

## RESEÑAS

**Fernando de Rojas. 'Celestina.' Adaptación (de la traducción inglesa de James Mabbe) de Max Hafler y Nick Philippou. Actors Touring Company. Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, London. Nov.-Dec. 1993.**

ACTORS TOURING COMPANY has given a brilliant reading in its new version of *Celestina* (the *Tragicomedia*) adapted from the James Mabbe seventeenth-century translation. Director Nick Philippou and adapter Max Hafler have cut the lengthy plot to the essentials of drama and humour without discarding any of the important philosophical and parodic elements of the work. Distinguished Shakespearian and film actress Ann Firbank gives us an inspired reading of the bawd, Celestina, in a slightly Eastend cockney which is completely convincing, while at the same time she manages to convey the underlying menace of this go-between and witch.

The other revelation of the evening is Sebastian Harcombe as Calisto. His rendition of this parodic courtly lover as a handsome but shallow booby who commits date rape on Melibea is both hilarious and disturbing. My only casting cavil is with Lucy Whybrow, whose little-girl Melibea is a touch too parodic and whose lust seems to be generated entirely by internal hysteria without any help from Celestina's magic spells and demon pact. However, she does excellent double-duty as the sluttish Areúsa.

The small cast doubles in the servant roles admirably: Mia Soteriu is Elicia and Lucrecia; Ben Albu is the suitably young and comic Pármeno and Tristán; Ross Dunsmore is a slightly more mature

Sempronio and Sosia; and finally Ann Firbank as mother Alisa and Sebastian Harcombe as father Pleberio.

Moggie Douglas' set is spare but effective with blue sky and a moon lighting a gabled structure over a bed which will serve as house and tower; one door frame and another tower structure stand in the opposite corners. The British cast and director prove yet again that the best productions of this classic are not, alas, to be found in the country of origin (Spain).

Finally, I must declare an interest: I found my bilingual Mabbe-Spanish edition on sale in the foyer, although with such a splendid production of *Celestina* on offer, there was no need to capture my benevolence any further.

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Roberto González Echevarría. *Celestina's Brood: Continuities of the Baroque in Spanish and Latin American Literature*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

"Celestina's Brood" is the title of the first essay in this book, the only part of the collection to be reviewed here. The brood that González Echevarría refers to is not, as one might assume, Celestina's younger cohorts, but an ironic reference to her lack of children; as the author later points out, the old woman commences in sexuality, but not with procreation as its purpose. The brood that González Echevarría discusses in the first section of this four-part article are the literary offspring that the work *Celestina* has begot, all recent works that portray Celestina-like figures: Carlos Fuentes's *Aura* and *Terra Nostra*, Gabriel García Márquez' Eréndira story, and Severo Sarduy's *Cobra*. González Echevarría returns to these works in a more specific manner in the last section of his essay. Before doing so, he takes another look at this old woman as a tragic hero and re-examines the symbolism of the skein, girdle, and chain, as well as the importance