

Francesc Foguet i Boreu, *El teatro catalán en el exilio republicano de 1939*, Biblioteca del Exilio (Anejos 28), Seville, Renacimiento, 2016. Pbk. 203 p. ISBN: 9788416685646.

Published as part of the pioneering collection on Spanish Republican Exile fostered by Renacimiento, *El teatro catalán en el exilio republicano de 1939* is unusual in its exclusive focus on the cultural practice of the Catalan exile communities. Thus, it further opens up the Biblioteca del Exilio to the diversity of experiences of political refugees during and after the Spanish Civil War, and provides a depth of focus on the different socio-cultural dimensions of particular performative practices that has largely been missing from extant work on the theatre of exile, due to the overarching focus thus far on dramatists, directors and dramatic writing. Commissioned by Professor Manuel Aznar-Soler, who provides the editorial introduction to the volume, as part of a Spanish government-funded project on «The Theatre of Exile since 1939», Foguet's study largely fits within the ethos of this wider project to map the diversity of activity within a previously under-researched field of production, as demanded by Aznar Soler himself in *Primer Acto* in 2009. Presenting his study as an initial approximation to the phenomenon, Foguet provides an overview of the trajectories of different Catalan theatre practitioners in exile, reflecting on how the theatre was framed as a force of social cohesion and cultural continuity in the decades after the end of the war, and identifying the main nuclei of activity as well as the most active practitioners. In this, he provides a clear and user-friendly map for anyone wishing to engage in further in-depth study of the phenomenon, in which key centres of activity —Toulouse, Mexico City and Buenos Aires— are identified and described over the period from 1939 to the early 1970s and the most significant dramatists and texts marked out for possible inclusion in the twentieth-century repertoire. Indeed, as a result of the research undertaken for his historical survey, Foguet has already provided audiences with editions of unpublished plays by Odó Hurtado (Vendaval, Lleida: Punctum, 2014) and Lluís

Capdevila (*La festa major de Gràcia*, Tarragona, Arola, 2015, edited with Just Cortés), accompanied by excellent introductions to both dramatists' lives and dramatic output.

At the same time, this study is far more than a «primer acercamiento» (Foguet 2016: 19), as anyone familiar with Foguet's extensive previous historiography of twentieth-century Catalan theatre would most probably expect. Based on rigorous and exhaustive investigation into the available archives, including the full repertory of exile journals housed in the Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya, the Arxiu del Pabelló de la República, and the Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya, private collections, memoirs and visits to the Casals that would have provided a home away from home for refugees escaping post-war reprisals, Foguet pieces together a detailed context-sensitive history that helps readers to understand the changing landscapes into which Catalan theatre practice in exile inserted itself. Rather than attempting to place the phenomena he analyses systematically in dialogue with other theatrical activities undertaken by the Spanish Republican exile communities or in the context of the cultures of reception, however, he is largely concerned with presenting his map in terms of twentieth-century Catalan cultural historiography. This both governs the positioning and the frame used for analysis, with the book maintaining its focus throughout on how the Catalan exile communities themselves view and construct their own activity, around the need to transmit a culture that is considered to be under threat, in order to «existir en el exilio» (Foguet 2016: 50), and on their particular contribution to Catalan cultural history. Furthermore, Foguet's recognition of the very particular context of Catalan exile, as a result of the severe restrictions faced by the Catalan language and culture under the Franco regime, allows him to explain the particular ideological urgency invested in cultural continuity in exile, whose valencies were hence significantly different to that experienced by the Spanish-language communities with which the Catalan refugees were generally intermingled.

Beginning in the first chapter with an overview of the trajectories of Catalan theatre practitioners in exile, with a particular focus on dramatists, in chapter two the focus is on the function—or what Foguet calls the «razones»—of these theatre activities in exile, drawing attention to the need to justify such an activity from the start. The bulk of his history is, however, organised into three central chapters, dedicated to excavating the different practices associated with three key host contexts—Toulouse, Buenos Aires and Mexico City. Anyone familiar with Spanish Republican exile culture more generally would not be surprised by the highlight focus on these cities, as they were centres of activity for all Republican exile groups. Indeed, it is important to note that there is actually very little recognition of this fact within Foguet's study, let alone

of the presence of multiple cultural and political activism in each of the areas, with practitioners moving between different languages and centres of activity. In the few cases where this is recognised, such as that of Maruxa Vilalta or Maria Lluïsa Algarra, for instance, it is largely because these figures' lack of production in Catalan in the period means that there can only be attention to their Spanish-language trajectories. But the overall effect is to turn Catalan exile theatre practice into an island that seems to have little or nothing to do with what is happening around it. Even so, the intricate detail of Foguet's mapping of Catalan theatrical activity in each of these sites does provide a strong basis for future studies that might wish to explore further the overlap between different community centres, and the ways in which different individuals and groups negotiate them, whether as repeating islands or insofar as they indicate more complex intermingling and interconnections. The wealth of details on these three key sites of memory is complemented in the appendices by an overview of the theatrical repertoire in other active centres: Caracas, Cordoba, Rosario and Mendoza (Argentina), Guadalajara (Mexico), Havana (Cuba), Montevideo, New York, Paris, and Santiago de Chile.

For those interested in Catalan theatre history tout court, the most valuable chapter is undoubtedly the final one on «dramaturgias», where Foguet outlines the principal features of Catalan exile theatre, identifying the primary focus on continuity of repertoire in the initial prevalence of dramatists and works drawn from the early decades of the twentieth century and later mirroring of plays that could be seen on the Barcelona stage with the gradual recovery of production in Catalan during the 1950s. Thus, the overarching picture of Catalan theatre in exile is a conservative one, characterised by restorative rather than reflective nostalgia, which leads Foguet to align himself with contemporary critics of its limitations. For him, the signs of more progressive and experimental practice can on the one hand be found in the opportunities the Catalan cultural infrastructure in exile offered to writers who found it difficult to see their work staged under the Franco regime, such as Manuel de Pedrolo and Maria Aurèlia Capmany. Yet he also identifies a number of writers and texts that buck the more conservative trend, through the construction of reflective, alternative spaces, as in the cases of Josep Carner, Agustí Bartra and Mercè Rodoreda, or in the exploration of the experience of war, political violence and exile, as in a handful of works by Ambrosi Carrion, Ramon Vinyes, Odó Hurtado, Lluís Capdevila and Ferran Canyameres. It is, in part, the decision to reserve the idea of a «dramaturgia del exilio republicano» for plays that reflect the experience of exile, that results in Foguet's concluding remarks in this chapter about the limitations of Catalan exile theatre. However, his final conclusion is more upbeat in tone, celebrating the diver-

sity of activity and calling for greater contemporary attention to the works he has so carefully recovered from the archive.

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