

SOME ANALOGIES IN *LA CELESTINA* AND *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*

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The object of this essay is to analyze some of the analogies that appear in *La Celestina* and *Troilus and Cressida* in order to draw certain conclusions about a possible influence from the Spanish work on the English one. This comparison is not unfounded as both works present a similar trio of characters, combine the tragic and the comic and exhibit a cynical, bitter and partially obscene language to refer to love.

Julio César Santoyo in his opening lecture to the II Conference S.E.D.E.R.I. mentions *La Celestina* among the Spanish books known to Shakespeare (261). However, we cannot properly assume an influence from *Celestina* on *Troilus and Cressida*, because, as we all know, Shakespeare had enough sources other than *La Celestina* from which to draw his love story.

In Spain there are two different versions of *La Celestina*, one with 14 acts and a later version with 21. The first extant copy is from 1499 and was published in Burgos and followed by printings in Toledo (1500) and Seville (1501). The longer version appeared in 1502 in Salamanca, Toledo and Seville and was entitled *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* while the shorter versions had been entitled *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*. Eventually, because of the importance of the character of the procurer in the whole work, it became known as *La Celestina* (Alborg 533-35).

According to Guadalupe Martínez Lacalle *La Celestina* was introduced in England at the time of Catherine of Aragon's journey to England to marry the Prince of Wales¹. Apparently the noble Spaniards of her entourage brought copies of the work. The first complete translation dates back to 1631 and was done by James Mabbe. Shakespeare could not have known that one. However, according to Lacalle, before that date, in 1530, there appeared in English an adaptation of the first four acts of *La Celestina* that included some lines from

¹ Pedro Guardia Masó gives 1501 as the arrival of Catherine to England (131).

the fifth and sixth acts and ended differently². At the end of the 16th century we have two entries –february 24, 1591 and October 5, 1598– in the *Stationer's Register* (Lacalle 5). Any of these could have been read by Shakespeare³.

Troilus and Cressida was probably written in 1601 or 1602 because it was entered in the *Stationer's Register* on february 7, 1603 and was published in quarto in 1609 and later on in the *FI* (Riverside 29-30, 54).

In the case of *La Celestina* what has puzzled the critics is not the fact of having been called first a comedy and later on a tragicomedy, but whether it is fiction or drama. *La Celestina* is divided into acts, written in its totality in dialogue form, a dialogue that is characteristic of drama of the time because it shows in every moment where the action is taking place. However, because of its length the work is unfitted for the stage. Stephen Gilman reaches the conclusion that it is a work without a genre because it was written at a time when the genre of the novel and the drama had not yet acquired a specific form. M. Rosa Lida considers it to be a "comedia humanística", a genre that appears in Italy in the first half of the XIV c., and whose initiator was Petrarch. It is interesting to point out that this type of comedy develops the personal independence of the heroine. In the poems added to the *Celestina* in the later copies, its author alludes to his "terenciana obra", a reason why some critics have seen certain similarities with the comedy of Terencius, a prototype of the comedy of love. Other critics point out that the Terencian comedy looks primarily to the complications in the plot⁴, while it leaves out very important aspects of the *Celestina* (Alborg 554-59). Finally, Dorothy Sherman Severin calls it "a generic hybrid: neither humanistic comedy nor sentimental romance" (2), and the first work in world literature that can be considered a novel (5).

The genre of *TC* has puzzled the critics since its appearance. The title-page of the 1609 quarto describes it as a "history" but in the preface the word

"comical" is mentioned twice. However in the *FI TC* was originally going to be included in the Tragedies after *Romeo and Juliet*⁵, to be finally placed between the histories and the tragedies.

So far three categories, –comedy, history and tragedy– have been mentioned with respect to *TC*. At the end of the 19th c. F.S. Boas came up with the name "problem play" (Cf Boas 345; Lawrence 3-4) and in the 20th c. O.J. Campbell decided that *TC* was a satire, a genre that was in fashion in the last years of Elizabeth's reign, a work dedicated to the service of moral education, ridiculing Trojan sensuality and Greek individualism⁶. A term with which Anne Barton does not agree because there is no well-balanced moral character to guide the judgement of the audience (Riverside 445).

As is the case with *TC* there exists a polemic with respect to the existence or not of a moral intention in *Celestina*. Many critics insist that *La Celestina* is a didactic work against the excesses of love and its tragic consequences, and consider the most important achievement of the work the study of passion with its logical and fatal result. It was a crazy love and for that reason Calisto is careless and dies (Alborg 578-613). With respect to *TC* some critics lament that Cressida is not punished⁷, but nobody considered that Troilus should be punished⁸. Love is destroyed not as a punishment to the lovers but because it is another casualty in a senseless war⁹.

Another term that has been proposed for *TC* is that of Tragicomedy. In "Shakespearean Tragicomedy" Barbara A. Mowat, presents Giovanni Battista Guarini's concept of tragicomedy:

He who makes a tragicomedy... does not intend to compose separately either a tragedy or a comedy, but from the two a third thing that will be perfect of its kind, and may take from the others the parts that with most verisimilitude can stand together.

(82)

2 It had a lengthy title that began *A New Comedy in English in Manner of an Interlude ...* and ended *"with a Moral Conclusion and Exhortation to Virtue"*.

3 Lacalle believes that one of these translations mentioned in the entries was Mabbe's. However, she does not think that they are the same as the Alnwick manuscript, written by Mabbe between 1603 and 1611, different and shorter than the 1631 published translation (Lacalle, 5-34). Because of his knowledge of Spanish, Mabbe had been officially appointed to Madrid from 1611 to 1616 (Guardia 132).

4 Besides looking primarily to the complications in the plot, the Terencian comedy is more interested in the tricks to procure love than in love itself, it is excessively prodigal in comic scenes while neglecting the painting of characters, that is, it does not stress the important aspects of *La Celestina* (Alborg 560).

5 This can be seen by comparing the three different versions that exist of the first edition of the *FI*. It is very clearly explained in Peter Blayney's study of the *FI* as Blayney presents in pictures the pages that make up the different versions (17-24).

6 Cf *Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida*. Hungtinton Lib. Pub, 1938: 185-234; rpt. in *SC III*: 574-78.

7 Cf Dryden or Lennox (*Shakespearean Criticism III*, 536-38) and especially Muriel Bradbrook's total condemnation of Cressida.

8 Not all critics praise Troilus's behaviour. Sir Edmund Chambers calls him "a poltroon" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 446; quoted also by Lawrence 32), Bryant blames him for Cressida's treason (193-98), and Barton considers that both Troilus and Cressida are equally flawed (Riverside 446).

9 Cf Kott and Yoder (*Shakespearean Criticism III*: 609-13; 626-30).

Mowat believes that *TC* has not been associated with Guarinian tragicomedy because it lacks a happy ending (85). However, we do not find that an unhappy ending contradicts the term tragicomedy as we are used to the *Celestina's* tragic ending.

It is not known if *TC* was ever staged in Shakespeare's times as we find two contradictory statements about it. The 1609 Quarto has two different title pages. The first describes *TC* as a play "acted by the King's Majesty's servants at the Globe" (Riverside 443). This claim accords with the specific mention of professional performances in the 1603 *Stationer's Register* entry. During the course of printing, however, this title-page was replaced by another, in which the reference to actors and theatres was suppressed. Instead, an address to the reader was inserted which hailed *TC* as "a new play never stal'd with the stage, never clapper-claw'd with the palms of the vulgar" (Riverside 443). Could this mean that *TC* like *Celestina* was meant to be read? Most critics do not accept that Shakespeare would write a play not to be staged. Some critics believe that *TC* was presented once; or that it was rehearsed, but because of the difficulties it involved, never put on stage; while others, because of the puns on legal terms that appear on the preface, think that it was presented at the Inn's Court (Riverside 444). Finally other critics interpret the statement "never clapper-claw'd with the palms of the vulgar" to mean that it is a witty play fit for a sophisticated audience¹⁰. It is not certain that it was staged in Shakespeare's time. In the centuries that followed, *TC* was never performed. Today, however, some critics claim it is the most staged of Shakespeare's plays. With respect to the characters, both works present a somewhat similar trio. The critics of each work have wondered why the young man has never thought of marrying his lady, and in both they have reached the conclusion that this is so because it is courtly love¹¹. Other critics have wondered about the lack of self-confidence on the part of the young man who needs the help of a wooer. In the case of Calisto it has been pointed out that perhaps he was of Jewish descent, a reason that would make his marriage to Melibea impossible. Other critics have seen in the manifestations of humility on Calisto's part proof of their different social class¹², while most critics think that that humility on the part of the lover is one of the conventions of courtly love (Martin 2).

With regard to the moment the lovers first set eyes on each other, in the case of Calisto and Melibea we know it takes place in a garden¹³, a garden to which Calisto seems to have had easy access. But, in the following encounters he needs a ladder to scale the high wall and he will die as a consequence of falling from it. With respect to Troilus and Cressida we do not know when or where they meet. As the play opens Troilus is in love with Cressida, and she seems to know him already (I.ii.228). The garden will come later on and it will be the place of their swearing and exchanging of vows. Their love, however, will be consummated in a chamber behind the stage. Troilus does not need to climb walls as Pandarus, Cressida's uncle, will not only push him into the affair but give him free entry and even present Troilus' excuses for his absence at King Priamo's dinner table.

At the beginning of their works both heroes are love-sick. Troilus unarms himself and Calisto wants to lie in bed. But neither one behaves like the typical courtly lover¹⁴. As June Martin has observed Calisto is not tamed, does not obey his lady and hits and swears at his servants, all of which as Martin observes constitute unfit behaviour for a courtly lover (110). In the case of Troilus he is not careful enough about hiding his affair. Everybody seems to know he has spent the night at Cressida's. He is so indiscreet as to choose his lady's guardian as his messenger to the king. Most criticism –male in the main– insists that Troilus does not deserve his fate. Calisto, on the other hand, shocks most readers with his lack of sensitivity towards Melibea's modesty. He is too rough with her. In the lovers' last encounter, the scene that precedes Calisto's death, his possession of Melibea seems like rape¹⁵. In the first consummation of their love, when in her modesty Melibea asks her maid to go away, he tells her to stay and witness his glory. Troilus also shows some insensitivity towards Cressida's feelings, as he allows Pandarus's nasty kidding (IV.ii.31-34), but this is nothing comparable to Calisto's behaviour. We could say that Calisto in the first part resembles Troilus in the second Diomedes.

There are also some differences in the way each lover courts his lady. Calisto spends his money in *Celestina* up to the point of being recriminated by his servant Parmeno, who advises him to send gifts to Melibea, instead of spending his money on the old woman. While Cressida, through Pandarus, seems to receive presents from Troilus (I.ii.284).

10 "Introduction" to *Troilus and Cressida*, Folger's edition, p. xvii.

11 Gaston Paris considered that illegitimacy was an essential feature of courtly love (Martin 2).

12 There must not be any difference in social class as Melibea before committing suicide tells Pleberio: "Muchos dias son passados, padre mio, que penava por mi amor vn caballero que se llamava Calisto, el qual tu bien conociste. Conociste assimesmo a sus padres y claro linaje..." (310).

13 According to Martin: "The courtly world... adopted as its setting a garden world..." (10).

14 For a concise study of courtly love beliefs and practices see June Martin's *Love's Fools*.

15 Melibea tells Calixto: "no me destroces ni maltrates como sueles" and he answers: "Señora, el que quiere comer el ave quita primero las plumas" (301). However, she does not seem to hate it really.

In the case of the young ladies, the critics wonder at the speed with which Melibea changes her ire towards Calisto¹⁶. However, I do not see such speed because Melibea tells Lucrecia: "aquel señor, cuya vista me catiuo" (209)¹⁷. Cressida also recognizes she "was won... / with the first glance" (III.ii.116). Four centuries before the Women's Liberation Movement Melibea ends up by lamenting women's fate: "¡O genero femenino, encogido y fragile! ¿Por que no fue tambien a las hembras concedido poder descubrir su congoxoso y ardiente amor, como a los varones?" (209). Cressida also laments the inequality of the sexes: "I wished myself a man, / Or that we women had men's privilege / Of speaking first". (III.ii.126-7). They both use strong images to describe their passion. For Melibea her passion feels like serpents inside her body which are eating her heart, for Cressida her thoughts are, "like unbridled children" (III.ii.120). The last point we want to stress is that both ladies are extremely careful to hide their affair. Melibea, in spite of her overwhelming passion¹⁸, prepares very carefully the encounters, keeps an eye on the street and lies to hide her passion¹⁹. And they both experience doubts towards the enjoyment of their passion, as they both want and do not want at the same time. Melibea is afraid to lose her chastity and so she grants a meeting to her suitor but she asks him to content himself with her sight. Cressida does not yield right away to her passion because she believes that men lose interest once they have enjoyed what they wanted. And it is for that reason that it takes months before she grants her favors while Melibea is won in one day²⁰. Cressida will always lament having yielded because she thinks she has lost her power over her lover, while Melibea, once she has yielded to her passion she will not experience any regrets whatsoever. The last feature relating to both heroines concerns the short time of the affair. In the short version of *Celestina* the lovers meet only once in

16 June Martin in *Love's Fools*—following Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore*— finds the reason of Melibea's ire in the fact that Calisto approaches her as he would approach his mistress (75).

17 This statement contradicts what Melibea tells Celestina a few pages later: "Muchos y muchos dias son passados que esse noble cauallero me hablo en amor. Tanto me fue su habla enojosa quanto, despues que tu me le tornaste a nombrar, alegre." (215). However this could be an indication that Melibea tries to blame Celestina for the passion she now feels.

18 As Melibea says, "Agora toque en mi honrra, agora dañe mi fama..." (212).

19 As Juan Luis Alborg comments: "Tras las primeras zozobras, Melibea cede resueltamente a su pasión sin atormentarse con imaginaciones y escrúpulos; y una vez gustado su amor se rinde a su deleite" (574).

20 In the case of Diomedes, however, Cressida, rather than losing him is willing to yield right away, but Cressida, as I tried to explained in *III Conferencia S.E.D.E.R.I.* has been stripped of all her pride and this Cressida is no longer the former Cressida as Troilus says in front of Ulysses. In "Representation and Performance: Authority in Shakespeare's Theater", Robert Weimann studies the crisis in authority in this scene and so does Barbarta Hodgdon in "He Do Cressida in Different Voices," *English Literary Renaissance* 20, 2 (Spring 1990): 254-86.

the longer twice, while in *TC* they spend only one night together. However, both ladies react very differently at the end of their affair, while Cressida after being let go can find a substitute²¹, Melibea prefers to stop living²².

While there is no negative criticism towards Melibea, it abounds with respect to Cressida. Most critics insist Cressida is a coquette, because she loves Troilus and pretends she does not²³. In the 18th c. there is an insistence on the fact that the play is deficient in poetical justice, because Cressida is not punished. In the last years of the 19th c. and beginnings of the 20th the critics wonder why Cressida is so odious and why Shakespeare was so bitter toward women. In the fifties during this century some critics started seeing her as a very contemporary girl and also as a victim of her circumstances²⁴. For me, Cressida seems to embody the *carpe diem* philosophy: "Seize the day", a time to love a time to die, while Melibea does not settle for seconds²⁵.

The last analogy concerns the role of the procurer. And while Celestina eventually usurps the place of the lovers in the eyes of the reader up to the point of renaming the work, there is not much written about Pandarus. Most critics insist on the decline of the character from Chaucer to Shakespeare. Many of the critics see Celestina as a sorceress, a kind of diabolical figure who is able to change Melibea's attitude and mind in a few minutes. Pandarus, however, needs time to convince Cressida to yield to Troilus' desire. He is not a diabolical figure but a mild fool. His motivation seems to be different from that of Celestina. While hers is money and she will be punished for her greediness, we do not know the reason

21 In Meredith's *The Tragic Comedians*, the lover also lets his lady go, and at the end she marries his executor. Apparently some women hate rationality and civilized behaviour on the part of their lovers.

22 Alborg points out that Pleberio's praise of virginity could have contributed to Melibea's decision to commit suicide.

23 In the 18th c. Charlotte Lennox complained that by escaping justice Cressida leaves the play deficient in poetical justice. Dryden also insists on the point that Cressida is false and is not punished. In 1849 G.G. Gervinus criticizes what he considers Cressida's coquetry and betrayal. George Brandes in the last years of the 19th c. wonders why Cressida becomes so odious and why Shakespeare was so bitter about her. And finds the reason on Shakespeare's rejection of women which had started with his drawing of Cleopatra. Frederick Boas calls Cressida a "scheming cold-blooded profligate", while Chambers sees Cressida as a creation of a disillusioned Shakespeare who meant to square the general sex by her. In the 20th c. critics like Tucker Brooke see her somewhat soiled from the beginning and predestined to become more polluted. De Almeida sees her as a wanton but also as a victim of circumstances—because the point of honour is the adulteress Helen, her uncle suggests her that her hopes lie in a liaison in Troy, and the same occurs in the Greek camp. Jan Kott sees Cressida as a young girl, very twentieth century, who has imagined love and gets it through a procurer.

24 For a reprint of part of the criticism on *TC* before 1984 see *SC* III 532-648.

25 For a *carpe diem* philosophy in *Celestina* see Hartunian's work.

behind Pandarus's interest in getting both lovers together. With the exception of his confession in the last act, scene x, –a scene that according to some critics is not Shakespeare's (Lawrence 134)– in the rest of the play we do not see any indication that Pandarus was a procurer for the general public but a person interested in getting a good settlement for his niece, a role that later on in the play and with respect to Diomedes will be taken by Calchas. Pandarus seems to have free entrance to the palace, but nobody as is the case of Celestina, seems to regard him as a procurer. However, he is called Pandarus, and that name characterizes him. There is something puzzling in Pandarus's behaviour with respect to the lovers' forced separation. Pandarus shows his concern about Troilus's suffering while he ignores Cressida's. Perhaps he knows her better than we do. Or perhaps his real motivation in the affair from the start has been his affection for Troilus.

Both works are thematically different. With respect to the *Celestina* Lida believes that its author meant to paint an uncontrollable tragic passion (Alborg 564). In *TC* what is tragic is not the passion, but Hector's death that will eventually bring about the destruction of Troy.

Comparing both works we realize that though Shakespeare could have known *La Celestina* and though at a first glance we see a correlation between the three main characters of both works, after a careful analysis we realize that—with the exception of some similar reactions on the part of the ladies—the characters of one work are totally independent from those of the previous one and also that there are more analogies concerning the bewilderment of the critics with respect to the genre of each of the two works, than similarities between their respective genres. We observe, however, some similarities in the mood. Instead of the mild irony of Chaucer's work we find that the mood in *Troilus and Cressida* is as cynical and bitter as that of *La Celestina*. Courtly love, free of pedestals and mixed with street language is no longer an elevating experience, but a debasing one as is described in obscene language by the witnesses to the affair. To summarize, both works rely on a similar kind of bitter humour and recur to obscene language to describe love, because the affair in the fable is not only seen through the eyes of the lovers but also through the unredeeming eyes of servants and slaves, and in this aspect of the work it may be possible that Shakespeare was inspired by the mood in the *Tragicomedy of Calisto and Melibea*. At the moment, we can only say that the tone in the interlude is not the same, and that Shakespeare could not have read the Alnwick ms. (composed between 1603-1611) before writing *TC* (entered in the *SR* on February 7, 1603) nor the 1631 Mabbe's translation. What is left to us is to guess about the tone adopted in the XVI c. abridged translations and adaptations the entries in the *SR* refer to that Shakespeare could have had access to. But this is a point that I do not believe should be researched further.

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MARLOWE AND THE DRAMA OF PROTESTANT SOCIETY

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At first glance my title may appear oxymoronic and inappropriate. Sex and protestantism seem unlikely bedfellows, as strangely heterogeneous as the yoking together of England and summer or Britain and Europe! It might also appear that I wish to import a Calvinist dampness into our proceedings in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria—some might assume Protestantism's relation with sex is in denying its place and propriety. I assure you I wish to bring no such spirit into our proceedings.

We have recognised, since Foucault, that sexuality is a human construct, a cultural artefact which changes with time. Because of its popular character, the collaborative circumstances of its agency, and the scope of its concerns, Renaissance drama is an important repository of information for our understanding of early modern sexualities. Yet, it must also be remembered that dramatic representations were not seeking to record the cultural meanings of sexuality in unmediated and authentic manners, as though anticipating the needs of current historians for an archive of information on gender and its effects. How the drama represented sexuality reflects many things, including generic choice, specific historic circumstances, ideological choices in a world culturally far less hegemonic than we have often imagined, and the desires of audiences to witness exaggerations and differences from the everyday in plays whose representations they selectively chose to subscribe to. Further, we should also recall that the Renaissance plays which most interest us are not necessarily the plays which seem to have most interested contemporary audiences and that many Renaissance plays, including some of the most popular, are lost to us.

Representations of sexualities in Renaissance drama are various, particularly dependent of the generic contexts in which sexuality is displayed. Sexuality can be presented in plays in symbolic manner, frequently representing an uncertainty of proper government (domestic or the state). Sexuality is often associated with uncontrolled emotionalism, the dominance of figures by sensual appetites, usually seen as effeminate, against the controlled reasonableness of patriarchal order. In other plays, sexuality seems suggestively displayed in