

Review

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Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (Apr., 2006), pp. 564-565

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20466855>

Accessed: 07-12-2015 12:25 UTC

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extremely well is to provide an outline of the development of the theme of language across the respective *œuvres* of the three poets in question while, at the same time, still managing to provide numerous close readings of whole poems (or of extracts) by way of concrete example. All in all, this volume provides an excellent introduction to the theme of language in contemporary Spanish poetry and bears testimony not only to the authority and insight of an accomplished scholar in the field but also to the communicative flair of an experienced teacher.

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

FEDERICO BONADDIO

'Nada es como es, sino como se recuerda': Teatro de la Abadía 1995-2005. Ed. by TEATRO DE LA ABADÍA. Madrid: Teatro de la Abadía. 2005. €25. ISBN 84-609-3670-8.

Teatro de la Abadía has for the past ten years been the most promising and exciting independent production venue in the Spanish capital, Madrid. Based in a converted church, with the veteran director José Luis Gómez at the helm, they have produced a startling array of work and hosted many alternative companies' pieces. Ten years on, it seems appropriate to pause and take stock; and not, as Gómez points out in his introduction, because theatre is an ephemeral art: 'todo es a la postre efímero' (p. 11). More accurately, as the title indicates ('Nothing is as it is, but rather as it is remembered', taken from Ramón del Valle-Inclán, 'Concepto de la vida y el arte', in *Valle-Inclán en Valencia*, ed. by Dru Dougherty (Madrid: Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos, 1994), p. 14), memory allows the past to be processed, reassessed and recalled anew. The history of this remarkable theatre is exactly what this strikingly bound and well-presented book seeks to unravel. In its ten years of operation, Teatro de la Abadía has not merely produced plays, it has nurtured a core of artists, developed a marked house style, and become the closest thing that Madrid has to a laboratory theatre.

To apply Grotowski's terminology to the Abadía is not entirely fanciful either. José Luis Gómez worked with Grotowski after studying at the Academy of Dramatic Arts at Bochum. Much later, he brought the methodologies of fellow European directors/pedagogues to Madrid, including Jacques Lecoq and Eugenio Barba. In recent years, the Abadía has moved to publish Spanish translations of seminal actor-training books by Michael Chekhov, Lecoq, and Grotowski. It is important to remember that the Abadía was always intended to be a training centre as well as a theatre, and was inaugurated as an academy from which the subsequent professional company members were plucked. The consequence of Gómez's approach, as we can well see ten years down the line, is that the Abadía is one of the few venues in Madrid which regularly programme unconventional theatre pieces that rely primarily on the body as an expressive tool. The photographic evidence the book provides indicates that for the most part these were not exclusively text-based productions, but rather sought alternative registers to reinvigorate the well-known works of Brecht, Ionesco, and Valle-Inclán.

The danger of such retrospectives is that they become self-indulgent celebratory coffee-table glossies for the theatre's chattering classes. However, the wealth of detail sets this work apart. It charts each in-house production in chronological order and devotes a chapter to each season. Every show is photographed lavishly, with an added technical information sheet. Each chapter also includes a list of invited companies, workshops that were held, and other sundry events. Helpfully, each season is headed by essays written by collaborators attached to the theatre throughout the years (Steven Berkoff, Àlex Rigola, Juan Luis Cebrián). Furthermore, each season features a run-down of the year's major world events. This act of contextualization is important to

note, serving to remind us how the Abadía has never shrunk from commenting on the issues of the day: 'El Teatro de la Abadía aspira a relacionarse con lo que sucede en la sociedad [. . .] la Historia, a veces tan cómodamente olvidada' (p. 15). Gómez himself admits that the book is intended as a tribute to ten years of hard work, but the varied set of essays indicate the Abadía's defining urge to create 'el placer inteligente' (p. 15).

Of course, as an anniversary publication the book is blissfully free of any negative write-ups, and likewise is prone to a certain self-aggrandisement. When the introduction boldly talks about a theatre's struggle to portray the human condition, one is tempted to wonder how successful they have been or on what evidence this assertion is based. It is certainly useful to get a clear idea of the Abadía's mission statement, but a critical reflection on the highs and lows would have provided the material necessary to substantiate their claims. Available only from the theatre itself and specialist bookshops, this is a work more useful for those familiar with the theatre, either as regular visitors or as students of its work. It is evident, however, that there is an audience for the 'placer inteligente' Gómez seeks to disseminate, and an audience who believe in 'el espíritu de La Abadía' (p. 15). In a theatrical scene dominated by corporate theatre and government-run companies, it is good to know that a little corner of Madrid has an independent creative spirit worth nurturing.

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SIMON BREDEN

Early Germanic Literature and Culture. Ed. by BRIAN MURDOCH and MALCOLM READ. (Camden House History of German Literature, 1) Rochester, NY: Camden House. 2004. x + 334 pp. \$85; €60. ISBN 1-57113-199-x.

German Literature of the Early Middle Ages. Ed. by BRIAN MURDOCH. (Camden House History of German Literature, 2) Rochester, NY: Camden House. 2004. xiv + 283 pp. \$85; €60. ISBN 1-57113-240-6.

The first two volumes in the Camden House History of German Literature together provide the reader with an admirably innovative guide to tackling the earliest literature in German and in related Germanic languages. The decision to make Old High German the focal point of the second, rather than of the first, volume of a literary history of German may initially seem surprising (as Brian Murdoch suggests in his preface to the second volume), but proves to be entirely justified by the lively and unusual intellectual programme of the first volume.

The series opens with an interdisciplinary approach to 'Germanic' culture in all its manifestations, starting with problems of definition. The term 'Germanic' is inevitably a loaded one, with associations going well beyond the merely philological, and it therefore seems appropriate that the first block of essays should engage with the relatively recent intellectual and political history which colour our conception of the 'Germanic'. Thus Brian Murdoch and Malcolm Read outline the various basic approaches (philological, geographical, ethnological, historiographical) to the term; Heinrich Beck analyses the particular circumstances under which 'Germanische Altertumskunde' (Germanic antiquity) was developed and promoted as an academic discipline in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and Herwig Wolfram examines historiographical texts which give a Germanic twist to the literary topos of the *origo gentis* (the origins of a given people). In conceptual terms these three contributions, which engage most directly with the recent cultural implications of the construction of the 'Germanic' (not least in relation to German national identity), are among the most ambitious in the volume. However, this dimension is also touched on in a number of other essays: for example, Adrian Murdoch's discussion of *Germania Romana*