

Dissidences

Hispanic Journal of Theory and Criticism

Volume 9 | Issue 14

Article 2

2-26-2019

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Recommended Citation

Guardiola Tey, María Luisa (2019) "Albert, Caterina, "Silent Souls" and Other Stories. Translated by Kathleen McNerney, New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2018. 154 pp. ISBN: 978-1603290425.," *Dissidences*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 14 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/dissidences/vol9/iss14/2>

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Kathleen McNerney’s compelling translation of a selection of Caterina Albert’s short stories and novellas is a welcome addition to the MLA “Texts and Translations” series where an assortment of Emilia Pardo Bazán’s stories was translated by Joyce Tolliver in 1996. Both Iberian authors were contemporary and shared, together with Anton Chekov, an interest in narratives using a variety of approaches and focusing in the psychological development of characters; their short stories include all kinds of topics and, in the case of Albert and Pardo Bazán, a majority of narratives focus on women’s role and daily trials in a patriarchal society. The wide-range of short stories included in the volume also defy Caterina Albert and Emilia Pardo Bazán’s categorization as rural naturalists; there are a few urban stories, “Carnestoltes” is one of them, together with other ones centered in the countryside; social realism in rural settings is complemented with traces of urban modernism. *Ànimes mudes i altres contes*, a matching volume with the stories in the original Catalan and the introduction in English is also included in the MLA Texts & Translations Series, providing readers the possibility of reading both texts hand in hand. The next step for a broader dissemination of these excellent and captivating narratives would be a Spanish translation. Instructors in US institutions inquired about this translation after the English version was published.

Albert, who wrote mostly in Catalan, was an important and recognized writer in Catalonia. However, she did not receive the acclaim she deserved as an outstanding writer at her time for many reasons, amongst them: male disdain for female creativity in the different arts, and Catalonia’s history within Spain. The author’s insistence on her privacy and domestic customs created a legend around her that is challenged by many scholars nowadays, increasingly gaining critical recognition, both in Spain and internationally.

The collection of stories, deftly translated by McNerney—it is no easy task to translate the nuances of a set of all-embracing narratives with a comprehensive linguistic variety, poetic resonances and multiple expression—arrives at an important female vindication time, since most narratives included in the volume deal with women’s harsh circumstances in a male dominated world, and are extremely relevant in today’s society despite the fact they were written more than a century ago. As McNerney states in the “Note of the Translation”: “Albert’s close look at human nature gives universality to these works” (xxxiii), therefore the significance and continuity of Albert’s message in the XXIst century.

The volume includes an introduction where Albert’s literary trajectory is presented. The author from L’Escala, in the Ampurdà region of Catalonia, has an important place in the Catalan literary canon. She is a model narrator of the late nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries and is a central figure within Catalan women’s literature, where the search for its core in literary foremothers is paramount. Celebrated forerunners, Josepa Massanés, Dolors Monserdà and Caterina Albert are followed by later authors such as Carme Karr, Maria Aurèlia Capmany and Montserrat Roig. The Catalan Ampurdanese writer is described as a feminist “avant la lettre”, the stories included in the volume attest to this description.

A quotation by the author depicts Albert's artistic freedom and eclectic literary style, breaking away from cultural and literary movements: "But can the work of an artist have limits? I don't believe art can be restrained by moral norms. I believe it is fundamental to advocate for artistic freedom. Thanks to this independence, I have been faithful to my vocation." (xiii, translated by McNerney) Albert is a resourceful author who wrote in different styles from a variety of literary movements, including modernism; she only rejects *noucentisme*, designed to purge the cultural system of unsuitable elements: women and common people, suggesting a rigid immobility and adherence to norms.

The volume's first work is the dramatic monologue in verse, *La Infanticida*. This short piece is a rewriting of the differences sought after by the hegemonic modernist canon to bring attention to the feared "others": women and the lower classes. The short piece stages the words and actions of a woman, confined to a mental institution after killing her own child because of extreme fear and solitude, representing a female literary construction challenging traditional male representation of women. In *La Infanticida*, the author uses several literary techniques to present the discord between the external oppressive male forces represented by the sickle, symbol of the father's terror, and internal female consciousness. Scandal ensued after the literary contest jury found out the author of this dramatic monologue was a woman causing Caterina Albert abstaining from attending the awards ceremony and starting to use her male penname, Víctor Català.

Ten stories follow from five collections with myriad narrative techniques that combine spectacular descriptions of nature, juxtaposed with distorted social circumstances, sensual representations of the female body, and a variety of shorter pieces and a few novellas depicting a great array in themes, character and settings. Most works have female protagonists that share great solidarity and friendship among women.

"L'empelt" ("The Graft") and "L'enveja" ("The Craving") are from the collection *Drames rurals*. In these pieces plant and animal imagery offer two contrasted approaches. The later story has naturalistic/deterministic traits, showing two half brothers opposed by their genetic make-up: good stock conflicted to inferior breed. The second piece leans towards plant imagery and has a more lyrical tone. "Conformitat" ("Acceptance") and "Ànimes mudes" ("Silent Souls") are from *Ombrívoles*. Social conventions and an ancestral family feud between two neighboring farms prevent any possible exchange between two star-crossed lovers. Silence becomes a virtual protagonist in these stories, a reflection of the author's position in her cultural milieu. *Caires vius* is represented by two stories, "Carnestoltes" ("Carnaval"), with a hint of a lesbian relationship between a mistress and her maid, and "Gisela", a fairy tale of female vengeance with a twisted, brutal ending. "Secretet rosa" is the only piece that appeared in a periodical, *La il.lustració catalana*, and connects with the art world of Van Veers. Albert was an artistic painter before she devoted herself exclusively to literary work and this piece shows her fondness for art. A very interesting capsized version of the traditional fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood" is "La púa del rampí" ("The Pitchfork Prong") where impressionistic nature overtones coexist with violent scenes of a young girl unsuccessfully attacked. This piece appears in *Contrallums*. Bonding among women in a rural setting against patriarchal order is presented in "La jove: tot pastant" ("Kneadings of a daughter in law") from the collection *Vida molta*. Feminist overtones anticipating Virginia Woolf's 1929 *A Room of One's Own* make this piece a significant one in advanced gender approach. "Pas de comèdia" ("Parts in a play") is the last story in the volume. It depicts a gender reversal role when a mistreated woman discovers her strength. There are parallels with Emilia Pardo Bazán's "Feminista" short story.

Kathleen McNerney's translation of these exquisitely selected narrative pieces challenge preconceived notions about an extremely talented and forward-looking writer who was not fully appreciated during her time. The alternative, and diverse manner in which Albert chooses to express female experience in a male dominated world is skillfully displayed in this carefully crafted volume that honors the Catalan writer whose universal views exceed different periods and trends. Kathleen McNerney's masterfully translated volume opens up Caterina Albert's world to a much wider audience and offers a diverse collection that defy preconceived notions about Albert's oeuvre.