



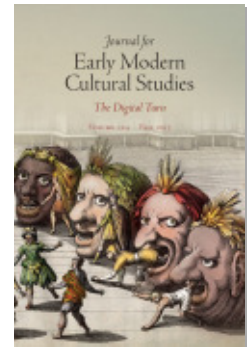
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CATCOM: A Database on Performances of Spanish Classical Theater

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Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies, Volume 13, Number 4, Fall 2013, pp. 160-163 (Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press



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CATCOM:

A Database on Performances of Spanish Classical Theater

TERESA FERRER VALLS

The research group DICAT (http://www.uv.es/dicat/index_en.html) has been working for almost twenty years on the creation of research instruments that will enhance scholars' knowledge of Early Modern Spanish theater through the use of digital tools that create new ways to combine and apply data.¹ The database *Diccionario biográfico de actores del teatro clásico español* (DICAT) (Ferrer Valls) was the result of work done during nearly fifteen years. The DICAT group created a database with almost five thousand entries, which document the activity of actors, actresses, heads of companies, and musicians who worked in Spanish professional theatrical companies during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We also included five hundred digitized signatures and a visual database with two hundred images and videos, together with a digitalized edition of the unpublished manuscript *Confirmación de la Cofradía de la Novena*, which includes the documents and regulations related to the 1634 foundation of the actors' guild.

The project CATCOM. *Database of plays mentioned in theatrical documentation (1540–1700)*, which we are currently developing, is based on our previous experience of creating the database DICAT. It is important to point out that Spanish theatrical documentation is exceptionally abundant, especially if we compare it to other European countries of the early modern period. We find a lot of documents regarding contracts between actors and the heads of the companies; contracts with the lessors of the playhouses; contracts with

municipal or with ecclesiastical authorities for religious festivities and the *Corpus*; receipts for performances at the royal palace; documents reporting expenditures or inventories of costumes and plays; inquisitorial processes or lawsuits that sometimes offer interesting information for the history of Spanish classical theater, etc. In these documents we can often find titles of plays, which can sometimes be difficult for researchers to track due to the vast number of plays in the Golden Age corpus. The objective of the CATCOM project is to collect, classify, and critically analyze the information on these titles, and make it available to researchers in the form of a database that will make it easier to access a calendar of performances, offer information on these performances (name of the company who performed the play, town where it took place, type of theatrical space where it was performed), locate titles and relate them to alternative titles of the same play and adaptations, and provide a current state of the question regarding their authorship. The large amount of information concerning the performance of plays in early modern Spain makes the use of digital tools especially valuable, as the database becomes an extremely useful instrument that enables researchers to connect data in ways that would otherwise be extremely difficult (or even impossible) to do. By gathering, comparing, and analyzing all this information in a single database, we can sometimes detect interesting and relevant issues that the dispersion of documents made difficult to perceive, which then allows researchers to offer a solution to these problems.

On our web page we explain the methodology of the project in the section titled "Projects" (http://www.uv.es/dicat/catcom_en.html), and we offer a selection of our database (<http://catcom.uv.es/>). In short, our research focuses on two essential issues:

- 1) Critically treating the data in order to create a digital calendar of performances.
- 2) Identifying the titles that are mentioned in the documents with particular plays and their authors, which can present some difficulties specific to early modern Spanish theater.

The documents we work with are not usually of a literary nature, but rather are legal and historical documents. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the titles that are mentioned with specific plays, which often present one or more alternative titles, or have controversial attributions. Most of the time references to

performances do not include the attribution of the play to a specific playwright, or if they do, it is not always reliable. It is necessary to confront these problems in order to differentiate different entries in the calendar of performances. Naturally we cannot always solve the problems related to the attribution of plays, but we do offer an updated state of the question on the attributions of each play and try to relate them to a specific play and playwright.

For the online publication of the *CATCOM* database we have created a specific database accessible from our web page that is different from the one researchers are working on. This allows us to separate the tasks of research and online publication, and to manage both areas independently. The online database obtains its information from the researchers' database through a process that allows us to select which entries we want to publish. We have also filtered and reorganized the information so that the data on titles has a structure more appropriate for online navigation. In the current state of the database that the research team is working on we have close to 2,600 entries, which will yield a slightly lower number of individual plays as we work on them, since some titles are predictably alternative titles of other plays. Up to this point we have included in the digital calendar information on 5,926 performances related to these play titles.

From the initial page of the database we can access different tabs: "Índice de títulos" (List of Titles), which shows all existing entries; "Bibliografía" (Bibliography), where users can see the bibliographical references used for this project; and "Búsqueda de registros" (Entries search), which allows users to search the database for titles, type of plays, playwrights, performance dates, head of companies, place of the performance, and type of performance (based on three categories: palace, public playhouse, and *Corpus*). Users can also combine these criteria when using the search function.

I would like to end by mentioning the productivity generated by the collaboration of digital humanities projects that work in similar fields, in our case early modern Spanish theater. For example, the work done on the databases *DICAT* and *CATCOM* allows for a collaboration with the database *ARTELOPE* (<http://artelope.uv.es/>), directed by Joan Oleza, which offers data and plot summaries of over four hundred plays attributed to Lope de Vega. Based on the work done by the research group *DICAT*, we are going to incorporate information on the performances of plays by Lope to the *ARTELOPE* database. On the other hand, the team directed by Margaret R. Greer that is developing the database *Manos Teatrales* (<http://manosteatrales.org>) has cross-

referenced information from the databases *DICAT* and *CATCOM* in order to clarify over one hundred cast lists of actors and actresses that appear in early modern Spanish theatrical manuscripts, and locate references to performances (including fifty related to plays by Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca, for example). Databases such as these, and the possibility of cross-referencing their information, constitute powerful digital instruments that create new ways to analyze information on early modern Spanish literature and help researchers develop their own critical inquiries in the field.

NOTES

1. Our work has been funded by the Spanish MICINN and MINECO, together with FEDER funds (projects with refs. FFI2008-00813; FFI2011-23549; CDS2009-00033). This international research group currently includes the following members: Drs. Teresa Ferrera Valls, Josefa Badía Herrera, Alejandro García Reidy, Dolores González Martínez, Enrico Di Pastena, Diego Símini, Jonathan Thacker, Debora Vaccari, and Elizabeth Wright; along with the following graduate students: Rosa Durá Celma, Purificació García Mascarell, Irina Ionescu, and Nàdia Revenga García.

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A Description of *Reading Shakespeare's Early Modern Readers*, a Digital Database

MARGARET RICE VASILEIOU

Reading Shakespeare's Early Modern Readers, directed and co-edited by Jean-Christophe Mayer and co-edited by Margaret Vasileiou, is an online database focusing on early modern and eighteenth-century readers' responses to Shakespeare. Sponsored by L'Institut de Recherche sur la Renaissance, l'Age Classique et les Lumières (IRCL) at the Université Paul-Valéry in Montpellier, France, it documents manuscript inscriptions found in early modern editions of Shakespeare's poetry and plays, as well as early modern and eighteenth-century manuscript miscellanies, letters, and commonplace books in which inscribers have excerpted from or commented on Shakespeare