

Josep Solervicens, director.
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 Literatura moderna: Renaixement,
 Barroc i Il·lustració.*

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THIS IS THE FOURTH VOLUME to appear in a series of eight devoted to the history of Catalan literature. Directed by Josep Solervicens, this installment covers a time span stretching from the end of the fifteenth century to the first decades of the nineteenth century and condenses into about six-hundred pages the history of Catalan literature during the Renaissance, Baroque era, and Enlightenment. The volume includes an introduction to each of these three periods as well as chapters on poetry, narrative, drama, and principal authors, namely, Cristòfol Despuig, Pere Serafi, Vicent Garcia, Francesc Fontanella, and Joan Ramis.

Since this review is for a journal devoted to the study of early modern theater, I focus on the portions of the book that are relevant to historicize Catalan drama. Nonetheless, I begin by noting that all chapters of Solervicens's volume underscore the distinctive episteme of the literary production of the periods covered. This epistemic emphasis aims to correct earlier attempts to write the history of Catalan literature between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in terms of exceptionalism, failure, or decadence. There is no denying that between the reigns of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Ferdinand VII of Spain, Catalan-speaking territories underwent sociopolitical changes that caused the textual production in Catalan to stagnate or starkly diminish in comparison with earlier and later moments in history. Regardless of its becoming a minority literature, Solervicens's book amply shows how Catalan letters were no less subject to the epistemic and aesthetic forces that also governed neighboring European literatures.

Such perspective is not a novelty. Most of the scholarly work in the field published over the past three decades on which this history draws has, in fact, moved in this direction. This book contributes a comprehensive and articulate narrative and several commendable perspectives. For one, this literary

history displays an illuminating comparative component. Contributors do not just address, for example (and as could be expected), Castilian, Italian, or neo-Latin literature that influenced Catalan authors, but rather, all chapters also pay attention to the literatures written in languages other than Catalan within the Catalan-speaking lands (*bien entendu*, this is a history of Catalan literature, not of the literatures of the Catalan-speaking territories). Another feature that should be highlighted is the volume's emphasis on the literary thought of the age, be it produced in the Catalan lands (rarely in Catalan) or elsewhere in Europe. Perhaps the chapters in the book that are most effective in developing such an epistemic-centered, comparative, and theoretically aware discourse are, to my mind, those devoted to the Renaissance.

Across Europe, Renaissance drama was decisively shaped by the philological recovery of classical comedy (mostly Terence, but also Plautus) and by the period's own scholarly approach to the genre as conceptualized through Aristotle's *Poetics*. Indeed, universities and grammar schools in Barcelona, Valencia, Palma, or Perpignan, as well as aristocratic and episcopal courts in Valencia or Rome, were the milieus in which tragedies, pastoral dramas, and comedies, all in Latin, were created and staged. Practice was contemporaneous to study and theory. Valencian Hellenist Pere Joan Núñez taught Aristotle's *Poetics* in the University of Barcelona in the last two decades of the sixteenth century and edited Euripides's *Alcestis* for Barcelona printer Pere Malo (1577). Majorcan theologian and vicar of Besançon Antoni Lull wrote a syncretic but fundamentally Aristotelian poetical treatise entitled *De oratione libri septem* (1558).

The first public theater in the Catalan territories was built in Valencia in 1584. Italian and Castilian theater companies were active, for instance, in Barcelona since the 1540s and performed their repertoire alongside local companies that can be documented as early as 1542. The anonymous *Comèdia de Corney* exemplifies popular street comedy in Catalan dating from the last third of the sixteenth century. Partial examples of courtly Catalan theater are also in existence. Two of Torres Naharro's comedies include characters that speak in Catalan. This is the case of the multilingual comedy *Serafina* (1512–16), of which almost a fourth of the verses are in Catalan because the play's original audience included former Valencian members of the curia of Roderic de Borja, pope Alexander VI, who remained in Rome after Alexander's death. *La vesita* is another multilingual comedy that features Catalan-speaking characters. All female characters in it speak Valencian among themselves and to their servants. Authored by Joan Ferrandis d'Heredia, *La vesita* was staged in Valencia twice: first, in the court of Germaine de Foix (1524–25) and then again to celebrate Mencía de Mendoza's marriage to Germaine's widower, the Duke of Calabria (1541).

During the Renaissance, devotional theater gradually reformulated its medieval iterations. Of the sizeable corpus of Renaissance Catalan religious plays, one could highlight the forty-four works contained in the Llabrés manuscript (including the *Cant de la Sibil·la*, still sung in Majorcan churches on Christmas eve), as well as the *Passió de Cervera* (dating from 1543 and still performed today) and the two *actes sacramentals* authored by Valencian polygraph Joan Timoneda: *L'església militant* and *El castell d'Emaús*. The latter

of Timoneda's *actes*, a bilingual play, was staged in Valencia during the Corpus celebrations of 1568, 1569, and 1575.

Catalan Baroque theater certainly assumed the same cross-generic parameters that were celebrated in the rest of Spain and were theorized by authors like Lope de Vega in his *Arte nuevo* from 1609 or by Gaspar Guarini in his *Il compendio della poesia tragicomica* from 1601. These new tragicomic and cross-generic poetics are the fabric of plays like Francesc Fontanella's *Tragicomèdia pastoral d'amor, firmesa i porfia*, which blends tragedy, comedy, and eclogue and Vicent Garcia's *Comèdia famosa de la gloriosa verge i màrtir santa Bàrbara*, which combines comedy with hagiographic and historical drama. Metafiction, emphasis on the spectacular, and attention to the audience's preferences are also key to understanding Francesc Fontanella's masterpiece of Catalan Baroque drama, *Lo desengany*.

Commercial theater emerged and thrived with the arrival of professional Castilian companies that brought their repertoire to Barcelona, Palma, and Valencia. Extant *lloes*, *entremesos*, and dances in Catalan were created for the private staging of Castilian plays. That would be the case of the *Lloa per la comèdia d' "El desdeny amb lo desdeny"* or the *Entremès en lo casament de Josep Gay, apotecari de Reus*. Burlesque theater, that is, metafictional parody plays, were also created for the celebration of subversive holidays like Carnival or Saint John's Eve and were possibly staged in noble households. Three of these plays have come down to us: *La famosa comèdia de la gala a està en son punt*, *Los amors de Melisendra*, *comèdia bribona*, and *La infanta Tellina i el rei Matarot, secret de peixcar tellines i traça d'agafar rates*.

Certain characteristic features of Baroque theater survived well into the eighteenth century. Complex plots, emphasis on the spectacular, appearance of *gracioso* characters, and reflections on the notion of disillusion, among other features, also became compositional elements of some Catalan religious plays of the Baroque era. Works like *La presa de l'Hort* (on Christ's passion), *La Relació dramàtica de la Nativitat del Fill de Déu*, and numerous hagiographic plays were not impervious to the new aesthetics.

Since the first decades of the eighteenth century, neoclassical poetics and its main theoretical text, Boileau's *Art poétique*, enjoyed currency in the Catalan-speaking territories thanks to Ignacio de Luzán's *Poética* and Gregori Mayans's *Retórica*. Boileau's treatise was, furthermore, translated into Spanish by Joan Baptista Madramany and published in Valencia in 1787. The most successful European plays of the Enlightenment were also widely translated and staged in Spanish. In Barcelona, stable Spanish and Italian theater companies performed their productions in each of their national languages. Only amateur, private, and religious theater could be found to be performed in Catalan or in Catalan and Spanish. Yet the extant corpus of Catalan *entremesos* and *sainets* counts about one hundred works, dating from the second half of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth. Spanish authors like Ramón de la Cruz and Ignacio González del Castillo were decisive influences and inspirations for Catalan playwrights like Josep Robrenyo and Ignasi Plana.

The only remaining example of Catalan neoclassical tragedy is Joan Ramis's *Lucrècia* (1769). A native of Minorca, Ramis obtained a doctorate of both laws

from the University of Avignon and lived in the French- and British-dominated Maó for most of his life, where he was an active member of the Societat Maonesa de Cultura. Ramis authored an additional neoclassical play entitled *Arminda* (1771) that, unlike his first play, was set in the Middle Ages, and a last dramatic work, a Baroque tragicomedy, *Rosaura o el més constant amor* (1783). Ramis's case exemplifies how in some Catalan-speaking lands under French and English rule (Roussillon and Minorca), flourishing intellectual circles were quite active in their use of Catalan, particular for translations. Works by Corneille, Racine, Molière, Beaumarchais, Goldoni, Metastasio, Vicente Rodríguez de Arellano, Ramón de la Cruz, and Leandro Fernández de Moratín were translated into Catalan, and many of these translations are yet to be edited and studied.

This review can only hint at the wealth of knowledge that Solervicens's volume contains. It should easily become the go-to reference work on the Catalan literature of the period, including its drama. I can only wish that the dialogue in which its authors engage with other literary traditions stirs an interest in scholars of other Romance, and particularly Iberian, literatures to join the conversation.