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Review of Ivan Gracia-Arnau, ¿Quién asesinó al virrey? Memoria de la violencia durante la revuelta catalana de 1640

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Gracia-Arnau, Ivan. *¿Quién asesinó al virrey? Memoria de la violencia durante la revuelta catalana de 1640*. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2024. Tiempo Emulado: Historia de América y España, 94. 259 pp.

On June 7, 1640, the corpse of the count of Santa Coloma, viceroy of Catalonia, lay on a beach in Barcelona. Earlier that day, crowds of armed reapers, known in Catalan as *segadors*, had launched the first of three days of attacks on the residences of royal officials, which resulted in several deaths and the loss of considerable property. They vented their anger at the viceroy and the judges of Audiencia of Barcelona, the royal appeals court, who also served as viceregal counselors, accusing them of inaction against abuses by royal troops billeted near the border with France. A few months after viceroy Santa Coloma's death, an armed invasion of Catalonia by Spanish royal troops was underway and Catalans swore allegiance to the French king in exchange for military aid. The war between Catalans and their former ruler, which nineteenth-century Catalan writers called the *Guerra dels Segadors*, lasted until 1652. The death of Santa Coloma therefore thrusted the Spanish monarchy into its greatest crisis of the seventeenth century and ensured its fall from European hegemony.

Ivan Gracia-Arnau's book focuses on the contested memory of the violent events of June 7–9, 1640, which the Catalan writer Manuel Angelón named *Un Corpus de Sangre* in his 1857 novel on these events. Between 1640 and 1652 hundreds of published and unpublished accounts by a wide range of authors competed to shape that memory. They included letters by eyewitnesses to correspondents elsewhere in Spain or abroad, but also in leaflets and gazettes. The judges of the Audiencia of Barcelona, among the main targets of the reapers' rage, wrote memoranda to exonerate themselves and secure rewards for their sacrifice from the Spanish monarch to whom they remained loyal. Some wrote at the behest of Catalan authorities and the royal government to defend or denounce the revolt in book-length manifestos, while others to leave a personal record for their children. Private narratives and correspondence sometimes circulated widely, serving as sources for later histories. They all contributed to how Catalans to this day remember the revolt as a defining episode in Catalonia's often-fraught relationship with Spain, as well as to the continuing debates over its interpretation among historians everywhere.

The book has four chapters organized into two parts. The first part centers on the surviving accounts of the events of June 7–9. It begins with an analysis of their divergent and contradictory versions that result in what Gracia-Arnau calls a *polifonía descompasada* (45), which one might describe as a cacophony. The chapter plunges the reader into an exhilarating and horrifying street view of the chaotic events that often leaves unclear who did what or even what happened. At

the most extreme, one testimony may report a building destroyed by rioters that another one asserts remained intact. The second chapter offers an "intertextual analysis" of several manuscripts and published accounts, tracing the repetition and elaboration of certain versions of the events that sometimes reinterpreted their original meaning (98). However, as the second part of the book shows, favored or more trusted versions of the events did not yield consensus over a basic narrative.

The last two chapters examine efforts from the start to the end of the revolt to impose narratives that, even when authors protested "dispassion" (120), took sides defending or denouncing the reapers' violence and laying blame on different authorities for what happened. Their lack of objectivity is evident in the recurring use of tropes describing the actions of reapers and others as the result of divine inspiration and the quest for justice, or else as evidence of their animal-like "barbarity" and ignorant superstition (182). The book ends with an epilogue that hints at how the contested memory of the revolt would continue to evolve through censorship of accounts favorable to it.

In the prologue to the book, the historian Francesco Benigno considers the book's approach a rebuttal of the illusory certainties of traditional positivist history. In the end, the book resists answering the question on its title: Who killed the viceroy? It argues that a definite answer is impossible because of the unresolvable contradictions in the surviving evidence. Readers who will appreciate most the refusal to provide a coherent account of these events will be those interested in delving deeper into them rather than those looking for an overview of the start of the revolt. Readers will also find it helpful to complement the book's analysis with existing studies on early modern historiography for a broader perspective on how historians and chroniclers sought to balance a commitment to truth with the duty to pass judgment and offer lessons on the past. One important lesson this book offers is that the challenges of making sense of the past should invite, rather than detract from, fresh approaches to a key event in early modern European history.

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