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**A NEW READING OF SÁTIRA  
DE INFELICE E FELICE  
VIDA BY DON PEDRO,  
CONSTABLE OF PORTUGAL:**

THE INFLUENCE OF SENECA'S ON  
CLEMENCY

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Sadness is unsuited to seeing to the heart of things.

(*On Clemency* by Seneca)

**Introduction**

*Sátira de infelice e felice vida*, written first in Portuguese and translated by Don Pedro into Castilian around 1449-1453 is, at its simplest level (in a work in which nothing is simple), a highly fictionalized love narrative, a psychological chronicle of extreme emotions in the courtly love fashion. More than three decades ago, E. Michael Gerli called attention to this “neglected and little-read work” which he saw as “an important measure of the esteem in which emotions were held in late fifteenth-century Castilian

literature”, and “as a work deserving further critical scrutiny” by virtue of its links with the incipient genre of sentimental fiction (107, 117). While there have been a number of valuable studies done on *Sátira de infelice e felice vida* since E. Michael Gerli’s call to deepen our knowledge of this text, as one of its most enthusiastic readers, Michael Agnew, claimed, in 2003, “there is still much to be said about the matter” (298 n1).<sup>1</sup> One of the reasons why this text was “virtually banished from contemporary scholarship” was its excessive sentimentality and facile erudition (Gerli 107). Indeed, the first editor of *Sátira*,<sup>2</sup> Antonio Paz y Meliá, stated that serious readers could hardly be interested in the exaggerated laments and whining of a fourteen-year-old youngster who is moved to desperation and on the verge of suicide because a young woman does not reciprocate his love:

Es un texto de erudición, importante para la historia de nuestra literatura, y nada más. No pueden interesar á hombres de fines del siglo XIX los exagerados lloriqueos y lamentos de un mancebito de catorce años á quien impulsan á la desesperación y al suicidio los desdenes de una dama de doce abriles. Todo según los modelos de Dante y de Petrarca. (vii)

Antonio Paz y Meliá here dismisses the sentimentality of *Sátira* as cloying, while doubly erasing one of its most salient –and disturbing– aspects, namely, the amount of violent imagery verging on horror that permeates the text. Interestingly enough, the violence in *Sátira* remains completely neglected in scholarship in spite of its intrusive presence in some of the glosses of the work.<sup>3</sup> In this study, I will show that the brutal content is related to cruelty and mercy, and is a key feature in our understanding of *Sátira*.

Needless to say, violence by itself neither redeems this work, nor endows it with more scholarly value. However, it is an intriguing factor in the

<sup>1</sup> I agree with Agnew that “the Constable’s highly complex text [*Sátira*] is not an outmoded relic of medieval aesthetics and a bad show of superficial erudition. On the contrary, it is ingenious, witty, and innovative”, as I will show (315-16).

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter I will refer to the text as *Sátira*.

<sup>3</sup> Paz y Meliá refused to reproduce the glosses in *Sátira* arguing that “el autor llena los márgenes de glosas explicativas, que suprimo, así por su gran extensión, como por ser materia conocidísima de todo el mundo y que en cualquier Diccionario de Mitología puede leerse” (49 n1).

composition of *Sátira* for many reasons. First, the author, probably under the influence of Dante's *Inferno*, made a conscious decision that would have literary consequences: Don Pedro elaborated the imagery of violence to a degree that was unthinkable in one of his main models, *Siervo libre de amor* –the other groundbreaking work that, together with *Sátira*, marks the beginning stage in the development of what is generally known as sentimental fiction.<sup>4</sup> This arguably led to violence as a trademark of subsequent sentimental fiction, since violence is linked to passion:

If we consider the corpus of fifteenth-century *novelas sentimentales* as a whole, we find a surprising configuration. Rather than culminating in melancholic courtly sentiment expressed by lovers who expire passively, there exists instead a surprising preponderance of violence. (Brownlee 211)

Second, Don Pedro's choice is neither accidental, nor simply idiosyncratic. His text can be considered part of a reawakening of interest in the issue of cruelty which ran parallel to the reception of Seneca towards the end of the Middle Ages. In fact, Daniel Baraz argues that "from the fourteenth century onward . . . cruelty increasingly becomes an important cultural issue: It is represented in numerous sources, and the representations become lengthier and more affective" (*Medieval Cruelty* 123). More precisely, as interest in Seneca's writings grew, so did the preoccupation with cruelty (Baraz, "Seneca, Ethics, and the Body" 196). Seneca had defined cruelty, within a politico-legal frame, as the opposite of clemency, as the brutality of the mind in exacting punishment: "Quid ergo opponitur clementiae? Crudelitas, quae nihil aliud est quam atrocitas animi in exigendis poenis. . . Possumus effugere cavillationem et ita finire, ut sit crudelitas inclinatio animi ad asperiora" (*De Clementia* II.4.1, 3).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Don Pedro worked under the influence of *Siervo libre de amor*, as is easily noticeable (see Gerli 108; Lida de Malkiel 15; and Castro Lingl). Other important influences in *Sátira* are works by Juan de Mena (especially his *Coronación*), Alfonso Fernández de Madrigal, Álvaro de Luna, and Seneca. For a more complete list of the multiple sources reworked in *Sátira* by Don Pedro, see Guillermo Serés's edition (29-34).

<sup>5</sup> "What then, is the opposite of clemency? Cruelty, which is nothing other than a harshness of mind in exacting punishment. . . . We can avoid quibbling and use this definition: let cruelty be the mind's inclination toward too great harshness" (172). All quotations of *On Clemency* are taken from Robert A. Kaster's translation into English; Latin quotations are

Cruelty and mercy, as we will see below, are overtly emphasized in the tragic love story encapsulated in *Sátira*. More precisely, the weight given to these concepts has moral and ideological implications that take us well beyond the depiction of a conventional tragic love story. I contend that *Sátira* should be contextualized as part of a reflection on the topic of cruelty, and its comrades, fear and anger, as well as their antithesis, clemency. I will start by giving a summary of *Sátira* that calls attention to the interplay of the plot with ideas on cruelty and mercy, and to the complementary role of the glosses in unpacking the meaning of these two notions. I will argue that the main source for the author's exploration of violence, cruelty, and clemency –as embedded in the trite clichés of fatal courtly love so common in lyrics at the time– is *De Clementia* by Lucius Anneus Seneca.<sup>6</sup>

### *Sátira de infelice e felice vida: a psychological thriller*

The succinct plot of *Sátira* could be summarized as the uneventful anatomy of extreme pain and anxiety –“cuidados, anxias, congoxas, e rabias . . . males, tristezas, daños e varias contemplaciones” (84)– experienced by a wandering forlorn lover who finds no consolation for his unrequited love.<sup>7</sup> The lover – Don Pedro himself– confesses to being the object of “desmesuradas cruezas” at the beginning of his third age (84), a piece of information that is carefully dissected in one of *Sátira*'s one hundred glosses.<sup>8</sup> Thus, at the beginning of the action, in a story that consists more of a depiction of mood rather than

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taken from Carmen Codoñer's edition.

<sup>6</sup> An autobiographical consideration must be mentioned: cruelty regarded as punishment beyond the measure prescribed by law and reason must have been a personal, sensitive issue for a man whose father had recently been assassinated at the battle of Alfarrobeira (1449), and even more so for a man who was in exile as a result of his father's demise. The historical background is discussed more fully below.

<sup>7</sup> All the quotations from *Sátira* are taken from Guillermo Serés's 2008 edition.

<sup>8</sup> Don Pedro provided glosses in order to anticipate and respond to potential questions by his readers: “Fice glosas al testo, aunque no sea acostumbrado por los antiguos auctores glosar sus obras. Mas yo, movido quasi por necesidat, lo propuse facer, considerando que, sin ello, mi obra parescería desnuda e sola, e más causadora de cuistiones [sic] que no fenescedora de aquéllas” (76). Interestingly, Don Pedro mentions that glossing was not a literary habit of writers from Antiquity, but he could hardly ignore that it was not an uncommon practice among contemporary writers (see Julian Weiss, “Las hermosas e peregrinas ystorias”, especially 103-04).



action, the lover is between 14 to 18 years and 8 months old. According to the author, this factor should move the beloved to compassion because the wounds and pain of love are more unbearable to the tender heart that has not yet been exposed to the sufferings and toils of the world, than to one familiar with these miseries (87).<sup>9</sup> In the glosses, a collection of sinister characters and inhuman deaths abound as a way of conveying the unthinkable emotional torment suffered by the lover. First, we read about Busiris who is well known thanks to Seneca, Ovid, Boethius, and others who wrote about Hercules. Busiris would receive foreigners and pilgrims peacefully and then would kill them with “desleal fieresa”. A great deal of attention is given to the reasons for this inhumane and abominable sacrifice, although the “causa más verdadera” remains ultimately unknown (88). The main focus in this gloss is the increased sophistication, delight, and ferocity used in killing by Busiris.

Horrors escalate with Nero, Anibal, Numicio Flaco, Lucio Sila, Crespines Diogrides, and Cain. Particularly disturbing is the reference to Lucio Sila, who is identified as a drinker of human blood. Not even children are spared. Among other types of tortures, Numicio Flaco would have fathers contemplate how their children were buried up to their heads (91). Crespines Diogrides crucified fathers and made mothers devour their children (93). The depiction in the glosses of unrestrained brutality creates a landscape of horror which is used to explain the emotional paralysis inflicted by love on the despondent lover. His senses are deadened, his brain and understanding exhausted: “Ya mis sentidos enmortecidos, ya mi seso, ya mi entendimiento cansados” (94). Forgetting himself, the lover and narrator ride on a horse, as frozen corpses do in the Alps, stuck to their mount after being killed by the cold (99). The lover deduces that Fortune has merged two contraries so that his furious pain reaches the highest degree ever spoken or thought of: “mi rabiosa pena fuese llegada al mayor grado de penar que desir nin pensar se puede” (93). These extremes are cruelty and virtue, and they dwell in the

<sup>9</sup> At the end of this chapter –when rather than his tender age, he wants to remark on the burden of his plight– the lover must be 19 years old, since he claims that his discretion had been blinded for five years (94). It is inferred that the lover is unable to abandon his “loco e desvariado deseo” (94); desperation is well settled in his mind (101).

lady who is consuming his youth, though he never gets to meet her in the narration.

Instead, the lover encounters the allegorical figure of Discretion who invokes the fear of death: “teme su suprema crueldat, teme su infinito dolor, teme su terrible sombra” (95). Thus, in inflated and dramatic terms, she lists the terrible deaths of lovers such as Gayo Placio Numida, Pyramus, Marco Placio, Ardenlier, and Macías. Her words help magnify the inhuman death in life the lover is experiencing, beyond what anyone has ever suffered before (98). Furthermore, the lover claims to have been dead (181), and to live as inside a tomb (184).<sup>10</sup> In spite of all his unbearable torment and Discretion’s urging that he fight to regain his freedom -“desencarcela tu libertad de la tenebrosa e muy amarga cárcel”- (98), Discretion is unable to dissuade him from pursuing a lady who is not interested in his wooing.

Prompted by the lover’s complaints, a new group of allegorical figures, the seven virtues, take as their task defending the impeccably virtuous behavior of the lady. Thus, we learn that the beloved is not touched by passions and as a consequence, she possesses fortitude to such a heroic degree that she becomes more divine than human (127). The fear of death, for instance, does not affect her. Even if Pluto, god of somber valleys inhabited by infernal horrors, were to confront her, her face would only reveal serenity (129-30). Nor is the lady defeated by Cupid (132) or by any of the mortal vices listed in one of the final glosses –namely, *anger*, greed and lust (182; italics are mine). Briefly, the lady is meant to embody a superhuman, hyperbolic ideal of moral perfection that the lover is painfully unable to reach. More precisely, whereas the lover is on his path to hell and self-destruction, the lady is on the path to eternal felicity (149), and her destiny in heaven is Satan’s chair. To sum up, the lady is extravagantly equated, thanks to the unique perfection of her spotless virtues, to a goddess of the Ancients (109) as well as to the

<sup>10</sup> In one instance, the lover is compared to Christ (189), a motif which will be subsequently developed in works such as *Cárcel de amor* by Diego de San Pedro. Briefly, the lover in *Sátira* has gone to the heart of horror. The analysis of extreme emotions may not be unusual in the literary production of the Portuguese dynasty of Don Pedro. His uncle and king of Portugal, Don Duarte, had extensively described his own experience with depression or sadness in his *Leal Conselheiro*: “Da maneira que fui doente do humor menencorico, e del guareci” (67).

Virgin Mary (168) and implicitly to a Stoic sage:

¿Tú piensas por aventura que fablo de muger cuyos loores con este mundo fenescerán? Por cierto no, mas de aquella cuyos loores, cuya inmortal fama perpetuamente durará. No dubdes, si aquella antigua secta gentía fasta el presente durara, que a ésta en los altares fuera sacrificada, dexados los de la reina de los dioses, dexados los de Citarea, los de Minerva e los de Diana, desnudos e solos e sin todo sacrificio. (109)

One should not miss the complexity of this text. The merciless lady, later identified as “esta princesa nuestra” (161), is Don Pedro’s sister, Isabel, queen of Portugal and wife of Afonso V, the “muy excelente princesa” to whom *Sátira* is dedicated in the opening lines (69). Isabel’s virtues are praised well beyond measure, almost as much as Don Pedro’s great grandmother’s piety and thaumaturgic powers will be extolled in one of the final glosses.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, the lover questions the lady’s right to “the crown of perfection,” as the seven virtues claim, because of the beloved’s cruelty towards him. Piedad intervenes to explain why the lady did not consent to mercy but should not be considered guilty (173-74). This leads the lover to clarify two points. First, that his only declared aim is to awake in the beloved some degree of compassion toward his unbearable plight:

mas solamente movida a clemencia, deseaba que de mi mal se doliese e que mi desigualado pesar sintiese, pues non es alguna cosa más conveniente ni que más cara deba ser al gentil, alto e virtuoso corazón que haber merced, dolor e sentimiento de los tristes infortunados. De haber compasión e piadat de mí, mucho más que de todos los mortales, razón lo mandaba, virtud lo consentía, pues por ella mayores que la muerte penas padescía . . . (175)

Second, the lover explains that he chose his servitude of love not under the expectation of receiving any reward (“galardón”) but out of his own free will (182). Parallel to these clarifications, through a gloss, the reader is made to reflect on situations of justice, which are projected in a pre-Christian time,

<sup>11</sup> *Sátira* is a conscious act of self-advertisement and family propaganda. After the assassination of his father, Don Pedro asserts the excellence of his lineage by extolling the virtuous character of his female relatives. It is also possible that Don Pedro might have been protecting his sister’s reputation since Queen Isabel was disliked by the Portuguese nobility and was in danger of being poisoned (Baquero Moreno and Vaz de Freitas 300).



more precisely, at the time of the Egyptian pharaoh whose hard and inhuman heart went against God's clemency and desire to free the Jewish people from their misery (175).<sup>12</sup> Thus, Don Pedro retells the well known biblical episodes of the seven plagues, and how the Egyptian leader's blindness eventually led to the slaughter of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. At the end of this gloss Don Pedro denounces the Pharaoh's "cruela e rigurosidad":

¡O detestable vicio, enemigo de toda humana naturaleza, e muy contrario a toda natural razón, fiero a los amigos, amigable a los enemigos, amargo e lloroso a los fieles e familiares, dulce e alegre a los adversarios, muy poderoso . . . de anular los altos poderíos e de distinguir las muy antiguas e esclarecidas linages! (177)

Alarmingly, he claims that cruelty remains as present in his own age as in the past: "El cual vicio en nuestros tiempos es usado e seguido como si fuese virtud famosa e loable" (177).<sup>13</sup>

In a climax of paradoxes, the lover wins the argument by concluding that were the lady perfect, she would undoubtedly turn a merciful face to his harsh condition. Ironically, this increases the pain of the lover who has defeated dialectically the virtues only by smearing the perfection of his lady:

Por lo cual comencé otro nuevo lloro e llanto. . . . "¿Por qué tenéis helada, ¡o fados crueles!, nunca contentos de la augmentación de mis infinitos males, la voluntad de aquella cuyo perpetuo esclavo só contra mí? ¿Por qué le queréis facer perder la rica corona fulgente e bienaventurada, matando a mí, el mejor servidor que dama nunca tovo? . . . o que en la estigia agua infernal fuese ascondido fasta que su voluntad clemente e piadosa mirase e acatase sobre mí. (183)

In the twenty-four rhymed stanzas and two glosses that reenact the lover's

<sup>12</sup> Henry Berlin has noticed the importance of compassion in *Sátira* (88), and I am thankful to him for sharing a chapter of his dissertation with me.

<sup>13</sup> In a number of glosses, the author calls attention to conduct marked by cruelty, anger, and/or clemency. An example in case is that of Vecturia who assuaged his son's desire for revenge right before he was ready to pillage Rome. Don Pedro's observations on ingratitude connects the past with the present: "el cual vicio de ingratitud es de foír como a pestilencia irreparable. Ca no solo a Dios e a los buenos hombres es abominable. . . . Del cual diabólico vicio yo me estendería a desir largamente cuánto en nuestra edad sea usado . . . si me no recordase que dise Salustio 'Veritas odium parit'" (148).

plea in one of the last chapters, cruelty and piety are once more foreground as opposites: “¡O cuántas fueron loadas / por ser pías e humanas; / otras por ser inhumanas / se fallan ser reprochadas. . .” (188).

Significantly, the work concludes with a definition not of mercy, but of pious behavior which is equated with happiness. This explanation is addressed to Don Pedro’s sister, Isabel, in two stanzas:

XI

¿Qué es otra cosa usar piedad  
salvo usar ser sancta y religiosa,  
pía, humilde, misericordiosa,  
liberal, dadora con gracia?  
Mirad, pues, los títulos de gran dinidat  
que ganan aquellas que son piadosas,  
ganáldosvos, lumbre e luz de fermosas,  
ganad e quered tal felicitat.

XII

Es muy sereno, muy acepto don...  
don no mortal de inmortal gualardón;  
virtud preciosa más de cuantas son  
e fama felice jamás duradera,  
la cual, mi señora, adquirirse quiera  
de vuestra preclara e gran discreción. (191)

Don Pedro then provides a detailed description of cruelty also addressed to his sister. This is equally important because its implications take the readers beyond the world of courtly love manners:

XXIII

Es la crueldad una aspereza  
fiera, sangrenta, muy desenfrenada,  
cobarde al bien, al mal denodada,  
desnuda de toda bondad e nobleza,  
inorme, malvada, terrible dureza,  
irosa, sañuda, en mal sabidora;  
de todos los vicios reina señora,  
mal enemiga de real alteza.

XXIV

Es pestilencia jamás reparable,

plaga infernal que nunca se farta,  
 los ánimos prende, fuerça e enarta;  
 a humana vida muy abominable.  
 Ponçoña basilisca, mortal, incurable;  
 la cual mi señora, de vos, se aborrezca,  
 se corra, persigua, muera e fenezca.  
 Viva el vuestro leal condestable. (198-99)

The two glosses of this section amplify both concepts. The first tells the story of the character which epitomizes cruelty in the Middle Ages as an irrational force that can push human beings to terrible revenge: Medea (193-94). The second, its antithesis, is the portrait of the late blessed and glorious Queen Isabel of Portugal who was Don Pedro's great grandmother and whose virtuous life was attested by many miracles after her death (195-98).

Shortly thereafter the work concludes by recapturing the somber atmosphere created by the main character's tragic inner drama. Thus, the central story reaches its end as the lover is ready to commit suicide by plunging a double-edged sword into his body:

E yo, sin ventura padesciente, la desnuda e bicortante espada en la mi diestra miraba, titubando, con dudoso pensamiento e demudada cara, si era mejor prestamente morir o asperar la dubdosa respuesta me dar consuelo. La discrición favoresce e suplica la espera, la congoxosa voluntad la triste muerte reclama, el seso manda esperar la respuesta, el aquexado corazón, gridando, acusa la postrimería. (203)

All in all, this conventional story with its disquieting atmosphere of horror has not proved to be very attractive for modern readers. As Robert Folger points out, its "highly rhetorical style, sentimental pathos, exuberant commentaries, prosimetrum form, extended prosopopoeia and minimal plot... makes it impenetrable to the reader used to the conventions of modern narrative forms" (134). Recently scholars have studied *Sátira* as part of the early generation of sentimental fiction in Castilian. They have opened the text in order to see how it relates to earlier and later expressions of the sentimental genre.<sup>14</sup> *Sátira* is also a small laboratory of other non-

<sup>14</sup> It is remarkable how much is missing of the courtly love ingredients from *Sátira* that we will find later in other sentimental romances. There is no chivalric feat, no communication

sentimental trends in the middle of the fifteenth century that include satire and moral treatises.

Don Pedro envisioned his work as a satire whose goal, unlike in the modern sense of satires, was to extol virtue as well as to reprehend vice—or in other words, praise women, while reproaching himself for his imprudent theme and inordinate sadness:

E por ende la intitulé *Sátira de infelice e felice vida*, poniendo la suya por felice e la mía por infelice, llamándole *Sátira*, que quiere decir reprehensión con ánimo amigable de corregir; e aun este nombre *Sátira* viene de *satura*, que es loor. E yo a ella primero loando, el femíneo linage propuse loar, a ella amonestando como siervo a señora, a mí reprehendiendo de mi loca tema e desigual tristeza. (71) <sup>15</sup>

Julian Weiss has clarified that, in the fifteenth century, “sátira is a term which, unlike tragedy or comedy, does not indicate the content, stylistic level, or narrative structure of the work, but simply denotes that it possesses a general moral function” (“Juan de Mena” 123). Don Pedro elaborates this notion of satire by establishing a sharp contrast between the lives of the lover and the beloved. By doing so he is apparently playing with the fashionable topic of the *querelle des femmes*.<sup>16</sup> However, rather than vindicating the virtue of all women as he claims he would do, Don Pedro praises an admirable woman able to dodge the wily, tortuous ways of Fortune by means of virtuous conduct that leads to happiness in the afterworld. Indeed, there is a strong moral component underlying this simple tragic plot, which is

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with the lady, no intermediaries, no erotic witticisms (or double entendre), no dialogues other than with Prudence and other allegorical figures, or soliloquies cursing Fortune, and hardly any event, except for the glosses, that deviates the attention from the lover’s neurotic pain. Within its minimal plot, *Sátira* undoubtedly deploys basic courtly love clichés from the lyrical world, such as the *belle dame sans merci*, the pining lover, and frustrated love.

<sup>15</sup> This intention is nuanced by the claim a few pages later that everything has two understandings and therefore almost everything can be praised as well as criticized: “casi todas las cosas tienen dos entendimientos, uno de loor y otro de reprehension” (76).

<sup>16</sup> The popularity of this branch of pseudo-feminist literature was formidable between 1438 and 1446, a few years before Don Pedro might have been writing the original Portuguese version of *Sátira*. For a list and analysis of the protofeminist corpus, see Robert Archer’s *The Problem of Woman*, Julian Weiss’ “¿Qué demandamos de las mugeres?” and “Bibliography”, and Julio Vélez-Sainz (117). None of them include *Sátira*.

promoted by the exploration of commendable ethics through the figure of the lady and the reproduction of an amoral life under the sway of passion, desire, and fortune in the lover whom Don Pedro chooses as his poetic personality. A consideration of certain glosses shows this concern with moral philosophy, which Don Pedro himself points out in a gloss: “porque la presente obra más fabla de moral doctrina que de teológico documento, e a cosas mundanas se dirige” (104). Through his glosses, Don Pedro denounces a general disaffection with virtue (182), defines theological and cardinal virtues and establishes a hierarchy among them (107-08, 104), addresses views on the common good by Stoics and Epicureans (136-38), and analyzes the four wills, which leads him to establish the importance of moderation in virtue (141-42). It is this ethical facet of Don Pedro’s work that I would like to explore further by adding one important complementary key to understanding *Sátira* thus far missed by scholars, namely, its use of Seneca’s texts, more specifically his *On Clemency*, which projects this courtly love story onto the unexpected field of political ethics.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Sátira* through the lens of Seneca’s *On Clemency*: from courtly love to political ethics**

In his study on the reception of Seneca in Spain from the thirteenth century to the seventeenth century, Karl Alfred Blüher states that “Séneca se presenta a la Edad Media como autoridad en el terreno de la ética política principalmente por su escrito *De Clementia* que contiene consejos de gobiernos dedicados a Nerón” (102).<sup>18</sup> After Claudius’s reign (41-54 CE), marked by his cruelty

<sup>17</sup> In 1954, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel identified two basic influences in *Sátira*, none of which, surprisingly, were related to Seneca: Juan Rodríguez del Padrón, “el modelo más importante aunque no el único” (14) and Juan de Mena, “puede presumirse que fuera Mena el modelo secundario del joven Condestable” (14 n8). In his edition of *Sátira*, Guillermo Serés has also detected the imprint of Alfonso Fernández de Madrigal’s *Diez cuestiones vulgares* (37). The main content of this latter text is the gods of Antiquity which is combined with two chapters dealing with issues equally important in *Sátira*: the ages of man and moral virtues. These two questions (number 6 and 7) appear in an edition of this text from 1551 but unfortunately were not included in the useful edition provided by Saquero Suárez-Somonte and González Rolán.

<sup>18</sup> Though Blüher notices traces of *De Clementia* in *Castigos del rey don Sancho* and in *Libro del caballero Zifar*, in which kings are exhorted not to “fazer crua justiça, sy non piedat” (103), a thorough understanding of Seneca’s works in Castile will not develop until the

and capricious enforcement of law, Seneca apparently found it expedient to make the young, up-and-coming Nero reflect on virtue as well as upon how to wield his unlimited power, and so began his treatise *De Clementia* between December 55 and December 56 CE. Seneca planned to divide his subject into three parts: “The first part will be concerned with leniency; the second will make plain the nature and character of clemency. . . . In the third part we will ask how the mind is brought to this virtue, strengthens it, and by exercising it makes it its own” (148-49).<sup>19</sup> This unfinished treatise –the last part was “either lost or never completed” (Kaster 183)– comprises reflections on the advantageousness of clemency for the common good of the community, and historical anecdotes as evidence of this; the definitions of clemency and cruelty, and their association with happiness and unhappiness, respectively; a comparison between a true king and a tyrant; an analysis of the distinction between clemency and the “vices” of pity and pardon; and a hyperbolic eulogy of young Nero to whom the treatise is addressed. This eulogy would prove to be rash and imprudent, to say the least. Nevertheless, the basic message of this treatise is one that still pertains today: “cultivating clemency is both right and expedient, for human beings in general but above all for the prince” (Kaster 135).

*On Clemency* –like other Senecan treatises in Iberia– became prominent once it was translated into Castilian by Alfonso de Cartagena before he left for the Council of Basilea in 1434 (Blüher 142).<sup>20</sup> Translations of Senecan works soon became a common feature in fifteenth-century libraries.<sup>21</sup> *On*

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fifteenth century. In *Sátira*, the influence of Seneca is encoded for the main explicit reader of *Sátira* who is Don Pedro’s sister, queen of Portugal. Queen Isabel should not have missed this connection, since Don Pedro encourages her to unmask the sources used in *Sátira*: “la fice no autorizada de los grandes e científicos varones e, en algunos lugares, escura, porque la vuestra muy llena industria saberá de cuáles jardines salieron estas flores mías, e la escuridat dará lumbr e claridad muy luciente” (75).

<sup>19</sup> I follow Robert A. Kaster’s analysis of the text in this section. Carmen Codoñer has established direct thematic links between *De Clementia* and *De ira* (xvii).

<sup>20</sup> According to Blüher, Alfonso de Cartagena translated first the second book of Seneca’s work, subordinated the notion of ‘clementia’ to the Christian one of ‘caritas’, and included glosses (137-38).

<sup>21</sup> Of the forty extant manuscripts of *Los libros de Séneca* translated by Cartagena, *Libro de la clemencia* appears in twenty five of them dated from the fifteenth century (*Diccionario*

*Clemency* influenced a range of works: from Santillana's *Proverbios* in 1437, Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo's *Suma de la política* (1454-1457), and even more clearly Diego de Valera's works –such as *Espejo de verdadera nobleza* (ca. 1441), *Exortación de la pas* (ca. 1448), and *Doctrinal de Príncipes* (1475-1476) (Blüher 189-191, 205-21). Don Pedro himself owned a French translation of the *Epistulae ad Lucilium* (Vasconcelos 125-26), and could have had access to other Senecan works either through his inspirational friend, the Marqués de Santillana, who owned the largest collection of Senecan works (Blüher 124-25), or Alfonso de Cartagena,<sup>22</sup> or the intellectual world of the Portuguese court.<sup>23</sup> In the following pages I analyze how Don Pedro deploys Senecan ideas, and the historical and political contexts behind Don Pedro's motivation for writing *Sátira*. I begin by establishing how Don Pedro recreated the content of Seneca's treatise *De Clementia* in his *Sátira*.

Clearly separate in terms of genre, *On Clemency* and *Sátira* are just as clearly linked by theme. Both authors focused on the opposed concepts of clemency and cruelty, and on how these notions could ensure or jeopardize the common good or happiness of the community or the individual. But whereas Seneca composed a political treatise, Don Pedro gave dramatic shape to these two concepts by narrating a number of stories both in the central plot and in some of the glosses that deploy both cruelty and compassion.

It is also relevant to analyze how both authors interpreted their main concepts. Seneca had defined cruelty in several ways. First, as a form of savagery or madness where "cruelty is the least human sort of evil and unworthy of the gentle mind of man; it's a bestial sort of madness to take delight in bloody wounds, casting off one's humanity to assume the character

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*filológico* 98-108; see also Giuseppina Grespi who only lists nineteen manuscripts). It can be safely assumed that "las traducciones de Séneca debieron estar en los anaqueles de todas las grandes y medianas bibliotecas de nobles y letrados de la época" (*Diccionario filológico* 109).

<sup>22</sup> Cartagena had visited the Portuguese court in 1421-1423 and maintained friendly relationships with king Duarte and Don Pedro's father, the Infante of Portugal, also called Don Pedro (Robert Ricard 89-90).

<sup>23</sup> In fact, Don Pedro's father –hereafter Infante Dom Pedro– had composed *Livro da virtuosa benfeytoria* around 1418 following Seneca's *De beneficiis*. The Infante's approach to this Senecan text was so personal that "la *Virtuosa Bemfeytoria* reste dans une grande mesure un ouvrage original" (Robert Ricard 122).

of some woodland creature” (I.25.1). Second, he reasoned that cruelty was not the opposite of strictness but of clemency, and could be defined as “nothing other than a harshness of mind in exacting punishment . . . the mind’s inclination toward too great harshness” (II.4.1,3). As examples Seneca used Busiris, Proustes, pirates who beat their captives and burned them alive, Phalaris, and even Stoic wise men who were falsely accused of being unforgiving and unable to feel pity (II.5.2).

As for clemency, Seneca chose the following as the most accurate definition: “Clemency is moderation that diminishes a due and deserved punishment to some degree” (II.3.2). And he often linked clemency to happiness:

the savagery of princes means war. . . . Clemency will make any household it reaches happy and calm. (I.5.2,4)

True happiness lies in granting well-being to many, in summoning them back to life from death, and in earning a civic garland through clemency. . . . This is godlike power: to save people. . . . (I.26.5)

But when a king is harsh and bloodthirsty, his own bodyguard cannot help but feel oppressed. . . . For among all of cruelty’s other bad features, this is surely the worst: you can’t retrace your steps for the better but have got to keep at it, using fresh crimes to ward off the consequences of your old ones.

Yet what could be unhappier than the man who now must be evil? (I.13.1,2).

Don Pedro recovers and puts into use all these elements in *Sátira*: the cruelty that becomes savagery appears in the horrifying conduct of Busiris and the such; the opposition between cruelty and clemency, together with need for the latter, is exemplified by the lady who will not show mercy in spite of her moral perfection; and the implicit emphasis on happiness or the common good is brought to the foreground in the title itself, as well as in some glosses. This connection, which at first sight may seem remote or loosely camouflaged under the fictional love story, becomes obvious when Don Pedro provides his own definitions of Seneca’s central concepts as a kind of coda that accompanies the denouement. However, Don Pedro’s abovementioned definition of cruelty differs greatly from Seneca’s more legalistic approach in tone and content. Don Pedro’s approach is mainly moral, since he defines cruelty as the summum of all vices: “de todos los



vicios reina señora”. Don Pedro’s definition is also melodramatic, insofar it seeks to conjure up an emotional reaction in the reader by piling up adjectives that highlight the vicious character of cruelty and its link to anger: “fiera, sangrenta, muy desenfrenada, . . . irosa, sañuda”, etc. It is political, as the civic injunction suggests -“mal enemigo de real alteza”- and it unbinds the social body, as suggested by the references to fatal illness or the irreversible and lethal impairment caused by cruelty to the human body: “pestilencia . . . plaga infernal . . . incurable” (198-99). Finally, Don Pedro’s definition of cruelty is dramatized not just thanks to the central plot but also in some of the fictions inserted in the glosses, the most prominent being Medea’s. Thus, Don Pedro dramatizes the ideas using examples from both the past and the present. Briefly, Don Pedro follows Seneca in spirit more than in the letter, a fact that becomes more obvious when the Senecan notion of clemency is superseded at the end of the text by that of Christian piety,<sup>24</sup> or when Don Pedro chooses to expand the images of terrible cruelty, that is savagery and madness, just alluded to in *On Clemency*.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, not only does Don Pedro rearrange dramatically the concepts present in *On Clemency* –cruelty, clemency, and happiness– under the cloak of the stereotypical conflicts induced by courtly love, he also puts into action two central ideas, or pillars, in the Senecan construction of clemency. The first one is “Seneca’s repeated insistence on the indispensability of clarity and calm, in opposition to murkiness and turbulence” (Kaster 138). According to Seneca, Mental serenity unclouded by emotions is needed for the fair administration of power:

Yet the calm and deliberate exercise of power has exactly the same appearance

<sup>24</sup> In his introduction to the second book of Seneca’s *De la clemencia*, Alfonso de Cartagena remarks that it is more common to use the terms *piedad* or *miserecordia* than *clemencia* in conversation. However, they have different meanings: “E con la *piedad* socorremos a los padres e a los otros parientes e ala tierra donde somos nascidos. E aun alas vezes la *piedad* es uno de los dones del Spū Stō” (Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid MS 9990, f. 31r).

<sup>25</sup> Seneca mentions Phalaris, Busiris, Lucius Sulla, etc. in different parts of his treatise. Don Pedro, as shown, exposed the horrifying conducts of Busiris and Lucio Sila. However, there do not seem to be direct borrowings by Don Pedro, except for the reference of Lucio Sila as a drinker of blood: “what tyrant ever drank human blood as greedily as he” (*On Clemency* I.12.2); “bebedor de la sangre de tu naturalesa” (*Sátira* 91).



as a clear and brilliant sky. Royal rule, when it's cruel, is plunged in murk and shadows; people on every side tremble and start at sudden sounds. . . . (I.7.2,3)

In Don Pedro's *Sátira*, clarity of mind is incarnated by the lady who has the personality of a Stoic sage, never disturbed by emotions:

Ella, del día de su nacimiento fasta el presente, cosa por destemprada saña o ira, cosa por floxa o descuidada negligencia, cosa por fea cobdicia, nin por desreglada risa o fabla ha hecho . . . siguiendo solamente las pisadas de la voluntad loable e virtuosa. (140)

Paradoxically, the lady who is the epitome of virtuous perfection, will be accused of not exercising clemency toward her lover. This contradiction echoes Seneca's acknowledgement of popular misgivings about the Stoics' lack of compassion in *On Clemency*. Though Seneca clarifies that this view is wrong, he mentions that "the Stoics have a bad reputation among the ignorant for being too callous and therefore very unlikely to give good advice to kings and princes: they are blamed for asserting that the wise man does not feel pity and does not forgive" (II.5.2). Given the political background of Don Pedro's exile, explained below, it is fairly plausible that Don Pedro was pointing covertly to his sister's duty to plead for him with king Afonso V, her husband. This was a delicate task for Isabel who was caught between her affection for her brother Pedro, and the obedience owed to her husband.<sup>26</sup>

On the other end of the moral spectrum designed by Don Pedro, the lover is under the control of "loco y desvariado deseo" and a victim of "congoxas, rabias e dolor pestilencial" (94). His rational faculties are enslaved by passion, that is, he epitomizes murkiness, the unbalance of the soul under the sway of passions that prevent the human being from exerting reason. This state of mind will lead him to attempt suicide.<sup>27</sup> Like the lady, the lover is also very much unable to feel clemency, although his case is more psychosomatic and

<sup>26</sup> For a summary of Isabel's life, see *A Corte de Afonso V* by Humberto Vaquero Moreno and Isabel Vaz de Freitas (297-308).

<sup>27</sup> In *De ira* Seneca establishes this polarization: "Reason and passion, as I said, don't have separate and distinct dwelling places but are the mind's transformation to a better and worse condition. How then will a reason that has been seized and overwhelmed by vices resurrect itself once it has yielded to anger?" (I.8.3)

painful given the fact that his inability affects his own physical and moral integrity. In Augustinian terms, the lover is an extreme example of how man can be cruel to himself by neglecting the well-being of his soul (Baraz, “Seneca, Ethics, and the Body” 202-03).

The second Senecan pillar is moderation, since it is a central component in his definition of clemency and his belief that human life should be founded on kindness and concord. “Clemency,” Seneca writes, “is moderation that diminishes a due and deserved punishment to some degree” (II.3.2). In *Sátira*, Don Pedro also ransacks Seneca’s penchant for moderation and he does so in a gloss in which, in contrast to the extreme behaviors of the lover and the lady, the text advocates a type of virtue based on equanimity that avoids behaviors marked by excess or deficiency:<sup>28</sup>

*Voluntad loable e virtuosa. . . .* La cual tiene el medio de las cosas, ayuna con templança, desvela con seso, contempla y ora con devoción discreta, fase limosna aquella que humanitat requiere e su fasienda puede sofrir para le mantener. Dase a los trabajos e afanes valerosos con prudencia, pero no que se mate, o que pierda el seso afanando. Honra los templos, mas non se desnuda por cobrir los altares . . . ni tampoco, aunque la carne se querelle o se quexe, ella se desvía del virtuoso camino si vee que lo debe seguir. La muerte con gososa cara, quando la razón lo adebda, toma, e algunas veses la busca; las famosas e loables cosas sin pavor de cosa ni cobdicia alguna acomete e en toda virtud se exercita. (142)

In spite of its pragmatic nature, Don Pedro’s conception of virtuous conduct can lead to opting for death lucidly.

Gradually, it becomes clear that *Sátira* camouflages Don Pedro’s personal reading of *On Clemency*, one that is not enslaved to the letter of Seneca’s model. Indeed, *Sátira* shares the exploration of a number of common concepts present in *On Clemency*, including the opposition between cruelty and clemency, happiness, savagery in conduct, and roles of moderation,

<sup>28</sup> This conception of virtue could be partially inspired by Aristotle’s doctrine of the Mean which has “two components: (i) each virtue itself, as a state, is intermediate between two other states, a vice of excess and a vice of deficiency; (ii) any correct felt emotion or action correctly carried out falls between those that would go astray because of some sort of excess and those that would go astray because of some sort of deficiency” (Michael Pakaluk 108).

mental serenity and passions, so central in decision making. All these elements have been reworked into an original synthesis.

Two telltale features show the link between *On Clemency* and *Sátira*, and thus reveal Don Pedro's originality. One is the imagery revolving around swords and parenthood.<sup>29</sup> The other is the reference to Nero. Don Pedro expands and develops some of the images inherited from Seneca's treatise, and propels them in a new direction. In Seneca's treatise there are references that show sheathed swords as a symbol of peace, safety and happiness:

[At the opening, Seneca makes Nero speak to himself as if he were reflecting on virtue and his conscience] The many thousands of swords that my peace keeps in check are unsheathed at my nod. . . . When I have such vast capacities at my disposal, anger does not drive me to impose unjust punishment—no, nor does youth's impulsiveness nor people's rash defiance, . . . nor the sort of glory—dreadful, but common in high commands—that depends on using terror to display one's power. *My sword is sheathed, or rather bound fast*. I am utterly sparing of even the meanest blood. . . . (I.1.2,3; italics are mine)

You, Caesar [Nero], have kept the community free of bloodshed, and this accomplishment . . . is all the more grand and admirable because the sword of authority has never before been entrusted to anyone at an earlier stage in his life. (I.11.3)

In contrast to Seneca's nonviolent scabbards, *Sátira* teems with unsheathed swords, not just the "desnuda y bicortante espada" wielded by the lover at the denouement.<sup>30</sup> That the sword may be an emblem of social unrest becomes clear when the gloss tackles the Stoic concept of virtue as the summum bonum:

<sup>29</sup> Swords and parenthood are common notions charged with myriad, broad political and literary echoes that Don Pedro may not have had a precise source in mind. However, both elements suggest one more link between *On Clemency* and *Sátira*.

<sup>30</sup> The multiple references to swords in *Sátira* include: Marco Placio's "bicortante espada" that he uses to commit suicide after the death of his beloved (96); Tarquino's "desnuda espada" when he wakes Lucrecia in order to rape her (143); the angelic cherub's "inflamada e bicortante espada" which helps prohibit the entry into paradise (116); Judith's "bicortante e bien guarnida espada" used to behead Holofernes (123), etc. On the other extreme, the "espadas ceñidas" appear to have positive connotations when it comes to symbolize that "todos deben punar por la propia patria" (152).

E aquí solamente consistir la bienaventurança, ca en aquesto no tiene poder la varia e rodante fortuna nin los príncipes mundanos, *nin las espadas nin armas ofensibles le pueden nosir*, ni la tempestad le puede dañar ni las fuertes e dolorosas prisiones de los tiranos, ni aquella tempestuosa e muy terrible furia de la muerte le empesce. (137-38; italics are mine)

Furthermore, in *On Clemency*, Seneca compares the clement king to a good father:

What, then, is his [the prince's] duty? The same as that of good fathers, who are accustomed to reprove their children sometimes gently, sometimes menacingly, and now and again to admonish them even with blows. . . . The things a father should do should also be done by a prince, whom we call "Father of the Fatherland" for reasons having nothing to do with empty flattery. (I.14.1,2)

Seneca also suggests that showing clemency makes fear and protection unnecessary since the citizens will see their king as a loving father, as the most respected relative:

Stable and well-founded greatness belongs only to the man who all others know is for them as much as he is above them, who they daily find to be anxiously on guard for their well-being, individually and collectively. . . . That's why it's not strange that princes and kings and guardians of the civil regime, by whatever other name they go, are loved more vehemently than even personal relations. (I.3.3-I.4.3)

Moreover, Seneca uses anecdotes that involve fathers and sons, such as the case of Tricho, a Roman knight who flogged his son to death, which caused his public lynching (I.15.1), or the example of generous Tarius. When Tarius discovered that his son was plotting to kill him, he put his son to trial. His final indictment could not have been more benevolent, and as a consequence, "everyone looked up to him because he was content to sentence the young man to exile –and a pampered exile at that, in Massilia, where he provided him with the same annual allowance he used to give him before his disgrace" (I.15.2). This was very much in line with Seneca's notion of clemency, according to which the wise person, especially, the political leader, should let an opportunity for revenge go by.

Don Pedro stages a number of scenes involving children and fathers. On

the one hand, he confronts us with the sadistic inhumane death of children, which can be seen as one of the worst manifestations of cruelty perpetrated by human beings.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, Don Pedro explores the image of the benevolent father, in a gloss designated as “la breve comedieta of Antioco” (180) that seems to replicate Seneca’s anecdote of Tarius with an ironic twist.<sup>32</sup> More precisely, Antioco’s tale (one of the longest glosses in *Sátira*) echoes not just Seneca’s notion of the king as a compassionate father, but also the central plot in *Sátira*, and, as a whole, it may have been intended as a way of exemplifying how to exert clemency in a morally complex situation. The gloss tells the tale of Antioco – “lucero de la juventud humana, semblante a los nuestros divinos dioses” (179)– who has silently fallen in love with his stepmother. Antioco’s “inmensa cobdicia e deseo desordenado, mesclado con muy grand vergüeña” leads him to fall fatally ill: “recordándose como el fuego que lo quemaba no era lícito ni honesto, celó la enebolada llaga de Cupido con sabia e piadosa disimulación” (177-78). Half of the gloss is spent in giving voice to the sorrow of King Seleuco, Antioco’s heartbroken father, who at first is unaware of the cause of his son’s imminent tragic death. Seleuco offers to die in the place of his son, tries to arrest the wiles of Fortune in a speech that anticipates Pleberio’s lament in *Celestina* except for its political nuance – “esperen los pueblos de aquí adelante o gozar con el buen príncipe o penar con el tirano” (178)– encourages Antioco to fight for his own life, and praises the brilliant accomplishments of his son. There is no doubt about Seleuco’s paternal love, which is also made clear by its well-known denouement. Once Seleuco’s physician notices that Antioco is suffering from *amor hereos*, the father renounces his young wife and forces Antioco and his former stepmother to marry, thus restoring Antioco’s health.

It is hard to miss the connection of the “comedieta de Antioco” both with the main plot in *Sátira* and with the notion of clemency. Antioco’s fatal love resembles Don Pedro’s plight and misguided conduct, and through

<sup>31</sup> This element is not present in Seneca’s *De Clementia*, although it is in other Senecan works, such as the tragedies *Thyestes* and *Medea*.

<sup>32</sup> Don Pedro may have taken this anecdote from Valerius’s *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri novem* (see note 41).

this extravagant plot, the merciless lady is invited to feel pity as the old father Seleuco did.<sup>33</sup> However, the moral sense of the story feels somewhat dislocated. The story, after all, can be taken as that of a lustful, spoiled, brilliant young man and that “of a consenting cuckold” (Agnew 308). This dislocation could be attributed to the comic tone of the story, since Don Pedro conceived it as a “comedieta.” It may also have to do with the exploration of extreme conduct that Don Pedro tackles under Senecan inspiration. More precisely, Seleuco may not fully fit Seneca’s notion of clemency – “so I will apply the term ‘clement’ not to the man who’s lenient where another’s distress is at issue, but to one who does not pounce when he himself is goaded” (I.20.3) –, since he verges on pity. Pity is not a virtue for Seneca: “so all good men will display clemency and mildness but avoid pity; for it’s the fault of a paltry spirit that collapses at the impression of other people’s woes” (II.5.1). Whatever Don Pedro’s final intention with this “comedieta,” there is an echo of Seneca’s notion of the king as a mild, benevolent father, ready to forgive even the worst outbursts of passion.

A shrewd reader would also wonder whether Don Pedro devised an implicit comparison between Nero –to whom Seneca addressed his treatise– and the addressee of *Sátira*, Don Pedro’s sister. Seneca extolled Nero’s character and represented him “as the gods’ chosen ‘vice-regent’” (Kaster 182 n23). What Seneca meant is that a kindhearted leader would be regarded as a god due to his clemency:

Does he not occupy a place closest to the gods who behaves in accordance with their nature, using his power kindly, generously, and for our betterment? This is the appropriate goal and the appropriate model: so to be considered the greatest just insofar as you are considered the best. (I.19.9)

Just as Seneca praises Nero extravagantly by presenting him as no less than

<sup>33</sup> Overall, the glosses in *Sátira* provide a mosaic of actions that complicate moral judgment, and that arguably guide the reader into developing a sense of moral distance (moderation?) that may help him/her strengthen clemency (which would be the part in Seneca’s treatise that did not survive or was never completed). A good example would be the gloss on the dueña de Valida, a 90-year-old virtuous, prudent woman who chooses to commit suicide in order to stop being exposed to fortune any longer and thus avoid the possibility of a more painful death (126).

a god, so does Don Pedro praise his addressee, Isabel, who also becomes a goddess in *Sátira*, far surpassing known goddesses of Antiquity thanks to her virtuous behavior. Like Nero, Isabel risks having her perfect reputation tarnished because of her alleged cruel behavior. More interestingly, a gloss is dedicated to Nero in *Sátira*, which reads:<sup>34</sup>

Mas ¿cómo podría alguno maravillarse de las suso escriptas crueldades  
si contra sí en su mano propia non falló piedat? Porque después, su vida  
acostumbrada en tan infinitos males, desterrado e corrido con aquélla,  
tomado el mortal cuchillo, fenesció. ¡O fiera muerte dada de fiera mano,  
cruel a los otros e no menos cruel a su señor! (90)

Was Don Pedro suggesting that his sister was another Nero ready to participate in the slaughter of family members including him? In the world of courtly love manners, the lover posed as a victim of the lady's coldness, and pretended to die of love. Don Pedro played that game: "Matar a mí ¿qué aprovecha, / pues al más vuestro matáis?" (stanza III, 188). But in the real world of Don Pedro's exile in Castile, those words and his lament would not sound quite like a harmless literary game. The fact that he confronted his sister with another emblem of evil, Medea, would seem to imply that the identification between Isabel and Nero is not entirely gratuitous or too far-fetched.<sup>35</sup> In a complex game of mirrors, Don Pedro can also be identified with Nero since the lover is ready to kill himself in the denouement of his *Sátira*. One can surmise that this tragic determination to commit suicide would not have been taken lightly by Isabel.

As we have seen, *Sátira* clearly, although indirectly, resonates with elements taken from *On Clemency*. In both works, cruelty and clemency (or piety) are defined as opposed concepts that are linked to the idea of happiness. The notions of moderation and mental clarity, versus murkiness or moral

<sup>34</sup> Nero, portrayed as a model of virtues by Seneca in *De Clementia*, known as a monster of cruelty by posterity, would become a popular reference in sentimental fiction. He is one of the classical figures mentioned in *Siervo libre de amor*, *Triste deleytación*, and *Sátira* (Corfis 156).

<sup>35</sup> "Yo no creo ser Medea/ loada por valerosa; / por ser crúa, rigurosa / mas antes creo que sea / muy tachada. / Pues por no ser reprochada / vos sola, mi bienandança / no muera mi esperança / de muerte desesperada" (stanza XVIII, 193).



degradation, are explored as the basis for clemency. Further, the imagery of savagery, swords, parents and/or children is developed to different degrees. This fact shifts our interpretation of Don Pedro's work.

The historical and personal vicissitudes surrounding Don Pedro's life at the time that he composed *Sátira* help to explain why he loaded a courtly love plot with so much violence and projected it into the realm of politics. Don Pedro's father (Infante Dom Pedro, tutor of Afonso V and regent of Portugal) was defeated by Afonso V at the battle of Alfarrobeira (May 20, 1449) in which he died. The Portuguese king Afonso V –Don Pedro's cousin and brother-in-law– seized Infante Dom Pedro's possessions, and dispossessed Don Pedro, the son, of the rights to the titles of constable in November or December of 1448, and master of Avis on May 27, 1449. Thus, Don Pedro, who was once a promising young man on the path to become the most powerful noble in Portugal, became a rebel in Portugal and an inconvenient, impoverished figure in Castile.<sup>36</sup> When Don Pedro translated *Sátira* from Portuguese into Castilian, he was experiencing the hardships of exile in Castile (1449-1456).<sup>37</sup> His situation must have improved around 1453 when Afonso V returned the title of Master of Avis to Don Pedro, due to Isabel's request (Fonseca, *O Condestável* 78). However, a public reconciliation would not take place until February or March of 1456, two or three months after Isabel's death. If we are to believe the chronicle by Damãiao de Góis, Isabel,

<sup>36</sup> While the untimely, unexpected death of Dom Pedro, the father, Infant of Portugal and duke of Coimbra, may be explained as a consequence of a plot by the nobility, the fall of Don Pedro, the son, constable of Portugal, may be a consequence of his father's thwarted ambitions. According to Gascón Vera, Don Pedro's father had attempted to "colocar a su hijo en una situación tal que resultara el más rico y poderoso súbdito del rey. . . Sin embargo la ambición de estos actos produciría un gran resentimiento en toda la corte. Rui de Pina en la *Crónica del rey Alfonso V* afirma que sería, sobre todo, el nombramiento de don Pedro como Condestable la causa que produjo, en última instancia, la caída y muerte del infante don Pedro [Don Pedro's father]" (9). Afonso's cruel behavior was criticized in the European courts (14). For a historical account of the times and an analysis of Don Pedro, see Luis Adão da Fonseca's *O Condestável D. Pedro de Portugal* (especially 52, 63, 69).

<sup>37</sup> Don Pedro spent seven years in Castile with "muyta pacyencia de grandes necesydades e desaventuras" according to Afonso V's chronicler Rui de Pina. I am thankful to Elisa Nunes Esteves for sharing with me a manuscript copy of her presentation "O modelo do Homem de Letras no final da Idade Média: o caso do Condestável D. Pedro de Portugal" (109).

who was defined by Don Pedro as “manto y consuelo de nuestra familia”,<sup>38</sup> died once she fulfilled her duties as a daughter and a wife, that is, once she had her father’s corpse buried at the Royal Monastery of Batalha, and gave Portugal a prince and future king João II:

Nam poderam tanto hos desgostos que ha Rainha passava, e revolvía em seu coração, por caso da desestrada morte do Infante dom Pedro seu pai, que ella com sua virtude e magnifesta bondade nam resistisse tanto, a tam continuos trabalhos, atte que per suas orações e lagrimas alcançasse de Deos duas cousas que sobre todas desejava, das quaes hua era deixar a elRei seu senhor e marido de seu matrimonio, filho macho que succedesse na herança destes Regnos, ha outra alcançar delle sepultura honrrosa pera hos ossos do Infante seu pai. (quoted by Fonseca, “A morte” 529-30)

When Don Pedro borrowed the central concepts of *On Clemency* –cruelty, clemency, happiness, and moderation–, he was in all likelihood pleading favor during his exile by recommending compassion to his plight.<sup>39</sup> Even more probably, Don Pedro was denouncing, though somewhat surreptitiously under the cloak of praise of his sister Queen Isabel, a general lack in virtue within the Portuguese court. In fact, the display of cruelty and lack of clemency, so prominent in some of the stories narrated in the glosses, implies an accusation of tyranny aimed at Isabel’s husband, the Portuguese king. Thus, the ingredients of the typical courtly love relationship –devotion,

<sup>38</sup> See *Tragedia de la insigne reina doña Isabel* by Don Pedro (Fonseca, *Obras completas*, 307).

<sup>39</sup> Since the resemblance between *De Clementia* and *Sátira* is established at a conceptual, veiled level that hardly allows for literal borrowings, it is worth considering whether Don Pedro could have also worked with other texts that dealt with cruelty, clemency, and happiness. Don Pedro was familiar with *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri novem* or *Illustrious Acts and Sayings*, a popular repository of nearly a thousand anecdotes written by Valerius Maximus between 27 and 31 A.D. A few glosses in *Sátira* echo stories found in Valerius’s books, such as those of Antioco and Seleuco (V.7.1. ext), “mujeres de los teotónicos” (VI.1.3 ext), “dueña de Valida” (II.6.8) or, more arguably, that of Marco Coriolano and his mother Vecturia (V.4.1). However, Valerius’s specific anecdotes on cruelty (IX.2), humanity and clemency (V.1), and happiness (VII.1) are not reflected in *Sátira*. Don Pedro owned two manuscripts of Valerius’s work (see Vasconcelos 125, 139). At least one of those two manuscripts dates from 1466 (Gemma Avenzoza 247), so he could not have used that particular one for *Sátira* which was finished around 1453. It is still to be determined whether Don Pedro’s selection of Valerius’s anecdotes was taken from Álvaro de Luna’s *Libro de las virtuosas e claras mugeres*. There are some important common points between *Sátira* and the Castilian constable’s work that are a matter for another article.

cruelty, desperation and compassion– would prove to be ideal to talk about politics in a clandestine way. To sum up, though *Sátira* is thematically a piece of sentimental fiction, in its exploration of moral and political concerns, it situates itself within other branches of ethical literature closer to *La coronación* by Juan de Mena or the Senecan treatises.

## Conclusion

Don Pedro's literary energy takes direction from multiples sources, and thus he synthesizes at least three different traditions in his *Sátira*: the lyrical love complaint, pseudo-feminist literature with its excessive praise of women, and treatises, such as Alfonso Fernández de Madrigal's *Diez cuestiones vulgares*, or Seneca's political analysis of the role of mercy to guarantee the wellbeing of society. As a consequence, his *Sátira* is indeed more than courtly love psychological drama and cannot be merely read as what it appears to be at first sight—that is, as the stereotypical quandary of the suffering lover who subjects himself to a merciless beloved and suffers myriad painful emotional “deaths” while alive. Don Pedro does not simply use the imagery of cruelty imaginatively, as a rhetorical tool that poetically conveys the harshness of a lover's plight and the monstrosity of passions. He also retraces a fragmented history of cruelty and clemency, of human tragic fate, backed up by Seneca, that implicitly calls attention to the need for compassion and ethical education in his times. In this abridged history of cruelty, Antiquity has produced a number of cases in which physicality and gore are prominent, and the absence of clemency is often rampant. From the perversion of Nero, who is said to have killed his mother to see the entrails that once contained him, to the nobility of a Portia or a Cato who committed suicide to reject tyranny: “Rasonablemente e no sin grande causa te gloriarás ¡oh Catón! . . . ca tu con fierro te mataste, e ella con brasas, e tú por la libertad corporal, e ella por la spiritual” (125). However, whereas cruelty is mostly inflicted on the body in former times, as the glosses reveal, Don Pedro, writing in a Christian age, shifts attention to spiritual cruelty, while still focusing on physical aggression.<sup>40</sup> Through examples of the lover and the beloved

<sup>40</sup> According to St Augustine, anything that man does to endanger his salvation can be defined as a soul-centered conception of cruelty (Baraz, “Seneca, Ethics, and the Body” 204–



and their desperation, desire, or lack of compassion, Don Pedro alerts his readers that human beings can endanger their future spiritual happiness by exerting intimate violence.

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07). Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux could arguably be in the background of Don Pedro's conception of cruelty as an internal drama, in which human beings' will inflicts pain.

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