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Catalan Review is the premier international scholarly journal devoted to all aspects of Catalan culture. By Catalan culture is understood all manifestations of intellectual and artistic life produced in the Catalan language or in the geographical areas where Catalan is spoken. Catalan Review has been in publication since 1986.

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REVIEWS

Agustí Bartra, *Haikús d'Arinsal/Haikú from Arinsal. Bilingual Edition*. Translated by Sam Abrams. "Els Llibres del Mirall", 3. Terrassa, Mirall de Glaç, 1986. 58 pp.

On April 19, 1980, at the closing session of the Second Colloquium of Catalan Studies in North America, held in New Haven—where he had spent a part of this thirty-one year exile—Agustí Bartra spoke on "Poesia i mite", two essential ingredients in Bartra's lifelong exaltation of the power of the word to penetrate—and to create—mystery. Song too, he suggested, possesses the same elemental power to mediate between the human and the divine. In that talk seven years ago, Bartra told of having once witnessed a ceremony in a remote Caribbean village, where he heard a kind of incantatory chant of which he understood nothing. "Qué dice?" he asked those around him. Their answer was: "No dice nada: canta".

Bartra, in *Haikús d'Arinsal*, is himself an elemental figure who sings without saying. This series of sixty three-line poems is dated 9.VII.81, in the year between the Yale colloquium and the poet's death in his early seventies. These thousand and twenty carefully chosen syllables came into being in the Andorran village of Arinsal, so close to the headwaters of the Catalan language and people that it lies upstream even of Andorra la Vella. The fruits of "this last happy Summer in the poet's life"—in the words of Manuel Duran's helpful preface, (12)—poetically reflect a midsummer optimism and the inimitable Pyrenean landscape. Addressing the wind, the poet says:

26

With words you begin,
words of obscure syllables,
close to the earth's crust;

Rhythms grow and recur, images recombine and rise up like mountain ranges,

27

and you draw great strength
from the things that you caress
while you are rising,

and meanwhile the poet's *élan vital* becomes rejuvenated:

28

untouchable youth,
drawing knowledge from the stones
and morning glories.

The series of poems develops organically through three parts: "The Flute of Bark", "The Wind", and "The Infinite Hair Braid". Themes intertwine elusively, like ivy on a tree trunk. Near the end, Bartra defines for us the drama's central character:

58

A poet. The man.
One who still strives to be born.
Much fire and wisdom.

Thus, as if by the force of nature, the volume moves toward its final vision of the poet and man urged tenderly from the earth into the infinite:

60

Love still, the total
embrace, tendered from beneath,
when the You opens.

In order to preserve the reader's creativity, one should read through the poems once or twice before approaching Anton Carrera's postface "My Reading", based on an article in which Bartra's wife Anna Murià gives a list of central symbols. The tree and its bark are "the physical person of the poet"; the flute is his song; the air is "the pure word"; the wind is "liberating force, the will in action"; the infinite hair braid "means joy, fullness, happiness", and so on.

As an example of symbolism, Carrera (51) cites

44

The light is teaching
the air that ever travels
how roses are born,

which, reduced from song to prose, “says” that “the scattered gift (the light) communicates the poem (the rose) to the will in action (the traveling air)”. Such symbols grow together to form the kind of allegorical network we also find in Salvador Espriu’s *Cançons de la Roda del Temps*, which invest dawn, light, sea, boat, and other concrete objects with myth. Perhaps Bartra thought precisely of Espriu in writing

21

Most ancient of roots:
air, fire, earth and the waters.
Stop at once, oh Wheel!

The comparison to Espriu goes deeper, because in both poets each word is in its place and we could not wish any syllable different. This quality poses a dilemma for the translator of *Haikús d’Arinsal*, since each of its three-syllable units has 5+7+5 syllables as in the classical Japanese form. Moreover, every line ends in a *paraula plana* (paroxyton) except for a dozen hypermetric lines ending in *paraules esdrúixoles* (proparoxytons, e.g., *vídua* and *sinia* in number 25). How then to reconcile, in English, the delicately calibrated rhythms of syllabification, word, and image? Sam Abrams has elected to count syllables even more rigorously than Bartra himself. The difficulty here, though, is that poetry in English, with its strong tonic accent and word stress, gives less importance to syllable count than do the Latin languages and, presumably, Japanese. Since English is also more economical—with often shorter words and fewer articles—Abrams is maneuvered into adding words and thus, inevitably, images of his own. Examples of such additions, from the units quoted above, are: in 26, *crust* and the second use of *words*; in 27, *great*; in 58, *A* and *Much*; in 60, *embrace*; in 44, *ever*; in 21, *Most* and *at once*. These few words added here and there—mostly adverbs and adjectives that a non-Catalanist reader would accord little attention—alter Bartra’s precise diction, imagery, and evocativeness. Personally I would prefer the crisp strength of an unamplified translation like

44

The light teaches
the air that travels
how the rose is born.

(Abrams’ present progressive *is teaching*, his addition of *ever*, and his plural *roses*

limit and weaken, for me at least, the poetic action symbolized here. The more literal version, with its strong natural rhythm of 2+2+3 stresses in lines of 4, 5 and 5 syllables, seems to me to respect better the genius of both Bartra and the English language.)

Such concerns about the old balancing act of the translator should not, however, obscure, the gratitude readers of this attractive slim volume will feel to Abrams for approximately doubling the bulk of Bartra's poetical work that has been rendered into English. (Hensley C. Woodbridge and John Dagenais, in "A Bibliography of Catalan Belles-Lettres in English Translation", in *Scripta Mediterranea*, IV, 1983, 41-70, include fourteen previously translated poems of Bartra's, several from the surprisingly early date of 1941-43 (considering that translation from Catalan to English is still today too rare an art). Even readers fluent in Catalan will turn to Abrams' facing translations for the light—and, unavoidably, the interpretation—that they cast on the original texts.

This unusual publication may well be, in Manuel Duran's words (12), "bound to become a classic of Catalan poetry."

NATHANIEL SMITH

Women Writers of Spain: An Annotated Bio-Bibliographical Guide. Edited by Carolyn L. Galerstein. Non-Castilian Materials Edited by Kathleen McNerney. Greenwood Press: New York — Westport, Connecticut — London. 1986. xxi+389 pages.

Considering the explosion in the number of women writers in the twentieth century this dictionary of female authors was long overdue. It familiarizes readers with the content and meaning of some three hundred such writers, many of whom have previously received little or no attention in the U.S.

As the Editor states in her Preface, this dictionary "is primarily an effort to evaluate the contribution made by each author and her work to the development of a particular genre and to the literary representation of the historical period in which she wrote. To the extent possible, each literary work of an author is summarized and analyzed. We have also emphasized feminist elements within the works, commenting upon the author's presentation of the psychology of women and their role in Spanish society. (...) We have also admitted authors who have not written 'creative' works. Therefore, we include almost ex-

clusively poets, novelists and dramatists. There are some essayists, and we do include literary critics if they have published major works and are known more as essayists than 'book reviewers'".

In spite of these limitations this is a very useful book. I have read with interest the entries for such Catalan writers as Clementina Arderiu, Aurora Bertrana, Víctor Català, Anna Murià, Teresa Pàmies, Marta Pessarrodona, and Mercè Rodoreda: they are informative, up-to-date, and provide sound critical insights. Kathleen McNerney is to be congratulated on her excellent work dealing with Catalan women writers in this dictionary.

While some women writers from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries are included, this guide concentrates primarily on authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, providing for the first time an extensive and comprehensive listing for the present century. Materials are made more accessible through four appendices: a chronological list of authors; a list of Catalan authors; a list of Galician authors; and an index of titles translated into English, French, German, Italian and Portuguese that are mentioned in the text.

This guide belongs in all library reference collections on European literature or women's studies. It should appeal not only to scholars and students of Spanish, Catalan and Galician literatures, but also to readers interested in discovering the contributions of women to literature.

MANUEL DURAN
YALE UNIVERSITY

Rafael Caria, *L'Alguer, llengua i societat: la minoria catalana entre passat i futur. Alghero, lingua e società: la minoranza catalana tra passato e futuro*. L'Alguer — Sàsser, Centre de Recerca i Documentació Eduard Toda i Editrice Democratica Sarda, SRL, 1987. 33 p., 7 f.s.n., 37 p., 1 f.

El Centre de Recerca i Documentació Eduard Toda, de l'Alguer, amb la col·laboració de l'Editorial Democràtica Sarda, acaba de publicar el primer volum del que ha de ser "una sèrie d'estudis (...) dedicats a la realitat de l'Alguer i a la seva civilitat", segons diu el president del centre en la *Nota introductiva*. Es tracta de l'edició bilingüe (català-italià) de la comunicació presentada per Rafael Caria al passat *II Congrés Internacional de la Llengua Catalana*. No es podia començar millor una biblioteca alguerera, tant pel que fa a l'autor com pel que fa al text. Perquè no es pot parlar de la represa de la consciència alguerera sense parlar de Caria — que ha deixat constància del seu rigor en diversos treballs sobre el tema

— i perquè aquest opuscle parteix del profund coneixement de la realitat sardo-catalana per tal d'aplicar-hi l'anàlisi sociolingüística i poder fixar els objectius que han de fer possible la supervivència de l'alguerès.

L'autor arrenca del treball presentat per Antoni Ciuffo al I Congrés Internacional de la Llengua Catalana, l'any 1906, i de les rondalles recollides per Pier Enea Guarnerio el 1883 i estableix una comparació amb la situació actual per mostrar les transformacions fonètiques i les contaminacions lèxiques experimentades per l'alguerès col·loquial i degudes a la pressió del sard i de l'italià. Repassa, després, el període de la primera "renaixença" algueresa (1898-1908) i el de la segona, és a dir, l'època dels "retroaments" (1950-1970), marcats per la falta de preparació i de compromís de la intel·lectualitat local, que va fer que en un primer moment el dialecte català de l'Alguer quedés "tallat fora de la unificació lingüística que en tots els Països Catalans començava amb l'adopció el 1913 de les normes ortogràfiques proposades per l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans però elaborades fonamentalment per Pompeu Fabra" i, després, a l'època "del post-feixisme i de la reconstrucció mai no anaren quant a la llengua i a la cultura catalanes de l'Alguer, més enllà del folklorisme oportunístic i conservador". Finalment, *La tercera renaixença algueresa i la situació sociolingüística actual*, o sigui, el període que abasta des dels anys 70 fins a l'actualitat, constitueix l'apartat més extens i més interessant. Caria hi remarca la importància de les lluites per l'ús públic de l'alguerès durant els 70 (la "qüestió algueresa") i passa revista a l'actitud lingüística dels catalano-parlants algueresos contemporanis, de les emissores de ràdio, de la televisió, de l'escola, de l'Església, dels intel·lectuals, del món del treball, de les institucions, les associacions i els partits polítics. Això li permet de fer una denúncia de la legislació italiana pel que fa a la protecció de les minories i de concloure el seu treball fixant els objectius prioritaris per tal que l'alguerès superi la situació de decadència actual i tingui unes mínimes garanties de continuïtat: "el foment dels contactes culturals i socials entre l'Alguer i els Països Catalans" i el compromís de l'administració municipal, un cop el parlament italià hagi aprovat la llei de protecció, "de fer-se carrec de l'obligació de prendre totes les iniciatives per garantir el coneixement i l'ús normal del català dins del seu territori", cosa que exigeix la planificació d'una política lingüística i l'establiment d'un estàndard.

AUGUST BOVER I FONT
UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

The Congress of Catalan Traditional and Popular Culture (1981-1982). Summary and explanatory texts prepared by Jacqueline Hall. Barcelona, Fundació Serveis de Cultura Popular, 1986, 136 pp.

Organized by the Catalan government's Ministry of Culture and Communications Media, The Congress of Traditional and Popular Culture took place from 11 December to 13 December 1981 in the Barcelona Convention Center where over 2000 participants, hailing from all over the Catalan Countries, gathered to listen to no fewer than 274 papers, presented in 22 workshops, on the many aspects of Catalan culture, traditional as well as popular.

As a direct result of this Congress, the Generalitat created the Centre de Documentació i Recerca de la Cultura Tradicional i Popular whose main objective is to make possible the gathering and safekeeping of all documents dealing with traditional culture, to promote further studies on this subject, and to form a link with and coordinate the efforts of all institutions and individuals interested in this area of study.

One of the first functions of this Center was to ensure the publication in Catalan of the proceedings of the Congress. Summaries of all the papers which were received in time to meet the deadline were published by the Ministry of Culture in two volumes: *Resums de les comunicacions presentades al Congrés de Cultura Tradicional i Popular* (Barcelona, Departament de Cultura i Mitjans de Comunicació de la Generalitat de Catalunya, 1981) and *Resums de les comunicacions presentades al Congrés de Cultural Tradicional i Popular II* (Barcelona, Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya, Direcció General de Difusió Cultural, 1982). A third book, containing general information, the texts of the lectures and speeches, the workshops conclusions, and a list of participants and photographs was also published: *Memòria del Primer Congrés de Cultura Tradicional i Popular* (Barcelona, Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya, 1983).

The book under review here is exclusively designed for readers whose limited knowledge of Catalan prohibits them from consulting these original sources. To help the reader place the concerns and topics discussed in the Congress in a historical and cultural context, Jacqueline Hall provides a very brief, eight-page introduction divided unevenly into four parts: "Catalonia—a little-known country", "Catalan history in a nutshell", "Catalan culture in a nutshell", and "The years ahead". She also provides very useful appendices such as a map of Catalonia showing its *comarques* (territorial units smaller than a region) and their respective capitals, a map of the *Països Catalans* or Catalan Countries, a list of place names together with information for locating the different places on the

two maps provided, and a glossary of commonly used terms which may be difficult for the foreign reader to understand.

The bulk of the book, as its title indicates, is devoted to the summary of the papers read in each of the 22 workshops, grouped together by subject, and to the conclusions reached. Some of the subjects covered are: the origins and function of the *falcons*, groups of gymnasts who build different figures; the history and role of Catalan dance in general and of some very specific dances such as the *balls de bastons*, or "stick dances", and, of course, the *sardana*; the present situation of music in Catalonia and the fate of specific instruments such as the *gralla*, a rustic wind instrument with a shrill sound, composed of a wooden tube 27 cm long, and the *flabiol*, another rustic wind instruments consisting of a reed 10-30 cm long; the concept and importance of "cultural heritage" and the need to adapt policies that take into account the great influx of "immigrants" from other parts of Spain who, because they settled in Catalonia during a short period of time, pose a problem "in terms of integrations and the defense of national identity" (60). Two of the longest summaries deal with the situation of festivals in present-day Catalan society, measured against the double background of significant social changes and the effect of the policies of the Franco régime, and sociological evaluations of the links between, on the one hand, popular and traditional culture and, on the other, social structures and historical processes. Some of the other subjects are: songs, *castellers*, those people who take part in the building of *castells*, or human towers, drama, folk tales, games, costumes, gastronomy, manual arts, *imatgeria*, or carnival figures, ethnography.

One of the main conclusions reached by the workshop chairmen concerned the importance "of making popular culture an integral part of the school system first of all, but also of the media and community life, not forgetting its diffusion outside Catalonia" (106). The book under review here is the direct result of the implementation of this latter recommendation.

Except for a few rather insignificant typographical errors, this book is elegantly printed and clearly laid out. And with one exception—Jacqueline Hall asserts in the glossary that "most of the present population [of the Valencian Country] is Catalan speaking, while a minority speaks Castilian" (130), while experts in the field stated categorically the opposite in a recent colloquium on Catalan culture—all information and sources are accurate, reliable, and useful.

The Congress of Catalan Traditional and Popular Culture provides good reading material particularly for those who are already familiar with Catalan culture. The uninitiated may have a somewhat difficult time with it because, quite naturally, the summaries condense a great deal of information that presupposes at the very least some rudimentary knowledge of many aspects

of this culture. What this book offers above all is an excellent source of very valuable information and a great resource tool since Jacqueline Hall has thoughtfully included a list of all papers read at the Congress and the order in which they appear in the two volumes published under the auspices of the Department of Culture. Short of ordering these two volumes, this book offers a very valuable summary of the proceedings of a conference of historical significance. This is indeed a book whose reading will benefit equally expert and novice students of Catalan culture.

MANUEL A. ESTEBAN

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Jesús-Francesc Massip, *Teatre religiós als països catalans*. Barcelona: publicacions de l'Institut del Teatre de la Diputació de Barcelona/Edicions 62, 1984. Monografies de Teatre 17. 182 pp.

In the first four chapters of his book, Massip insists that medieval Catalan religious drama was written not to be read but to be performed. Therefore, those who wrote this drama and those who reworked existing plays had no literary pretensions. Massip further characterizes this theater as didactic and directed to the people, the majority of whom were illiterate.

According to Massip, medieval Catalan religious theater must be evaluated as a moral spectacle. In doing so, we should analyze staging, scenography, stage direction, and the emotional impact on the common people who were being entertained and evangelized.

Having established the theoretical basis for his monograph, the author describes the cult of Mary's Assumption in the Middle Ages and enumerates the sources of this cult from the fourth to the sixteenth centuries. His most original and informative section begins in chapter 4.4, in which he describes and analyzes four Assumption plays of medieval eastern Spain, all named for the location where they were performed: Estany, Tarragona, València and Elx. In each case Massip supplies information on manuscripts and editions, plots, music annotations, staging directions, decorations, costume descriptions and verticle and horizontal architectural plans of the cathedral or church where the Assumption plays took place. Also, he describes special effects including aerial devices common to the medieval Catalan stage (e. g., *araceli*) and diagrams of special stages set up within the churches (e. g., *cadafals*).

Although Massip deemphasizes the belletristic value of medieval Catalan

religious drama, he does describe the poetry and rhyme scheme of specific stanzas, variety of versification, verse construction, quality of language and dialogue. By doing so he reveals the difficulty and impracticality of divorcing medieval religious drama from the text and its literary quality.

Ricard Salvat adds to the value of *Teatre religiós medieval als països catalans* with his introduction summarizing Massip's contributions to medieval Catalan theater and reviewing the research on medieval European theater and the characteristics of medieval Catalan drama. In addition, Salvat emphasizes Massip's thesis that medieval Catalan theater should be judged primarily as spectacle.

Massip's monograph presents medieval Catalan religious drama from several perspectives, some of which are often ignored by literary critics, whose approach to Catalan religious theater is elitist, according to Massip. His research adds new insight into the medieval Catalan theater and confirms former opinions, such as the traditional nature of Catalan drama.

DAVID J. VIERA

TENNESSEE TECH UNIVERSITY

The Memoirs of Frédéric Mistral. Translated by George Wickes. New Directions. New Rochelle and New York, 1986.

Frédéric Mistral (1830-1914), internationally famous towards the end of the 19th century, awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1904, is today neglected and unread except in his beloved French Midi. Catalans and Catalanophiles owe him much and should be interested in his Memoirs. Mistral was a powerful ally of Catalan culture and did his best to renew the traditional ties between the Provençal and Catalan languages and cultures. A letter from Mistral to Mossèn Cinto Verdaguer, praising *L'Atlàntida* as one of the greatest epic poems written in modern times, was the first clear sign that the newly reborn Catalan letters were achieving an international impact. Mistral founded the Felibrige association of poets and spent twenty years of his life compiling a monumental Provençal dictionary in order to revitalize the ancient Midi culture which for so many years in Medieval times had been intertwined with Catalan culture. It is well known that many Catalan poets chose to write in Provençal.

The world in which young Mistral lived had an idyllic rural charm that comes through in these pages. It is a world of wise and well educated peasants, a world of deep friendships and family ties, a world permeated by folk wisdom, proverbs, and oral traditions, and one that tries to preserve in modern times

some of the charm and authenticity of past centuries. Not much of this agrarian ideal has survived the industrialization of the countryside, either in France or in Catalonia. Modern readers can find in these Memoirs — and also, of course, in Mistral's great poem, *Mireio* — a blueprint for an ideal agrarian society that will point out the shortcomings of our Age of Anxiety.

MANUEL DURAN
YALE UNIVERSITY

Quim Monzó, *O'Clock*. Translated by Mary Ann Newman. New York, Available Press/Ballantine, 1986, 86 pages.

Quim Monzó is the youngest Catalan author ever published in the United States. In his mid-thirties, his work has been repeatedly considered the most innovative and interesting among those of his generation. *O'Clock* contains the sixteen short stories that formed *Olivetti, Moulinex, Chaffoteaux et Maury*, the Catalan original that was awarded the Critic's Prize in 1981. Mary Ann Newman's translation shows both the degree of professionalism and the love with which the job was undertaken. The result is a sharp, colourful, vivid and very accurate English prose and idiom that captures the ironic nuances of Monzó's text.

Monzó's narrative world springs from his personal and historical circumstance and gradually turns into its distorted image. Coming of age during the countercultural movements surrounding May 68, Monzó's aesthetics are informed by pop-art, beat literature, underground cinema and, to a lesser extent, by the textualism of the seventies. These aesthetical and ideological components are best perceived in his first novel *L'udol del griso al caire de les clavegueres* (1976) and his first collection of short stories *Self-Service* (1977). Both books use juxtaposition and collage and provide a visual and expressive portrayal of the collapsing values of the radically committed youth in the late sixties and early seventies. *Uf, va dir ell* (1978) may be considered the first turning point in Monzó's career since it shows the passage from the "committed" to the "perverse". To contextualize this movement, one may say that it shows the passage from the post Sartrian/Brechtian to the Barthesian ethics and its celebration of the pleasure of the body/text. Stylistically, *Uf, va dir ell* and *O'Clock* show clearly Monzó's evolution in the use of a much more restrained diction, without the heavy ideological elements that hindered the freshness and mobility of his style in the early texts. Both books present a wise balance of oneiric, erotic and ludic

components and rely on a sensuous, vivid imagery. Both books, on the other hand, are highly and ironically self-reflective, providing a hilariously reductive counter-image of the major myths that informed the so-called "generació dels 70". In "The Vegetal Kingdom", for instance, the metonymic narrative voice, moving from a self-created "I" to a generational "We", exclaims: "We doubt there is a course" ("Dubtem si hi ha nord"), in what becomes the first gesture in a sustained parody of the mythical "Nord Enllà": the escape from a repressed Franco-ridden Catalonia into the Northern paradises where sexual, social and political freedom is possible... This intertextual parody will achieve its climactic moment when the infinitely bored protagonist of "To Choose"—another of the stories in *O'Clock*—wakes up to the conviction that he "must kill someone" and, instead of pain and remorse he thinks that "this need, far from causing me any distress, would, if carried to its logical end, leave me feeling free, joyful, and alive". Thus, Monzó's perverse would-be killer echoes Salvador Espriu's spiritual rebel in his "Assaig de càntic al temple", when the poet dreams of going North where he is told people are "rich, noble, free, joyful and alive".

Another aspect in the generational myth of the "Nord Enllà" is the celebration of constant movement, the unlimited "on-the-road" trip and the unrestrained sexual freedom attached to it. Monzó, who had happily indulged in a humorous recreation of both elements in *Uf, va dir ell*, turns *O'Clock* into a parody of his previous indulgence. "The Salmon Lady", for instance, offers a perfect parody of the erotic adventure. In this story, Monzó's "liberated" protagonist indulges in his sexual fantasies involving the Scandinavian lady who sits in front of him in a train compartment only to see those fantasies slip into daily life frustration when the lady steps out of the train to emerge into the most trivial of circumstances. "Globus", another story in the *O'Clock* collection, is perhaps the most poignant demystification of that generational "on-the-road". It tells the story of a man who had spent his first twenty years travelling with a circus and had never stayed twice in the same city. On his twentieth birthday, the circus dissolves and the man decides to try it as a settler. For the next twenty years, he becomes a clerk in a train station. At night, everyday, he dreams of what he had done that same day in the first half of his life, until, on turning forty, the nightmare of himself wakes him up and sets him on a frenzied trip trying to visit all the places he had not seen in his youth. At sixty, he has travelled all over the world but has lost his capacity to dream and, thus, to remember. Trying to recapture it, he goes to the city where he was born only to realize that he has lost his memories of it. In fact, he has lost his memory entirely. Soon, he will lose the images of his dreams and will find himself sitt-

ing at the station platform staring wittlessly at the incomprehensible sight of the passing trains, a spectral figuration of his own emptiness.

Like "Globus", most stories in *O'clock* are ironic accounts of the thin line that separates dream and nightmare. Monzó's winking eye seems an invitation to develop the libidinal energy in our daily lives instead of displacing it into the oneiric fulfillments of our more or less neurotic fantasies.

O'Clock stands out as Monzó's most balanced attempt to combine his interest in the absurd and psychoanalysis with the theoretical demands of post-structural textualism. In this short but rich collection, Monzó is able to write the desire of his own text in a ludic portrayal which is also, perhaps essentially, the textual parody of his daily, personal attempt "to shatter the opaque mirror of routine". It undoubtedly shatters the routine of the reviewer who is exhilarated to introduce this most uncommon text as if throwing a stone to break the "opaque mirror" of the academic literary mainstream.

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UCLA, LOS ANGELES

Xavier Pericay and Ferran Toutain, *Verinosa llengua*. Editorial Empúries, Barcelona, 1986, 128 pp.

Aided by some agents posing as linguists and writers, the evil Secretary, Dr. Ramon Aramon i Serra, is the mole who has infiltrated the Institut d'Estudis Catalans and cajoled its key operation, the Secció Filològica, into plotting the destruction of the Catalan language. This Dr. Moriarty of linguistics may not only go undefeated but he may also be held in odor of sanctity by the very people whom he seeks to destroy. For the destruction of the language is tantamount to the collective suicide of its speakers. The horror of Dr. Aramon's plan lies in its very simplicity. Catalan will be done in regally. It will not be transformed into a patois increasingly bonded to the glossophagous Castilian — such an attack would be unmasked easily. No. The Secretary will make written Catalan so pompously arcane that all similarity to the spoken language will be lost and no living person will be able to read one page in the "correct" Catalan sanctioned by the Institut d'Estudis Catalans and its corporate branch, the Fundació Enciclopèdia Catalana, without entering deep depression. At least five young and successful novelists already write in this fiendish newspeak. Catalan will be a Latin before its time: uncompromisingly pure and uncompromisingly dead. Only a few minds have become aware of such a plan and are strug-

gling to uncover the mole who, even though very advanced in years, is more powerful than ever...

This is in essence the thesis of *Verinosa llengua*. It is not easy to report concisely what the book is about since it attempts to be several things: a critique of current normative linguistics for Catalan, a proposal for an ideal of narrative style in this language, a vindication of previous proponents of such a style, an analysis of contemporary expression in fiction, and a theoretical proposal for what linguists would do vis-à-vis the "normalization" of Catalan (i.e., the grammatical coherence for its public usage). For a brief volume, the schedule is ambitious. Besides, an Apocalyptic tone dominates the presentation which is surely the key to its commercial success. Given the urgency of the message, one is reassured to learn that the essay is selling briskly.

Like all morality tales, *Verinosa llengua* is Manichaean and, like all Manichaean essays, it tempts the reader into making mental lists of its good points to oppose its bad points. And good points it has. The essay makes a forceful case against gratuitous obscurity and against overwriting in style; it advocates a clear prose—both for fiction and scholarly writings—which will betray neither its historical dignity nor the language spoken by the community. And it does so with well chosen and apt examples in the realm of vocabulary and syntax. The role of history and politics in the evolution of the language is rightly seen as foremost, as is the importance of literature, radio and TV. The unabashed use of Aramon's name and those of this coreligionists contributes a note of freshness.

But the doom the essay prophesies is inconsistent with the authors' claim that they argue strictly on linguistic terms. *Verinosa llengua* defends the work of Pompeu Fabra against those who, supposedly led by Aramon, would want to deform it into the standard for gratuitous difficulty and, worse yet, make what was and should be a dynamic system, always evolving along with the language, into a static one, giving the language a premature rigor mortis. It is hard to disagree with the authors' desideratum. Such linguists as Gabriel Ferrater, Joan Coromines, Joan Solà, Joaquim Rafel, Lluís V. Aracil, Josep Calveras and, with some hesitation, Lluís López del Castillo, and the writers Salvador Espriu and Josep Pla are justly and admiringly praised here as revitalizers of grammar and style. It is curious to note (for it would seem to belie the reigning tone of doom) that the list of these good Catalans outnumbers and outweighs the list of Aramon's cadre: Eduard Artells, Antoni M. Badia i Margarit, Santiago Pey and, with some hesitation, Francesc Vallverdú. Furthermore, the defense of the "good" Fabrians is done unsystematically, and the analyses of 5 recent writers are peremptory and cannot disguise the authors' parti pris for an ideal (yet debatable) codification of the written language.

The essay, as befits its ardent didacticism, is clad in a rhetorical style based on ironic references and cute puns which, unfortunately, render it all too enigmatic for Catalanists unfamiliar with fashionable Barcelona gossip. I say unfortunately because, for all its shortcomings, *Verinosa llengua* is an engaging document about the most pressing linguistic and socio-linguistic problems of Catalan. The present book could be the preparatory step for a more sedate study of the situation of Catalan today, bearing in mind that, only since ca. 1832 and in less favorable circumstances, Catalan has attempted to experience the growth and consolidation that Castilian, French, and Italian underwent since the late Middle Ages. Having expelled the venom of their tongues, let us hope that Pericay and Toutain will now turn to this other task.

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