

## FERNANDO DE ROJAS FROM 1499 TO 1502: BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIAN?

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[This article has had an unusually long gestation. The first version, "Fernando de Rojas de 1499 a 1502: ¿una doble conversión?," was a paper read at the meeting of the Academia Literaria Renacentista in Salamanca, 12 March 1988 (an account of the meeting is given in Snow 1988). Six days later a shorter English version, with the present title, was read to the Medieval Hispanic Research Seminar at Westfield College. A considerably revised Spanish version was read to Professor Carmen Parrilla's research seminar in the Universidad de Coruña on 5 March 1999. The present article has benefited from the suggestions and criticisms of those present on the three occasions. Since the time that the article has been in the making is over half the lifetime of *Celestinesca*, it seems appropriate to publish it in the volume marking the journal's first quarter-century. A.D.]

### 1. The biographical gap

All critics of *Celestina* feel - or ought to feel - daunted by three obstacles.<sup>1</sup> First, the book's ambiguity, recognized in varying degrees by almost everyone who has worked on it in the last forty years. Secondly, the paucity of our knowledge of Fernando de Rojas' life, and the fact that what we do know (as distinct from what we may conjecture) concerns years when the composition of his masterpiece was only a memory. Thirdly - a quite different kind of difficulty - the vast debt that we owe to previous critics, and the near-impossibility of distinguishing between our own contribution and what we have learned from our predecessors and our contemporaries, often without realizing that we have learned it.

I have referred to the paucity of biographical information. I do not wish to exaggerate the problem: thanks to the archival investigations by Manuel

Serrano y Sanz, Fernando del Valle Lersundi, and Stephen Gilman, we have much more information about Rojas than we do about many medieval Spanish authors.<sup>2</sup> Those who work on the *Libro de Buen Amor* would be delighted to have as much archival evidence about Juan Ruiz as we have about Rojas; and the lives of a fair number of Rojas' contemporaries, such as Florencia Pinar or Nicolás Núñez, are a good deal more opaque than that of Juan Ruiz. Nevertheless, the absence of external evidence for Rojas' life as a student, or indeed for any period until long after his years of literary activity, presents a serious difficulty to anyone who tries to relate his experiences to the writing of the *Comedia* and its reworking as the *Tragicomedia*. It is significant that the chapter that Stephen Gilman wrote about Rojas' student years (1972: chap. 6) is based entirely on what is known about the University of Salamanca during those years and on speculation arising from that knowledge. I do not say that in order to disparage the chapter. Like the rest of the book, it is both interesting and useful. But if we want specific information about Rojas' student years we have to turn to the preliminary and concluding matter of the early editions of *Celestina* - the explicit declarations of the dedicatory epistle, the prologue, and the poems - and to what can be deduced from the sixteen, later twenty-one, acts.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. The internal evidence: declarations in the text

Let us now compare the explicit declarations in the two main redactions of *Celestina* (what I say about them assumes Rojas' authorship of the *Tragicomedia* additions). I divide these into four topics: the aims of the work, literary evaluation, sociopolitical attitude, and religious attitude. These topics inevitably overlap.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1. Aims of the work

The incipit of the *Comedia* tells us that it "contiene, demás de su dulce y agradable estilo, muchas sentencias filosofales & avisos muy necesarios para mancebos, mostrándoles los engaños que están encerrados en sirvientes y alcahuetas."<sup>5</sup> This is unchanged in the *Tragicomedia*. In both redactions, then, the literary qualities and the didactic intent are emphasized. We do not know who was responsible for the incipit, but it is likely to have been someone working for the printer. The same points are, however, stated more extensively by Rojas in the dedicatory epistle: as well as describing the literary qualities of "estos papeles" (Act 1), he says approvingly that it contains "avisos y consejos contra lisonjeros & malos sirvientes & falsas mugeres hechizeras" (Rank 1972: 87); there is no change in the *Tragicomedia* (Russell 1991: 185). He seems to imply that in continuing the work he shares the aims of the "antiguo autor."<sup>6</sup> The didactic intent is again emphasized in Rojas' preliminary poem:

buscad bien el fin de aquesto que escrivo,  
o del principio leed su argumento.  
Leeldo y veréys que, aunque dulce cuento,

amantes, que os muestra salir de cativo. [...]
   
Estos amantes les pornán temor
   
a fiar de alcahueta ni de mal sirviente.<sup>7</sup>

Alonso de Proaza's poem at the end of the work takes up the point: "harás al que ama amar no querer" (st. 2; 1978: 207; 1991: 612). As we have seen, Rojas maintains in the *Tragicomedia* the statements that he made in the *Comedia* about the work's didactic nature. It is thus, perhaps, surprising that he does not reiterate the point in the prologue: he says that the best readers "coligen la suma para su provecho" (201), but does not spell out the nature of the "suma."<sup>8</sup> However, he more than makes up for that in a new final stanza of his preliminary poem:

O damas, matronas, mancebos, casados
   
notad bien la vida que aquéstos hizieron;
   
tened por espejo su fin qual huvieron,
   
a otro que amores dad vuestros cuydados.
   
Limpiad ya los ojos los ciegos errados,
   
virtudes sembrando con casto bivir;
   
a todo correr devéys de huyr:
   
no os lance Cupido sus tiros dorados. (1991: 193, n. 27)

and in the closing poem that he adds (it opens with a modified form of the old final stanza of the preliminary poem):

Pues aquí vemos quán mal fenescieron
   
aquestos amantes, huygamos su dança. [...] (1991: 609)

He is here, in the added *Tragicomedia* material, just as insistent on the work's didactic function as he was in the *Comedia*. He is also just as insistent on one aspect of that function: the warning against sexual passion. But what about the "avisos y consejos contra lisonjeros & malos sirvientes & falsas mugeres hechizeras"? I shall return to this interesting omission in section 2.3, below.

## 2.2. Literary evaluation

This too appears in the incipit, the dedicatory epistle, Rojas' preliminary poem, and Proaza's poem in the *Comedia*, and also in the *Tragicomedia* prologue: Rojas speaks of the work of the "antiguo autor," Proaza of Rojas' work, and in the *Tragicomedia* Rojas reports the judgments of his earliest public (see Deyermond 2000: 136–137). Since this is not directly relevant to the subject of the present article, I pass on to the next matter dealt with in the opening and concluding poetry and prose.

## 2.3. Social and political attitudes

Most of the evidence has already been presented in section 2.1, above.

If, within the overall statements of didactic aim, we distinguish between the warnings against dishonest servants and procuresses and those against sexual passion, we find an interesting pattern. The incipit, of unknown authorship, mentions only the first of these. The dedicatory epistle mentions both, but emphasizing the first in what is said of Act 1 and the second in explaining Rojas' reasons for continuing the work. The preliminary poem mentions both, giving priority to the warning against love (this is also the only aspect mentioned in Proaza's poem).<sup>9</sup> In the *Tragicomedia*, the prologue, as we have seen, gives no detail about the nature of the didactic "suma." In Rojas' concluding poem, however, there is strong emphasis on the warning against sexual passion, but no mention of a warning against servants and procuresses.

There is a clear progression from the author of the incipit, who sees evil proletarian characters as the threat to young aristocrats, through the Rojas of 1499, who balances this with the threat posed by sexual passion, to the Rojas of 1502, who makes no further mention of the "malos sirvientes & falsas mugeres hechizeras" but reiterates the warning against passion. Before we draw conclusions from this, it is prudent to recall that Rojas does not, in the *Tragicomedia*, eliminate the *Comedia* references to evil servants and procuresses. He is content to let them stand in the new redaction, but he no longer seems to take an active interest in them. One major discrepancy between the prefatory material and the text is thus much attenuated. In a review-article on Marcel Bataillon's book (1961), Russell says: "So far from showing the harm that servants can do to their knightly masters Pármeno's case seems designed to illustrate the harm that masters can do to their servants."<sup>10</sup> He is right: what we learn from the text is hard to reconcile with what the incipit tells us about *Celestina*'s didactic purpose. What Rojas adds to the prefatory and concluding material does not, on the other hand, conflict with a reading of the text.

#### 2.4. Religious attitude

The incipit, the dedicatory epistle, Proaza's poem, and the *Tragicomedia* prologue say nothing about religious doctrine or personal piety. In Rojas' preliminary and concluding poems, however, religion looms large. In the *Comedia*, the prefatory poem ends:

Vosotros, que amáys, tomad este enxemplo [...]  
 load siempre a Dios visitando su templo [...]  
 Temamos Aquel que espinas y lança,  
 açotes y clavos su sangre vertieron.  
 La su santa faz herida escupieron;  
 vinagre con hiel fue su potación;  
 a cada costado consintió un ladrón.  
 Nos lleve le ruego con los quel creyeron. (1976: 90)

A number of critics (notably María Rosa Lida de Malkiel and Stephen Gilman) have questioned the sincerity of these lines, but no one has suggested that they are ambiguous. They are a straightforward expression of Christian faith, with a concentration on the Passion of Christ. Whether or not they are sincere is a matter for argument, in which the *Tragicomedia* additions may be helpful.

The *Tragicomedia* version of the prefatory poem does not shed much light on the problem. The two lines just quoted from the penultimate stanza are retained, and the final stanza is transplanted to the end of the work, being replaced by a new stanza that says nothing about religion. When we turn to the concluding poem, however, we find important evidence. The first stanza is a revised version of the transplanted stanza from the end of the prefatory poem, and the lines corresponding to those quoted above are (with significant differences italicized):

*Amemos* a Aquel que espinas y lança,  
açotes y clavos su sangre vertieron.  
*Los falsos judíos* su haz escupieron;  
vinagre con hiel fue su potación;  
*por que nos lleve con el buen ladrón,*  
*de dos que a sus santos lados pusieron.* (1991: 609)

“Temamos” is replaced by “Amemos,” by a personal devotion to Christ crucified, a divine love that contrasts with the sinful loves of *Celestina*’s characters, and the relatively abstract “con los quel creyeron” is replaced by the individual “con el buen ladrón.” The other change, the identification of the “falsos judíos” as Christ’s tormentors, is of a different kind.

The second stanza of the closing poem has nothing of relevance to our present subject, but the third and final stanza includes the lines:

Y assí, no me juzgues por esso liviano,  
mas antes zeloso por limpio bivar,  
zeloso de amar, temer y servir  
al alto Señor y Dios soberano. (610)

Here again is love of God (though accompanied by fear).

### 3. Extra-textual statements and the lessons of the text

“Never trust the artist. Trust the tale,” said D. H. Lawrence in a rare moment of good sense. This is, of course, a high-risk strategy, because it gives the reader’s interpretation of a novel, a romance, or a play precedence over the author’s interpretation. It is particularly risky today, when - as I had occasion

to show some years ago, and shall soon show again - the application of recent critical theories may lead the critic to a reading that is incompatible with the plain meaning of the text's words. Therefore we need to be certain that we have understood the text before we challenge the author's statements. In the case of Rojas' attitude to master-servant relationships that certainty is, I think, attainable. Russell's comment on "the harm that masters can do to their servants" startled some readers when he made it nearly forty years ago, but it has been amply supported by later research, especially José Antonio Maravall's classic study of Calisto and Pleberio as representatives of the leisure class.<sup>11</sup> I have argued in a series of articles (1984a, 1985, 1990, 1993, and 1995) that Calisto and, to a lesser extent, Pleberio are the targets of radical social criticism by Rojas. This is already fully developed in the *Comedia*, and it is intensified in the *Tragicomedia*, with Calisto's "Señora, el que quiere comer el ave, quita primero las plumas" (1991: 571). Given that Rojas, while allowing earlier references to "malos sirvientes" to stand, does not introduce further references of this kind, there is every reason to accept what the text so clearly shows us, and to conclude that if Rojas' sympathies were ever compatible with those manifested in the incipit, they were no longer compatible by the time that he came to turn the *Comedia* into the *Tragicomedia*.

If, on the other hand, the statements in the prefatory and closing material concur with what the text shows us, their agreement should be taken as conclusive unless there is exceptionally strong evidence to the contrary. Thus, when Rojas complains that "los impressores han dado sus punturas, poniendo rúbricas o sumarios al principio de cada auto" (1991: 201) and when, as Stephen Gilman points out (1954-55), analysis of the *argumentos* reveals a profound difference between those already present in the *Comedia* and those added in the *Tragicomedia*, it is clear that Rojas did not write the former group. Again, the extensive statement of conflict as universal in this world (*Tragicomedia* prologue) is developed in action in the plot.

#### 4. The religious development

What is true of the *argumentos* and of the theme of conflict is, I believe, true of Rojas' religious development. I recognize that, especially in the *Comedia*, there is surprisingly little that evokes the presence of God, but, as has been pointed out by a number of critics, Rojas is showing us characters in whose lives God is marginalized; I have argued elsewhere that Pleberio's lament shows the extent to which he has, for initially good motives, allowed financial concerns to usurp the central place in his life (Deyermond 1990). Moreover, just as the action has an outer frame of incipit, epistle, poems, and prologue, so it has an inner frame of Biblical allusion: both Calisto's first words in Act 1 and Pleberio's last words in Act 21 derive from the Psalms, the former directly and the latter indirectly. (I drew attention to this in an earlier article, 1990, but it may be useful to repeat the point here.) Pleberio's "in hac lachrimarum valle"

has long been recognized as a quotation from the hymn *Salve, regina*. As Peter N. Dunn says,

Poor confused Pleberio [...] gropes in the dark night of his grief for an explanation. At the last hour of the day - and every day - as the lights were extinguished in churches and monasteries all over Christendom, the *Salve regina* was sung at the end of the office of Compline. *In hac lachrymarum valle* were the last words of the Church, in which it recognized the universality of pain and sorrow, symbolically put out the candles, and waited for the new day.<sup>12</sup>

The ultimate source of the words is, however, a psalm, from which the hymn quotes: "Beatus vir cuius est auxilium abs te, ascensiones in corde suo disposuit, in valle lacrymarum, in loco quem posuit" (Psalm 83:6-7). Calisto's opening words, however, are not so instantly recognizable as Biblical, because they are not in Latin, but "En esto veo, Melibea, la grandeza de Dios" clearly alludes to "Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei, et opera manuum eius annuntiat firmamentum" (Psalm 19:1).<sup>13</sup> This, of course, means that the "antiguo autor," not Rojas (assuming that the two are distinct), provided the first part of the Biblical frame. I think it highly likely that Rojas recognized the allusion in Act 1 (if he did not introduce it himself), and that it inspired him to end his work with another such allusion. Thus the whole action of the work is set within a context by which the characters are to be judged.

That is the position in the *Comedia* (as well, of course, as the *Tragicomedia*). Even if we make - as some critics have made - the assumption that Rojas' explicit religious declarations in the prefatory material of the *Comedia* are a mere protective device, we can hardly take the same view of the Biblical inner frame, because it is not obvious enough to provide a shield of orthodoxy. What the inner frame does is to make it much more likely that the outer-frame declarations are sincere.

We have seen that in reworking the last stanza of his prefatory poem in the *Comedia* to form the first stanza of the closing poem in the *Tragicomedia*, Rojas expresses a more strongly personal devotion. Do the amplifications and other changes in the action of the *Tragicomedia* reveal a similar preoccupation? Indeed they do. I have shown elsewhere (Deyermond 1984b) that at two points, one in Act 13 and the other in Act 19, Rojas focusses sharply on the question of repentance *in articulo mortis*. In the *Comedia*, the only character who, at the moment of death, expresses a wish to confess is Celestina, and this seems to be no more than a socially conditioned reflex.<sup>14</sup> In the *Tragicomedia*, on the other hand, one of the servants being led away to execution (we are not told whether it is Pármemo or Sempronio) is reported to have made three of the five gestures that were recognized as signs of contrition when the dying man or woman was

unable to speak. These gestures are set out by Juan Ruiz in the section on confession in the *Libro de Buen Amor*:

es menester que faga por gestos e por gemido  
sinos de penitencia que es arrepentido.  
En sus pechos feriendo, *a Dios manos alçando*,  
sopiros dolorosos muy triste sospirando,  
signos de penitencia *de los ojos llorando*;  
do más fazer non puede, *la cabeça enclinando*.  
(st. 1138c-1139d; Gybbon-Monypenny 1988: 348-349)

el uno [...] hincó los ojos en mí, alçando las manos al cielo[...] Y  
abaxó la cabeça con lágrimas en los ojos [...] (1991: 490)

Similarly, as Calisto falls to his death, he cries out “¡O, válame Santa María! ¡Muerto soy! ¡Confesión!” (1991: 574). In the *Comedia* he had fallen without a word. We do not know whether either Calisto or the unnamed servant makes an effective act of contrition and is saved, and I do not think Rojas - unlike Christopher Marlowe, who used a frustrated attempt at repentance *in articulo mortis* as the tragic climax to *Doctor Faustus* - intended us to know. What matters is that the question was raised. It is hard to believe that Rojas would have taken the trouble to introduce even one scene of this kind, let alone two, unless he was deeply interested in the problem. Stephen Gilman showed long ago that even apparently minor interpolations and emendations in the *Tragicomedia* are often the result of careful artistry (1956: chap. 2). If two silent deaths in the *Comedia* become, in the *Tragicomedia*, deaths marked by the wish to repent, it seems to me obvious that a subject to which Rojas had not given much thought in 1499 was, only a few years later, of profound interest to him. And this matches the change in the first stanza of the *Tragicomedia*'s closing poem.

### 5. Rojas' last composition

It would be inaccurate to describe Rojas' will, dated 3 April 1541, as a literary work, but anyone interested in his life or his religious beliefs would be grossly imprudent to neglect it. Medieval Spanish wills did not receive much attention until the mid-1980's, but since then a dozen important studies have been published. As Laura Vivanco says,

Wills cannot be read as unambiguous expressions of an individual's beliefs as they approached death. The will was a legal document, shaped both by precedent and the *escribano* who penned it, though this is not to say that it did not also reflect the beliefs and wishes of the testator.<sup>15</sup>

The notary public Juan de Arévalo oversaw the drafting of the will, though



it is neither in his hand nor in that of Rojas (“Esta carta de testamento fize escribir segund que ante mí pasó,” Valle Lersundi 1929: 370). Both of them, however, signed it. It follows the normal order for wills. First comes an introduction with standard phrases such as “yo, [...] estando enfermo del cuerpo e sano de la memoria” (366) and expressions of faith:

creyendo todo aquello que tiene y cree la Santa madre yglesia como bueno e fiel xpiano, en la qual fee y creencia protesto de bivar e morir, en que primeramente mando y encomiendo my ánima a Dios Padre que la crio e hizo en su semejança e a su precioso Hijo Jhu Xpo, que la redimió por su santa e preciosa sangre, e al Espíritu Santo que la alumbró, y el cuerpo a la tierra donde fue formado. (368)

Such professions of faith are very frequent in wills of the period, but although that makes it unwise to regard them as spontaneous expression of the testator’s beliefs and feelings, it does not mean that they are necessarily insincere. It is regrettable, therefore, that Gilman refers contemptuously to “the various sanctimonious remarks and bequests” (1972: 485). Moreover, the extent of the formulaic content is still a point of disagreement among scholars (Vivanco 2001: 29, n. 28).

Secondly, the dying man gives instructions about his funeral:

que mi cuerpo sea sepultado en la yglesia del monesterio de la Madre de Dios desta dicha villa de Talavera, en la sepoltura donde mys testamentarios dixeren e señalaren. [...]

Yten mando que sea enterrado en el ábito de señor San Francisco y paguen por él lo que justo sea.

Yten mando quel dya de my enterramiento me digan por mi ánima en el dicho monesterio los frayles de señor San Francisco tres mysas de réquien [...] (368)

Thirdly come the bequests, and fourthly the arrangements for the administration of the will. The second section of the will and the first part of the third section (bequests to churches and convents) are of particular interest in the present context. Thirty-six lines of Valle Lersundi’s edition of the will - a quarter of the whole - are concerned in some way with the Franciscan Order. Does this indicate that Rojas was a Franciscan Tertiary?

Only a few years after the foundation of his Order and of the Second Order, the Poor Clares, Francis of Assisi made provision for men and women of the laity who wanted to follow his teaching but who, for various reasons, could not commit themselves to life in either order (Moorman 1968: 40–45).

They “were filled with a spirit of renunciation and longed to adopt a life of simplicity and discipline even though continuing to live in their own homes and earn their own living” (40). It is interesting to compare these words of Moorman’s, written about the first years of the Tertiaries but still true of the secular Tertiaries of Rojas’ time, with Gilman’s statement that such simplicity, manifested in Rojas’ will, was the “protective coloration” of many *conversos* (1972: 487). As so often happens, the way that evidence is interpreted depends on the preconceptions of the interpreter.

In the fourteenth century some tertiaries began to establish small communities, and as the years passed the differences between these and Franciscan monasteries and convents became steadily smaller. In the fifteenth century the change was formally recognized by “the permanent division of the Tertiaries between those called ‘secular’ who continued to live in their own houses, and those who adopted the monastic life and so came to be known as the Third Order Regular” (Moorman 1968: 560). By the end of the century “the regular Tertiaries had become a recognized religious Order” (564). It is, then, the secular Tertiaries who are relevant to a consideration of Rojas’ will.<sup>16</sup> Tertiaries were forbidden by the Franciscan Rule to take oaths (44), but this did not always debar them in practice from civic duties (217 & 426). The fact that Rojas served as Alcalde of Talavera does not, therefore, mean he could not have been a secular Tertiary. It is likely that research on the Franciscans in Talavera in the second quarter of the sixteenth century might take us closer to a solution of the problem. What is clear, however - and it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to the terms of Rojas’ will - is that even if he was not formally a secular Tertiary his links to the Order were very close.<sup>17</sup> The will, and what we know of the secular tertiaries, raise a strong presumption that he was not merely an orthodox but also a devout Christian. His descendants, as Russell says, “creían que Rojas era una figura de reconocida consideración social cuya ortodoxia cristiana (lo mismo que la de su libro) estaba fuera de toda sospecha” (1978: 370-371). When he encountered suspicion it was, as is well known, because he was a *converso*. Ancestry, not belief, was in question.<sup>18</sup>

There is a strong and rather surprising difference of scholarly opinion on the matter of Rojas’ beliefs in his later years. I find it surprising, because there is substantial evidence on one side of the debate, while the other - the side chosen by such respected scholars as María Rosa Lida de Malkiel and Stephen Gilman - rests on conjecture and on analogies of no evidential value. What can be set against the positive evidence of the will and the negative evidence of a total lack of any accusation of heresy? Only some cases of men who, apparently of unimpeachable Catholic orthodoxy, turn out to have been secret judaizers. For instance:

a famous case of the Inquisition in Mexico reveals that a certain

convert (by the name of Antonio Machado) was buried in the church wearing the habit of an Augustinian friar. Years later, his daughter, caught by the Inquisition, confessed under torture that, out of obedience to her father's will, she had shrouded him according to Jewish custom, covering the shroud with the monk's habit. Only Heaven knows what was underneath the Franciscan habit in which Fernando de Rojas was buried ) and what he ensconced in the depths of his soul. (Lida de Malkiel 1961: 5-6)

It is worth recalling at this point that when Rojas' coffin was opened in 1936, shreds of an expensive habit were found with the bones (Gilman 1972: 585, n207), and that the report of the exhumation says nothing about a shroud.<sup>19</sup> An analogy much closer to Rojas, both in place and time, is cited by Gilman (1972: 88-89 & 486). I find this line of argument deeply worrying, because - as others have noticed - the absence of evidence that Rojas in his last years was a judaizer, or anything other than a devout Christian, is taken by Lida de Malkiel, Gilman, and others as evidence of successful concealment. A hypothesis can be taken seriously only if it is capable of falsification: that is, if those who propound it recognize that it could be invalidated by contrary evidence. If the contrary evidence is seen as strengthening the hypothesis, like the mythological Anteus who, whenever knocked down by his opponent Heracles, gained redoubled strength by contact with the earth, then no useful discussion is possible.

## 6. The will and the book

I began this article by acknowledging that the only biographical information we have about Rojas tells us of a period long after the composition of *Celestina*; most of it, indeed, relates to the end of his life. It would be rash in the extreme to use Rojas' will as a guide to his beliefs forty years earlier, when he wrote and then revised the *Comedia*. However, just as we should attach great importance to any points of agreement between the prefatory and closing statements and what the text itself shows us, so any points of agreement between these and the biographical data from the end of Rojas' life are extremely interesting.

I argued earlier that the changes in the first stanza of the *Tragicomedia's* closing poem reveal a deeper, more personal devotion, and that this corresponds to the interest in the question of repentance *in articulo mortis* shown in two of the *Tragicomedia* interpolations. Now we find at the end of Rojas' life a strong attachment to the Franciscan Order, an order which, in contrast to the more intellectual Dominicans, emphasized personal devotion to Christ. Can we afford to disregard this coincidence? This is not the only point of resemblance between the Franciscans and *Celestina*. John V. Fleming's very useful book on Franciscan literature of the Middle Ages includes a chapter on "Franciscan Style

and the Literature of Late Medieval Europe" (1977: 235–262). One of the points made in this chapter is that the vernacular sermons of St Bernardino of Siena, in the first half of the fifteenth century, "abound with what are in effect dramatic dialogues, but dialogues in a realistic and domestic style" (260). Even more interestingly, Franciscan preaching had a strong element of social criticism (see, for instance, Owst 1961: 267–269). The same was true of other Franciscan literature. Fleming says, in words that might often be taken as a commentary on *Celestina*:

Medieval Franciscan literature is [...] not prudish in its language. [...] Ascetic rigor and high seriousness were often the inspiration behind a freedom of satirical expression which we would be wrong to call libertinism but which will not fall easily into preconceived notions of cloistered piety. What Giotto was not ashamed to paint in the Last Judgment of the Scrovegni Chapel, the friars openly preached. We shall find a particularly exuberant and imaginative collation of themes of sexual and monetary cupidity. [...] the penitential manuals of the friars addressed in new ways the moral problems of a commercial society and a money economy. (255–256)

I have no wish to suggest that either realistic dialogue or radical social criticism is an exclusively Franciscan characteristic. The sermons of St Vicent Ferrer, a Dominican, are notable for their use of realistic dialogue. G. R. Owst devotes three long chapters of his classic work on vernacular sermons to "The Preaching of Satire and Complaint" (1961: chaps. 5–7), and the preachers from whom he quotes come from the ranks of several orders and from the secular clergy (the parish priests).<sup>20</sup> But my point is not that only Franciscan social criticism or Franciscan dialogue is consistent with *Celestina*. It is enough that it is consistent. Moreover, while one or the other element is quite frequently found, the combination of intense personal devotion with radical social criticism is characteristically Franciscan.

### 7. A hypothesis

It is time to pull the threads together and formulate a hypothesis. The evidence and arguments for it have been set out above, so I shall here do no more than say briefly what, in my opinion, underlies the differences between *Comedia* and *Tragicomedia* with which I have been concerned: the changes in the prefatory and closing material, and the emphasis on the problem of repentance *in articulo mortis*.<sup>21</sup> Rojas was born into a family already Christian (the documents cited by Gilman point to conversion in his grandparents' time, though this was not the way that Gilman read them). At some point he came under Franciscan influence, which (no doubt with other factors) inclined him to radical criticism of the leisure class, which would have been plentifully represented among his Salamanca contemporaries.<sup>22</sup> This influence may have in-

clined him to realistic presentation of dialogue. When he wrote the *Comedia* he was an orthodox Catholic, but did not have an intensely personal devotion. At some point within the two or three years that followed the publication of the *Comedia* his piety became more intense and more personal, without any diminution in his criticism of the leisure class but with less inclination to condemn their servants. The change was deep enough to justify the use of the term "born-again Christian" (though without the pejorative connotations now often attached to that term). At some point in his life, perhaps before the change from *Comedia* to *Tragicomedia*, perhaps long after, he became closely attached to the Franciscans, perhaps as a secular Tertiary) an attachment that is clearly visible in his will. Thus his religious beliefs and practices may well have changed more between 1499 and circa 1502 than between 1502 and 1541.

This is hypothesis, not statement of fact. The most I claim for it is that it is consistent with the available evidence (including close readings of both redactions of *Celestina* as well as of the 1541 will). There are rival hypotheses, but I do not believe that they take adequately into account the evidence that I have considered in this article. I close with a word of caution. Hypotheses rest on data. If the data are erroneous, the hypothesis falls. Virtually everything that has been said in the preceding pages depends on Fernando de Rojas's being the author of the *Tragicomedia* additions and alterations. If, as has been variously argued by Cejador y Frauca 1913, Marciales 1985, and - most drastically - García Valdecasas 2000, much or all is the work of another author or authors, it is as if a mischievous hand has shaken the kaleidoscope. The whole picture changes, and our attempts to interpret it must start all over again.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I use the title *Celestina* to refer to the work in its evolution from the manuscript of Act 1 to the *Tragicomedia*. Jeremy Lawrance has argued vigorously and cogently against the use of this title (1993a), and he is course right in so far as specific references to the *Comedia* and the *Tragicomedia* are concerned. But we need a title that covers the work in general, and I follow the lead of Germán Orduna (1988) in using "*Comedia*" and "*Tragicomedia*" for Rojas' two principal redactions but "*Celestina*" for the book in the course of its evolution.

<sup>2</sup> See Serrano y Sanz 1902, Valle Lersundi 1925 and 1929, and Gilman 1972. Much light was shed by Stephen Gilman (1972: ix-xi) on the twentieth-century history of the documents, though a key episode had been concealed from him by Valle Lersundi. Sir Peter Russell alluded to this enigmatically (1978: 347-348) and much later felt free to reveal the facts (2000: 2-3). See also Infantes 1998: 50.

<sup>3</sup> I do not think that Gilman gives enough weight to this difficulty. He is right to emphasize (1972: 26) that we have a great deal of evidence, but the weakness in his analogy with Shakespeare scholarship is that Shakespeare wrote throughout his adult life, so any information about the last years of that life is directly

relevant to the study of his work, whereas in Rojas' case there is a quarter-century gap between the literary work and the earliest document. It is therefore misleading to say that "students of *La Celestina* have conspicuously failed to meditate on biographical facts that have long been known" (26), and unreasonable to suggest that "Rojas has been the victim of an erudite conspiracy of silence" (27).

<sup>4</sup> Mercedes Blanco's analysis of the prefatory material (1995) deals with aspects different from those studied in the present article.

<sup>5</sup> Rank 1978: 85. All quotations from the *Comedia* are from this edition. I supply punctuation and accents, and regularize the use of *i/j*, *u/v*, and *c/ç*. Quotations from the *Tragicomedia* are from Russell 1991.

<sup>6</sup> This remains true if we accept that, as Emilio de Miguel Martínez persuasively argues (1996), Rojas himself wrote Act 1.

<sup>7</sup> Stanzas 4 & 7 (1978: 89; 1991: 190–191). The point is made again in stanzas 10 and 11.

<sup>8</sup> He makes the point again in the last two lines of his concluding poem:

dexa las burlas, que es paja y grançones,  
sacando muy limpio de entre ellas el grano (1991: 610)

<sup>9</sup> Dorothy S. Severin overstates the difference between Rojas' statement of the aims and what is said in the incipit (1981: 1–2 and 1989: 12).

<sup>10</sup> 1963: 38. The view of Pármeno expressed here is reaffirmed in Russell 2000: 5–9. A darker side of Pármeno is depicted by Snow 1986 and 1989, but this does not invalidate Russell's point.

<sup>11</sup> Maravall 1964; note the reservations in Russell 1966, and also Jeremy Lawrance's caution about dismissing the message of the incipit (1993b).

<sup>12</sup> Dunn 1975: 166. Dunn was the first to point out the implications of Pleberio's use of the hymn, but, despite his statement that "none of the commentators does so" (166), he was not the first to notice the source of the words: F. Castro Guisasola did so (1924: 104).

<sup>13</sup> This theme occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament:

Domine Deus, tu coepiste ostendere servo tuo magnitudinem tuam,  
manumque fortissimam (Deuteronomy 3:24)

Ecce ostendit nobis Dominus Deus noster maiestatem et magnitudinem suam  
(Deuteronomy 3:24)

A magnitudine enim speciei et creaturae cognoscibiliter poterit creator horum  
videri. (Wisdom 13:5)

These passages are not, however, as close to Calisto's words as is the verse from Psalm 18.

<sup>14</sup> Melibea's words as she is about to throw herself from the tower - "Dios quede contigo y con ella. A éll offrezco mi alma" (1978: 202) - are in such flagrant contradiction to her imminent mortal sin of suicide that it is hard to take them seriously.

<sup>15</sup> Vivanco 2001: 29; see also 47–50. References to recent work are given, 9–10 & 29. It is to be hoped that Vivanco's wide-ranging study of death as social reality and literary theme in fifteenth-century Castile will soon be published.

<sup>16</sup> Moorman describes (561–562) the activities of a confraternity of secular Tertiaries in Toledo at the end of the fifteenth century.

<sup>17</sup> An example of the perfunctory attention given to the will is to be found in

Peter N. Dunn's book (1975: 14–15). I choose this example because Dunn's book is an excellent general survey (far above the average of the series in which it appeared), with much original critical comment; a quarter of a century has not diminished its value. If even Dunn neglects the opportunity offered by this document, there is something seriously wrong with the critical tradition.

<sup>18</sup> The same lack of suspicion about Christian orthodoxy marks the reactions of early readers of *Celestina*. Maxime Chevalier tells us that “frente a los que afirman y defienden el valor moral de *La Celestina*, una serie más nutrida de escritores condenan con vigor la *Tragicomedia*, libro pernicioso que halaga la lujuria e incita al pecado” (1976: 155), but his thorough study of comments by readers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries does not reveal any who questioned the book's religious orthodoxy.

<sup>19</sup> For details of the exhumation and related matters, see Careaga 1938.

<sup>20</sup> For further examples, restricted to the three mendicant orders, see Paton 1992: chaps. 5 & 8.

<sup>21</sup> It is hardly necessary to say that the text of the sixteen, and then the twenty-one, acts is a far more ambivalent, complex, and flawed working-out of Rojas' position than I discuss here. See, for example, Whinnom 1981 and Russell 1995.

<sup>22</sup> The most important of these other factors is likely to have been his *converso* status, which would have exposed him to slights at Salamanca. Keith Whinnom writes of “the euphoria of his revenge on the *jeunesse dorée* whom he hated” (1981: 67).

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