

## Classical Scholarship, Cultural Prestige and National Identity in Modern Catalonia

*Del Romanticisme al Noucentisme: els grans mestres de la Filologia Catalana i la Filologia Clàssica a la Universitat de Barcelona*, a cura de Jordi Malé, Rosa Cabré i Montserrat Jufresa (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2004), 116 pp.

In the early months of 1926 Carles Riba prefaced the first volume of his Catalan translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* with a dedicatory to the politician Francesc Cambó (1876–1947) "in the hope that he will one day see realised the high aspirations that have presided over this daring translator's work, and made it in these times of damage and shame not only a pleasure but a duty".<sup>1</sup> Riba's intricate syntax and grandiloquent tone should not detract from the relevance of his tribute to Cambó. For Riba was writing in the highly adverse political circumstances created from 1923 onwards by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. And Cambó himself had been instrumental in the launch in 1922 of a collection of classical texts in bilingual editions published by the Fundació Bernat Metge, of which Plutarch's biographies of Theseus and Romulus were to mark volume eighteen.

Riba's prefatory words to his version of Plutarch encapsulate the spirit of the so-called *Noucentisme* (the movement of the new century), a new concept of national culture developed by conservative Catalanism after 1906 which dominated cultural life in Catalonia in the first three decades of the twentieth century. It is at this point that cultural life came to be regarded officially for the first time as an essential component in the political future of Catalonia. Hence the emergence of an efficient programme of cultural institutionalisation, which, in addition to creating a network of cultural foundations, schools and libraries, aimed at protecting and preserving the archaeological, historical, and literary heritage of Catalonia. With a hegemonic party organisation led—among others—by Cambó, and from achievement and, subsequently, domination of semi-devolved government in the form of the *Mancomunitat* (1914–1925), *Noucentisme* also promoted the reform and standardisation of the Catalan language, a project launched by the recently founded Institut d'Estudis Catalans.

It would be wrong, however, to regard the achievements of *Noucentisme* and of the political structures behind it as emerging in a vacuum. Rather, they were the result of a continuous political and cultural process which gained momentum in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Under the influence of literary Romanticism, the *Renaixença* revival movement contributed to the recovery of Catalan as a language suitable for literary expression albeit still lacking standard rules for spelling and usage. From the early 1890s the *Modernisme* movement attempted to create a genuinely European culture out of what was felt to be a purely local and regional one. At the same time a number of scholars—writing first in Spanish and later in Catalan—were engaged in mapping out the literary and political history of Catalonia from the Middle Ages onwards. In most cases, however, their work went well beyond the confines of erudition and helped create the atmosphere

1. Plutarc, *Vides Paral.leles*, vol. 1, part 1a, text i traducció de Carles Riba (Barcelona: Fundació Bernat Metge, 1926, p. xliii): "Aquesta primera versió catalana de les *Vides Paral.leles* és dedicada a Francesc Cambó en esperança que per ell seran un dia realitat les altes aspiracions que presidint el treball del gosat traductor n'han fet en temps de dany i de vergonya més encara que una joia un deure".

in which Catalanism became political at the turn of the twentieth century. Some of these scholars are the subject of study of the book under review. The proceedings of a conference held in March 2003, the volume charts the evolution of Latin, Greek and Catalan studies in Barcelona roughly between 1870 and 1936, that is, the period from the peak of the *Renaixença* movement to the immediate aftermath of *Noucentisme*.

Although in recent years important research has been undertaken on the legacy of the classical world within early twentieth-century European politics and culture, the pervasive presence of the classics within Catalan letters and thought of the time has gone totally unexplored by scholars outside Catalonia. As an example, whilst devoting at least two chapters to similar responses to Rome elsewhere in Europe, Catharine Edwards's otherwise highly stimulating *Roman presences* omits any reference to the role played by classical scholarship and the classics in the construction of political and cultural identity in modern Catalonia.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, local critics have for a long time been fully aware of the importance of key *noucentista* concepts heavily indebted to classical Antiquity.<sup>3</sup> Ideas such as *civilitat* (centre of a network of related notions, deriving from *civitas*, *urbs* and *polis*), *imperialisme* (the organic expansion of a dynamic nationalism, applicable also to the imposition of authority), *humanisme* or *classicisme* (tradition and decorum) were indeed cardinal to the ideological system of the thinker Eugeni d'Ors (1881–1954), whose essays appeared regularly from 1906 to 1921 on the front page of the daily *La Veu de Catalunya* ('The Voice of Catalonia'), the organ of Cambó's political party, the Lliga Regionalista.

In Catalonia fertile interaction between classical literature and the political and cultural milieu is exemplified by the prominent role accorded to translation (and above all to translation of classical authors) in the first decades of the twentieth century. Considered a moral duty for Catalan intellectuals of the period, translation was central to the *noucentista* campaign destined to create a standard literary language and to build a cultural canon. Carles Riba's versions of Greek texts—initially for the *Biblioteca Literària* and subsequently for the Bernat Metge collection—constituted a body of pioneer work within this campaign, which was supported by the most powerful sectors of Catalan society in the form of popular subscriptions even if the handsome volumes of the Fundació Bernat Metge remained unopened on the shelves of many bourgeois private libraries. Traditionally, the academic and scholarly activities of Riba, himself a University professor at Barcelona, have received extended treatment.<sup>4</sup> Even though his figure often occurs in the reviewed volume (if only through the research group under whose auspices the 2003 conference was organised), the focus of the eight essays collected in *Del Romanticisme al Noucentisme* is not Riba but other equally important Catalan philologists and translators who have as yet received little critical attention.

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2. See *Roman presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789–1945*, edited by Catharine Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
  3. See, for example, the monographs by Victòria Alsina Keith, *Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer (1888–1961), humanista* (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 1987); Gabriella Gavagnin, *Classicisme i Renaixement: una idea d'Itàlia durant el Noucentisme* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2005); Eduard Valentí, *Els clàssics i la literatura catalana contemporània* (Barcelona: Curial, 1973); and Jaume Vallcorba, *Noucentisme, mediterraneisme i classicisme: apunts per a la història d'una estètica* (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1984). For a general introduction to *Noucentisme* and its classical foundations see Josep Morgades's chapters in Martí de Riquer, Antoni Comas & Joaquim Molas (dirs.), *Història de la literatura catalana*, vol. 9 (Barcelona: Ariel, 1987, pp. 9–98).
  4. For a bibliography of work on Riba's translations see Miriam Cabré, "Poe, Baudelaire, Riba", *Quaderns. Revista de traducció* 6 (2001), pp. 119–131.

The contributions offered in this book explore the place of classical and Catalan studies in university teaching in Barcelona between the second half of the nineteenth century and the 1930s. They also highlight the difficulties and obstacles encountered by both disciplines—and above all by Catalan scholarship—against the backdrop of a stagnant and centralised Spanish university system. As with all academic disciplines, at the University of Barcelona instruction in the classics, for the most part still hampered by old-fashioned practices, was conducted in Spanish. Recruitment and training of Catalan translators had therefore to be undertaken within other academic institutions, most notably at the *Fundació Bernat Metge*. Moreover, unlike Greek and Latin, which—irrespective of the methods employed in the classroom—were at least an integral part of the university curriculum of the time, the study of Catalan literature and linguistics only attained a normal state after 1932, and then only for a brief period until the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939.

The foundations, however, had been laid for several decades. Four essays engage with the achievements of scholars active in the field of Catalan studies in the period under investigation. Manuel Milà i Fontanals (1818–1884) is the subject of an article by Carles Garriga (pp. 27–39), in which he shows how positivist research and aesthetic considerations went closely hand in hand in Milà's studies on medieval epic poetry. For his part, Sebastià Bonet (pp. 79–92) explores the contribution of Pompeu Fabra (1868–1948) to Catalan linguistics. As head of the Philological Section of the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, Fabra had supervised since 1911 the project (dating back to his own collaboration in *modernista* regenerationism) of orthographical reform and grammatical standardisation, which helped turn Catalan into a language viable for matters of a technical nature. His appointment as Professor of Catalan in 1932, under the short-lived statute of autonomy granted to the University of Barcelona during the Second Republic, led to the inclusion of Catalan Philology in the university curriculum. The acceptance of Catalan literary history within the university canon of disciplines was the result of the scholarly activity and political awareness of Antoni Rubió i Lluch (1856–1937), and of his son Jordi Rubió i Balaguer (1887–1982), recalled in articles by, respectively, Jordi Malé (pp. 51–65) and the late Miquel Batllori (pp. 107–116). Both contributors chronicle the progress of Catalan literary history as an independent field of research and teaching. Initiated by Rubió i Lluch as part of broader courses on Spanish literature and subsequently, outside the official education system, within the teaching provision offered by the *Estudis Universitaris Catalans* after 1904, the study of Catalan literature gained full university status with the appointment of the cultural historian Rubió i Balaguer in 1932. Being the only contributor to have been directly taught by the masters evoked in this collection, Batllori appropriately emphasizes Rubió i Balaguer's monumental task and endorses his coinage of the concept and term of *Humanisme català*, an alleged early vernacular humanism at the core of Catalan letters of the late Middle Ages. Yet, as scholars like Lola Badia have pointed out, this highly problematic term was but a cultural construct invented by *noucentista* scholarship to describe the classical inclination of several fourteenth-century Catalan writers, in accordance with Eugeni d'Ors's doctrinal import.<sup>5</sup> In this respect it is not fortuitous, for example, that the name of Bernat Metge (1340/46–1413) inspired the abovementioned collection of classics in Catalan translation, and that Metge's classicizing *Lo somni* inaugurated a scholarly series of editions of Catalan texts launched in 1924, characteristically under the title of *Els nostres clàssics*.

5. See Lola Badia, *De Bernat Metge a Joan Lluís de Corella: Estudis sobre la cultura literària de la tardor medieval catalana* (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1988), pp. 13–38 and 59–62.

Since the 1870s interest in Catalan studies at the University of Barcelona ran in tandem with (and in most cases was fuelled by) attention to the languages and literatures of ancient Greece and Rome. Four essays in this collection re-evaluate the contributions of four generations of Catalan classicists whose scholarship was indebted to philologists of the time from other European countries. Examined by Jaume Pòrtulas (pp. 11–25), one such scholar is Antoni Bergnes de las Casas (1801–1879), who held the first professorship of Greek after the restoration of the University of Barcelona in 1837. Bergnes's earlier activities were as a publisher (he issued translations of Horace, of Tacitus, and of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*) but he quickly concentrated on the study of language. In addition to compiling anthologies of Greek literature, he wrote several Greek grammar books, heavily dependant on Philipp Buttmann's work, and a handful of essays on topics of comparative linguistics. Bergnes's successor in the chair of Greek studies was Josep Balari i Jovany (1844–1904), whose greatest and most original achievements—as argued by Pere Quetglas (pp. 41–50)—were, however, in the field of the early history of the Catalan language. These would lay the foundations for further research on the corpus of Latin texts written in medieval Catalonia.

Although Balari's contribution as a classical scholar, aside from a sample of translations, was certainly rather scarce, his teaching proved decisive for future generations of Catalan Hellenists. Of these Lluís Segalà (1873–1938), professor of Greek since 1906, here the subject of an article by Carles Miralles (pp. 67–77), was a dominant influence. A meticulous and engaging lecturer who roused interest in Greek literature and attracted students to his classes, Segalà began his career by publishing two important monographs on the Greek dialects. This equipped him later to devote energies to the study of Homer and to the so-called "Homeric question", a scholarly endeavour also well in line, after all, with contemporary interest in other epic traditions. For years Homer would be the focus of Segalà's scholarly activities: his translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* still remain the standard reference versions in Spanish of the Homeric poems. But Segalà also committed himself—as rigorously documented by Miralles—to the *noucentista* project. As a member of the Philological section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, he produced Catalan translations of a series of Greek texts, by Aristophanes and Musaeus among others. In the end, however, he would be overshadowed by the gigantic figure of Riba, whose *Odissea* of 1919 was met with much critical acclaim.

Segalà's contribution to Greek studies has a clear parallel in the work of the Latinist Joaquim Balcells (1890–1936) whose philological and editorial labour, translation skills, political commitment as well as teaching guidance are poignantly examined by Josep Lluís Vidal (pp. 93–106). Well acquainted with the practices of German classical scholarship, Balcells published extensively on archaic and bucolic Latin poetry. After 1922, he devoted himself to the edition of Lucretius, Propertius, Ausonius, and (albeit unfinished by his untimely death) Virgil, which he prepared for the Fundació Bernat Metge. In his paper Vidal pays due tribute to Balcells's constitution of the text of Lucretius, which he regards as exemplary and certainly "*no inferior al d'Ernout (1920) i al de Diels (1923)*" (p. 104). But Balcells was not only an eminent philologist. He was also an influential teacher and an effective organizer. His favourite creation was his philological seminar after the German model, at the Fundació Bernat Metge and at Barcelona University, intended specially for the training of future textual critics.

A strong sense of continuity—however interrupted by the hiatus of the Civil War and the first two decades of the Franco regime—permeates the essays gathered in this collection. All the scholars portrayed in *Del Romanticisme al Noucentisme* walked in the footsteps of their immediate predecessors. The authors of the eight contributions under

review are equally the descendants both of the great masters presented here, and of past and present generations of Barcelona-based Romanists, medievalists and classicists, who include Martí de Riquer, Joan Bastardas, Josep Alsina and Miquel Dolç.<sup>6</sup> To give but three examples, Carles Miralles's research on Homer, Josep Lluís Vidal's studies on Virgil and the Virgilian reception, and Pere Quetglas's work for the *Glossarium Mediae Latinitatis Cataloniae* mirror twentieth-century interest in classical epic and in medieval Catalan texts.<sup>7</sup> As well as crossing academic boundaries, *Del Romanticisme al Noucentisme* testifies to a rich scholarly tradition in classical and Catalan studies at Barcelona. Judging by the papers in this volume, the one-day conference at the University of Barcelona when they were read and discussed must have been a stimulating gathering, plentiful in ideas and enthusiasm. Those of us unable to attend at the time can now thank the editors for their acumen in bringing the proceedings swiftly and neatly to the press. The inclusion of an index of names and terms would have increased the usefulness of the volume. In any case, much benefit can be derived from this valuable collection.

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## Ovid in the Twentieth Century

Theodore Ziolkowski, *Ovid and the Moderns* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005) XVII + 262 pp.

The opening chapter of *Ovid and the Moderns* ('The Lure of Ariadne' [pp. 3–17]) exemplifies the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Its focus is the figure of Ariadne, and in particular her depiction in the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico and in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's opera of 1912. For both artists, Ziolkowski argues, the Ovidian Ariadne was mediated by Nietzsche—as the consort of Dionysus she was a recurring motif in Nietzsche's works.

This chapter, which mentions English writers only in passing, sets the tone for the volume. Whereas for most critics of Ovid's afterlife the early twentieth-century phase is dominated by anglophone Modernists such as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce and Ezra Pound, Ziolkowski's much broader frame of reference, his readiness to engage with the litera-

6. A student of Balcells, Dolç held no university post at Barcelona. He was, however, a member of the editorial committee of the *Fundació Bernat Metge*, for which he translated Virgil, Persius, Tacitus and Martial. For Dolç's debts towards Balcells and Riba's translation criteria see Jaume Medina Casanovas, "El Virgili de Miquel Dolç", in: M. del C. Bosch—M.A. Fornés, eds., *Homenatge a Miquel Dolç* (Palma de Mallorca: Govern Balear, 1997, pp. 681–686).
7. Miralles makes that debt explicit in the preface to his *Homer* (Barcelona: Empúries, 2005, p. 10): "Sóc professor de grec a la Universitat de Barcelona, on foren professors de grec Lluís Segalà i Carles Riba, on l'estudi de l'èpica —grega i romànica, sobretot— ha estat una tradició, de Milà i Fontanals a Martí de Riquer i Josep Alsina. M'he pres com un deure plaent, algun cop, mirar d'aportar amb els meus estudis alguna cosa a aquesta tradició i, ara, tornar aquest Homer a la meua llengua".