

Laelia by G. C. Moore Smith

Review by: W. W. Greg

*The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Oct., 1911), pp. 528-529

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3713291>

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*Laelia*, a Comedy acted at Queens' College, Cambridge. Edited by G. C. MOORE SMITH. Cambridge: University Press. 1910. xxviii + 115 pp.

The same volume in the Lambeth library contains both *Fucus Histriomastia*, already edited by Professor Moore Smith, and *Laelia*. It is certainly strange, in view of its supposed relation to *Twelfth Night*, that the latter piece should not have been printed before; but if it has had to wait for an editor, it has been fortunate in the one it has eventually found.

*Laelia* is commonly said to have been acted at Queens' College in 1590 and 1598, but Professor Moore Smith argues with great ingenuity for the date 1 March 1594/5, and I think establishes his contention so far as it is possible to do so by indirect evidence. [See, however, his further note in *M.L.R.* vi, 382.] He is undoubtedly right, by the way, in regarding Rowland Whyte's 'Pedantiq' as a mere misreading of 'Pedantius.'

*Laelia* is an adaptation of the Sieneese 'Intronati' comedy *Gli Ingannati* by way of Charles Estienne's French translation entitled *Les Abusés*. This is quite obvious from the names of the characters. *Gli Ingannati* seems also to have been the source of a certain novel of Bandello's translated by Belleforest in the *Histoires Tragiques*, whence Rich drew his tale of *Apolonius and Silla*, the commonly acknowledged source of *Twelfth Night*. As to the relation of Shakespeare's play to *Laelia* controversy is likely to be keen. The editor clearly considers that Shakespeare's main inspiration came from Rich, but he mentions a number of details which he thinks point to a knowledge of *Laelia*. I cannot say that I find these at all convincing. Moreover, if the points mentioned are really significant they imply a knowledge of both the Italian and the Latin. Still less cogent are the grounds for arguing a connection between *Twelfth Night* and Bandello's or Belleforest's versions, though that Shakespeare was acquainted with the latter is of course intrinsically likely.

To suppose that Shakespeare knew of more than one version of the tale is reasonable enough, and there is certainly no ground to deny Professor Moore Smith's hypothesis that the author being already familiar with Rich's version was fired to the production of his play by the report of the Cambridge performance. But to suppose that he thereupon wasted his time in seeking out copies of *Laelia*, *Gli Ingannati* and the *Histoires Tragiques*, to say nothing of *Gli Inganni* and Bandello, seems to me gratuitous.

The text has evidently been prepared with great thought and care. In such a case as the present it is always a difficult question how far the vagaries of the original scribe should be retained, and how far they should be normalized. If it be thought that in some respects Professor Moore Smith has been a little arbitrary in his decisions, it must be borne in mind that the difficulties with which an editor has had to contend, and the conflicting demands which he has sought to reconcile,

do not always fully appear in the completed work. As a guarantee the serious critic is here provided with full textual notes, in which all departures from the manuscript are recorded, and often justified by reference to the French. The other notes are chiefly occupied by references to classical authors in illustration of phrases in the text. These Latin academic dramas are, of course, often almost composed of tags from the authors read in the schools, and it is right that this should be pointed out in some detail. This Professor Moore Smith has amply done. To demand that every classical reminiscence should be recorded—even were the task possible—would be hypercritical, and it is matter for satisfaction that the editor has not wasted his time in such an attempt.

There is one point in this admirable edition that I regret. A critic having spoken of *Laelia* as ‘the undoubted immediate source of *Twelfth Night*,’ the editor remarks, apparently without intentional irony: ‘We may feel some surprise at the rapidity with which Professor — arrived at “certainty” in regard to a play which he had not read: but at least we are bound to treat his view with respect.’ Professor Moore Smith is a serious student, and there is no need for him to indulge in polite rhetoric. To pretend respect for the opinions of a writer who was obviously in no position to form any, is unworthy of the severe reticence of his own scholarship.

W. W. GREG.

CAMBRIDGE.

*Les Masques Anglais. Étude sur les ballets et la vie de cour en Angleterre (1512—1640).* Par PAUL REYHER. Paris: Hachette. 1909. x + 563 pp.

M. Reyher had already been some time at work on the history of the English masque when Dr Brotanek published the standard work on the subject in Oct. 1901 (the book is dated 1902). Undeterred by finding himself thus anticipated, the French scholar turned his attention more exclusively to that side of the question which most interested him, and elaborated the relation of the court entertainments to the general social conditions of the time. This was perhaps the task for which he was most exceptionally fitted, for while his patient researches among documents and texts would have given permanent value to any work that he might have seen fit to publish, it was this particular investigation that gave the best scope for his admirably vivid and well trained historical imagination, and enabled him to turn to the very best account his almost unparalleled knowledge alike of the permanent literature and of the more ephemeral writings of the time. And it is also in such exposition as this that the reader gets the best effect from the clearness and elegance of M. Reyher's style, a style, be it said, which at the same time has qualities of grip and grit to an unusual degree.

M. L. R. VI.

34