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## REVIEWS



ANNICCHIARICO, Annamaria. "Narracions en vers" catalane medievali. *Appunti e materiali per una Guida bibliografica*. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003. 99 pp.

Professor Annicchiarico's *Appunti* are a concise but incisive introduction to the origins and development of the narrative genres in Catalan literature and should be considered a major contribution to the field. In a footnote to the title, Professor Annicchiarico modestly describes the *Appunti* as no more than a section of the forthcoming *Guia Bibliogràfica* of Medieval Catalan Literature, directed by Albert Hauf. She emphasizes that it follows the strict guidelines adopted by the *Guia*: a) only the authors and texts included there are to be found in the *Appunti*, b) the discussion of each topic follows a concise pattern, in which a swift *excursus* defining the themes and problems that have attracted critical attention leads to a brief description of the most recent research and relevant hypotheses on the subject, and c) only those contributions directly concerned with medieval Catalan narrative in verse have been collected. She admits, however, that, in this version of the work and for didactic purposes, she has occasionally overstepped this last limitation to offer a fuller and more coherent picture of the bibliographical background. For the most part, the title's footnote accurately describes the *Appunti*'s contents, but by emphasizing the book's nature as a part of the *Guia Bibliogràfica*, it significantly underestimates the true scope and importance of the present publication.

The declared function of the book is well fulfilled. Comprehensive, up to date, and accurate in the evaluation of bibliographical references, the data collected will satisfy the needs of the most demanding scholar. Neither significant omissions nor superfluous addenda spoil the balance of a well-researched study. When critical attention has failed to give appropriate relevance to a text or author, pointed comments and cross references help to set the score right and, in a calculated and telling contrast, conciseness and moderation place in a truer perspective those topics not always justifiably favored by a comparatively extensive bibliography. Very few editing slips or misprints are to be found, and I saw none that would really affect the meaning of the text. Two examples, a misprint on page 10 line 21 reads "rist." instead of "Hist." and a slip in the *bibliografia* fails to provide the entry for Eva Kushner [1988], quoted on page 55. The omitted entry should read: Kushner, Eva. "L'Esprit satirique et le développement de la satire" in *L'Epoque de la Renaissance (1400-1600)*. I, *L'Avènement de l'esprit nouveau (1400-1480)*. Ed. E. Kushner and A. Stegmann, Budapest: Akad. Kiadó, 1988, pp. 384-401.

Over the last thirty or forty years the original texts and authors that provide the *raison d'être* for this bibliography have become easily accessible, although not always in scholarly editions. Their diffusion has led to an interesting series of monographic and general studies that have helped to place them in the context of medieval Catalan literature, but so far no serious attempt has been made to examine their meaning and function within the general evolution of the narrative genres. In a subtle and unassuming way, Professor Annicchiarico's approach to the organization and analysis of the bibliography sets the tone and provides the tools to do so.

The presentation of the material suggests a general acceptance of well-

established molds, taxonomy, and classification of the texts; however, a close reading of the author's comments shows that she is far from uncritically accepting the standardized topics. The very nature of a bibliography requires an advanced degree of accommodation to the overall patterns reflected by the same. Professor Annicchiarico knows this and does not break the rules of the game, but by charging these rules with a new meaning and new intention she goes beyond mere bibliographical information and transforms her *Apunti e Materiali per una Guida Bibliografica* into a true outline for a critical history of the "*Narracions en vers*" *Catalane Medievali*.

Professor Annicchiarico never pretends to offer anything other than a bibliography; nevertheless, she actually presents her subject as a revision of the present ideas about the topic and as a guide for a new approach to the study of these *narracions*. She does this by framing the original works in a theoretical, social, historical and literary context, which should lead future scholars to a new and suggestive evaluation of each bibliographical entry. That frame is carefully defined in the ten introductory pages of the book, where she summarizes the theoretical basis for a broad definition of the narrative genres in all medieval literatures. The implication of such a summary is that it is against such background—and not only within the limited scope of Catalan literature—that these *narracions en vers* should be studied and evaluated. In this indirect but provocative way, perhaps without she herself realizing the true scope of her propositions, Professor Annicchiarico foretells what will not and yet should be found in this bibliography and invites a reinterpretation of the available materials that would help to fill that gap.

For the characterization and nature of medieval narrative in general, the author relies mostly, but not exclusively, on Italian sources (Segre, Varvaro, Picone, Malato, Bataglia Ricci, but also Paredes Núñez, Neüschafer, Neugaard). She pays particular attention to the differences between short and long narrative, and to the difficulties in separating them. Then, rightly assuming that most of the Catalan texts would be classified as short ones, she carefully defines the singular and conflicting nature of *Brevitas* as the literary canon for their identification. *Brevitas*, she explains, refers not so much to the length of a work but to an organization of the materials based on the principles of concision and essentiality, structural sobriety, unity of action and a linear exposition of temporal and causal connections. Such characterization, of course, helps little to distinguish between short and long narrative. Professor Annicchiarico takes advantage of this inherent ambiguity and frequent overlapping between long and short narratives to stress further the place and function that these apparently simple *narracions en vers* have in the overall development of all romance narrative genres.

Following recent Catalan bibliography, Professor Annicchiarico dwells on the idea of the experimental, transitional, and innovative character of these texts. She discusses the significance that the linguistic wavering between Catalan and Provençal has for their evaluation, comments approvingly on the hypothesis that they seem to reflect the transition from an oral to a written tradition, and accepts that they show the evolution from an essentially aristocratic literature to one that echoes the views and habits of the bourgeoisie. A little abruptly, but thoroughly enough, she sums up the discussion of these topics with direct references to the birth of narrative

prose, mentioning as examples the Italian *Novellino* and the Catalan works of Ramon Llull. That sudden twist in her exposition suggests quite clearly her own view about the place that the *narracions en vers* have in literary history.

A sideline of this discussion allows for the adoption of an arbitrary but useful classification and taxonomy of Catalan narrative verse and helps to set the outline for the organization of the bibliography. She establishes three groups: a) *Narrativa Cavalleresco-Cortese*, b) "*Contes plaents*" e dintorni, and c) *L'emergenza dell'attuale. La storia tra realtà e allegoria*. The classification is summarily justified when she indicates that the texts have been distributed taking into account their "tratti fisionomici di fondo;" but the definition of such "tratti" is not given and the reader will have to reread and reinterpret the ten dense pages of the introduction to come to a personal conclusion. This is no major issue, as the headings are self-explanatory, but a more precise exposition of the criteria adopted would have helped to explain where, how, and why this classification and distribution of the texts differs from the ones offered by other literary historians and anthologists. It would also help, perhaps, to explain a certain unevenness in the weight given to each group. The first includes twelve works and takes up 23 pages of comments and commented bibliography, the second includes ten and fills 13 pages, and the last one mentions only four and takes 6 pages.

As I have indicated earlier, balance and objectivity are paramount characteristics of this bibliography, and the aforementioned unevenness has no significance whatsoever if one attends to the discussion and analysis of the bibliography devoted to each individual text. However, as I honestly believe that the greater merit of this work is its potential as a guideline for an in-depth study of Catalan narrative in verse, this is one of the very few issues that any scholar wishing to undertake such a study should bear in mind.

Summing up, Professor Annicchiarico has collected and placed in their literary and historical context well over three hundred entries, which have then been carefully indexed in the bibliography. She has pointedly discussed the contribution of each one of these bibliographical entries to the analysis and evaluation of individual texts and authors, looking for a presentation of the materials that will offer an overall view of the whole corpus of *narracions en vers*. One may disagree with her work in some points of detail, particularly in the classification of the texts, but even then her unassuming work is, in my opinion, perhaps the best available introduction and guideline for the study of an important chapter of medieval Catalan literature that has not yet received all the attention that it deserves.

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ALCOVER, Joan. *Elegies*. Trans. Kristine Doll and Robert E. Brown; paintings Eduardo Arranz-Bravo. Merrick, NY: Cross-Cultural Communications, 2004. Sèrie de Poetes Catalans (català-anglès). Published with the support of the Conselleria d'Educació i Cultura del Govern de les Illes Balears and the Institut Ramon Llull. 151 pp.

This charming book, small in format and length, is solidly international: written equally in Catalan and English, published in the US to begin a new series of translations, and printed in Poland. In addition, it is interdisciplinary, uniting literary criticism, poetry, translation, and visual art. The texts are accompanied by color reproductions of nineteen paintings by Eduardo Arranz-Bravo illustrating the dark states of mind of the creator of these elegies, by a photo of a room of the poet's house in Palma de Mallorca, and by the often-reproduced painting of a gloom-laden Alcover by Cristóbal Pizà Ensenyat.

Concretely, the volume contains a Prefaci/Foreword by August Bover, professor at the University of Barcelona, tracing Kristine Doll's interest in the language and culture of Mallorca and in Alcover, already studied by the "initiator of Catalan Studies in North America," Josephine De Boer. As Bover notes, it is personal suffering, and not an intended vocation, that conferred on the poet his "profoundly human dimension." There follows a sizable introduction with notes, by Doll, which emphasizes the role of the non-Castilian languages in Spain, the poetic tradition of Mallorca, the life and work of Alcover, and in particular his *Elegies*.

Alcover, who published his first four volumes of poetry in Castilian, passed over to Catalan in the context of the revivification of Catalan culture in the years around 1900. His *Elegies*, written between 1903 and 1909, reflect the sadness of losing his wife and their daughter and son. Of "Desolation," the title of one of his greatest poems, there had been an abundance in his life, and even more so by the *Elegies'* publication year of 1909, when he had lost his mother, second wife, and remaining two children.

The Introduction, as is appropriate, notes the romantic traits of the *Elegies*: "the intensity with which individual grief is exalted..., an insistence on an autobiographical and confessional tone, and a significant dependence on imagery drawn from Nature" (60). Then, Doll's introduction proceeds to the detailed analysis of the six elegies.

Alcover's formalism poses to his translators a challenge which Doll and her colleague Robert E. Brown (both of Salem State College, Massachusetts) do not seem eager to take up: they do not attempt to render in English either the rhyme or the rhythm of the original texts, even though the *Elegies* are rhymed throughout and their syllables carefully counted. This seems unfortunate, especially in the famous "Desolation," undoubtedly the most perfect of the six in terms of its form and central image, of which one might have hoped for an English version capable of following the rhythms of the unforgettable song fashioned by the Mallorcan singer Maria del Mar Bonet.

The translations normally remain faithful to the original content, but one does note a tendency to interpret or summarize. For example, in "The Bells" "els qui gosen" becomes "those revelers down there in the streets" (the "Translators' Notes" defend this decision [120], but the fact remains that it



reflects an interpretation, not properly a translation). In a contrary movement of contraction, "L'himne de pau als qui reposen / en el reialme de la mort" becomes simply "this hymn meant for the dead." In my opinion, it is preferable for the translator to respect the general contours imposed by the poet; that is, if he uses nine words to describe the dead, one should employ a similar periphrasis. The translators indicate plausibly, "We discovered that strict adherence to traditional prosody resulted in an English that was unnecessarily stilted and distracting" (131); nevertheless, without going to such an extreme, one can attempt to respect the genius of the poet.

Similarly, I do not see what is gained in "The Relic" by changing the 13 lines of stanza 2 into 14 lines, or changing the third stanza from 15 to 13 lines. Why rewrite "tombats a la molsa, / passàvem les hores millors de la vida" (lines 11-12) as "sprawled on the grass, / splayed out, / we played so pleasantly"? And why reduce "Trenta anys de ma vida volaren depressa" (line 40) to the brusque "Thirty years!"? It is not, it seems to me, the translator's job to override, without major justification, the poet's division between lines or choice of concrete details.

The volume ends, usefully, with a few pages on "Translating Alcover," followed by acknowledgments and notes about the artist, the translators, and the poet. In conclusion, with some reserve about the translations, I believe this remains a volume well planned to introduce the English-speaking reader to these beautiful, sad, and masterful poems.

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CAMINALS, Roser. *La petita mort*. Barcelona: Mondadori, 2004. 287 pp.

Roser Caminal's novel *La petita mort* tells the story of Andreu Nadal, a successful young architect but social misfit, who has climbed from obscure poverty into Barcelona's upper-middle class. He is an imaginative designer anxious to break with the derivative, warmed-over *nouveau* buildings his partners put up, but he is also curiously empty emotionally. On the night of September 12, 1920, Nadal wanders outside his comfort zone and ends up rescuing a beautiful circus acrobat from the flames of an anarchist's bomb thrown into the Pompeya Music Hall.

The explosion jolts Nadal from his routine and disrupts his curiously frozen social development. Through the cracks in his façade we glimpse a wounded child. Though Nadal makes a shaky attempt at a relationship with spangled, tightrope-walking Sabina, he soon loses his equilibrium and falls into an emotional void that he can only climb out of by a willful act of detection. His investigation of a mystery that includes death, deception, jealousy, and mistaken identity uncovers guilt and a murderer or two, much to Andreu's chagrin. Impressively convincing is the way Caminal's makes the crime detection parallel a search for identity in the dawn of Freudian psychotherapy.

The title, *La petita mort*, also bears heavy psychoanalytical freight. It refers not only to the "little death" of orgasm, but also to fainting spells or being



knocked unconscious, as was Andreu by the bomb, and even to the hypnotic trance his therapist induces to help him remember clues to an old murder he witnessed as a child. All these extreme states relate to the gigantic deaths that forever deformed Andreu's childhood and family, and it is through the little deaths that he is able to conjure and abjure them. By the end of the novel, the reader is awed by the incremental repetition of the metaphor of "little death," which resounds with satisfying force, as titles of the best novels do.

*Mort* is actually the second in a proposed trilogy of historical novels by Caminals set in Barcelona. The first, *El carrer dels Tres Llits* (2002), was a gem: glittering, deceptively small, carefully polished, and surprising as much for what it was not as for what it was. *Carrer* was also a *Bildungsroman*, the tale of young, wealthy Maurici Aldabò, who grew from adolescent superficiality into manhood and conscience. *Llits* was an historical novel mostly set in the Barcelona of around 1910, and at the same time a mystery informed by Borges and Cortázar. The detective was himself detected, and there was a mysterious disappearance worthy of Graham Greene. As a bonus, it had a spectacularly atypical brothel sub-plot, and a clear social awareness that was never preachy. Both the first and second parts of this historical triptych have deftly interwoven themes of parricide and class division, all written with lovely simplicity and a keen ear for speech patterns up and down the social scale.

Every detail in *Mort* adds careful layers of depth to the plot, often in resonance with regard to what was laid down in *Llits*. For example, the author mentions in an aside that Maurici and his friends line up to see the latest Max Linder comedy. Silent comic Linder was himself a wife killer, like the publicly executed Isidro Mompert of *Llits* and Silvestre Lluís of *Petita mort*. Linder slit the throat of his young wife and then himself at age forty-two, leaving behind baby daughter Maud, while the Catalans were convicted of killing their wives and children as well.

Parricide is an important theme in both books, because both Maurici from *Amores* and Andreu from *Mort* must kill their fathers. This happens in the best Freudian sense for Maurici, and unwillingly, literally, in the case of the child, Andreu, whose testimony gets his father executed for a crime that he did not commit.

Although Caminals's work tends to be mentioned alongside that of Eduardo Mendoza or Ignacio Agustí, her two novels, with their finely planned webs of allusion, are most unlike either. Most of what is remarkable about *Llit* and *Mort* lies precisely in their different vision of familiar scenes and settings. The violence of the anarchist movement and its official suppression, to give just one example, has an innovative function in Caminals. For Agustí's Joaquín Rius, the bomb thrown into the Liceu provides a "decent" liberation from his wife's infidelity and also underlines his error in "marrying up." Success for him, and his son, will come through knowing their place and working in it. For Mendoza's Bouvila, the anarchist movement is an opportunity for self-promotion. Bouvila, like Forest Gump, is present for everything important that happens between Barcelona's world fairs and may be said to die a victim of the early twentieth-century Spanish self-conscious obsession with verticality. While Murcian inventors attempted to defy the laws of physics, moving straight up in the air or straight down in the water; Bouvila attempts to scale the social mountain in a Barcelona where fortunes could be made and

lost and social positions bought as well as inherited. Juan de la Cierva went up, Isaac Peral went down, and Onofre Bouvila's vertiginous social climbing ended in a sonorous crash landing. Mendoza's first novel, *La verdad sobre el caso Savolta*, looked at Barcelona in the 1920s with its anarchists, bombs, arms sales, *arrivistes*, and social climbing. To a certain extent, Mendoza is always self-parodying, always criticizing himself and his class. The ironic voice, the magically real gestures, and what T.S. Eliot referred to as "the hero trying to cheer himself up," dominate Mendoza's fiction.

In stark contrast, Caminals creates, in her first book, a hero who deliberately chooses the downward mobility that eventually accompanies ethical business behavior, and in the second, one who gains understanding of himself by rejecting the sexist values of the men in his family. While men of character in Mendoza (like Domingo Pajarito de Soto, the anarchist-idealist-journalist) inevitably end up pitiable, naïve, ruined, and then dead; in Caminals, they are capable of evolution. In that way, Mendoza's novels present Barcelona's history with a certain fatalistic determinism that is absent from Caminals's work. Mendoza may parody wealthy Catalan burghers, but they are always the center from which marginality is measured. In Mendoza, the center is wealthy and male, and —despite his paternal surname— there is nothing remotely *xarnego* in his authorial positioning.

By contrast, for Caminals, the Carrer Príncep de Viana is every bit as real as the Passeig de Gràcia, and the women are as real as the men. In fact, it is perfectly possible for a literate person with a passion for Barcelona to read and enjoy, for different reasons, Mendoza, Caminals, Agustí, Rodoreda, Riera, Roig, Marsé, Vázquez Montalbán, Ruiz Zafón, and more. Who really believes that Mendoza wants to be a sort of literary kudzu that chokes out all the other plants in the garden?

If the reader does not come to Caminals's novel with the notion that *Savolta* and *Prodigios* are measuring sticks against which everything should be judged, one finds quite a different book from either in *Llits* and *Mort*. Perhaps Caminals brought a comparison upon herself by allusion in the title of her 1995 book *Un segle de prodigis* (first printed in English in 1993 as *Once Remembered, Twice Lived*), and by the character of Sabina Lombardi in *Petita mort*, who is a clear wink at Mendoza's María Coral in *Savolta*. However, Sabina is as different from María Coral as night from day; though Mendoza's *femme fatale* plays Javier Miranda for a chump, Sabina is as dexterous off the high wire as on it. Moreover, there are other, more pertinent literary ancestors.

The title of the first book deliberately evoked Mercè Rodoreda's *El carrer de les Camèlies*, and the conception of the saga in several volumes reminds one more of Montserrat Roig's historical works *Molta roba i poc savò... i tan neta que la volen*, *El temps de les cireres*, *Ramona*, *adeu*, and *L'hora violeta*. That particular influence is transparently presented in Caminals's decision to have an important character's surname revealed near the end as "Miralpeix."

Author Roser Caminals has the advantage, as a professor of Iberian literature at Hood College, of knowing the Spanish literary traditions as well as the Catalan, recognizing feminist strands in both, and having the courage to tug at them ambidextrously. Caminals has published outstanding translations of both Spanish and Catalan into English —no small feat— such as Emilia Pardo Bazán's *Los pazos de Ulloa* and Carme Riera's *Questió d'amor propi*.



One looks forward to the third installment of this lovely triptych, which Caminals has promised will include the Second Republic and the Civil War, and will have a female protagonist. Until then, both *El carrer dels Tres Llits* and *La petita mort* are worth reading again.

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RAVENTÓS-PONS, Esther. *Rupturas espaciales: Palabra e imagen en textos catalanes postfranquistas*. New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2003.

Esther Raventós-Pons has written a focused, comparative study of the ways in which spatial and social constructions work in Catalan painting and literature of the post-Franco period as counter-narratives to the imposition of hegemonic norms. It is an ambitious project in that Raventós-Pons must demonstrate expertise in the theoretical foundations of two interrelated disciplines: history of art and literary criticism. The introduction presents the major theorists and key texts that describe both disciplines, from historical references to the most recent of critical analyses. For those looking for a synthesis of sophisticated ideas that inform the study of space as a concept in contemporary literature and the visual arts, Raventós-Pons's book will be most welcome. Since she reaches back to include philosophical precedents, classic art historical texts, and more recent theoreticians, the reader is presented with a spectrum of voices with which to consider space as a significant creative and interpretive category. In the process, however, rigorous selective criteria may be lost in the array of citations and summaries. It is difficult to pull from the variety of sources a clear, critical lineage. Thus, Raventós-Pons presents a challenge for the reader looking to chart a clear path between her introductory overview and the stated subject of her book, the artists and writers of post-Franco Catalonia.

The introductory section will be most useful for scholars unfamiliar with art historical approaches space. In this regard, Raventós-Pons's book appears to be aimed more at the literary scholar branching out into art history and visual culture, than at the scholar working from art history and looking out into literature. This is not to say that Raventós-Pons oversimplifies the texts she describes, nor that her use of them in the analysis of paintings is misdirected, for neither is the case. Rather, it is that her sweeping gestures across the field of art history and the links that she makes between the visual arts and literature sometimes glide across the difficulty of images and our interpretation of them. This becomes apparent at the very start of the book when, following the general theoretical introduction, Raventós-Pons telescopes her address of the specific historical and geographic conditions of Catalonia into just over ten pages (this after spending over thirty pages in presenting the theoretical overview). Indeed, Raventós-Pons's quick movements from general theories and schematic, if well researched, overviews to interpretative conclusions may prove frustrating for readers looking for a more complicated connection between the universal and the specific.

A key question to emerge after reading these two introductory sections is: Why separate the theoretical from the historical, the general from the specific? Clearly, this must be an issue that the author herself considered. Had she not realized the importance of place to these artists, she would not have even attended to the issue of historical and geographic specificity at the start of her study. Likewise, we know that what unites her choice of works is their status as "textos catalanes postfranquistas." The identity of each of her authors and artists as Catalan is critically important, even if the relation between space as a concept and Catalan as an identity remains under-explored. The tension between theory and practice (on the part of Raventós-Pons and the authors/artists she studies) is a problem that is negotiated in each chapter, and over the course of the book. In my reading of *Rupturas espaciales*, it is this tension that sets up a problem when one tries to think about how these works of art and literature relate to the actual space in which they were created. It also underlies what, in my mind, becomes a conceptual flaw in the joining together of her four case studies. Rather than emphasize the differences between literature and the visual arts as a problem in thinking about "spatial ruptures" and take that distance as a constructive element in the book, it is de-emphasized and under-theorized. As she states in the Preamble, her objective in bringing together different artistic practices, styles, and narratives is to "descubrir los puntos de conexión y de diferencia entre la literatura y el arte pictórico." Beyond this, however, Raventós-Pons should have offered the reader a clarified view of what really holds these cases together, even amidst their differences. At the end of the book, beyond observing potential differences and affinities, what are we asked to conclude? An epilogue or closing chapter might have answered, or at least problematized, such questions and brought a theoretical coherence to the project.

The fragmentary nature of the book is not entirely out of place in Raventós-Pons's study. She writes frequently about decentralization, polyphony, abstraction, and the breakdown of traditional perspectives as qualities shared by all four of the artists/writers she studies. She assigns these same characteristics to the political function of the works, since often these formal qualities create spaces for resistance within the visual or textual field. Given that her case studies are so far ranging, we might take their non-comparability as an intentional strategy, one that makes the project of studying space laced with implications for the reader. In other words, rather than be frustrated by the non-compatibility of artists, media, and interpretive frameworks, Raventós-Pons seems to be encouraging us to follow this dislocation as a means of opening up new readings. No doubt this is one of the motivations behind Raventós-Pons's book. However, I found in reading the book a nagging discomfort with this push and pull, between the desire to see the works as challenging normative gender, national, or spatial orders and the author's own reliance on the secondary theoretical texts to provide proofs for her interpretations. These secondary texts, which sometimes have no clear historical or contextual relation to the case studies, were used as authoritative keys to unlock a work's hidden significance. It would be unfair to judge Raventós-Pons's analyses as uniformly structured in this way, but the logic behind the connections that she draws is too often left under investigated. When the connections are clear, and the relation between theory and practice

explored (for example in her chapter on Ana María Moix's *Vals negro*), Raventós-Pons's book reaches a high point and the reader is rewarded with great insights and sensitive, critical interpretations.

To understand the rewards and disappointments of reading *Rupturas espaciales*, one has to consider the case studies chosen by Raventós-Pons to illuminate her thesis. The four core chapters in the book, each one devoted to a different artist (Antoni Tàpies and Montserrat Gudiol) or writer (Carme Riera and Ana María Moix), function primarily as contrasting cases that demonstrate the variety of ways that space can be understood in visual and literary "texts." (Raventós-Pons adopts the word "text" to describe works of art and literature equally, without interrogating its utility or exploring the recent critical debates about the application of narrative theory and semiotics to the field of art history). In each of her chapters, she argues for a particular understanding of the function of space in relation to the chosen case study. She establishes an interpretive model based on an examination of the formal qualities of her chosen paintings and the narrative qualities of the textual examples. In each instance she provides a summary of the normative understanding of space for the particular genre, whether it be in painting or literature, and then proceeds to demonstrate how the given work of art or literary text challenges or undermines this norm through an alternative spatial construction. In principal, this is a sound point of departure. In practice, however, comparing such different artists as Tàpies and Gudiol presents significant challenges that Raventós-Pons's interpretive structure neglects to address.

In other instances, by cordoning off her examples chronologically (by only considering post-Franco work), she ignores the important relationships that exist in Catalan art and letters between the pre- and post-Franco periods, and between the Catalan avant-garde of the early twentieth century and Catalonia's most advanced artists of the last twenty years. She also downplays the radical differences that exist between her chosen examples. Tàpies and Gudiol not only differ in terms of their chosen techniques (which she does address), but also in the differences that exist between the two artists in their critical reception, international success, and relation to art historical precedent and contemporary practices. Tàpies was not alone in his turn toward materiality, nor was Gudiol unique in her desire to contrast realism with abstraction. Rather than isolate these artists as exemplary figures, it might have been more useful to situate them among their peers and within both their local and international contexts. After all, what one learns about Catalan modern artists that may be applicable to Tàpies and Gudiol is that being "international-Catalans" offers its own position of empowerment and resistance.

Had Raventós-Pons examined each of these artists more closely within their historical contexts, and across their careers, she would have been able to explore the ways in which Tàpies's dialogue with Romanesque art (as a challenge to Renaissance perspective) not only had roots in Catalan national identity but also in earlier artistic explorations of the Catalan Romanesque as an alternative tradition by non-Catalan and Catalan artists and writers alike. One need only think of Francis Picabia's palimpsest compositions of the 1920s, in which he overlaid depictions from Catalan Romanesque wall paintings with abstracted figurative patterns, or the art historical research of *noucentista* architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch into Catalan Romanesque architecture, to



realize that a connection with the Catalan medieval past as it was mediated by twentieth-century artists and historians is also part of Tàpies's rich intertextual references.

Even more than the potential richness that a deeper historical or contextual examination might have brought to Raventós-Pons's subject, I found the inclusion of Tàpies to be the most distracting. Throughout the book, Raventós-Pons attends to the role of women in creating alternative spatial environments, both visually and textually. This is rich terrain to explore. Why not focus on Catalan women artists and writers in the post-Franco period? Why dilute the potential to build out from these case studies a feminist reading of space by including one of Catalonia's most famous male artists? I am not arguing here that Raventós-Pons should have limited her study in any essentialist way. Rather, such a strategy might have allowed her to explore in a more nuanced, critical fashion the relationships between authority, gender, and space that she has already sketched for us in the book. She hints at these connections in individual chapters or when making cross-chapter comparisons, but the condition of gender as a significant quality in the relation of a person's identity to concepts about space moves forward with one hand behind its back. We always have to think: What about Tàpies?

Each chapter in *Rupturas espaciales*, on its own, provides a valuable addition to the field of Catalan studies. The chapters devoted to Carme Riera and Ana María Moix are insightful and rigorous. For those unfamiliar with Gudiol's work, Raventós-Pons provides a beautiful introduction to the layered meanings extant in such deceptively simple works. Because there is such little critical work on Gudiol, Raventós-Pons has significantly expanded our understanding of her paintings through close attention to each work within a larger conceptual frame. Had her readings been accompanied by high-quality illustrations, the impact of such close analysis would have been communicated even more effectively to her readers. Both Tàpies and Gudiol are underserved by the poor black and white reproductions of their work. Given that Raventós-Pons depends on these illustrations to demonstrate her conclusions, her interpretations also suffer from the inadequate reproductions. Even so, and even with the above criticisms in mind, Raventós-Pons's book is a serious, thoughtful, and risk-taking contribution to the interdisciplinary study of Catalan literary and visual studies.

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