



CALISTO AND MELEBEA: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

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☞ I. STATE OF CRITICISM

Criticism of *Calisto and Melebea* (henceforth *C & M*) is not easily accessible, scattered as it is throughout chapters of books, unpublished dissertations, and journals. Yet its mention in numerous standard literary histories, anthologies, and journal articles reflects its secure status as a minor, though significant, Tudor interlude, illustrating the relationship between English and Spanish works. Some scholars, especially those with a penchant for illuminating a text with references to its author's life, have been often distracted from the literary, dramatic qualities of *C & M* as their searches for its author(s) range from John Rastell to his son-in-law, John Heywood, from (an) unknown member(s) of Thomas More's Circle to one, perhaps several, of Vives' students. Because the authorship question is presently unresolved, other critics have concerned themselves with *C & M*'s relationship to *La Celestina* (henceforth *C*), a more worthwhile approach if it does not ignore essential differences in the genres, purposes, intentions, audiences, and auspices of both. Completed and proposed studies of *C & M* have provided new materials (with the promise of more) on its employment of a Spanish masterpiece in an interlude combining the qualities of a translation/synopsis and a morality play to form a frame for humanistic viewpoints on often-debated, irresolvable questions, such as the "good and evil properties" of women, feminism and anti-feminism, joyful poverty and cynical materialism, youth and age, and idealism and realism.

☞ II. GENERAL STUDIES

A. BIOGRAPHICAL. If John Rastell, the versatile brother-in-law of Thomas More and printer of *C & M*, also wrote it (see IV), A. W. Reed's *Early Tudor Drama* (1926) broke ground for twentieth-century explorations of Rastell's career. Reed emphasizes Rastell's importance as an innovator of morality plays and freer forms of imaginative drama and aptly epitomizes

his efforts, saying few men "illustrate more completely the eager restlessness, the varied interests and the tragic ironies of the sixteenth century." Appendices provide essential documents about More's journey to Coventry in 1506 to visit his sister Elizabeth (Rastell's wife); Rastell's house and stage in Finsbury Fields; his abortive voyage to the newly-found lands in 1517; his self-imposed exile in Ireland; and his conversion to Protestantism because of John Frith's reply to his purgatory tract. Some of Reed's insights depend on those found in H. R. Plomer's "John Rastell and his Contemporaries," *Bibliographica*, 2 (1896), 437-51, a study uncovering many facts about Rastell's London printing career, some of which relate to *C & M*. The opening chapter, "A Biographical Sketch of John Rastell," of Amos Lee Laine's "John Rastell: An Active Citizen of the English Commonwealth," Diss. Duke (1972) incorporates materials unavailable to Reed.

B. GENERAL INTERPRETATIVE STUDIES. In *The Sir Thomas More Circle: A Program of Ideas and Their Impact on Secular Drama* (1959), Pearl Hogrefe discusses the education of women, love, and marriage when she turns to *C & M* and compares the English adaptation to *C*. She examines the amount of moralizing in the English version and believes the play, "when compared with its source and with the comments of More, Erasmus, and Vives on women, love, and marriage, seems a deliberate piece of propaganda for the beauty and properties of women." Concerning its authorship, Hogrefe advances the unusual suggestion that three hands may be detected in it. David M. Bevington's *From "Mankind" to Marlowe* (1962) places the humanist *C & M* in the larger context of popular drama in Tudor England. Though such humanist dramas contain certain popular motifs and provide dramatic entertainment, they intend to teach audiences moral and secular lessons. In *Tudor Drama and Politics* (1968), Bevington considers *C & M* as a manifesto of contemporary social, political, and economic movements in which aristocratic idleness is contrasted with virtuous poverty. Often disagreeing with Hogrefe and Bevington's interpretations, Richard Allen Pacholski's "The Humanist Drama of the Sir Thomas More Circle," Diss. University of Wisconsin (1969), examines *C & M* and four other interludes in an attempt to qualify critical commonplaces about early Tudor drama being "thematically humanistic, theatrically dull, and aesthetically mediocre" (see III). J. E. Bernard's *The Prosody of the Tudor Interlude* (1939) contains detailed charts, showing the percentages of various meters, rhymes, and rhythms used in *C & M* and other dramas of the period. The staging of *C & M*, especially how its lines indicate dramatic entrances, exits, and action and how some of its techniques are far in advance of its time, is discussed in Richard Southern's *The Staging of Plays Before Shakespeare* (1973).

See Also

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III. DETAILED INTERPRETATIVE STUDIES

C & M has long elicited critical disagreement. On the one hand, A. W. S. Rosenbach's "The Influence of 'The C' in Early English Drama," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-gesellschaft*, 39 (1903), 43-61, argues that the brevity of *C & M* improves its staging, makes its characters more forceful, and brings its theme into sharper focus. In *Foreign Influences in Elizabethan Plays* (1923), F. E. Schelling finds its clearly distinguished characters, lively dialogue, tight structure, and realistic plot unusual considering the state of English letters at its composition. On the other hand, James Fitzmaurice-Kelly condemns its happy, moralistic ending, which he claims alters the original's tragic conclusion, and its clumsy arrangement and dialogue in *The Relations Between Spanish and English Literature* (1910). He also comments on the interlude in his edition of James Mabbe's 1631 translation of *C* (1894), calling it "a wretched and lying piece of work [that] fell dead in the town", a remark revealing his critical "imagination," since nothing is known about how the play was originally received. The introduction to H. Warner Allen's *An Interlude of C & M (For the First Time Accurately Reproduced from the Original Copy), Printed by John Rastell, c. 1530. C or The Tragi-Comedy of C & M, Trans. from Spanish by James Mabbe, anno. 1631* (1908) strikes a balance between the views of Rosenbach, Schelling, and Fitzmaurice-Kelly (see V). Doubting Rastell or Heywood's authorship, advancing the influences of Vives, and speculating on its composition by one of Vives' Oxford students anxious to please his master, Allen praises the English author's resolution of the problem all art must solve, the fusion of idealism and realism, and sees the titular characters as prototypes of Romeo and Juliet. While lauding its use of real rather than allegorical characters, the unities, and the essentials of "regular drama," Allen concedes some shortcomings, which make it only a reflection of the original. Pacholski (see II. B) views *C & M*, the shortest dramatic production of the More circle and the most dependent on its source, as the most diverse in its intentions, being simultaneously a translation/synopsis of *C*, a drama currying to popular taste, a courtly interlude with sophisticated verbal devices, and a moral exemplum against the evils of courtly love. Taking issue with Hogrefe's notion (see II, B) that Melebea is the "ideal maiden" tricked by the bawd, Celestina, and the courtly lover, Calisto, Pacholski demonstrates Melebea knows full well the implications and consequences of the seduction Calisto intends. H. D. Purcell's "The *C* and the *Interlude of C & M*," *BHS*, 44 (1967), 1-15, attempts to determine the exact relationship between *C* and *C & M* and suggests a French redaction of the Spanish work may have been its source. Calling the interlude an adaptation and not a "mere truncated translation," Purcell praises its compression of time and its contractions of action and character motivation, while he points out images only an English audience could recognize.

IV. AUTHORSHIP

Authorship problems with *C & M* (as suggested in I, II, A & B) are most perplexing. Although some scholars insist *C & M* remains anonymous,

many authorities give it to Rastell. Because Rastell often functions as author, translator, editor, and printer, it is difficult to determine his relationship to some works from his press, and the ambiguous Latin colophon of *C & M* has long obscured its attribution. In "John Rastell's Dramatic Activities," *MP*, 13 (1916), 557-60, C. R. Baskervill uses parallel passages in *C & M* to demonstrate it is a product of the author of *The Four Elements*, Rastell. A. W. Reed's "John Rastell's Plays," *Library*, 37 (1919), 1-17, places *C & M* in Rastell's canon. In his *Anglo-Spanish Relations in Tudor Literature* (1956), Gustav Ungerer considers *C*'s influence in *C & M* at length, notes certain word choices and patterns of usage characteristic of Rastell's other works, and utilizes those traits to substantiate Rastell's authorship. The notions that Rastell may have collaborated with others or not been involved in the composition of the play at all are often overlooked, though conclusive evidence to substantiate these claims (just as that necessary to prove Rastell's authorship) is unavailable.

See Also

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≡ V. EDITIONS

Allen (see III) provides the best text of *C & M* (1908). Taken from the only surviving copy of the *editio princeps* preserved in the Bodleian Library, it includes valuable notes. Robert Dodsley, I (1744), W. Carew Hazlitt (1874), and John S. Farmer, *Early English Dramatists*, I (1905), also edited it. W. W. Greg and Frank Sidgwick printed a facsimile of the *editio princeps* (1908).

