

eina que aporta llum sobre el moment fundacional de la narrativa occitana i catalana i de l'arrelament de la cultura trobadoresca. El diàleg que entaula Espadaler amb tots els estudis previs i que confegeixen un coixí per a la present edició es tradueix en una bibliografia final precisa i detallada que compta amb monografies, edicions de trobadors, estudis historiogràfics i tractats de gramàtica, entre d'altres.

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LLULL, Ramon: *Romance of Evast and Blaquerna, translation and notes*, Robert D. Hughes (trad.), Albert Soler and Joan Santanach (introduction), Barcelona, Woodbridge: Barcino, Tamesis, 2016; «Series B: TEXTOS» 60.

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The Majorcan theologian, philosopher, poet and mystic Ramon Llull (c. 1232 - c. 1316) is an engrossing figure. When I first expressed interest in investigating his vast oeuvre, a medieval Catalan philologist friend mentioned —perhaps it was a warning— that she knew scholars who had begun by researching a single article on Llull and ended up dedicating the rest of their life's work to him. Throughout his prodigious output (over 260 separate extant works on topics ranging from medicine to theology, and from proverbs to logic), Llull's magnetism derives

from his unwavering conviction. Here is a man who is determined to set the world to rights, and convinced that he alone can teach humanity how to achieve this. Following his spiritual awakening, which occurred as he worked on a troubadour composition, Llull rejected both secular literature and secular life. He dedicated the rest of his days to a project at once salvific and literary, determining that «he would have to write a book, the best in the world, against the errors of unbelievers» (BONNER 2010: ps. 34-35). A divine revelation in around 1274 supplied the method to accomplish this: the combinatorial system of practical reasoning known as the Art which, Llull maintained, if correctly applied, would allow its adepts to determine the truth in all matters and would guide them in properly loving and serving God.

As it turned out, a single book, however worthy, was not enough to transform the world, and Llull was compelled to keep trying by presenting his Art in different guises and applying it to a range of subjects. Yet, as Albert Soler and Joan Santanach note in their introduction, «[t]he work which expresses the Lullian desire to reorder the world in the liveliest and most optimistic way is, without doubt, *Blaquerna*» («Introduction», p. 30). This optimism, they suggest, is attributable to the fact that Llull had not yet encountered any major setbacks in his project. As Soler and Santanach drolly explain, by the end of the 1280s, «[Llull] came to realise that, all things considered, the task would be more complicated than he had imagined» («Introduction», p. 17). *Blaquerna*, completed around 1283, is the first of Llull's works which can be classified as a novel, the other being *Felix, or the Book of Wonders* (1289). *Blaquerna* is typically Lullian in its innovation, its ambition and above all its totalizing tendencies. The novel is aimed at the broadest of audiences, promising something for every reader. It is a fantasy of setting the world to rights which proffers the vision of a comprehensively re-ordered Christendom, drawing inspiration from medieval French prose romance but presenting its narrative with the distinctive twist which is the hallmark of Llull's Art.

Blaquerna follows the life of its eponymous hero, who desires to retreat from the world to live as a hermit. The text is divided into five books, signifying the five wounds of Christ, and each book represents a different estate (marriage, the religious life, the episcopacy, the papacy and the eremitic life). Each book is further subdivided, structured according to a catechetical framework or another significant theme (respectively: the seven deadly sins; the five senses and the seven virtues; the *Ave Maria*; the beatitudes; the *Gloria*; and two of Llull's own short interpolated works, the *Book of the Lover and the Beloved* and the *Art of Contemplation*).¹ Book One relates the story of *Blaquerna*'s father, Evast, and his mother, Aloma, and their transition from lay marriage to life as beguin and beguine, while the first part of the Book Two describes the life of Natana,

1. See the explanatory table on p. 18 of Soler and Santanach, «Introduction».

Blaquerna's female counterpart, first as a nun and then as abbess. From the second part of Book Two, the narrative focuses on Blaquerna. Called to the eremitic life, the young man sets out to seek a suitable location for his hermitage. However, the world needs him, and Blaquerna must thus follow an almost comically convoluted trajectory in order to reach his goal, becoming successively monk, abbot, bishop and pope—and reforming the entire ecclesiastical hierarchy as he passes through it—before finally, in his old age, he is able to resign from the papacy and seek the life of solitude and contemplation he has always yearned for. Along the way, he meets a number of allegorical figures, as well as many other characters. The relative merits of the active versus the contemplative life constitute a core theme of the text.

Blaquerna is not just a fictional narrative, however. It is also a guide to various aspects of Llull's Art. The text is structured to familiarise its readers with the principles underlying the Art and to acquaint them with key concepts, such as the three faculties of the rational soul (memory, intellect and will). Principles of the Art, such as the Divine Virtues of God (goodness, greatness, eternity, power, wisdom, will...) recur throughout the text, and different groupings of these and other terms (such as difference, concordance and contrariety; beginning, middle and end) underlie many of the situations and scenarios presented by the narrative. The Art functions through analysis of these combinations of terms. Robert D. Hughes' invaluable footnotes highlight this framework, although some of the notes will remain opaque to those not already acquainted with Llull's thought, since they refer to the Figures of the Art, diagrams which are neither reproduced nor discussed in this book. However, detailed analysis of Llull's work and thought is always an intertextual endeavour.² The presentation of the Art through narrative provides a much gentler and more discursive introduction than is offered by Llull's more technical works, and the critical apparatus of this edition facilitates various levels of engagement with the text.

Book Five of *Blaquerna* offers resources for the practical application of the Art. The *Book of the Lover and the Beloved*, which forms part of Book Five, is perhaps Llull's best-known work. This mystical opuscle, which circulated independently from the rest of *Blaquerna* after the late 1280s, is comprised of 357 verses which present the relationship between the Beloved (God) and His Lover (the Christian) («Introduction», p. 68). For example:

[27] The bird was singing in the Beloved's garden. The Lover arrived and said to the bird: «If we do not understand each other through language, let us understand each other through love, for your song represents my Beloved to my eyes.» (p. 425)

2. For an introduction to the Art, see BONNER (1993); for in-depth analysis of every aspect, see BONNER (2007).

These versicles, which Llull describes as «moral metaphors», are intended to serve as spurs to contemplation, each providing enough material for a full day of prayer («Introduction», p. 53). Some of the versicles end with questions which test the reader's comprehension of previous material, for example:

[317] The Beloved felt mercy towards His Lover because of His perfection, and likewise because of His Lover's needs.

So the question arose: for which of these two reasons does the Beloved more fully forgive the faults of His Lover? (p. 481)

This interactive, interrogative approach is typical of Llull's didacticism. The *Book of the Lover and the Beloved* is followed by the *Art of Contemplation*, an opuscle which describes a series of contemplative exercises employed by Blaqueria the hermit. These methods are presented as a model for contemplation that can be adopted by readers.

This new edition of *Blaqueria* is only the second full translation of the text into English; it is based on Soler and Santanach's 2009 critical edition of the medieval Catalan text («Introduction», p. 72). Hughes has succeeded admirably in his aim to produce «a readable and plausible, if complex, modern rendering» of *Blaqueria* («Translator's Preface», p. 79). While the aura of the text remains unmistakably Lullian, the translation is composed in clear, precise and idiomatic English. Hughes' Translator's Preface outlines his approach to the task and discusses his choices in translating both commonly-used and multivalent medieval Catalan verbs (*esser*, *haver*, *fer*, etc.) and particularly Lullian usages such as *vivificar*, *contrari* and *concordança*. Further commentary on medieval Catalan idioms and other translation choices is given in footnotes throughout the volume, and the original text is provided for phrases whose rhyme, rhythm or syntax cannot be satisfactorily reproduced in English. Hughes' meticulous footnotes also offer cross-references for recurring themes within the text, as well as explanations of philosophical, theological, historical and cultural allusions, and references to the Art.

Soler and Santanach's excellent and extensive introduction provides a summary of the narrative and a discussion of its structure, as well as a range of valuable supplementary material, including historical background, exposition of analytic frameworks which can be used to interpret the text, consideration of the narrative models on which *Blaqueria* draws, and an account of textual transmission from the thirteenth century to the present day. One or two aspects of this analysis remain somewhat conservative. Despite its title, the *Book of the Lover and the Beloved* is described as referencing «love between friends» rather than erotic love («Introduction», ps. 54-55). This is odd, since (homo)eroticism is a familiar element in thirteenth-century Christian mysticism, including the Franciscan mysticism whose texts Soler and Santanach explicitly cite as narrative models for *Blaqueria* («Introduction», p. 67). Nevertheless, the introduction is an immensely rich and informative resource.

Llull is a remarkably significant intellectual presence in the medieval Mediterranean. His role as one of the originators of literary Catalan; his generic innovations; his close involvement in copying, translating and disseminating his own texts; and his engagement with Jewish and Islamic theology all signal that scholars of medieval European literature should be aware of his thought. *Blaquerna* serves as an ideal introduction to both Llull's work and his mindset. The tone of the narrative is always earnest, often solemn, yet sometimes drolly humorous; the text is thematically wide-ranging and structurally varied; and this edition, from translation to notes to introduction, is truly exemplary, not to mention beautifully presented. The *Romance of Evast and Blaquerna* joined Llull's autobiography, *A Contemporary Life*, in Barcino and Tamesis's TEXTOS series. The *Doctrina Pueril*, Llull's work on the education of children, which may well have been composed simultaneously with *Blaquerna*, is forthcoming in the same series in September 2019 («Introduction», p. 14, no. 6).

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Amb bona cadència van apareixent un rere altre els volums de les AVOMO (Arnaldi de Villanova Opera Medica Omnia), la col·lecció que té per objectiu editar i estudiar tota l'obra mèdica d'Arnau de Vilanova. A aquestes alçades ja ningú dubta que el que nasqué com un ambiciós projecte editorial, segurament inèdit arreu d'Europa per la seua magnitud, rigor i constància, acabarà sent una realitat, i que els investigadors disposaran en uns anys de l'edició completa de l'obra mèdica d'Arnau (s'han publicat 16 llibres, i encara en falten almenys 5 més, que