

RESEÑAS

***Celestina* on Radio Three (BBC). October, 1992.**

BBC Radio 3, the elite cultural channel in the United Kingdom, broadcast a new adaptation of *Celestina* on Sunday October 4, 1992 from 7:30-9:00 p.m. Based on the *Comedia* text, John Clifford's translation and adaptation was fairly free in some important respects, yet faithfully preserved certain significant nuances (e.g., the anticlericalism, and even key verbal details such as Sempronio's "Little share? I don't like the sound of that!"). The cast consisted of Celestina, Calisto, Melibea, Pleberio, Parmeno, Sempronio, Elicia, Areusa, and Lucrecia; Tristan, Sosia, and Alisa played no part.

Clifford's adaptation significantly changes the order of events. The play opens with Pleberio (in this version, already a widower) counselling Melibea prudence while he is away. His departure is followed immediately by Calisto's arrival in the garden in search of his hawk. Swiftly dismissed by Melibea, he returns home to bed. Sempronio's monologue is turned into a dialogue between the latter and Parmeno, but the main outlines are well preserved. The character of Parmeno is somewhat modified by the fact that were originally Sempronio's arguments against women are voiced by him; not does he protest at Calisto's offer of a cloak. In general, however, the relationship between the servants is accurately conveyed, as is the role of Celestina and the world inhabited by Elicia and Areusa. Other changes are Melibea's being alone with Lucrecia when Celestina arrives to sell her thread, and Pleberio's being given the role of voicing what was originally Alisa's advice to Melibea against meeting Celestina, which he does by letter during his absence. Calisto's death precedes that of Celestina; his first visit to Melibea to arrange a later tryst is rapidly followed by his return to her garden with Parmeno and Sempronio in order to consummate the relationship. After this is done (with a fond promise from Calisto to return: "I will come, my lady... Have no fear: love will give me wings"), he falls from the ladder, as a result of Parmeno and Sempronio's failing to help him when he descends. The servants abandon their master, with Melibea lamenting in the background, in their haste to go to Celestina to ask for a share in the chain; Parmeno seems to have

more qualms about this than does Sempronio. We briefly return to Melibea, lamenting at the top of the tower, before the action turns again to Celestina's house. Her murder is followed by the death's of Parmeno and Sempronio; they jump from her windows, screaming, and the dying Celestina is heard saying "Scrape them off the ground and hang them in the square, and that's justice, justice." We once more switch back to Melibea's grief, and her explanation of the situation to her father, which is followed by her suicide and Pleberio's solitary lament. The tone of this is relatively true to the original, despite cuts and reordering of the content.

One significant detail of interpretation is that Melibea and Pleberio are both explicitly and implicitly identified as Jewish on several occasions (Parmeno: "You lost your hawk...and will lose all your property..and all for a Jew"; Pleberio: "the malice of Christians," "reputation is a thing our race cannot afford to lose"). Celestina's witchcraft was also presented very seriously.

The play was accompanied by musical interludes at various points; the music was composed by Neil Brand, with flamenco sung by Miguel Sanchez. The director was Owen O'Callaghan. Hardly a crib for students studying the text, but as an original interpretation of the sixteen-act *Celestina* the broadcast was successful, and listening to a radio version is, after all, probably closer to circumstances envisaged by Proaza's final verses (and by the "cuando diez personas se juntaren a oír esta comedia" of the Prologue) than attending a stage production. This broadcast version also successfully conveyed the sheer rapidity of events in the *Comedia*.

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