

Abstract: The prostitution in "The Celestine" and its social context

The objective of this work is to outline the connection between prostitution as it is impersonated by the literary predecessors of "The Celestine", vivacity, which it gains in Rojas' piece, and the way it is described in the official historical documents. So that we can understand the significance and importance it had for the audience at that time.

With such a large abyss of time, that divides our presence from the times of "The Celestine", it is not easy to guess how the early readers understood the book. We must get rid of today's perspective, and for this purpose it is necessary to plunge into the history. Therefore, we offer to the readers of this thesis a short introduction with basic sociological and historical information about the 15th and 16th century.

Further we compare "The Celestine" with literary works that are regarded by savants as its source of inspiration, to understand better the impression that this book certainly aroused in the late-medieval readers. The relationship between reality and works of fiction is only indirect, though aspirations and frustrations of a real society can be revealed by means of the characters, their feelings, goals, and difficulties. In the chapter dedicated to the literary predecessors of "The Celestine", we disclose that this book, in comparison with previous works, deals with the physical love and the world of prostitution in a very original way. The largest part of this thesis is dedicated to a detailed analysis of the work of Rojas, especially to the passages related to the topic of prostitution. We interpret one by one all the important female characters of the book: Celestina, Elicia, Areúsa, Lucrecia and Melibea. On the basis of the observations we made, we can assign the characters to one or another type of women that are treated in law-books or

official documents: procuress, secret prostitute, fancy woman, maid or a noble young girl of lighter morals. At the same time we obtain a detailed description of the fictional background and compare it with the real world of prostitution of the late Middle Ages.

On account of the previous research enriched by comparison of the book with its imitations and continuations, we would like to qualify the role and importance that the low world described in "The Celestine" had for the early readers.

Significance of the influence of this book is confirmed by the fact that the original name was changed to "The Celestine" and that, thanks to one of the main characters of this work, the term "celestina"¹³⁰ started to be used as a synonym of "procuress", i.e. of a woman who arranges assignations.