

**Josep Solervicens-Antoni L. Moll (a cura di), *La poètica renaixentista a Europa. Una recreació del llegat clàssic*, Barcelona, Punctum 2011, pp. 241, ISBN978-84-939252-0-8**

This book is one in a series of publications by a working research group at the University of Barcelona, *Mimesi* (<http://stel.ub.edu/mimesi/>), which has as its primary goal the study of literature and literary theory in the Renaissance and Baroque periods connected with the literary culture of Catalonia, focusing also on how Catalonian culture interacted with other European literary cultures and traditions during the early modern period. The working group organizes conferences, workshops, and other scholarly meetings, which have generated numerous publications, including the one under review. *Mimesi* also maintains a website with an extensive database of treatises on poetics from the period to which its members dedicate their research. The searchable database contains descriptive entries, including key words, on over one hundred works published between 1475 and 1836, in Latin, Catalan, or Spanish. In some cases the texts themselves are provided in pdf files that can be downloaded.

Two of the prime movers of this group, Josep Solervicens and Antoni L. Moll, have edited an impressive volume of seven essays on the reception of classical poetics in the European Renaissance, with an introduction by Solervicens (pp. 7-16), *La poètica renaixentista a Europa. Una recreació del llegat clàssic*. The volume brings together work from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives: the study of the classics, romance philology, comparative literature, and literary theory. Authors and their essays include: 1) Bernhard Huss, *La teoria del furor poeticus come arma dottrinarria: Ficino, Landino e il Cinquecento* (pp. 19-44); 2) Roger Friedlein, *El furor poètic escenificat* (pp. 47-66); 3) Brigitte Kappl, *Aristotelian Katharsis in Renaissance Poetics* (pp. 69-97); 4) Josep Solervicens, *De l'ampliació del sistema aristotèlic de gèneres a l'establiment d'un nou paradigma (1548-1601)* (pp. 101-35); 5) Anne Duprat, *Le cheval de Troie: Mimesis et allégorie dans les poétiques de l'épopée au xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle* (pp. 139-55); 6) Roland Béhar, "Los sagrados despojos de la veneranda antigüedad": *estilo poético y debate literario en torno a Fernando de Herrera* (pp. 159-96); 7) Cesc Esteve & Antoni-Lluís Moll, *La poética catalana del Renaixement: conceptes clau* (pp. 199-241).

Essays 1-6 in the book can be divided into three broad sections, each focused on the revival of an approach derived from classical literary theory: Platonic (1-2), Aristotelian (3-5), and Hermogenic (6). The seventh and final essay summarizes these three approaches in its case for a Catalonian vernacular poetics. The essays of Huss (1) and Friedlein (2) that open the volume focus primarily on Neoplatonic literary theory. Huss considers the foundational importance of the interpretations of Ficino and Landino in the Quattrocento concerning poetic madness for later theorists in the Cinquecento such as Lorenzo Giacomini and Francesco Patrizi. For Ficino, poetic

madness is a way to connect with the divine, a means to encounter divine truths and he privileges the poet's experience in this process. Landino's focus is on the rhetorical art that enables the inspired orator to encounter truth, shifting the emphasis away from the poet. Friedlein also examines the theme of divinely-inspired madness but focuses on the representation of the *poeta vates* in a striking trilogy of Renaissance texts, not typically brought into dialogue with one other: João de Barros, *Crónica do Imperador Clarimundo*; Maurice Scève, *Microcosme*; and Alonso de Ercilla, *La Araucana*. These texts open up the geographical boundaries of the space declared in the book's title, Europe, pointing the reader to Africa and Asia along the routes of exploration of the eager Portuguese sailors in the case of *Clarimundo* and to Patagonia in the New World in the case of *La Araucana*.

Three essays follow that deal with questions generated by the debate on theory in Italy prompted by the reading of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Padua and elsewhere in the second half of the sixteenth century. The third essay by Kappl tackles the hoary question of catharsis, considering discussions of it in Robertello, Maggi, Castelvetro, Piccolomini, Giacomini, and Minturno. Most striking, perhaps, is the presentation of catharsis in the work of Lorenzo Giacomini (1586), who develops a theory of physiological catharsis that anticipates by several hundred years similar interpretations of classicists, e.g. Jacob Bernays, in the nineteenth century. In the fourth essay, Solervicens considers how the energized investigations of Aristotle's *Poetics* affected critical thinking about the status of genres, emphasizing the importance of Robertello at the beginning of that process. Solervicens continues by examining the attempts of subsequent theorists to expand upon Robertello's Aristotle and make a case for lesser genres not mentioned in the *Poetics*. E.g., Bonciani presents an Aristotelian reading of the *novella* in *Lezioni sopra il comporre delle novelle* (1574); Sigonio and Tasso on the dialogue in, respectively, *De dialogo liber* (1562) and *Discorso dell'arte del dialogo* (1585); Viperano on the lyric poem in *De poetica libri tres* (1579) and Torelli on the lyric in a speech delivered at the Accademia degli Innominati in Parma (1594). In the book's fifth essay, Duprat examines the exploration of imitation and allegory in the context of theories of the epic poem, with attention to the debate as it affected the interpretation of epics by Ariosto, Tasso, Ronsard, and Marino.

Béhar's essay shifts the focus from Platonic and Aristotelian literary theories to the question of style in the analysis Fernando de Herrera made of Garcilaso de la Vega (1580), drawing attention to his dependence on Cicero and Hermogenes. Hermogenes in particular had a lasting and deep impact on the work of theorists in the Iberian peninsula, especially in Catalonia. The volume's final essay by Esteve and Moll considers key concepts in the Catalonian theoretical Renaissance. Esteve and Moll connect the idea of a neoclassical poetics with that of a vernacular poetics, in this case the

Catalonian vernacular, using the discourse of literary theory in the Italian Cinquecento as the go-between.

Each essay, even the introduction, includes an ample bibliography. In Béhar's essay, the bibliographical apparatus runs eight pages; the norm among the others is three to four pages, lending the book a value for its extensive lists of works on the topic of poetics in early modern Europe. Alas, there is no index, which would make the volume even more valuable as a reference work. That shortcoming notwithstanding, this is an impressive publication that admirably represents a dynamic collective hard at work in their examination of Renaissance and Baroque poetics across Europe.

Dennis Looney

University of Pittsburgh

Department of French and Italian

Secondary Appointments in Departments of Classics and Philosophy

[looney@pitt.edu](mailto:looney@pitt.edu)