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Reviews of Books

Emily Jenkins, *The Visualization of a Nation: Tàpies and Catalonia*. Oxford: Legenda, 2021. 200 pp. ISBN 9781781884195.

From 13 December 2023 to 13 December 2024, the Antoni Tàpies Foundation in Barcelona will celebrate the centenary of Tàpies's birth. The institution will hold a program of exhibitions and educational activities to commemorate the artist and inaugurate new interpretative paths for his work. With the participation of popular figures of contemporary Catalan culture, the Foundation aims to delve into the artist's legacy and social commitment. To this day, the museum's exhibition program has traditionally focused on his work's aesthetic particularities. With the exception of exhibitions such as *Els Cartells de Tàpies i l'esfera pública* (2007) and *Antoni Tàpies. Biografia política* (2018-2019), allusions to his social commitment and political positioning have usually been treated as interpretative keys to his artworks or historiographical sidenotes to his biography. We might say that the Foundation, together with other major Spanish museums, has dedicated itself to spotlighting the artist amongst the untidiness of Informalism and Abstract Expressionism, unceasingly finding ways to approach his mysticism, spirituality, and metaphysical reflections. Through the institution he built to manage his legacy, Tàpies has certainly been kept high up in the realm of the aesthetic, looking down on the complicated political and social ground where his work was rooted.

While we will have to wait until the end of the artist's centenary year to evaluate how effectively the Foundation brings Tàpies back to earth, the academic field has recently welcomed a publication that overtly confronts this challenge. In *The Visualization of a Nation: Tàpies and Catalonia*, Emily Jenkins initiates the task of filling the gap regarding the artist's politicization. Questioning the constructed nature of any form of nationalism, the author departs from a straightforward question: "Why has Tàpies's art become iconic in Catalonia?" Throughout the six chapters of the book, Jenkins lays out a multifaceted answer that refuses to rely on the artist's political convictions as the ultimate interpretative criteria.

She does so by exploring three aspects of Tàpies's oeuvre and legacy: his defense of Catalan culture during and after Francoism, the promotion of his work by political institutions in Catalonia since the Transition, and the discourses resulting from the exhibition of his work in Spain since the 1980s.

The book covers an extensive period, ranging from Tàpies's initial steps in the 1950s to his posthumous exhibitions in the early 2010s. Although its ambitious scope prevents the author from delving into details that would have uncovered the artist's complex relation to Spanish politics, Jenkins successfully achieves her aim of demystifying Tàpies's iconic Catalan status. Methodologically, the study combines traditional formal analysis with sociopolitical contextualization and theoretical reflections. This three-pronged approach allows the author to solidly demonstrate her claim: Tàpies created a signature style that was ambivalent enough to adapt to different historical interpretative frameworks and political discourses. This core argument is emphatically put forward throughout six well-defined chapters that draw on case studies and are presented in chronological order.

After a methodical introduction, the first chapter provides a general overview of Tàpies's career from 1946 until 1987. The author explores the origins of what Manuel Borja-Villel named "matter paintings" and how they developed into a style that endured throughout the artist's life. The analysis of Tàpies's Surrealist origins is of particular interest, offering a new interpretation of Joan Miró's influence on him, in both formal and political terms. Through a careful iconographical examination, Jenkins shows how, for Tàpies, to paint *from* Miró was to paint as a "universal Catalan." Embracing Miró as an artistic reference provided his signature style with an inherent Catalan character, regardless of explicit references to Catalan culture in his works. This alignment with Miró would create the basis for Tàpies's later defense of Catalan culture.

After the initial introduction to Tàpies's career, Jenkins studies some of the key moments of the artist's rise to prominence in Catalonia by looking at projects related, in one way or another, to Catalan political and cultural institutions. In Chapter 2, she addresses the controversy around the "Monument homenatge a

Picasso” (“Tribute to Picasso”) created for the Ajuntament de Barcelona in 1983, and the “11 de setembre” (“September 11th”) mosaic commissioned by the Ajuntament de Sant Boi de Llobregat that same year. Chapter 3 is mostly devoted to projects that involved the Generalitat de Catalunya, including the commission of *Les quatre cròniques* in 1990, the mural for the Catalan Pavilion at the Universal Exposition of Seville in 1992, and the failed commission of *Mitjó* for the National Museum of Catalunya (MNAC) in 1992. While the artworks for the Ajuntament de Barcelona did not necessarily contain Catalan references, those commissioned by the Generalitat tended to glorify Catalan history and culture. Despite this difference, both institutions have contributed to the success (including financial success) and public promotion of Tàpies’s work, enriching his iconic status as an exemplary Catalan citizen. In these two main sections of the volume, Jenkins navigates an abundance of primary and secondary sources that contribute to the book’s richness. Considering that Tàpies was especially careful to build an archive that could assure his legacy—as the author proves in her anecdote about the huge folders of clippings housed at the Tàpies Foundation Library—the way she makes sense of these materials is remarkable. Newspaper articles, interviews, and publications are clearly knitted together, shedding light on key moments of Tàpies’s career that had not been studied before.

In Chapter 4, Jenkins rounds off her effort to historicize the artist’s association with Catalonia by exposing how he formulated this association through his art. Tàpies became a Catalan icon not only because of the way his work was used by public institutions but also because of what Jenkins calls its “indirectly political” character. The inclusion of Catalan words and symbolic references to Catalan history were among the artist’s veiled ways of expressing his defense of Catalan culture during Francoism while sidestepping censorship. A more in-depth study of Tàpies’s relation to Franco’s government during the 1950s and 1960s would have helped pin down the ambiguity of the artist’s politics at the time and would have certainly enriched the author’s reflections. However, Jenkins effectively elaborates on Homi Bhabha’s, Michael Billig’s, and Kathryn Cramer’s theories of nationalism to expose how Tàpies visualized Catalonia as a victim but also a victorious survivor of the regime. In

such an authoritarian and repressive context, painting the stripes of a *senyera* or the shape of a *barretina* sustained the fabricated concept of the Catalan nation, “the myth that the Catalan civilization has existed for centuries and shares a cohesive identity” (98). As with his alignment with Miró, these references imbued his trademark style with an inherent defence of Catalonia, transforming it into “a reminder of the sociopolitical conditions under which Tàpies first developed his artistic style in the 1950s and 1960s” (105).

Far from assuming the association between Tàpies and Catalonia to be unalterable, the author continues to investigate the bidirectional relationship between politics and art beyond the artist’s life. In Chapters 5 and 6, Jenkins examines how Spanish media and cultural institutions have negotiated Tàpies’s national identity towards the end of his career and immediately after his passing. Considering the political turmoil generated by the revival of the Catalan Independence movement in recent decades, Jenkins thoughtfully selects a group of exhibitions and analyses the different ways their curatorial models have associated Tàpies with a national Catalan discourse. Although the lack of historical distance prevents the author from delivering an encompassing argument about the interests behind these exhibitions, Jenkins clearly displays the conflicting interpretative trends that have recently called Tàpies’s relation to nationalism into question. As Jenkins shows, the Fundació Tàpies has opted for remembering the artist’s Catalan activism but has also collaborated with the Instituto Cervantes in presenting such activism as part of his fervent defense of culture. Meanwhile, the Spanish State has tended to reinforce the artist’s place within the modernist tradition as a Spaniard, concealing his thoughtful relation to Catalan culture. Throughout this comparative analysis, the author emphasizes the importance of curatorial models in creating meaning for artworks, reminding readers about the significance of exhibition contexts.

These last chapters of the book are, together with the concluding section, the most theoretically loaded, although the whole volume has a strong reflective character. Throughout its pages, Jenkins includes theoretical statements about the relationship between art, curating, and politics that aim to “take Tàpies as a model while broadening the traditional perspective of academic studies”

(151). At the same time, these reflections possess a familiar, pedagogical tone that opens the book's potential readership to a non-specialist public.

The Visualization of a Nation is the first study about the intricate and complex dialogue between Tàpies's aesthetic investigations, his national convictions, and how political and cultural institutions have negotiated the meaning of his oeuvre. The book is based on a dialogical understanding of the relationship between art and politics. It unearths Tàpies's contributions to Catalan nationalism – even if he did not always defend it explicitly – while historicizing the changing nature of his Catalan exegesis from the Francoist dictatorship to the recent revival of the independence movement. Jenkins has inaugurated a line of research that will certainly be enriched when exploring other aesthetic stages of Tàpies's career, such as his attraction to objects in the 1960s, his attention to clay in the 1970s, and the incorporation of varnishes in the 1980s. Future studies on Tàpies will certainly benefit from Jenkins's approach: one that shows that the study of an artist's relation to politics does not consist of spotlighting his social commitment, but rather unravelling it to expose its knots.

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Venetia Johannes, *Nourishing the Nation: Food as National Identity in Catalonia*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2020. 264 pp. ISBN 9781789204377.

Foodways in Catalonia have attracted diverse scholarly interest as their intersection with politics has become more noticeable in recent years. In 2017, the region bid to hold an independence referendum, which resulted in the Spanish government invoking the Constitution to enforce direct rule, while bringing charges of sedition, rebellion, and misuse of public funds against members of the ousted Catalan Parliament who were either incarcerated or exiled. In *Nourishing the Nation*, this provides important backdrop to Venetia Johannes's

revisiting of the oft-recognised connection between food and (national) identity. The build-up to the confrontation between the regional and central government provides ample material for the author to put to the test how feelings of nationalism and national identity are expressed through food.

As stated in the introduction, the book's objective is to improve the understanding of lived realities of nationalism and what are perceived and acknowledged as "national" foods in Catalonia. To do so, the author starts by offering a thorough review of definitions of nationalism, from E. Gellner to B. Anderson, A. Smith, and M. Billig. She favours definitions that pay attention to everyday interactions that elicit subjective feelings, which in turn become part of our consciousness, such as those proposed by anthropologist Joseph Llobera and Catalan political theorist Montserrat Guibernau. Food, from this perspective, becomes a useful tool for examining different ways of articulating a sense of identity and the ways an individual is linked to a place and its historical, social, and cultural traditions, as well as its geography. The argument developed in this section provides ample documentation of how food, as an everyday practice, links to national sentiments. In the context of recent Catalan politics, this association becomes fertile ground. Examples often reveal their contradictions, as notions of traditional and authentic dishes and foodways are hardly uniform in their everyday manifestations or the ways they are understood. The introduction also includes a useful overview of Catalan history with an emphasis on the so-called "Catalan crisis", explaining in detail the ins and outs of the bid for the referendum on Catalan independence. It also identifies the symbols of Catalan nationalism that fuelled this popular mobilisation but that have also historically established Catalan territory, identity, culture, and history as distinct from the rest of the Iberian Peninsula, such as its language, character traits – the *seny* or *rauxa* for instance – the *senyera* flag, and cultural activities and customs – like the *sardana*, the building of *castells*, or *pairalisme*. From this point on, Catalan food is understood as part of this national discourse and as occupying an important place in everyday practice. It also becomes a point of pride that, ironically, pulls Catalan gastronomy in opposite directions: on the one hand, Catalan *nova cuina*, linked to the global molecular gastronomy movement, and on the other, Catalan foodways that focus on traditional cooking and recipes. This extensive introduction serves as the foundation for the monograph, which presents itself as an ethnographic study – one that emerges from the lived experience

of a social reality. In this case, the author, who lived for approximately fifteen months in the town of Vic, Catalonia her main field site uses her lived experience as one of the primary sources that structure the book's argument. She also learned to speak Catalan in order to integrate and communicate better during her research stay. Her main research tool was the ethnographic interview; the voices that appear in the monograph are labelled "informants".

Having established the connection between Catalan food and complex feelings about Catalan nationalism and identity, each of the book's five chapters functions as an opportunity to examine this association. They not only highlight dishes that are embraced as part of Catalan culinary tradition but also those that are rejected. The first chapter recounts Catalan culinary history by offering a thorough review of Catalan cookbooks published in the Iberian Peninsula, establishing a genealogy and culinary hierarchy that continues to be relevant to home and professional cooks today. Chapter 2 considers dishes and sauces considered essential in Catalan cooking, including some of its most iconic dishes, such as *canelons*, *escudella de carn i olla*, and *pa amb tomàquet*. Chapter 3 places Catalan cuisine in the context of narratives about gastronomy, from the region's bid to make Catalan cuisine part of UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage to Catalan foodways' connection to the post-2017 independence movement. This link is further examined in Chapter 4 through the framework of the gastronomic calendar, tying together seasonality, festivities, and the geography that contains them. This landscape, which in a way is consumed in Catalonia through its cuisine, guarantees the preservation of this connection. The last chapter examines food consumed during holidays, including recent initiatives to link celebrations, such as the Diada de Sant Jordi, to specific pastries or dishes. A short conclusion summarises the link between food and national identity and considers Catalan cuisine as an example of "lived realities of nationalism" (3) that could be useful to the study of nationalism, foodways, and national identity.

While each chapter offers compelling material for discussion and teases out the complexities of the relationship between food and national identity, having stated the argument thoroughly beforehand, it is difficult at times to avoid the impression that each section arrives at predictable conclusions. Furthermore, as the "informants" in the book keep appearing in the different chapters, this sense of circularity is reinforced. Perhaps making clearer who these "informants" are from the start while maintaining some uniformity

in the way their affiliation and roles are explained or restated would have connected the different parts of the book, helped give the argument a stronger arc, and thus strengthened the monograph's overall claims. Keeping an eye on these threads could have also helped maintain formal uniformity, as using different languages can lead to unwanted irregularities. Finally, an aspect that could have been stated more clearly is the author's awareness of the way the informants were also performing for an outsider during these interviews and while they ate and cooked together.

The author should be commended for the impressive and varied "informants" who participated in the study; they represent official and institutional perspectives, the experience of highly recognised professionals in the culinary scene in Catalonia and Spain, as well as academics and private citizens with a clear distaste for politics and politicians. Their voices and views offer a complex view of Catalan foodways, one that surpasses the basic preparation and consumption of traditional dishes, to reveal the intense negotiations that go on in the understanding of food and the variations that exist between regions, towns, households, and even from one family member to the next when it comes to the preparation of iconic and traditional dishes. These voices also help reveal one of the most important points of this study: the often-contradictory dynamics that arise when discourses around food and everyday eating and/or cooking are fully articulated and why looking into food and foodways can be a fascinating exploration of our lived realities and understanding of them.

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Olga Sendra Ferrer, *Barcelona: City of Margins*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022. 288 pp. ISBN 9781487508487.

Barcelona: City of Margins adds to the long list of studies on Barcelona's cultural life but does so from an innovative critical viewpoint: the margin, which is understood as the space from which the countercultural voices of urban demographics, who were

marginalised under Franco, were able to emerge. The book's thesis is that the marginal position of such voices disrupts the coherent image (both mental and visually apprehensible) of the city advanced under Francoism, and is argued robustly with recourse to urban theory (mostly Henri Lefebvre and Manuel Delgado) and eloquently through forensic close readings of the source material.

Sendra Ferrer leads by example: the insightful analysis of the Gil de Biedma poem "Barcelona ja no és bona" not only demonstrates her analytical prowess, but also effectively sets out the book's primary research questions, which are: a) how are the visual paradigms that define the Barcelona of Francoism renegotiated? and b) how is a space of dissent created in literature and photography that prefigures the possibility of a new, democratic order? Next comes clarification of the critical approach. Sendra Ferrer looks at her primary sources through the lens of the margin as a space that opens up to dissent. She seeks margins (in structures, stories, spaces and so on) that "make us question the harmony of the spatial structure of the city" (13). And she finds these margins in the works of Francisco Candel, Joan Colom, and Colita, the first artists to create dissent in Barcelona under Franco. The margin is not so much a space as a figuration or a movement; a force that "simultaneously criss-crosses the city and [...] marks and renders visible what is overlooked or ignored and, hence, outside" (8). It is these critical voices, which directly affect urbanistic discourses and practices in Barcelona, that are the focus of Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Before reaching the analysis of the literary and visual works, Chapter 1 sets out how the Franco dictatorship made use of urban interventions as part of its political regime in Barcelona from 1950 to 1970, a time of mass migration to the city. This was the moment of an "urban turn" a period in which cities were central to the modernisation of Spain and the articulation of Spanish national identity under Francoism. The ideology of "Una, grande y libre" was translated in urbanistic terms into a view of urbanism as a tool without ideological bent, one that made use of a ruthlessly objectivising and neutralising gaze that imposed order and eradicated disorder. Specifically, it materialised as Porcioles's urban reforms that demolished shantytowns and gave priority to the construction of broad arterial roads, which had the effect of breaking associative bonds among urban communities and supporting the real estate and automobile industries' aspirations to oligarchy. However, the city

also became a powerful site from which to resist and contest this homogeneous formulation of “Spanish” identity.

The founder of criticism of Franco’s urban spatial politics is the writer Francisco Candel, the subject of Chapter 2. Sendra Ferrer’s discussion of Candel is mainly based on his novel *Donde la ciudad cambia su nombre* (1957), which centres on the working-class inhabitants of Barcelona’s suburbs. His aim in the book is to critique changes in the urban fabric and give voice to the marginalised populations of the suburbs, and he does this by dismantling the Franco regime’s efforts to portray the city as socially harmonious. The novel challenges official discourse by making the invisible visible, by peering voyeuristically into a less stable and sometimes violent world and therefore opening up new worlds to narrate. For example, Candel comments ironically on top-down urban planning initiatives that erected rows of identical housing blocks that eliminated the city’s complexity, to which the residents responded by deforming the street names, thereby revealing a dissonance between officials’ attempts to sanitise the area and the everyday life of the neighbourhoods’ residents. Sendra Ferrer finds a margin here and argues convincingly that it is from this marginal space that Candel articulates his dissent, which was to go on to influence other dissenting voices.

We then turn from narrative to visual culture, which is where the book makes its most intriguing contributions to scholarship on Barcelona. Chapter 3 focuses on the photography of Joan Colom, who moves beyond the *costumbrismo* of earlier photographers of the 1950s Nova Avantguarda to produce images that subvert official discourse. Sendra Ferrer’s analysis of Colom’s photographs is also self-reflexive, asking what the margin itself can be. Sendra Ferrer finds that the margin can be a destabilising element and that it can be mobile, acting with a transformative potential. We see this in Colom’s works, in which space is apprehended through the movement of bodies that breaks the material hierarchy imposed by the urban planner. Indeed, one of Colom’s photos from the series “Passeig Marítim” (1964) is described as a satire of rational, ordered planning initiatives such as those of Ildefons Cerdà and the Plan Comarcal of 1953. In the marginal Raval district, Colom, in the manner of the stranger (in Georg Simmel’s theorisation as occupying a space both inside and outside), photographed the area with his camera concealed at waist height. The resulting images show public life governing public places; movement, interaction, and encounter

characterise streets, the “space of unreason” that the state tries to control (124), where order is substituted for disorder, making it, according to Sendra Ferrer, a margin. Colom’s work is dissent; it “emphasises the dialectic nature of coexistence in the street”, precisely the coexistence that city planners sought to eradicate (143).

The final chapter focuses on Colita and looks at anti-Francoist critique from a female perspective. The chapter begins with an appraisal of the work of preceding photographers, including Colom, Carme Garcia, and Caturla. Sendra Ferrer retroactively criticises Colom from the point of view of gender, saying that his work, along with that of other male photographers, reinforces the limited space of women. At the same time, Garcia and Caturla kick off women’s seizure of authority by taking control of the gaze, although their criteria for femininity still align with the regime’s discourse and practice, limiting the force of their work. It is therefore up to Colita, a contemporary of these two, but a professional photographer and journalist, to reconstruct female identity in the city.

Women in Colita’s photographs are not objectified but given strength. Her works lay bare the fact that the state’s aim to consolidate a series of urbanistic discourses based around limitations is “defied precisely by the limitations that it imposes” (186). These limitations, coded masculine, become openings which allow for dissent, expressed by Colita with the use of irony and the conception of space “through a markedly female experience” (183). This chapter is all about bodies: male and female bodies, urban bodies, and public bodies. (Elizabeth Grosz could have provided an interesting theoretical perspective here; similarly, a queer reading of the images is suggested but not pursued in its entirety). Bodies are the metaphor used to order social space and also to modify it; it is through bodies, in the work of Colita (as it was for Colom, albeit differently), that the regime’s discourse and practice are challenged.

One of the book’s main strengths is the connections drawn between written and visual works. This bolsters the book’s originality and broadens its appeal. Both genres are shown to be equally important modes of expression when Francoism takes its urban turn. At times, more nuance could have been added when discussing Cerdà, as the impetus behind his urbanistic work is more socially motivated and less materially oriented than is frequently portrayed, although, admittedly, this would not have affected the book’s argument to any great degree. Ultimately, the margin-as-

methodology approach provides Sendra Ferrer with a powerful analytical tool that lets her critique these artists' new ways of looking at the city through her own new way of looking at them. This altogether makes the volume essential reading for those working on Barcelona and indeed highly useful for those outside Catalan studies who work on narrative and visual culture in a broader Iberian context.

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Jordi Vilaró Berdusan, *L'amabilitat dels desconeguts. Tennessee Williams a Barcelona durant el franquisme*. Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona – Publicacions de l'Institut del Teatre. Escrits teòrics, 18. 2021. 420 pp. ISBN 9788498039832.

La publicació de *L'amabilitat dels desconeguts. Tennessee Williams a Barcelona durant el franquisme*, constitueix la culminació de la recerca de l'autor, Jordi Vilaró Berdusan, a l'entorn de la relació entre l'escriptor estatunidenc i la capital catalana durant els anys 50 i 60 del segle passat. El cos de l'estudi és constituït per la recepció dels sis drames de Tennessee Williams representats en castellà a Barcelona en el període franquista, un arc temporal que abasta des del 1950 al 1966; l'exposició va precedida d'una detallada descripció del camí d'aquestes peces als escenaris dels Estats Units i Europa, i acompanyada, quan s'escau, de l'acarament amb el fenomen a l'escena madrilenya. Per aquest motiu l'interès del llibre ultrapassa l'àmbit català i esdevé fita imprescindible per a tot estudiós de Williams.

En efecte, l'autor enfoca l'estudi no tant des de l'anàlisi especialitzada com de la reproducció, teixida amb un relat àgil, de les ressenyes dels cronistes teatrals de l'època i incorpora mercès als documents de l'Archivo General de la Administración d'Alcalá d'Henares (AGA) la veu dels censors (teatrals, eclesiàstics, etc.). Els escrits de la censura s'erigeixen en una font extraordinària per copsar l'impacte de Williams en els vigilants de l'ortodòxia dins la Dictadura, que adopten sovint un to ambigu, entre l'escàndol de qui preserva un posicionament rígid i l'excepcionalitat condescendent.

Serveixi de mostra la puntualització davant *Un tranvía llamado deseo*, una de les més polèmiques:

Obra de minorías. Al menos en España. Late en ella toda una preocupación sexual contenida en un límite de elegante insinuación. Creemos que puede autorizarse para su representación en círculos limitados y exigentes, pero que el gran público nuestro no está capacitado, y tal vez sea una pena, para enfrentarse con estos problemas como desde un ángulo frío de asistentes a una exposición de problemas morbosos envueltos en la más abierta inquietud social y servidos con una crudeza dialéctica y expositiva muy peligrosa.

(Pérez López de Heredia, 2004, 186-187, citat dins Vilaró, 88-89)

També en les ressenyes periodístiques a bastament reproduïdes per Vilaró, ensopeguem amb una adversitat i unes reticències tan o més accentuades que les dels censors com ho són les de José Maria Junyent, i en menor grau les de Luis Marsillach o Martí Farreras, que arran de *La gata sobre el tejado de zinc* adverteix el lector del “gusto del autor por la deformación, su persistente tendencia y predilección por la anormalidad en todas las esferas, su deliberada o inconsciente fidelidad a una galería humana purulenta y viscosa reclutada en los manuales de psiquiatría” (Farreras 1959, 36, citat dins Vilaró, 267). Vilaró explora el camí entre el text original i el de la versió representada, una tasca d’escapça i modificació condicionada per la censura i l’autocensura: així, la referència a la guerra espanyola dins *The Glass Menagerie* és alterada amb un circumloqui d’efecte grotesc, ultra suprimir, com era esperable, l’esment dels fets de Guernica. No es tracta, doncs, de retocs puntuals, sinó d’una autèntica tasca de neteja i maquillatge de qualsevol element revulsiu.

L’obra de Vilaró (que manlleua l’avantítol *L’amabilitat dels desconeguts* a una frase de *A Streetcar Named Desire*) no planteja un estudi de la traducció *strictu sensu*, sinó el registre amb perícia notarial d’aquestes “obligades” dramatúrgies. En cada una de les sis obres estrenades (*El zoo de cristal*, *Un tranvía llamado Deseo*, *La rosa tatuada*, *La gata sobre el tejado de zinc*, *La caída de Orfeo*, *Dulce pájaro de juventud*), s’efectua una classificació dels “canvis” per diferents motius: religiosos, històrics, polítics, sexuals, (amb l’homosexualitat i el paper de la dona com a elements destacats), estilístics, bones maneres, etc. El repàs del context europeu efectuat per Vilaró, ens

permet constatar que malgrat el prestigi d'alguns directors dels muntatges teatrals (Ingmar Bergman, Luchino Visconti, etc.), el dramaturg patí problemes importants amb la censura al Regne Unit, per exemple i que, llevat dels països escandinaus, el continent registrà un rebuig i unes traves no tan llunyanes a les generades pel context franquista a l'Estat Espanyol.

Com a contrapunt d'aquest rebuig moralista i conservador, Vilaró recull l'entusiasme d'aquells sectors que en copsaren la frescor, l'agosament i la desinhibició, amb el necessari acarament, quan convé, amb el ressò de les versions cinematogràfiques. L'autor registra un especial idil·li de Williams amb Barcelona, ciutat on efectuà diverses estades estivals des del seu primer viatge a inicis dels 50. Un dels motius que l'induíren a viatjar-hi fou establir la coneixença amb Antonio de Cabo, que amb Rafael Richart dirigia el Teatro de Cámara, i que a començaments de 1950 li havia estrenat dues peces emblemàtiques (*El zoo de cristal*, *première* absoluta a l'Estat Espanyol de Williams, i *Un tranvía llamado deseo*); el propi De Cabo fou el traductor de les quatre peces posteriorment representades, arran de les quals hagué d'enfrontar-se als censors per endolcir la píndola i dur-les a bon terme. Aquella febre per Williams fou recollida de bon començament pel testimoni periodístic de Manuel de Cala davant l'estrena d'*El zoo de cristal*, rebuda amb una intensitat i un recolliment traduïts en entusiàstics aplaudiments: el públic era conscient de l'excepcionalitat de l'esdeveniment.

En aquella atmosfera d'inquietud i repressió Williams aterrà com a element vivificador que durant una quinzena d'anys desvetllà l'interès i la posada en escena a la ciutat per part de companyies professionals com les de Pepita Serrador, Maria Asunción Sancho, Aurora Bautista, Arturo Fernández o la Companyia Lope de Vega (dirigida per José Tamayo). El punt àlgid simbòlic, ben destacat per Vilaró, fou *La rosa tatuada*, escrita en bona part pel dramaturg a Barcelona i estrenada el 3 d'abril de 1958 al Teatre Comèdia per la companyia de Pepita Serrador, actriu i directora propera a Williams. L'obra assolí un nombre aproximat al centenar de representacions i el 3 de juliol del mateix any comptà amb l'assistència del propi dramaturg. Dins d'aquest marc Vilaró registra com a casos singulars dues representacions en català, dignes de gran mèrit atesa la minorització que vivia l'escena en la llengua del país. *Figuretes de vidre*, traduïda i dirigida per Bonaventura Espinosa, s'escenificà el 7 de juny de 1956 al Teatre Bartrina de Reus, el text de la qual encetà la col·lecció "Quaderns de Teatre de l'A.D.B", tota una fita lligada a la importància de l'Agrupació Dramàtica de Barcelona. Hauríem

d'esperar quinze anys més per tornar a veure Williams en català: *Auto de fe*, peça breu, representada el juny de 1971 a l'Orfeó de Sants de Barcelona, en un muntatge de l'Escola d'Art Dramàtic Adrià Gual (EADAG), dirigit per Josep Costa.

Deu anys després d'aquelles primeres estrenes èpiques, Williams entrava a la dècada dels seixanta amb tot el prestigi teatral i cinematogràfic i, tanmateix, l'evolució de l'escena europea aportava aires nous que acabarien relegant-lo de l'interès del públic i de la crítica; l'acarament al teatre d'avantguarda, fos al corrent absurdista d'un Beckett o Ionesco, fos al nou teatre èpic, decantà la balança cap a l'oblit. Així ho certificà un representant dels postulats brechtians a Catalunya com Ricard Salvat, que tot i reconèixer-li l'audàcia i l'agosarament en la qüestió sexual acaba objectant-ne l'evolució cap a clixés del star system burgès del seu país. Ja ens havia situat Vilaró prèviament els darrers anys de la producció de Williams, (1963-1982) com a *Stoned Age*, la lapidació pública de l'autor en mots del propi dramaturg; aquesta decadència es feu palesa en l'escena barcelonina després de 1966, on llevat de la representació esmentada d'*Auto de fe*, es veié condemnada a l'ostracisme i haurem d'esperar al postfranquisme per assistir-ne al rescat.

Estem, doncs, davant d'un llibre tan vàlid per l'originalitat del seu contingut (no sovintegen gaire els estudis sobre la recepció de dramaturgs contemporanis) com per l'amenitat que la seva riquesa d'enfocaments ens brinda. Sense renunciar en cap moment al rigor acadèmic, l'autor ens regala un retaule polifònic que esdevé un retrat viu de l'impacte de Williams en el clima moral de la postguerra, o per ser més exactes, de les diverses postguerras de cada país on fou representat: una simfonia de veus contraposades que mostra a l'esqueix l'impacte que suscità dins i fora de Catalunya, en el teatre i més enllà del teatre.

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