

## CELESTINESCA

<https://doi.org/10.7203/Celestinesca.10.19625>

### IN MEMORIAM KEITH WHINNOM, 1927-1986

On March 6, 1986, at age 58, Keith Whinnom, Professor of Spanish at the University of Exeter, distinguished scholar of life and letters in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spain, and a corresponsal of this journal from the time of its founding in 1977, died in England. The scope of his career and the breadth of his interests surely qualified him as one of the outstanding members of our profession: his many accomplishments, both professional and personal, are poignantly sketched in previously published tributes by Alan D. Deyermond, in *The Times* (London) of March 9, 1986 and--in greater detail--in the Spring 1986 number of La corónica. I refer Celestinesca's readers to these accounts, in the latter of which Deyermond says of Keith: "And he was always patient, always generous, with young scholars." I would like to use this space to reinforce, from where I sit, the truth of those words.

I began a correspondence with Keith Whinnom in September of 1974: it was about an unedited manuscript auto by Joseph de Valdivielso that treated of the life and legends of Saint Ildefonso of Toledo. My letter to him was dated 8 Sept. and his reply was posted to me on the 17th. Yes, he had heard a paper I'd read at Hull, at the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland in April of 1973 (my first contact with his prodigious memory), and yes, he liked my proposal regarding the edition of the Valdivielso auto for The Exeter Hispanic Texts series and was willing to accept it (my first contact with his generosity to younger scholars). My knowledge of his wonderful patience, naturally enough, took longer fully to appreciate, for it was not until 1983 that my edition appeared (EHT XXX). The delays were always mine but at no time did our regular correspondance ever signal any loss of faith on his part in that I could and would overcome the obstacles placed in my path.

Before the edition finally appeared, of course, this journal had been founded in Athens, Georgia and twelve numbers had appeared. I was still a pretty raw Assistant Professor when I rashly conceived of this journal, and many were the voices that discouraged me from setting out on uncharted waters: his was not one of them. I asked him in a letter dated 17 January 1977 if he would serve (with Alan Deyermond and Dorothy Severin) as corresponsales from the UK

## CELESTINESCA

and, in a letter dated 25 January he assented, even though he claimed that at the moment he had "nothing whatsoever to contribute" (a modesty which I came to appreciate as an unconscious irony, for Keith's contributions to Celestinesca over the first nine years of its life were, each and every one of them, invaluable). Subsequently he sent news items, notice of unusual bibliographical items published in out-of-the-way places, word of theatrical productions of Celestina in England and on the continent, thorough critical appraisals of submissions that I farmed out to him, and encouragement about the slow subscriber buildup of narrow-focus projects like ours.

Keith believed in the need for Celestinesca and I am happy that he was able also to find time to contribute to it. His review of La ética judía y 'LC' como alegoría [3:ii (1979): 25-26] was severe but with warrant. His excellent article on "The Motives and the Personality of Fernando de Rojas," originally intended for these pages, ended up as part of the homage volume to his former tutor, Peter Russell (in 1981). What did appear in the pages of 4:ii (1980) were two shorter pieces, one of which, "La Celestina," "The Celestina," and L<sub>2</sub> Interference in L<sub>1</sub>" (19-21), is a landmark item. In it, he showed why the altogether too common use of the article (in Spanish and in English) in the titles, La Celestina and The Celestina was wrong and recommended that something be done about it. He even chided the compiler of the bibliography that appeared in Hispania in 1976, and its supplements in Celestinesca (me!) for falling into the trap (A word to the wise...?). Well, I have changed the policy in Celestinesca; I note that some recent doctoral theses have taken Whinnom to heart: I further note that R. Langbehn's Buenos Aires student edition and Miguel Marciales' University of Illinois study and critical edition follow Whinnom's restored norm. It would please me greatly if this slight three-page sally of Keith's will have had the enduring impact that he himself, perhaps, did not quite fully envision. I know that he fought a losing battle, with the piece in the Russell homage volume, to have its editor's change all their La Celestinas to "la Celestina" but expressed delight when his friend and colleague, Ian Macpherson, finally saw it his way. Modern tradition says La Celestina and tradition is ofttimes our strongest adversary. But Keith was a seeker of truth, he backed up his contentions about the correct citation of the title [based on sixteenth and seventeenth-century usage] and wanted only to know, if he were wrong, "why" he was.

His other two pieces in these pages were, one, a friendly rejoinder to a piece published by Dorothy Severin on Pármenos's reference to the practice of hunting with a "falso boezuelo" (which pieces have had three further replies) and, two, the touching necrology for the Venezuelan hispanist and classics scholar, Miguel Marciales [5: ii

## CELESTINESCA

(1982): 51-53]. It was Keith who shared first with me the news of the existence of the five cyclostyled, privately-circulated volumes on LC that Marciales had produced over a ten-year period. It was typical, I think, of Keith, that although his own schema for the stemmatic relationships of the early editions of Celestina was roundly rejected by Marciales, Keith saw the great value of Marciales contribution ("this is simply the best edition of Celestina so far produced"--52) and was later to play a role in recommending that it be printed for general circulation [it was, in 1985, in 2 vols., in the Illinois Medieval Monographs Series].

Our many attempts to meet after Hull often did not materialize. He was unable to be at the Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas' gathering in Toronto of 1977, as I had been unable to attend at Bordeaux in 1974. We did finally join forces at Venice in 1981, even speaking on the same program (along with Dorothy Severin, if memory serves), and sharing good cheer on a number of other, more social, occasions. Our contacts never diminished in quantity or quality, but were mostly conducted through the mails. The support he continued to give to me was comforting and challenging: he could encourage and criticize and, I knew, always with fairness. Even though at times it meant, for me, swallowing a bitter pill, I found his genuine concern for quality and for excellence to be a well-applied and instructive sugar coating. My growing respect and admiration for him, and for a career in which celestinesque matters were, after all, but one small (if not unimportant) part, led me to dedicate my 1985 Celestina and Fernando de Rojas: An Annotated Bibliography of World Interest 1930-1985 "to Alan, Dorothy and Keith," my UK colleagues. Although, as he wrote, in his customary return-mail reply, his duties precluded a longer letter of thanks, he wanted to thank me for the copy of the volume and for the generosity of the dedication. It was the last word I had from him. I shall miss him (as we all will) but I am delighted to have been able to pay back, even in so small a fashion, the years of generosity he lavished on me and on one of my most foolhardy dreams: this journal. RESQUIESCAT IN PACE.

*Joseph Snow*