Three central aspects of fifteenth-century Castilian vernacular humanism affected Rojas and the anonymous author of *Celestina*'s first Act, and are consequently present in the text. We depart from the premise that literary creation, and recreation, implies the elaboration of a message marked by the circumstances of its creation and reception. Since cultural artifacts are not isolated from the rest of society, we see as necessary the investigation of how they reflect politics, religion, artistic sensitivity, and ideas on education of the time. Three lines of investigation will structure our exposition: first, the extent to which *Celestina*'s authors were humanists, or, at least, conversant with the contemporary Castilian humanism; second, why *Celestina* presents a fully autonomous world without need of external support; and third, how the authors of *Celestina* express their worry for the society in which the characters live, the same society to which *Celestina*'s readers belonged, and how such concern was characteristic of fifteenth-century humanism.

In his review of the studies of fifteenth-century Castilian humanism, Di Camillo identifies two main lines of research: one studies the historical, sociological, and intellectual impact of humanism; the other centers on the pedagogical, rhetorical, and literary practices associated with humanism. Both lines are relevant to the study of *Celestina*'s production and reception because a complete understanding of the Renaissance as a historical period, and of humanism as an intellectual movement in it, are integral to the understanding of this masterpiece within its context. Undeniably, Rojas and the first Act’s unknown author were part of Castile’s, and particularly Salamanca’s, intense changing cultural ambience at the time. Therefore, the more we know about fifteenth-century Castilian humanism, especially vernacular humanism, i.e., using Spanish instead of Latin, the more we understand the circumstances of *Celestina*'s production. The vernacular humanism we propose as the context for *Celestina*'s production was characterized by a defense of the usefulness and

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practicality of knowledge that implied an interest not only for antiquity but also for the present. Those who shared the humanistic ideals, and believed in the importance of the studia humanitatis, valued the arts of language and communication between equals. Thus, humanist Alonso de Cartagena (1384–1456) conceived of language as the human capacity enabling communication between social groups and preserving the political and social fabric of city and state.\(^2\) Antonio de Nebrija (1441–1522), author of the first Spanish grammar, expressed similar ideas in his prologue to his Introducciones latinas (1481). Humanists understood literature as a civic enterprise extending to the moral and ethical function of denouncing corruption and social tensions.\(^3\) Words must be capable of moving people to action. Literature was expected to influence the reader; the deaths in Celestina were lessons intended to influence youth, as stated by the book's paratexts.

**Castilian Humanism**

Nationalism was another important facet of vernacular Castilian humanism. Beginning in the early fifteenth century, many humanists saw the classical tradition’s recovery as an opportunity for extolling the writers born in the Roman province of Hispania, including Lucan, Seneca, and Quintilian. They presented these authors as precursors to a proto-Spanish literary tradition, and references to them became common in the discussion of the creation of a new Spanish literature. Diego de Burgos, secretary of the Marqués de Santillana (1398–1458), deemed contemporary Spain a literary wasteland, except for the work of his master, whom Burgos praised for restoring the country to the splendor of the days of Lucan, Seneca, and Quintilian.\(^4\) The longing for a grandiose national past included an admiration for not only the Roman Empire, but also for when the Visigoths ruled the Iberian Peninsula, a period defined by natural unity under strong kings. The idea that Visigothic Spain could be a model and inspiration for the present was shared, for instance, by Alonso de Cartagena, in spite of him being a converso, a fact which automatically placed him beyond this lineage that extended only to cristianos viejos.\(^5\) Similar investigations into

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\(^3\) Guido M. Capelli, El humanismo romance de Juan de Lucena. Estudios sobre el De vita felici (Bellaterra: Seminario de Literatura Medieval y Humanística, 2002), p. 23.

\(^4\) Di Camillo, El humanismo castellano, p. 124.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 132.