invites the writer to acknowledge his origins. As we will explore in chapter four, the *Diálogo* is a highly pessimistic literary piece since its protagonist, an old man, is induced to fall in love on the verge of death.

The fifteenth century is one of many transitions in Spanish letters. One of the major literary influences is that of humanist Italian authors. Through the Italian poets, primarily Petrarch, poetry became largely influenced by Greek and Latin authors and many classical texts were translated into Spanish. The humanist influence reached Spain primarily through Alfonso V of Aragon's court in Naples and Juan II's court in Castile. About the literary influence of these two monarchs, Joseph O' Callaghan notes,

Alfonso V, totally captivated by the Renaissance, made his court at Naples one of the greatest centers of literature and learning in Europe. Every humanist of any consequence, men such as Lorenzo Valla and Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, enjoyed his patronage at one time or another. Catalan and Castilian writers visited his court, imbibed new ideas, learned new styles, and returned home to propagate them. Juan II of Castile, though a total failure as a statesman, was a distinguished patron of poets and scholars, a ruler whose court became an important literary center, spreading Renaissance classicism and humanism not only throughout Castile, but also into the neighboring kingdoms. (*A History*, 641)

Santillana expresses his admiration of Classical authors in his "Proemio e carta":

De los griegos quieren sean los primeros Achatesio Millesio e,
apres dél, Ferecides Siro e Homero, no obstante que Dante
soberano poeta lo llama. De los latinos Enio fue el primero, ya
sea que Virgilio quieran de la lengua latina en metro aya tenido
e tenga la monarchia, y aun asy plaze a Dante allí donde dize, en
nombre de Sordello mantuano:

O gloria del latyn solo per chui
mostro cho que potea la lingua nostra
o precio eterno del locho oue yo fuy. (*Poesías Completas*, 212)

Fifteenth-century Spanish poetry is often characterized as obscure
precisely due to its many biblical and classical references. Such characteristics
abound in the works of Santillana and other poets of that century.

In fifteenth-century Spain, poetry is mainly the occupation of an
intellectual elite and is primarily viewed as a rhetorical and intellectual game.

In words of Le Gentil:

Les Castellans jonglent dans l'abstrait, avec les idées et les
dogmes; ils analysent, associent, opposent, prouvent et
demonstrent dans un perpetuel cliquetis d'arguments ingenieux
et alambiqués. C'est par une virtuosité toute intellectuelle qu'ils
se distinguent.¹⁶ . . . Pour un vrai poete, il ne suffit plus de vivre
en contact avec la bonne societe, d'en assimiler les idees ou les
prejuges, d'en partager les gouts ou les lectures habituelles, de
s'initier a quelques recettes de metier. Il faut avoir recu une
education plus complete . . . il faut enfin pouvoir s'aventurer
hors du domaine de la poesie galante, s'essayer aux vastes
compositions allegoriques, traiter meme d'autres themes que
l'amour; il faut orner son style de comparaisons ou d'artifices
nouveaux, puiser aux bonnes sources, chez les Italiens ou chez
les Anciens. (*La Poésie Lyrique*, 42)

Under the influence of the Renaissance, the new poetic form of the
sonnet "fecho al italico modo" -- to cite the title of the 42-sonnet collection
written by Santillana -- was introduced in Spain. Nevertheless, Santillana's

sonnets never achieved the rhythmical balance of the Italian sonnet. As Alan Deyermond observes:

Los 42 sonetos, empero, que Santillana compuso durante los veinte años últimos de su vida, suponen una consciente innovación desde la vertiente culta. Nos dejan entrever, en efecto, una clara determinación de aclimatar al español este esquema métrico italiano compuesto de versos de once sílabas, y, aunque algunas de estas piezas rondan lo logrado, tomadas en su conjunto nos revelan, en definitiva, un fracaso por parte del autor en este intento. El número de sílabas es casi siempre correcto, pero el endecasílabo italiano posee ritmos típicos que se enfrentaban con el del octosílabo no menos que con el del arte mayor, y el oído de Santillana estaba hecho a los últimos.¹⁷

Moreover, fifteenth-century literature maintained its medieval didactic function and for that very reason, the Renaissance never flourished in fifteenth-century Spain as it had in other European countries. The Marqués de Santillana in his “Carta y Prohemio,” a critical literary manifesto, divides poetry into the three following categories: “sublime/mediocre and ínfimo” and as defines good poetry as “un fingimiento de cosas útiles cubiertas o veladas con muy hermosa cobertura” (*Poesías Completas*, 210). The objective of good poetry is therefore to transmit useful knowledge.

Finally, Deyermond adds that the very spirit of the Renaissance was in opposition to that of the nobility:

En las décadas, pues, que cierran el siglo XV existía poderoso apoyo para la cultura humanística, aunque parece que la mayoría de los hombres la miraban todavía con profundo recelo . . . Se hallaba ampliamente divulgada la creencia de que la afición hacia los libros encerraba implicaciones de magia, que era incompatible con la nobleza y el orgullo militar, y que era característica de los conversos. (*Historia*, 261)



Cancionero poetry is mainly dominated by love lyrics and a product of the Provençal school of love, i.e., courtly love. As noted in chapter one, courtly love was born in Occitania and flourished there in the twelfth century and in the rest of Europe in the following century, the thirteenth, when it became intertwined with the cult of the Virgin.

The philosophy of *fin'amors* is an integral part of Marqués de Santillana's sonnets "fechos al italico modo" as in the following part of Santillana's composition, which makes references to Greek antiquity, in this particular case to Helen of Troy:

Oh dulce esguarde, vida e honor mía,
Segunda Elena, templo de beldat
So cuya mano, mando e señoria
Es el arbitrio mío e voluntat!
Yo soy tu prisionero, e sin porfía
Fuiste senora de mi libertat,
E non te pienses fuya tu valía
Nin me despliega tal captivitat.¹⁹

The poetic "I" reiterates in these verses various characteristics of courtly love (see chapter one). In fact he is his lady's prisoner ("yo soy tu prisionero") and expresses his joy at finding himself in such a state ("Es el arbitrio mio e voluntat"). Not unlike the later troubadours, Santillana intertwines the sacred and the profane in his love sonnets.

Diametrically opposed in tone and style are Santillana's *serranillas*, with their rural setting and *serrana* protagonist. She, unlike the *domna* of the courtly tradition, is a rustic character. The *serrana* (or mountain girl) of Serranilla V is a shepherdess. The tone and language of this *serranilla* and of

all the compositions of that type are deprived of any *courtoisie*, so characteristic of the lyric of *fin'amor*:

Entre Torres e Canena,
Acerca de Sallozar,
Fallé moza de Bedmar
San Julian en buena estrena
Pellote negro vestía
E lienzos blancos tocaba,
A fuer del Andalucía
E de alcorques se calzaba

Preguntéle do venía,
Desque la ove saluado,
O quál camino facía.
Díxome que d'un ganado
Quel gardaban en Racena,
E passava al olivar
Por coger e varear
Las olivas de Ximena . . . (*Poesías Completas*, 98)

The following *serranilla* exemplifies the register of language used by the *serrana*:

Mozuela de Bores
Allá só la Lama,
Púsome en amores.
Dixo: "Cavallero,
Tirat vos afuera:
Dexad la vaquera
Pasar el otero;
Cá dos labradores
Me piden de Framá,
Entrambos pastores." (94)

Our three authors, Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas also paid homage to the literary tradition of courtly love. Unlike Santillana, all three authors parody the philosophical and linguistic practices of that school in order to show that the school of *fin'amor* is a literary game

aimed at entertaining the nobility. For Pierre le Gentil, these three authors view courtly love as follows:

Sensualité facile, passion romanesque, flirt équivoque, amour de tête, tout cela se rencontre alors, et prend dans la poésie, comme la prouesse dans les pas d'armes, le même vêtement d'apparat, imposé par une mode uniformément respectée. L'amour courtois, en cette fin du moyen âge castillan, est une belle comédie que l'on joue avec conviction devant les autres et devant soi-même, et nous retrouvons là cet attachement aux formes, au ceremonial, dont nous parlions plus haut. (40)

The resurgence on Spanish soil of the literary school of Provençal poetry has been explained by Roger Boase in political terms:

In the late Middle Ages many European countries were dominated both politically and culturally, by an aristocracy which was in danger of becoming professionally redundant as a result of its inability to adapt to sudden changes in the nature of society, chief of which were the absence of chivalry in the methods and motives of mechanized warfare, the growth of centralized bureaucracy and the development of a non-seigniorial economy. This was especially true of Spain where contrary to the experience of most other countries, the nobility expanded rapidly during the course of the fifteenth century. The principle of primogeniture and the duty of non-derogation, whereby a person of noble birth was debarred from participating in trade and commerce, produced a large leisured class in which there was a preponderance of unattached males, most of whom had no material or political responsibilities. This social group looked back with nostalgia to a largely imaginary chivalric age and rejected as subversive and heretical any social concepts or intellectual theories which denied the immutable providential character of the status quo. The provençal ideal of fin'amors answered the needs of this dominant minority because, being based on the feudal principles of fealty and subservience, it inculcated a respect for status and the existing hierarchy and was a means of evading unpleasant social and political realities. (151-152)

Le Gentil agrees that the resurgence of courtly love in fifteenth century Spain has political causes and responds to the nobility's nostalgia for an heroic past:

Il semble bien que les tournois soient pour la chevalerie, progressivement éliminée des véritables champs de bataille, un refuge et une revanche. Une revanche que l'on veut complète, ainsi qu'il apparaît aux raffinements d'une étiquette de plus en plus rigoureuse; un refuge où l'on se sent à l'aise et à l'abri des dures contradictions de la réalité . . . (*La Poésie Lyrique*, 46)

One of the most important works in prose, and particularly pertinent when discussing the poetry of our three authors, is *La Cárcel de Amor*. This work-- published in 1492 and written by Diego de San Pedro, also a convert, - is undoubtedly one of the major manifestations of the philosophy of courtly love in fifteenth-century Spain. It is also important to note that *La Cárcel* has also been analyzed by critics, among them Stephen Gilman, as a metaphor of *converso* existence in fifteenth century Spain (on that particular, see chapters four and five).

The originality of *Cárcel de amor* resides in its literary form(s). *Cárcel* is an epistolary novel -- based on the letters exchanged between Leriano and Laureola and other characters of the novel -- but it also belongs to the Dantesque tradition since, not unlike the *Divine comedy*, it is constructed on various allegories. An example in point is the allegorical characterizations of the various components of love, among those Desire, or *Deseo*, who introduces himself to the author in the following manner:

Yo soy principal oficial en la casa de Amor; llámanme por nombre Deseo: con la fortaleza deste escudo defiende las esperanças y con la hermosura desta imagen causo las aficiones y con ellas quemo las vidas, como puedes ver en este preso que lievo a la Cárcel de Amor, donde con solo morir se espera librar.²⁰

The prisoner is Leriano who further describes himself to the author in this way:

Tu sabrás que yo soy Leriano, hijo del duque Guersio, que Dios perdone, y de la duquesa Coleria. Mi naturaleza es este reino do estás, llamado Macedonia. Ordenó mi ventura que me enamorase de Laureola, hija del rey Gaulo, que agora reina, pensamiento que yo deviera antes huir que buscar; pero como los primeros movimientos no se puedan en los hombres escusar en lugar de desviallos con la razón, confirmélos con la voluntad; y assí el Amor me vencí, que me truxo a esta su casa, la cual se llama Cárcel de Amor. (*Cárcel*, 88-89)

Another original aspect of the novel is that the author (*el Autor*) is part of the novel. In fact the narrator is fully integrated in the action and plays the part of intermediary between the various characters. Alan Deyermond summarizes the action of the novel as follows:

. . . El autor es un personaje en este libro, en vez de ser tan sólo un testigo a quien se le cuenta la historia. Se encuentra con Leriano en el camino hacia la cárcel alegórica que el título menciona y que representa la tensión sin resolver entre la esperanza y la desesperación. El Autor, que pronto se compromete emocionalmente al éxito de su misión, reúne a Leriano y a la princesa Laureola. Un celoso rival acusa de incontinencia a los amantes y el rey condena a muerte a su hija (ley de Escoscia), a pesar de que Leriano le vindique en un duelo judicial. Leriano la rescata... el triunfo se convierte, no obstante, en desastre, ya que Laureola jamás puede casarse con Leriano por miedo que se confirme la acusación. El amante desdeñado se suicida en una escena que recuerda la muerte de Cristo. (298)

Diego de San Pedro's novel exemplifies the major concepts of the philosophy of courtly love; in fact, Leriano is patient and lives in the hope of receiving Laureola's' *galardón* or reward and for that very reason has been opposed by critics to Calisto, the male protagonist of the *Tragicomedia*, who is

clearly a parody of the patient courtly lover.²¹ The highest expression of Leriano's perfection as a courtly lover resides in his choice of death over life:

Si todavía te plaze que muera, házmelo saber; que gran bien harás a la vida pues no será desdichada el todo; lo primero della se pasó en inocencia y lo del conocimiento en dolor; a lo menos el fin será en descanso, porque tu lo das, el cual, si ver no me quieres, será forçado que veas. (*Cárcel*, 152)

Leriano's unwavering passion for Laureola can easily be compared to Melibea's determination to commit suicide after Calisto's death. In fact, as we will later analyze, Melibea takes on the part of the perfect male lover, in her determination and courage to be with Calisto and eventually to commit suicide. Calisto, on the contrary, is a parody of the ideal courtly lover since he merely recites rules (those described by Andreas Capellanus) in which he does not believe.

One further parallel can be drawn between *Cárcel de Amor* and the *Tragicomedia*. Both works insist on the devastating effects of love, the injustice of the protagonists' -- Leriano and Melibea's -- destiny and the arbitrariness of human existence. Leriano's mother's speech and Pleberio's soliloquy after the death of their children express the same feeling of hopelessness and incapacity to accept the devastating effects of love:

O alegre descanso de mi vegez, o dulce hartura de mi voluntad!
Hoy dexas [de] dezir[te] hijo y yo de más llamarme madre, de lo cual tenía temerosa sospecha por las nuevas señales que en mí vi . . . O lumbre de mi vista, o ceguedad della misma, que te veo morir y no veo la razón de tu muerte . . . O muerte, cruel enemiga, que ni perdonas los culpados ni asuelves los inocentes! . . . Tan poderoso fue tu mal que no tuviste para con el ningund remedio; ni te valió la fuerca del cuerpo ni la virtud del corazón, ni el esfuerco del ánimo. (*Carcél*, 172-174)

Pleberio's words are similar to those of Leriano's mother when he says:

Ay, ay noble mujer, nuestro gozo en el pozo; nuestro bien todo es perdido; no queramos más vivir! . . . O mi hija y mi bien todo, crueldad sería que biva yo sobre ti! Más dignos eran mis sesenta años de la sepultura, que tus veynte . . . Porque mi Melibea mató a si misma de su voluntad a mis ojos con al gran fatiga de amor que le aquexava . . . [hablando del amor] . . . Enemigo de toda razón, a los que menos te sirven das mayores dones, hasta tenerlos metidos en tu congoxosa danca.
(*Tragicomedia*)²²

Both characters insist on the fact that love deprives its victims of reason. Leriano's mother insists on the fact that "Tan poderoso fue tu mal que **no tuviste para con el ningund remedio**" and adds "ni te valió la fuerza del cuerpo **ni la virtud del corazón** ni el **esfuerco del ánimo**. Pleberio clearly states that love is "**Enemigo de toda razón**" (emphasis added).

Both the *Carcel de Amor* and the *Tragicomedia* display anti-feminist elements, and some of the female characterizations found in both works are reminiscent of Andreas Capellanus' vision of women in the final section of his *De Amore*. As explained in chapter one, the first part of the *De Amore* fully develops the rules of courtly love and emphasizes the many moral values the courtly lover must display in order to become a member of the order of Love. Furthermore, the chaplain's work clearly implies in that first part, that the courtly lady must also be an example of moral virtue. Similarly, the *Cárcel* and the *Tragicomedia* display a strong courtly influence if we are to judge by Leriano's exemplary courtly behavior or Melibea's attitude of *belle dame sans merci* at the opening of the *Tragicomedia*.

The second part of the *De Amore* de-constructs the idealized vision of the courtly lady found in the first part of the work. The same dichotomy between the philosophy of courtly love and misogyny can be found in San Pedro's work, but more significantly in Rojas' *Tragicomedia*.

Andreas considers first of all that women are not able to love "for no woman ever loved a man or could bind herself to a lover in the mutual bonds of love."²³ Capellanus considers that women's sole objective is to acquire wealth and that only love allows them to achieve that goal. Women in Capellanus' view are interested in money and will grant any favor in order to get gifts. In Capellanus' view, women are not only miserly, but

every woman is also envious and a slanderer of other women, greedy, a slave to her belly, inconstant, fickle in her speech, disobedient and impatient of restraint, spotted with the sin of pride and desirous of vainglory, a liar, a drunkard, a babbler, no keeper of secrets, too much given to wantonness, prone to every evil, and never loving any man in her heart. (*Arte*, 201)

Such a negative vision of women can be traced to the Bible and to the Church fathers. Not unlike many works in the Middle Ages, the Bible either praises the lady or de-constructs an ideal vision of the female sex, depending on the context that plays a substantial role in her image. The misogyny expressed in Capellanus is undoubtedly reflected in *Cárcel de Amor*, more particularly in the character of Tifeo, to whom Leriano demonstrates the superiority of women over men in the following terms:

la sesta razon es porque nos crían en el alma la virtud del
esperanca . . . la setena razón es porque nos hazen merecer la
caridad . . . La onzena es porque nos hacen honrrados. (*Cárcel*,
162-163)

Misogyny is also present in the servant Sempronio's speech to his master Calisto:

Pero destas otras cosas ¿quién te contaría sus mentiras, sus trafagos, sus cambios, su liviandad, sus lagrimillas, sus alteraciones, sus osadías? Que todo lo que piensan osan sin deliberar; sus disimulaciones, su lengua, su engaño, su olvido, su desamor, su ingratitud, su inconsistencia, su testimoniar, su negar, su rebolver, su presuncion, su vangloria, su abatimiento, su locura, su desden, su soberbia, su subjecion, su parleria, su golosina, su luxuria y suziedad, su miedo, su atrevimiento, ssu hechizerias, sus enbaymientos, sus escarnios, su deslenguamiento, su desvergüenza, su alcahueteria. (TC, 97)

It is interesting to note that the attributes that Sempronio uses to characterize women are reminiscent of the characterization of the old bawd Celestina herself, as she is viewed by Pármeno. Therefore, the character of the *alcahueta* could very well enhance the misogyny present in the work. The young Pármeno, soon to be corrupted by Celestina, describes the latter as thus:

Ella tenía seis officios, conviene a saber: labranderia, perfumera, maestra de hazer afeytes y de hazer virgos, alcahueta y un poquito hechizera. (110)

The purpose underlying the twelfth-century French chaplain's work is not so very different from *La Cárcel de Amor* and the *Tragicomedia's* intention, a work ostensibly written "en reprensión de los locos enamorados." Misogyny in these three works fulfills the function of further debasing the literary school of courtly love. In fact, misogyny destroys the idealized vision of women -- oftentimes associated with the Virgin Mary in the traditional troubadour lyric -- and whose perfection is one of the defining elements of the Provençal philosophy of love. As we will have occasion to

analyze in chapter five, Fernando de Rojas further de-constructs that literary school by presenting Calisto as the antithesis of the perfect male courtly lover.

Misogyny finds its highest expression in the Archpriest of Talavera's *El Corbacho* which was influenced by Capellanus' *De Amore* as Gerli explains in his introduction to the work:

El antifeminismo es un tema de antiguas raíces bíblicas y clásicas que reaparece con acusado vigor en Francia y en Italia en los siglos XII y XIV: siglos que también marcan el auge de la literatura cortesana en estos países.²⁴

El Arcipreste de Talavera o Corbacho, first circulated in 1438 and written "contra los vicios e todas las malas condiciones de las mugeres, las buenas en sus virtudes aprobadas" (40), is the first work in Spain with such a strong misogynist element. The objective of the Archpriest of Talavera is, according to Gerli,

la reprobación del amor mundano o la concupiscencia. Así pues al referirse al amor mundano en general, el Arcipreste sin duda atacaba también el amor cortés; el tipo de conducta amorosa que se practicaba en los círculos palaciegos en que el se movía. (*Corvacho*, 39)

Archpriest of Talavera sees courtly love as an act of blasphemy since the courtly love poems in vogue in fifteenth-century Spain associated women with God. In this particular aspect, the author of *El Corbacho* agrees with Capellanus in the second part of his *De Amore* as well as with the author (the fictitious *Auctor*) of the *Cárcel* and Fernando de Rojas in his *Tragicomedia*. In fact all these authors stress the negative consequences of mundane love and Capellanus further explains that love is a sinful feeling that leads to

heresy. Rojas expresses his condemnation of the “loco amor” in Pleberio’s soliloquy:

¡O amor, amor, que no pensé que tenías fuerza ni poder de matar a tus sujetos! Herida fue de ti mi juventud. Por medio de tus brasas pasé ¿Cómo me soltaste para me dar la paga de la huida en mi vejez? . . . Si amor fueses, amarías a tus sirvientes; si los amases, no les darías pena . . . (TC, 341)

In this particular instance, love is personified as it is in *Cárcel de Amor* and not unlike in the Archpriest of Hita’s *Libro de Buen Amor*. In these authors’ view, love is indeed a devastating force that leads to heresy and death. Talking about the young victims of love, Fernando de Rojas notes in the “Síguese” of the *Tragicomedia* that the work was written en “reprensión de los locos enamorados, que vencidos en su desordenado apetito, a sus amigas llaman y dicen ser su dios . . . ” (82)

El Corbacho’s intention is very like that of the *Tragicomedia*. In the words of Gerli:

La refutación satírica del culto del amor idealizado así como existió en el siglo XV, lejos de ser una escuela de virtudes como creían muchos de sus contemporáneos, el amor mundano según Martínez de Toledo lleva al pecado y a la degeneración moral. (*Corbacho*, 44)

In his section, “Concluye el auctor, aplicando la obra al propósito por que la hizo,” Fernando de Rojas clearly implies that the attitude of Calisto and Melibea is not to be followed since it contradicts the basic tenets of the Christian faith:

Pues aquí vemos cuán mal fenecieron
aquestos amantes, huygamos su danca;
amemos a aquel que spinas y lanca
acotes y clavos su sangre vertieron;

los falsos judíos su haz escupieron;
vinagre con hiel fue su potación;
por que nos lleve con el buen ladrón
de dos que a su santos lados pusieron. (TC, 343)

In order to vilify mundane love, the Archpriest of Talavera recurs to realism.

Gerli believes that

Empleando artificios narrativos que habían perfeccionado los predicadores populares así como el empleo del habla coloquial directa en la representación de la personalidad y las descripciones minuciosas de un mundo familiar y cotidiano, Martínez logra dar vida e inmediatez a los principios abstractos de la moralidad cristiana. Tampoco huye el arcipreste de lo escabroso, sino que lo explota para hacer resaltar la degradación del loco amor. (*Corbacho*, 37)

The realism found in *Corbacho* is exemplified in the following section of the work titled: "Como la muger es envidiosa de qualquiera más fermosa que ella":

Dize luego: Fallan las gentes que Fulana es fermosa Oh Señor y que cosa es favor! Non la han visto desnuda como yo el otro día en el baño; más negra es que un diablo; flaca que non parece sino a la muerte. (161)

By using highly realistic language, the Archpriest not only debases the main tenets of the philosophy of courtly love but also its language practices. In his realist technique resides an indirect parody of the hyperbolic and fictitious language of the Provençal literary tradition. Such is also an objective of Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas when parodying that literary school. As we will have opportunity to see in the coming chapters, these three authors unveil the fictitious nature of *fin amor*

by de-constructing and de-stabilizing its fossilized language practices. Realism is undoubtedly one of the centerpieces of many of Montoro's compositions and of the *Tragicomedia* as can be observed in Celestina's following speech:

El deleyte es con los amigos en las cosas sensuales, y especial en
recontar las cosas de amores y comunicarlas. Esto haze, esto otro
me dixo; tal donayre passamos, de tal manera la tomé, assí la
besé, assí me mordió, assí la abracé, assí se allegó . . . (TC, 126)

The reflection of the philosophy of courtly love as well as its parody were on display in the fourteenth-century Archpriest of Hita's *Libro de Buen Amor*. Little is known about the author of this autobiographical tale, who presents himself as a fictitious priest, Juan Ruiz, who is irremediably attracted and given to world pleasures. The objective of the writer Archpriest is primarily moral since its protagonist is searching for the love of God but in the meantime details his earthly amorous escapades. In fact, the narratee is warned: "Haz lo que yo digo y no lo que hago" and the protagonist explains in the beginning of the work that

Yo como soy humano y por tal pecador
sentí por las mujeres a veces gran amor.
Que probemos las cosas no siempre es lo peor;
el bien y el mal sabed y escoged lo mejor. (*Libro*, 76)

One of the most famous episodes of the *Libro* is undoubtedly the relationship that the author, thinly disguised as don Melón de la Huerta, entertained with Doña Endrina, thus described:

La más noble figura de cuantas tener pud,
viuda, rica, moza llena de juventud
y bien acostumbrada; es de Calatayud.
Era vecina mía, mi muerte y mi salud! (582)

In his description of his *domna*, the author defines her as the perfect courtly lady:

¡Ay Dios cuán hermosa viene doña Endrina por la plaza!
Ay qué talle, qué donaire, que alto cuello de garza!
Qué cabellos, qué boquita, qué color, qué buenandanza!
Con asetas de amor hiere cuando los sus ojos alza. (653)

and addresses her in the following terms:

No existe nadie en el mundo a quien ame como a vos;
el tiempo va transcurrido de los años, más de dos
que por vuestro amor padezco, pues os amo más que a Dios
no quiero que otra persona medie entre nosotros dos. (661)

Doña Endrina is indeed behaving with the detachment characteristic of the courtly *belle dame sans merci*:

Paso a paso, doña Endrina bajo el portal es entrada,
bien lozana y orgullosa bien serena y sosegada
los ojos bajó a la tierra, en el poyo fue asentada;
yo volví a la explicación que tenía comenzada. (669)

With the help of Trotaconventos, the old go-between who is a clear derivative of the Classical *anus* and predecessor of the bawd of Rojas' *Tragicomedia*, Don Melón eventually manages to obtain doña Endrina's favors, but the author-Archpriest warns women against the treachery involved in love games:

Aplicate bien la historia de la hija del endrino;
la conté por darte ejemplo, y no porque a mí avino.
Guárdate de vieja falsa, de bromas con mal vecino;
no estés con un hombre a solas ni te acerques al espino. (909)

The author-Archpriest's objective is reminiscent of Capellanus' on the one hand and of Rojas' on the other hand since he, in this part of the work,

clearly condemns mundane love and advises the reader against go-betweens.

As Rosa Lida de Malkiel explains:

Varios rasgos del *Libro de buen amor* se explican más satisfactoriamente por su intención didáctica que por cualquiera de las interpretaciones propuestas. Tal es el caso de las repeticiones estructurales; la más desconcertante es la de los "castigos" de don Amor (423 ss.) y los de doña Venus, que contienen una referencia expresa a los primeros.²⁵

Not unlike Calisto in the *Tragicomedia*, the Archpriest ridicules the language of courtly love by presenting an hyperbolic courtly lover: don Melón. In the view of Lida de Malkiel, don Melón,

Sir Melón goes to such troubadouresque extremes, dolefully berating his heart, his eyes and his tongue, that the old woman [Trotaconventos, the go-between], satisfied, consoles him, confiding to him that Lady Sloe is in love, and describing her symptoms . . .²⁶

The Archpriest further de-constructs the school of courtly love in his *serranillas*. The vision of women offered in these pieces is grotesque and anticipates *El Corbacho's* vision of women. "The *serrana* de Malangosto" is indeed presented as the antithesis of the courtly lady: her language is crude and the reader can deduce that her physical appearance is a parody of that of the Provençal *domna*:

Plantóseme en el sendero
la sarnosa, ruin y fea
dijo: - "Por mi fe escudero!
aquí me estaré yo queda;
hasta que algo me prometas,
por mucho que tu arremetas
no pasarás la vereda."

. . . Cogióme fuerte la mano
y en su pescuezo la puso;
como algún zurrón liviano

llevóme la cuesta, ayuso . . . (*Libro*, 951; 957)

The language used in this composition and for the other *serranas* is of a popular vein and is similar to Montoro's parodic compositions (see chapter three). Juan Ruiz is evidently playing with the traditional themes and language of courtly love. The *serrana* indeed inverts the traditional roles of men and women from the Provençal genre of the *pastorela*. The *serrana* de Malangosto [note the play on words "mal gusto" (bad taste) and "Malangosto"] behaves in a masculine manner. The archpriest is overpowered by her as he mentions at the end of the composition: "Tuve que hacer cuanto quiso."

One of the main themes of the *Libro de Buen Amor* is the nature of language and the treachery involved in courtly love language practices (exemplified here in the Doña Endrina episode) and the treacherous nature of language in general. The Archpriest illustrates, throughout his work his own formulations according to which "words serve intentions" and not the opposite, a concept that is expressed in the example of the encounter between the Greek and the Roman which opens the *Libro*:

La burla que escuchares no la tengas por vil,
la idea de este libro entiéndela, sutil;
pues del bien y del mal, ni un poeta entre mil
hallarás que habla sepa con decoro gentil.

. . . Son, las de Buen Amor, razones encubiertas;
medita donde hallares señal y lección ciertas,
si la razón entiendes y la intención aciertas,
donde ahora maldades, quizá consejo adviertas. (65; 68)

The treacherous nature of language is further illustrated in the *Libro* by the proliferation of genres employed, a multiplicity that attests to the varieties of literary genres developed in fourteenth-century Spain but also, and most importantly for the purpose of the present study, that bears testimony to the ambiguity inherent in language. If we consider genres as different forms of discourse, Juan Ruiz then points to the fact that language is multifaceted and infinite in its meanings and implications. This proliferation of genres is also a characteristic of Rojas' *Tragicomedia* and of Montoro's poetic corpus. By multiplying speech genres in his *Libro*, the Archpriest illustrates M. M. Bakhtin's following view of speech genres and language:

All the diverse areas of human activity involve the use of language. Quite understandably, the nature and forms of this use are just as diverse as are the areas of human activity. This, of course, in no way disaffirms the national unity of language. Language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity. These utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style, that is, the selection of the lexical, phraseological, and grammatical resources of the language, but above all through their compositional structure. All three of these aspects -- thematic content, style, and compositional structure -- are inseparably linked to the whole of the utterance and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call speech genres.²⁷

We mentioned earlier that the Archpriest of Hita deplores the importance of money in his century mainly because its appearance redefined social relationships. In the Archpriest's view, money is treacherous since it confers nobility to people who do not possess any intrinsic value. In fact, in

the author's view "Donde hay mucho dinero allí está la nobleza." In the dialogue between the Greeks and the Romans, Juan Ruiz warns readers against language for the same reason: language is treacherous since its meaning is oftentimes disguised.

R. Shoaf analyzes the analogy between language and money in Dante and Chaucer and his comments can easily be applied to the Archpriest's vision of both money and language. According to the critic, money and language share many a characteristic: first, money is arbitrary since, as Shoaf notes, an object acquires the value arbitrarily attributed to it. Moreover, "as money reduces everything to arbitrary exchange values, so language reduces experience to meaning" (Shoaf, 12). In fact, to use a word is "always to commit an act of reduction" (12). In Juan Ruiz's view, money and language share the same attributes and the Archpriest's language practices reflect the many changes of his society; among those, the disappearance of the traditional class division and the introduction of money. Juan Ruiz's world is one of transition(s), where the traditional medieval parameters have vanished. For this very reason, language is a-centric, deceitful and in a state of perpetual change in the *Libro*, as we will further examine in chapter three.

This vision of language as a treacherous and deceitful entity is at the core of our three *converso* authors' works. The direct analogy between language and money is clearly expressed in Rojas' *Tragicomedia*, and more particularly illustrated in Celestina's "commerce" of language as we will take up in chapter five. As the main thesis of this work will show, Montoro's,

Cota's and Rojas' philosophy of language also reflect the changes and turmoil of their society.

Particularly relevant in the *Libro* is the continuous dialogue that the fictional protagonist maintains with the reader. The *Libro* invites readers or hearers fully to partake in the creative process, precisely because the author is aware of the multiplicity of meanings that his writing is generating. This involvement of the reader, also evident in Montoro's poetry, is clearly expressed by Fernando de Rojas in *Celestina*, where the author implies that the readers of the *Comedia* directly influenced the changes on display in the *Tragicomedia* (introduction and chapter five). The Archpriest of Hita further considers the reader as a friend; for example, consider the following verses:

Cuidado con la pereza! Recordad la frasecilla:
cuando te den la cabrilla, ven pronto con la soguilla;
conseguid lo que queréis, que no os tome por cestilla;
más vale vergüenza en rostro que en el corazón manzilla.
(*Libro*, 870)

In comparison with the extreme characterizations of women located in Andreas Capellanus, the Archpriest of Hita, Antón de Montoro and Fernando de Rojas, the poetry of Florencia Pinar represents a more realist approach to the vision of women and love. Florencia Pinar was an exception in a century dominated by male writers. Her poetry represents a subversion of the traditional images and concepts of the literature of courtly love since the feelings expressed are sensible and very concrete. About her verses, J. T. Snow notes,

the female figure had been undergoing, since the time when Provençal poetry and its idealization of the *domma* swept

through most of Europe in the twelfth century, important changes in Spain. Caught up in a trend which gradually lavished more attention on the male lover's analysis of the pains love had inflicted on him since he became subject to his lady's whim, the image of the woman as an autonomous individual tended to lose its sharper outlines. She was -- it is true -- still the inspiration of the poem and very much present in the formulas of the later love lyric, but it is also true that by and large she is rarely seen close up, rarely given physical dimensions and as a result she infrequently emerges as more than a mere abstraction.²⁸

Not only does Florencia Pinar give a more concrete image of the female, she focuses squarely on her feelings. She destabilizes the idealized nature of courtly love literature as well as its hyperbolic language. Her poem "Otra canción de la misma señora a unas perdizes que le embiaron bivas" draws a parallel between the poetic "I" and the partridges. The poem reads as follows:

Destas aves su nación
es cantar con alegría,
y de vellas en prisión

siento yo grave pasión
sin sentir nadie la mía.

Ellas lloran, que se vieron
sin temor de ser cativas.
y a quien eran más esquivas,
esos mismos las prendieron,
Sus nombres mi vida son.
que va perdiendo alegría,
y de vellas en prisión
siento yo grave pasión,
sin sentir nadie la mía.²⁹

Alan Deyermond, commenting upon this composition, notes,

[I]t seems to me that the full meaning of the poem escapes modern readers who are unfamiliar with the medieval bestiary, a moralized account of the origins and habits of real and

mythical beasts. I have found, in the course of another study, ample evidence that medieval Spanish authors and their public were thoroughly familiar with at least some parts of the bestiary . . . If we turn to the appropriate section, we find it said of partridges: Frequent intercourse tires them out. The males fight each other for their mate, and it is believed that the conquered male submits to venery like a female. Desire torments the females so much that even if a wind blows toward them from the males they become pregnant by the smell. (*Spain's First Women*, 47)

Undoubtedly, Pinar shows here that love -- in its courtly literary manifestation -- is but a re-presentation. These verses unveil the carnal nature of love. The partridges become a metaphor for the speaker's sexual desires. They are comparable, in their textual function, to Calisto's falcon which has also been identified as a simulacrum of *Celestina's* parodic lover's base sexual desires.

The language used in this particular composition is direct and deprived of affectation. The main metaphor is certainly that of the partridges. Pinar does not intend to veil her intentions since she openly asserts, "Sus nombres mi vida son," allowing the reader to identify the nature of her desires. The image of the prison is characteristic of Provençal poetry. Nevertheless, the love expressed is not *amor purus*.

The irony of the poem resides, I believe, in the fact that Pinar uses the image of a bird, characteristic of the traditional messengers in courtly lyric. Yet she subverts that image by declaring that women are entitled to express their sexual desires. The "white" birds of this composition are not synonymous with purity as they usually are in traditional love lyric. The

feelings or rather desires expressed in these verses seem to answer Melibea's request in Act IX of the *Tragicomedia*:

¡O género femenino, encogido y frágil! ¿por qué no fue también a las hembras concedido poder descubrir su congoxoso y ardiente amor, como a los varones? Que ni Calisto biviera quexoso ni yo penada! (TC, 239)

The image of the woman presented in Pinar's verses is far from being fossilized. It is real. Not unlike Melibea, Florencia's poetic speaker represents in the work of art a realistic expression of female feelings and desires.

In another composition, *Canción de Florencia Pinar*, the poetic speaker identifies love with a "gusano," a worm, which Alan Deyermond identifies as a phallic symbol:

El amor ha tales mañas
que quien no se guarda dellas,
si se l'entra en las entrañas,
no puede salir sin ellas.

El amor es un gusano
bien mirada su figura;
es un cáncer de natura,
que come todo lo sano.
Por sus burlas, por sus sañas,
d'él se dan tales querellas
que si entra en las entrañas
no puede salir sin ellas. (*Spain's First Women*, 48)

Deyermond also observes that the word 'gusano' can sometimes indirectly refer to a snake and that

The repeated statement that love, once lodged in his victim's entrails, can leave only by tearing them out seems to be an allusion to the supposed reproductive habits of the viper; the bestiary tells us that when the young are ready to be born, they break out through their mother's side, killing her. (49)

As in the first poem cited, Pinar here uses a traditional image of the courtly love lyric, i.e., love as a synonym of death. Nevertheless, she clearly insists on the sexual nature of love as opposed to the idealized vision of that feeling as it is described in the Midi tradition and in most of the male-authored fifteenth-century Castilian courtly poems. One cannot help but draw a parallel between this specific poetic speaker's words and Melibea's in the *Tragicomedia* when she declares to Celestina that "Madre mía, que me comen este corazón serpientes dentro de mi cuerpo," thus expressing her desire to be Calisto's lover. Pinar's and Rojas' objectives are very similar in their common endeavor to unmask the true nature of the desire experienced by their protagonists. In the process, they inevitably parody the hyperbolic and idealized nature of courtly love. The female poetic speakers as well as Melibea offer the same characteristics as those of the *trobairitz*, who earlier had openly expressed their own feelings and thus subverted the stylized literary school of the male Midi poets.

As this chapter has tried to illustrate, the philosophy of love and the vision of women found in Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas' works was largely influenced by the literary trends of their times but are also indebted to earlier literary manifestations: namely Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore* and Archpriest of Hita's *Libro de Buen Amor*. Not unlike the authors of the *De Amore* and the *Libro*, our three *converso* writers' works oscillate between an idealization of women and their vilified portrayal, between courtly love and misogyny, the two main, yet

contradictory, literary movements present in fifteenth-century Spanish literature.

As the coming chapters will further show, the linguistic practices found in our three writers are influenced even more by their Jewish background. In fact, the socio-political circumstances of fourteenth and fifteenth century Spain tended to marginalize *conversos*. Writing became for these authors the means by which they compensated for their political marginalization and arbitrary social status. To cite Jacques Derrida's own formulations, writing became for Montoro, Cota and Rojas "l'angoisse de la ruah hebraique."³⁰

These three *converso* authors decided to parody the literary school of courtly love because their aim was to prove that it was a mere form of escapism for the obsolescent noble class. The objective of their parody was therefore political. Furthermore and more importantly, the hyperbolic nature of courtly love allowed these authors to reflect upon the nature of language itself which by nature is malleable and treacherous. Finally, by destabilizing language and by proving that it is highly arbitrary and ever-shifting these three authors make a strong metaphorical reference to their own marginalized status; in fact, not unlike language, *conversos* in fifteenth-century Spain were irremediably condemned to reinvent themselves.

Notes

Chapter two

¹ Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) 407. Will be referred to as *A History*.

² Joseph F. O' Callaghan explains about the Western Schism that

After a residence at Avignon for seventy years, the papacy was restored in Rome, but soon after the death of Pope Gregory XI in 1378 a grave crisis occurred. The new pontiff, Urban VI, proved to be so overbearing and tactless that the cardinals, before the summer was over, abandoned him, declaring his election null and void because of the pressures put upon them by the Roman mob. Branding him a usurper, they then elected another pope who called himself Clement VII and eventually established himself in Avignon. Thus the unity of Christendom was rent for forty years. (*A History*, 529)

³ Roger Boase, *The Troubadour Revival: a study of social change and traditionalism in late medieval Spain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978) 77. Will be referred to as *Troubadour Revival*.

⁴ María Brey Mariño, ed., *Libro de Buen Amor*, by Juan Ruiz, Archprioste de Hita (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1989) 506; 508; 509; 510. Stanza numbers will be used to quote from the *Libro de Buen Amor* that will be referred to as *Libro*.

⁵ R. A. Shoaf, *Dante. Chaucer and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images, and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* (Norman: Pilgrim Books, 1983) 8. This study focuses primarily on the similarities between money and language which are of modern interest since Saussure and Derrida but are also "seriously medieval" (9). Shoaf studies the identification between the two concepts in Dante's *Commedia* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and presents a comparative study of the treatment of money and language in both works. In Shoaf's view, language communication is presented as commerce in the *Commedia* and the *Canterbury Tales*. Will be referred to as *Shoaf*.

⁶ Antón de Montoro, *Poesía completa*, ed. Marithelma Costa (Madrid: Moidhisa, 1990) X-XIV. Will be referred to as *Costa*. Poem numbers will be used to quote the poet Montoro.

⁷ In his article "Towards Expulsion: 1391-1492" (in *Spain and the Jews*, ed. Elie Kedourie, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992), Eleazar Gutwirth cites several famous Jews in fourteenth and fifteenth century Spain; among them

was Abraham Seneor, an influential income collector who accumulated a fortune of a million *maravedis*. Gutwirth notes that Seneor

had an instinct for political survival, [had] foresight in choosing the right alignments and maintaining them, and also [made] daily efforts on behalf of the implementation of increasingly centralized policies of collecting revenue. (68)

Other examples of influential Jews are given by Angus Mackay in his article "The Jews in Spain during the Middle Ages" (in *Spain and the Jews*. . .) who mentions Don Solomon ibn Zadok in the thirteenth century, the chief collector of taxes for Alfonso X of Castile (1252-84). The critic also analyzes the case of the great Jewish financier Samuel Halevi who acted as the chief treasurer of Peter I of Castile (1350-1369) (35). Mackay adds that

Jewish financiers and tax collectors were to be found in the service not only of the noble houses of Spain but of individual archbishops and bishops, as well as religious institutions, such as cathedral chapters. (35)

⁸ Louise Mirrer, *Women, Jews, and Muslims in the Texts of Reconquest Castile* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996) 72. Will be referred to as *Women, Jews*.

⁹ O' Callaghan explains that Fernando de Martinez was

archdeacon of Ecija and had been admonished by the king as early as 1378 to curb his tongue . . . He now took advantage of the minority of the king [Juan I of Castile] and the rivalry among the king's councilors to abandon all restraint in his harassment of the Jews. (537)

¹⁰ Henry Kamen insists on Fernando's determination to expel the Jews. Kamen cites Ferdinand's letter to the count of Aranda, which was sent the same day as the decree was promulgated:

The Holy Office of the Inquisition, seeing how some Christians are endangered by contact and communication with the Jews, has provided that the Jews be expelled from all our realms and territories, and has persuaded us to give our support and agreement to this, which we now do, because of our debts and obligations to the said Holy Office; and we do so despite the great harm to ourselves, seeking and preferring the salvation of souls above our own profit and that of individuals.

In Henry Kamen, "The Expulsion: Purpose and Consequence," in *Spain and the Jews*, ed. Elie Kedourie, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992) 75.

¹¹ B. Netanyahu asserts that

the *marranos* (converts) were discriminated against, were eliminated from positions of honor and income, were refused intermarriage with Old Christians, and were subject to a variety of other abuses, solely on account of their particular race (which allegedly had a "pollutive" quality) and regardless of their position on religious questions (for religiously they may have been good Christians) . . .

In "The Racial attack on the conversos: Américo Castro's View of its Origin," *Toward the Inquisition: Essays on Jewish and Converso history in late Medieval Spain*, ed. B. Netanyahu (Cornell: UCP, 1997) 1.

In this article, Netanyahu, de-constructs Américo Castro's argument according to which the cause of the racial attacks against the converts did not "lay with the Spaniards, or rather with those Spaniards who promoted that idea, but with the forefathers of the Marranos -- i.e., the Jews -- as well as with the Marranos themselves" (1). In fact, according to Castro "the Jews "carried into Spanish society, as soon as they entered it through their conversion, the "Semitic system of purity of lineage" (2). Castro supports his arguments with the biblical evidence (the idea of the chosen people was integrally bound up with the ideas of a "closed caste;" Castro also insists on the fact that "from ancient times onward, the Jews pursued the policy of purity by prohibiting intermarriage." Castro asserts that the Old Christians were not preoccupied by this policy. Finally, Castro says, that "the purity of blood was the answer of a society animated by anti-Jewish fury to the racial hermeticism of the Jews." (37). Netanyahu refutes Castro's arguments by citing from Spanish Jewish literary sources and explains that the prohibition of intermarriage among the Jews was not of racial but of a religious nature (38).

¹² Marqués de Santillana, *Poesías completas II: Poemas morales, políticos y religiosos. El proemio e carta.* ed. Manuel Durán (Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1980) XII; XXIII. Will be referred to as *Poesías Completas*.

¹³ Marithelma Costa explains that Román was "comendador no se sabe en cuál de las órdenes militares, era criado del duque de Alba, D. Garci Alvarez de Toledo, . . ." The critic also indicates that although the epigraph is written to Antón de Montoro, the person that the poem was destined for was Juan de Valladolid, with whom Montoro maintained a violent and bitter poetic correspondance. Although this poem was not intended for Montoro, the piece is a clear testimony of the open acrimony against *conversos* of Montoro's times (63).

¹⁴ Caro Baroja, *Los judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea* (Madrid: Istmo, 1961) 276-277.

¹⁵ Stephen Gilman, *La España de Fernando de Rojas* (Madrid: Taurus, 1978) 175. Will be referred to as *La España*.

¹⁶ Pierre Le Gentil, *La poésie lyrique espagnole et portugaise a la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Slatkine, 1981) 116. Will be referred to as *La Poésie Lyrique*.

¹⁷ Alan Deyermond, *Historia de la literatura española I: La Edad Media* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1989) 328. Will be referred to as *Historia*.

¹⁸ The *Cancionero de Baena* was the first anthology of Castilian poets and was compiled around 1445. Ángel del Río notes that it represents a transition in fifteenth century Spanish poetry: "Representa el período de transición de la lírica gallego-portuguesa de origen trovadoresco, recogida en cancioneros más antiguos y la escuela castellana." In Ángel del Río, *Antología general de la literatura española. Vol 1: Desde los orígenes hasta 1700* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960) 102.

Deyermond further comments that: "El galaico-portugués fue aceptado como la lengua apropiada para la lírica culta no sólo en aquellas áreas en donde se hablaba corrientemente, sino mucho más allá de ellas, hecho que atestiguará el marqués de Santillana en pleno siglo XV." On the poetry found in the *cancioneros*, Deyermond observes that

Contienen los cancioneros dos tipos principales de poemas: la canción lírica (breve, concebida originariamente para el canto, y, por lo general, de tema amoroso, aunque se dan también canciones religiosas y panegíricas) y el decir de índole doctrinal panegírica, narrativa o satírica (considerablemente más amplio, cuyo objetivo era la lectura o la recitación). Se sirve la canción de versos de ocho sílabas . . . de rima regular y consonante, que nos ofrecen grande flexibilidad en su esquema acentual. . . La canción emplea un solo tipo de versos casi sin excepción; el decir, en cambio, hace uso del octosílabo o bien del arte mayor, en versos de doce sílabas partidos por una fuerte cesura y dotados de dos intensos ictus en cada hemistiquio.

In Alan Deyermond, *Historia de la literatura española I: La Edad Media* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1989) 235; 314.

¹⁹ Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Antología de Poetas líricos castellanos 3 vols.* ed. Enrique Sánchez Reyes (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1944) 134. Will be referred to as *Antología de Poetas*.

- ²⁰ Diego de San Pedro, *Cárcel de Amor*, ed. Keith Whinnom (Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1985) 84. Will be referred to as *Cárcel*.
- ²¹ June Hall Martín studies three parodic lovers in her critical work *Love's fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the parody of the courtly lover* (London: Tamesis, 1972). Also consulted on this subject are Dorothy Severin in her article "La parodía del amor cortés en la Celestina," *Edad de Oro* (1984): 275-79. Alan Deyermond also addresses this issue in his article "The Text-book Mishandled: Andreas Capellanus and the Opening Scene of la Celestina," *Neophilologus* 45 (1961): 218-21. For more details on these critical works, consult chapter five.
- ²² Fernando de Rojas, *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, ed. Dorothy Severin (Madrid: Cátedra, 1988) 336. Will be referred to as TC.
- ²³ Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*. ed and trans. John Jay Parry (New York: Columbia UP, 1960). p. number
- ²⁴ Alfonso Martínez de Talavera, *Arcipreste de Talavera o Corbacho*, ed. Michael Gerli (Madrid: Catédra, 1987) 38. Will be referred to as *Corbacho*.
- ²⁵ María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, "Nuevas notas para el Libro de Buen Amor" in *Estudios de Literatura Española y Comparada* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1966) 55.
- ²⁶ María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, *Two Spanish Masterpieces: The Book of Good Love and the Celestina* (Urbana: U Illinois P, 1961) 41.
- ²⁷ M. M. Bakhtin, "The Problems of Speech Genres" in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1994) 60.
- ²⁸ Joseph T. Snow, "The Spanish Love Poet: Florencia Pinar" in *Medieval Women Writers*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1984) 322.
- ²⁹ Quoted by Alan Deyermond from *Cancionero general recopilado por Hernando del Castillo* (Valencia, facsimile ed. by Antonio Rodríguez-Moñino (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1958), folio cxxv in "Spain's First Women Writers" in *Women in Hispanic Literature: Icons and Fallen Idols*, ed. Beth Miller (Berkeley: U California P, 1983) 46. Will be referred to as *Spain's First Women*.
- ³⁰ Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la difference* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967) 19. Derrida further explains in this chapter, "Force et signification," that

l'écriture est l'angoisse éprouvée du côté de Jeremie soumis a la dictée de Dieu (Prends un livre et tu y eciras toutes les paroles que je t'ai dites.") ou de Baruc transcrivant la dictée de Jeremie, etc (Jeremie 36-2, 4; 19).

and further comments that: "l'écriture, c'est le moment où il faut décider si nous graverons ce que nous entendons. Et si graver sauve ou perd la parole." In this particular instance Derrida reiterates the impossibility of language to translate reality and to save words "sauver la parole."

Chapter three: Games, love and deceit: Treacherous language practices in Antón de Montoro, "El ropero"¹

Despite his humble and unpretentious origins, Antón de Montoro, known as *El Ropero*, is acknowledged by modern critics and his contemporaries to be among the most prominent poetic figures in fifteenth century Spanish *cancionero* poetry. According to Brian Dutton, due to his powerful irony and humor, Montoro's poetic skills are further magnified in a poem by his contemporary Alonso Velasco:²

Alonso de Velasco a Montoro

Como los *ricos tesoros*
puestos so la ruda tierra
non labrada, son perdidos,
y los *cantos* muy *sonoros*,
con que la serena atierra,
poco oídos.
así vuestro, muy *polido*
estilo de conversar,
todo entero
es en vos como perdido
por non querer dejar
de ser Ropero. (*Costa*, 66; emphasis added)³

Montoro is described by Velasco as a poetic genius since his verses are "ricos tesoros," his "estilo de conversar, muy polido" and his tone "sonoro." In fact, Montoro fully participates in the Spanish fifteenth-century poetic tradition characterized by its refined and elaborated style figures and its complementary satirical vein.

Velasco's elegy is highly ambiguous since it praises Montoro's poetic virtuosity, but clearly deplores the poet's humble origins with such

expressions as "la ruda tierra" or the adjective "perdido." Montoro's humble origins are also emphasized by Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo:

No pertenecía en verdad al número de aquellos conversos acaudalados que con su opulencia y granjerías excitaban la codicia de los cristianos viejos, disimulada con máscara de piedad. La condición social de Montoro era para aquellos tiempos de las más ínfimas y abatidas; su oficio, el de sastre o ropero, al cual no renunció ni aún después de sus éxitos poéticos, que no parecen haber contribuido mucho a mejorar su precaria existencia. Un menestral poeta era caso tan raro en la antigua literatura española, que no es de admirar que pululen las alusiones sobre este punto en los versos de los émulos de Montoro y aún de sus amigos.⁴

Velasco directly implies that Montoro "no quiere dejar de ser ropero." Why would such a talented poet who, according to Marithelma Costa, despite his occupation, had accumulated a large fortune, insist on being a *ropero*? the reader asks. Furthermore, Montoro was an educated man and owing to his poetic abilities was in contact with the most prestigious poetic and literary figures of his times. For example, Antón de Montoro was not only acquainted with the Marqués de Santillana but also maintained a poetic correspondence with this most prestigious of contemporary writers as the following composition attests:

. . . Ansí, varón que florece
en saber y valentía,
ante quien más prevalece,
mill vegadas me contece
con vuestra gran señoría . . . (Costa, 8)

It is true that poetry was the preserve of the aristocracy in fifteenth-century Spain, but its practice was by no means limited to the higher levels of society or denied to people of more humble origins. As Santillana's *Carta a*

Prohemio attests, poetry was an exercise meant to show and develop one's intelligence: poetry was an alternate form of education and resulted in the elevation of one's spirit: "Commo es cierto que la poesia sea un zelo celeste, una affección divina, un insaciable cibo del ánimo."⁵ Montoro's verses clearly exemplify such a vision of poetry. Poetry was also the means by which one could become part of the higher reaches of society and, as mentioned, Montoro was acquainted with the major literary figures of the times, most of whom were members of the nobility. Therefore, despite his privileged position in the literary circles of fifteenth century Castile, Montoro, as Velasco implies, is determined to proclaim his modest social origins.

What comes first to mind is that by insisting on his humble origins, the *Ropero* wants to prove that human worth is to be found in the person's intrinsic value and not only in the position he/she occupies in society. In fact, Montoro consistently opposes appearances and reality throughout his poetic corpus, as for example, in the following verses:

Montoro contra si mismo porque compró un jubón de seda y se lo vistió.

Es el triste de Montoro,
cuando más lleno de risa,
como el esclavo del moro . . . (*Costa, 72*)

Montoro is here "triste" (sad but also unfortunate) although he appears "lleno de risa" (full of laughter). Likewise, Montoro is a *ropero* and comes from a lower social class but his intrinsic value is that of a talented and respected poet. Therefore, the poet implies that one should not judge according to appearances. Such a warning is particularly relevant in a century

characterized by political intrigues, a taste for artifice and literary games.

Montoro makes the reader reflect on the concept of appearances. His text “plays” with reality (triste) and artifice (lleno de risa). It is true that Montoro was accepted by contemporaries who recognized his poetic talent; but was this acceptance as deep as it seemed or was it mere show? Stephen Gilman makes the following comment on Fernando de Rojas' society that could be equally applied to Montoro's:

La sociedad estancada en la que Rojas vivía prestaba muchísima importancia al rango o categoría, es decir, la imagen social fija de cada individuo para tratarle de acuerdo con una norma predeterminada. La precedencia y el protocolo eran asuntos de cotidiana discusión.⁶

In order to provoke the attention of his reader, Antón de Montoro plays with the opposition between reality and artifice. This technique, used throughout his poetic corpus, constitutes one of his literary games:

Literary texts may contain all kinds of wordplay (or even, in Nabokov's term, mirrorplay), all of which need to be, at some level, explicated. In what is, perhaps, the widest sense of all, “any playful, self conscious and extended means by which an author stimulates his reader to deduce or to speculate, by which he encourages him to see a relationship between different parts of the text, or between the text and something extraneous to it may be called a literary game.”⁷

By openly insisting on his origins and by being ironic about them on many occasions, Montoro anticipates potential attacks and mockery on the part of his contemporaries. More importantly, he clearly espouses the idea that one should be judged according to intrinsic human value. Finally, Montoro remains a *ropero* in words of Velasco, because his lower social status allows him to cast a cold critical eye on his society. The character of *el ropero*

allows Antón de Montoro to maintain a critical distance from the world he frequents as a poet -- that of the active literary and court circles. Literature becomes, for Montoro, the means by which he faces his particular circumstances; those of a *converso* poet, of humble origins. Stephen Gilman notes that "Kenneth Burke pretende que la relación entre el autor y personaje es comparable a la de los sentimientos de un bailarín con las figuras de su baile."⁸ Montoro's poetic corpus fulfills that particular function.

El ropero not only insists on his humble social status; he also clearly reclaims his *converso* origins. Marithelma Costa notes that Montoro lived in circles that

o defendían a los conversos, o no establecían una distinción entre cristianos nuevos y viejos. Como ejemplos del primer caso se pueden citar a los Fernández de Córdoba . . . el segundo caso, está representado por los círculos literarios del Marqués de Santillana y del arzobispo de Toledo, Alfonso Carrillo." (Costa, XII)

As noted in chapter two, the situation of the *conversos* in fifteenth-century Spain was highly ambiguous. In Gilman's words, the *conversos* were at the center, since many of them occupied positions of prestige in the court but also at the margin since they were oftentimes accused of practicing their old religion. This anti-Semitism mainly based on envy on the part of many old Christians is expressed by Montoro in a poem dedicated to Queen Isabel (the catholic):

*A la Reina Doña Ysabel*⁹

Adorando a Dios y Hombre
por muy alto Señor mio,
por do mi culpa se escombe,

no pude perder el nombre
de viejo puto, judío. (98)¹⁰

Montoro's poetic persona in this particular piece clearly implies that despite his devotion to the dominant religion -- that of Christianity -- (adorando a Dios y Hombre) he is perceived as a Jew. In this specific composition, not unlike in many others, the poetic "I" openly insults his own self in a derogatory manner using the adjectives "viejo" and "puto." This approach to self characterization is typical of much of Montoro's poetic production and of *converso* writers. In fact, by presenting themselves according to how they are viewed by old Christians ("putos, judios"), the *conversos* strive to become part of the dominant group. The position of a *converso* in fifteenth-century Castile is indeed not one to be envied. By criticizing themselves, the *conversos* exorcise their own fears and dull the barbs of others' critical attacks.

In this piece dedicated to the Queen of Castile, Montoro once again, refers to an external vision of reality. In fact, people give the poetic persona the name of *judío*. The act of naming is highly arbitrary and by using this concept, Montoro insists on the arbitrariness of opinions in his society. The poetic "I" assigns to himself the name of a *puto judío*; yet his devotion to the dominant faith is, according to the avowal of the poem, sincere. By contrasting appearances and reality, Montoro points to the arbitrariness not only of opinions in his society but also of language. The words *judío* and *puto* obviously violate the vision that the poet has of himself. They distort

reality and create a fictitious vision of Antón de Montoro, the newly converted Jew.

The tone of this composition is pessimistic since the poetic "I" finds no solution for the *converso* dilemma. Despite their desire to assimilate, *conversos* in fifteenth century Spain seem destined to bear the stigma of disgrace. Montoro might not be referring directly to his own situation among Old Christians and his poetic corpus is by no means to be interpreted as a simple biographic reflection of his own existence as a *converso*; yet, the use of the poetic "I" gives immediacy to the issue of anti-Semitism in fifteenth-century Castile. In the words of Carlos Bousoño,

La relación entre poema y vida se parece a la relación que media entre dos líneas paralelas, que sin tocarse nunca, cada una de ellas sigue las evoluciones de la otra en una mimesis perfecta. Tómese esta comparación de todos modos con cierta reserva, porque el arte no es una reproducción exacta de la vida al modo de una curva con respecto a su paralela, sino que es su contemplación sintética, algo que, para entendernos, llamaríamos estilización, si esta palabra no trajese consigo la posibilidad de otra suerte de equívoco, el equívoco irrealista, acaso más grave que el primero.¹¹

As mentioned earlier, Montoro seemed to have enjoyed a better situation than other *conversos*, precisely owing to his literary talent.¹² Still, by means of fictional situations, the poet does give voice to the general religious malaise of his times.

The expression "ruda tierra" used by Velasco to describe Montoro's social origins could also metaphorically refer to *El Ropero's* religious background. Being of Jewish origin was definitely a handicap in fifteenth century Spain. Moreover, the allusion to Montoro's Jewish origins could

very well be reinforced by the last verse of Velasco's poem. The office of *ropero* was traditionally associated with Jews and therefore the expression ("no querer dejar de ser ropero") could imply that Montoro, to his disadvantage, never ceased to allude to his Jewish origins and in some occasions, to be a practising Jew. Nevertheless, what Alonso de Velasco sees as a clear disadvantage (i.e. "no querer de ser ropero") which as we have explained, can metaphorically be interpreted as "non querer dejár de ser humilde y converso" is an advantage for Montoro. By insisting on his social and religious background, Montoro manages to distance himself and look at his own self as though an outsider. This attitude conveys a search for identity; it also allows him to observe his society from the outside. In Gilman's words,

Pero en su caminar hacia el interior, los conversos individuales . . . encontraron con frecuencia un mirador desde donde poder observar hacia fuera. El estar indeleblemente marcado por la sociedad y el sentirse uno mismo axiologicamente huérfano, rechazado por Dios y por la historia, le hacía al individuo volverse sobre sí mismo, pero al mismo tiempo le procuraba una perspectiva incomparable para ver las cosas como son. (*La España* . 206)

This attitude, which led to a perpetual search for one's identity, was dangerous since, in most instances, the *conversos* of fifteenth-century Spain did not have a definite place in their society. Such is the case of Antón de Montoro. The difficulty of the task explains why many *conversos* chose to hide their religious origins. An example is the *converso* Rodrigo Cota to whom Montoro dedicated the following verses (for Cota, see ch. 4):

*Del mismo a una que hizo Rodrigo Cota de Maguaque*¹³

Señor, do virtud acata,
sed persona conocida;
quien de su sangre trata,

quien a sí mismo se mata:
¿A quién podrá dar la vida? (Costa, 101)

Montoro clearly implies that Rodrigo Cota denied his origins; this, in Montoro's view, is equivalent to killing oneself. The fact that so many people should hide their former religious beliefs inevitably shows that the situation of the *conversos* was precarious and unstable. Montoro, despite his own situation, is highly aware of the precariousness of his religious caste. In fact, *el ropero* lived in times when tensions between the Jews and the Christians were particularly acute. Being born at the beginning of the fifteenth century he lived through the pogroms of 1449 and witnessed the conflicts that led to the expulsion of the *conversos* from Cordoba in 1473. His poem "Montoro a Don Alonso de Aguilar cuando la destrucción de los conversos de Cordoba" was inspired by this historical episode. As Marithelma Costa observes, the poetic voice in this poem "recurre de nuevo a la *captatio benevolentiae* y acepta la culpa del grupo, sin identificarse con él."

(23)

Buen caballero leal,
quien los defectos olvida,
de sangre toda real;
¿qué os ha parecido el mal
desta gente convertida?
Dino de mill señoríos,
de corazón y de manos;
muy más por sus desvaríos
les valiera ser judíos
que cristianos. (Costa, IX)

We have seen so far, how the poet Antón de Montoro, called *el ropero*, consistently alludes to his social and religious origins, and how despite the fact that he was a *ropero* and a *converso*, he was respected for his literary talents. We have also seen how Montoro strives to distance himself from his own self in order to gain a more objective vision of the reality surrounding him. Montoro offers an ironic vision of himself (when he calls himself a *judío puto*) in order to protect himself. In this respect, Adena Rosmarin notes,

. . . the poem protects itself from our irony by making itself ironic, from our superior awareness by making itself self-aware, from the charge of limitation by implicitly deflecting limitless discounting . . . By “looping” back on itself, by making its self-contradictory or tropological nature explicit, writing both protects itself against extramural attack and creates the illusion of fullness or self-completion.¹⁴

This chapter will help show that Montoro's poetic corpus attests to a search for identity on the part of the poet precisely due to the ambiguity of the *conversos'* status -- both political and psychological -- in fifteenth-century Castile. By means of irony and humor together with the use of different poetic personae, the poet manages to distance himself from his own literary self. These techniques, typical of the marginalized in general and of *conversos* in particular, enable Montoro to observe his society as well as himself from the outside and therefore to try to exorcise his own feelings of marginalization.

The means by which Montoro uses to energize his search for language is language itself. The ambiguity of Montoro's self is reflected in his language

practices which are undoubtedly characteristic of most of fifteenth-century *cancionero* poetry but which, in Montoro's case, are an open expression of his marginalized self as well as an open critique of his society.

Montoro, not unlike other fifteenth century authors, initially subverts the philosophy and language of courtly love in some of his compositions. In the words of Marithelma Costa,

El Ropero participa así de la concentración del concepto y culto a la dama típicos de la canción cortesana de la segunda mitad del siglo XV. Sin embargo, en sus poemas de amor cortés se dedica también a subvertir paródicamente el género . . . El Ropero se apropia del modelo en algunos de sus poemas de amor cortés, pero lo invierte irónicamente. La crisis del mundo feudal y su procedencia marginal le proporcionan la distancia necesaria para parodiar la idealización de la dama, elemento canónico del género. (XXVI; XXVII)

In so doing, he provokes laughter on the part of the reader and successfully ridicules the popular literary trend that ended up being a mere form of escapism for the Castilian fifteenth-century noble class.¹⁵ More importantly, Montoro dissects language and shows that it is intrinsically unstable, malleable and by nature incomplete. Montoro therefore plays with language and literary concepts by creating neologisms and expanding meanings of words. His linguistic task is comparable to that of some of the troubadours on the one hand and to that of the Archpriest of Hita on the other (see chapter one). Montoro's search for identity ends up in a void since his own self seems to multiply indefinitely, not unlike his attitude toward language. The reader is left with a contradictory and incomplete image of Montoro/el *Ropero*. In fact, the means of the search is highly arbitrary since

it is effected through language, itself, an incomplete or imperfect means of communication.

Montoro uses humor and irony throughout his poetic corpus when dealing with the issue of his Judaism. Caro Baroja explains that the *conversos* had two main ways of overcoming anti-Semitism:

El humorismo es una forma de enfocar la existencia que conviene al converso, porque el humorista se burla de los demás, sí, pero empieza o es el primer objeto de risa. El judío o el converso son zaheridos por un grupo social grande muy pagado de sí, el de los cristianos viejos; una forma de proceder es adherirse a las burlas, otra es combatirlas.¹⁵

Montoro "se adhiere a las burlas" when he qualifies himself as "un viejo, puto, judío" in the poem previously cited. By using such an expression, the poet expresses how others view him since Marithelma Costa reminds us that the word "puto" was the adjective used by old Christians to talk about Jewish people: "puto," "Sodomita," uno de los vituperios que se aplicaba a los judíos" (Costa, 203).¹⁶ By distancing himself from his own self Montoro becomes able to be both a dweller in, and a pitiless judge of, his own selfhood.

In order to become part of the group that denigrates Jews and *conversos*, Montoro distances himself as in the following verses from the previously cited composition *A la Reina Donna Ysabel*. Oh Ropero, amargo, triste/que no sientes tu dolor (202). The poet uses the personal pronoun "tú" to make an external witness to his own self. In *Montoro contra si mismo* porque compró un jubón de seda y se lo vistió, el Ropero o Antón describes Montoro: "Es el triste de Montoro . . ." by using the personal pronoun "él". In

both compositions, Montoro observes el *Ropero* from afar. As well, it permits him to explore the different facets of his own conflicted self.

Montoro goes a step further in distancing himself from himself in another poem, "Otra del Ropero a su caballo porque Don Alonso Daguiar le mandó trigo para él y cebada para el caballo y el dicho ropero suplicóle que gelo mandase dar en trigo todo y el caballo quejándose del así." This highly ironic composition is a dialogue between Montoro and his horse and the latter describes the poet in the fifth stanza of the composition

. . . Aquel de pobres abrigo,
de los más lindos que vi,
de los mozos enemigo,
para vos, libró buen trigo
y cebada para mí.
Y vos, malvado cohen
judío, zafío, logrero,
por tenerme en rehén,
y que nunca oviese bien
dejistes que no lo quiero. (*Costa*, 151)

In this particular composition dealing with a trivial matter, Montoro chooses his horse as an alter-ego or poetic persona. Antón does not criticize Montoro or Montoro is not critical of *el Ropero* as observed in the poems cited earlier. Antón de Montoro is criticized and judged by his horse. It is important to note that the vocabulary used by the horse is almost identical to that used by Montoro in the poem *A la reina Isabel*. Montoro is a "judío, zafío and logrero" (*Costa*, 339). The last adjective clearly refers to the fact that Jewish and *conversos* were seen by the Old Christians as treacherous and interested only in money. On the word *cohen* also used to qualify *el ropero*

in this poem, Marithelma Costa notes that it means “Adivino,” “Alcahuete,” and comes from “hebr. Kohen’sacerdote” (339).

The first irony of this poem resides in the choice of a horse as a poetic speaker. The second irony consists in putting words of religious discrimination in the mouth of an animal. By using an animal as the mouthpiece for religious enmity, *el Ropero* reduces his religious enemies to the level of animals and thus annuls the full effect of their criticism. Who indeed would take an animal's words seriously? The use of a poetic persona allows the poet to justify himself once more and to openly declare his Jewish ancestry, yet with an attitude of humility. The use of a horse is a ludic device that enables Montoro to engage in a dialogue within himself. Irony allows the poet to overcome his personal dilemma of being a *converso* since as A. Rosmarin reminds us “irony is self-polemy overcome . . . [the author] has made his text ironical, so it cannot be accused of being callow, glib, sentimental, or self-ignorant . . . [irony allows for] a reduction of passion into ‘a kind of detachment and objectivity’” (122). The critic further explains that “the romantic ironist has it, which is to say himself, both ways; at once carried away and in control of his own transport. He is a master of conscious illusion” (122). Montoro answers to his horse in the following fashion:

Respuesta del Ropero a su caballo

Pues viérades mis respetos,
teniéndovos buen consejo.
como hacen los discretos,
que tengo hijos y nietos
y padre pobre muy viejo,
y madre doña Jamila,

y hija moza, y hermana
que nunca entraron en pila,
do va cuanto Marta hila
y cuando Pedro devana. (*Costa*, 151)

Montoro clearly reasserts his Jewish origins by saying that his family was never baptized, an idea implicit in the verse, "que nunca entraron en nombre de pila." In this stanza, Montoro insists on the fact that he is, first of all, a human being; he has sons and grandsons, a mother etc. At the end of the poem, Montoro is ironically forgiven by his horse, although the words of the latter are so ambiguous that they end up annulling the effect of the forgiveness:

Fin

Agora, señor Antón,
porque me temporizastes,
yo vos otorgo perdón,
por honra de la Pasión
daquel que crucificaste. (*Costa*, 151)

The two last verses reiterate the charge of responsibility of the Jews in the death of Jesus, a charge often made by the old Christians against the Jews and *conversos*.¹⁷ Montoro does not come out victorious in this dialogue between self and self since the poem ends with an accusation that cannot be denied. Montoro is seen by himself as well as by the rest of society as "un puto judio, un judio zafio y logrero."

In poems so far cited and analyzed, Montoro "se adhiere a las burlas," -- an attitude frequently assumed by *conversos*, as Caro Baroja explains or in the case of the last poem --, and openly declares his *converso* origins. In other instances, Montoro openly defends the Jews and attacks the Old Christians,

thus illustrating the second attitude typical of the *conversos* as described by Caro Baroja. The poem "Montoro a una mujer que lo llamó judío" is an example of such an attack against old Christians:

Muy discreta, buena y bella
sobre cuantas cubren tocas,
guardaréis la cuarentena
pero no con amas bocas;

porque, llenas de valía,
cristiana, llena de fee,
que conserve Dios su honor,
vos ternéis carnicería
de ganado vivo en pie,
aunque pese al provisor.

Fin

Y si os dijere que es gula
por Dios, aunque no se coma,
vos diréis que tenéis bula
del perlado de Sodoma. (*Costa*, 10)

Not unlike others of Montoro's, this poem focuses on the opposition between appearances and reality. The Christian lady is discreet, good and beautiful and, apparently, a faithful Christian, since she is indeed "llena de fee." Nevertheless she indulges in sexual practices during Lent: "guardareis la cuarentena" but not with "amas bocas." The lady might respect Lent at a superficial level but does not abstain from sexual pleasures. This idea is further illustrated in the last stanza by the poet's words: "vos direis que teneis bula/del perlado de Sodoma." This lady is a Christian (the word *bula* clearly alludes to the Catholic religion) but she in reality belongs to the kingdom of Sodom -- synonymous with sexual indulgence. The irony of the poem resides in the association of religious and profane language. The words

"Dios," "cuarentena," "fee," "gula," and "bula" belong to a religious register.

The expressions "carniceria," "amas bocas," "ganado vivo," as well as

"Sodoma" depict the true sacrilegious nature of the Christian lady.

By implying that this lady's religion is a mere artifice, Montoro indirectly rehabilitates himself since one can easily believe that despite his Jewish appearance (his "cara de puto judío . . ."), he duly complies with the ordinances of the Christian Church. In fact, in his poem dedicated to the Queen, Montoro declares:

Los hinojos encorvados
y con muy gran devoción,
en los días señalados,
con gran devoción contados
y rezados
los nudos de la Pasión. (Costa, 98)

As Marithelma Costa reminds us, "rezar los nudos de la Pasión" was "una práctica devota muy difundida en la época en que se rememoraban las estaciones de la pasión de Cristo" (203). As he clearly expresses in his poem dedicated to Queen Isabel, Montoro strives to become a Christian but never loses the face of a Jew. Directly opposed to the poet's situation is that of the Christian lady who does not respect the dictates of the Church but is a member of the dominant group of Old Christians and therefore is not judged by her peers.

By offering such a contrast between his own attitude and that of the Christian lady, the poet unveils the artificial nature of his society and sheds light on the religious hypocrisy of some of the Old Christians. By questioning the validity of this lady's faith, Montoro indirectly implies that opinions,

because they are based on appearances, are arbitrary in fifteenth-century Castile. In fact, the poet -- although a convert -- might well be "más lleno de fee" than the Christian lady herself, despite the name of "puto judio" that he has been given arbitrarily .

Montoro directly attacks the Old Christians as in his poem dedicated to the Christian lady, but also ridicules his Jewish origins in other pieces such as in his poem dedicated to the Queen Isabel, or in the dialogue with his horse. The fact that the poet should hold such contradictory attitudes shows that he finds himself in a state of indeterminacy as to his own status, in a society dominated by Old Christians. His ironic approach to Judaism is an attempt on his part to become an integral part of his society. By using the language used by the Old Christians to describe the Jews, Montoro indirectly becomes part of the majority voice. Nevertheless, Montoro's Jewish origins are an integral part of his self and the necessity to reclaim them is inescapable. Gilman explains that there were three ways for the *conversos* to react when confronted with the ambiguity of their status:

Las tres clases de reacción de los conversos a la circunstancia social que acabamos de proponer: el rechazo violento, la retirada irónica y la aceptación parcial . . . (*La España* , 158)

The critic further comments that these reactions were not contradictory and differ

no sólo de individuo a individuo sino de un día a otro, de un año para otro dentro de un mismo individuo. (158)

These changes are explicit in Montoro's poetic corpus; the unevenness of his poetic "I" can be accounted for by the arbitrariness and instability of his

status. Montoro's attitude indeed changes from one poem to the other (i.e. from one day to the other in Gilman's words). The poem dedicated to the Christian lady represents on the part of Montoro "un rechazo violento" of his condition, since the poem possesses an infuriated voice. What Gilman calls "la retirada irónica" is illustrated in the dialogue between Montoro and his horse as well as in the other poems cited. Nevertheless these poems also evince "una aceptación parcial" since on the one hand the poetic "I" of these compositions clearly acknowledges the poet's Jewish origins but also laments the lack of acceptance on the part of the Old Christians ("nunca perdí mi cara de puto judío").

The ironic effect found in most of Montoro's poems is achieved through the use of different poetic personae or lyric masks that allow the poet to express the same problem from different angles; the poetic "I" becomes, successively, Antón, Montoro, *el Ropero* and his horse. Such multiple literary personae aim at giving a more complete view of Antón de Montoro, *el Ropero* as a whole; yet, paradoxically, it creates a notion of void since the reader is placed in front of a multitude of "I"s, each of which is incomplete. Carlos Bousoño defines the poetic "I" as thus: "El narrador poématico es un sueño del autor sin comillas, y el "autor" entrecomillado es un sueño del lector, aunque éste lo entienda siempre como real, entendimiento que forma parte esencial de su naturaleza" (*Teoría*, 30). Rosmarin defines the lyric mask as follows:

The free standing other, strategic device that frees the poet from this more usual voice, enabling him to speak more variously

and complexly even as this more various and complex voice continues to seem his own. All mask lyric speakers are personae in the strict etymological sense of the word; they are that through which the poet seems to speak. Writing from the point of view of someone else, makes us see and feel as if we were that someone. Speakers of mask lyrics are definitely self-conscious and aware of themselves as written. The speaker is at once himself and out of himself, a dweller within his time and beyond it, a self that writes and self that is written about. (*Power*, 104)

This literary device that can be perceived on the part of the poet as an attempt to maintain ambiguity, allows him to cast a more objective view on himself and on his surrounding circumstances.

The use of different poetic personae also raises the issue of which of these personae, if any, was a part of the real Antón de Montoro. Biographic data attest that the poet had accumulated a considerable fortune by the time of his death but his poetic corpus consistently presents him as "triste" and "pobre." Testimonies show that he was recognized and famous among his contemporaries, some of whom were the principle and most prestigious poetic figures of the time. Nevertheless, the *Ropero* obsessively alludes to his social and religious marginalization and offers this image time and again. It is obvious that one should not equate life with art. In fact, as Bousoño reminds us:

La persona que habla en el poema, aunque con frecuencia mayor o menor . . . coincida de algún modo con el yo empírico del poeta, es, pues, substantivamente, un "personaje," una composición que la fantasía logra a través de los datos de la experiencia. (*Teoría*, 28)

Bousoño further explains that the reader is more tempted to associate the poetic persona of a poem with the author himself than the narrator of a

novel or the narrators of a play. Nevertheless, the critic cautions us against the association poetic I-author in a poem:

Pues aún en los casos límites de uso de la propia vida para fines artísticos, trátase de un poema lírico o de una narración en prosa, escrita en primera persona, donde se utilicen datos biográficos de la persona, el autor, quien nos dirige la palabra no puede ser más que un ente de ficción. (29)

Thus it is important to remember that the poet Antón de Montoro is creating fictions. In fact, the blurred line that separates fiction from reality is one the main themes of the *el ropero's* poetic corpus. Montoro appears poor and humble but the reader knows that he was one of the most celebrated poets of his times. Consequently, the obsessive allusion to the poet's origins may lead the reader to believe that Montoro's acceptance by his society was a mere game of appearances and artifice. These two elements -- appearances and artifice -- were undoubtedly major attributes of Montoro's society (see chapter two). Poetry is the means by which Montoro plays with the concepts of reality and fiction and demonstrates the impossibility of distinguishing them.

Montoro is a "fingidor" and to use Santillana's own formulations his poetry is "un fingimiento de cosas útiles" (see chapter two).¹⁸ *El ropero's* poetic corpus is a construct and as such is to be interpreted as a fiction. Should we conclude thus that Montoro's poetic corpus -- with its image of a poet as poor and sad with his vulnerability as *converso* on prominent display -- is but a mere game conceived to entertain the fifteenth-century courtly audience, itself much given to such ludic occupations?

I see the conflictive poetic personae present in Montoro's poetic corpus not as contradictory, but rather, as complementary. Montoro is, in turn, a poor *ropero*, of Jewish origins, both solidly historical data. Yet, he excels in the poetic practices of his times and circulates in the higher court society. It is, then, precisely the apparent conflictive nature of his status that allows him to cast an ironic eye on his surroundings and to voice the unjust treatment of his caste. It is obvious that the poetic personae in Montoro's poetic corpus are "staged" in the etymological meaning of that word. Montoro plays with his different identities in order to provide entertainment, a main component of the poetic production of his times. He uses much irony in order to overcome the ambiguity of his own poetic selves. His games are, nevertheless, serious in nature since they also aim to document his times, at least in part.

The use of poetic personae allows the poet to experience the life of the *conversos* since, according to Rosmarin, such is one of the functions of a poetic persona "to make us see and feel as if we were that someone." Montoro holds a privileged position as part of the higher literary circles, participating in the life of the court. Nevertheless, as a *converso*, he is deeply aware that his poetic genius is precisely the very means of his partial acceptance among the Old Christians. Gilman defines Rojas *Tragicomedia* as being "entre otras y muy importantes cosas, una coherente y profunda revelacion de la vivencia del converso . . . " (*La España* , 114). Montoro's poetic genius and literary games are a similar manifestation of the marginalization of an entire group, that of the *conversos*.

Montoro plays with his different identities. He wears many masks, in a society that irremediably sees him as a "puto judio." Not unlike many characters in Rojas' *Tragicomedia*, the characters created in Montoro's poetic corpus constantly reinvent themselves and are in a state of perpetual *mouvance*, owing to a social status that is always in a state of flux (see ch. 5). For Gilman, the *conversos* share something:

Lo que tienen en común no son los temas o rasgos fijos o el estilo o el género, sino un sentido del yo como un ser diferente e inexplicable, Inexplicable, entre otras cosas, porque está cambiando siempre. (204)

Derrida notes in *L'écriture et la Différance*:

L'écriture est le moment de cette Vallée originaire de *l'autre* dans *l'être*, Moment de la profondeur aussi comme déchéance. Instance et insistance du grave.¹⁹

Writing is the means through which Montoro experiments with his own self and indirectly questions the tenets of his society. Montoro represents "l'autre" -- to use Derrida's words --, that is, a part of the poet that strives to achieve unity with "l'être," his true self. As Gilman explains, the converts were in a perpetual state of "becoming" since their identity was constantly reinvented by the dominant caste. Whether the *conversos* could survive in fifteenth-century Spain was up to the Old Christians. It was obvious and impossible for this marginalized group to find a well-defined stable position in society. On the other hand, *conversos* were in many instances condemned to simulating a mask in order to be acceptable to the majority. Their nature and condition may be compared to that of language itself. Language is by

nature also in a perpetual state of becoming; it is an inert matter that can be sculpted according to its users' and readers' needs.

Montoro plays with language and manipulates it not solely for the purpose of participating in the ludic linguistic practices of his times but precisely because language shares many a characteristic with the unstable identity of the *conversos*. Metaphorically, Montoro's linguistic practices become a reflection of the state of ambiguity and instability of his real self as well as of his religious caste. Language becomes the means through which Montoro explores this real self. Writing offers Montoro the privilege of exploring the depth of his own self as well as of examining the ambiguity of the *converso* identity in his Spain.

In her article "La hipérbole sagrada en la poesía castellana del siglo XV," María Rosa Lida de Malkiel establishes a direct link between the use of the sacro-profane hyperbole and *converso* writers. The critic believes that the use of that poetic device is yet another sign of *conversos'* estrangement and internal conflict in fifteenth-century Spain

En España el "Otoño de la Edad Media" tiene como nota diferencial el papel de conversos y cristianos nuevos en su cultura y economía. Por su número e importancia debieron de contribuir de modo específico al desorden íntimo y a la confusión de jerarquías espirituales, de suyo existente en toda la sociedad de la tardía Edad Media. Además, la conmoción sufrida por los conversos debió de hacer el conflicto más intenso en ellos mismos. Testigo explícito, Antón de Montoro . . . Pues Montoro, es quien con mayor asiduidad echa mano de la hipérbole devota para halagar a los grandes de la tierra.²⁰

A sacro-profane hyperbole appears in the following of Montoro's poem destined to the Queen Isabel and in which the poet suggests that Isabel is the mother of God:

Dize la canción . . .

Alta reina soberana,
si fuérades antes vos
que la hija de Santana,
de vos el hijo de Dios
recibiera carne humana.

Que bella, santa, discreta,
por espiriencia se pruebe,
aquella virgen perfeta,
la divinidad ecepta,
eso le debéis que os debe.

Y pues, que por vos se gana
la vida y gloria de nos,
si no pariera Santana
hasta ser nascida vos,
de vos el hijo de Dios
rescibiera carne humana. (qtd. by Malkiel; Costa, 147)

The sacro-profane hyperbole, so characteristic of later Occitan (thirteenth century) poetry is used extensively by the *Ropero* (see chapter one for Occitan). It allows the poet to participate in a trend that, according to Lida de Malkiel, is highly characteristic of the Spanish Middle Ages, "Una nota específica de la cultura medieval es el enlace íntimo y frecuente entre la poesía sagrada y profana" (*Hiperbole*, 121). The sacro-profane hyperbole -- precisely because it mingles the sacred and the profane -- also expresses the religious malaise of *el ropero*. The sacro-profane hyperbole is yet another linguistic device that evinces the ambiguous religious status of our poet.

Although ludic in nature, Montoro's linguistic practices are serious indeed since they end up in a void. Montoro does not fully reconcile his real self with his poetic selves, nor does he find a solution to the *converso* dilemma in fifteenth century Castile. In fact, the poet uncovers multiple selves and clearly shows that language, the means of his metaphysical search, is by nature in a state of constant flux. For this reason, writing becomes for Montoro "une decheance" (a fall) in words of Derrida. The fact that Montoro indulges in these many playful linguistic practices does not mean that his preoccupations are not serious ones. Rawdon Wilson claims that

the mere fact that literary texts may contain games does not imply that they must, in themselves, be games. A text might be constructed entirely out of games and not be a game, much as a philosophy (or a theology) might be built out of jokes and yet not be a joke. (*Palamades*, 19)

Montoro plays but under the guise of playful linguistic and literary practices is his desire to express his malaise.

The creation of neologisms, another characteristic of fifteenth-century poetry, attests to the desire to challenge the notion of language as a reliable means of communication. In this process, it unveils the arbitrary nature of language. As Marithelma Costa explains in the introductory notes to her edition of Montoro's poetic corpus, poetry was conceived to challenge one's intellect. Neologisms are also ludic in nature since they challenge one's intellect; they invite the reader to participate in the creative process since the word (the neologism) does not have any pre-determined meaning or usage; yet, taken to its ultimate consequences, the creation of new words can lead to

linguistic chaos and therefore defeat the common ideal of language itself: communication. Neologisms are thus pure fictions, much more so than repertoried words.

By forging new words, Montoro shows that language can be continuously molded and manipulated in the hands of the writer and in the mind of the reader. As a consequence, meaning becomes more arbitrary.

Marithelma Costa enumerates a number of neologisms found in Montoro's poetic corpus. One of them is the word "bondado" found in the first verse of the following poem:

*Montoro a un caballero que le mandó un puerco y envió por el
y no gelo quiso dar diciendo que aún apenas era cristiano.*

Muy más bondado de fe
que no de fojas el guindo;
¿no sabéis cómo gané
carta de cristiano lindo?

Y vos, señor importuno,
en las mandas muy prolijo,
mandar luego enviarme uno
de los que rabí maldijo. (Costa, 79)

The word "bondado" is formed on the noun "bondad" (generosity). Montoro therefore uses a known word "bondad" to form an adjective that is not repertoried. The meaning of this word is conveyed by the sound of the word, and its spelling is very close to the word "abondada" (abundance). Marithelma Costa notes that this word, although not repertoried, was used from Berceo through the beginning of the fifteenth century and underwent an orthographic change when the "o" in the syllable bon-changed to a "u"

("bon" changed to "bun"). Why did Montoro use the word "bondado" in this particular context?

Montoro wishes to draw the reader's attention to the true intentions of the Christian who is sending him "a present." In fact, the present is pork meat, forbidden by Judaic law. The word "bondado" is therefore highly ironic since the Christian (ironically the *cristiano lindo*) sends it to the newly converted poetic persona. The reader cannot but draw a parallel between this expression "bondado de fe" and the description of the Old Christian lady who is "llena de fee" whom Montoro ridicules in a composition previously cited. Not unlike that lady ("llena de fe"), who wanted to give the image of a perfect Christian observing Lent but was indulging in sexual pleasures all the while, the Christian of this composition wants to test the sincerity of Montoro's faith under the guise of generosity. As Gilman explains, using the anthropologist Dorothy Lee's theory, eating habits were an integral and defining part of the Judaic religion:

Dorothy Lee ha destacado el papel tan profundamente arraigado y central de los hábitos alimenticios, particularmente la relación de ciertos alimentos con un ciclo anual de mito o creencia, en cualquier cultura. Y en la tenaz cultura neojudaica de España, su tesis tiene un apoyo sorprendente. Lo que uno comía y cuando lo comía era el principal vínculo con el pasado, y cambiar exigía un esfuerzo consciente de valentía. La misma vista de la carne de cerdo podía poner enfermos a los sensibles conversos tanto en el alma como en el cuerpo, y su consumo producía a menudo dolorosas reacciones alérgicas. (*La España de F. de R.*, 90)

Montoro attests to the difficulty of changing eating habits in a section of his poem dedicated to the Queen Isabel:

Hice el Credo y adorar
ollas de tocino grueso,
torreznos a medio asar
oir misas y rezar,
santiguar y persinar,
y nunca pude matar
este rastro de confeso. (*Costa*, 98)

The difficulty is here emphasized by the use of irony in the verse "Hice el Credo y adorar/ollas de tocino grueso." The use of the verb "adorar" in conjunction with the expression "ollas de tocino grueso" indirectly expresses Montoro's opinion on the imposition of new eating habits as well as his aversion to this type of food. Adoring pots of pork is indeed highly ironic. Not only does Montoro express the difficulty of adapting to new eating habits but he also ridicules the importance given to appearances. In fact, as the poem expresses, one's degree of true Christian devotion could be measured according to such a ridiculous ritual as adoring food.

The use of the neologism "bondado" is not merely ludic. It is true that the word offers the poet the possibility of achieving an ear rhyme with the words "guindo" and "lindo;" nevertheless, as we hope to show clearly, the use of the neologism directs the reader's attention towards the treachery of the Old Christian. In this particular instance, Montoro "sculpts" the word "bondado" in order to fulfill a private purpose: to show the true intentions of this supposedly generous Old Christian.

The use of neologisms also illustrates the Derridian concept of "supplement" that the French philosopher further identifies as "dangerous":

Tout commence par la reproduction. Toujours, déjà, c'est à dire
dépôts d'un sens qui n'a jamais été présent, dont le présent

signifié est toujours reconstitué, après coup,
supplémentairement. (*L'Écriture*, 314)

Language in Derrida's view is but a reproduction of reality, a fiction. Moreover, language does not have any pre-determined meaning since the meaning "n'a jamais été présent." Language is thus a "supplément" because it is created "après coup." Neologisms clearly exemplify the supplemental nature of language since, by definition, they are created out of a void and their meanings have to be elaborated by the reader or hearer. Montoro uses them repeatedly in his poetic corpus since the poet's endeavor illustrates by example the ambiguous nature of language itself. His use of neologisms shows that meanings are created arbitrarily; more importantly, Montoro wishes to prove that language can be regarded as a metaphor for the arbitrariness of human experience in general.

The use of neologisms is also the reinvidication of imagination in the work of art. Imagination does not distinguish between reality and fiction and is an integral part of creativity. Again, Derrida:

L'imagination est en elle même un dit, est l'art lui même, qui
originellement ne distingue pas entre le vrai et le beau.
L'imagination a en effet une grande puissance pour créer en
quelque sorte une seconde nature avec la matière que lui fournit
la nature réelle. (*L'Écriture*, 16)

In this respect, neologisms represent an escape from imposed linguistic rules and such a practice is not surprising in a *converso* author such as Montoro. The poet himself describes the rules that were imposed on newly converted Jews (as in the poem dedicated to the Queen Isabel). Poetry becomes for *el ropero* a sacred place where he can give free expression to his

imagination. His poetic occupation, although playful in nature goes beyond a mere ludic intention; in the process, Antón de Montoro questions the *converso* identity as well as the validity of language as a reliable tool for unambiguous communication.

Montoro further demonstrates the ambiguity of language by presenting all the different meanings and uses of one single word. In words of Marithelma Costa, *el ropero* "aprovecha las máximas posibilidades semánticas de los términos, y multiplica ambigüedades, antítesis, anfibologías y referencias oblicuas, a fin de condensar en sus poemas el mayor número de significados . . ." (XXV). Not unlike a surgeon, Montoro dissects the word "primo" in the following composition. While the nature of the poem is ludic, nevertheless, its verses can metaphorically be compared to an operating room, where words undergo many incisions under the poet's scalpel:

Montoro a un escudero que loaba a una prima suya

Por cabsa de vuestra prima
querría ser vuestro primo
porque me dicen ques prima
y a mi me place con lo primo. (Costa, 74)

The word "prima" (cousin here in the feminine form of the word), the subject of the composition, is a key concept since it directs the use of the other word "primo" (cousin in the masculine form). In the two following verses "porque me dicen ques prima/y a mi me place con lo primo," Montoro uses the same words but in their adjectival forms: "primo" and "prima." Rhyme is what dictates the use of words in this particular composition. In fact, the meaning of "primo" and "prima" have to be reconstructed

"supplémentairement, apres coup" to retake Derrida's own words. Meaning is secondary. The use of words is arbitrary since it is the product of a chain reaction; the noun "prima" calls for its masculine equivalent "primo" that in turn calls for the adjectives "prima" and "lo primo" (the first). The latter do not have a pre-determined meaning in the composition until they engage in a dialogic relationship with the words "primo" and "prima." Meaning is therefore not always a pre-existent condition in language. That very characteristic of language and the use of neologisms clearly show that language is always in a state of becoming. Carlos Bousoño's comments on poetic creation describe what the reader witnesses in "A un escudero que loaba una prima suya":

Cada verso que el poeta escribe acucia su imaginación emotiva y le mueve a nuevos hallazgos, que, a su vez, le despiertan otros, y así hasta el final: Son pues las palabras mismas del poema, las que operando sobre su autor, originan la sucesión expresiva. Un primer sintagma lírico actúa como la piedra, que, arrojada a un estanque, provoca un movimiento de ondas concéntricas. . .
(*Teoría*, 35)

The second stanza of the poem reads as follows:

Y también porque marrimo
a quien a razón se arrima.
y aunque mi razón no limo,
pláceme con quien la lima. (*Costa*, 74)

In these verses, Montoro plays with the verbs "arrimarse" and "limar."

Again here the rhyme dictates the use of the verbs in different persons:

marrimo=*me arrimo* first person singular and "se arrima," third person

singular. These four verses rhyme in -imo and -ima. It is easy to speculate

that the choice of the verb *limar* was dictated by the verb *arrimar*. Although

the use of the verb *limar* does not deprive the composition of meaning, it is nevertheless arbitrary and is contingent upon the use of the verb *arrimar*.

Once again, this example shows that language does not have any pre-determined meaning and that words are in a state of perpetual flux since, in many instances, they have to be said first before acquiring meaning. Derrida says,

Ecrire c'est savoir que ce qui n'est pas encore produit dans la lettre n'a pas d'autre demeure, ne nous attend pas comme prescription . . . ou quelque entendement divin. Le sens doit attendre d'être dit ou écrit pour s'habiter lui même et devenir ce qu'a différer de soi, il est: le sens. (*L'Écriture*, 22)

The conception of language underlying Montoro's poetic corpus is ludic in nature and his linguistic practices so far have drawn the reader's attention to the phenomenon of auto-reflexivity in literature. Language is in fact self-generative and what may appear at first as a manipulation on the part of the writer is indeed intrinsic to language. Bousoño believes that "el lenguaje . . . también se impone al escritor como una silenciosa pero inexorable limitación de sus posibles ocurrencias" (*Teoría*, 36). As Rawdon Wilson explains in this work *Palamades Discourse*, language is a play of meanings. Montoro's uses of the word "primo" and "prima" are a good example of such a characteristic of language because in words of Wilson they create a play of significations which

must be seen as both a universal condition of language and a universal effect; it is both an endless semi-logical linkage, a fabric of traces entailing other traces, and that which makes signification possible. In a deconstructive perspective, a writer (scriptor ludens) may be said to play only because the game of language play through him. He plays because the system of language, which he seems to manipulate and perhaps actually

believes that he masters, play through him, both inevitably and as a matter of course. (*Palamades*, 17)

Another phenomenon worthy of note in the second stanza of this composition is the assimilation of the reflexive pronoun “me” with the verb “arrimarse,” “marrimo” instead of “me arrimo.” In the assimilation, Montoro creates a new word, or sound and this phenomenon is very akin to that of “copula” as described by Derrida. *Copula* is in fact the assimilation of the predicate with a verb. By uniting the reflexive pronoun with the verb, the poet creates a verse of eight syllables, identical in count to the last verse of the stanza. His grammatical subversion is therefore stylistic in nature. The poet wishes to maintain metrical regularity. This specific example shows how malleable language can be in order to serve its user's needs.

We can conclude thus that “Montoro a un escudero” exemplifies the very essence of language which is by nature arbitrary and therefore “reconstitué à retardement” to use Derrida's own formulation; it is incomplete because it is always in a state of becoming; it is malleable and therefore constantly sculpted according to its users' needs. For these very reasons, language is essentially and forever ambiguous.

Malleable language creates fictions. Particularly relevant in that respect is the language of courtly love, which, as demonstrated in chapter one, was a fiction created by the early troubadours who excelled in manipulating its language and key metaphors. Following the fifteenth-century courtly poetic tradition, Antón de Montoro's poetic corpus reflects on the philosophy of courtly love and its language.

Not unlike his dual attitude vis à vis his *converso* origins, Montoro plays with the concept of courtly love, praising the courted lady in some instances and presenting grotesque caricatures of women in others; Montoro plays the part of the perfect courtly lover as we will see in several compositions. It readily surrenders to his lady's will, glorifies her exceptional beauty and puts his destiny in her hands. His misogyny, on the other hand, is equally obvious; in specific compositions, Montoro debases the ideal courtly lady by using vulgar language to describe her.

By using this graphic language, highly reminiscent of that used in the Archpriest of Talavera's *Corbacho*, Montoro de-constructs the very essence of courtly love since the woman in this particular instance is dispossessed of her godly attributes. It is true that these two conflicting views of women were expressed in other forms of fifteenth-century Spanish letters (reviewed in ch. two). Nevertheless, the fact that these two tendencies should coexist in one poetic corpus openly questions the philosophical as well as linguistic foundations of the literary school of courtly love.

"Montoro a una dama" clearly illustrates the positive dictates of the philosophy of courtly love:

En el mandar e vedar
de mi servicio, mi vida,
vuestra boca sea medida

Ved si soy vuestro cativo
de mi propia mente y gana
que, si poco o mucho vivo,
de vuestra belleza mana

pues podéis tomar y dar

placeres, pesar y vida,
vuestra boca sea medida. (*Costa*,1)

This composition fully subscribes to the courtly love tradition. In fact, the poetic "I" finds himself in a state of slavery and complete devotion to this lady since he is "cativo" (captive) on the one hand, and his "placeres" (pleasures), "pesar" (difficulties) and his life are in the hands of his beloved "vuestra boca sea medida" on the other hand. Whether the poetic "I" lives or dies depends on the lady: "Que si poco o mucho vivo/de vuestra belleza mana," a view of love at the core of the philosophy of the first troubadours (chapter one). The beauty of the lady is also an essential part of Montoro's verses and it is this very beauty that causes love to grow: "que si poco o mucho vivo/pues de vuestra belleza mana."

The following verses are very similar in theme and tone:

Montoro

Sobjuzgáis toda beldad
cuanta Dios al mundo dio,
y ha de nacer
y por mis pecados no.
Entendéis en piedad
ni en bien querer []

Nunca ceso comediendo
de emplear en vos mi vida
y si sois de mí servida
non jamás vos lo entiendo. (*Costa*, 3)

This poem reiterates the theme of servitude ("y si sois de mi servida"; if you are served by me) and more significantly than "Montoro a una dama" praises the courtly lady's beauty: "Sobjuzgáis toda beldad/cuanta Dios al mundo dio y ha de nacer."

While *el ropero* fully subscribes to the philosophy of *fin'amor* in the above-cited poems, he subverts the main tenets of that literary school and its language in other poems. His subversion -- that can be qualified as a rebellion -- is against what Carlos Bousoño qualifies as

. . . el peso, a veces abrumador, de la tradición literaria misma . . .
No hay duda de que los poetas cortesanos del siglo XV español
estaban estrechamente encajonados en fórmulas tan férreas (las
trovadorescas), y sobre todo, ya tan alejadas de la realidad
contemporánea . . . (*Teoría*, 36)

Not unlike the earlier troubadours, we will see how *el Ropero* wishes to demolish courtly style by proving that it was but a jaded fiction. His criticism of that literary school, so popular in fifteenth-century Spain is, I believe, also a veiled attack against his society's high valuation of appearances. In fact, the hyperbolic and ornate nature of courtly love, particularly fashionable among the court poets, is one additional manifestation of the malaise of that social class. Or rather, the fact that the Spanish courts should have revived a literary tradition, that of courtly love, long forgotten in other European countries, clearly shows that such a tradition was a form of escapism (chapter two). Montoro is particularly interested in unveiling the artifices of his society, courtly love being one of them. In the following composition, Montoro subtly implies that the courted lady is a mere fiction, fabricated by the courtly lover. This poem illustrates Ian MacPherson's statement about fifteenth-century love poetry: "A piece of *cancionero* verse, therefore, may contain concealed references to ideas or objects outside its own immediate context . . ." ²¹

Montoro a una dama hermosa

Cuya vista me repara
y sus piensos dan pasión,
más vale vergüenza en cara
que mancilla en corazón.

Mástil de piedras preciosas,
iluminante diadema,
forgeras vivas, rabiosas
de mi pasión se quema.
Cuando vuestra se formó
imagen bella, garrida
esa hora se ordenó
la muerte para mi vida. (*Costa*, 61)

This first stanza of the poem captures the main tenets of the philosophy of courtly love; the lady described is beautiful physically, she is indeed compared to precious stones ("piedras preciosas.") About this particular image, Keith Whinnom notes that it is a recurrent one in fifteenth-century *cancionero* poetry:

Lo que pasó en la Edad Media es que mediante los bestarios, los herbarios, los lapidarios, los tratados de heráldica, a muchísimos animales, pájaros, plantas, piedras preciosas, colores, etcétera, se les atribuyeron cualidades particulares, de tal manera que llegaron a ser emblemas de ciertas ideas. Ya vimos que en la poesía amatoria cancioneril se mencionan raras veces objetos concretos o colores; pero cada vez que leemos "rosa," "perdiz," "limón," "hierbabuena," o bien "negro," "blanco," . . . nos conviene pensar en el valor simbólico del objeto o del color.²²

The idea of love as metaphoric death, so characteristic of the philosophy of courtly love, is also present in the last verses of the stanza, "esa hora se ordenó/la muerte para mi vida." The word "muerte," (death) or the verb "morir," (to die) is frequently used in amatory poetry. Keith Whinnom notes that it can be understood in its literal meaning but also could refer to the

sexual act. Whinnom further explains that the objective of the fifteenth-century amatory poet is not to give a definite answer to the reader but rather to maintain ambiguity of meaning:

. . . si se dice que uno se muere, es posible que esté falleciendo. El gran problema es que , en la poesía cancioneril más fina, no tenemos que enfrentarnos ni con metáfora ni con el sentido literal, sino con la ambigüedad, una ambigüedad pensada y buscada. No estoy dispuesto a sostener que, cuando los poetas cancioneriles se quejan: “y muero porque no muero,” están diciendo abiertamente. “Siento dolores mortales porque mi amada no me permite el alivio sexual,” sino que detrás de la paradoja del vivo muerto, de la que se podrían citar múltiples ejemplos, yace también esta sugerencia erótica. (37)

In the last stanza of “A una dama hermosa,” Montoro combines erotic and sacred elements in his characterization of the courtly lady, a frequent occurrence in courtly love lyric.

. . . que vos veo tan venina
y vos fallo tan lozana,
que no sé tomar doctina,
si vos ore por divina
o vos ame por humana. (Costa, 61)

The verb “orar”(in its subjunctive form of “ore”) and the adjective “divina” can be qualified as a sacro-profane hyperbole. As we explained in chapter one, the courtly lady occupies the highest position in the lover’s eyes and courtly love itself was considered as a religious order. For this reason, the male lover prays to his god-like beloved.

Yet, the reader of Montoro’s poem soon realizes that all the feelings elicited by the courtly lady are the result of an image fabricated by the poetic “I” who admits: “Cuando vuestra se formó/imagen bella, garrida” (when the image of you, beautiful and elegant was formed) [my translation]. The

influence of the courtly tradition is such that it deforms the poet's vision of reality. In this particular case the courtly lady, whose real existence seems uncertain since she is a conjured image, is created by the poet and it acquires a life of its own in his imagination. Her description in the remainder of the poem is thus an embellished fiction. Language or rather the language of courtly love in this specific case, continuously re-invents reality. The hyperbolic nature of courtly love as well as the potential of language to create fictions is illustrated in the opposition between the concept of the image and the idea contained in "esa hora se ordenó/la muerte para mi vida" (and at that moment my death sentence was signed). The death evoked in the poem is as metaphorical (unreal) as is the "image" (created in the poet's words) of his beloved.

This lady is thus an abstraction. She not unlike so many other created female images in fifteenth-century Spanish *cancionero* poetry is not seen close up, "she (the woman) is rarely seen close up, rarely given physical dimensions and as a result she infrequently emerges as more than a mere abstraction" to recall J. Snow's own formulations (see ch. 2).

In her article, "The Vaquera de la Finajosa: Was she a Vision?" Nancy Marino analyzes a similar phenomenon.²³ Marino notes that the scene depicted by the poetic "I" in that famous piece dramatically changes at one point in the poem: "The vaquera might be a drama by the swift and unexpected metamorphosis of the environment." The poetic "I" acknowledges that "faziendo la via del Calatraveno . . . perdí la carrera/do vi

la vaquera de la finajosa." As he encounters the *vaquera*, the scenery changes, a technique common in Santillana's and others' *serranillas*, as Marino points out. The scene of the encounter is suddenly characterized as "un verde prado de rosas y flores" (264). Love is thus associated in this specific *serranilla* with the concepts of dream and fiction.

The *locus amoenus* created in the *serranilla* is highly reminiscent of Paradise itself and is therefore of a fictional nature since it is an image to which the poetic "I" gives form. Montoro deliberately chooses to use the verb "formar" in order to clearly imply that his lady is a created vision. Santillana on the other hand, expresses the same idea by suddenly changing the scenery of his famous *serranilla*. Both authors thus illustrate the power of language to create fictions. Writing becomes the means by which reality can be reinvented. Montoro and Santillana both allow the reader to be the witness of the subversive power of language.

In order further to illustrate the fictional nature of courtly love, and to subvert not only its philosophical tenets but also its hyperbolic language, Montoro wrote some poems in an openly misogynist vein. The language used in those compositions is highly reminiscent of the *Corbacho's* and they share a common aim: to ridicule women. Such a subversion of the literary school of courtly love is particularly apparent in the following verses:

Montoro a una mujer que todo era tetas y culo

Vos pedaís por tan compas
salvo honor del consonante,
que no pesa un grano más

vuestro culo cara atrás
que vuestras tetas delante. (*Costa*, 12)

This particular lady is the antithesis of the courtly lady since she behaves in a rude manner, “vos pedaís por tan compas,” and is not physically attractive, “vuestro culo cara atrás/no pesa un grano más que vuestras tetas delante.” More importantly, this lady is not courtly because she strikes the reader as being too real, even grotesque. The allusive language used by the poetic “I” is also diametrically opposed to that which we associate with courtly love. The words “tetas,” “culo” and “pedaís” belong to a base register of language and differ radically from the refined and elaborate images familiar in courtly love. This lady’s description is also reminiscent of Juan Ruiz’s *serranas*.

The following composition further illustrates Montoro's subversion of the woman as idealized in the courtly tradition. The irony in this specific instance is that Montoro misleads the reader by starting the poem with a formula usually associated with traditional courtly lyric:

Canción suya a una mujer que traía grandes caderas y cuando andaba parescia que amblaba

Gentil dama singular, (emphasis added)
honesta en toda doctrina,
mesuraos en vuestro amblar;
que por mucho madrugar
no amanesce más aína.

Las nalgas bajas, terreras,
meceldas por lindo modo,
poco a poco, y no del todo,
el traer de las caderas;

y al tiempo del desgranar,

quellombre se desatina,
mesuraos en vuestro amblar;
que por mucho madrugar
no amanesce más aéina. (Costa, 154)

The grotesque representation of women continues in the following verses where the protagonist of the following verses indulges constantly in drinking:

Montoro a una mujer beoda:

La viña muda su foja,
y la col, nabo y lechuga;
y la tierra que se moja
otro día se enjuga.

Y vos, todo el año entero,
por tírame allá esa paja,
a la noche soes un cuero
y en la mañana, tinaja. (Costa, 112)

The description found in these verses is highly reminiscent of Talavera's description of drunk women in the section, "*Como se deve el ombre guardar de la muger embriaga*" of his *Corbacho*.

Si la muger se mete en el vino, en beber demasiado, ser grande embriaga dubda no es en ello. Anda muy presurosa e fazendosa deca e dalla, los ojos inflamados . . . la luenga trastavada: fabla por las narizes.²⁴

The description of women in both cases is grotesque and the authors' objective of ridicule is achieved; the female, protagonist of Montoro's verses, is drunk all year around: "Y vos todo el año entero (note the use of "todo" and "entero," two words that share the same meaning but are used together by Montoro to exaggerate the woman's non-stop drinking). In fact, Montoro's female protagonist is drunk "a la noche soes un cuero/y en la mañana,

tinaja" the woman is urinating at night, all the alcohol that she has absorbed in the morning when she "resembles a jar" "[se parece a una] tinaja."

Talavera's description of women is no less fierce: tiene "los ojos inflamados y la lengua trastavada" and "fabla por las narizes"; her eyes are inflamed, and she speaks through her nose. Both compositions are purposely graphic to the point that the distorted image of the lady produces laughter. These descriptions represent the other extreme of the idealism expressed in courtly love. By presenting such a negative image of women, the two authors clearly show that poetry is a game that idealized women in some instances and ridiculed them in others. Women are either viewed as angels and are given divine attributes whereas in some other instances they are evil or ridiculous. The reader is faced with a dilemma: is the extreme negative vision of women a mere attack against its exaggerated idealization? In other words, is it a mere conceptual game?

R. Rowdon Wilson summarizes the Bakhtinian concept of carnival as follows:

Carnival worked against the power and compulsion of authoritative discourse: the voices of rulers, of the clergy, of the lay. . . Carnival is a ritual social event, collective and egalitarian, that plays the unofficial voices of the people against the official voices of authority . . . It possesses no essence in itself, but only its social function, its peculiar mode of exchange in mockery and laughter . . . As a sociocultural phenomenon, carnival is "syncretic pageantry of a ritualistic sort. . . Nonetheless, it is possible for the writer to borrow carnival humor and to incorporate them in the heart of his literary discourse. Bakhtin calls this process of incorporation and reinscription "carnivalization." (37)²⁵

According to Costa , *el ropero* "asimismo introduce en sus textos las degradaciones impías típicas de la subversión carnavalesca, y las mulas y los caballos de sus poemas suelen apropiarse de la frase: " Alzar los ojos a Dios para implorar la piedad divina (poemas 90 y 151) and further comments that Montoro provides various examples of irrational poetry. The critic believes that the objective of the carnivalesque poems is primarily moral: "Los procedimientos de la poesía irracional se hallan en función de una cordura deseada, apuntan a la necesidad -- por negación y vacío -- de una orden moral o social que hay que reconstruir" (Costa, XXVII).

The use of the carnivalesque in Montoro's poetic corpus is, I believe, intimately connected to the writer's philosophy of writing and eventually is a graphic representation of his marginalized religious and social status. Following are some more examples of carnivalization in the *ropero's* corpus. The first composition is a dialogue between the poetic "I" and a mule; the second poem is once again, dedicated to the theme of drinking:

Montoro a una mula de Juan Muñiz

Vos, al muy gran rey anejo,
la mula de Juan Muñiz,
encorbada mi cerviz,
ante vos, de vos me quejo.
Como Dios es Trenidad,
vos cabsastes mi lacerío
pues, por darme libertad
cabsastes mi cabtiverio.

Dios me vista de paciencia
de tan incurables daños;
que ha bien veinte y dos años
que soy suya por herencia.
Follando polvos y lodos

tanto, la fiel se me quiebre,
si en aquestos tiempos todos
dare señas de pesebre . . .

. . . Yo, con todo mi dolor,
cuando oí nombrar a vos,
alcé mis ojos a Dios,
dije, "Dios me viene a ver",
pues un tal me favoriza,
andaré sin cargazón
entre su caballeriza
do saldré, puerco cebón. (*Costa*, 90)

The carnivalesque aspect of this poem resides undoubtedly in the fact that the poetic "I" is judged, and judged severely, by an animal, not unlike in Montoro's dialogue with his horse. The mule has to complain about the poetic "I": "Vos, la muy gran rey anejo/la mula de Juan Muñiz,/encorbada mi cerviz,/ante vos, de vos me quejo./Como Dios es Trenidad,/vos cabsastes mi lacerío/pues, por darme libertad/cabsastes mi cabtiverio."

This poem displays one of Montoro's favorite literary techniques: self-criticism which together with the use of the carnivalesque (i.e the use of dialogue and the presentation of an inverted world -- the mule is judging the poetic "I" fulfills a definite function: they indirectly remit us to the poet's marginalized *converso* status.

The following poem further illustrates the use of base language -- also characteristic of carnivalization -- in *el ropero*, and is reminiscent of "A una mujer beuda," cited earlier:

Otra del ropero a dos mujeres, la una puta y la otra beuda

Haberos de bastescer,
damas, de lo que os fallesce,
a la una de hoder,

y a la otra de beber,
a sólo Dios pertenesce.

Para matar esta guerrra
y cumplir lo uno y lotro,
la una vaya a la tierra,
la otra quede en el Potro. (Costa, 158)

The concept of love as a game is also at the center of Guilhem IX's poetic production. Like Montoro, who fully subscribes to the hyperbolic nature of the philosophy of courtly love in some instances and ridicules women in others, the Count of Poitiers played with that literary double face. In fact, it is to the first troubadour's verses that the embryo of the subversion of the philosophy can be traced. It comes to no surprise that such an idealistic view of love would result in an easily parodied conception. The level of perfection accorded to the courted lady is a courtly fiction, not intended to be true to life, but to enhance the reality.

To compare Montoro's achievement, I present Guilhem's following composition because it so successfully reflects the main tenets of the courtly love tradition; the lady is depicted as "white as ivory," and the lyric speaker, who is awaiting the *bon semblans*, (the reward [in this particular case, a kiss]) will die if he does not receive it. The beauty of the courtly lady and the total submission of the lover to his lady are the two main threads in the poem. The vocabulary used, (i.e., the verbs "to yield" and "to render") intensify the state of slavery in which the lover revels; the verbs "to love," "to adore," and "to die" express the intensity of his feelings:

Qu'ans mi rent a lieys e. m liure,
Qu'en sa carta.m pot escriure,

E no m'en tengatz per yure
S'ieu ma bona dompna am,
Quar senes lieys no puesc viure,
Tant ai pres de s'amor gran fam.

Que plus es blanca qu'evori,
Per qu'ieu outra non azori.
Si'm breu non ai ajutori
Cum ma bona dompna m'am
Morrai pel cap Sanh Gregori!
Si no.m bayz'en cambr'o sutz ram. (V)

[I rather yield and render myself to her, that in her charter she
may write me down. And do not for this think me drunk, If I
love my fine lady, for without her I cannot live, so great has
been my hunger for her love.

For she is whiter than ivory, wherefore I adore no other. If soon
I do not have help so that my fine lady may love me, I'll die, by
Saint Gregory's head! if she does not kiss me in bedroom or in
arbor.]²⁶

Guilhem's following composition is diametrically opposed in tone and language to the first one. In this particular instance, the poetic "I" openly expresses sexual desire for two ladies that he compares to two horses. The fact that the ladies should be associated with animals naturally deprives them of any courtly attribute. Love is presented here from a purely physical point of view since the lyric "I" has one objective in mind: to "ride" one of the horses since he cannot "ride" both at the same time. The frankly sexual tone of the poem is further illustrated by the use of war images "good they are and skilled in war and valiant." This composition is fully reminiscent of Montoro's "A una muger que era todo tetas y culo" since in both cases the female protagonist is lacking any noble qualities:

Dos cavalhs ai a ma selha, ben e gen;
Bon son e adreg per armas e valen,

Mas no.ls puesc amdos tener, que l'us l'autre non cossen . . .

. . . Cavallier, datz mi cosselh d'un pessamen!
Anc mais no fuy issaratz de cauzimen:
Res no sai ab qual mi tengua, de N'Agnes o de N'Arsen . . . (I)

[I have two horses to my saddle, right and properly; good they are and skilled in war, and valiant. But I cannot keep them both, for one can't abide the other

Knights, give me counsel in a problem! Never was I more puzzled by a choice; I don't know at all with which one I should stay, with Lady Agnes or with Lady Arsen].

This poem by Guilhem IX anticipates the wordplay found in fifteenth-century Spanish *cancionero* poetry. Keith Whinnom has repertoried the supposedly courtly words that allowed the *cancionero* poets to cultivate ambiguity. Among those is the verb “cabalgar” used by Guilhem in this particular composition. Other examples are the verbs, “cargar,” “comer,” “jugar,” “poseer,” “servir,” “tirar” . . . (36)

As I hoped to have shown in chapter one, Guilhem clearly implies that the lady protagonist of the courtly lyric is a useful fiction. Recall that in “Farai un vers de dreyt rien,” Guilhem reminds us that “I have a loved one, I don’t know who she is, for I’ve never seen her, so help me my Faith.” Therefore Montoro and Guilhem share an interconnected vision of courtly love as a useful fiction, but still a fiction. The Castilian poet further exemplifies his view in the following verses, dedicated to a serving girl:

Montoro a una dama de servicio

Si te dijere hermosa,
Catalina, no me creas;
si despierta y facendosa,

limpia, discreta, donosa,
amiga, non lo decreas;

que yo te digo verdad,
que si yo fuese damaire,
yo daría mi beldad
por mitad de tu donaire. (Costa, 91)

The subversion of the Provençal literary model resides in the fact that the poem is written to a humble lady “una dama de servicio” when usually the female protagonists of the courtly lyric are noble. Montoro’s main objective in this particular poem is to draw the reader’s attention to the simplicity and value of Catalina. It is not surprising that he, *el ropero*, also of humble origins, should praise someone of humble descent also.

Catalina, not unlike any courtly lady of high society, is “limpia, discreta and donosa.” Nevertheless, she is unlikely to be praised by poets because of her social status. Montoro, in this instance, wants to draw the reader’s attention to the importance of intrinsic values as opposed to appearances. It is worthy to note that Catalina is not an abstract female. The poet emphasizes this by stressing the fact that he speaks the truth about her beauty and moral attributes on the one hand, and by using a vocabulary deprived of preciousness and hyperbole, on the other. The linguistic simplicity of this composition as well as the sincerity expressed, is highly reminiscent of Florencia Pinar’s verses (chapter two).

We saw in chapter one how Guilhem IX, in “Farai un vers de dreit rien,” describes a third state of being, one in which the poet is neither awake nor asleep; he finds himself in a state of semi-consciousness that he cannot

describe with words. By insisting on that fact, Guilhem IX stresses the insufficient nature of a language unable to recreate reality; the Count of Poitiers finds himself in a state that paradoxically he cannot describe, but succeeds in describing.

Guilhem's philosophy of language is captured by Derrida who considers writing as: "ce passage necessairement resserre de la parole contre lequel se poussent et s'entr'empêchent les significations possibles." The Count of Poitiers shows that language is incomplete and thus generates different readings and spiraling ambiguities. The task of the reader is precisely to complete or fill the space created in the poem, according to his/her capacity for interpretation. The written text (in this particular case "Farai un vers de dreyt rien") is in a perpetual state of becoming and is awaiting to be supplemented and completed by the reader.

Montoro's linguistic endeavor is comparable to the Count of Poitou's. In fact, *el ropero* creates neologisms, plays with words and invites the reader to share in the creative process involved in literary communication. The fifteenth-century poet invites the reader to become aware of the mechanisms involved in linguistic practices and to reflect upon the multiplicity of meaning language can generate.

Guilhem offers a similar attitude towards language when he directly implies in the last verses of "Farai un vers de dreyt rien" that his work will be submitted to the arbitrariness of the readers "e trametrai la selhuy/que lo-m trametra per autrui/ lay vers Anjou" (I will transmit my verses to the

one/who will transmit to someone else/somewhere around Anjou”).

Metaphorically, the lyric persona implies that the future of his book (i.e. the interpretation of his works) will undergo a multitude of transformations.

Guilhem’s conception of language is very akin to Montoro’s and his desire to play with words identical as the following example cited by D. R Sutherland attests:

Companho, faray un vers covinen;
Et arua. I masis de foudatz no.y a de sen,
Et er totz mesclatz d’amor e de ioy e de ioven.

E tenguatx lo per vilan qui no l’enten
O dins son cor voluntiers [qui] non l’apren;
Greu partir si fa d’amor qui la trob’a son talen. (ed. Jeanroy, I, I, 6)²⁷

The critic further comments that

The passage by itself appears courtly, both in the appearance of the three basic terms of the courtly jargon and the opposing of them to what is “vilan”; yet the poem is not a courtly lyric at all, but one of William’s broad jokes about his mistresses, and “vilan” might well mean simply a clod, thick-witted; not necessarily, as in the courtly convention, uncourtly . . . (206)

One last parallel can be drawn between the twelfth-century Provençal poet, Guilhem IX, and the fifteenth-century Castilian poet, Antón de Montoro. One of the main flaws to be found in Montoro’s poetic corpus is the unevenness of his poetic “I”. As explained earlier, Montoro finds himself in a highly precarious and ambiguous situation since he is of humble origins but nevertheless participates in the life of the court. Montoro was also a *converso* who duly fulfilled his duties as a new Christian but always remained, in others’ eyes, a Jew.

The state of uncertainty described by Guilhem in "Farai un vers" seems to parallel the state of malaise that Montoro experiences. Philippe Ménard in his article "Sens, contresens, non sens: "Reflexions sur la piece Farai un vers de dreht rien de Guillaume IX' " sees the impossibility of knowing oneself as the main theme of William's composition:

La première strophe ou l'on nous dit que le poème n'a aucun sujet, ne parlera ni de lui, ni des autres, ni de l'amour, est faite pour nous tromper. Toute la suite nous montre qu'il n'est vraiment question que de l'âme du poète et du thème de l'amour."²⁸

Knowing himself and finding his place in newly created social and religious circumstances is Montoro's endeavor. Like Guilhem who is neither sad nor gay, Montoro is neither a Jew nor a new Christian. In a similar fashion, Montoro is neither "a stranger" nor a "familiar friend" with respect to his society. He is accepted by the literary society he lives in but at the same time is ever the "puto judío."

Guilhem's social and religious circumstances were vastly different from those of Montoro. Nevertheless, Guilhem was known for his opposition to the Church and his refusal to participate in the first crusade. His status was also ambiguous since he was both one of the richest lords of his times and a famed poet.

While different in terms of their poetic manifestations, these two writers clearly reflect an existentialist, almost nihilist, philosophy of life. In fact, in both cases, Guilhem and Montoro focus on the void created by the search for identity. In both cases, the search for one's identity is conducted

through an experimentation with language, one of the main foundations of human existence. Language and human identity share the same attributes of mutability and transformation. In Guillaume's case and in Montoro's, the metaphysical search is indirectly connected to a linguistic search, the irony being that the means of the metaphysical search is language itself, by nature arbitrary and incomplete, insufficient and ambiguous.

Another intermediary text that bears proof of that search for identity and reflects similar views on language is the *Libro de Buen Amor*.

In his Prologue, the Archpriest warns the reader against "las coplas pulidas" in which "yace[n] gran fealdad." About his work, the author says "Donde creas que miente, dice mayor verdad."²⁹ For the archpriest, therefore, apparent beauty is equivalent to "falsedad," a concept largely developed by Montoro. Here the archpriest expresses the idea according to which appearances are treacherous.

When talking about "las coplas pulidas," the author undoubtedly alludes to the language of courtly love, that, as exemplified by both the early troubadours and Montoro and later by Fernando de Rojas in his *Tragicomedia*, exults in refined forms, but is a false fiction, a mere simulacrum of the real.

The Archpriest gives solid examples of the dangerous uses of courtly love language in the famous episode of Doña Endrina and Don Melón de la Huerta. Courtly language is used by Don Melón to deceive Doña Endrina: "con la gran pena que paso vengo a deciros mi queja/vuestro amor y mi

deseo que hiere y que me aqueja no se alivia, no se marcha, no me suelta, no me deja/tanto más me da la muerte cuanto más de mi se aleja/Creedme, el amor que os tengo es mi único cuidado/tan sólo por este amor estoy triste y amoroso" (*Libro*, 663).

Don Melón expresses here the formulae of courtly love: the enduring suffering of the courtly lover who rejoices in his pain and whose life depends on the lady's will. Doña Endrina's reaction to these words shows that the courted lady is not being fooled by Melon's words: "No penséis que estoy tan loca que escuché vuestras pamplinas. Buscad a quienes engañéis con vuestras falsas esperas" (665). This reaction is similar to that of Melibea in Act I of the *Tragicomedia* when the parodic lover Calisto overwhelms her with his lack of restraint. Doña Endrina is aware of the deceitful nature of love language; so is Cota's *Viejo*. Nevertheless, both characters will eventually fall victim to it with the treachery of Trotaconventos on the one hand and of *Amor*, on the other. Such will be Melibea's fate also; she will be encouraged to open her heart under the influence of Celestina's manipulative linguistic suasions (chapter five). The Archpriest concludes this episode on this moral register: "Así es como engañan muchos a muchas Endrinas/los hombres son engañosos y engañan a sus vecinas" (*Libro*, 665).

Language is known to be treacherous and behind the language of love lie don Melon's base instincts. The Archpriest shows in that episode that the business of seducing these particular women is staged and that the language used is crafted to mask the male lover's true intentions. In fact, after

Endrina's first refusal, don Melón and the *alcahueta* Trotaconventos devise a scheme that will allow them to deceive doña Endrina. Seduction and seductive language are reduced to a mere game, well rehearsed by its participants. The Archpriest gives ample proof in his work that language is highly malleable, a proof we also observe in Montoro's poetic corpus. Both accomplish their exposé by contrasting different registers of language. The language used in Hita's Marian compositions anticipates Montoro's religious composition dedicated to the Virgin Mary as well as his courtly love poems. The following Marian verses by the Archpriest read as follow:

Virgen del Cielo Señora,
y del mundo mediadora
dignate oír al que implora,
sea en tus gozos ahora
mi prosa merecedora
de servirte. (*Libro*, 33)

and are similar in tone to those written by Montoro:

Cantica que fizo Antón de Montoro a nuestra señora

Tú que no tiras el velo
de la ceguedad que yerra
custodia rica del cielo
defensora de la tierra;

tal clemencia se te liega
que, por darnos salvación,
al que servicio te niega
le ganas buen galardón.

Fin

Pues aquel que con buen celo
cree lo que en ti sencierra
fácesle parte del cielo
y das bienes en la tierra. (*Costa*, 9)

Montoro's poem is based on the opposition between Earth and Heaven; the Virgin Mary is the guardian of the heavens and defender of the Earth. In fact, the Virgin Mary was traditionally seen as the mediator and interceding agent between God and mortals (compare Alfonso el Sabio's *Cantigas* as well as Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*). This idea is also expressed by the Archpriest of Hita: "Virgen del cielo, Señora/y del mundo mediadora." (*Libro*, 33)

Two elements in Montoro's composition are worthy of note: first, the use of the word "galardón" that directly remits us to the language of courtly love. Second, the word "sencierra" attests to the phenomenon of *copula* described by Derrida. Here, Montoro associates a direct object "me" with the verb "encerrar" in the third person.

Montoro again demonstrates that language is malleable and is manipulated in this specific instance in order to intensify the concept of perfection that characterizes the Virgin Mary.

Diametrically opposed in theme, tone and linguistic register are the Archpriest of Hita's verses dedicated to the ugly mountain girl, "la serrana fea." This specific composition is very similar linguistically and conceptually to Montoro's "A una mujer que era todo tetas y culo":

Tenía la cabeza mucho grande e sin guisa
cabellos cortos, negros, como corneja lisa
ojos hundidos, rojos; ve poco y mal divisa
mayor es que de osa su huella, cuando pisa. (*Libro*, 1012)

Such a shift in language register as that observed between the two poems exemplify the ability of language to continuously be metamorphosed and to being manipulated to achieve the writer's multiple designs. These two poems also evince the two extreme characterizations of women in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Peninsular literature: an idealistic vision on the one hand and a grotesque caricature on the other.

The proliferation of genres in the *Libro de Buen Amor*, a multiplicity that attests to the variety of literature practiced in fourteenth-century Spain, also bears testimony to the ambiguity inherent in language. If we consider genres as different forms of discourse, Juan Ruiz then points to the fact that language is multifaceted and ever-changing in its external forms and manifestations. In fact the multiplicity of genres demonstrates that the same words can be used in different genres and contexts. Metaphorically speaking, words wear successive masks, according to the generic context in which they appear. The multiplying effect of language results in the impossibility for language users to affix a definite meaning to words.

The unevenness of the Archpriest's language practices is reflected in the use of several poetic personae. Like Montoro, the Archpriest of Hita wears masks: he is successively himself, or Don Melón de la Huerta, or someone else, all by the magic of fiction. In some parts of the *Libro*, he appears as a devout Christian and in others as a sinner indulging in carnal love. In this particular juncture resides the ambiguity of the *Libro de Buen Amor*. The notion of the mask directly remits us to the world of the

carnavalesque and eventually to the very nature of language. In fact, as explained earlier, carnival subverts order and maintains ambiguity by disguising reality. So does language itself. The presence of the carnivalesque in the *Libro*, I believe, is also an expression of the turmoil of Archpriest of Hita's times. The objective of carnivalization, to use Bakhtin's expression, fulfills the same purpose as in Montoro's poetic corpus. An example in point of the use of the carnivalesque motif in the *Libro* is the fight between Don Carnal and Doña Cuaresma:

. . . Vino luego en su ayuda la salada sardina
que hirió muy reciamente a la gruesa gallina,
se atravesó en su pico ahogándola aína;
después, a don Carnal quebró la capellina . . .

. . . Andaba allí el atún, como un bravo león,
encontró a don Tocino, dijole gran baldón;
si no es por la cecina que desvió el pendón,
a don Lardón le diera en pleno corazón . . .

. . . Allí, con los lavancos, lidiaban barbos, peces;
la pescada habla al cerdo: -"¿Dó estás que no pareces?
Si vienes ante mí, te haré lo que mereces.
Métete en la Mezquita, no vayas a las preces." (*Libro*, 1103; 1106;
1108)

Malcolm Read explains that the "failure of synthesis [of the *Libro*] stems from an uncertainty of attitude to language on the part of Juan Ruiz" (127). The contradictory philosophies of life exposed in the *Libro* are therefore clearly connected to the Archpriest's vision of language (i.e., the conventionality of the work) in Read's own formulation. The Archpriest considers that language is shifting, ambiguous and ever-changing. The variety of genres as well as the wordplay are all manifestations of such a

vision. His contradictory self is but an extension or rather an illustration of such a philosophy of language.

The following composition illustrates how the Archpriest plays with the religious and mundane meanings of the word “cruz,” thus illustrating the capacity of language to diffuse meaning. His wordplay reminds the reader of Montoro’s manipulation of the word “prima” in the poem cited earlier:

Mis ojos no verán luz
pues perdido he a Cruz

Cruz cruzada, panadera,
quise para compañera:
senda creí carretera
como si fuera andaluz . . .

. . . Cuando la Cruz veía, yo siempre me humillaba;
me santiguaba siempre, cuando me la encontraba
Mi amigo más de cerca a la Cruz adoraba
Traición en tal cruzada yo me recelaba . . . (*Libro*, 115; 116; 121)

Read further explains that the pervasive ambiguity of the *Libro* “derives from an uncertainty in respect to two intuitively attractive but not mutually contradictory views of the nature of the word: the consideration of the word as God-given on the one hand and the assertion, on the other hand, of the conventionality of the name” (*Read*, 127; also see chapter one).

The Archpriest gives ample proof of language as God-given; for example, in the religious compositions dedicated to the Virgin Mary, in the speech given after Trotaconventos’s death, etc. This language is further defined by Derrida: “*Livre de Raison cette fois, manuscrit infini lu par ce Dieu, qui, de façon plus ou moins différée, nous eut prêté sa plume*” (*L’Ecriture*, 21). Such was also the case of Guilhem IX who plays with

language and concepts in "Farai un vers" but offers a different view of language as well as a different philosophy of life in the following poem:

. . . Per merce prec mon compaignon,
s'anc li fi tort, qu'il m'o perdon;
Et il prec En Jesu del torn,
En romans et en son lati.

De proeza e de joi fui,
Mais ara partem ambedui;
Et eu irai m'en a Selhui
On tut peccador troban fi. . .

Tot ai gerpit ant amar sueill,
Cavalaria et orgueill;
E pos Dieu platz, tot o acceuill.
E prec li que.m reteng'am si.

Toz mos amics prec a la mort
Que. i vengan tut e m'onren fort;
Qu'eu ai avut joi e deport,
Loing e pres, et e mon aizi.

In mercy's name I pray to my companion. if ever I wronged him
may he forgive me it; and may he pray Lord Jesus on His throne,
both in Romance and in what Latin he knows.

I have lived my life in prowess and in joy, but now we both part
company, and away I shall go to Him in Whom all sinners find
their end.

I have been most gay and lighthearted, but our Lord no more
wishes it so; now I cannot bear the burden, so near am I drawn to
my end.

All have I quit that I used to love, chivalry and noble pride;
and since it pleases God, all this I accept, and pray to Him to keep
me by His side.

All my friends I pray, at my death, to come and to do me great
honour, for I have known joy and delight both far and near, and
within my own bounds. (*Anthology*, VI)

These two opposite views of language are reminiscent of those later reconciled by Montoro's linguistic practices. We have seen how Montoro plays with language in many of his compositions but also includes in his poetic corpus a poem dedicated to the Virgin. Moreover, such poems as those dedicated to Queen Isabel as well as poems of circumstance use a different register of language. The shift in language registers as well as that in genres attests to a personal and linguistic search, conducted simultaneously. This search is the consequence of specific personal as well as social and cultural circumstances. The count of Poitiers, the Archpriest of Hita and Antón de Montoro share an interconnected philosophy of language closely linked to their personal circumstances. Guilhem's society was based on temporary structures (Kendrick, see ch. 1, p. 68) and his own social status was ambiguous.

Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita, lived in highly difficult times, characterized by political and social turmoil and changing economic factors (civil wars, first anti-Jewish pogroms; chapter two) as well as by the effects of the plague. Juan Ruiz's protagonist is also in an ambiguous situation since he presents himself as a member of the clergy, was an Archpriest, but was irremediably attracted by the mundane. His aspiration to the divine and attraction towards worldly pleasures undoubtedly created a conflict in this writer who also witnessed the hypocrisy of the members of his ecclesiastic brotherhood.

Similarly, Montoro finds himself in an ambiguous situation; he is a *converso* and as many members of that newly formed religious group, had to

endure the oppression of the dominant religious group, the Old Christians. Montoro was the witness of the rise of anti-Semitism which after his death, soon after 1477, reached its climax with the 1492 Edict of Expulsion.

These three authors' state of uncertainty is reflected in their language practices which are equally ever-changing. The means they use to conduct the search is language itself which is arbitrary, ambiguous and in a state of perpetual becoming. Guilhem IX, Juan Ruiz and Antón de Montoro, vacillate between two opposite attitudes in so far as their own being and language itself are concerned. Guilhem plays with the concept of love and with language at times but also reflects on the fictional nature of both. The Archpriest presents himself as an epicure who delights in earthly pleasures; yet, on other occasions he wears the garb of a perfect Christian and warns the reader against the dangers of earthly pleasures. Montoro, as we hope to have demonstrated, oscillates between being a defender of the *converso* cause and criticizing the Jews. He also consistently insists on his humble social origins but demands that he be judged on his true merits.

These three authors' language practices also vacillate between two extremes: a ludic conception of language that consists in playing with words and concepts, more particularly that of courtly love, and another view of language as God-given (Read, ch. 2). The result of the search -- both metaphysical and linguistic -- ends up in trick reflecting mirrors and make the writers personalities seem to proliferate indefinitely, not unlike language, the primary tool of their search.

Notes

Chapter three

¹ *El ropero*: Yirmiyahu Yovel in his "The New Otherness: Marrano Dualities in the First Generation" (The 1999 Swig Lecture, September 13) [no page number available] notes that

Throughout most of his life, Montoro was known -- and liked to refer to himself -- as El Ropero, meaning roughly "the clothes peddler" (*shmate* vendor in today's colloquial Yiddish). The appellation indicates a humble position in the garment business, neither artisan-tailor (*alfayate*) nor full-fledged merchant but one who simply buys and sells used clothes. Although Montoro was not as poor as he would have his readers believe -- he gave his daughter a decent dowry of 35000 maravedis and left similar assets to his two sons and wife -- he was attached to the title El Ropero as an ironic literary trademark and he made use of it in his poems. Perhaps, the image of old clothes being bought and sold, re-used and sold again, appealed to him as a figurative representation of his own inconstant and unsettled identity, a recurring theme in the text and subtext of his poems.

² Marithelma Costa notes that Alonso Velasco was "veinticuatro de Córdoba y capitán en la guerras de Granada (COT, p. 332) and adds that "En el Catálogo-índice, Dutton incluye ocho poemas suyos; dos relacionados con Montoro y el resto, con Fernando de la Torre. *Antón de Montoro: Poesía completa*. Estudio y notas de Marithelma Costa. Cleveland: Cleveland State University Press, 1990.

³ Ibid. Marithelma Costa's edition will be used throughout this chapter. All the poems will be cited by number. Costa's edition will be quoted as *Costa*.

⁴ Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Antología de Poeta Líricos*. 2 Vols. ed. D. Enrique Sánchez Reyes, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1944) 306.

⁵ Marqués de Santillana, *Poesías completas* II. Ed. Manuel Durán. (Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1980) 210.

⁶ Stephen Gilman. *La España de Fernando de Rojas*. (Madrid: Taurus, 1978) 157. Will be quoted as *La España*.

⁷ Peter Hutchinson: *Games, Authors, Play*: (London: Methuen, 1983) p. 14. quoted in Rawdon Wilson, in *Palamades' Shadow* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1990) 19. Rawdon's work will be referred to as *Palamades*.

⁸ Kenneth Burke. *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, (New York', 1957) 16. quoted by Gilman in *La España* 380.

⁹ Haim Beinart, *The conversos and their fate in Spain and the Jews*, ed. by Eli Kedourie (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992) 111. About the Catholic Kings, the critic notes that,

Ferdinand and Isabella, however, were opposed to local measures being taken against the Jews. When in 1486 the town of Valmaseda (in Vizcaya) ordered the Jews to leave, the crown ordered their return. When Tomas de Torquemada ordered the expulsion of the Jews from Saragossa and Albarracin in 1486, Ferdinand intervined and asked for a postponement of six months. The catholic monarchs' attitude seems to have been ambiguous since we explained in chapter two that it was with the agreement of the crown, more especially Ferdinand's that the decree of expulsion was promulgated in 1492.

¹⁰ Haim Beinart, *The conversos and their fate in Spain and the Jews*, ed. by Eli Kedourie (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992) 112, also explains that in 1488 two anti-*converso* works were published. Although they were published after Montoro's death (1477) they describe how Jews were viewed by the majority of Old Christians:

[The second booklet] had a special name: Libro llamado el Alboraique (after the name of Mohammed's legendary horse). The conversos are "Alboraiques," who have a wolf's mouth, human eyes, the ears of a greyhound, the body of an ox, the tail of a snake, and legs hoofed like various animals. Thus symbolically they are credited with possessing the characteristics of these animals: falsehood, cheating, cruelty, laziness, treachery to their religion and their desire to spread their venom. The author also presents a list of derogatory terms the conversos use in their daily conversation when referring to what is sacred to Christianity.

¹¹ Carlos Bousoño: *Teoría de la expresión poética*. (Madrid: Gredos: 1985) p. 31. Will be referred to as *Teoría*.

¹² Many critics have focused their attention on Montoro's social background:

Amador de los Ríos explains that “Tanto Menéndez y Pelayo como Cejador y Frauca subrayan la importancia del origen social del Ropero. Según Cejador y Frauca, Montoro es ‘el primer poeta que se allega al pueblo y bebe en su decir la fuerza satírica. Por su parte, Menéndez y Pelayo subraya la importancia de la actividad poética tardía de Montoro y declara que, aunque su obra ‘abarca el largo espacio de tres reinados [nunca fue] tan intensa y original como en su vejez.’ El polígrafo sin duda se refiere a las largas defensas poéticas de los conversos.” Amador de los Ríos también alude al giro que toma la obra tardía del *Ropero*: “las burlas se han trocado en sangrientas veras; e indignado contra los opresores, exhala en amargos acentos terribles acusaciones, sin curarse de las consecuencias que podían éstas acarrearle. Este tipo de textos es el que más ha llamado la atención de la crítica contemporánea pues constituye, en la producción poética del siglo XV, la única defensa, consistente y abierta de los conversos.” from José Amador de los Ríos, *Historia crítica de la literatura española* (Madrid: Imprenta de José Fernández Cancela, 1865), VI: p. 151. (quoted in Costa, XIII)

¹³ Maguaque: Marithelma Costa explains that this expression has: “un sentido ofensivo [y es] utilizada en la región de Córdoba. Se refiere al comportamiento de una persona que habla u obra en daño, deshonra o menoscabo de los suyos, no tanto por intrínseca maldad, cuanto por cobardía, apocamiento o sucio interés” (Costa, 210).

¹⁴ Adena Rosmarin, *The Power of Genre*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) 120.

¹⁵ Julio Caro Baroja *Los Judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea*, (Madrid: Istmo, 1978) III, 284.

¹⁶ The word *puto* also appears in its derogatory meaning in “Montoro a Don Aguilar cuando la destrucción de los conversos de Córdoba;” Marithelma Costa notes that Montoro uses this word

a fin de captar la benevolencia del noble, se disminuye el valor colectivo de los conversos en su honor, varonía y poder económico. Según Scholberg, estos actos de autodesdén eran muy comunes en la poesía conversa. El apelativo *puto* se utilizó para incitar el motín de 1465: “Stuñiga, Stuñiga, a pesar de putos judíos.” (29)

¹⁷ Here the poetic persona refers to the responsibility of Jews in Christ’ death. B. Netanyahu also discusses Menéndez Pelayo’s analysis of anti-Semitism.

Pelayo believes that there were additional factors that helped bring about the founding of the Inquisition. "The popular voice," he says, "accused the Jews also of other crimes and unheard of profanations." Moreover referring to the hatred of the Old Christians for the conversos, he says that the latter attracted to themselves the wrath of the former by such crimes as the assassination of the Holy Child of Laguardia (193). In B. Netanyahu. *Toward the Inquisition: Essays on Jewish and Converso History in Late Medieval Spain*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997).

¹⁸ In the following poem, Fernando de Pessoa explains that the poet is a master of illusions (fingidor):

O poeta é um fingidor
Finge tão completamente
que chega a fingir que é dor
a dor que deveras sente.

Pessoa *Autopsicografia* Obra poética, (Rio de Janeiro: Aguilar, 1965, p. 164) quoted by Carlos Bousoño, *Teoría de la expresión poética*. (Madrid: Gredos, 1985) 30.

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la difference*. (Paris: Ed du Seuil: 1967) p. 49. Will be quoted as *L'Ecriture*.

²⁰ María Rosa Lida de Malkiel "La hipérbole sagrada en la poesía castellana del siglo XV" *Revista de Filología Hispánica* 8 (1946): 121-130. Will be quoted as *Hiperbole*.

²¹ Ian MacPherson. "Secret Language in the Cancioneros: Some Courtly Codes". *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (1949): 51-63 at p. 58.

²² Keith Whinnom, *La poesía amatoria de la época de los Reyes Católicos*. Durham Modern Language Series 2. (Durham: U of Durham, 1981)

²³ Nancy Marino, *The Vaquera de la Finajosa: Was she a vision ? Romance Notes*, 26 (1986) 264.

²⁴ Alfonso Martínez de Toledo. *Arcipreste de Talavera o Corbacho*. Edición de Michael Gerli. (Madrid: Catédra, 1987). Will be quoted as *Corbacho*.

²⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the Bakhtinian concept of Carnival consult chapter five on the *Tragicomedia*.

²⁶ *Anthology of Troubadour Verse*. Ed. and trans. by Alan R. Press. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971). Poems are cited by number. Will be quoted as *Anthology*.

²⁷ D.R Sutherland, *The Language of the Troubadours and the Problem of Origins French Studies*, 10.3 (July 1956) 206.

²⁸ Philippe Ménard, *Mélanges de langue et de Litterature occitanes en hommage a Pierre Bec*. (Poitiers, Centre d'Etudes Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, 1991) 17.

²⁹ Juan Ruiz, Arcipreste de Hita. *Libro de Buen Amor*. Ed. María Brey Mariño (Madrid: Castalia, 1987). Will be quoted as *Libro*.

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Chapter four: The Treacherous Power of Words: Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo entre el amor y el viejo* or the Tragedy of an Old Man in Love.

Little is known about Ruy Sánchez Cota, also called *El Tio* or *El viejo* to distinguish him from other members of his family with the same name. Ruy Sánchez Cota is known as Rodrigo Cota or Rodrigo de Cota and is more particularly famous for two works, his *Epitalamio Burlesco* and his *Diálogo entre el amor y el viejo*.

Rodrigo Cota was born into a prestigious *converso* family, based in Toledo. His father, Alonso Cota, was treasurer of that city but was banished in 1449. That same year, Castile was invaded by Aragonese troops and the Castilian king needed money in order to meet mounting military expenses. Rodrigo's father had lent the crown money upon the request of Alvaro de Luna, Juan II's favorite. Alonso Cota offered that money but when Alvaro de Luna asked for more -- this time from the humbler inhabitants of Toledo -- the latter held Alonso Cota responsible for such an excess and set his house on fire. Following this tragedy, Pedro Sarmiento declared that no public office would be held by *conversos* in the city of Toledo.¹

Rodrigo Cota, the poet, was the eldest son of Alonso Cota and therefore benefited from the *mayorazgo* law which entitled the eldest son of a family to inherit the totality of his parents' property. Francisco Cantera Burgos believes that Rodrigo Cota was born around 1430 to 1440 y “como su padre fue fiel ejecutor y jurado de la ciudad de Toledo.”²

Like Fernando de Rojas, Rodrigo Cota was not a direct victim of the Inquisition; however, his father was a direct victim of anti-Semitism. Jews and *conversos* were despised by the lower classes for the often-prestigious positions they often occupied in Castile. Alonso Cota was banished from Toledo by the mayor Sarmiento.

As we explained earlier in this study, the jealousy towards the Jews -- aroused by the high positions some of them occupied and the association that most Jews had with usury -- was the main reason for anti-Semitism throughout Medieval Spain (see ch. 2).

Cota's attitude towards his Jewish origins is -- not unlike Montoro's -- ambiguous. Stephen Gilman remarks that two main attitudes could be observed among the *conversos*:

O había que camuflarse, o si no convertirse en eterno chocarrero habitual, categoría humana familiar de la época cuyo ingenio se especializa en observaciones chocantes y que por lo mismo hace de sus observadores -- sus *moscas y azechadores* -- un auditorio.³

Gilman further explains that "Para muchos conversos -- los poetas Rodrigo de Cota y Antón de Montoro son ejemplos conocidos -- lo molesto de su situación quedaba aliviada únicamente por esta exhibición" (113; n75). In fact, as we will further analyze, Rodrigo Cota gives testimony of his intimate knowledge of the Judaic law in his *Epitalamio Burlesco*. In the words of Menéndez y Pelayo, "El textode esta composición, [el epitalamio] es oscurísimo, no sólo por el mal estado del manuscrito, sino por las alusiones satíricas a usos poco sabidos de la población israelita en España . . ."⁴ Nevertheless, we know that Antón de Montoro accused Rodrigo Cota of

hiding his Jewish origins in his poem "Del mismo a unas que hizo Rodrigo Cota de Maguaque," analyzed later in this chapter. About that poem, Marithelma Costa remarks that

En las veintiséis coplas dirigidas a Rodrigo Cota (poema 101), el poeta subraya irónicamente el origen converso de su adversario, parodia sus intentos por aparentar una posición social que no le corresponde y le advierte los peligros que conllevan sus ataques contra los conversos. El ideal de Montoro es la "tolerancia" que había permitido durante el Medioevo la convivencia de las tres civilizaciones.⁵

This chapter will show that, despite their similar religious backgrounds, the two writers -- Montoro and Cota -- differ greatly in their literary achievements. In fact, Montoro, in the words of Costa "1) afirma su identidad cultural, 2) denuncia los móviles de las persecuciones políticas, 3) funda el valor social de los conversos."(XIV) Conversely, Rodrigo Cota's literary manifestations -- the *Epitalamio Burlesco* and the *Diálogo entre el amor y un viejo* -- are veiled expressions of their author's spiritual malaise. Rodrigo Cota, unlike Montoro, does not express openly his internal religious dilemma. As for Fernando de Rojas, in the words of Gilman ". . . después de escribir *La Celestina*, parece haber tomado el primer camino"[camuflarse] (*La España*, 113).

The reason for this difference in attitude between Antón de Montoro Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas can be accounted for by historical circumstances. Antón de Montoro was born at the beginning of the fifteenth century when asserting one's origins did not entail much risk-taking. Most of the *Ropero's* poems were written before the establishment of the Inquisition

in 1481 and therefore deal more openly with the delicate themes of conversion and the social integration of Jews. Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas belonged to the following generations: Cota was born in 1430 or 1440 -- in the middle of the century -- and Fernando de Rojas around 1470. The Inquisition was well under way throughout the adult life of those two authors. Marithelma Costa explains:

Sin embargo, hacia el final del siglo XV, cuando termina la Reconquista y se puede pensar en un Estado unitario, se ha de imponer una política regida por el binomio asimilación/exclusión; aquél que no se integre queda inmediatamente excluido. Las etapas de este proceso histórico pueden resumirse en: motines antijudíos, y anticonversos, estatutos de limpieza de sangre, establecimiento del Tribunal de la Inquisición y expulsión de los judíos. (*Costa*, XIV)

According to Stephen Gilman, this second generation of *conversos* -- and among them, more particularly, writers -- reflected upon their *converso* condition not openly but rather in a veiled way and their works became metaphors of the malaise of their caste. Commenting on the *converso* writer Diego de San Pedro, author of *La Cárcel de Amor*, Gilman asserts (see ch. two for *La Cárcel de Amor*):

By the time he sent the *Cárcel* to the printers in 1492 (among the other famous firsts of that year, it was the first Spanish novel written intentionally for publication) he, too, had undergone generational rebirth. The result was the insertion of a political fable for his time (constructed from chivalresque material) within the conventional allegory of courtly love. Arbitrary royal coercion is castigated, the injustice of Inquisitorial methods is exposed, and revolutionary change ("la revuelta de los tiempos") is predicted. In short, San Pedro's fictional and repressive Macedonia is in reality a picture of his homeland as he saw it in the year of its greatest triumph.⁶

Rodrigo de Cota was accused by his contemporaries not only of hiding his Jewish origins but also of attacking members of the Jewish caste. Antón de Montoro himself openly denounces Cota for his hypocrisy in the previously cited poem "Del mismo a una que hizo Rodrigo Cota de Maguaque" (chs. two and three). "Del mismo . . ." was written in response to Rodrigo Cota's *Epitalamio Burlesco* which openly ridicules the Jews and their practices. This piece was written against the Catholic Kings's treasurer, Arias de Avila, one of Rodrigo Cota's relatives.⁷ Diego Arias had failed to invite the poet on the occasion of his son's or nephew's wedding. The *Epitalamio* is thus an act of revenge against Arias de Avila. In this piece, Cota mainly ridicules the Jews and the *conversos* who took part in the wedding and more particularly the bride and groom who "will give birth to a son as big as Goliath the Philistine and who would inherit his parents' trade and become a tax collector" (*Poetas líricos*, 76).

In the following stanzas, Cota characterizes the groom by openly insisting on his Jewish origins:

Volvamos a nuestro hecho;
Es un mancevo sin mal,
De muy orrado cabal
Arrendador de cohecho.

De un aguelo Avenzuzén
Y del otro Abenamías;
De la madre Sophomías
Del padre todo Cohén. (qtd. by Burgos Cantera, 127)

Cota also refers ironically to the foods that were served during the banquet, all with Jewish associations:

En la voda desta aljama
no se comio peliagudo,
ni pescado sin escama,
con quanto el marido pudo. (122)

sino mucha berengena
y acafran con acelguilla.
quien Jesu diga en la cena,
que no coma alvondiguilla. (122)

What could have been Cota's motivation when writing the *Epitalamio*? He had most certainly been offended not to have been invited to the wedding; yet it is not hard to imagine that Cota was himself jealous of Arias' prestigious position if we consider that there was much enmity between Jews and *conversos*. Caro Baroja notes that there were various groups of people among the *conversos*:

Entre los conversos se repiten una y otra vez tipos como los que siguen:

I. El que se convierte en apologista de la religión católica y ataca a la religión de Israel.

II. El que denuncia y persigue a los "criptojudíos", por celo real o por interés económico.

III. El que satiriza a sus antiguos correligionarios.⁸

According to Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota clearly belongs to all three categories:

A tal fin que, muy ufano,
haciendo de más prudente,
y así queréis de troyano,
por hacer de muy buen cristiano,
tratar del negro pariente.
Pues no son buenos antojos
los con que el cuerpo se daña
con injurias, con enojos,

quebrantan entrambos ojos
por sanar una pestaña.

. . . La muy gran injuria dellos
lugar hubiera, por Dios,
casi de pies a cabellos,
si por condenar a ellos
quedárades libre vos;
mas muy poco vos salvastes,
no sé como no lo vistes,
que, en lugar de ver, cegastes,
porque a ellos amargastes
y a vos en lleno heristes.

Porque, muy lindo galán,
no pareciera ser asco
esta culpa que vos dan,
si vos llamaran Guzmán
o de aquellos de Velasco;
mas todos, según diré,
son los de Medina hu,
de los de Benatavé,
y si éstos, don Mosé,
vuestro aguelo, don Barú.

. . . Pues, fendo tales procesos
no muy dignos de loores,
estimados por excesos,
hacéis remover los huesos
de vuestros antecesores;
que dirá quien vos oyó,
con aquel gemido fuerte,
lo quel águila habló;
que de sus alas salió
de quien rescibió la muerte. (*Costa*, 101)⁹

Cota “se hacía de buen cristiano” which corresponds to Caro Baroja's first category among his classification of Jews and *conversos* and “trataba al negro pariente” which puts him in Baroja's second and third categories.

Montoro directly conveys the idea that Rodrigo Cota was a *converso* in the following verses: “en puerto más combatido/el ciego que nunca vido/no

trate del medio tuerto" (101). Cota is here identified as the "blind man" (a *converso*) who ironically and unjustly, according to Montoro, pokes fun at the *tuerto* (from the same caste) in his *Epitalamio*.

Menéndez y Pelayo characterizes Rodrigo Cota as follows:

Llamóse Rodrigo de Cota de Maguaque y era de raza judaica; pero no sólo renegaba de tal origen, sino que parece haber cometido la indigna flaqueza de hacer causa común con los degolladores de los conversos, provocando con ello las iras de su antiguo correligionario Antón de Montoro. (*Poetas Líricos*, 199)¹⁰

Critics do not agree on Cota's true personality and on his attitude towards the Jews. The majority of critics who have studied the author share Menéndez y Pelayo's opinion. Francisco Cantera Burgos as well as Elisa Aragone do not, however, agree on the fact that Cota was a *malsín*¹¹

Cota era descendiente de judíos y [por esta razón] tanto tuvo que padecer en su carne y hacienda de los atropellos miserables de 1449 y 1467 contra los conversos de Toledo. (*Cantera*, 67)

Cantera also comments that the term "Maguaque" -- used by Antón de Montoro to address Rodrigo Cota in his poem -- cannot refer to Rodrigo Cota, the poet. It seems difficult to agree with these two critics since the literary testimonies left to us (i.e. the *Epitalamio Burlesco*) and Montoro's poem on Cota attest to the contrary.

Yet another literary fact -- which could well point to Rodrigo Cota's hostile attitude towards the Jews -- is the attribution to Cota of the satirical works *Las Coplas del Provincial* and *Mingo Revulgo*, an attribution acknowledged by the editor of the *Diálogo entre el amor y el viejo* in his preface to the work in 1569 (see Introduction for *Las Coplas del Provincial* and

Mingo Revulgo). Amador de los Ríos believes that “No se ha alegado razón ninguna convincente y siendo converso y tildado de relapso . . . no es verosímil que se ensangrantase contra los judíos.”¹²

Neither Menéndez y Pelayo nor Cantera Burgos believe that these two works were written by Rodrigo Cota. As for the *Coplas del Provincial*, Menéndez y Pelayo believes that Cota would be “el último poeta a quien sentiríamos tentación de atribuírselas” since the critic believes that those verses are far too different in nature from the *Diálogo* (Cantera, 66). Opposed is J. Fitzmaurice-Keley who believes that “aquel hacia el cual se inclina la balanza de la probabilidad es Cota” (66).

Whether those works -- *Las Coplas del Provincial* or *Mingo Revulgo* -- were written by Cota or not, is not important for the purposes of this study. What seems more significant, I believe, is that they were attributed to Rodrigo Cota in the first place. Such attribution confirms two major facts about the author: first, that Rodrigo Cota was perceived in his times as a *malsín* since the *Coplas del Provincial* openly condemns Jews; second, that the malaise experienced by the *converso* writer could have indeed led him to write such satirical works as those mentioned.

As I will hope to illustrate in this chapter, this feeling of otherness and marginalization experienced by the caste of the *conversos* is reflected in Rodrigo Cota's most famous literary piece, *El Diálogo entre el amor y el viejo*. More precisely, I will analyze how writing for Cota is the point of departure of a reflection upon *converso* existence. Not unlike the linguistic practices

found in Montoro's poetic corpus and Fernando de Rojas' *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, those reflected in Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo* are suggestive of the ambiguity its author experienced in his social and literary surroundings.

The *Diálogo* is yet another parody of courtly love, and for this reason can be compared to those poems of Montoro that parody that same literary tradition and to Fernando de Rojas' *Tragicomedia*. The main irony in the poem is the fact that the lover is an old man who falls in love. As mentioned earlier in chapter one, his advanced age contravenes the rules codified by Andreas Capellanus who reminds us that one of the essential rules of *fin' amor* is precisely the youth of the lovers.

Yet, the use of the old man in the work goes beyond a simple parody of the philosophy of courtly love. The old man, *Viejo*, is a metaphor for the state of decrepitude and malaise of his caste and represents the author himself. *Viejo* has established a dialogue with Love, *Amor*, who eventually convinces him, against his better judgment, to fall in love again. The old man resists strongly at first but finally gives in under the influence of Love's rhetorical powers.

The protagonist -- the old man -- is in search of an emotional rebirth that he believes he will find through earthly love. The dialogue between these two characters could metaphorically be an interior dialogue between the two parts of the divided self, between "Rodrigo" and "Cota." Not unlike Montoro who establishes a dialogue with his horse to exorcise his internal insecurities and to try to find his own identity, Cota could have very well

established a dialogue between different aspects that constitute his *converso* personality. The dialogic form of the work is indeed appropriate for such self-exploration.

Love manages to convince the old man to fall in love again, only to end up ridiculing him. The means of the persuasion is dexterous rhetorical language. The linguistic practices used by *Amor* are highly reminiscent of the old bawd Celestina's as we will have opportunity to explore in chapter five. Both Love and Celestina embody the treacherous power of language. Their use of persuasion manages to convince both protagonists -- *Viejo* and Melibea -- and eventually leads to destruction. *Viejo* -- as the reader can easily guess -- will suffer the devastating effects of *Amor* while Melibea's capitulation to Celestina's eventually leads to the death of five protagonists in the *Tragicomedia*. In the case of the *Diálogo*, the effects of language are literally those of a mirage which deceive the listener, the old man, and lead him to his ruin.

The *Diálogo* shares more than one parallel with the *Tragicomedia*, whose first act Fernando de Rojas tentatively attributed to Rodrigo Cota (or Juan de Mena). Rodrigo Cota belonged to the previous generation of *converso* authors; yet, Cota and Rojas share a similar vision of the world. The *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia* analyze two essential and central themes: love and language viewed by their respective authors as treacherous and which become, therefore, metaphors for the ambiguity of Cota and Rojas' identities.

El Diálogo entre el amor y el viejo was probably written between 1470 and 1480 and was first published anonymously in the *Cancionero General de Hernando del Castillo* (Valencia, 1511) (*Poetas líricos*, 202). The *Diálogo* is a 630-verse poem made of 70 stanzas using the *redondilla* and *quintilla* forms. Critics have acknowledged its dramatic characteristics: “el elemento dramático del diálogo dentro del alegorismo amoroso cancioneril, [se encuentra] sobre todo en la parte segunda de la obrita y en la figura del rival del Amor” (*Cantera*, 72).

Cota's piece is clearly hybrid in nature; it belongs to the genres of both drama and poetry. The double literary identity of the work is highly reminiscent of Rojas' *Tragicomedia de Calisto and Melibea*. As we will explain in chapter five, Rojas' work combines dramatic elements as well as novelistic ones; moreover, tragedy is commingled with comedy in the work. This unique combination forces us to revisit the issue of genre -- or, rather, the multiplicity of genres -- in a given literary work. Genre is directly connected to the issue of inscribing forms and functions. E. D. Hirsch believes that genre is a tool to understand the text:

this description of the genre-bound character of understanding is, of course, a version of the hermeneutic circle, which in its classical formulation has been described as the interdependence of part and whole: the whole can be understood only through its parts, but the parts can be understood only through the whole.¹³

In the case of the *converso* authors, genre and writing, I believe, are intimately related to the plurality of identities found in *conversos*. The different genres -- the combination of the tragic and comic genres as well as

the novelistic discourse and the theatrical elements in the case of the *Tragicomedia*, and the poetic and dramatic genres in the case of the *Diálogo* -- are a metaphorical expression of their multiple selves. Both authors experiment with language in order to explore their inner selves. Rojas and Cota wish to demonstrate that genres -- which can be regarded as different ways to present the "reality" of the text -- illustrate the capacity of language to multiply -- precisely under the guise of different masks or genres. In turn, the multiplicity of genres points to the acentric nature of both authors' status in fifteenth-century Spain. The multiplicity of genres is not a negative element, as Carlos Moreno Hernández notes about *La Celestina*, with comments that could easily be applied to the *Diálogo*:

... A caballo entre dos épocas, su propio ser como texto es ambivalente e inclasificable. ¿Es esto negativo? Al contrario; si hay algo que caracterice lo que hoy denominamos **literatura** es su negatividad, su resistencia a la teoría y a la interpretación misma, su capacidad para provocar desde lecturas creativas y malentendidos fructíferos hasta interpretaciones más o menos aberrantes. En ninguna parcela se hace más patente la ambivalencia que en la cuestión del género de la obra y, en particular, en su consideración o no como novela.¹⁴

The *Diálogo*, like the *Tragicomedia*, was meant to be read aloud and theatrical elements abound. In words of the playwright Moratín:

Este diálogo es una representación dramática con acción, nudo y desenlace; entre dos interlocutores no es posible exigir mayor movimiento teatral. Supone decoración escénica, máquina, trajes y aparato; el estilo es conveniente, fácil y elegante; los versos tienen fluidez y armonía. (qtd. by Menéndez y Pelayo; *Poetas Líricos*, 201)

Menéndez y Pelayo further comments that:

En el diálogo hay algo más: hay contraste y lucha de pasiones (contienda como el autor la llama) dentro de un argumento que se desarrolla con dórica sencillez sin más artificio que la viva expresión de los afectos. La forma del contraste que puede considerarse como una de las elementales del arte dramático, aunque tenga sus raíces en la poesía lírica, aparece con frecuencia en los tiempos medios, dentro y fuera de las escuelas de trovadores: debates entre el cuerpo y el alma, entre los sentidos corporales, entre el estío y el invierno . . . (201-202)

The use of dialogue in Cota's work serves two purposes, I believe; it offers the reader the opportunity to witness directly the confrontation between the two characters, *Amor* and *Viejo*, furthermore, it gives the author the opportunity to develop to their full potential the linguistic games at play in *Amor's* discourse. Some of the functions of dialogue are similar in the *Tragicomedia* also (see chapter five on the use of dialogue and asides).

Rodrigo Cota's objective, as I see it, is to underline the treacherous power of language through the use of his character, *Amor*. As we will develop in the second part of this chapter, Love's characteristics are also those of language: Love is treacherous, hypocritical and leads its victims to destruction and ruin.

Love, and its devastating effects, is undoubtedly one of the *Diálogo's* main themes. Alan Deyermond explains that it "depicts, vividly and bitterly, an old man's reluctant surrender to love and his irreparable humiliation."¹⁵

The fact that Cota should have chosen an old man as Cupid's victim vilifies love more significantly than if the victim had been a young man. As Deyermond further explains: "Sexual love was, according to the later Middle

Ages, both unsuitable and reprehensible in the elderly" (*Animal Imagery*, 133); therefore the presence of the old man as protagonist in the *Diálogo* is highly parodic. Not unlike Calisto who contravenes the basic rules of courtly love, the old man contradicts one of its main tenets: youth. Both Calisto and the *Viejo* are parodic lovers. The objective underlying such parodies is, I believe, to ridicule courtly love by insisting on the tragic consequences it brings about. Both characters are indeed "puppets" in Love's hands. The objective underlying the parody of that literary school in the *Diálogo* is akin to Montoro's and Rojas': de-construct a literary trend, in vogue in the fifteenth century for political reasons. J. Huizinga reminds us that "In order to forget the painful imperfection of reality the nobles turn to the continual illusion of a high and heroic life. They wear the mask of Lancelot and of Tristan. It is an amazing self-deception . . ." ¹⁶

Courtly love was easy to parody because of its hyperbolic nature. In June Hall Martín's words:

It is not difficult to see why courtly love should be an inevitable target for parody. Parody ordinarily directs itself towards a work, style, or tradition that is well known to its audience. . . While the ideal was beautiful, it was unnatural and unreal. The whole idea of a codification of love attests to this fact. And the idea that an emotion such as love can be governed by a set of rules is inherently absurd. (*Martín*, 16; 20)

The *Diálogo* can be analyzed as a reversal of the canonical literary tradition of courtly love. The *locus amoenus* -- traditionally the scene of amorous encounters -- is in the *Diálogo*, decrepit:

Quanto más qu'este vergel
No produze locas flores,

Ni los frutos y dulcores
Que solíes hallar en él.
Sus verduras y hollajes
Y delicados frutales,
Hechos son todos saluajes,
Convertidos en linajes
De natios de eriales.

La beldad de este jardin
Ya no temo que la halles,
Ni las ordenadas calles,
Ni los muros de jazmin;
Ni los arroyos corrientes
De biuas aguas notables,
Ni las aluerkas ni fuentes,
Ni las aues produzientes
Los cantos tan consolables. (*Diálogo*, 6)

The idea of reversal of the ideal courtly *locus amoenus* is here emphasized by the repetition of the negatives “no” and “ni” which combined, deny the beauty of the “huerto” (garden) and insist on its state of decrepitude. The lack of pleasant aromas, (“Ni los muros de jazmin”), of beauty (“La beldad de este jardin/Ya no temo que la halles”) and, finally, of pleasant sounds (“Ni las aves produzientes/los cantos tan consolables”) convey images of abandonment and solitude to the reader. All these negative attributes are used to introduce the advanced age of the protagonist in the following extended metaphor, based on the similarities between a house in ruins and the aging body of the old man:

Ya la casa se deshizo,
De sotíl lauor estraña,
y tornose esta cabaña
De cañuelas de carrizo.
De los frutos hize truecos
Por escaparme de tí,
Por aquellos troncos secos,
Carcomidos, todos huecos,

Que parescen cerca mí. (*Diálogo*, 6)

As we explained in chapter one, youth was an essential ingredient of courtly love. The troubadour Bertrán de Born describes in the following poem an old man -- who could be seen as the antithesis of the ideal courtly lover and is highly reminiscent of Cota's *Viejo* in the *Diálogo*.

Vielhs es rics hom, quan re no met en gatge
et li sobra baltz e vis e bacos;
per vielh to tenh, quan lieura uous e fromatge
a jorn charnal (si non:) sos companhos;
per vielh, quan vest chapa sobre mantel,
per vielh, quan a chaval qu'om sieu apel;
vielhs es, quan vol un jorn en patz estar,
e vielhs, si pot guandir ses baratar.

[A man of means is old when he won't risk a thing,
and he hoards up grain and wine and bacon;
and I consider him old when he puts eggs and cheese on
the table for himself and his friends on meat-eating days,
old when he has to wear a hood on top of his cloak,
old when he owns a horse another man has trained;
he is old when he wants to sit one day in peace,
and old when he can pull out before he squanders everything.]¹⁷

The following description of the ideal courtly *locus amoenus*, found in another of Bertran de Born's poems, is diametrically opposed to the description found in the *Diálogo*:

Bem platz lo gais temps de pascor,
que fai fuolhas e flors venir;
e platz mi, quan auch la baudor
dels auzels, que fan retentir
lor chan per o boschatge;
e platz mi, quan vei sobre.ls pratz
tendas e pavilhos fermatz;
et ai gran alegratge,
quan vei per champanha renjatz
chavaliers e chavals armatz.

[I love the joyful time of Easter,

that makes the leaves and flowers come forth,
and it pleases me to hear the mirth
of the birds, who make their song
resound through the woods,
and it pleases me to see upon the meadows
tents and pavilions planted,
and I feel a great joy
when I see ranged along the field
knights and horses armed for war.] (*Lyrics*, 45)

Personification and allegory are the two main poetic devices used in the remainder of the poem. Courtly love is personified, as it often is in medieval literary writings, to underscore its inevitable influence over and dominance of human affairs. As for the use of allegory, C. S. Lewis explains that:

Allegory, in some sense, belongs not to medieval man but to man, or even to mind, in general. It is of the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms. What is good or happy has always been high like the heavens and bright like the sun . . . Symbolism comes to us from Greece, It makes its first effective appearance in European thought with the dialogues of Plato. The Sun is the copy of the Good. Time is the moving image of eternity . . . 'You may be surprised,' says Dante, 'that I speak of love as if it were a thing that could exist by itself; and not only as if it were an intelligent substance, but even as if it were a corporeal substance. Now, this, according to the truth is false. For love has not, like a substance, an existence of its own, but is only an accident occurring in a substance.'¹⁸

The old man addresses personified *Amor* as follows:

Sal del huerto miserable;
Ve buscar dulce floresta
Ni tú ni tus seruidores
Podés bien estar comigo;
Que aún qu'esten llenos de flores,
Yo sé bien cuantos dolores
Ellos traen siempre consigo. (*Diálogo*, 6)

This style of personification of Love is, in words of C. S. Lewis, “almost equally connected with the subject of the ‘love-religion’ and with that of allegory” (*Allegory*, 31). It is also present in Archpriest of Hita's *Libro de Buen Amor* in the famous dialogue between the author and Love (*De como el amor visito al arcipreste y de la disputa que ambos sostuvieron*):

Una noche sostuve combate peregrino:
pensaba yo en mi suerte, furioso (y no de vino),
cuando un hombre alto, hermoso, cortésmente, a
mí vino. Le pregunté quien era; dijo: - Amor, tu vecino.”¹⁹

The poetic persona defines Love as thus:

Cerrada estaua mi puerta,
¿A qué vienes? Por do entraste?
Dí, ladrón, ¿porque saltaste
Las paredes de mi huerta? . . .

El viejo.

Sí, que no tengo en oluido
Cómo hieres y atormentas; . . .

El viejo.

Blanda cara de alacrán . . . (*Diálogo*, 5; emphasis added)

The parallels between the *Diálogo* and the *Libro de Buen Amor* are numerous. Love shares the same characteristics in both. According to Cota's protagonist, love is a thief (*un ladrón*) who climbs over walls (*saltaparedes*); it hurts (*hiere*) and torments (*atormenta*); it is a scorpion (*alacrán*). Love is clearly associated with snakes and rattle snakes (*Las culebras y serpientes*) since they are apparently soft and pleasant to look at (*son muy blandas y pintadas*). But they are also deceitful since they sting with their venom (*Mas*

un secreto venino dexando pueden llegar). The major attribute of earthly (*courtly*) love is indeed deceit.

The Archpriest of Hita describes love and also deplores its deceitful nature:

Una falta le hallo al Amor poderoso
la cual a vos, señoras, descubrirla no oso;
pero no me toméis por decidor medroso;
aquí está: que el Amor es un gran mentiroso. (*Libro*, 161)

and further elaborates on this characteristic in his debate with Love:

Con enojo muy grande le empecé a denostar;
le dije: - "Si Amor eres, no puedes aquí estar,
eres falso, embustero y ducho en engañar;
salvar no puedes uno, puedes cien mil matar. (182)

Sempronio, Calisto's servant in Rojas' *Tragicomedia*, similarly insists on the devastating effects of love when he tries to convince his master not to engage in a love affair with Melibea:

Sempronio: ¡Ha, ha, ha! ¿Este es el fuego de Calisto; éstas son sus congoxas? Como si solamente el amor contra él assestara sus tiros. O soberano Dios, cuán altos son tus misterios, cuánta premia pusiste en el amor, que es necessaria turbación en el amante! Su límite pusiste por maravilla. Paresce al amante que atrás queda; todos pasan, todos rompen, pungidos y esgarrochados como ligeros toros, sin freno saltan por las barreras. Mandaste al hombre por la mujer dexar el padre y las madre. Agora no sólo aquello, mas a ti y a tu ley desamparan, como agora Calisto. Del qual no me maravillo, pues los sabios, los profetas por el te olvidaron.)²⁰

As explained in chapter one, most of the troubadours praised the pains inflicted upon the male lovers by Love and declared that those pains were gratefully welcomed and even enjoyed. The Archpriest of Hita, Cota and

Rojas openly criticize Love and its ill effects: Cota's *Viejo* rails in the following verses:

Ni tú ni tus seruidores
Podés bien estar conmigo;
Que aún qu'esten llenos de flores,
Yo sé bien cuantos dolores
Ellos traen siempre consigo,

Tú traydor eres, amor,
De los tuyos enemigo,
Y los que biuen contigo
Son ministros de dolor.
Sábete que sé que son
Afán, desden y deseo,
Sospiro, celos, pasión.
Osar, temer, afición,
Guerra, saña, deuaneo,
Tormento y desesperanca,
Engaños con ceguedad,
Lloros y catiuidad,
Gongoxa, rauia, mudanca;
Tristeza, dubda, coraje,
Lisonja, troque y espina
Y otros mil deste linaje,
Que con su falso visaje
Su forma nos desatina. (*Diálogo*, 6)

The poetic "I" is therefore "desengañado" -- he is aware of the dangers of love -- to use a term familiar in the sixteenth-and seventeenth-century picaresque novel. The poetic "I" has earlier experienced love as Love tells us:

En tu habla representas
Que nos has bien conocido. (6)

This last stanza uses allegories in order to characterize the different attributes of love: "Afán, desdén y deseo,/Sospiro, celos, pasión etc." It is highly reminiscent of Diego de San Pedro's characterization of love. In his introduction to San Pedro's *Cárcel de Amor*, Keith Whinnom notes,

La alegoría en general, ofrece una interpretación plástica de ideas abstractas, igual que un gráfico en papel cuadriculado nos facilita hoy día la comprensión inmediata de datos matemáticos. Desde luego este cuadro hablado que es la alegoría, hay que convertirlo en una imagen visual.²¹

Such is the function of allegory according to Whinnom who admits that “En cuanto a la *Cárcel de Amor*, creo que el lector moderno encontrará algo difícil retener una clara imagen visual de cómo es la prisión” (51). In the case of the *Diálogo*, allegory fulfills the function cited by Whinnom and therefore reinforces the graphic impact of the dialogue. Dialogue and allegory used jointly in Cota's work convey a vivid picture of the ill effects of love which is one of the author's main objectives in the *Diálogo*. Whinnom further explains about San Pedro's *Cárcel*:

Hay en la Cárcel una concatenación interna de todas las unidades empleadas y la alegoría inicial de esta obra también contribuye de una manera importante. Permite a San Pedro explicar, de un modo artístico y ameno, toda una psicología de la pasión amorosa. En efecto, no se ve bien cómo lo hubiera conseguido de otra manera, porque habría sido difícil introducir un discurso explicativo, tal como su Sermón, en una historia parecida. (50)

Love is also seen as cruel and capable of producing insanity on the part of the lover in both the *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia*. The image of the “saltaparedes” used to characterize the male lover is found in both works. In Cota's poem, love “salta las paredes de la huerta del viejo” and in the *Tragicomedia*, Sempronio makes the following comment on male lovers: “todos pasan, todos rompen, pungidos y esgarrochados comoligeros toros, sin freno saltan por las barreras” (TC, 93;94). Furthermore, Melibea, when

infuriated by Calisto's lack of restraint and Celestina's speech describes the young man thus:

¡Jesú, no oyga yo mentar más esse loco saltaparedes, fantasma de noche, luengo como cigüeña, figura de para miento malpintado, sino aqui me caeré muerta! (TC, 162)

The wall or barrier is highly metaphorical in both cases. It represents the obstacles facing the lover as he sets out to obtain his lady's favors. Not unlike Love in Cota's *Diálogo* -- who metaphorically wants to enter the old man's garden -- Calisto, who personifies passionate and uncontrolled love in Rojas' work, truly breeches Melibea's garden walls: "Entrando Calisto una huerta empós dun falcon suyo halló y a Melibea de cuyo amor preso, comencóle de hablar" (85). The destructive power of love is reiterated in the *Tragicomedia* by Pleberio's famous words in his final soliloquy:

¡O amor, amor que no pensé que tenías fuerca ni poder de matar a tus sujetos! Herida fue de ti mi juventud. Por medio de tus brasas passé ¿cómo me soltaste para me dar la paga de la huida en mi vejez? Bien pensé que de tus lazos me avía librado cuando los quarenta años toqué, quando fui contento con mi conyugal compañera, . . . ni sé si hieres con hierro, ni si quemas con fuego; sana dexas la ropa; lastimas el corazón. ¿Quién te puso nombre que no te conviene? Si amor fueses, amarias a tus sirvientes; si los amasses, no les darías pena; si alegres biviessen, no se matarían como agora mi amada hija. (341)

and are also expressed by Melibea herself:

Por cierto, tú lo pides como mujer bien esperta en curar tales enfermedades. Mi mal es de corazón, la ysquierda teta es su aposentamiento; tiende sus rayos a todas partes. Lo segundo, es nuevamente nascido en mi cuerpo, que no pensé jamás que podría dolor privar el seso como éste haze; túrbame la cara; quítame el comer; no puedo dormir; ningún género de risa querría ver. (TC, 241)

These tragic consequences of love had already been expressed in part, by the Archpriest of Hita in his dialogue with Love: Love leads to insanity and the “imprisonment” of the lover:

Enloquecidos trae a muchos tu saber;
les estorbas el sueño, el comer y el beber,
haces a muchos hombres a tanto se atrever
por ti, que cuerpo y alma llegarán a perder...

Cuando a uno aprisionas, no le alivias con nada,
hoy y mañana humillas su vida acongojada;
el que te cree, preso gemirá en tu mesnada
y por placer poquillo andará gran jornada. (*Libro*, 184; 186)

Love eventually leads to ruin:

Los que no te probaron en buen día nacieron,
vivieron sin cuidados, nunca se entristecieron;
desde que te encontraron, todo su bien perdieron,
como pasó a las ranas cuando un rey exigieron. (198)

The *Viejo* of Cota's *Diálogo* further parodies the philosophy of courtly love by its insistence on the *joi* that it produces in the old protagonist. After falling prey to *Amor* the old man exclaims:

Amor:

Hete aquí bien abracado;
Dime, ¿que sientes agora?

Viejo

Siento rauia matadora,
Plazer lleno de cuydado;
Siento fuego muy crescido,
Siento mal y no lo veo;
Sin rotura está herido;
No te quiero ver partido,
Ni apartado de deseo. (*Diálogo*, 13)

The old man reiterates many of the *topoi* found in the philosophy of courtly love (i.e., the willingness on the part of the lover to suffer and to desire). The irony resides in the fact that those feelings are expressed by an old man, i.e., the antithesis of the courtly lover. The same phenomenon occurs with Melibea in the *Tragicomedia*. The young lady expresses feelings similar to those found in *fin'amor* but these are ironic since they are expressed by a woman who, according to the philosophy of courtly love, is to play a limited, passive role in the amorous exchange (see chapter five for examples of Melibea as a perfect courtly lover).

Alan Deyermond has observed of the *Diálogo* that:

In the debate which follows, and which ends with the Old Man's surrender, animal imagery is prominent. In some cases, it is subordinated to a more general pattern, as in the Old Man's reference to the birds which used to sing in his garden. (*Animal Imagery*, 134)

Deyermond further explains that this use of animal imagery fulfills a specific function in the *Diálogo*: all the characteristics of the animals evoked in the work become metaphors for the intrinsic qualities of love as, for example, in the case of scorpion and the sirens, "the scorpion can be a symbol of lust." It appears in this role in the Middle English *Ancrene Riwe* (ca 1200?) and in Chaucer's Parson's Tale; in *La Celestina*, the symbolism becomes more explicit:

Celestina: Mal sosegadilla debes tener la punta de la barriga.
Pármemo - Como cola de alacrán! Celestina. - Y aún peor: que la otra muerde sin hinchar y la tuya hincha por nueve meses."
(qtd. by Deyermond, TC, 134)

The sirens are yet another good example of the symbolism of animals:

The sirens then, represent not only physical danger but also, because their seductive beauty incites to lechery, the damnation of anyone unwary enough to listen to them. (Deyermond, *Animal Imagery*, 135)

The presence of snakes is recurrent in the three works studied here: the *Libro de Buen Amor*, the *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia*. The reptile seems to be, in the eyes of these three authors, the animal that best embodies the treachery of love. We find in the *Libro de Buen Amor* this reference to Love's venom:

El Arcipreste:

Con engaños, lisonjas y sutiles mentiras
emponzoñas las lenguas, envenenas tus viras,
hiere a quien más te sirve tu flecha cuando tiras;
separas de las damas a los hombres, por iras. (*Libro*, 183)

In this particular instance, the Archpriest directly associates Love with language and more precisely with deceitful language. In fact, Love has the power to ("[emponzoñar] (poison) las lenguas"). In Hita's view, language is deceitful; Love uses language in order to make its victim succumb to its invincible power. The same association between Love and language appears in the *Tragicomedia*. In Rojas' work it is the old bawd Celestina who embodies the corrupting essence of both language and Love [let us be reminded that the old-bawd considers that her power to convince resides in her "lengua," in her tongue. Love and language play a conflictive role, that of *pharmakon*, a concept analyzed by Derrida. Love and language are viewed as a cure by their victims; yet, they end up "poisoning" their followers and listeners. Trotaconventos, in the *Libro*, plays a role similar to Celestina's. In

fact, the Archpriest and the old go-between's joint efforts result in Doña Endrina's capitulation.

The *Viejo* of the *Diálogo* is also fully aware of the treachery involved in amatory linguistic practices when, like the Archpriest, he uses the image of the snake and retorts to Love:

Viejo

Las culebras y serpientes
Y las cosas enconadas
Son muy blandas y pintadas
Y á la vista muy plazientes;
Mas un secreto venino
Dexando pueden llegar
Qual, segun que yo adeunino
Dexarías en el camino
Que conmigo quiés lleuar. (*Diálogo*, 7)

Finally, the young Melibea, when finally confessing her love for Calisto, exclaims, "Madre mía, que me comen este corazón serpientes dentro de mi cuerpo." (TC , 239)

The snake is an appropriate image for love's treachery since it is clearly associated with human sin and temptation. The serpent -- in Deyermond's words -- is symbolic as well of "illicit sexual passion" (*Animal Imagery*, 136). The snake is invariably also associated with hypocrisy and dissimulation. These are the qualities Rodrigo Cota, the Archpriest and Fernando de Rojas join in their attacks on Love.

The use of animals in the *Diálogo* allows the writer to distance himself from what he is narrating. It is indeed a Medieval tradition, found in fables among other literary manifestations, to use animals in order to describe

human characteristics. The use of animals permits the writer to play with language and to engage the reader in a game of interpretations. By using bestiary images, Rodrigo Cota illustrates the Derridian concept of *difference* applied to language. As I observed in the introduction, the French philosopher considers that language happens “*apres coup*, a retardement” (afterwards). The reader's task is precisely to decipher the text, i.e., to assign it a meaning, by comparing the main bestiary characteristics found in the *Diálogo* with human ones. The use of animal imagery thus emphasizes the reader's participation in the elaboration of meaning(s). The animals present in the text become codes that the reader, relying on his/her previous experience, deciphers. Naomi Schor makes the following comments about reading a novel:

In short, it has taken the importation of semiotics into the field of literary criticism for us to discover and turn to account a rather simple fact: novels are not only about speaking and writing (*encoding*), but also about reading, **and by reading I mean the decoding of all manner of signs and signals.**²²

The use of animal imagery in the *Diálogo*, invites the reader to decode the text. They are in Schor's words “signs and signals.” Furthermore, the use of animal references in the *Diálogo* illustrates the limits imposed by language itself when describing reality. The objective of Rodrigo Cota's dramatic piece is to offer a vivid and graphic representation of the ill effects of love, an objective he reaches, in part, by adopting the dialogue form and furnishing his poem with allegory. Animal references thus provide a visual and thus more realistic view of the negative attributes of love. Such concepts as

“alacranes, serpientes y ballenas” are much more expressive and visually dynamic than the mere mention of the negative associations for which they stand, i.e., “treacherous, hypocritical, etc.”

For Derrida, the concepts of “hypocrisy, treachery” are concepts for which “nous n'avons pas assez de formes” and are “plus larges que la plastique du style”.²³ Confronted by the limits imposed by writing, Derrida concludes that “Il faudrait donc choisir entre l'écriture et la danse” [“Choose between writing and dancing”] (*L'écriture*, 48). Rodrigo Cota, in choosing to include animals in his *Diálogo*, confers a fresh vitality to this text. The function of the animal imagery in Cota's piece is that of “supplement” since the images conveyed supplement the impossibility of language to describe reality.

As we will illustrate in what follows, Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo* is a self-reflection on the treacherous nature of language. Like Fernando de Rojas, who uses the character of the old bawd, Celestina, in order to personify the devilish powers of language, Rodrigo Cota chooses the personification of Love to represent those attributes (see ch. five for powers of language). Interestingly, Love as characterized in the *Diálogo* shares many character types with Celestina.

We will analyze later (ch. 5), Celestina's technique and see that it is nearly identical to *Amor's*. The old bawd appeals to Melibea's charity in order to convince her to “help” Calisto. The astute go-between substitutes her real

motive -- the arranging of an illicit affair between Calisto and Melibea -- with a “dolor de muelas,” a toothache which allows her to finesse her real motive.

We have already insisted on the hypocritical nature of courtly love. Its language practices are illustrated negatively in the *Diálogo*:

Viejo

Blanda cara de alacrán
Fines fieros y rauiosos,
Los potages poncoñosos
En sabor dulce se dan;
Como el mas blando licor,
Es muy más penetrativo,
Piensas tu con tu dulcor
Penetrar el desamor
En que me hallas esquivo. (*Diálogo*, 6)

When *Amor* asks *Viejo* why he does not listen to him, the old man answers that love is as dangerous as bees:

Amor :¿A la habla que te hago
Por qué cierras la orejas?

Viejo: Porque muerden las abejas
Aunque llegan con halago. (*Diálogo*, 7)

Melibea also acknowledges the treacherous nature of language, even while using it to pursue her own objectives:

Melibea: *No me maravillo, que un solo maestro de vicios dicen que basta para corromper un gran pueblo. Por cierto, tantos y tales loores me han dicho de tus falsas mañas que no sé si crea que pedías oración.* (TC, 166; emphasis added)

Both characters are fully aware of the nature of language used to seduce them. They become willing victims of their interlocutors' rhetorical expertise.

Love is also both patient and obstinate in both the *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia*:

Amor: Tu rigor no dé querella
 Que manzille tu bondad,
 Y pues tienes justedad,
 Sigue los caminos della.
 Al culpado, si es ausente,
 ¿Lo llaman para juzgar?
 ¿Pues por lo cual inconuiniente
 Al presente ygnocente
 No te plaze d'escuchar? (*Diálogo*, 7)

Celestina: Mientras viviere tu yra más dañará mi descargo;
 que estás muy rigurosa y no me maravillo, que la sangre nueva
 poco calor ha menester para hervir. (TC, 163)

In the following verses, the rhetorical power of language is perfectly illustrated. Here, Love uses the moral values of *honor* in order to conquer the old man. The function of honor in the *Diálogo* fulfills the same function as the toothache in *La Celestina*. They are both supplements in Derrida's formulation. They supplement or make up for Amor's and Celestina's real intentions:

Amor : Escucha, padre, Señor,
 Que por mal trocaré bienes;
 Por ultrajes y desdenes
 Quiero darte gran honor,
 A tí que estás más dispuesto
 Para me contradézir;
 Assi tengo presupuesto
 De sufrir tu duro gesto
 Porque sufras mi servir. (*Diálogo*, 7)

Melibea: . . . Qué palabra podías tú querer para esse tal hombre
 que a mí bien me estuviesse? Responde, pues dizes que no as
 concluydo, y quica pagarás lo passado.

Celestina: Una oración, señora, que le dixeron que sabías de
 Santa Polonia para el dolor de las muelas. (TC,163)

The expression “dolor de muelas” has a double meaning: a literal one that allows Melibea to pursue her discussion with Celestina under the guise

of charity and a second sexual hidden meaning that Melibea may understand but, if so, chooses to ignore in order to preserve appearances.²⁴

The word "honor" used by *Amor* in the *Diálogo* ("Quiero darte gran honor"), refers to the honor conferred upon the courtly lover when entering the Order of Love (ch. one). It is also highly ironical since the old man, owing to his advanced age and his surrender to love, will eventually lose his "honor."

Viejo and Melibea first react violently against Love's and Celestina's intent to engage them in love's snares. *Viejo* says:

Vé day, pan de caracas,
Véte, carne de señuelo,
Véte mal ceño de anzuelo:
Tira alla que m'embaracas:
Reclamo de paxarero,
Falso cerro de vallena:
El que'es cauto marinero
No se vence muy ligero
Al cantar de la serena. (*Diálogo*, 7)

In turn, Melibea asserts: "¡Ya ya ya buena vieja, no me digas más! ¡No pases adelante!" (TC, 161) Yet, soon after both characters let their interlocutors -- *Amor* and Celestina -- give their reasons. They willingly become part of the linguistic persuasion process. *Viejo* says:

Viejo: Habla ya: dí tus razones:
Dí tus enconados quexos;
Pero dímelos de leños:
El ayre no m'enfreciones:
Que segun sé de tus nuevas,
Si te llegas cerca mí,
Tú farás tan dulces pruebas,

Que el ultraje que ora lleuas
Esse lleue yo de tí. (*Diálogo*, 7)

Melibea is also ready to listen to more of the old *alcahueta's* arguments:

Melibea: Si esso querías, ¿por que luego no me lo espressaste?
¿Por qué no me lo dixiste por *tales* palabras? (TC, 164)

At this stage of the seduction process, *Viejo* and Melibea become full participants in the twisted games of love and language.

Viejo: Vente á mí, muy dulce amor,
Vente á mí, brazos abiertos;
Ves aquí tu seruidor,
Hecho sieruo, de señor,
Sin temer tus dones ciertos. (*Diálogo*, 13)

Conversely, Melibea praises the psychological and linguistic gifts of the old bawd:

Melibea: O pues ya, mi nueva maestra, mi fiel secretaria, lo que
tú tan abiertamente conoces en vano trabajo por te lo encobrir . .
. Alabo y loo tu buen sobrimiento, tu cuerda osadía, tu liberal
trabajo, tus solícitos y fieles passos, tu agradable habla. (TC, 245)

In the following stanza, where the tragic consequences of love are once more stressed, *Viejo* clearly equates love with language.

Viejo: **Maestra lengua d'engaños,**
Pregonero de tus bienes,
Dime agora ¿por qué tienes
So silencio tantos daños?
Que aunque más doblado seas
Y más pintes tu deleyte,
Estas cosas do te arreas
Son diformes caras feas
Encubiertas del afeyte. (*Dialogo*, 11; emphasis added)

Love is also covered with “afeyte” (make up) which directly remits us to the description of the old bawd Celestina who according to Pármeno, Calisto's second servant, was a “maestra de afeytes.” As we will see in greater detail in chapter five, the concept of make up is tied with that of the mask,

which in turn refers to the world of carnival. The idea of carnival -- here to be understood as re-presentation and disguise -- is also present, I believe, in the following verse of the *Diálogo*: “Estas cosas do te arrears/Son diformes caras feas.” Love and, by association, language, are here seen as a reversal of normal order, or the main idea of carnival. As Bakhtin writes:

One of the indispensable elements of the folk festival was travesty, that is, the renewal of clothes and of the social image. Another essential element was a reversal of the hierarchic levels; the jester was proclaimed king, a clownish abbot, bishop, or archbishop was elected at the “feast of fools”, and in the churches directly under the pope’s jurisdiction a mock pontiff was even chosen.²⁵

Viejo becomes a puppet in the hands of *Amor*. He is forced to play a part that does not suit him anymore. The effects of love on the old man transforms him into a grotesque character due to the opposition between his senility and the degree of emotions he expresses at the end of the *Diálogo*. *Viejo* is thus transformed into a buffoon. Despite his appearance of an old man, he starts acting as a young lover. The rules of courtly love are inevitably reversed, or debased.

The carnivalesque entails a disruption of order which *Amor* undoubtedly causes, if we are to judge by the consequences it has on *Viejo*. *Viejo* displays an attitude -- that of a young lover -- in opposition to his old age.

Finally, carnival is directly connected with the ludic concept of game, so intimately associated with love but also with language. Thus the previously-cited stanza (*Maestra lengua d’engaños*) can be analyzed as a

reflection on the ludic but also dangerous nature of both love and language (in chapter five, I will further develop the concept of carnival and its applications in the discussion of the *Tragicomedia*).

The effects of love in both works -- the *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia* -- are devastating. In the former, they result in the humiliation of *Viejo* and suggest his more than probable future: death. These effects are fatal in the *Tragicomedia* since its protagonists eventually die. Nevertheless, *Viejo* clearly admits his mistake in falling prey to *Amor*, whereas Melibea fully accepts the consequences of her acts (ch. five).

Viejo: El qual y no l'muerde, muere
Por graue sueño pesado;
Assi haze el desdichado
A quien tu saeta fiére.
¿A do estavas, mi sentido?
Dime ¿cómo te dormiste?
Durmiose triste, perdido,
Como hace le dolorido
Qu'escuchó de quien oyste. (*Diálogo*, 14)

I have hoped to demonstrate clearly the similarities between Cota's *Diálogo* and Rojas' *Tragicomedia* in their characterization of the negative force of love. Cota is indeed still considered by some to be the author of the first act of the *Tragicomedia*, a possibility Fernando de Rojas playfully mentions in the *Prólogo* to his work.²⁵ As many critics have acknowledged, both works share the same pessimism and undoubtedly are a metaphorical reflection of the *converso* status of their authors.

About the many affinities between the *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia*, Elisa Aragone notes that:

A nuestro juicio, tali reminiscenze non bastano a comprovare la paternità di R. C. riguardo a uno o più atti della *Celestina*: esse costituiscono una chiara, innegabile testimonianza, della presenza del *Diálogo* alla mente dell'autore di essa. Ma ben più significativa e importante resta sempre la forza icastica e la vena di pessimismo che circolano nello svolgimento della *Tragicomedia* memorabile e grandiosa: l'affinità vera e propria -- fatte, ovviamente, le debite distanze -- tra le due opere, poggia su un particolare atteggiamento psicologico comune agli autori. (qtd. by Cantera, 71)

Aragone doubts that Rodrigo Cota could be the author of the first act of the *Tragicomedia* but insists on the fact that both authors share the same socio-psychological background.

The problematic of *converso* existence in the *Tragicomedia* has been studied by Stephen Gilman in his *La España de Fernando de Rojas*. For the purposes of the present chapter, it will be useful to analyze how Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo* can be interpreted as a metaphor of the *converso* existence and the ambiguity attached to that status.

Cota's idea of alienation is expressed primarily by the choice of his protagonist: an old man who falls in love -- knowing better -- and ends up being humiliated by *Amor*. This old man's environment is one of decay and abandonment as explained earlier and initially inspires pity, or pathos, in the reader. *Viejo* was once part of the garden of love and participated in its games. He is, at present, reduced to leading a secluded existence. The parallel between the old man and the status of the *converso* caste is easy to establish.

As Maurice Kriegel explains:

L'idée de l'intouchabilité des Juifs, fondée sur celle de leur impureté met en évidence une stratification qui suit bien les modèles de caste. L'existence d'une couche privilégiée de Juifs

de cour n'implique pas l'acceptation des Juifs dans la société environnante et une intégration générale à un haut niveau, elle témoigne ironiquement de leur exploitation par le pouvoir central, de la totale vulnérabilité d'une communauté maintenue en marge de la société.²⁶

I observed earlier that Rodrigo Cota belonged to a rich *converso* family and was related to the Arias clan, a group with ties to the throne. Antón de Montoro clearly believed that Rodrigo Cota's social status should have allowed him to declare his religious origins openly. The reality is that Rodrigo Cota felt the need to attack the Jews and more particularly one of his relatives, Diego Arias. It is not difficult to imagine that behind such an action was Cota's desire to belong to the dominant caste, that of the Old Christians, an attitude typical of the newly converted. The *Epitalamio Burlesco* seems to be a manifestation of such an attitude. In the words of Caro Baroja:

Hubo otros conversos que adoptaron una postura que nada tiene que ver con la ironía, menos aún con el humor. Aludo a los que se erigieron en apologistas de la religión católica y que incluso escribían libros contra los judíos. Tales conversos no fueron ni uno ni dos, ni salieron de humildes talleres o de sectores poco refinados de la sociedad hebrea. (*Los Judíos*, 293)

Caro Baroja amplifies:

Esta posición de burla encierra ciertamente una adulación hacia la masa de cristianos viejos o lindos que con complacencia verían, sin duda, envilecerse a sí mismos a hombres que pertenecían al linaje despreciado: era una prueba más de la razón que se tenía al humillarlos. (289)

Rodrigo Cota's attitude does not differ radically from Montoro's who in some poems openly attacks and ridicules the Jews. We explained how this auto-criticism responded to a similar desire, on the part of the *Roperio*, to be accepted as a part of the dominant religious group but that it was also an

expression of a deep existentialist anxiety. Antón de Montoro can justify his criticism owing to the social position he occupied. Cota's example demonstrates that the *converso* malaise was to be found at all levels of society.

If *Viejo* represents the state of alienation of fifteenth-century Spanish *conversos*, *Amor* could metaphorically represent the majority, i.e., the Old Christians. We observed in chapter three that Antón de Montoro chose to parody the literary school of courtly love precisely because courtly love was the dominant literary trend of his times. I believe that, for the same reason, Rodrigo Cota also was parodying the philosophy of *fin'amors*.

Viejo is in a state of dual exile, as were the *conversos* themselves. First, the protagonist of the *Diálogo* is approaching senility; second, he becomes a member of the Order of Love, to which, by definition, he cannot aspire. Similarly, *conversos* were alienated from their old religion to which they no longer belonged; on the other hand, they were alienated from the majority because they would never lose their "cara de puto judío" (to cite Antón de Montoro's expression) in the eyes of Old Christians.

Viejo wants to become part of the majority, like the *conversos* themselves, who formerly were not so significantly excluded from it. Integration into the majority is nevertheless painful. *Viejo* ends up destroyed by his being led by *Amor* to once again renew his faith in the Order of Love. The *conversos* experienced both physical and moral pain when denying their former beliefs. Antón de Montoro described such physical pain

associated with being a *converso* in his poem dedicated to Queen Isabel as well as the torments of constantly being different in the eyes of the majority. In fact, the *Ropero* concludes in that same poem that he will never lose his “cara de puto judio.” Cota's conclusion is strikingly similar: The old man belongs to the Order of Love but he remains a “marchito corcobado!”

(*Diálogo*, 13)

Rodrigo Cota satirizes the Jewish community in his *Epitalamio*; we recall that Cota's own father had been a victim of anti-Semitism. The fact that Cota should use the bestiary image of the snake is, in my opinion, highly significant. The snake as we explained earlier is associated with the concept of treachery and deceit. Fernando de Rojas also uses the image of the snake in his *Prólogo*. Rojas explains that the viper first kills her mate but eventually gets killed by her own offspring:

Entre las serpientes el vajarisco crió la natura tan poncoñoso y conquistador de todas las otras, que con su silvo las asombra y con su venida las ahuyenta y disparze, con su vista las mata. La bívora, reptilia o serpiente enconada, al tiempo del concebir, por la boca de la hembra metida la cabeza del macho y ella con el gran dulcor apriétale tanto que le mata, y quedando preñada, el primer hijo rompe las yjares de la madre, por do todos salen y ella muerta queda; él quasi como vengador de la paterna muerte. ¿Qué mayor lid, qué mayor conquista ni guerra que engendrar en su cuerpo quien coma sus entrañas? (TC, 79)

These could be Cota's words; metaphorically, Cota “rompe las yjares de la madre” i.e. destroys his own heritage -- an attitude widespread among *conversos* and vividly denounced by Montoro. As observed earlier in this chapter, the symbolism of the snake is important in the *Diálogo*, and whether Rodrigo Cota was or was not aware of the metaphorical meaning of that

image, the *víbora* becomes a telling symbol of internal *converso* conflicts, such as his own. The snake has the capacity of camouflage, to become part of its environment. Its shape (*enconada*) permits it to adapt to any new environment. In the final analysis, the snake can be a metaphor for all the attributes of love but also of language, which necessarily shapes itself to any situation and deceives and seduces.

As explained in the introduction to this study, the interpretation of a text is a combination of the author's personal circumstances as well as the awareness of the dynamics of the language used in that particular text (Derrida and *difference*,). These two elements are on open display in Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo*. We have now seen how Rodrigo Cota parodies the literary school of courtly love and its language in the first part of the *Diálogo*, which ends up being a devaluation of the principles of that literary school. Rodrigo Cota is adept at using words in their different meanings. The use of the bestiary images in his work illustrate the necessity for a reader to be actively engaged in the interpretative process. We have seen how Rodrigo Cota depicts the deceit and treachery involved in language practices through the manipulative rhetorical arts of his protagonist, *Amor*, who is metaphorically identified with language as a shifting set of meanings. Finally, we have seen how the inherent instability of language can be identified with the inherent dual identity of the *conversos* themselves.

Love and its tragic consequences is one of the Middle Ages' great themes and favorite *topoi*. But the unusually strong pessimism associated

with that concept in the three authors under scrutiny acquires large and significant dimensions; the deceitful nature of love is intimately connected with the issue of language. Montoro, Cota and Rojas display, in varied ways all the treacherous devices involved in language performance as a metaphor for their marginalized and alienated status. Although products of different historical and personal circumstances, these three authors express the same search for a definite identity, clearly expressed in Antón de Montoro by the use of various poetic *personae*, and exemplified by Cota's not-so- veiled references to *converso* otherness. Cota's *Diálogo*, in effect, becomes a dialogue between the author and his *alter-ego* and becomes an important reflection on his circumstances. Who was Rodrigo Cota? asks the reader. Rodrigo Cota is questioning his own identity.

It is interesting to note that the *Diálogo* was originally published anonymously which could very well indicate that Cota did not want to be associated with its contents. About *converso* existentialist dilemma, Gilman explains that

La raíz de la inquietud judía es esa necesidad en que el judío se encuentra de no cesar de interrogarse, y de tomar finalmente partido, acerca del personaje fantasma, desconocido y familiar, inasible y próximo, que le obsesiona, y que no es más que el mismo, el mismo tal y como es para los demás. (*La España*, 113)

The case for multiple connections between the three authors has been outlined in detail. It is demonstrated, too, by Montoro's poetic dialogue with Cota and Fernando de Rojas' mention of Cota as one of the possible authors of the first act of the *Tragicomedia*. According to Gilman:

Es posible e incluso probable, que Rojas conociera la identidad de su predecesor, pero de todos modos, la fingida y significativamente tardía especulación de que pudiera ser o Cota o Mena con su gran saber indica la conciencia de orígenes similares. (328)

Fernando de Rojas was undoubtedly aware that the spirit that guided the elaboration of the first act of his work, was one very akin to his own, precisely owing to the fact that both the *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia* are veiled metaphors for the state of alienation of fifteenth-century Spanish *conversos*. Fernando de Rojas' and his *Celestina* will provide material for a final statement about the ambiguity, ambivalence and deceitful nature of language. Of our three authors, he is the most intensely pessimistic.

Notes

Chapter four

¹ Francisco Cantera Burgos explains in his work, *El Poeta Ruy Sanchez Cota (Rodrigo Cota) y su familia de judios conversos*. (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1970), that Pedro Sarmiento was the mayor of Toledo and the King's assistant in that city. He also qualifies him as "ambicioso e innoble" (11). Talking about the poet's father, Cantera Burgos comments that "Debió de contarse entre los confesos a quienes Sarmiento echó fuera de la ciudad, Alonso Cota"

² Francisco Cantera's work will be used to provide biographical information on Rodrigo de Cota and will be referred to as *Cantera*.

³ Stephen Gilman: *La España de Fernando de Rojas*. (Madrid: Taurus, 1978) 113.

⁴ Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Antología de Poetas líricos castellanos*, 3 vols. ed. Enrique Sánchez Reyes (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1944) 201.

⁵ Marithelma Costa, *Antón de Montoro: Poesía completa*. (Cleveland: Cleveland State UP, 1990). Will be referred to as *Costa*.

⁶ Stephen Gilman, "A Generation of Conversos," in *Romance Philology*, 33 (1979-80): 99.

⁷ The *Epitalamio*, of 241 verses, is made of 49 *redondillas* (roundelays) y *nueve quintillas* (metrical composition of five verses). The events it relates probably took place around 1470-1471.

Yirmiyahu Yovel explains in his article *Converso Dualities in the First Generation: The Cancioneros* in *Jewish Social Studies*, 4.3 1992(that will be referred to as *Yovel*) that Diego Arias, the bridegroom's patron, was one of the *conversos* who had climbed to the upper crust of Castilian society when it was still possible. In court, Diego Arias defended the *conversos* and indirectly the Jews, against the malevolent designs of Alonso de Espina and tried to stop the plans for establishing the Inquisition. Diego Arias was widely disliked in his time not only because he served the much vilified King Enrique IV in the unpopular job of treasurer and tax-collector but also because as the most conspicuous *converso* in court, he became a symbol of the new Spanish Otherness, the otherness within. This made him the target of many attacks and abuses. He was even tried posthumously for Judaizing by the Inquisition. An anonymous poem treats him like this:

Diego Arias, *puto*
who are and was a Jew

with you I won't compete [contigo no me disputo]
You who possess a great lordship.

an Eagle, a castle, a Cross
tell me where you got them,
since after all . . .

Diego Arias's "avowal":

The eagle comes from San Juan,
the castle from Emaus
and on the cross I put Jesus,
because I was the commander there. (Quoted by Arbos, 1987, 149-150; Yovel, 11)

It is interesting to note that Diego Arias' "confession" of being Jew is very similar in nature to Montoro's poem 151 dedicated to his horse (see ch. 3, p. 145). In fact, both poems allude to the Jews' responsibility in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Both poems use the technique of self-degradation, so characteristic of Jews and converts.

Cantera Burgos as well as Menéndez y Pelayo note that when Queen Isabel read the *Epitalamio*, she qualified the piece as "ladrón de casa." The Queen viewed Cota as a thief in his own house since the poet ridicules his own people.

⁸ Julio Caro Baroja, *Los Judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea*, (Madrid: Istmo, 1978) 277. Will be referred to as *Los Judíos*

⁹ Poems will be quoted by number throughout this chapter.

¹⁰ *Maguaque*: see note 13 in ch. two, p. 196.

¹¹ Elisa Aragone, ed. *Diálogo*, (Florenca: 1961) 48-54. The critic further believes that "no existen documentos que acrediten que Rodrigo fue un malsín" (qtd. by Cantera Burgos, 67).

¹² Amador de los Ríos, *Antología general de la literatura española*. Vol. I. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960) 150.

¹³ E. DHirsh, Jr. "Objective Interpretation," *PMLA* 75 (1960) 76. qtd. by Adena Rosmarín in *The Power of Genre*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) 27.

¹⁴ Carlos Moreno Hernandez, "Díálogo, Novela y Retórica en Celestina" *Celestinesca* 19:2 (Otoño 1994) 3.

¹⁵ Alan Deyermond, "The use of Animal Imagery in Cota's *Diálogo* and in Two Imitations," In *Etudes de Philologie Romane et d'Histoire Littéraire offertes a Jules Horrent*. ed. J. M. d'Heur and N. Cherubini. (Liège: Gedit, 1980) 133. Will be referred to as *Animal Imagery*.

¹⁶ J. Huizinga. qtd by June Martín Hall, *Love Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the parody of the courtly lover*. (London: Tamesis, 1972) 19.

¹⁷ *Lyrics of Troubadours and Trouvères: An Anthology and a History*. trans. Frederick Goldin. (New York: Doubleday, 1973) 240 (poem 40). Will be referred to as *Lyrics*.

¹⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1938).

San Pedro's work is built on the allegorical characterization of the different attributes of Love. Deseo, one of those attributes is characterized as thus for example:

Yo soy principal oficial en la casa de Amor; llámanme por nombre Deseo; con la fortaleza deste escudo defiendo las esperancas y con la hermosura desta imagen causo las aficiones y con ellos quemo las vidas, como puedes ver en este preso que lievo a la *Carcel de Amor*, donde con solo morir se espera librar.

In Diego de San Pedro, *Cárcel de Amor*. ed. Keith Whinnom (Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1985) 84. The allegorical description of *Amor* is to be found in the first part of the work which consists of a dialogue between the author and a young man in love. The second part of the work confers its epistolary nature to the work since it is constituted for the most part by letters exchanged between the two lovers Laureola and Leriano. For a more detailed analysis of the *Cárcel*, consult chapter two. Will be referred to as *Allegory*.

¹⁹ Juan Ruiz, Arcipreste de Hita. *Libro de Buen Amor*, (Madrid: Castalia, 1987) 181. Will be referred to as *Libro*.

²⁰ Fernando de Rojas, *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. ed. Dorothy Severin. (Madrid: Cátedra, 1988) 93. Will be referred to as *TC*.

²¹ Keith Whinnom. See note 18.

²² Naomi Schor "Fiction as Interpretation," in the *Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*. ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 168.

²³ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, Derek Attridge, (see p. 2 of the introduction on the concept of *supplément* in Derrida).

²⁴ On this topic, also consult Geoffrey West's "The Unseemliness of Calisto's toothache". *Celestinesca* 3, 1 (may 1979), 3-10. Also, Javier Herrero's "Celestina, the Aging Prostitute as Witch," in *Aging in Literature*, L and L Porter, eds. (Troy, International Book Publishers, 1984) 31-47.

²⁵ *Rabelais and his world*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968) 81.

²⁶ Cantera Burgos notes about Cota's authorship of the first act of the *Tragicomedia* that

aunque son muchos los críticos que no la creen verosímil, y entre ellos se cuentan algunos de la talla de don Marcelino, A. Valbuena, etc, es lo cierto que tal adjudicación no carece de bases de relativa firmeza. Tales son las palabras de Fernando de Rojas en la carta a un amigo al encomiar el auto primero de la comedia "que no tenia su firma del auctor, el qual, según algunos dizen, fue Juan de Mena y según otros, Rodrigo Cota;" o los versos acrósticos en que el mismo Rojas alude elogioso a esa "escriptura" debida a "Cota o Mena" "con su gran saber." También defendió esa paternidad, años adelante, el editor de *La Celestina* en Valencia el año 1514. (69)

²⁷ Maurice Kriegel, *Les Juifs a la fin du Moyen Age dans l'Europe Mediterraneenne*. (Paris: Hachette, 1979) 39.

**Chapter five: Mirrors and Mirages: The Game of Love and Language in
Fernando de Rojas' *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*.**

"difficulté d'être Juif, qui se confond avec la difficulté d'écrire;
car le judaïsme et l'écriture ne sont qu'une même attente, un
même espoir, une même usure. (*L'écriture et la différence*, 100)

The *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, one of the most influential and original literary manifestations of Medieval-Renaissance Europe, was published in a highly influential period in Spanish history, that of the Catholic monarchs, Isabel and Fernando. Under the reign of the Catholic Kings, Spain moved in new directions; the Reconquest was completed with the victory in Granada on January 1, 1492, and the Americas were “discovered” that same year. In the economic and social realm, the feudal system, as well as the agriculture society it was based on, was rapidly supplanted by a pre-capitalist system based on commercial exchanges and currency. Spain became a centralized state and the power of its nobility significantly decreased.

The Catholic monarchs developed political measures that were primarily aimed at maintaining the unity of the Spanish kingdom. It is in the name of the reason of the State that Fernando and Isabel founded the institution of the Holy Inquisition in 1480; the initial objective was, primarily, to uncover false converts. Their desire to establish religious homogeneity led to the expulsion of both non-converted Jews as well as Muslims from Spain in 1492 (on the historical events that led to anti-Semitism see chapter two).

The year 1499, the date of the publication of the *Comedia de Calisto and Melibea*, is also when the artistic revolution of the Renaissance, which will fully be expressed later, in the reign of Charles I, was already under way on Spanish soil. The *Comedia*, renamed by its author the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* when published in expanded form for the second time around 1502, is indeed the product of changing times in Spain.

The *Comedia de Calisto and Melibea* was published soon after its author, Fernando de Rojas, claimed to have found the anonymous first act of the work. Its plot can be summarized as follows: Calisto, a young man, belonging to the gentry, is in love with a young lady, Melibea, who belongs to the newly formed class of the bourgeoisie. The first act opens with Calisto's declaration of his love for Melibea. Upon the young lady's rejection, Calisto resorts to the services of a go-between, Celestina, known for her expertise in the office of matchmaking. Celestina manages through her clever use of rhetoric, to win Melibea over, but she eventually falls victim to her own avarice and is killed by her two followers and accomplices, Calisto's servants, Sempronio and Párrmeno. In the meantime, Calisto and Melibea entertain a passionate relationship until Calisto dies fortuitously when descending a ladder from her garden wall. When Calisto dies, Melibea decides to commit suicide, unable to live without him.

In the words of the *Carta del Autor a un su amigo*, the author claims to have written the work in order to help a friend, imprisoned in the prison of

love, and found the necessary advice in the anonymous act that he encountered quite fortuitously:

pero aun en particular vuestra mesma persona, cuya juventud de amor ser presa se me representa aver visto y dél cruelmente lastimada, a causa de le faltar defensivas armas para resitir sus fuegos, las quales hallé esculpidas en estos papeles, no fabricadas en las grandes herrerías de Milán, más en los claros ingenios de doctos varones castellanos formadas.¹

Rojas proceeds to praise the literary value of the “papeles,” insisting on their elegant style and more importantly, on its perfect combination of moral *sententiae* and pleasurable content:

Y como mirasse su primor, su sutil artificio, su fuerte y claro metal, su modo y manera de lavor, su estilo elegante, jamás en nuestra catellana lengua visto ni oydo, leylo tres o quatro vezes, y tantas quantas más leya, tanta más necesidad me ponía de releerlo y tanto más me agradava, y en su processo nuevas sentencias sentía. Vi no sólo ser dulce en su prinicpal ystoria o fición toda junta, pero aun de algunas sus particularidades salían delectables fonteçicas de philosophía, de otros agradables donayres, de otros avisos y consejos contra lisongeros y malos sirvientes y falsas mugeres hechizeras. (69-70)

The early *Comedia* has sixteen acts and its main purpose is to entertain, despite the fact that its ending was tragic. Under the influence of his readers, the author adds five acts to the *Comedia*, known as the *Tratado de Centurio*, due to the appearance there of that new character, and retitled the work *Tragicomedia de Calisto and Melibea*, which appeared in 1500 or 1502.²

Otros han litigado sobre el nombre, diziendo que no se avía de llamar comedia, pues acabava en tristeza, sino que se llamase tragedia. El primer autor quiso darle denominación del principio, que fue placer, y llamóla comedia. Yo viendo estas discordias, entre estos extremos partí agora por miedo la porfía y llaméla tragicomedia. Assí que viendo estas contiendas, estos díssonos y varios juyzios, miré a donde la mayor parte acostava y hallé que querían que alargasse en los procesos de su deleyte

destos amantes, sobre lo qual fuy muy importunado, de manera que acordé, aunque contra mi voluntad, meter segunda vez la pluma en tan estraña lavor y tan agena de mi facultad, hurtando algunos ratos a mi principal estudio, con otras horas destinadas para recreación, puesto que no han de faltar nuevos detractores a la nueva adición. (TC, 80; 81)

In the word 'tragicomedia' resides the first ambiguity of the work, since it is the only work in Spanish letters which mixes the two genres of tragedy and comedy. Undoubtedly, the work follows the dominant medieval literary trend of "enseñar deleytando" which accounts for the definition of the work: *tragicomedia*. This philosophy is clearly stated in the section of the work "El autor escusándose de su yerro en esta obra que ecrivió, contra sí arguge y compara."

Como el doliente que píldora amarga
o la rescela o no puede tragar,
métenla dentro del dulce manjar,
engañase el gusto, la salud se alarga,
desta manera mi pluma se embarga,
imponiendo dichos lascivos, rientes,
atrae los oydos de penadas gentes,
de grado escarmientan y arrojan su carga. (73)

Fernando de Rojas puts particular emphasis on the didactic nature of the *Tragicomedia* and characterizes its finale as an "amargo y desastrado fin" (83). In fact, what appears to be a pleasant -- and frequently comical -- love story between the two lovers, Melibea and Calisto, was, by Rojas' own admission, a fierce condemnation of the consequences of *loco amor*. The work was written by the author's own avowal

en reprehensión de los locos enamorados que vencidos en su desordenado apetito, a sus amigas llaman y dizen ser sus dios. Assimismo hecho en aviso de los engaños de las alcahuetas y los malos y lisonjeros sirvientes. (TC, 82)

an idea clearly reinforced at the end of the work in Pleberio's mournful soliloquy:

O amor, amor, que no pensé que tenías fuerza ni poder de matar a tus sujetos! Herida fue de ti mi juventud. Por medio de tus brasas passé ¿Cómo me soltaste para me dar la paga de la huida en mi vejez? Bien pensé que de tus lazos me avía librado quando los quarenta años toqué quando me vi con el fruto que me cortaste el día de hoy. No pensé que tomavas en los hijos la venganza de los padres, ni sé si hieres con hierro ni si quemas con fuego . . . ¿Quién te dio tanto poder? Quién te puso nombre que no te conviene? Si amor fuesses, amarías a tus sirvientes; si los amases, no les darías pena; si alegres biviessen, no se matarían como agora mi amada hija . . . Enemigo de toda razón, a los que menos te sirven das mayores dones, hasta tenerlos metidos en tu congoxosa danca. Enemigo de amigos, amigo de enemigos¿por qué te riges sin orden ni concierto? Ciego te pintan, pobre y moco. Ponente un arco en la mano con que tires a tiento; más ciegos son tus ministros que jamás sientien ni veen el desabrido galardón que se saca de tu servicio. Tu fuego es ardiente rayo que jamás haze señal do llega. La lena que gasta tu llama son almas y vidas de humanas criaturas, las quales son tantas que de quien comencar pueda apenas me ocurre, no solo de christianos mas de gentiles y judíos y todo en pago de buenos servicios. (341; 342)

This final speech, which has been analyzed by critics as an expression of Rojas' pessimism and could be regarded as an expression of existentialism "avant-la-lettre," uses love and its devastating effects as a subterfuge in order to declare the malaise of pre-renaissance Spain: "¿Para quien edificué torres; ¿para quien adquirí honrras; ¿para quién planté árboles,¿ para quien fabriqué navíos?" (TC, 337) attests to that fact.³

Furthermore, Rojas specifically advises the reader to concentrate on the moral content of the work and not to be distracted by its comicity:

Y assi no me juzgues por esso liviano
mas antes zeloso de limpio bivar;
zeloso de amar, temer y servir

al alto Señor y Dios soberano;
por ende si vieres turbada mi mano
turvias con claras mezclando razones,
dexa las burlas, qu'es paja y grancones
sacando muy limpio dentrellas el grano. (TC, 344, added italics)

In Rojas' view, those who fall prey to love do not follow Christian precepts and therefore are blasphemous. The author implicitly compares the two protagonists of his *Tragicomedia*, Calisto and Melibea, to the Jewish people,

Pues aqui vemos qu  n mal fenecieron
aquestos amantes, huygamos su danca;
amemos a aquel que spinas y lanca
acotes y clavos su sangre vertieron;
los falsos jud  os su haz escupieron;
vinagre con hiel fue su potaci  n;
por que nos lleve con el buen ladr  n
de dos que a sus santos lados pusieron. (343)

In these verses, Rojas, of a *converso* family, directly condemns his own origins in a manner highly reminiscent of Montoro's in some of that poet's compositions (see chapter three). On the one hand, the *Tragicomedia*, and more particularly its tragic ending, becomes the means by which Rojas presents himself as a good new Christian and praises the dominant religious values of fifteenth-century Spain, embodied in the work by Melibea's parents, Alisa and Pleberio. On the other hand, the *Tragicomedia* also demonstrates the failure of these dominant values, as Pleberio clearly espouses them in his soliloquy. The other characters, particularly Celestina and the people gravitating around her, such as Claudina, Calisto's two servants Sempronio and P  rmeno, the two prostitutes/cousins, Elicia and Are  sa, represent the underworld of marginalized beings in the *Tragicomedia*. Metaphorically,

their constant necessity to dissimulate is highly reminiscent of that same *converso* strategy. Their world, best defined as one of assimilated corruption, vice and treachery, is also destroyed at the work's end. The *Tragicomedia*, thus ends up in a void, and reaffirms the failures of a society in rapid transformation.

The identification of the genre of the work is made more difficult by the fact that it can be seen as a play or a novel, a work that combines characteristics of both genres. It has traditionally been defined as a "novel in dialogue" since it is divided into twenty-one acts, includes asides, and is written in dialogue form; nevertheless, the number of acts makes it difficult to fully represent on a stage. Rosa Lida de Malkiel demonstrated that the work was directly modeled on the neo-Latin humanistic comedy.⁴ We know that Rojas' intention was to have the work read aloud, as a dramatic reading, and due to that fact, the *Tragicomedia* was largely influenced by readers' response as Rojas himself asserts in the above cited section of the "El autor a un su amigo."

The ambiguity that resides in the essence of the work, which combines elements of both comedy and tragedy as well as the uncertainty of the genre (drama or novel), are directly connected, I believe, to the author's personal circumstances, i.e., those of a lawyer of *converso* origins, who, because of his religious origins, and not unlike many other *conversos* who were apparently well integrated and accepted in fifteenth-century Spain, was morally marginalized. We remember that Rojas' father-in-law was tried by the

tribunal of the Inquisition for heresy (ch. two). Furthermore, it is easy to imagine that Fernando de Rojas intended to define himself against the grain, in this new society, dominated by intolerance of non-Christians.

Directly connected to the issue of genre in Rojas' work is that of language, an issue central to my thesis. The indeterminacy of the essence and genre of the work is further illustrated in the *Tragicomedia* by ambiguous language practices such as double-entendres, play on words, etc. If we regard genres as specific speech patterns, the connection between literary genres and language becomes obvious. By uniting two genres -- that of comedy and of tragedy -- traditionally opposed in nature, Fernando de Rojas implies that literary works, i.e. written language, cannot be classified in definite categories. Thus the *Tragicomedia*, hybrid in nature, illustrates the plurivalent nature of language itself.

Dorothy Severin explains in her edition of *La Celestina* that the main object of early *Celestina* criticism was the analysis of the characters of the work. Undoubtedly, the character of the old bawd has been studied by many critics, among whom are Menéndez y Pelayo, Lida de Malkiel and, more recently Joseph Snow in his article, "Lectura de Celestina: personaje de la obra de Fernando de Rojas."⁵

The feminine characters have elicited particular interest in recent years; among the most critical studies on that subject are those of Leyla Rouhi's in, "Y otros treynta officios: The Definition of a Medieval Woman's Work in Celestina;"⁶ V. A. Burrus in her article, "Melibea's suicide: The Price

of Self-delusion”⁷ and James F. Burke’s, “The Mal de la Madre and the Failure of Maternal Influence in *Celestina*.”⁸

The nature of the work’s genre as well as the question of single or dual authorship are still topics of debate among critics. Such scholars as Stephen Gilman, Alan Deyermond, and Rosa Lida de Malkiel have aired opinions on the identity of the first author.⁹ Most have agreed that the differences in sources and style between the first act of the *Tragicomedia* and the remainder of the work are significant enough to confirm a double authorship. This issue is still at the center of literary debates as Donald Mc Grady’s, “The Problematic Beginning of *Celestina*,” and Dorothy Severin’s, “Cota, His Imitator and *La Celestina*: The Evidence Re-examined” attest.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Emilio Miguel de Martínez deflates these arguments and advocates a single authorship.

Yet another theme of major interest among *Celestina* scholars is that of witchcraft; it has also divided critics into two main positions. P.E. Russell believed that Rojas was convinced of the powers of witchcraft at play in Melibea’s sudden transformation into a willing lover.¹¹ A. Deyermond in his article “Hilado-cordón-cadena: Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*”, explains that it is through these three elements in the plot that the Evil one works in order to convert not only Melibea but also to convince her mother Alisa to leave her daughter alone with *Celestina*.¹² Others such as Lida de Malkiel and Francisco Rico believe that witchcraft is more a literary presence in the *Tragicomedia*.¹³ Finally, Stephen Gilman believes that witchcraft is a

secondary element and that Melibea simply gives in to a passion that she entertained from the very outset of the work. Gilman further supports his argument by arguing that Pármeno also “converts” under the influence of Celestina without the intervention of witchcraft.¹⁴

Post-modern studies have been interested in the urban setting of Celestina as developed, in Patrizia Botta’s “Itinerarios urbanos en *La Celestina* de Fernando de Rojas.”¹⁵ In more recent years, critics have also been analyzing the use of language in the *Tragicomedia*. Mary Malcolm Gaylord’s “Fair of the World, Fair of the Word: The Commerce of Language in *La Celestina*,” analyzes how the old bawd actually excels in the commerce of words which she sells to her interlocutors in order to achieve her every goal.¹⁶ Finally, Eloisa Palafox analyzes the *Tragicomedia* as a defense of orality and a criticism of the intellectual élite of Rojas’ times in her critical work “Oralidad, Autoridad Retórica en la *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*.”¹⁷

One of the major themes of the *Tragicomedia* is undoubtedly carnal love, or rather, the parody of courtly love. Indeed, Calisto is the perfect example of the parodic courtly lover. Contrary to the basic tenets of that literary school, revived by Spanish fifteenth-century *cancionero* poets, the young lover openly declares his desire for Melibea, blithely suppressing that courtly love was based on respect for the *domna* and on a chastity of feeling. To recall Alan Deyermond’s words in his description of Calisto, the young lover “mishandles” the rules described by Andreas Capellanus in his *De Amore* (chapter one).

The present chapter will focus on Celestina's parodic use of the philosophy of courtly love and its language in the first act of the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* and, then, on its reflections in subsequent acts. It will be clear that such a parody is the point of departure of a more general statement on the deceitful and treacherous devices involved in language practices and performance in the *Tragicomedia*. I will hope to prove that, in the final analysis, language as it is performed by Rojas' characters is an inert substance, in a constant state of evolutionary flux, that it is sculpted according to its users' needs and manipulated by its specialist practitioners -- the most representative of who is the experienced Celestina. The old go-between, who symbolically embodies the marginalized of fifteenth-century society, on the one hand, and constantly reinvents herself through her verbal subterfuges on the other, is seen here as a metaphor for *converso* existence in fifteenth-century Spain and for the ever changing and treacherous nature of language itself.

Owing to his impatience and lack of restraint, Calisto is the antithesis of the epitomized courtly lover. While the model lover (as described by Andreas Capellanus) is moderate and self-restrained, Calisto follows the precepts of courtly love when he begins the work, declaring, "En esto veo, Melibea, la grandeza de Dios" (85) and adds:

¿Quién vido en esta vida cuerpo glorificado de ningún hombre como agora el mío? Por cierto, los gloriosos santos que se deleytan en la visión divina no gozan más que yo agora en el acatamiento tuyo . . . (TC, 86)

The courted lady is often metaphorically associated with the Deity in the original Midi troubadours' verses and the sacro-profane hyperbole is a recurrent theme of Provençal poetry. Nevertheless, the lack of restraint of Calisto's tone reverses the precepts of courtly love since, according to Capellanus, "an excess of passion is a bar to love" and the courtly lover "shall be in all things polite and courteous."¹⁸

The irony contained in Melibea's answers shows that she is well aware of Calisto's real intent. At first, she simply makes fun of Calisto's excess of passion but soon, apparently, becomes irritated by his impetuosity. Her answer to Calisto's pressing speech, "Igual galardón te daré yo si perseveras," (TC, 87), shows that Melibea is indeed cognizant of the norms of courtly love and its formulae, probably from her reading of sentimental fiction.

The *galardón*, a reward given by the *domna* to a suitor for his loyal service, good manners and perseverance, is a key concept in the performance of courtly lovers. The fact that Melibea should use the word "galardón" and should follow closely Calisto's use of courtly language, albeit in an ironic yet infuriated tone, shows that she sees through to his real goal: seduction. Melibea recognizes, in spite of the appearances, that Calisto's intentions are not platonic,

Véte, véte de ay, torpe! que no puede mi paciencia tolerar que
haya subido en coracon humano conmigo el *ilícito amor*
comunicar su deleyte. (87, italics added)

Courtly language is by nature hyperbolic. Calisto takes it one step further; his metaphorical discourse ends up being a cynical set of formulae

emptied of their sincere meaning since they do not translate the young nobleman's baser intentions.

Despite the fact that his words provoke Melibea's wrath, Calisto continues addressing Melibea in his persona of courtly lover. Such is Calisto's desire to fulfill his immediate desires that the young male lover creates a mere linguistic fiction that he wants to impose upon reality. His language is pure artifice, a game that later leads him to use neologisms when he creates the words "melibeo" in his statement to Sempronio, "Yo Melibeo so" (TC, 93) and describes Melibea's heart as "plebérico." (88)

That Calisto should resort to verbal subterfuge to mask his real desires and that he should create neologisms shows clearly that his use of courtly language is a learned, fictitious construct that stands in opposition to reality. In defining parody, Martha Bayless sees it as

an intentionally humorous literary (written) text that achieves its effect by 1) imitating and distorting the distinguishing characteristics of literary genres, styles, authors, or specific texts (textual parody) or 2) imitating, with or without distortion, literary genres, styles, authors, or texts while in addition satirizing or focusing on nonliterary customs, events, or persons (social parody).¹⁹

In this light, the author of the first act of the *Tragicomedia* intentionally mocks the decadent genre of "courtly" literature, which had been so prevalent in Spanish fifteenth-century letters. The underlying intention of his parody is to unmask the pretentious and ludic essence of that literary style. Bayless explains to that effect that:

The minority view is summed up by the turn-of-the century critic Arthur Symons, who claimed that admiration for the

model was "the very essence of the art of parody." Much modern critical theory on the other hand, maintains that parody is intrinsically critical of its model. (*Parody*, 5)

The ideal of purity and chastity, more particularly of *amor purus*, naturally lends itself to parody and comic characterization. The parodic use of courtly love found in the *Tragicomedia* seems to prove that a platonic conception of love is an illusion. Mishandled in the insincere speech of Calisto, the entire Provençal school of love and its later manifestations are reduced to a sexual ploy in his game of seduction.

As June Hall Martín has observed, Calisto provokes laughter on the part of the reader owing precisely to the hyperbolic nature of his speech.²¹ Another essential characteristic of parody is that it does not function if the original model does not lend itself to such mocking. Therefore, the definition of courtly love, hyperbolic in essence, can only be parodied. The reader's reaction to Calisto's characterization in the opening scene is laughter. Laughter fulfills a definite function within the literary work. In Bakhtin's words:

Laughter is essentially not an external but an interior form of truth; it cannot be transformed into seriousness without destroying and distorting the very contents of the truth which it unveils.²⁰

Therefore, parody and its comical effects in the initial characterization of Calisto unveil the darker side of the literary tradition of courtly love: its degeneration into social entertainment and shallow linguistic virtuosity.

Rojas elaborates on the parodic use of courtly love, contained in the first scene of the *Tragicomedia*, through the description of Calisto and

Melibea's later sexual encounters. In Act XIX, Melibea intimates that Calisto is not behaving like a traditional courtly lover when she says:

Cata, ángel mío, que assí como me es agradable tu vista
sossegada, me es enojoso tu riguroso trato; tus honestas burlas
me dan plazer, tus deshonestas manos me fatigan quando pasan
de la razón. Dexa estar mis ropas en su lugar , y si quieres ver si
es el hábito de encima es de seda o de paño ¿para qué me tocas en
la camisa?, pues cierto es de lienco. Holguemos y burlemos de
todos mil modos que yo te mostraré; no me destroces ni
maltrates como sueles. ¿Qué provecho te trae dañar mis
verstiduras? (TC, 323; 324)

Calisto cannot refrain from his strong sexual urges; Melibea knowingly uses the verbs 'destrozar' and 'dañar' when referring to her lover's actions and the adjective 'dishonest' when referring to his hands. Contrary to Calisto's dishonest behavior, the canonical courtly lover is indeed honest in his behavior and patiently awaits for his *domna's* favors, unlike Calisto in this particular scene, or in others.

Despite his behavior, Calisto continues throughout the greater part of the work to use courtly love formulae as a mask to veil his real intentions. Those expressions are for Melibea, "honest" since they follow the rules with which she is familiar. They allow her to preserve the appearances of a socially-acceptable relationship between Calisto and herself. Melibea is well aware of Calisto's infringement of the courtly love rules; her only desire is to preserve outward appearances. Calisto's true behavior is diametrically opposed to the avowal of courtly ideals contained in his speeches and it thus accentuates the parody being made of them.

It is particularly interesting to note that Melibea, in this act XIX speech, but on other occasions as well, pokes fun at her lover and plays on words. As, for instance, when she coquettishly suggests “si quieres ver si es el hábito de encima de seda o de paño” (TC, 323) which is obviously not Calisto's goal. Melibea is quite well aware of her lover's true sexual intentions (and even comes to share them fully).

The emptiness of Calisto's courtly speeches, found in such statements as “Pues, señora y gloria mía, si mi vida quiere, no cesse tu suave canto . . .” (323) becomes obvious when he emits, later in Act XIX, a sentence whose intent exists in direct opposition to the purity of the (courtly) statement: “Señora, el que quiere comer el ave, quita primero las plumas” (324). These words clearly imply that Calisto's intentions are grossly sexual. *Amor purus* has here been substituted for by *amor mixtus* or concupiscence.

Calisto's actions are highly reminiscent of the Archpriest of Hita's Don Melón de la Huerta. In fact, both parodic lovers use the services of a go-between, in Don Melón's case, the old bawd Trotaconventos who helps the young male to seduce Doña Endrina.

Calisto and don Melón also display the same impatience to win over their *domnas*. We saw how openly Calisto declared his love for Melibea as early as the first act of the *Tragicomedia* and how he manages to irritate the young lady even once the relationship has been established between the two (see the above cited scene in Act XIX). Similarly, Don Melón expresses his feelings to doña Endrina (see chapter three on the parodic lover don Melón;

[p. 114] and Lida de Malkiel's view of the character). Both the Archpriest of Hita and Fernando de Rojas present parodies of their male lovers in order to ridicule but also to condemn the effects of carnal love. By presenting caricatures of courtly lovers, , both authors manage to teach "deleytando."

The parody of Calisto as courtly lover is further exemplified in Melibea's attitude toward him. Contrary to the canonical rules of the school of *fin'amors*, Melibea openly declares her desire for Calisto on several occasions. Melibea boldly uses words more typical of the male lover when she enthuses in Act XIX, "Señor, yo soy la que gozo, yo la que gano; tu, señor, él que me hazes con tu visitación incomparable merced" (324) or at the beginning of the same act, "O sabrosa trayción, o dulce sobresalto! ¿es mi señor y mi alma, es él? No lo puedo creer . . ." (322), or in Act XIV, "Es tu sierva, es tu cativa, es la que más tu vida que la suya estima . . ." (284). The expressions "cativa" and "sierva" all refer to the notion of imprisonment, one of the main *topoi* of Provençal love. These words clearly show that Melibea openly avows her passion. They remind us of the directness of the feminine poetic personae in Florencia Pinar's compositions as well as the verses of the *trobairitz* cited previously (see chapters one and two).

Melibea, not only by her actions, but also by her words, helps to deconstruct the idealized image of the courted lady and the precepts of *fin'amors*. Her character, brave and determined, clearly superior in value to Calisto's, is a reversal of the ideal but fossilized vision of woman as projected in the Provençal *canço*.²²

Another aspect of the *Tragicomedia* which de-constructs the idealized philosophy of courtly love is the underlying presence of misogyny in the work. Both Sempronio's famous speech against women (TC, 96-97-98) and Elicia's attack against Melibea (226) are obvious manifestations of that literary movement that runs parallel with the literary school of courtly love but whose objective is to undermine *fin'amors*, so prominent in fifteenth-century Spanish letters.

We illustrated in chapter two that misogyny is the prevalent theme of the Archpriest of Talavera's *Corbacho*. We also discussed how misogyny inspired the second part of Capellanus' *De Amore*, a clear manifesto against carnal love and the negative influence of women on men. It is true that this part of Capellanus' work has been identified by some as a pure rhetorical exercise. Nevertheless, misogyny, the antithesis of the idealization of women at the center of courtly love literature, is used in the *Tragicomedia* to further support Rojas' parody of courtly love. By presenting a vision of women -- diametrically opposed to that present in the philosophy of courtly love -- the author of the *Tragicomedia* implicitly accentuates the excesses of *fin'amors*. Sempronio describes women thus:

Llenos están los libros de sus viles y malos enxemplos, y de las caydas que levaron los que en algo, como tú, las reputaron . . . Oye a Salomon do dize que las mujeres y el vino hazen a los hombres renegar. Conséjate con Séneca y verás en que las tiene . . . Pero destas otras ¿quién te contaría sus mentiras, sus tráfgos, sus cambios, su liviandad, sus lagrimillas, sus alteraciones, sus osadías? Que todo lo que piensan osan sin deliberar; sus dessimulaciones, su lengua, su engaño, su olvido, su desamor, su ingratitud, su inconstancia, su testimoniar, su negar, su rebolver, su presunción, su vanagloria, su abatimiento,

su locura, su desdén, su sobervia, su subjección, su parlería, su golosina, su luxuria y suziedad, su miedo, su atrevimiento, sus hechizerías, sus enbaymientos, sus escarnios, su delenguamiento, su desvergüenza, su alcahuetería (. . .) (TC, 97)

It is interesting to note that most of the attributes that Sempronio uses in his diatribe against women are, for the most part, adjectives that could be used to define the old-bawd herself; in fact, Celestina is “engañosa,” “ingrata,” “orgullosa,” lives through the use of her tongue (su parlería); she is “atrevida” (when she goes to Pleberio's house), and is “hechizera” and “alcahueta,” according to Pármeno's description. The character of the bawd could therefore symbolize in the work the antithesis of the ideal courtly lady who, at the beginning of the work, is personified in the character of Melibea, described by Calisto:

Pero no de Melibea, y en todo lo que me has gloriado, Sempronio, sin proporción ni comparación se aventaja Melibea. Mira la nobleza y antigüedad de su linaje, el grandísimo patrimonio, el excelenísimos ingenio, las resplandecientes virtudes, la altitud y ineffable gracia, la soberana hermosura, de la qual te ruego me dexes hablar un poco (. . .)

Comienzo por los cabellos. ¿Vees tú las madexas del oro delgado que hilan en Aravia? Más lindas son y no replandecen menos; su longura hasta el postrero asiento de sus pies; después crinados y atados con la delgada cuerda, como ella se los pone, no has más menester para convertir los hombres en piedras. (TC, 100)

Melibea's attributes, very akin to -- but more elaborate than -- those of Hita's Doña Endrina, reiterate the prototypical canons of feminine beauty; yet, more than true to life, they reiterate the fossilized descriptions of many a courtly lady. Diametrically opposed to that idealized description of Melibea is Elicia's and then Areusa's depiction of Calisto's beloved:

Elicia: ¿Gentil, es Melibea? (. . .) Aquella hermosura por una moneda se compa de la tienda (. . .) que si algo tiene de hermosura es por buenos atavíos que trae. Ponedlos a un palo también dires que es gentil. Por mi vida, que no lo digo por alabarme, mas creo que soy tan hermosa como vuestra Melibea (. . .) (226)

Areúsa: Las riquezas las hazen a éstas hermosas y ser alabadas, que no las gracias de su cuerpo, que assí goze de mí, unas tetas tiene para ser donzella como si tres vezes oviesse parido; no parescen sino dos grandes calabacas. El vientre no se le he visto, pero juzgando por lo otro creo que le tiene tan floxo como vieja de cinquenta años. No sé que se ha visto Calisto porque dexa de amar otra que más ligeramente podría aver y con quien más él holgasse (. . .) (228)

Rojas presents the reader with two extreme characterizations of Melibea: one that reiterates the idealized vision of women, the centerpoint of courtly love; another, clearly the product of Elicia's and Areusa's jealousy, one that could be termed grotesque. The contradicting features of the two descriptions -- that of Calisto on the one hand, and that of the two female prostitutes on the other -- results in the cancellation of both descriptions, since both are clearly overstated. Melibea's true self will emerge later in the work through demonstrations of her courage, passion and determination. Therefore, Rojas' objective seems to have been twofold, in juxtaposing the two diametrically opposed visions of women: first, to ridicule the idealized vision of women, so characteristic of the courtly love lyric; and second, to shift the reader's attention on Melibea's personality as an individual, to forge an original representation of a woman, not a type.

Areúsa's description of Melibea -- the antithesis of the idealized vision of women in courtly love lyric -- is further reinforced by the characterization

of the old bawd Celestina. With the character of the old go-between, Rojas wishes to further deconstruct the idealized vision of the Provenzal *domna*.

Manuel da Costa Fontes has identified Celestina as the “antithesis of the Virgin Mary”, the qualities of whom -- as we explained in chapter one -- were attributed to the courtly lady. In that respect, Costa Fuentes notes, “Celestina is much more than a woman. Calisto is so gratified by her presence that he kisses the ground on which she walks.” Nevertheless, “being a whore and procuress, Celestina is an antithesis of all [the] qualities (10-11) traditionally associated with the Mother of God.”²³

Similarly, Areúsa’s description of Melibea is diametrically opposed to the idealized courtly lady. Areusa’s description of Melibea is carnivalesque because it represents a reversal of Calisto’s characterization of his beloved but also because it is grotesque. As Bakhtin reminds us: “The grotesque concept of the body lived especially in the familiar and colloquial forms of the language” (*Rabelais*, 341). Areúsa’s use of the word “calabacas” to describe Melibea’s breasts, or her expression “tiene el vientre tan floxo como vieja de cincuenta años” to describe Melibea’s lower body attest to such a use of language.²⁴ The carnivalization of language in this particular instance further de-constructs the philosophy of courtly love. In fact, by ridiculing women, in this case Melibea, carnivalesque language debases further the main tenets of that philosophy.

According to Bakhtin, the language of the grotesque is hyperbolic, as is clearly demonstrated in Areúsa’s characterization of Melibea (it is in fact hard

to believe that such a young woman as Melibea would have a physical appearance as that described by Areúsa). The language of courtly love is also hyperbolic as observed earlier in this study and in this chapter. In this light, Areúsa's speech could be metaphorically compared to the equally distorted vision of Calisto's description of Melibea; indeed it is its parodic reversal. The effect of such a reversal is the undermining of the model.

The two contrary descriptions of Melibea -- Calisto's hyperbolic praising of his lover, and Elicia's, and more particularly Areúsa's, grotesque characterization of Melibea, further enhance our understanding of the hybrid nature of the *Tragicomedia*. In fact, critics have demonstrated, almost unanimously, that the work belongs to both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. On the difference between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Bakhtin explains that

[t]he grotesque concepts of the body in some of its essential elements represented the humanist and, above all, the Italian philosophy of that period. It had conceived, as we have seen, the idea of the microcosm based on ancient tradition as adopted by Rabelais. The human body was the center of a philosophy that contributed to the destruction of the medieval hierarchic picture of the world and to the creation of a new concept. (*Rabelais*, 362-363)

The ideal description of women, necessary to the courtly love tradition, clearly belongs to the Middle Ages, as does the hyperbolic nature of its language. In fact, the language that pervades the fifteenth-century *cancionero* poetry in Spain is highly metaphorical and stylized. It is a ludic occupation, designed to demonstrate the poet's intellectual versatility (see chapter two). The literature of the Renaissance, on the other hand, is characterized by a

more direct style, deprived of such ornamentation and, as a consequence, recurs to a language deprived of artifice. The linguistic differences between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are on display in Calisto's and Areúsa's respective descriptions of Melibea and further enhance the transitional nature of the *Tragicomedia*. Melibea personifies this transition between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance by displaying two very different personalities during the work, as analyzed by J. T. Snow in his article, "Two Melibeas."²⁵ We will return to this later.

Pármeno and Areúsa, Sempronio and Elicia, traditionally characterized as secondary characters, also play a prominent part in the debasement of the precepts of courtly love and its language practices. Calisto and Melibea's embraces and declarations of love are paralleled in the work by those between Areúsa and Pármeno. The fact that courtly language should be used by characters -- servants and prostitutes -- who by definition do not belong to the world of *courtoisie*, debases the fundamental tenets of the literary school of *fin'amors* as well as its recourse to hyperbolic language. The similarities between the characters' speech can be observed in the following citations. In Act VIII, Pármeno expresses his joy in possessing Areúsa in these terms:

¡A Dios te quedas !O plazer singular, o singular alegría! Quál hombre es ni ha sido más bien aventurado que yo, quál más dichoso y bienandante !que un tan eccellente don sea por mí posseydo, y quan presto pedido tan presto alcancado! (TC, 212)

The concept of humility, central to the philosophy of courtly love, as well as the beauty of the beloved is here developed by Pármeneo and also present in Calisto's speeches:

O señora mía, esperanza de mi gloria, descanso y alivio de mi pena; alegría de mi corazón! Qué lengua será bastante para te dar yguales gracias a la saboreada y incomparable merced que en este punto, de tanta congoxa para mi, me as quesido hazer en querer que un tan falco y indigno hombre pueda gozar de tu suavíssimo amor? (TC, 261)

O angélica ymagen, o preciosa perla, ante quien el mundo es feo. O mi señora y mi gloria, en mis brazos te tengo y no lo creo. Mora en mi persona tanta turbación de plazer que me haze no sentir todo el gozo que poseo. (284)

The parody of the Provençal school of love also resides, in this particular instance, in the fact that both lovers use courtly formulae but clearly state that they had a fully sexual relationship with their respective *domnas*. As Pármeneo states, “¡y cuán presto pedido tant presto alcancado!,” and Calisto declares, “un tan falco y indigno hombre pueda gozar de tu suavíssimo amor?”

The parallels between Calisto's and Melibea's speeches on the one hand and those of Pármeneo and Areúsa on the other are explained by June Hall Martin as follows:

The device sets your judgment free because you need not identify yourself firmly with any one of the characters; a situation is repeated for quite different characters and this puts the main interest in the situation not in the characters. It provides a sort of parody or parallel in low life to the serious parts (. . .) This gives an impression of dealing with life completely. (*Love's fools*, 118)

Not only does this device allow the reader to deal with life completely, it also deprives language of any pre-determined meaning since words can be manipulated indefinitely and modeled according to their users' needs. Such a repeated use of courtly formulae by several characters subtly debases the literary school of courtly love and reduces it to a clear set of fossilized formulae.

Pármeno's and Areúsa's speeches represent a second level of the parody of that literary school. Such also is the function of both Sempronio and Elicia, to parody the noble lovers Calisto and Melibea. Such structural parallels reinforce the parodic nature of Calisto in particular but also of Melibea. In fact the two young lovers merely play the literary roles of noble, courtly lovers. Their intentions are certainly carnal, not unlike their lower life counterparts.

Hall Martin concludes by saying that "the triple love story (Pármeno/Areúsa-Sempronio/Elicia-Calisto/Melibea) guided by the witch Celestina is like a three fold mirror, each panel reflecting the others." This technique, I believe, responds to Rojas' desire to explore the inner workings of language. By using the same repertory of language in different situations and in the mouths of different people, Rojas demonstrates that language is a volatile supplement to action and that it can also be used to further one's private agenda. Hall Martin's use of the image of the mirror seems particularly relevant. It embodies the function of language, that of a mirror, which by definition can but offer a distorted or imperfect image of reality.

Similarly, language appears to reflect reality but is, deceptively, not able to reproduce it.

Rojas creates an artificial courtly circle within the lower social classes which accounts for the comical effects of many situations. Bakhtin notes about laughter that:

[o]ne might say that it builds its own world versus the official world, its own church versus the official church, its own state versus the official state. Laughter celebrates its masses, professes its faith, celebrates marriages and funerals, writes its epitaphs, elects kings and bishops. Even the smallest medieval parody is always built as part of a whole comic world. (*Rabelais*, 88)

Calisto and Melibea's world can be considered as the official world despite the fact that their embraces frame a parody of the literary school of courtly love. The world of the servants is obviously the unofficial world, which is directed by the old bawd Celestina. Bakhtin insists on the fact that medieval laughter was a form of truth:

It was the world's second truth extended to everything and from which nothing is taken away. It was, as it were, the festive aspect of the whole world in all its elements, the second revelation of the world in play and laughter. (*Rabelais*, 84)

The caricature of courtly love in the servants' world in the *Tragicomedia* leads us to believe that Rojas is happily poking fun at that literary school. But the characterization of the secondary characters goes beyond a simple parody; they are, indeed, caricatures of their models (Calisto and Melibea) and for this very reason embody the carnivalesque. This idea of a world upside down, dominated by debauchery, is further developed in the Act IX banquet scenes.

Finally, courtly love resides in the fact that all the characters: Melibea, Calisto, Areúsa and Pármene, Sempronio and Elicia display contradictory modes of language; in some instances, they use the formulae of courtly love, in others, they resort to highly informal, and even gross, language patterns and tone. Concerning Sempronio's courtly attitude and alleged respect for Elicia, it is debased by his opening anti-feminist remarks to Calisto. He claims to be Elicia's servant, but despises women.

In this full parody of courtly love resides the point of departure of a reflection on the use of language in the *Tragicomedia*. The old bawd Celestina is an expert in verbal manipulation. She artfully places words and effects according to her plan of the moment; she cultivates ambiguity, always serving her own ends. She embodies the concept of treachery, implied in speech itself. Metaphorically, her use of language can be compared to a meaningful experimental laboratory in which, like a surgeon, she experiments with meaning by dissecting language.²⁶

That Celestina's language practices are treacherous and deceitful can be seen in her words addressed to Pluto:

Conjúrote, triste Plutón señor de la profundidad infernal,
emperador de la corte dañada, te conjuro por la virtud y fuerza
de estas bermejas letras, por la sangre de aquella noturna ave con
que están escritas (. . .) hasta que Melibea con aparejada
oportunidad que haya lo compre, y con ello de tal manera quede
enredada. (TC, 148)

It appears thus that Celestina's language as it appears in the *Tragicomedia* shares many a characteristic with the language of witchcraft. It is possible that Rojas resorts to witchcraft in order to stress its importance in

his society, as P. E Russell has demonstrated.²⁷ Alan Deyermond has seen that witchcraft is an integral part of the world of the *Tragicomedia* and works, for Celestina, through the presence of three objects: the girdle, the cord and the yarn that Celestina sells to Melibea's mother, Alisa. According to Deyermond, the continuing presence of the devil in those three objects accounts for Alisa's ill-advised leaving of her daughter in the company of Celestina.²⁸

That Celestina herself should establish such a direct link between witchcraft and language may lead us to believe that Rojas uses the old bawd's beliefs as a metaphor for the capacity of language to transform reality. In fact, Celestina equates witchcraft with language in her plea to Pluto, which metaphorically is associated with the act of performing language. In her address to the devil, she uses these "bermejas letras," "letters written in blood," as a means to conjure the help of evil forces and hopes that these letters will allow her access to the power of witchcraft and, thus, to convert Melibea to her own will ("y con ello el cordón quede enredada"). The bawd reinforces the intimate connection between witchcraft and language upon returning home after her first visit to Melibea when she declares:

¡O diablo a quien yo conjuré cómo cumpliste tu palabra en todo lo que te pedí! En cargo te soy; así amansaste la cruel hembra con tu poder y diste tan oportuno lugar a mi habla quanto quise, con la ausencia de su madre (. . .)! O serpentino azeyte, o blanco hilado, cómo os aparejastes todos en mi favor! O yo rompiera todos mis atamientos hechos y por hazer ni *creyera en yervas ni piedras ni en palabras*. (171, emphasis added)

The last sentence of the speech clearly shows that Celestina considers her “yervas, piedras and palabras” as equally important in her conjuring art. Witchcraft (“yervas y piedras”) and language (“palabras”) empower her to set out on her quest to change circumstances to her professional and economic advantage.

Celestina clearly believes that language is living matter that can be shaped to one's own ends, that can transform reality. When she addresses Pluto, she threatens him: “Si no lo hazes con presto movimiento, apremiaré con mis asperas palabras tu horrible nombre.” In Celestina's view, words are empowered to transform reality.

Another key idea in the conception of language shared by the characters in the *Tragicomedia* is the belief in the natural origin of words. As Malcolm K. Read explains, “language in the medieval mind was alive and natural, natural in the sense that there exists an innate, causal relationship between the word and the thing it named.”²⁹

This connection explains why language can put matter in motion, a theory that was reinforced by the Renaissance rediscovery of Plato. Language is matter and, for Rojas, words are not only sounds but living things, possessed of a definite being. Precisely because the word is alive, it undergoes continuous changes and metamorphoses. For that very reason as well, words are pregnant with meaning as in Rojas’ “Prólogo al lector.” Such a philosophy of language also accounts for the fact that Melibea becomes possessed with Celestina's words as she clearly states in Act X “Cerrado han

tus puntos mi llaga.” It is interesting that the word ‘puntos’ has a double-meaning in this particular instance: ‘puntos’ refer to stitches but also to theoretical points. Words are indeed empowered to cure and change reality.

One excellent example of Celestina’s power to manipulate reality with deceitful language is found in Act IV. Celestina’s immediate need is to win the young lady’s confidence and arrange an illicit meeting between her and Calisto. At first, Celestina makes the mistake of pronouncing Calisto’s name, thus infuriating her interlocutor:

Bien ternás, señora, noticia en esta cibdad de un cavallero
mancebo, gentilhombre de clara sangre, que llaman Calisto.

Melibea: Ya, ya, ya buena vieja, no me digas más. No pases
adelante. Desbergoncada, barbuda, de locura será su mal. (TC,
161)

Knowing Melibea’s religious convictions, her character and the social class she belongs to, the old bawd appeals to the young lady’s charity, thus substituting the appearance of an honest request when her real objective is nearly exposed:

Melibea: ¿Qué palabra podías tu querer para esse tal hombre que
a mí bien me estuviesse? Responde, pues dizes que no as
concluydo, y quica pagarás lo passado.

Celestina: Una oración que le dixerón que sabías de Santa
Polonia para el dolor de las muelas.

Melibea: Si esso querías ¿porque no lo dixiste por tales palabras?
(TC, 164)

Melibea, at this stage, will only tolerate a language, if used properly, that veils and distorts reality. The young lady precisely needs “tales palabras” because such words will -- she thinks -- preserve her honor yet veil the reality

of her own and Calisto's illicit desires. In fact, in Act I, scene one, Melibea qualifies those intentions of "ilícito amor." (87)

Celestina asks for "una oración" to cure Calisto's "dolor de muelas." This toothache becomes a sign for Calisto's illicit love. This expression, which in Dorothy Severin's view has a definite sexual connotation, serves as a subterfuge and supplements Celestina's discourse.³⁰ The words "una oración" and "dolor de muelas" become "dangerous supplements." They create a fictitious reality, used by Celestina to aid in her deception.

These "tales palabras" allow Melibea to continue the discussion about Calisto that she indeed wishes to pursue, but under the safer guise of Christian charity. The interaction between Celestina and Melibea ends up being a complex verbal game. Melibea is aware of the treachery implicit in the old bawd's words as she will admit later:

Quebróse mi honestidad, quebróse mi empacho, afloxó mi
mucha verguenca (. . .) Alabo y loo tu buen sofrimiento, tu
cuerda osadia, tu liberal trabajo, tus solícitos y fieles passos, tu
agradable habla, tu buen saber, tu demasiada solicitud (. . .)
Postpuesto todo temor, as sacado de mi pecho lo que jamás a ti ni
a otro pensé descubrir. (245)

By using the multi-faceted or plurivalent expression such as "dolor de muelas," Celestina gives the young lady the opportunity to play the game of language and to construct the fiction of her honor. The language used by Celestina is open-ended, giving the bawd every opportunity to adapt to any turn of events.

Bakhtin explains that the "underground man's speech is actively double-voiced in an astonishing variety of ways."³¹ He further explains that

“the underground man” uses a distinctive discourse type, that of the “word with a loophole.” This Bakhtinian concept seems to describe accurately Celestina's language:

A loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility of altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's words. If a word retains such a loophole, this must inevitably be reflected in its structure. This potential other meaning that is, the loophole left open, accompanies the word like a shadow. Judged by its meaning alone, the word with a loophole would be an ultimate word and does present itself as such, but in fact it is only the penultimate word and places after itself only a conditional, not a final period. (qtd. by Emerson, 233 in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*)³²

Celestina's expression, “dolor de muelas,” fulfills Bakhtin's definition of a word with a loophole. The conviction with which Celestina uses it, and the fact that she uses the expression together with the word “oración,” allows her to assuage Melibea's wrath. Melibea says, “Si esso querías ¿porqué luego no me lo espressaste?” (TC, 164). Still it remains open to a second interpretation to which Melibea willingly becomes a party. For Derrida, the word “dolor de muelas” has a reserve. It offers the two interlocutors a margin of interpretation:

Meaning and effect are never produced or refused absolutely; they always keep a reserve at the disposition of a potential reader, a reserve that has less to do with a substantial wealth and more with an aleatory margin in the trajectories, an impossibility of saturating a context. The “same” utterance can refer to a large number of other “texts” (phrases, gestures, tones, situations, marks of all sorts) and to “others” in general; it can open onto other effects, intersections, grafts, iterations, citations (. . .) These possibilities and these differential forces are not strictly linguistic, which is why I prefer to speak of traces of text rather than language (. . .)³³

In this particular instance, Celestina demonstrates her superior talent for persuasion and her exemplary use of rhetoric. Leyla Rouhi comments:

The elaborate medical metaphor here evoked by the bawd leaves little room for doubt as to the nature of her suggestion (. . .) the strength of the procuress lies in matching her rhetoric to the register set by the young woman. The go-between's skill consists not only of her ability to communicate her ideas but equally of the essential suitability of her words for an interlocutor such as Melibea. Celestina waits cleverly for the young woman to set the tone of the exchange and upon receiving Melibea's own frenzied and pained discourse, plugs into the type of verbal communication which would correspond suitably to the latter's state of mind. After all Melibea herself clearly perceives her condition as a burning illness and introduces graphic imagery to describe it; (. . .) the alcahueta reveals a remarkable capacity of active response to the elements of dialogue, establishing a firm and organic link between the utterances of her interlocutor and her own. She thus distances herself from the realm of formulaic or predictable responses and gauges the exact requirements of dialogue as she goes along. Her debt cannot escape unnoticed in this regard.³⁴

Undoubtedly the interaction between the go-between and Melibea occurs because the latter is aware of the potential for treachery in Celestina's words; indeed, she pursues the goal of a union with Calisto.

J. T. Snow has demonstrated in his article, "Two Melibeas," that

after Act X (and perhaps earlier) there are two Melibeas, each aware of the other, forced to dwell in one body until a separation that will permit neither to live becomes the only open option. (655)

Snow describes the first Melibea with her mother's own words, "casto vivir y honesta vida y humildad;" "discreción, honestidad y virginidad" and adds that

The new Melibea, we know, is listening - in Act XVI to these no longer accurate descriptions of her. They portray, rather

painfully for Melibea, her former self. They point us to the divided self. (657)

Snow also believes that Melibea is already in love with Calisto and that Celestina "functions as an expert catalyst for a process already under way before her first intervention," and further comments that

the magic and the conjuring of Act III -- and its replay in Act IV -- may be efficacious in helping an old bawd to feel more confident in the face of an important (. . .) commission but we do not serve Melibea well in thinking that the devil-in-the skein produces a genuine metamorphosis that is sudden, forced or imposed by Powers higher than passions that already -- by Melibea's repeated admission -- are fully operational. (*Two Melibeas*, 658)

It is through the game of language, and more particularly under the guise of chastity, honesty, and religion that the appearances are temporarily preserved for Melibea. Melibea is, as we have seen, a full participant in the game of love and language. She is not passive; on the contrary, she also subtly uses Celestina in order to achieve her own goal. As Melibea quickly matures, she too becomes aware of the power of language to change circumstances which do not satisfy her. Not unlike Celestina, Melibea plays with words, creates a new self from within her own self, almost at the outset of the work. She performs it for her parents and successfully manages both roles until the end of the *Tragicomedia*. Melibea embodies the new woman of the Renaissance. Language as defined by the *Tragicomedia* is a dangerous rhetorical enterprise. Celestina uses rhetoric skillfully to achieve her goals; she takes pride in excelling in her profession which is achieved through her

masterful use of language. Erica Morgan in her article, "Rhetorical technique in the persuasion of Melibea," observes that

Rojas seeks to explore the role of rhetoric as an inevitable part of everyday life rather than as being confined to the cloisters of academic life.³⁵

Bakhtin, in describing the underground man's language practices, also comments that:

These [linguistic] activities are deeply creative, always responding to the quotidian pressures of life. And so discourse lives as if it were beyond itself, in a living impulse toward the object. (qtd. by Emerson, 161)

This concept of language as an impulse toward the object (Bakhtin) is exemplified in Celestina's conversation with Alisa, Melibea's mother. The locale -- Melibeas' house -- and the social status of Melibea's family -- the high bourgeoisie of fifteenth-century Spain -- call for a specific type of discourse. Celestina's speech is a response to the "pressures of life" and it is geared toward its object. In fact, the old bawd, decides to don a verbal mask that perfectly suits the specific situation. As previously, when conversing with Melibea, Celestina has recourse to the use of religion in the presence of Alisa, albeit for a new goal:

Señora buena, la gracia de Dios sea contigo y con la noble hija; mis passiones y enfermedades han impedido mi visitar tu casa como era razón, mas Dios conoce mis limpias entrañas, mi verdadero amor (. . .). (TC, 153)

The examples demonstrating Celestina's capacity to adapt to any given situation multiply throughout the work. One other significant demonstration of her rhetorical dominance can be found in her interaction

with Pármeno, whose help she feels she needs to succeed in her matchmaking enterprise. Celestina wishes to convince Pármeno to become Sempronio's friend in order to have an additional ally and, thus be more assured of success in her new undertaking. When temporarily defeated by Pármeno's sense of righteousness, she responds by awakening his sensuality. In her superior psychological knowledge of her interlocutors resides most of the power of Celestina's rhetorical arts.

The old go-between adapts to any quick change in her interlocutor's behavior and assuages his/her wrath before they inevitably fall victim to her persuasions. The rhetorical technique that Celestina uses with Melibea and with Pármeno are similar, while differently applied. In fact, the bawd first appeals to Melibea's repressed attraction to Calisto but, then faced with her violent reaction, resorts quickly to a better-suited sentiment: that of piety. In her dialogue with Pármeno, Celestina first presents friendship as one of the most noble human feelings, and only then evokes the possibility of a friendship of another kind, with Areúsa:

Celestina: Y tú gana amigos que es cosa durable; ten con ellos constancia (. . .) Que lo ál que te he dicho, guardado te está a su tiempo. Y mucho te aprovecharás siendo amigo de Sempronio. (TC, 122)

Pármeno: Celestina, todo tremo en oyrte; no sé que haga; perplexo esté (. . .) Riqueza desseo, pero quien torpemente sube a lo alto, más ayna cae que subió. No querría bienes mal ganados (. . .). (123)

Celestina: ¿Quién es que tenga bienes en la república que escoja vivir sin amigos? Pues, loado Dios, bienes tienes ¿y no sabes que has menester amigos para los conversar? Y no pienses que tu privanca con este señor te haze seguro, que quanto mayor es la

fortuna, tanto es menos segura. Y por tanto en los infortunios el remedio es a los amigos? ¿Y a dónde puedes ganar mejor este debdo, que donde las tres maneras de amistad concurren, conviene a saber, por bien y provecho y deleyte? Por bien: mira la voluntad de Sempronio conforme a la tuya, ya la gran similitud que tú y él en la virtud tenéys. Por provecho: en la mano está, si soys concordes. Por deleyte: semejable es, como seáys en edad dispuestos para todo linaje de plazer, en que más los mocos que los viejos se juntan, assí como para jugar, para vestir, para burlar, para comer y beber, para negociar amores junctos de compañía! O si quisieses, Pármene, qué vida gozaríamos! Sempronio ama a Elicia, prima de Areúsa. (124)

Pármene: No querría, madre, me combidasses a consejo con amonestación de deleyte (. . .) Todo me recelo, madre, de recibir dudoso consejo. (126-127)

Pármene finally signals his compliance, saying:

. . . Más humano es confiar, mayormente en esta que interesse promete, a do provecho no pueda allende de amor conseguir. Oydo he que deve hombre a sus mayores creer (. . .) (Esta, ¿que me aconseja? Paz con Sempronio. La paz no se deve negar, que bien aventurados son los pacíficos, que hijos de Dios serán llamados. Amor no se deve rehuyr. Caridad a los hermanos; interesse pocos le apartan. Pues quiérola complazer y oyr). Madre, no se deve ensañar el maestro de la ignorancia del discípulo, sino raras vezes por la sciencia, que es de su natural comunicable, y en pocos lugares se podría infundir. Por esso perdonáme. Háblame; que no sólo quiero oyrte y creerte, mas en singular merced recibir tu consejo Y no me lo agradescas (. . .) Por esso manda que a tu mandado mi consentimiento se humilla. (127-128)

Pármene has been characterized by some critics as an innocent lad who falls prey to Celestina's treacherous language practices and psychological expertise. Others consider that the young servant is not as naive and righteous as he first appears in the first act of the *Tragicomedia*.³⁶

Pármene, too, will act in order to fulfill his own desires and pursue his private agenda. He wishes to "seduce" Calisto by playing the part of the

faithful, loyal servant but rapidly is irremediably attracted by the possibility of greater future gain. Pármene's words in the last speech cited above clearly shows that he has rapidly understood what will be of greater benefit to him. For this reason, he uses speech and constructs arguments that not only imitate Celestina's but are heavily ironical. The irony contained in this particular speech shows us that he is aware of the old bawd's manipulation. He willingly becomes her victim since, as he clearly states: "Riqueza desseo ..."

The main argument in the final transformation of both Pármene and Melibea is sexuality. In fact, Melibea is inwardly consumed with her new-born passion for Calisto and Pármene more outwardly becomes Areúsa's lover. It is sexual desire, Melibea's and Pármene's, which allows the old bawd to succeed so rapidly in her twin enterprises. The body is ever at the center of her discourse and allows the characters she is seducing linguistically to indulge their most profound or repressed desires. It is sexual discourse that sets the action into motion:

Celestina addresses Melibea in the following terms in Act IV:

Celestina: ¿por qué los hombres havemos de ser más crueles?
Por qué no daremos parte de nuestras gracias y personas a los
próximos? Mayormente quando están embueltos en secretas
enfermedades, y tales que, donde está la melezina, salió la causa
de la enfermedad. (161)

She tells Pármene in Act I:

Celestina: Y para esto Pármene ¿ay deleyte sin compañía?
Alahé, alahé, la que las sabe las tañe. Este es el deleyte, que lo ál,
mejor lo hazen los asnos en el prado. (126)

She compels Areúsa with the following discourse:

Celestina: Deste tan común dolor todas somos, mal pecado, maestras; lo que he visto a muchas hazer y lo que a mí siempre aprovecha, te diré (. . .) Y todo olor fuerte es bueno asi como poleo, ruda, axiensos, humo de plumas de perdiz, de romero, de moxquete, de encienco. Recebido con mucha diligencia, aprovecha y afloxa el dolor y buelve poco a poco la madre a su lugar. Pero otra cosa hallava yo siempre mejor que todas, y ésta no te quiero dezir, pues tan santa te me hazes. (203)

Areúsa: ¿Qué por mi vida, madre? Vesme penada y encúbresme la salud.

Celestina: Anda, que bien me entiendes. No te hagas bova.

Areúsa: ¡Ya ya mala landre me mate, si te entendía! Pero ¿qué quieres que haga? Sabes que se partió ayer aquel mi amigo con su capitán a la guerra; ¿avía de hazerle ruyndad?

Celestina: Verás y qué daño y qué gran ruyndad! (203)

In her commentary on Celestina's strategy with Areúsa, Leyla Rouhi offers this:

As she prepares Areúsa for the meeting with Pármeno, Celestina unravels significant tenets of her dogma, the principal one of which is that the very language used by her contains an intensively sexual tenor, overwhelming the listener with its clearly suggestive words and tonalities. The authority lent to this voice drives from the old woman's posture as a medical expert familiar with female ailments; she creates a pace of female complicity entirely rooted in sexual experience and reveals to Areúsa as well as to the reader the bare essence of her strategies which revolve around the all-importance of sexual desire. (*Mediation and Love*, 268)

In addition to her openly sexual discourse, Celestina physically touches the characters that she wishes to conquer. Witchcraft, words, sexual desire and touch seem to be commingled in her discourse in order to seduce and conquer. In Rouhi's words:

Celestina translates the power of sexuality and the boast of her own familiarity with it primarily into verbal expression but also makes use of the sense of touch. As she touches the young woman's body with the half-true pretext of finding her ailment, she accompanies the gesture with a mesmerizing tirade on pleasure and merges medical discourse with an intensively personal, erotic one, the intention of which becomes immediately apparent in one gesture not seen but perfectly understood by the reader. Searching for the reason for Areúsa's pain, Celestina continues to touch the young woman. (*Mediation and Love*, 268)

Celestina's sexual references as well as the fact that she is touching and arousing Areúsa become obvious when she exclaims: "Bendígate Dios y el señor Sant Miguel Angel, y que gorda y fresca que estás qué pechos y qué gentileza!" (*TC*, 202)

The intertwining of rhetoric, magic, sexuality and touch underscores equal importance these elements bear in the old bawd's exercise of her profession. Each and every component of her art of persuasion complements the others in her various schemes of seduction.

Mary Malcolm Gaylord makes the following important observation on the importance that Celestina accords to her language arts:

The passage where Celestina celebrates with words the celebrative powers of the word illustrates to perfection this metalinguistic consciousness, most acute of course in the old woman herself. It is thanks to language, she asserts, that every other form of enjoyment has any importance at all without the stimulus of the word, erotic experience would lack any interest or significance. This is surely why, in her negotiations with Pármeno, she offers in exchange for his loyalty not only sexual pleasure but the seductive delights of the word.

Gaylord also considers that:

Celestina's genius lies not only in her acute sensitivity to the desires of their fellow human beings, but in her recognition of

the fact that human desire-physical, sexual, metaphysical-is in large part a hunger for words, a hunger which seeks not only to express itself but also to satisfy itself verbally. (*Fair of the Word*, 7)

Celestina is unmatched in creating fictions, in manipulating meaning. She is always able to dissimulate her true intentions and her speech(es) generate so many opposite discourses that the center of her inner self is lost to public view. Such is her power to dissimulate, and such is the capacity of her language to multiply itself, that her words become the means by which order is subverted at times or reestablished. As analyzed earlier, Celestina's words to Alisa reestablish order since the appearances of an honest visit to Pleberio's house are preserved in Act IX. Order is subverted when Celestina makes the mistake of pronouncing Calisto's name in that same Act and infuriates Melibea. Celestina's words also allow the old bawd to maintain order in her underground and "unofficial" world as we have tried to show in her seduction of Melibea and her matchmaking between Pármeno and the *mujer enamorada* , Areúsa.

Carnival is also characterized by sensuality and happiness. All these attributes define Celestina's epicurian life style on the one hand but also characterize her rhetorical techniques, on the other.

Furthermore, Celestina can withdraw behind the screen of various personae. She is an ever-changing character, who adapts with facility to each new situation. An example in point is Celestina's fear when approaching Pleberio's house contrasted with her assured speech in front of Melibea and

her mother, Alisa. Let us listen as Celestina expresses her fears as she makes her way to Pleberio's house:

¿pues yré, o tornarme he? O dubdosa y dura perplexidad! no sé qual escoja por mas sano. En el osar, manifiesto peligro, en la covardía, denostada perdida . . . Y su amo Calisto que ¿qué dirá?qué hará, qué pensará? (. . .). (TC, 149)

In the following speech her assurance asserts itself in front of Alisa:

Celestina: (Por aquí anda el diablo aparejando oportunidad, arzeiando el mal a la otra. Ea, buen amigo, tener rezio, agora es mi tiempo o nunca; no la dexes; llévala de aquí a quien digo). (153)

Alisa: ¿Qué dizes, amiga?

Celestina: Señora, que maldito sea el diablo y mi pecado porque en tal tiempo ovo e crescer el mal de tu hermana que no avrá para nuestro negocio oportunidad (. . .). (154)

Her doubts return when faced with Melibea's resistance:

(Es hora mala acá vine si me falta mi conjuro. Ea pues bien sé a quien digo! Ce, hermano, que se va todo a perder!). (162)

but continues the dialogue with the young lady and manages to deliver -- despite the various obstacles -- her crucial message to Melibea:

Tu temor, señora, tiene ocupada mi desculpa. Mi inocencia me da osadía (. . .). (161-162)

Celestina has the capacity of multiplying herself indefinitely, according to each given situation. Celestina clearly wears successive masks which allow her to deal with any sort of adversity. This concept of the mask is undoubtedly connected to that of carnival. Celestina whose speech embodies the capacity of language to multiply indefinitely, and to be sculpted according to its user's desires, also symbolizes the ambiguity and treachery of language.

Not unlike the old bawd, who transforms reality to suit her own needs, language either masks or reinvents reality, in an endless spiral.

The concept of the lyrical mask directly remits the reader to the dramatic genre to which the *Tragicomedia* clearly belongs; it is also the defining symbol of the carnivalesque. It is equivalent to a second non-official voice that inverts and mocks the established order.³⁷ Celestina assumes this role in the *Tragicomedia*; she defies the established order of social hierarchy, represented by Melibea at the beginning of the work and by her parents throughout the work.

The carnivalesque elements abound in the *Tragicomedia*. Pármemo mentions in his description of Celestina that she was “maestra de hazer afeytes” (TC, 110). The preparation of beauty aids is highly relevant to the issue of Carnival but also to the description of Celestina, and to the issue of language. It ties into the concept of the mask and puts a final touch to the characterization of both the old bawd as cosmetician and language as facade. Indeed, Celestina’s linguistic artifice and manipulation can easily be compared to the act of applying make-up.

Lucrecia, who is Melibea's servant and is related to Areúsa and Elicia, the two prostitutes, knows Celestina well and unveils the old bawd's real intentions when Celestina comes to Pleberio's house:

¿A esso sólo saliste de tu casa? Maravíllome de ti, que no es éssa tu costumbre, ni sueles dar paso sin provecho (. . .) Algo es lo que yo digo; en mi seso estoy, que nunca metes aguja sin sacar reja. (TC, 151)

Celestina remarks later in the scene that Lucrecia does not wear make-up or other feminine ornaments:

Hija Lucrecia, cel!; yrás a casa y darte he una lexía con que pares esos cabellos más que el oro; no lo digas a tu señora. Y aun darte he unos polvos para quitarte esse olor de la boca que te huele un poco. Que en el reyno no lo sabe hazer otro sino yo, y no ay cosa que peor en la mujer parezca. (TC, 169)

Lucrecia could metaphorically be associated at this stage of the *Tragicomedia* with an ideal state of language since she speaks the truth and does not manipulate meaning or create fictions. Nevertheless, Lucrecia will, later on in the work, also fall victim to Celestina's linguistic treachery.

R. Rowdon Wilson further defines carnival in his critical work, *In Palamedes Shadow*:

Carnival worked against the power and compulsion of authoritative discourse: the voices of rulers, of the clergy, of the lay. Carnival is a ritual social event, collective and egalitarian, that plays the unofficial voices of the people against the official voices of authority. It possesses no essence in itself, but only its social function, its peculiar mode of exchange in mockery and laughter. As a socio-cultural phenomenon, carnival is "synthetic pageantry of a ritualistic sort (. . .)." Nonetheless, it is possible for the writer to borrow carnival humor and to incorporate them in the heart of his literary discourse. Bakhtin calls this process of incorporation and reinscription "carnivalization."³⁸

Most of the elements here described by Wilson are at play in the *Tragicomedia*. Celestina and her underworld represent the unofficial voice in the work, the one that opposes the established order represented by Calisto, Melibea and Melibea's parents. Furthermore, the characters involved in this process of carnivalization, Celestina primarily, but also Sempronio, Pármeno, Areúsa, and Elicia, have no essence since they are in a state of perpetual flux,

as are their language practices. Their personalities and speeches change according to any given situation.

The mutability of the characters is illustrated by the use of asides in the *Tragicomedia*, which allow the reader to share the characters' most intimate thoughts. Patricia Finch has identified the role of asides as follows:

The first and most obvious function of the aside in drama is to advance the plot -- to let the audience and sometimes also a character, know something while excluding another character who is present. One common instance is that of two characters plotting against a third in his presence. It is curious and also significant, that there is no example of an aside functioning to advance the plot in *Celestina*. A second function of the aside figures importantly in characterization. The character speaking reveals not only important clues to his own personality, beliefs, and relationships with the other characters, but may also reveal these same aspects for other characters present.³⁹

I believe that the use of asides in the *Tragicomedia*, reinforces the concept of language as deceitful and treacherous. In fact, characters continuously dissimulate their real intentions. The use of asides ties in with the concept of the mask and of make-up, and are all related to the carnivalization present in the work.

The carnivalization to which Rojas subjects his characters seems a particularly appropriate way to reinforce his philosophy of language, i.e. an entity in perpetual *mouvance*. At the same time, he is able to assert his vision of the social realities that surround him. Masks and pretense, as well as language games and dissimulation, are vital characteristics of the society that fifteenth-century *conversos* were daily faced with. That Rojas' society might be sheer masquerade, in order to deceive, appears to be the strongest

underlying motive behind the introduction of carnivalesque elements in the *Tragicomedia*.

We explained earlier that words in the Middle Ages were considered alive and could consequently impact reality (Malcolm K. Read). The fact that words be endowed with a life of their own and a spirit explains the many examples of self-fulfillment prophecies in the *Tragicomedia*. It is as if words, mistreated by their users, take their own revenge. An excellent example of such an occurrence can be found in the Act XII scene ending with Celestina's tragic death. This particular scene is announced in Act V:

Sempronio, amigo, ni yo me podría parar; ni el lugar es arparejado. Vente conmigo delante Calisto; oyrás maravillas. Que será de[s]florar mi embaxada comunicándolo con muchos. De mi boca quiero que sepa lo que se ha hecho; que aunque ayas de aver alguna partezilla del provecho, quiero yo todas las gracias del trabajo.

Sempronio: ¿Partezilla, Celestina? Mal me parece eso que dizes.

Celestina: Calla loquillo, que parte o partezilla, quanto tú quieres te dará. Todo lo mio es tuyo (. . .) (TC, 173)

The confrontation between Celestina and Sempronio, elicited by Celestina's imprudent use of the word “partezilla” foreshadows Celestina's tragic death in Act XII:

Sempronio: O vieja avarienta garganta muerta de sed por dinero ¿no seras contenta con la tercera parte de lo ganado?

Celestina: ¿Que tercia parte? Vete con Dios de mi casa tu, y essotro no dé bozes; no allegue la vezindad. No me hagáys salir de seso; no querays que salgan a placa las cosas de Calisto y vuestras. (274)

Language in this particular instance becomes prophetic. The word “partezilla” is for Erich Auerbach, a “figura,” a shadow of what is to come. In his critical work, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, Auerbach explains that

[t]he dominant idea in the Middle Ages: the idea that earthly life is thoroughly real, with the reality of the flesh into which the Logos entered, but that with all its reality it is only umbra and figura of the authentic future, ultimate truth, the real reality that will unveil and preserve the figura (. . .) so that the earthly event is a prophecy of figura of a part of a wholly divine reality that will be enacted in the future. But this reality is not only future; it is always present in the eye of God and in the other world, which is to say that in transcendence the revealed and true reality is present at all times or timelessly. (72)

The word “partezilla” used in Act V announces the expression “tercera parte” which in turns complements and fulfills the first word. In this particular instance, Celestina misjudges the importance and prophetic value of the word “partezilla” which together with the expression “tercera parte,” will literally exact revenge.

I hope to have shown that words and language have a magical and diabolical power in Rojas' view. In fact, it is under the “magic” of Celestina's “lengua” that the action between the two lovers Calisto and Melibea unfolds and eventually comes to its tragic end. In the previously cited example, the go-between's fatal slip, her misuse of the word “partezilla” signals a rupture of her “magical” performance of language and foreshadows her violent death.

What could have inspired such a view of language in Rojas's mind? We have explained that such a philosophy of language was characteristic of the Middle Ages and of Rojas' times, and suggested that it was partly due to

the importance of witchcraft. In chapter two, we saw how *conversos* were irremediably condemned to disguise their true beliefs and to live at the margins of fifteenth-century Spain. Moreover, language or, rather, its misuse was a cause of many a *conversos'* death. Gilman in *La España de Fernando de Rojas* explains why Rojas' father-in-law was arrested by the Inquisition. The motive of his imprisonment was indeed the misuse of language, in this particular instance, heresy:

(. . .) el cual [Alvaro de Montalbán] dixo que él ha pensado en aquel artículo que le acusa, que auía dicho que en este mundo toviere el bien, que en la otra vida no sabía sy avía nada.⁴⁰

Alvaro de Montalbán opposed the words and concepts of the dominant religion; for this reason, his words exacted their revenge on him.

Rojas believed that language had magical power precisely because words were the main means of oppression in his society. False converts were the daily victims of the “malsines” or delators who reported heretic speeches to the Inquisitorial authorities. For Julio Caro Baroja,

el “malsín” no es un carácter específicamente judío, aunque la palabra sea hebraica y aunque se dé entre los judíos repetidamente. El “malsín” es el producto de una justicia que tiene fundamento fuerte en la denuncia de carácter religioso. Lo encontramos con otro nombre en Estados de la Antigüedad, y hasta con una especie de carácter institucional. No ha de chocar que en estos antecedentes del “malsín” aparezca con precisión matemática, automáticamente, en los primeros procesos de la Inquisición española: cuando comenzó ésta a actuar en Toledo, allá por los años de 1485 a 1486.⁴¹

Caro Baroja explains that the “malsines” often acted with the purpose of obtaining money:

Sin duda no todos los denunciadores eran hombres interesados por una pequeña remuneración. Odios profesionales, antipatías personales y familiares, discusiones académicas, mil episodios de la vida cotidiana, podían originar la denuncia, no sólo el directo deseo de lucro. Y señoreando todas las pasiones, acaso la envidia. (*Los Judíos*, 279)

It is not hard to imagine that the world that Rojas recreates in his *Tragicomedia* is precisely the one he was given to survive in. The direct reference to the character of the *malsín* is represented in the work, I believe, by Celestina herself. In addition, her two accomplices, Pármeno and Sempronio, who end up betraying one whom they call “madre” repeatedly in the work, can be seen as *malsínes*.

The climate of uncertainty of fifteenth-century Spain for *conversos* is further illustrated in the work by the continuous use of asides: characters may indeed feel one thing but say another. In Celestina's world, every character contradicts himself or herself. The thoughts she or he expresses are always a veiled and transformed version of what these characters truly believe. Language as it is performed in the *Tragicomedia* is, at one level, an expression of the constant pretense and dissimulation *conversos* were subjected to in fifteenth-century Spain.

The characteristics of language studied -- language as a mask that veils reality, that disguises it and transforms it -- are not arbitrary in the *Tragicomedia*. For Gilman, we recall, it is “una coherente y profunda revelación de la vivencia del converso” (*La España*, 114).

The dialogues between Celestina and other role-players in the work are multi-valent as explained above, in several examples. Those dialogues

respond to the characters' awareness of what Malcolm Read defines as the rhetoric of social encounter. In Celestina's world, social contacts are highly important, and Read surveys the importance that Celestina gives to her social contacts (loyalty among thieves). This concept, stressed in Celestina's speech to Pármeno and Elicia's criticism of her cousin Lucrecia, embody the importance of social encounter. Read explains:

The medieval man had primarily been concerned with his relationship with God, therefore giving little importance to social relationships. With the Renaissance, man's fear of the last judgment recedes as a consequence of the stress put on man's social responsibilities. This belief was also largely influenced by Aristotle's conviction that man was by nature a social animal and from this was but a short step to seeing him as provided with a natural gift in speech. (*Birth and Death*, 79)

The multiplicity and multivalency of Celestina's discourses produce in the work a notion of void which is further reflected in the work by the use of similar speeches for two different characters and in different situations. This was the case of the love encounters of Calisto and Melibea on the one hand and of Pármeno and Areúsa on the other. This phenomenon has been acknowledged by June Hall Martin in her work *Love's Fools* who explains that "there is a sort of double plot which keeps the readers continually aware of the essential foolishness of the entire situation" (*Love's fools*, 117).

The use of language in the *Tragicomedia* is easily assimilated to the phenomenon of mirage. Characters are deceived by language that is ambiguous and eventuates in their death. Deceit, ambiguity and danger are attributes equally of the mirage and of language, as it is perfectly exemplified in the *Tragicomedia*.

Celestina's words have the power to infuriate the young Melibea, and to violate the young lady's apparent code of honor, but also the power to restore order when she locates the appropriate words to reestablish control.

Malcolm Read qualifies the language in *Celestina* as "phatic communion" and explains that language plays the role of social bond. This accounts for the emptiness of language in the work. It is precisely when the characters cease to fulfill their function as phatic communicators that tensions arise. This is the case, clearly, when Celestina pronounces Calisto's name in front of Melibea and when Calisto, later, declares his desire to possess Melibea and, finally, when Celestina reveals her great desire for profit and money. Truth is therefore what causes the conflicts to arise as well as death to occur in the *Tragicomedia*.

Implicitly, Fernando de Rojas demonstrates the impossibility for his characters -- but figuratively for the marginalized human beings of his society -- to express their true selves. An example in point is that of his father-in-law, who openly expressed his disbelief in life-after-death. Commenting on the *converso*, Francisco Villalobos, Gilman comments that he was: "forzado a jugar sin cesar con su máscara de chocarrero (. . .) y no pudo nunca encontrar satisfacción" (*La España*, 114). This comment could easily apply to many a *converso* of Rojas' times, but as well it could describe Celestina and her cohort.

This chapter has hoped to show that the nature of language is a central theme in the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. Fernando de Rojas chooses

to illustrate with the use of the parody of courtly love as a point of departure for his reflection, the deceptive and treacherous nature of language. Thus we are introduced to Celestina's rhetorical games. Language is the means by which the old bawd shifts circumstances to her own profit; it is the tool she wields to destroy order at times and reestablish it at others. The power of language to transform reality is supported in Rojas' work by the carnivalization of its main characters. The use of carnivalesque elements allows Rojas to present a world upside down, an unofficial world where deceit, masks, linguistic distortion are permitted to dominate.

The expert use of parody and carnivalization in the *Tragicomedia* inevitably will provoke some laughter on the part of the reader. Ludic language practices mingled with overt sexual references are two of the main components of the work and account for the "dulce píldora" that Rojas intended to use in order to transmit his moral message about the tragic consequences of "loco amor." Behind this moral message there seems to lie yet a more serious reflection. In fact, Rojas' work, as we intended to demonstrate, becomes a metaphor for the impossibility of the marginalized to express their true feelings; it condemns them to deceit, ambiguity, treachery and duplicity. In fact, all characters in the *Tragicomedia* appear to have a double personality evidenced by the use of asides among other elements. Duplicity is also what characterized the life of the *converso* in fifteenth-century Spain. In this light, the *Tragicomedia* becomes the manifestation of the *converso's* irremediable differences between self and self. For J. T. Snow,

cited earlier in this chapter, Melibea is a character who is aware of her two selves. Such was the destiny of Spanish *conversos* who, in Gilman's view, were at both the center and margin of society. On the relation between a writer and his book, Jacques Derrida establishes the reciprocal influence between both:

Le poete est donc bien le sujet du livre, sa substance et son maitre, son serviteur et son theme. Et le livre est bien le sujet du poete, etre parlant et connaissant qui ecrit dans le livre sur le livre.⁴²

Writing becomes the means by which the lawyer, Fernando de Rojas, expresses the duality of his own being. Not unlike Antón de Montoro, the author of the *Tragicomedia*, wishes to give his testimony concerning the internal struggles of an entire class of Spanish *conversos*. In fact, what would embody the uncertain destiny of *conversos* better than language itself, irremediably manipulated, veiled and treacherous?

Notes

Chapter Five

¹ Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina*. Edición de Dorothy S. Severin. Segunda edición. (Madrid: Cátedra, 1988) 69. *La Celestina* or *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* will be referred to as TC.

Fernando de Rojas is the known author of *La Celestina* although his existence is questioned by some critics. In fact very little is known about that author. Stephen Gilman has developed the circumstances of Rojas' life and thus proven his existence as well as his Jewish origins in his *La España de Fernando de Rojas*. Stephen Gilman believes that Fernando de Rojas, was the son of Hernando de Rojas who was condemned as a *converso* in 1488. Other critics have opposed that argument on the basis that Rojas could not have been accepted in Salamanca to study law and could not have become the mayor of Talavera if such had been the status of his father. On Rojas' religious convictions see chapter two.

Rojas mentions in his "El autor a un su amigo" that he found the first act of the *Comedia* and decided to finish it during a fifteen day time period. This first act, typically Spanish according to Rojas since it was formed "en los claros ingenios de doctors varones castellanos" was believed by Rojas himself to have been written by Juan de Mena or Rodrigo Cota. The Spanish critics M. Pelayo believed that Rojas was the author of the entire work. On the other hand, Stephen Gilman and Rosa Lida de Malkiel believe that the first act was written by a different author due to the stylistic differences as well as differences in the use of literary sources and tone.

² The *Tragicomedia*, which appeared in 1500 or 1502 is composed of twenty-one acts and has five additional acts (known as *Tratado de Centurio* due to the appearance of that new character) that were placed between the middle of the XIV act of the original *Comedia*. The *Tragicomedia* also included a new prologue in prose, the final stanzas (*Concluye el autor*) and all the acts, except for the first one are altered. (adapted from Severin's Introduction to *La Celestina*, 12). Severin further comments that

El autor del prólogo, que confiesa ser el mismo author de antes, sostiene haber añadido estos actos ante la insistencia de algunos amigos que querían que el proceso de los amores se alargase, y haber cambiado el título de esta versión aumentada, teniendo en cuenta el trágico final de la obra, por el de *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. (12)

³ Dorothy Severin comments on the existence of two distinctive critical schools in regard to the interpretation of Pleberio's soliloquy. In her words, the "Christian didactic school which judges Pleberio's words from a moral

and traditional point of view whereas the judaic-pessimistic school bases its approach on Rojas' *converso* origins." In this light, Pleberio's words would be an expression of what could today be characterized as an existentialist pessimism characteristic of a marginalized and persecuted caste, that of the *conversos* in fifteenth century Spain. (23-24)

⁴ María Lida de Malkiel asserted that the genre of the *Tragicomedia* was directly inspired by that of the humanistic comedy, written in Latin and popularized by Petrarch but that originated in Plauto and Terencio. The humanistic comedy, popular in Renaissance Italy was read aloud, written in prose and offered a very flexible concept of time and space; moreover, it reflected given social circumstances of the times it depicted; finally, it used implicit quotations, monologues of humble characters and asides. All of these characteristics can be found in Rojas' dramatic work. (Consult, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel's *La originalidad artística de La Celestina* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1962) 29-44. Dorothy Severin further comments that:

Se podría señalar que, para Rojas "comedia" implicaba no sólo la forma dialogada, sino también un contenido cómico, por eso Plauto ofrecía una etiqueta utilísima, la de la tragicomedia, quizás (como sugiere Castro Guisasola) a través del Fernandus Servatus de Verardo, y a pesar de que el problema de Plauto fuera completamente diferente del de Rojas: la comedia de Plauto trataba de personajes serios mientras la obra de Rojas era una obra cómica con final trágico. (TC, 17)

⁵ Joseph T. Snow: "Lectura de Celestina- personaje y de la obra de Fernando de Rojas." *Historia y ficciones. Coloquio sobre la literatura del siglo XV*. Ed. R. Beltrán, Valencia: Universidad, Dept. de Filología Espanyola. 1992) 279-87.

⁶ Leyla Rouhi, ". . . Y otros treynta officios:" The Definition of a Medieval Woman's Work in Celestina" *Celestinesca* 22.2 (Otoño 1998): 21-31.

⁷ V. A Burrus, "Melibea's suicide: the price of self-delusion" *Journal of Hispanic Philology* 19 (1994-1995 [1998]): 57-88.

⁸ James F. Burke, "The Mal de la Madre and the Failure of Maternal Influence and its 'Moralité.'" *Celestinesca* 17.2: 111-128.

⁹ Alan Deyermond believes that *La Celestina* is a novel in dialogue. In the words of Severin, Deyermond considers that

el joven Fernando de Rojas encuentra una comedia humanística incompleta, con un amante cortés que encierra un gran potencial cómico y paródico, y decide completarla no como tal comedia,

sino como una novela sentimental paródica y dialogada que sea al mismo tiempo trágica y cómica. (TC, 27)

Lida de Malkiel in words of Severin "hizo una enérgica defensa de la obra como teatro, y Marcel Bataillon añadió la noción de obra teatral moralizante." In his *La Celestina: Arte y estructura* (Madrid: Taurus, 1974), Gilman further considers that

El problema del género literario en *La Celestina* es tan esencial, que desconocerlo es no entender y no apreciar la obra como un todo. La mezcla y conflicto de géneros es un factor determinante no sólo en la forma sino también en el estilo; se relaciona directamente, con con una incertidumbre o confusión superficial del autor, sino con su intención artística fundamental como quedó expresada a través de las posibilidades de aquella época. (338)

The critic further characterizes the genre of *La Celestina* as thus: "deseo presentar una vez más la dualidad del género literario más fundamental, la de la novela y del drama, en la cual cada una impone a la obra su significado respectivo y sus irreconciliables necesidades estéticas." (349)

¹⁰ Donald Mc Grady, "The Problematic Beginning of Celestina" *Celestinesca* 18.2 (Otoño 1994); 31-51. On the authorship of Act I of the *Tragicomedia* also consult Dorothy Severin's "Cota, his Imitator and *La Celestina*, the Evidence Re-examined" *Celestinesca* 4.1 (1980): 3-8.

¹¹ P .E. Russell believes that "Rojas estaba más convencido de la brujería que el primer autor, quien puso en boca de Pármeno estas palabras: "y todo era burla y mentira" pero queriendo decir, probablemente, que Celestina era víctima de los diablos." (qtd. from Severin,TC, 40)

¹² Consult Alan Deyermond, "Hilado-Cordón-Cadena: Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*" *Celestinesca*, I. 1 (mayo 1977): 6-12. Also, "Symbolic Equivalence in *La Celestina*: a Postscript" *Celestinesca*, 2.1 (mayo 1978): 25-30.

¹³ Francisco Rico and María Rosa Lida de Malkiel believe that "Rojas pudo haber empleado la brujería como una estratagema argumental, pero sin estar convencido personalmente de ella. (qtd. by Severin,TC, 40). As for Menéndez y Pelayo, 'tras sentar que Celestina es [hechicera de verdad y no embaucadora] y explicar por su conjuro' 'la rápida y súbita conversión del ánimo de Melibea' estampa: 'nada de esto era necesario: todo lo que pasa en la *Tragicomedia* pudo llegar a término sin más agente que el amor mismo.'" (qtd. by Rosa Lida de Malkiel, *La originalidad*, 221). Malkiel considers that,

En efecto, después de los estudios de los profesores Gilman y Asensio, aun el más distraído lector reconocerá que han pasado “muchos y muchos días” entre el instante en que Calisto aborda a Melibea en el jardín (I, 31 y sigs) y el instante en que la doncella confiesa su amor (X, 53 y sigs.): la conversión no ha sido pues tan “rápida y súbita” que exija obligatoriamente la intervención sobrenatural. A la luz de aquella confesión (X, 53 y 64), la repulsa de los actos I y IV muestra que, más o menos a sabiendas, desde el primer momento Melibea está inficionada del amor a Calisto: los críticos de nuestro siglo sin de hecho indagar la cuestión del tiempo implícito, han venido a suponerlo (. . .).” (222)

¹⁴ See Severin's comments (TC, 40).

¹⁵ Patrizia Botta, “Itinerarios Urbanos en *La Celestina* de Fernando de Rojas” *Celestinesca* 18.2 (Otoño 1994): 113-131.

¹⁶ Mary Malcolm Gaylord, “Fair of the Word, Fair of the World: The Commerce of Language in *La Celestina*,” *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 2.1 (1991): 1-28.

¹⁷ Eloisa Palafox, “Oralidad, autoridad y retórica en la *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* de Fernando de Rojas.” Dissertation. (Michigan State University, 1993).

¹⁸ Andreas Cappelanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*. Trans. John Jay Perry. (New-York: Columbia UP, 1960) 82.

¹⁹ Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996) 3.

²⁰ M. M Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968) 81.

²¹ June Hall Martin, *Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover* (London: Tamesis, 1972).

²² In her *Love's fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the parody of the courtly lover*, June Hall Mariín draws a parallel between the female character of Nicolette in the French 12th century chantefable, *Aucassin et Nicolette*: and Melibea. Nicolette is, not unlike Melibea, the bravest in the love relationship. The critic has also drawn a parallel between the two male lovers Aucassin and Calisto who are both parodic courtly lovers. Calisto is highly preoccupied by his reputation and often only thinks of himself. Melibea, on the contrary, is all devoted to Calisto and her love for him. Consult *Aucassin et Nicolette* (Paris: Flammarion, 1984).

²³ Manuel Da Costa Fontes, "Celestina as Antithesis of the Virgin Mary," *Journal of Hispanic Philology*. 15. 1 (1990): 7-41.

²⁴ In her article "El auto IX y la Destronización de Melibea," *Celestinesca*, 19.2, (1995) 57-69, Francoise Maurizi, when analyzing the diametrically opposed descriptions of Melibea -- that made by Calisto and that made by Areúsa and Elicia -- notes that:

La destronización de Melibea es la consecuencia lógica e ineluctable de esta deificación. El retrato ideal de la dama lleva en sí un movimiento antitético de inversión paródica que la precipita hacia lo bajo. No es de extrañar que en este movimiento de rebajamiento llegue a adquirir la amada de Calisto unos rasgos que la puede emparentar con la mujer diabolizada de las creencias populares. Evidentemente, el peso de la retórica desempeña un papel predominante. (63-64).

²⁵ Joseph T. Snow, "Two Melibeas," en 'Nunca fue pena mayor:' *Estudios de literatura española en homenaje a Brian Dutton* (Cuenca: Univ. de Castilla-La Mancha, 1966): 655-662.

²⁶ Celestina's activities are described by Pármene as thus:

Sacaba agua[s] para oler, de rosas, de azaar, de jasmín . . . Tenía una cámara llena de alambiques, de redomillas, de barrilejos de barro, de vidrio, de arambre . . . Adelgasava los cueros con cumos de limones, con turvino, con tuétano de coro y de gara, y otras confaciones. (TC, 111).

All these activities can easily be compared to Celestina's linguistic powers. The old bawd re-creates reality with the power of her rhetorics, as she creates potions from different plants.

Celestina also views herself as a doctor when she says in Act IV: ". . . Mayormente quando están embueltos en secretas enfermedades, y tales que, donde está la melezina, salió la causa de la enfermedad" (TC, 161). Celestina's power is what will allow Calisto and Melibea to be cured.

²⁷ See note 11.

²⁸ See note 12. For a contrary view, see J. T Snow, "Alisa, Melibea, Celestina y la magia," *Insula*, no. 633 (septiembre 1999), 15-17.

²⁹ Malcolm K. Read, *The Birth and Death of Language: Spanish Literature and Linguistics: 1300-1700*. (Madrid: Porrúa Turanzas, 1983).

³⁰ Dorothy Severin comments on Calisto's toothache that "era el dolor típico de los enamorados." On that topic also consult Geoffrey West's "The unseemliness of Calisto's Toothache" in *Celestinesca*, 3.1 (mayo 1979), 3-10.

³¹ Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin, Creation of a Prosaics*, (Palo Alto; Stanford UP, 1990) 159.

³² M. M Bakhtin. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed and tr. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press, 1984).

³³ Elizabeth Weber, *Jacques Derrida: Points, Interviews, 1974*. Ed. Trans. Peggy Kamuf (Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1995).

³⁴ Leyla Rouhi, *Mediation and Love: A Study of the Medieval Go-between in Key Romance and Near-eastern Texts*. (Leiden: Brill, 1999) 273.

³⁵ Erica Morgan, "Rhetorical Technique in the Persuasion of Melibea," *Celestinesca*, 3.2 (noviembre, 1979): 8

³⁶ Stephen Gilman has studied the character of Pármeno in his *La Celestina: Arte y estructura*, and more precisely the different steps of his evolution. According to the critic, Pármeno is at the beginning of the work under the influence of Celestina "Aquí el Pármeno de la primera situación logra recobrase, pero está a punto de llorar" (111) but the young servant ends up being a copy of Sempronio: "En efecto, Pármeno se ha convertido en mera copia de Sempronio, en una reproducción que ya no puede servir de guía para estudiar el arte de Rojas. Casi es simbólico que sus últimas palabras a Sempronio sean: "Salta, que tras ti voy." (121). Dorothy Severin adds that Stephen Gilman clearly shows that Pármeno is subjected to Celestina without the intervention of witchcraft which confirms the theory according to which witchcraft is but a literary device in the *Tragicomedia*. (See Severin, Introduction, TC, 40)

³⁷ In his article "El concepto de la máscara en *La Celestina*, *Celestinesca* 5. 1 (mayo, 1981): 33-38, René P. Garay, notes that

El concepto de "máscara" o "persona," según las definiciones de Carl Jung y el sociólogo Erving Goffman, nos facilita una penetración más aguda de los rasgos variables en cada personaje de la obra. Aparte del retrato externo adentramos también en los aspectos psíquicos que mueven a estos individuos. (34)

Garay agrees with María Rosa Lida de Malkiel who asserts that "Visiblemente, Celestina se acomoda a cada interlocutor para dominarle; su maniobra, idéntica en la intención aunque diversa en la forma, está en perfecto acuerdo

con su caracter.” (*La originalidad*, 99). Garay concludes his article: “Son estas máscaras sin embargo las que definen a los personajes; por ende resultan ser sumamente irónicas las palabras de Calisto cuando le dice a Celestina: ‘. . . por la filosomía [fisionomía] es conocida la virtud interior.’” (qtd by Garay;TC, 64)

³⁸ Rowdon R. Wilson, *In Palamades' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game, and Narrative Theory* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1990) 37.

³⁹ Patricia Finch “The Uses of the Aside in *Celestina*” *Celestinesca* 6.2 (1982) 19-24.

⁴⁰ Stephen Gilman, *La España de Fernando de Rojas* (Madrid: Taurus, 1978) 103.

⁴¹ Caro Baroja, *Los Judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea*, (Madrid: Istmo, 1978).

⁴² Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la difference*, (Paris: Seuil, 1967).

Conclusion

The present dissertation has hoped to prove that Antón de Montoro's poetic corpus, Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo entre el amor y un viejo* and Fernando de Rojas' *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* are reflections of their *converso* authors' marginalized position in fifteenth-century Spain. We have tried to demonstrate that language is a core issue in our three writers and that written language -- by essence, deceitful and pluri-valent -- becomes a metaphor of the ambiguity and ever-changing nature of Cota's and Rojas' precarious religious and political status.

Beyond sharing the particularity of being *conversos* or of being of *converso* origins, Montoro, Cota and Rojas all chose to parody the literary school of courtly love as the point of departure of their reflection on the treacherous nature of language. Chapter one showed how the philosophy of *fin'amors* and its literary manifestation, the school of courtly love, flourished in the twelfth century under the influence of the Troubadours. We explained that courtly love -- which deeply impacted the culture of the South and markedly differentiated it from the culture of the North of France with its *trouweres* -- was hybrid in nature and displayed both sacred and profane elements.

Under the influence of the Church, courtly love acquired distinct religious elements and the *domma*, the courtly lady, soon became identified with the Virgin Mary in the thirteenth century. Courtly love was an order --

a profane one -- with its specific rules -- duly established by Andreas Capellanus in his *De Amore*. It was also a school of perfection, a *camino de perfección*, to retake the Spanish seventeenth century mystics' expression. Through the resistance of the courtly lady and the many obstacles encountered in order to gain the favors of his *domma*, the male courtly lover had to demonstrate the knightly attributes of perseverance, patience and courage. Also at the center of courtly love, was the concept of honor, that guided both the courtly male's and the *domma's* conduct.

Yet, courtly love was essentially a game, designed to entertain the courts of Occitania and demonstrate the poet's (the troubadour's) ability to "trobar" (the equivalent of "trouver" in modern French and meaning "to find") the most ambiguous and pluri-valent word. Such a ludic conception of language is, for example, at the core of Arnault Daniel's poem studied in chapter one (p. 56) and is defined by Roger Dragonetti as thus: "Dans le jeu formel de la langue, tromper la ruse, par une ruse plus subtile, constitue un des moteurs de cette poesie qui se doit de vaincre, par un tour plus habile de l'écriture, celle du rival . . ." ¹ The critic further comments:

Autant dire que le jeu du *trobar* est toujours refermé (*clus*) sur son secret et là surtout où il est le plus ouvert (*leu*). Il postule une pratique de la langue d'Amour dont les poètes ont toujours su que, si la chance d'une trouvaille est liée à l'obstacle, celle-ci engendre à son tour et nécessairement le contredit qui multiplie, dans l'art de la gille, les figures antagonistes . . . (*Le Gai Savoir*, 190)

Laura Kendrick and Sarah Kay have demonstrated that the original troubadours were well aware of the ever-changing nature of language and

engaged the reader in a playful game of interpretations. These two critics have also shown that courtly love was a pure fiction since some of the early troubadours' verses parody the idealized vision of the courtly lady as well as the excellence of character of the male lover.

Guilhem IX, Count of Aquitaine and the first known troubadour's "Farai un vers de dreyt rien," clearly asserts that the courtly *domma* was a mere construct of the school of *fin' amor*. Other of Guilhem's poems also deconstruct the idealized vision of love professed by courtly love -- more particularly *amor purus* -- by including very overt sexual references. Finally, the verses of the *trobairitz* -- female troubadours -- further deconstruct the philosophy and language of courtly love by presenting a more realistic view of women, diametrically opposed to the male troubadours'; the *trobairitz*' language is also deprived of ornamentation and hyperbole.

Courtly love was thus a game -- designed to entertain -- but the vision of language that it displayed, had political and religious roots. As Kendrick demonstrated, the troubadours' society was also acentric and the political alliances shifting in Occitania (p. 67). Moreover, the troubadours' wordplay originated in their desire to challenge the Church's vision of the word as fixed in its meaning.

It is this very concept of language -- as a malleable and ever-changing entity -- that we find in Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas. These three *converso* writers chose to parody the literary school of courtly love because better than any other literary school, *fin' amors*

illustrated the power of language to embellish and re-invent reality. Yet, like the troubadours', our three *converso* writers' objective is religious and political. Their respective texts go far beyond a simple parody of courtly love and its language. By manipulating language and showing that it is deceitful, these three authors metaphorically express the state of malaise experienced by *conversos* in fifteenth-century Spain.

Antón de Montoro's , Rodrigo Cota's and Fernando de Rojas' works are the product of changing times in Spain. As we analyzed in chapter two, the Spanish fifteenth century is one of political intrigues and turmoil; it is also a century characterized by the rise of overt anti-Semitism. This movement of popular origin became particularly violent in the fourteenth century with the pogroms of 1391 and culminated in 1492 with the expulsion of the non-converted Jews. Moreover, anti-Semitism was complicated by the ambiguous attitude of royalty towards the Jews and later towards *conversos*. Jews were among the most sought-after advisors at court but also discriminated against at times by the monarchs who used popular anti-Semitism for political purposes. Enrique of Trástamara's contradictory attitude towards Jews is highly significant in that respect. The king massacred the *judería* of Toledo in 1355 after originally having supported Jews.

The political and religious status of the Jews was therefore unstable and their identity had to be constantly re-invented in order to adapt to any new given situation. In 1492, Jews were obliged to convert to the main religion although many had already converted under the influence of the Inquisition.

The newly-converted found themselves in a marginalized situation since they were forced to convert to a religion that they did not embrace but were still accused of practicing their old religion.

In the literary field, the Spanish fifteenth century was characterized by the resurgence of the literary school of courtly love -- a literary anachronism that has been analyzed by Roger Boase in political terms. According to the critic, courtly love allowed the obsolete nobility to find a fictitious way to recreate their chivalric ideals. Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota, and Fernando de Rojas chose to parody the literary school of courtly love and thus indirectly poked fun at an idle social class, in search of a *raison d'être*.

The political, social, and religious malaise of fifteenth-century Spain found its roots in the previous century. The climate of the fourteenth century is expressed in Archpriest of Hita's *Libro de Buen Amor*. The *Libro* tells how the author -- who presents himself as a fictitious priest, Juan Ruiz -- indulges in world pleasures while searching for the love of God. The objective of Hita's *Libro* was undoubtedly moral since Juan Ruiz warns the reader not to follow his example and warns women more particularly against the dangers of love. The *Libro* also parodies the philosophy of courtly love (see don Melón and doña Endrina's episode as well as the *serranas*). More importantly for the purpose of our study, the *Libro* also reflects upon the treacherous and deceitful nature of language. The philosophy of language expressed by Hita is very similar to that found in our three *converso* authors, Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota, and Fernando de Rojas. The Archpriest

considers that “words serve intentions” i.e., that language is manipulated in order to fit its users’ needs. Hita clearly associates the use of language with the recent commerce of money (introduced with the rise of the new social class of the Bourgeoisie) since not unlike money, language only re-presents reality. In fact, words cannot be taken at face value.

Florencia Pinar and her love poetry -- deprived of all the ornaments characteristic of the traditional fifteenth-century Spanish courtly lyric -- further de-constructs the literary school of courtly love and parodies its excess of ornamentation. One of the few feminine voices of Spanish *cancionero* poetry, the female poet also parodies the language of courtly love and indirectly insists on the power of language to distort reality. Florencia Pinar’s female protagonists are clearly opposed to the hyperbolic and fossilized women protagonists of fifteenth-century Spanish courtly lyric. Antón de Montoro and Fernando de Rojas, more particularly, evince a vision of women very akin to Florencia Pinar’s in parts of their works. Montoro’s Catalina is beautiful despite her humble origins and Rojas’ Melibea undoubtedly emerges as a real and highly determined human being.

The study of the *Libro* as well as Florencia Pinar’s poetry in chapter two, enabled us to prove that the vision of language found in Montoro, Cota, and Rojas was fostered by other authors. Nevertheless, the following chapters hoped to prove that such a vision of language is all the more significant in authors of *converso* origins since their linguistic practices become a direct metaphor of their marginality.

Chapter three focused on Antón de Montoro, *El ropero's*, poetry.

Montoro pays homage to the literary tradition of courtly love but also parodies the school of *fin' amors*. Not unlike the troubadours themselves, *el Ropero* is well-aware of the hyperbolic nature of the Provençal school of love. Following the tradition of poetry as game, Antón de Montoro plays with language and concepts and in the process his poetry becomes a self-reflective entity on the ever-changing essence of language. Montoro, by means of neologisms mainly but also by wordplay, shows that language is malleable and can be indefinitely re-created by the writer and the reader. The *ropero* invites the reader to fully participate in the creative process thus proving that the literary document acquires a life of its own once out of the hands of its writer. In this respect, Antón de Montoro illustrates one of the central concepts of the Derridian philosophy of language, that of *difference*.

Converso poet Antón de Montoro's linguistic search is inexorably connected with a personal search. The *ropero* openly claims his Jewish origins on the one hand but also denigrates himself and strives to be accepted by the majority of the old Christians. His poems are a reflection of that internal search for identity in a society that irremediably sees him as a "puto judío."

Antón de Montoro, *el ropero*, wears successive masks through the use of various poetic personae -- a poetic device that allows him to experience with his multi-faceted self. The reader is left with multiple -- and contradictory images -- of that poet. Antón claims his Jewish origins and is

the advocate of the Jews but Montoro is a devoted Christian. His religious ambivalence is further complicated by his social status. Montoro was of humble origins (as his nickname *el ropero* playfully suggests) but was a highly respected poet and moved in high circles. Thus, language, by nature a-centric and in a state of perpetual flux, becomes in Montoro's case, a metaphor for the life of this *converso* poet, perpetually condemned to re-invent himself in a society also in a state of transition. Montoro's linguistic games become an expression of the poet's religious *dilemma*.

Rodrigo Cota is yet another example of the intimate connection between an a-centric view of language and *converso* existence in fifteenth-century Spain. Born in a prosperous family, Rodrigo Cota was openly criticized by Antón de Montoro for denigrating his Jewish origins in his *Epitalamio Burlesco*. In fact, the Toledan writer directly parodies Jewish traditions in that literary piece. Yet, more central to the purpose of our study is Cota's *Diálogo entre el amor y el viejo*. That piece allowed us to prove in chapter four that, under the guise of a parody of courtly love, the poem is a veiled expression of linguistic treachery and eventually a metaphor for *converso* existence in fifteenth-century Spain.

We saw how the old man protagonist of the *Diálogo -- Viejo --* is a clear parody of the ideal young courtly lover immortalized by Provençal poetry. *Viejo* is a victim of *Amor* whose rhetorical powers successfully convince him to become a member of the order of Love. *Amor* is seen as treacherous in the *Diálogo* and is directly associated with language itself, also deceitful. *Viejo* becomes a puppet in the hands of *Amor* and his will power is for ever destroyed. Falling in love in old age will -- undoubtedly -- lead him to ruin.

We showed that *Viejo* is a symbol of *conversos* themselves. In fact, the old man becomes a member of the Order of Love, to which he cannot belong due to his old age. Similarly, *conversos* were -- in theory -- members of the dominant religion but in many cases could not or would not fully belong to that caste. In many cases, *conversos* were still practicing their old religion while pretending to be good Christians in order to become full members of the dominant caste of Old Christians. *Viejo*, not unlike *conversos*, is an outcast in his own world. The old man belonged to the Order of Love when he was a young man as *conversos* belonged to their world before they were obliged to convert. In the new religious reality of fifteenth century Spain, Jews and *conversos* become alienated in their own society, not unlike *Viejo* in his "new" reality.

Love and its devastating effects is one of the main themes of Fernando de Rojas' *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, first published under the name of *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea* in 1499 and published in its present form in 1502. The *Tragicomedia* was indeed written "en reprehensión de los locos enamorados . . ." as clearly stated by Rojas himself.

The impetuous and passionate Calisto is by definition the parody of the ideal courtly lover and interestingly enough, Melibea, the courted lady, behaves in a more courtly manner than her male counterpart, although her feelings for Calisto are also passionate.

Like in Montoro's poetic corpus and in Cota's *Diálogo*, the parody of courtly love is the point of departure in the *Tragicomedia* of a reflection on

the dangers of carnal love but also on the devastating effects of language itself. The old bawd Celestina impersonates the power of language to deceive and through her expert use of rhetoric, she exemplifies how language can not only serve the user's intentions but also subvert the order of society. Celestina manipulates language in order to uncover Melibea's secret passion for Calisto but also Pármeno's hidden venality. The old bawd seduces her "victims" and appeals to their most inner self. Her gift is not only rhetorical, it is also psychological. Her language fits every given situation and adapts to the many mood changes of her interlocutors (see her attitude with Melibea in Act IV).

Celestina wears different masks throughout the *Tragicomedia*, and for this reason, her inner self is lost to public view. In fact, one of the images that dominates Rojas' work is that of carnival and also the concept of the mask, intimately connected to the carnivalesque. Rojas' characters are role-players and the use of asides attest to the fact that the characters have double personalities. The art of Celestina resides in her ability to un-mask the characters' inner desires and hidden personalities.

The characters of the *Tragicomedia* can be defined mostly by their power to dissimulate. As we tried to prove in chapter five, Celestina could very well embody *converso* existence in fifteenth-century Spain since she is constantly obliged to re-invent herself, like the *conversos* themselves. Her fear to enter Pleberio's house (in Act IV) for example, could be compared to the newly converted Jews' to become part of the majority of Old Christians.

Celestina also lives on the outskirts of town and is part of an underground world diametrically opposed to Pleberio's world. Once again, her state of marginalization can be easily associated with the Jews' or the *conversos*, who -- metaphorically -- also lived at the margins of their society. Chapter five thus established a link between the pessimism found in the work, but more significantly between the linguistic practices found in the *Tragicomedia* and Rojas' *converso* origins.

The issue of language as an incomplete and treacherous entity -- only able to represent reality -- was raised as early as Plato and by many authors after him. The objective of the present dissertation has been to demonstrate the originality of the three authors -- Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota and Fernando de Rojas -- who used language and its inherent instability as a metaphor for their own state of uncertainty. Moreover, we showed that the three authors -- although belonging to different literary generations -- proceed in a similar fashion. Their first objective was to de-construct -- to retake Derrida's own term -- the literary school of courtly love, in vogue during their century. By doing so, the three authors indirectly poked fun at a literary school but also at a specific social class -- the nobility -- which saw in courtly love the possibility to recreate a past -- for the most part fictitious. Their parody of the school of *fin' amors* is therefore primarily literary but has also political undertones.

The parody of courtly love allowed our three authors to reflect on the treacherous nature of language in general since *fin' amors* is by definition

hyperbolic. The originality of our three *converso* authors is the use of characters -- or rather prototypes -- who embody the deceitful nature of language itself. Montoro becomes Antón, *el ropero*, or creates an alter-ego such as his horse and thus multiplies himself throughout his poetic corpus in order to exemplify the power of language to reconfigure itself continuously. Cota uses the character of *Amor* to impersonate the power of language to deceive. Finally, Rojas' old bawd Celestina perfectly embodies the capacity of words to deceive but also to subvert social order and lead to death.

Also present in these three authors is the motif of the carnivalesque and the concept of the mask, used to identify the power of language to deceive. Antón de Montoro, *el ropero*, as well as Celestina wear successive masks and the reader can but obtain a fragmented knowledge of both characters. As for Cota's *Viejo*, he falls victim to *Amor* and as a consequence becomes estranged from his own self. He is an old man experimenting the feelings of a young lover.

The presence of the carnivalesque is highly relevant in the work of three *converso* authors. In fact, as the various critics cited throughout this study pointed out, *converso* existence could easily be compared to a masquerade in which appearances were far removed from the truth. Some *conversos* were truly converted to the main religion but were still accused of Judaism whereas others abandoned their former religion and became *malsines*. In this newly-defined society, *conversos* had to re-create

themselves constantly and as Montoro's case attests, were undoubtedly estranged from their own selves.

Carnival has also been associated traditionally with a disruption of order, obvious in the three authors studied but more significant in Cota's *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia*. Caro Baroja's definition of Carnival, translates the subversion of order found in the *Diálogo* and the *Tragicomedia*:

Desde un punto de vista social lo que imperaba era una violencia establecida, un desenfreno de hechos y de palabras que se ajustaba a formas específicas; así la inversión del orden normal de las cosas tenía un papel primordial en la fiesta . . . El descoyuntamiento del orden físico iba unido al descomedimiento en el orden social.²

The view of language found in Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota, and Fernando de Rojas is by no means limited to *converso* authors. As we analyzed in chapter one it is also found in the troubadours and later in Archpriest of Hita's *Libro de Buen Amor*, for example. Thus there are antecedents, and undoubtedly followers of Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota, and Fernando de Rojas' philosophy of language, which -- we mentioned earlier -- is originated in Plato.

Montoro's, Cota's and Rojas' texts attest that the issue of the deceitful nature of language -- at the center of modern and post-modern debates -- was also present in Spanish Middle Ages. Moreover, the concept of language as treacherous acquires new dimensions in the case of our three *converso* authors since it becomes a reflection of their internal instability.

The Derridian deconstructive approach to literature is a critical approach, which I believe, allowed us in this particular study to analyze more

effectively the self-reflexivity of Montoro's poetic corpus, Cota's *Diálogo* and Rojas' *Tragicomedia*. In words of Derrida:

As we have seen, the very condition of a deconstruction may be at work, in the work, within the system to be deconstructed; it may already be located there, already at work, not at the center but in an eccentric center, in a corner whose eccentricity assures the solid concentration of the system, participating in the construction of what it at the same time threatens to deconstruct. One might then be inclined to reach this conclusion: deconstruction is not an operation that supervenes afterwards, from the outside, one fine day; it is always already at work; one must just know how to identify the right or wrong element, the right or wrong stone -- the right one, of course, always proves to be, precisely, the wrong one. Since the disruptive force of deconstruction is *always already* contained within the architecture of the work, all one would finally have to do to be able to deconstruct, given this always already, is to do memory work.³

Deconstruction seemed more particularly appropriate to approach these *converso* authors' texts, since Montoro, Cota and Rojas precisely use language and its inner contradictions in order to express their feeling of religious malaise and alienation. Their message is a veiled one, that comes to light once the very intricacies of language are uncovered. Moreover, deconstruction seemed particularly relevant to the study of our authors since it does not reject but rather complements a biographical approach to literary texts. Deconstruction considers that a text is the unavoidable product of its author's circumstances but also an independent entity that generates its own system of interpretations. As I hope to have proved, these two complementary views of the literary text -- although contradictory at first sight -- are at work in our three authors. Montoro, Cota, and Rojas, play with language and follow the fifteenth-century literary tradition of literature as

game. Part of their inner conflicts are directly expressed in their works, i.e., the world of corruption and treachery in the *Tragicomedia* as well as the pessimism of the work; Montoro's direct reference to the way *conversos* were viewed by the dominant caste, among other examples, express their authors' pessimism in regard to their society. Nevertheless, language is also self-generating in these three authors and its multi-faceted meaning (s) might have escaped their authors' original intentions. Language is what causes despair and death in Cota and Rojas. In Montoro's case, language is clearly acentric and multi-faceted. It is treacherous as *converso* existence itself.

It remains to be proven in another study that the characteristics of language found in our three *converso* authors are also present in other *converso* authors. Although Eugenio Asensio believes this task to be impossible because:

Cada individuo se insierte en múltiples cuadros de la sociedad y de la cultura que no coinciden entre sí. Mirando a la cultura, no vislumbramos la menor uniformidad ni en la visión del mundo, ni en la expresión literaria de los neocristianos. Ni siquiera a los más descolantes logramos asignarles rasgos distintivos comunes denotadores de casta . . . No basta que determinados pensamientos, sentimientos y expresiones comparezcan en varios neocristianos para considerarlos como adscritos e inherentes al alma conversa.⁴

Colbert Nepaulsingh has already identified what the critic calls a "*converso*" structure in *la Cárcel de Amor* and *La Celestina*.⁵ Nepaulsingh believes that Jews and converts display a literary originality:

The Jews in particular, were far ahead in literary matters, in some respects, because they took the commandment seriously that all their children were to be educated in textual dilemmas. Whereas in Islam and Christianity education was mainly a

matter of means, in Judaism it was, has always been, a question of legal, moral obligation. In Spain, the obligation for Jews was even greater than elsewhere because of the proximity of Islamic and Christian communities, sometimes sympathetic, often hostile; in the rest of Europe the alternatives for Judaism were different than those in Spain. Why should we be surprised, therefore, if we have to admit that the “conversos” excelled at literature for special reasons? . . . The “conversos” were word artists of the highest calibre, all of them, from Pedro Alfonso to Fernando de Rojas. Not only did they have their own long-standing textual traditions to draw upon, which left them and their ancestors no choice but to be educated in literary matters, but also because, equipped with this liberating force --education -- in the midst of servitude to Christian and Muslim masters, they had the option of mingling with their own the best literary achievements of their Muslim and Christian counterparts. What more ideal environment for literary artists: oppression and self-conscious tradition in a multicultural environment . . . (*Towards a History*, 226)

Based on the findings of our study of Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo Cota, and Fernando de Rojas’ respective texts, it seems appropriate to conclude that there are many similarities in these three *converso* authors’ linguistic practices. These similarities lead us to believe that it is their religious status that originated such a pessimistic view of language. These three authors are “word artists” to retake Nepaulsingh’s own formulations and they used their craft ingeniously and artistically to voice their internal turmoil. It is ironical that they should use the very tool of their expression: language in order to express their social and religious malaise. Nevertheless, it is also highly logical since no other tool could have better embodied the essential arbitrariness of human existence. Therefore, Montoro’s, Cota’s, and Rojas’ linguistic practices, apparently ludic in nature, are, in the final analysis, a very pessimistic attitude towards life itself. Antón de Montoro’s poetic corpus,

Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo*, as well as Fernando de Rojas' *Tragicomedia*, all attest to the fact that language -- our main means of communication -- is irremediably treacherous and can lead to death. Who better than the *conversos*, whose language was scrutinized by the Inquisition, could attest to that truth?

Notes Conclusion

¹ Roger Dragonetti *Le Gai savoir dans la rhétorique courtoise*, (Editions du Seuil: Paris, 1982) 35.

² Julio Caro Baroja, *El Carnaval*, (*Análisis historico-cultural*) (Taurus ed: Madrid, 1979) 50.

³ Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1986) 73.

⁴ Eugenio Asensio, *La peculiaridad literaria de los conversos* (Anuario de Estudios Medievales, 1967) 329;332;333.

⁵ Colbert Nepaulsingh, *Towards a History of Literary Composition in Medieval Spain* (Toronto University Press: Toronto, 1986) 228.

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