

National Repertory Theatre Foundation
P. O. Box 71011
Los Angeles, CA 90071
(213) 629-3762

1981 National Play Award
Reader's Report

AUTHOR: Maria Irene Fornes READER: CARMEN SALAZAR PARR
TITLE Life is a Dream (orig. by Pedro Calderon) SCRIPT NUMBER: 742T
TYPE: (Black Comedy, Historical Drama etc.) _____
STAGING PROBLEMS, IF ANY (Large Cast, Special Set Requirements etc.) _____

NUMBER OF CHARACTERS _____
SYNOPSIS:

COMMENTS:

See attached sheet.

→ RATING ON SCALE OF 2 to 10 (USE EVEN NUMBERS ONLY) 2 = lowest 10 = highest

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Review of La vida es sueño

- A. This is more than a translation. It is an interpretation that has taken certain liberties in the stage directions, and that add nothing to the work.
Examples: the Spanish text says nothing about an "angel" appearing in the introductory scene. The significance of it is not clear. (p. 1)

to have Segismundo bald, wearing a loin cloth, and hanging from a rope is a distorted view that seems more appropriate for the theatre of the absurd. (p. 4)
(It might cause laughter where non is called for)
Rosaura has already seen him (p. 3b) dressed in animal skins and loaded with chains. There is nothing in the original, however, to indicate that "his body is gruesome and full of putrefaction." (p. 3b)

- B. Bad style throughout and quite uneven. Example: would build such a building (p. 2)

Other examples: I think I see an edifice. In Spanish edificio is the common term, but in English, edifice sounds affected.

In Spanish, certain dialects admit the use of "el aire está viciado" for the air is polluted. The translator has given the literal translation: "The air is visciated" (sic) vitiated. There are other similar examples of affected speech: putrefaction for decomposed; tenebrous for gloomy;; convulses, etc.

- C. Carelessness in spelling:
visciated for vitiated
inters for enters
bruskly for brusquely
marvellous for marvelous
sepulchre for sepulcher
- D. The translator has avoided some key aspects of the play. She does not do justice to Segismundo's soliloquy. She fails to bring out the humorous character Clarin. For example, when Segismundo threatens to kill those who overhear him, Clarin says "I am deaf-- I didn't hear a word you said!" This line is omitted entirely in the translation.
- E. Clarin knows that Rosaura is dressed in man's clothes. He should not address her as "master" (p. 2). He addresses her as señora in the Spanish version.
- F. It is not clear why Rosaura says to the horse "now you are dead" (p. 1) The horse is not dead.

Suggestion: Read Life's a Dream translated by Kathleen Reine and R. M. Nadal for the Mermaid Theatre of London. This is an excellent adaptation of Calderon's play suitable for the modern stage. It will be difficult to improve on it.

C.S. Parr