



MIGUEL MARCIALES

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Miguel Marciales is dead. After suffering for two years from chronic renal disfunction, which put him into hospital twice and then into a wheelchair, he died on 23 December 1980, still conducting his classes and pursuing his research. The copious tributes which have appeared in the Venezuelan press, notably on the occasion of the unveiling of a plaque to his memory in his Universidad de los Andes, describe a man of immense charm, great modesty, enormous erudition, and manifold talents: a poet, a polymath and polyglot (Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Arabic, Japanese), and a brilliant lecturer and conversationalist. In Mérida, Venezuela, he was a phenomenon; to the vast majority of Hispanists, and even to *Celestina*-scholars, to whom in the not-too-distant future his name must surely become a household word, he is as yet unknown.

Marciales began his academic career as a classicist (and remained Head of the Department of Literatura Clásica), but ranged over a variety of disciplines, producing, for instance, a massive *Geografía histórica y económica del norte de Santander* (sc. Columbia) (Bogotá, 1943), and from 1965 on devoted his energies to Rojas and *Celestina*. The fruits of these labours are a critical edition of *Celestina*, his *Carta al profesor Gilman sobre problemas de la 'Celestina'* (Mérida, 1975; see *Celestinesca*, I, 1, p. 28, S6), and a critical edition of the anonymous Spanish translation of Piccolomini's *Historia de duobus amantibus*, which Marciales believed to be the work of Rojas. Whether this latter edition, of which I have a carbon copy of a draft, will ever see the light of day, must be doubtful; the *Carta al profesor Gilman*, now in the press (Universidad de Mérida), has already reached various interested readers in its duplicated format; but it is now imperative that the edition of *Celestina* be published in the form it deserves. For patriotic motives, which some may feel were misguided, Marciales was determined that the work should appear in Venezuela, but shortage of funds has grievously delayed its publication, and the stop-gap cyclostyled version (1977) is available only to a handful of people. There are, for instance, just two copies in Great Britain: mine and P. E. Russell's. And the only other recipients whose names are known to me are Marcel Bataillon, Stephen Gilman, and Miroslav Marcovich.

The work merits a fifteen-page review, but I confine myself to a brief description. This Edición Crítica, entitled *Comedia o Tragicomedia de Ca-*

lieto y Melibea, consists of five folio volumes, densely typed (one-and-a-half spacing, no margins). Vol. IV (123 pp.) contains the *Texto Crítico*, including the *Auto de Traso*. The acts are divided into scenes, and a complex system of numbering (dividing long speeches, lumping fragments of rapid dialogue) permits quick reference to any passage in the work. Within this typescript text, underlining, double underlining, dotted underlining, square brackets, and oblique strokes indicate precisely how the editor has modified his base texts. Where there is unmanageably great variation, the text is printed in parallel columns. Vol. V, *Aparato Crítico* (135 pp.), records variants from fourteen early editions, with occasional reference to later editions, and to the Italian and Latin translations of Ordóñez (c. 1505) and Barth (1624); it includes some explanation and 'translation' of the most difficult passages; and it justifies not only the emendations but the retention of peculiar early readings by copious reference to other fifteenth and sixteenth-century writers. Although it may not prove impossible to take issue with Marciales on some of his choices of readings, the evidence and reasoning are there for all to see, and it can scarcely be disputed that this is simply the best edition of *Celestina* so far produced.

In a sense, however--and I am forcibly reminded of Alan Deyermond's printing his edition of *Mocedades* as an appendix to his *Epic Poetry and the Clergy* (London, 1968)--this invaluable edition is a mere postscript to volumes I, II, and III (over 310 pp.--lettered insertions, 99a, etc., make computation difficult). This *Introducción*, which could run to a thousand normal printed pages, addresses itself not to literary criticism (except tangentially) but to the perennial fundamental problems: the affiliation of the texts, the identity of the authors, and the biographies of Rojas and other hypothetical contributors. It is at once sensational and near-indigestible, demanding months of patient study. Marciales writes with tremendous verve and style ('ese don de creación verbal que me recuerda a nuestro Rabelais', wrote Bataillon), leading the eager reader on, only to force him to stop and go back, to attempt properly to assimilate some essential point in the coherent and densely-woven argument. Some self-contained theses may be more easily grasped: that Cota wrote the 'esbozo', that Rojas was not a student when he wrote the *Comedia*, that he was the translator of Piccolomini's erotic tale (of this I remain sceptical, but the detailed evidence was to have formed part of another work), that most of the *Tratado de Centurio* was composed by someone else, probably Sanabria, that Rojas was mayor of Talavera before his documented taking over, temporarily, as an ex-mayor, of the post left vacant by the death of the elected *alcalde*, and so forth. Some of these appear in the copious supporting evidence, in his *Carta al profesor Gilman*. That book, described as 'impresionante' by our editor, Joseph T. Snow, is in fact, in comparison with his *Introducción*, as a book-review to a book.

Although eminent colleagues have responded to my printed references to Marciales' work by demanding to know who and what he was, he did not work wholly in isolation. If he was no conference-attender, he was a Visiting Professor in Michigan and Miami, was a prolific and generous correspondent, and was in contact with (to my knowledge) Raymond Moloney, Robert Herron, J. Homer Herriott, Leslie Byrd Simpson, Stephen Gilman, the invaluable Tomás Magallón, Dennis E. Rhodes, R. J. Norton, Dalmiro de la Válgoma, Marcel Bataillon, P. E. Russell, and, primarily because of my review of Herriott

(he accepted neither of our schemes of affiliation), myself. But it is tragic that he did not receive before his death, not from a handful of scholars but from the academic Hispanist community at large, the recognition due to someone who, *post mortem*, must inevitably be acknowledged to be one of the greatest *Celestina*-scholars of our time.



Celestina. Ilustración
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[1979]. Artista:
Gyula FELEDY.

