

**Calisto's Narcissistic Visions:
A Reexamination of Melibea's "Ojos Verdes" in *Celestina***

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In Act 1 of *Celestina*, Calisto praises the beauty of Melibea to his servant Sempronio largely in terms of the clichéd portraiture common to chivalric romance and troubadour lyric.¹ Along with the long and golden hair typical of the courtly lady, the young gallant describes the maiden with a high brow, long lashes, small nose and mouth, white teeth, red lips, and skin so lustrous and smooth that snow appears dark in comparison. Her green eyes, however, are striking, and not simply because they introduce a color outside the traditional red and white features of the typical medieval heroine. Though not entirely original to Rojas's work, Melibea's green eyes contrast with more widespread depictions of feminine portraiture popular in the medieval literature of Western Europe where authors tend to describe a beloved's eyes largely in terms of their luminosity (shining, starry or mirror-like).

The reason why Melibea's eyes are green rather than brilliant or mirrored is a question whose theoretical implications have received little attention from those who study *Celestina*. Among the overwhelming amount of commentary dedicated to Rojas's text, scholars such as Otis Green, Stephen Gilman and Pierre Heugas demonstrate the ways in which Melibea's portrait fits easily within the canonical beauty of medieval literary heroines but focus more on the general conventions of her facial features without directly addressing eye color. Studies that do discuss her eyes, such as those by Vernon Chamberlin, A. Trampe Bødtker and Lief Sletsjøe, tend rather to place them anecdotally within larger literary and cultural practices dealing with green eyes, eye color or the color green.

Although my study aligns itself with and builds upon such scholarship, I propose here a new means of considering Melibea's *ojos verdes* as a complex symbol joining the psychophysiology of sight found within the text to the conflicted desire that both sustains and undermines Calisto's amorous feelings for the maiden. The greenery of the eyes, I argue, comes to serve as a metaphor for the transcendental, rapacious, and narcissistic modes of desire linked to vision and the gaze between lovers which Rojas's work explores. My goal is subsequently twofold in this study; I shall demonstrate (1) the ways in which the *ojos verdes* of Melibea's portrait are linked etymologically to medieval traditions of beauty and carnality as well as textually to literature dealing with mirrored vision and (2) how these issues coalesce around the

¹ I must thank my former student Caleb Salgado who first informed me of Valeria Pizzorusso's article concerning Beatrice's green eyes and their connection to emerald mirrors, thus sparking my thoughts about Melibea's *ojos verdes* and their link to Ovidian narcissism. In addition, I would like also to thank my colleagues Jenny Davis Barnett and Sarah Senk for invaluable comments with earlier drafts of this study.

theme of Ovidian narcissism (desire based upon imagery) present within the text. This dual objective is accomplished through an analysis of the construction of the beatific vision Calisto claims to experience in Act 1, where the reference to *ojos verdes* appears, the problematic undoing of these exalted green eyes in their association with falconry and rapacious desire, and the link between Melibea's eyes, narcissistic imagery, and the greenery of the garden scene of Act 19.

To help in this endeavor, I posit *Celestina* in correlation to certain non-Castilian texts focusing on vision and desire (most prominently Ovid's myth of Narcissus, but also Dante's *Commedia*, the *Lapidaire en prose* and the *Roman de la Rose*) in order to demonstrate, as Ricardo Castells argues, that one cannot study this masterpiece solely through a Hispano-centric lens due to the imprint of broader literary and cultural traditions present in medieval Western Europe (*Fernando de Rojas* 6). Additionally, Claire Nouvet's scholarship on Ovidian narcissism and its influence in medieval literature, as well as James F. Burke's and E. Michael Gerli's studies on the transcendental and violent nature of the narcissistic gaze in *Celestina*, will further be shown as essential in my investigation into the symbolism of Melibea's *ojos verdes*.

Green Eyes and Beatific Vision

The connection between vision, desire and verbal portraiture prevalent in *Celestina*, as in much of the erotic literature of the Middle Ages, finds an origin in Ovid's Narcissus, whose reflection is arguably the image that most greatly influences descriptions of feminine beauty in medieval texts (see Goldin). Here, as the youth gazes into a fountain, he falls desperately in love with a statuesque likeness of flowing hair, smooth cheeks, ivory neck, a snowy white complexion with a rosy flush, and two stars for eyes: "spectat humi positus geminum, sua lumina, sidus" [prone on the ground, he gazes at his eyes, twin stars] (154, 155). From these astral eyes an entire tradition of vision and desire arises in connection to the relationship between the medieval literary hero and his beloved. Many writers, following Ovid's example, appropriate the stars from the narcissine image for the verbal portrait of their heroines, couching the beauty of these women's eyes in terms of brightness and linking them directly to the transcendental desire felt by the lover. This light emitted by the eyes of the beloved, as Claire Nouvet explains, is an incomparable vestige of divine illumination that should signal the lover to move beyond himself and aspire for unity with Supreme Goodness itself:

Like the luminous infant Narcissus sees floating on the fountain's waters, [the beloved other] illuminates, shines with a strange light whose intensity attracts: its eyes are "two stars" [...]. Love demands that the lover move from what is manifest (the light as it manifests itself in the beloved) toward the source of all manifestation (light itself) [...]. Medieval beauty

is luminosity. The woman must illuminate the heart of the lover. (*Enfances* 145-46; my translation)

Gazing upon these glowing eyes, the male lover thus experiences the closest thing possible to a beatific vision, or visual contact with divinity, through the mediating abilities of the woman. The literature of the Middle Ages is therefore replete with such women who possess shining eyes. In the French tradition, Chrétien de Troyes describes eyes that shine like stars in his portrait of Enide and depicts “li oil / Rient et vair, cler et fandu” [laughing, sparkling, clear and large eyes] for Blancheflor in *Le Conte du Graal* (1996, my translation). In Dante’s *Vita nuova*, Beatrice’s eyes emit blazing spirits of love;² Petrarch portrays Laura, who is the sun compared to other ladies, as shining rays of light from her lovely eyes onto him.³ Parallels also exist in Iberian texts where authors following this tradition of luminosity do not emphasize color but rather light to describe a woman’s eyes. Don Amor in the *Libro de buen amor*, for instance, instructs the Archpriest during his explanation of the ideal woman to seek out a partner with “ojos grandes, someros, pintados, rreluzientes” (433a).

As explored by scholars such as Ricardo Castells, an analogous vision of the divinely luminous feminine body seems to occur in *Celestina* during the initial encounter between Calisto and Melibea at the start of Act 1 (“Cuerpo Glorificado” 98). Pursuing his falcon one day while out hunting, the gallant happens upon Melibea’s garden, a locale that will serve as a metaphor for the vision and desire that propels him throughout the text. The first words Calisto utters in this much discussed episode signal the importance of sight within the text when, upon seeing Melibea, he is immediately struck and moved to speak, professing: “En esto veo, Melibea, la grandeza de Dios” (85). Continuing, he claims not only to see the glory of the divine within her, but that in beholding her, he experiences contact with a celestial being before whom he enumerates the traits of his desire:

[I]ncomparablemente es mayor tal galardón que el servicio, sacrificio, devoción, y obras pías que por este lugar alcançar yo tengo a Dios ofrecido [...]. Por cierto, los gloriosos santos que se deleytan en la visión divina no gozan más que yo agora en el acatamiento tuyo. (86)

That Calisto professes to experience a beatific vision in Melibea’s presence stems from the popular medieval practice of combining religious and amorous rhetoric, which, Denys Turner points out, highlights the belief that “we are most fully that which we are in our source. And the passionate yearning for the source from which we

² “De li occhi suoi, come ch’ella li mova, / escono spirti d’amore inflammati” [“Her eyes, wherever she may choose to look, send forth their spirits radiant with love”] (35, 33).

³ “...ch’è tra le donne un sole, / in me movendo de’ begli occhi i rai” [Thus she who among the ladies is a sun, moving the rays of her lovely eyes, in me”] (45, 44).

originate is at one and the same time a passion for God, a passion from God, and a passion for ourselves” (67).

Calisto’s hyperbolic accolades concerning his initial encounter with Melibea continue once he returns home and relates to his servant that he has just seen a beautiful maiden with resplendent virtues, floor-length hair more brilliant than gold, and skin whiter than snow. In the verbal portrait produced by this initial viewing in the garden, Calisto marks Melibea with all the attributes of the traditionally luminous woman of medieval literature who carries within her a trace of the light of creation and serves as a mediator between the sublunar and celestial realms. She shines everywhere, inside and out, except in her green eyes, a seeming contradiction that is at first puzzling. Calisto’s professed love for Melibea arises from his vision of her, as it is the sight of her luminosity that functions, at least initially, as a transcendental index toward the spiritual domain. If Calisto truly claims to behold in her a divine vision, he should be able to see a remnant of heavenly light in her eyes and behold the illumination that renders his own vision of her possible. Such ocular luminosity is fundamental, Nouvet explains, to the overall import of feminine literary portraiture in the Middle Ages: “everything in the female body must shine. Her face must be ‘clair’ [radiant]; her hair must be as blond as a sunbeam; her eyes must be ‘vers,’ brilliant, as brilliant as the eyes Narcissus discovers in the fountain’s mirror. In short, the female body must be the incarnation of light” (*Enfances* 146, my translation).

The adjective to which Nouvet makes reference concerning the luminosity of eyes, *vers*, found sometimes under the alternate form *vair* (such as in Chrétien de Troyes’s description of Blancheflor above), is the one most French medieval authors use in their renditions of women (Bourdillon 160). A descendant of the Latin *varius*, meaning “varied and diverse,” *vair* appears to have originally meant, among other things in Old French, “diverse in color,” “bluish-gray” and “bluish-white” (“*Vair*”). Nonetheless, in phrases such as “les ieux ot vairs come cristal” [eyes *vairs* like crystal] in *Barbazon* and “si noir oel me semblaient vair” [her black eyes seemed *vair* to me] in *Li Jus Adan*, the word means “shining,” “brilliant” and “luminous” (qtd. in Bourdillon 167-68, my translations). As the French language evolved during the thirteenth century though, the plural form of the adjective (*vairs*) came to be pronounced identically to *verts* (green). *Vairs* and *verts*, having the same plural form in both speech and orthography, were confused with one another and what were once *yeux vairs*, “bright, shining eyes,” became *yeux verts*, “green eyes.” It is after this linguistic merging that green eyes begin to appear more frequently in French texts, whose influence is evident in the Iberian literature of the same period (Bødtker 359).

Melibea’s *ojos verdes*, A. Trampe Bødtker claims, fall into this literary innovation where green eyes replace bright eyes, evident in early translations of *Celestina* into other vernaculars that maintain the original meaning of the term (*yeux vers*, or “bright eyes,” in French and “gay glasyng eyen” in English) (360). Green eyes subsequently become a mark of idealized feminine beauty within Renaissance poetry and beyond, from Ronsard’s “yeux verts et beaux” in his “Hymne VII” (132) to Gustavo Adolfo

Bécquer's *leyenda* "Tus ojos verdes." These green-eyed women can trace their origin back through the long line of heroines whose sparkling eyes direct poets to meditate upon a luminous form and, in turn, contemplate their desire and its origins in the divine. Melibea's green eyes, an iteration of the glowing twin stars of the narcissine reflection, form part of her illuminated body, heightening her enchanting beauty and appeal for contemplation on the spiritual realm.

This interweaving of pre-Christian mythology and medieval theology in the symbolism of Melibea's green eyes also has, I argue, a literary correlation in Canto 31 of Dante's *Purgatorio* that further elucidates Calisto's professed glorified experience in Act 1. Here, Beatrice, whose name directly references the beatific vision, comes to embody a tradition parallel to that of green eyes as an incarnation of the shining stars from the narcissine image. In this canto, a group of nymphs representing the four cardinal virtues bring Dante to Beatrice in whose green eyes the three theological virtues will clarify his vision. Dante, as the virtues speak to him, gazes upon Christ's reflection, symbolized by a gryphon, in Beatrice's eyes:

"Merrenti a li occhi suoi; ma nel giocondo
 lume ch'è dentro aguzzeranno i tuoi
 le tre di là, che miran più profondo." [...]
 Disser: "Fa che le viste non risparmi;
 posto t'avem dinanzi a li smeraldi
 ond' Amor già ti trasse le sue armi."
 Mille disiri più che fiamma caldi
 strinsermi li occhi a li occhi rilucenti,
 che pur sopra l' grifone stavan saldi.
 Come in lo specchio il sol, non altrimenti
 la doppia fiera dento vi raggiava,
 or con alti, or con alti reggimenti. (vv. 109-11, 115-23)

We will lead you to her eyes, but to the joyous light that is in them yours will be sharpened by the three over there, who see more deeply [...]. Do not spare your eyes; we have placed you before the emeralds whence Amor formerly drew his bow at you." A thousand desires hotter than flame drew my eyes to her shining ones, which were still fixed unmoving on the gryphon. Like the sun in a mirror, not otherwise shone there the double beast, now with one bearing, now with another. (537; line breaks removed)

This scene, like Calisto's initial viewing of Melibea in the garden, focuses on the rapport between vision and the pilgrim's love for Beatrice. Though the nymphs lead Dante to his beloved and instruct him to look at her, it is not their words but rather desire itself that locks his eyes to hers. Imbued with all the trappings of love, as they

cast arrows, shine with divine light, and serve as the locus for Dante's pointed gaze, Beatrice's green eyes reflect an image of Christ. She becomes, as *Celestina* also seems to suggest for Melibea, an index to the divine for the one who looks upon her; in the light of Beatrice's eyes, Dante is able to see the very source of light.

Beatrice's eyes though are not simply green, they are *smeraldi* ("emeralds"). Valeria Pizzorusso points out that emerald eyes are not found within the Latin tradition of female portraiture, where authors typically describe eyes as stars. Dante's use of *smeraldi*, she contends, is intimately linked not only to the innovation of green eyes as the exemplar of feminine beauty evident in the Iberian Peninsula, but also to the use of lapidaries, or treatises on the quality of gemstones, popular during the Middle Ages: "I believe it is legitimate [...] that a medieval author *cannot* reference the emerald without immediately evoking from it the color green, which this stone, according to the lapidary tradition, represents" (9, my translation). Pizzorusso's argument is compelling, not simply because there are direct links between Canto 31 of *Purgatorio* and medieval lapidaries (which state, for example, that gryphons guard emeralds), but because these links enhance the theories of vision under analysis and connect Melibea's green eyes to broader implications concerning this gemstone.

The fourteenth-century *Lapidaire en prose*, for instance, describes the green emerald as holding spiritual qualities directly connected to the eyes and act of seeing, making it an ideal stone for Dante's heavenly vision in *Purgatorio*:

Esmeraudes sueurmonte toutes les verdours dou monde. Li livre nous dient que l'esmeraude et li prasmes sont conciré ensemble et que les fines esmeraudes viennent de al terre de Tire et dou flum de paradis. Esmeraude amende les ieuls et garde la veue d'ampirier. A celui qui en bonne creance l'esgarde moult est bone esmeraude a esgarder et a mirer. (294)

[Emeralds surpass all the greenness in the world. Books tell us that emeralds and chrysoprasus are formed together and that fine emeralds come from Tyre and the river of paradise. The emerald enriches the eyes and keeps vision from deteriorating. To him who in good faith looks at it greatly, this is a good emerald to see and reflect upon] (my translation)

The emerald, created in the waters of heaven, thus functions as the perfect material for Beatrice's eyes, the locus of sight where the poet comes in contact with an image of divinity through a mediated gaze. How could Dante's eyes be more enriched, one can question, than by catching a glimpse of Christ on the surface of these stones? The pilgrim, like Calisto, views the divine light in the brilliant green eyes of his beloved that in turn direct him toward his celestial origin. Dante's reference to the mirror is important, as the emerald, the lapidary states, is also good "a mirer." From the Latin verb *mirare*, meaning "to look attentively," the word implies both recognition and the

process of mirroring and reflecting (“*Mirer*”). This gemstone has the capacity to act as a mirror that, when one looks attentively, leads to a kind of recognition.

The *Lapidaire en prose* expands on this link between emeralds, the mirror and self-recognition when, immediately after claiming that this stone is good “a mirer,” states that: “Noirons en ot un mireor ou il se miroit, et savoit par la force de ceste pierre ce qu’il voloit enquerre” [Nero had a mirror of emeralds where he would look at himself reflected, and by the strength of this stone he knew what he sought to know] (294, my translation). Based on Pliny’s belief that Nero had a concave emerald green mirror in which he would watch the reflections of fighting gladiators, the *Lapidaire* makes an obvious link between this mirror, the emperor’s visual reflection on it, and the knowledge he receives from such speculation.⁴ With no mention of what Nero sees in the concave mirror other than his own image, present here by the reflexive construction “il se miroit” [he would look at himself reflected], the text professes that he gains understanding precisely because he sees himself *as an image*.

Beatrice’s eyes, also emerald mirrors, shine. Their brightness, “like the sun in a mirror,” not only illuminates Dante physically, but mentally and spiritually as well. He, as Nero before him, gains a specific type of knowledge in the emerald mirror. Whereas the *Lapidaire* obscures the exact nature of Nero’s insight, *Purgatorio* is quite explicit in this regard. The luminosity comes from an image of Christ seen within Beatrice’s mirrored eyes in which, by analogy, Dante must also see an image of himself. This triple view (Beatrice, his own image and that of Christ) signals to the pilgrim an understanding of himself as an image of the divine mediated through the mirror of his beloved Beatrice. He sees himself in her emerald green eyes as an idealized *imago Christi* and the erotic love that draws him to her leads to this divine knowledge.⁵

Strikingly similar ideas concerning vision are also at work in *Celestina*. Although the text does not reference emeralds and their connection to sight, it does mention concave mirrors, which is the very shape of the reflective gemstone used by Nero. After Sempronio hears Calisto’s verbal portrait of Melibea’s beauty, he states that his master has viewed the maiden not with normal eyes, but rather with *ojos de allinde* (102). A play on words, *allinde* not only derives from the verb *alindar*, meaning “to make beautiful,” but is also the term for the mercury used to produce mirrors. More precisely, the *espejo de allinde* to which Sempronio alludes, used by women to

⁴ “‘Smaragdi’ are generally concave in shape, so that they concentrate the vision. Because of these properties, mankind has decreed that ‘smaragdi’ must be preserved in their natural state and has forbidden them to be engraved [...] When ‘smaragdi’ that are tabular in shape are laid flat, they reflect objects just as mirrors do. The emperor Nero used to watch the fights between gladiators in a reflecting ‘smaragdus’” (213, 215).

⁵ Kevin Brownlee has argued that just before the reference to Beatrice’s *smeraldi*, Dante has recognized his reflection in a fountain in Canto 30 and, unlike Narcissus before him, equates his image with poetic and spiritual salvation (202). The same ideas, I find, can be applied to the “triple gaze” and reflection seen in Beatrice’s green eyes of Canto 31.

beautify themselves, is a small concave mirror that enlarges the size of the object reflected (“*Alinde*”).

Due to this mirrored vision, Calisto, like Dante, believes he assumes the qualities of the shining body before him; it is as if, while looking at Melibea and her *ojos verdes*, he were staring into a looking glass at his own glorified image. Imbuing the maiden with divinity, he claims to experience a transformation that elevates him to a heavenly position equal to hers: “¿Quién vido en esta vida cuerpo glorificado de ningún hombre como agora el mío?” (86). To see Melibea in the garden aggrandizes his status, defining him as an enlightened and celestial figure. He undergoes, as the pilgrim of *Purgatorio*, a professed mental and spiritual illumination from an idealized version of himself present in the gazes exchanged between his mirrored eyes and the green eyes of his beloved.

That Melibea’s *ojos verdes* are etymologically linked to the shining stars of the narcissine image and textually associated with celestial emeralds is subsequently no mistake. Numerous authors during the Middle Ages employed Ovid’s myth, not only as a means of connecting its luminosity to divine brilliance, but also in order to comment upon the fact that such ephemeral reflections find their ultimate origin in a fixed heavenly permanence. James F. Burke, with a nod to Frederick Goldin’s analysis of the classical tale upon medieval erotic literature, points out that writers would typically posit the human mind as an image mirroring celestial reason. The likeness of a knight’s own perfected self beheld within the courtly lady should thus function similarly; in the woman-as-mirror, the lover is asked to contemplate his own status as an *imago Dei* and the resemblance he sees as a pathway to the eternal. For this reason, Burke argues, Calisto could go so far as to profess while gazing upon Melibea, “En esto veo, *Narciso*, la grandeza de Dios,” in his appeal for oneness with divinity (42-43, emphasis mine). This structure of love found in both *Celestina* and the *Commedia*, where a lover sees his own glorified image within the woman, therefore serves not simply as an iteration of Narcissus’s viewing of his simulacrum, but is more fundamentally the very relationship necessary, Nouvet argues, for this betterment of the lover to occur. Love, in other words, cannot exist without the image of the self in the beloved:

Courtly love [...] is not opposed to narcissistic love. It expands its possibilities. The beloved appears where the self should appear because it stands in for the self, making of it a glorious figure [...] One can love in the other the image of the self, not as one is, but as one desires to be. (*Enfances* 144; my translation)

The construction of Calisto as an individual ameliorated due to his love of Melibea and professed transformation into a glorified *imago* proves seductive because it supports a teleological view of erotic love both originating and ending in the divine. Calisto’s vision of his bettered self as a likeness mirrored in the maiden, under these

circumstances, would serve as the very reflection of the heavenly beauty he hopes to emulate. This initial reading though is problematic, and not simply because Calisto betrays the spiritual nature of the beatific vision upon hiring Celestina to procure Melibea on his behalf. As E. Michael Gerli points out, Rojas's text links sight, not with celestial ideals, but more importantly with forces of domination and control: "[i]n *Celestina* everyone is driven by a need to see, a compulsion to grasp the object of desire with the eyes, that is portrayed as an extension of the erotic imagination, a need to apprehend visually and thus possess what is caught by the field of vision" (*Ends of Desire* 99).

The maiden's *ojos verdes*, as primary markers of the gaze within the work, thus couch a sentiment counter to the literal reading of Calisto's "divinely inspired" speech; to see himself as a glorified likeness in her countenance, within the larger context of the narrative, does not carry any theological overtones, but instead reveals the duplicitous nature of his amorous drives and self-as-image. Gerli's statement concerning vision in *Celestina* is therefore pertinent for two reasons, as it directs attention to (1) the ability of the gaze to entrap that which is in its purview and (2) the association between this controlling gaze and the eroticized imagery it encompasses. As markers of this domineering vision, Melibea's green eyes embody this notion of sight as both rapacious (in an association with the hunt) and deceptive (in an association with narcissistic simulacra). No felicitous resolution will ultimately be found within the text, and the initial beatific vision the gallant claims to behold before these *ojos verdes* turns destructive, causing his downfall by trapping him in a world of fictional shades that blind him to the true nature of his desire.

Green Eyes and Rapacious Vision

Calisto views Melibea ultimately as a vessel through which he hopes, not to catch sight of divine inspiration, but to satisfy his frustrated sexual aims. The transcendental language of the text's opening remains mere theological rhetoric that, when stripped of all religious significance, reveals a drive for physical possession, consumption and fulfillment of unsatisfied desires. With such perversion of speech, the language of *Celestina* reveals itself to be an indistinguishable mixture of sacred and profane. Melibea appears to realize this while rebuffing Calisto when she states at the start of Act 1 that:

Más desventuradas de que me acabes de oír, porque la paga será tan fiera qual [la] meresce tu loco atrevimiento, y el intento de tus palabras [Calisto] ha seydo como de ingenio de tal hombre como tú aver de salir para se perder en la virtud de tal mujer como yo. ¡Vete, vete de ay, torpe!
(87)

Rojas's work subsequently exposes the entire tradition of *fin'amor* lauded for centuries by poets for what it always already signaled: the violence of desire that, couched within the language of courtliness and theology, has the power to dominate and destroy.

This duality concerning desire within *Celestina* endlessly constructed and deconstructed throughout the text is reflected in the green eyes of Melibea. As much as they embody the beatific vision Calisto claims at the start of Act 1, they also exemplify the foolish love he ultimately demonstrates. It is here the dangers of vision, only momentarily evident in Dante's Beatrice, become manifest; this woman's emerald eyes, reflecting Christ as mediator between the poet and the divine, are the site where Amor drew his arrow at the pilgrim. Present here in *Purgatorio* is thus the personification of Love as a hunter who utilizes the powerful gaze of the beloved woman to trap the lover by inflicting physical and emotional pain upon him. *Celestina* contains the same theme of the hunt, albeit in different imagery, even before Calisto speaks to Melibea when, in the formative to Act 1, the reader learns that: "Entrando Calisto una huerta empos dun falcon suyo, halló y a Melibea, de cuyo amor preso, començóle de hablar" (85).

Scholars have demonstrated that such references to falconry serve as a popular motif for love in both the literature and visual arts of the Middle Ages. Mira Friedman, for instance, points out that this link between falconry and love implies more than simply the search for the beloved through the language and imagery of the hunt. The falcon, she demonstrates, is an ambiguous symbol capable of signifying both the positive and negative aspects of love and desire (185-86). Using Friedman as a model, Gerli traces the various literary and artistic references to the falcon as they relate to *Celestina*, explaining that the presence of this bird in medieval Spanish sculpture stands as a symbol for the evil mind of the sinner and, in a more generalized context, destruction and wanton appetite ("Calisto's Hawk" 86). Marked by an absence of rationality and wisdom, love in this framework becomes a perversion of the human will. The traditional theme of *mezura*, so central to the tenets of *fin'amor*, that directs the courtly lover to maintain balance between reason and emotion, is grossly lacking in Rojas's text. The falcon within *Celestina* can thus serve as a symbol of the irrational pursuit for sexual fulfillment that permeates the entire work. Belonging to Calisto, the bird represents the rapacious and animalistic desire the gallant holds for Melibea as well as the predatory course of action he takes in hiring Celestina to operate as his go-between.

Many medieval texts, however, associate the falcon not with a character but rather with his or her eyes. As Baudouin van den Abeele demonstrates, Old French literature tends to compare the luminous beauty of a woman's eyes to those of this bird. The adjective most frequently employed in these descriptions, *vair*, which he interprets not only as "brilliant" but also "varied," is based on the fact that the falcon's bright eyes reflect what they behold (160-61). For instance, Guillaume de Lorris in the *Roman de la Rose* describes Dame Oiseuse with "Le neis ot bien fait a droiture / Et les yeauz

vairs com .i. faucons” [A well-made and straight nose and eyes *vers* like a falcon] (70, my translation); a popular chanson gives us its lady with “Iex vairs comme .I. faucon muez, / Biaux chief, cors poli, plain visage” [Eyes *vairs* like a molting falcon, a beautiful head, polished body, and a clear face] (qtd. in Abeele 300, my translation); and the *Roman d’Alexandre* describes women as having “cler lo vis plus que n’est flor d’estez, / Les oilz vairs et rians plus que faucons müez” [a face more brilliant than a summer flower and eyes more laughing and *vairs* than a molting falcon] (qtd. in Abeele 299, my translation). The falcon’s eyes, *vairs* because they gleam and act as mirrors, are the perfect correlation to the luminous eyes of those women who evoke the brightness of the narcissine image. Melibea’s *ojos verdes* find a new connection to the term *vair*, not only in its association with the color green, but also due to its link, as Bødtker purports, to “falconry [and] the gleaming eye of the falcon” (356). Melibea’s green eyes, I contend, serve as a manifestation of both the supposedly divine brilliance inherent to the medieval heroine as well as the piercing, rapacious gaze that hunts Calisto.

It might seem more logical though for Calisto, and not Melibea, to be associated with the falcon. This bird is his, leading him to the garden where the maiden falls prey to his desire for domination and control. Nonetheless, the amorous sentiment the gallant experiences, even when read through the discourse of carnality and lust that dominates *Celestina*, remains essentially incomprehensible, attacking him mercilessly. In a most fundamental way, Calisto is not in control of his desire, evident to all it seems except himself. His servant Pármeno, recognizing this lack of agency, makes a direct correlation between the lost bird of prey, the events in the garden and the adolescent’s dejected state: “Señor, porque perderse el otro día el neblí fue causa de tu entrada en la huerta de Melibea a le buscar; la entrada causa de la veer y hablar; la habla engendró amor; el amor parió tu pena, la pena causará perder tu cuerpo y alma y hacienda” (134-35). The desire Calisto experiences, Pármeno infers, is split between the vision he projects onto Melibea’s shining body and that which overwhelms him in return, attacking him physically and emotionally from without. He has become the unavoidable victim of his own quest for erotic domination.

Melibea’s green eyes symbolize this external assault. Suffering because erotic fulfillment with her seems impossible, an unknowable desire inextricably linked to vision hunts him throughout his bout of melancholic heartache. The falcon, whose eyes authors describe as *vairs* not simply for their shine but because the light they reflect connotes the precision with which it sees its prey, serves as a metaphor exposing the violent duality of Calisto’s professed love for the maiden. With the linguistic trace of the bird’s eyes in the maiden’s *ojos verdes*, the young gallant experiences a harmful gaze within her presence that traps him as its helpless victim, sending him into melancholic bouts of unrequited longing and doubt. As Calisto laments his unfulfilled amorous sentiments, he speaks directly to his own eyes, these *ojos de allinde*, that received love’s arrows and serve as the locus his torment: “O mis ojos, acordaos cómo fuisteis causa y puerta por donde fue mi corazón lllagado, y que

aquél es visto hazer el daño que da la causa” (188). Speaking as if they were an independent entity over which he has no control, his eyes have become prey to a desire before which he remains powerless.

Even in his suffering, Calisto nonetheless takes pleasure in his status as hunted victim; the perpetual martyrdom he experiences for love serves to guarantee that fulfillment ultimately *does* exist, else the seemingly endless tortured lovesickness he endures would be in vain.⁶ The longer he can remain under the control of those libidinal forces attacking him from without, the more he can sustain the amorous feelings held for Melibea. This is why after his first sexual encounter with her, the supposed cure for his melancholic heartache, Calisto is surprised to find the passion once carried for her has begun to fade, rendering him strangely unfulfilled and discontented. In an extended soliloquy, Calisto ponders the waning nature of his desire while attempting to recapture the pursuing gaze of the maiden’s green eyes, conjured up by a fantasy of her shining image that beckons to him with coquettish reproaches and sweet kisses:

Pero tú, dulce ymaginación, tú que puedes me acorre; trae a mi fantasía la presencia angélica de aquella ymagen luziente; buelve a mis oídos el suave son de sus palabras, aquellos desvíos sin gana, aquel “apártate allá, señor, no llegues a mí,” aquel “no seas descortés” que con sus rubicundos labios vía asonar, aquel “no quieras mi perdición” [...]; aquellos açucarados besos; aquella final salutación con que se me despidió [...] con cuántas lágrimas, que parecían granos de aljófara, que sin sentir se le caían de aquellos claros y resplandecientes ojos. (292-93)

Far removed from the disappointing flesh-and-blood reality of Melibea’s physical presence within the garden, this radiant likeness sprung from Calisto’s imaginative fancy teases him with tears streaming from its luminous eyes. This image, which he believes to mourn on his behalf, contains the power to reestablish his hope of fulfillment and extend his earnestly desired torture while simultaneously lamenting the erotic satisfaction it delays. The fantasy is a welcome trap for the gallant, promising to ensnare him in a perpetual game of unfulfilled longing that will greatly outweigh any happiness temporarily achieved through union with Melibea.

Like the inherently positive nature of Nero’s reflective gaze upon the emerald mirror, it would appear that Calisto hopes to experience a similarly enlightening revelation from the image of Melibea’s likeness. The hero of Rojas’s work though does not simply want to recall the beautiful rendering of his beloved while hoping to grasp the unknowable nature of his desire, he also longs to appropriate it in the locale where it first appeared. While the falcon-like shine of the image’s eyes signal their ability to focus upon and trap the onlooker, they ensnare Calisto within their purview

⁶ For more on the concept of martyrdom for love, see Simon Gaunt.

and mirror back to him the fantasy of unity in love and the promise of its satisfaction. Vowing to spend the days in his room, where he has remained for much of the text bemoaning his frustrated love, Calisto promises to return to the enchanted garden and spend his nights among the “suaves plantas y fresca verdura” where he initially experienced this beatific vision (292).

Calisto’s mention of *verdura* (greenery) establishes a linguistic connection between the walled paradise of Melibea’s house and the *ojos verdes* of the lustrous form beheld there. No longer are these green eyes simply linked to their shared etymology with the French adjective *vair*; their color now assumes a significance of its own within the text. The endless fulfillment embodied in their luminosity and the rapacious vision that forms Calisto’s lovesickness color everything the young gallant hopes to see. This link between greenery and unrequited love in Calisto’s soliloquy, as Vernon Chamberlin points out, is not out of place within the text, but rather is the product of an original association in Iberian culture of this color with the Latin goddesses of fertility and love:

Hope early became intertwined with the libidinous connotations of green, and thus the color most often signified new or unattained, but hoped-for, love [...] If one accepts the idea that eyes are the windows whence the soul looks out, then it is indeed appropriate for the fatally enamored Melibea of the *Celestina* to have “ojos verdes, rasgados” (30).

Rojas’s work thus transforms the verdure of the maiden’s eyes, now externalized from Calisto’s beatific vision and eroticized across the landscape of the garden, reflecting awaited hopes for endless libidinal torment and satisfaction.

Green Eyes and Narcissistic Vision

Act 19 of *Celestina* takes the association between Melibea, this “fatally enamored” vessel of Calisto’s unfulfilled longing, her eyes and the greenery of the garden one step further. Stating she will move about the *verduricas* (green plants), becoming one with the vegetation of her surroundings while awaiting her love, Melibea and her servant Lucrecia sing verses describing all the elements of this earthly paradise (320). The song, at first referencing the plants of the garden (the flowers with their colors and scents), continues to reveal the space as one where an eroticized vision mingles with the surrounding geography. The mutual gaze of fulfillment for which Melibea hopes in her encounter with Calisto does not exist in solitude, but rather works in tandem with the greenery of the garden. The two women, for instance, sing of the cypresses that, in order to conceal the union of the lovers, bend over as they witness the “ojos gracious del que tanto desseays” (323). Furthermore, as Melibea exclaims once Calisto has arrived, all nature works together to create the ideal setting for libidinal satisfaction: the moon shines on them, the stream flowing from the fountain murmurs in the

grasses, and tree branches sway gently in the breeze. That the cypresses along with the natural world, as professed within these poetic musings, can bear witness to the desire between the couple establishes a triple gaze akin to that of *Purgatorio*. Like Dante, who beholds his own image deified from Christ's gaze within Beatrice's emerald eyes, Calisto, looking upon Melibea's *ojos verdes*, hopes to see his idealized self fulfilled within the reflected gaze of the garden's *verdura*. In this locale where he longs to regain the beatific vision of the text's first act, mentioned again in his soliloquy, the eroticized garden becomes a green space mirrored through Melibea's eyes and the reciprocal longing of the young lovers.

The cypress trees though are not the sole ocular entity within the garden's purview. The triple gaze endemic to the relationship between the lovers comes to be fully realized at the fountain, mentioned not only in Melibea's description of the garden but also in Lucrecia's lyrics as the central focus of desire amidst this greenery:

Alegre es la fuente clara
 a quien con gran sed la vea,
 mas muy más dulce es la cara
 de Calisto a Melibea.
 Pues aunque más noche sea
 con su vista gozará,
 o quando saltar la vea,
 qué de abraços le dará. (321)

As the traditional locus for reflection, speculation and love in medieval erotic literature, the fountain, as evidenced here, typically evokes the visual process by which a lover becomes enamored with an image seen on its surface. Associating Melibea twice with sight, as her name rhymes with the verb "to see" (*vea – Melibea*), the song establishes a context in which the maiden become a locus of vision where she concurrently sees and is seen at the fountain.

Earlier in the text, Celestina alludes to such reciprocal glances at aquatic sites in a reference to Narcissus, whose own shining eyes are linked to Melibea's *ojos verdes*. Attempting to convince the maiden of Calisto's devotion, the matchmaker paints a verbal portrait of the gallant, likening him to the fatally enamored youth of Ovid's tale: "Por fe tengo que no era tan hermoso aquel gentil Narciso que se enamoró de su propia figura quando se vido en las aguas de la fuente" (167). Not mentioning any specific features of this reflected *figura*, Celestina interestingly focuses on the moment Narcissus, taken with overwhelming passion for his own likeness (*umbra*, or shadow, in the original Latin), mistakes what he sees for another flesh-and-blood boy. In this brief statement, she highlights the central problem of the myth that will in turn have profound repercussions on the love Calisto holds for Melibea: the connection between imagery and desire is based upon a fundamental misrecognition of fantasy for reality.

Narcissus's error, at the center of Ovid's tragic story, becomes evident the moment he sees the reflection upon the fountain's waters and believes it to contain the answer to his unrequited love. Deceived by his own vision, he cries with arms outstretched to this starry-eyed aquatic double, asking it in vain to reciprocate his appeals for affection. Upon realizing that the image is simply a fiction unable to return a desiring gaze, Narcissus finds himself in a hopeless predicament; caught between longing for a non-existent shadow and a permanently unattainable erotic satisfaction, he comes to know himself as divided by an alienating desire from which there is no chance for fulfillment.⁷ The fact that the boy's object of affection forever exists beyond his reach, thereby leads, as Gerli points out and as *Celestina* also demonstrates, to the inevitable "self-destruction of the desiring subject" (*Ends of Desire* 101).

Stronger than that of Narcissus (at least according to *Celestina*), Calisto's heightened beauty appears to signify that his entrapment before Melibea's glorious image is even more powerful than that of his Ovidian predecessor. The gallant has already expressed his longing for reciprocated union with the maiden's likeness in the *verdura* of the garden, an exchange that will occur, according to Lucrecia's song, in the context of the fountain. Having put all hope in the weeping simulacrum of his soliloquy, Calisto thus reenacts Narcissus's error, mistaking the luminosity of the beatific vision as both a receptacle and ennobling source for his amorous inclinations. Upon arriving, Calisto's hyperbolic rhetoric ("O mi señora y mi bien todo, ¿quál mujer podría aver nascida que desprivasse tu gran merecimiento? [...] ¿y cómo no podiste más tiempo çofrir sin interrumpir tu gozo y complir el desseo de entramos?") reveals that he continues in his deception, believing the flesh-and-blood maiden before him to be identical to the beautiful image he carries in his memory (322). Contrary to Lucrecia's verses, Melibea is *not* seen by her lover, but rather mistaken for the brilliant resemblance Calisto beholds at the start of *Celestina*.

The garden is complicit in this deceit. Despite the emphasis in the song of the locale's power to satisfy desire, there remains a fundamental confusion of fantasy and reality within this walled enclosure. At first interpreted by Melibea as symbolic of an everlasting desire, the greenery surrounding the lovers remains subject to seasonal cycles and temporality, eventually succumbing to both decomposition and collapse. As George Shipley points out, every element (the trees, grasses, fountain, etc.) reminds "men of their mortality. Melibea forms them into a paradise, which is by nature timeless, and interprets them according to their sublime sentiment, which ignores the possibility of death" (293). Imbued with a fatal significance concealed to the couple, the garden thus incorporates the same lifeless qualities of the image Narcissus witnesses at the fountain. Reflecting such verdant decay, Melibea's green eyes, a physical manifestation of this fatality, do not evoke sight, but rather serve as a marker of the impossibility of amorous fulfillment. The original beauty of the *ojos*

⁷ My reading of Ovid's myth is influenced by Nouvet (*Enfances* 104-05).

verdes, which at first sparked and continue to maintain Calisto's desire, is now replaced by a horrific reality.

This horrific reality stems solely from the duplicitous nature of the image, for Calisto, like Narcissus, remains trapped by a beautiful fantasy that will never realize his desire. As with Nero before the emerald mirror, he has come to know himself as an iteration of the glorious qualities he believes inherent in the beatific verdure of the garden. Far removed though from Dante's salvific triple gaze in *Purgatorio*, where the pilgrim sees himself as an *imago Christi* reflecting a divine source, Calisto's triple gaze (Melibea, the garden and him) condemns him as an *imago Melibea*. Thinking this brilliant image with green eyes reflecting the wonders of a heavenly garden to be the source of benevolence and salvation capable of transforming him with illuminating powers, Calisto cannot see that it instead exposes the reverse. When Narcissus discovers the false nature of his reflection, he knows himself, not as the image's origin, but rather its product. Unable to reciprocate a loving stare from its lifeless astral eyes (because it cannot project one), the likeness informs Narcissus that his own gaze, identical to that of his mirrored double, can only return to him as lacking and incomplete; unity in love with something nonexistent can never be achieved. Doomed, he remains in a permanently unfulfilled state pleading in vain for satisfaction from a shade that cannot reverse the unavoidable trauma of desire.

The *ojos verdes* of the beatific vision, in their very repetition of the narcissine *yeux vairs*, inflict the same lacking gaze; Calisto, save for a brief moment of lucidity during his soliloquy, never arrives at this realization. Choosing to live within the realm of fantasy where fulfillment continuously seems forthcoming, the gallant can only see a fiction in the very place where truth, quite literally, confronts him face to face. The *ojos de allinde* that Sempronio recognizes in his master speak to this vision capable of transposing fantasy and reality, for with these mirrored eyes, the servant states, "lo poco parece mucho y lo pequeño grande" (102). Portraying everything as its opposite, Calisto's eyes confuse small and large, paucity and plenitude. In them Melibea's lifeless image becomes transcendently life-giving.

Choosing to exist within the fantasy this specular vision provides, Calisto does not find heavenly transcendence but rather meets his end while leaving the garden with a hasty and careless drop from a ladder. Critics of *Celestina* have rightly seen the gallant's fall as symbolic of the morally downward trajectory he has assumed, due to a base sexual appetite, over the course of the text. While I do not dispute this popular interpretation, I would like to offer an additional reading for the episode. Given the importance of Ovidian narcissism within *Celestina*, Calisto's descent should come as no surprise. The most famous medieval rewriting of the Latin myth, found within the *Roman de la Rose*, does not incorporate Narcissus's death by liquefaction as found in *Metamorphoses*, but rather describes his demise as a fall into the fountain:

C'est li mireors perilleus
Ou narcissus li orgueilleux

Mira sa face et ses yauz vers,
Dont il jut puis morz toz envers. (1568-71)

[This is the dangerous mirror where the proud Narcissus looked at his face and brilliant eyes, from which he then died by falling backwards] (my translation)

The downward nature of the boy's death (*envers*) is linked, by the rhyme in the text, to the luminosity of the shade's eyes (*yauz vers*). Their shine, a mark of the image's captivating beauty too enticing for Narcissus to stay away, proves to be the very cause of his demise. Despite their brilliance though, these eyes do not indicate sight but rather, as with Calisto's beatific vision, an absent gaze that must remind the onlooker that he, like the shadow, is an iteration of the lack it projects. Narcissus's fall therefore signifies, as Nouvet purports, the ultimate cohesion of his self-as-image with the reflection upon the waters: "The self literally falls into its image, a fall which occasions the inversion, the reversal, the 'falling,' of the very notion of a substantial, ontological self. In the pool, the distinction between self and image collapses: the self becomes a mere image" ("Reversing" 194). Only in death therefore can the longed-for fulfillment he has craved be possible as he transforms into the image that has defined both him and his desire.

The link between the *yeux vairs* and Narcissus's death applies as well to the *ojos verdes* of the beatific vision in *Celestina* for, despite appearing to signal transcendence to a brilliant source, they point to the blinding copy of a lacking gaze that trap Calisto's thoughts to the garden. Searching for fulfillment in love, he, like the courtly heroes of chivalric romance, has become unavoidably ensnared by a yearning over which he has no control. The greenery of his surroundings, thought to be both a likeness and source of his desire, even provides its own reflection, almost as if to warn of the truth concerning its duplicitous nature. Instructing Calisto of all the natural wonders in the locale, Melibea states that the cypresses cast down calm shadows (*sombras*), an etymological derivative of the Ovidian *umbra*, to hide the lovers as they gaze down upon them. The shade of these sighted trees, mentioned alongside the fountain whose water runs through the grasses, transforms the entire garden into a verdantly aquatic mirror of narcissistic reflections that, the couple believes, heightens its erotic appeal.

Nevertheless, Calisto's fall, read alongside the *Roman de la Rose*, remains distinct from that of his mythic predecessor. Whereas a lifeless Narcissus achieves unity with the image in the fountain, thereby reaffirming his status as an iteration of this shadow, the gallant, condemned to fall just outside the watery garden, is not allowed such an end. The *ojos verdes* of the beatific vision and the green paradise they reflect, always out of reach in life, now maintain a permanent separation from Calisto in death; he has, in a sense, failed to die properly. His demise, rendered more tragic (and even more pathetic) than that of Narcissus, spurs Melibea, now desperate in her newly-

discovered alienation, to commit suicide by jumping off a tower as her father watches helplessly from below.

Melibea's fall though, unlike Calisto's, does transform her into the likeness that has defined her subjectivity throughout the text, thereby highlighting her status as image. Having entered into the same narcissistic paradigm of unrequited desire as Calisto, she is an image not simply because the gallant has designated her as such, but also because she has placed her own hopes for erotic satisfaction in the fantasy of an Edenic paradise and perfect lover. Even after Calisto's demise, the beauty of this mirage retains its strength, and Melibea believes the exchange of gazes between the two will continue in an eternal love finally accessible in death: "algún alivio siento en ver que tan presto seremos juntos yo y aquel mi querido y amado Calisto" (331). In this delusion, she ultimately creates for herself a beatific vision equivalent to Calisto's. Where he believed her green eyes to form part of a transcendental divinity achievable through union with her, she now wishes to see such coupling with her own eyes. Like the gallant's *ojos de allinde*, her *ojos verdes* transpose fiction and truth; Melibea, confusing her death with erotic fulfillment, maintains hope that satisfaction with her dead lover awaits her: "O mi amor y señor, Calisto, espérame; ya voy; détente si me speras" (334).

The nature of Melibea's demise though, as a fall toward the watery floor housing the fictitious beauty of its narcissistic shades, exposes her death not as a source of eternal bliss but rather the result of her misplaced yearnings. Like Narcissus's astral *yeux vairs*, Melibea's *ojos verdes*, reflecting the greenery of the locale that becomes her cemetery, represent not insight but rather her own blindness to the inherently divisive and alienating nature of her desire. This infectious longing appears as irreconcilably split between the eroticized fulfillment promised by the fountain and vegetation of the walled enclosure, whose gaze, which attacks without warning, parallels that of the hawk, and the internalized "mortal llaga en medio del corazón" Melibea claims to experience (330). The fiction of unity between the two, which she believes achievable, is precisely the mistaken fantasy into which she plummets; having allowed it to define her in life, she holds the restless desire, this fateful wound tearing at her heart, can be overcome in death. Melibea's green eyes, though, are irrevocably linked to the divisive nature of this longing. As a marker of both the *verduras* in the deadly garden, which maintain the image of erotic fulfillment, and lifeless beatific vision that haunts Calisto's thoughts, they stand in for the very lacking quality found at the center of the couple's unavoidable desire. It is within these *ojos verdes* therefore that desire finds its permanent frustration and that human will, powerless before their catastrophic gaze, is rendered but a fantasy with the world of *Celestina*.

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