

David Thatcher Gies. *Theatre and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Spain: Juan de Grimaldi as Impresario and Government Agent*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, 257 pp.

The story of Juan de Grimaldi is improbable, excessive: a precocious boy of humble, Corsican descent, he rose to officer rank in Napoleon's army, went to Spain with the invading French army in 1823, set himself up as an impresario of Madrid's theaters, in which —contrary to all precedent— he made himself a fortune. Having gained access to the exclusive circles of the Spanish court, he developed a taste for conspiracy and intrigue that he indulged throughout his life by intervening in the highest affairs of state, both in Spain and in France, where he settled after 1836. It is difficult to believe that the chapters of Grimaldi's life have not been drawn from the novels of Balzac and Stendhal: as the story of the provincial outsider's ambition, of opportunities offered to greed and lust for advancement by socio-economic upheaval, of the corruption, intrigue, and uncertainty characterizing post-Napoleonic European governments, this biography does indeed capture the flavor, the essence, of a period. Juan de Grimaldi, self-made man, part confidence-man, part genius, exemplifies possibilities inherent in European life in the early nineteenth century.

Grimaldi's influential presence in the Spanish cultural and political world of the 1820s and 1830s has long been recognized by Hispanists, but not until the publication of David T. Gies's carefully researched study of this intriguing figure have we been able to assess the full significance of his impact on Spanish history. The first four chapters describe Grimaldi's place in the reform of the Spanish theater between 1823 and 1836, and the fifth chapter traces his activities as a journalist in Spain, and as propagandist, diplomat and historian on behalf of his Spanish friends after he settled in France. Because it focuses on the interaction between Grimaldi and Spain, the book is constructed somewhat differently from a traditional biography. Having scoured the available documents that might cast some light on Grimaldi's activities, Gies shows us the multiple dimensions of his influence, which ranged from his training of all the leading Spanish actors of the first half of the nineteenth century to his

triumphant challenge of a French historian's interpretation of the court of Isabel II.

The chapters on the theater contain indispensable information on the pre-Romantic Spanish stage. It is Gies's thesis that Grimaldi's efforts to reform the Spanish theater paved the way for the advent of Romantic drama in the mid-1830s. From the book's astonishing account of how Grimaldi, a young officer in the theater, managed to win a contract from Madrid's city council to run the city's two theaters for a season, we learn about the sorry state of drama in Spain's capital: untrained and uneducated actors, a standard repertory of vapid French comedies bowdlerized *comedias* and crude melodramas, run-down, ill-lighted playhouses, a tangle of restrictions based on feudal rules, Fernandine censorship, and court intrigue. Although Grimaldi was impresario of Madrid's theaters for only one year, the book shows us the multiple forms in which he exercised a reforming influence. For example, despite Grimaldi's lack of formal education, his wit, judgment and knowledge were sufficient to make him a presiding presence at the famous *Parnasillo*, the coffee-house discussion group that shaped the literary tastes and attitudes of the young intellectuals who would dominate the theater during the Romantic decade. As stage manager of the Príncipe theater for many years, he trained Madrid's leading actors in the more subtle, natural expression of emotion, built a public responsive to pre-Romantic sensibility and eager for new plays, and encouraged young playwrights like Larra, whose *Macías*, produced and directed by Grimaldi, was one of the earliest manifestations of the Romantic spirit in the Spanish theater. Indeed, all the ground-breaking Romantic dramas prior to 1836 were staged by Grimaldi: *La conjuración de Venecia*, *Macías*, *Don Alvaro o la fuerza del sino*, and *El trovador*.

Gies argues that *La pata de cabra* (1829), the smash hit that made Grimaldi's fortune, was instrumental in making Romantic drama viable. This absurd hodge-podge of melodrama, spectacular «magic» effects and slap-stick comedy not only brought an expanded public to the Madrid theater, but also gave theater staff the technical skills in dealing with the stage machinery, lighting, and sets that would be required by Romantic drama (184). Gies buttresses this convincing thesis with details about

the production of *La pata de cabra* and its reception that in themselves provide new and invaluable information on the sociological and economic aspects of the Spanish theater in this period. This is precisely the kind of investigation that we need much more of if we are ever to have an accurate idea of the receivers or consumers of literary culture in Spain in the nineteenth century. How much tickets cost, who bought them, how they were distributed, what preoccupied the authorities, how the audience behaved in the theater, how much money constituted a good take for an evening's performance—all these questions receive concrete answers. The pages (64-69) documenting the unprecedented success of *La pata* are a tour de force of primary research: using newspaper accounts, letters and memoirs, box office figures and municipal records, Gies constructs a vivid picture of the scope of the play's appeal (220,000 people saw it between 1829 and 1850, he calculates) and its financial implications.

The last chapter, leaving the subject of the theater to trace Grimaldi's activities after leaving Spain in 1836, sheds light on a variety of other facets of Spanish history. Gies's discussion of Grimaldi's association with *La Revista Española*, for example, makes clearer that important journal's political line of support for the Moderates and the Queen-Regent. Grimaldi's alliance with the moderate right can be seen in his long and cordial collaboration with General Narvaez as the General's agent, sometime consul and secret propagandist in France. In his use of the press to defend the General's interests, he revealed his astute awareness of the importance of manipulating the information media in modern politics and business.

One of the most fascinating episodes in this involves Grimaldi's mediation of a deal in which Narvaez's government secretly loaned money to Louis Napoleon, who at the end of 1849 badly needed funds to stabilize his new government. «I am the purest Napoleonist in France» (156), declared Grimaldi in a letter to Louis Napoleon. Referring thus to his origins as an obscure soldier in Bonaparte's army and his ultimate status as a wealthy capitalist providing financial support for the Bonapartist dynasty, Grimaldi slyly suggests the parallel between his own life story and the Napoleonic myth. It may be that Grimaldi embodied a type well-known to the France of the July monarchy, but to

the Spaniards that he dazzled with his intelligence and enterprising spirit he represented a social species that was just beginning to appear in their country —the self-made man, the bourgeois parvenu. David Gies's excellent book unfolds for us in concrete detail the talents, attitudes and cultural politics of one of Spain's first examples of this type.

University of California, San Diego

SUSAN KIRKPATRICK

Antonio de Capmany y de Montpalau. *Centinela contra franceses*, edición, introducción, notas y apéndices documentales por Françoise Etienvre, Londres, Tamesis Books, 1988, 193 pp.

Nunca se insistirá lo suficiente en la importancia que tiene la recuperación del pensamiento y la obra de los escritores de fines del XVIII y principios del XIX para la comprensión de la España contemporánea. Uno de los ejemplos más evidentes lo constituye don Antonio de Capmany, a quien tradicionalmente vienen prestando atención los historiadores de las ideas económicas en el ámbito catalán en razón de sus *Memorias históricas sobre la Marina. Comercio y Artes de [...] Barcelona* y su *Código de las costumbres marítimas de Barcelona...*, dos obras desde luego importantes, pero no las únicas que su autor produjo. A remediar ese incompleto conocimiento en su más evidente laguna está dedicada la edición que la profesora Etienvre acaba de publicar de la más curiosa y significativa de esas obras hasta ahora no asequibles: el *Centinela contra franceses*, texto básico para perfilar una de las líneas dominantes del pensamiento español en la época de la Guerra de la Independencia y las Cortes de Cádiz.

La Introducción de 73 páginas comienza, como es propio, con un bosquejo de la biografía de Capmany (1742-1813), basado en la *Relación sucinta* que él mismo preparó y publicó al final de su vida (sin duda como curriculum destinado a divulgar sus méritos de cara al futuro político español) y que reprodujeron *El Español* de Blanco White y un folleto madrileño de 1815. Gracias a esta y otras fuentes documenta la editora el contacto de Capmany con el núcleo sevillano de Ola-