

<https://artnodes.uoc.edu>

ARTICLE

NODE "MATERIOLOGY AND VARIANTOLOGY: INVITATION TO DIALOGUE"

The Armenia archive. A Ramon Llull project

Amador Vega

Pompeu Fabra University

Date of submission: December 2023

Accepted in: March 2024

Published in: July 2024

Recommended citation

Vega, Amador. 2024. «*The Armenia archive. A Ramon Llull project*». In: Siegfried Zielinski and Daniel Irrgang (coords.). Node «Materiology and Variantology: invitation to dialogue». *Artnodes*, no. 34. UOC. [Accessed: dd/mm/yy]. <https://doi.org/10.7238/artnodes.v0i34.424477>



The texts published in this journal are – unless otherwise indicated – covered by the Creative Commons Spain Attribution 4.0 International licence. The full text of the licence can be consulted here: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstract

The Armenia Archive is the account of an unfinished inquiry. Centring on a reading of the *Vita Coetanea* by the Majorcan philosopher, poet and mystic Ramon Llull (1232-1316), my aim in what follows is to perform a mode of thought at the crossroads between scientific treatise, autobiography, historical document and literary fiction. The archival model of *The Armenia Archive* refers to a compilation and a process of compiling in which historical, philosophical and poetic lines of inquiry cross one another in changing combinations. This article is the first instalment in a larger work in progress.

Keywords

invention; method; metascholarship; hybrid fiction; metaphysical realism

El archivo Armenia. *Un proyecto de Ramon Llull*

Resumen

El archivo Armenia es el relato de una investigación inconclusa. Centrándome en una lectura de la *Vita Coetanea* del filósofo, poeta y místico mallorquín, Ramon Llull (1232-1316), mi objetivo en este artículo es llevar a cabo un modo de pensamiento situado en la encrucijada entre el tratado científico, la autobiografía, el documento histórico y la ficción literaria. El modelo de archivo de El archivo Armenia se refiere a una compilación y un proceso de compilación en el que las líneas de investigación históricas, filosóficas y poéticas se entrecruzan en combinaciones cambiantes. Este artículo es la primera entrega de un trabajo más amplio en curso.

Palabras clave

invención; método; metascholarship; ficción híbrida; realismo metafísico

Introduction

On my desk is a box file labelled *The Armenia Archive*.¹ Only recently did I come to accept this as its real name, though there were others before: *De investigatione secreti*, *The Beirut Lectures*, *Excesses of Silence*, etc. The file is empty, as every time I managed to give some sort of discursive shape to its contents, I ended up transferring my notes to other files which, in time, have become many books. Yet in all of these, something was missing and something else was superfluous. All had in them the vocation of what they were not; all were objects whose dimensions I did not know how to fix. Their content seemed to point to an abyss that opens in the mind, unsealing in it a certain sensuality and air of adventure, but over which one does not dare to step. In each, an idea of life stirred restless, and as life went on, my expectations of finding a satisfactory limit to its definition evaporated in the heat of the concepts themselves.

Now I understand that whatever ends up in the file must be either almost real or almost fantastical. No statute of reality will exhaust its fictional possibility, but neither will fiction divert me from a vocation for the real or from an adequate concept of reality. *The Armenia Archive* is, in this regard, not unlike the country of Armenia, whose ancient borders are no longer to be found on maps, unless we go back to the famous *Catalan Atlas*, attributed to Abraham Cresques, a 14th-century Majorcan jew: a place much visited by merchants, conjured in imaginary worlds; a much-desired maritime landscape, whose charm, once dreamt, is inescapable.

No sooner were they written than the texts I had intended for my “archive” fell apart, lost consistency, ceased to exist in a specific time, try as I might to fit them to the contours of a single thought or thread of meaning. What remained was often an abstract picture, a sort of painting in which you couldn’t work out what was the top and what was the bottom (Rothko). What literature, what philosophical texture, corresponds to this mental scheme? In other words, I have come to ask myself what it is that makes metaphors seem real, how they come to occupy your inner landscape, your Armenia, displacing the edges of concepts, like the borders of countries.

I was to fill *The Armenia Archive* with texts that sought out that long-lost country, impossible to reach, of course, because my longing is for the desire itself and is a limit I do not want to cross. And yet, I need its existence, its place, as I need the breeze off its shores to find me, from time to time, rattling the windows of my life like a gale, cold in the night, with news of change.

At some point, *The Armenia Archive* began to take shape around a corpus of texts relating to negative theology. Perhaps it is fairer to say they were lists of words: *emptiness*, *nothingness*, *desert*, *silence*... There was no extracting anything of discursive consistency and, little

by little, I realized that the only way to approach these words was as a sort of script. I mean by this that they were the concrete expression of a secret that could only be performed, never grasped by reasoning or logic. *The Armenia Archive* is the scene of an event that overflows definition. The borders of its content impossible to fix, this region of similarities contracts and expands like the breath inside *emptiness* and *desert*. Here, even the most extreme analogies converge.

Thirty years have passed since I set out in search of Armenia. I couldn’t name my object of desire, nor could I know where exactly I was headed. I couldn’t pronounce the name that would come to define a practice and an event of erring: how it feels to cross an unknown landscape in the confidence that there, behind the pencilled trace of the mountains, you will find sustenance, conversation in the company of strangers, a place to sleep in the night that, wakeful, holds you as *in utero* under an unperturbed sky, and alert to the tiniest movement, as from the forest where you have prowled your fears, you will know this to be inevitable, the fulfilment of a design, of which the only thing you know for certain is that it has been set down for you. The search for Armenia has as many risks as the search for a solid etymology of its name. From Akkadian to Indo-European cultures, its meaning shifts from context to context, though it is most likely just the place that gives its inhabitants their name, or the place to which its inhabitants have given such a name.

An empty file is, in any case, indispensable among any writer’s materials. It is the motive of their failures, of the essay that never quite takes shape; unlike those texts that assemble themselves out of sight, and that, one day, you take up and read and feel like a stranger in your own land. The Armenia of *The Armenia Archive* is, of course, a land in devastation, just as the border regions between Eastern and Western Europe have been devastated, ridden by the Tartars, with all the syntheses of human horror in their wake. To what lengths we have gone to fatten the human imaginary, in thrall to its invisible cities, its warlords without name.

1. More guide than method

Every journey, real or fantastic, can be drawn on a moving map, marked with conquests and defeats. It is by marking these that you realize the only constant that aids you as you travel is movement itself, the continuous abandonment of place or abode. The pilgrimage is a real metaphor for metaphor’s work: the search for another meaning that puts at risk the very truth from which you departed. Yet, there is no point of departure in the sense of an origin or beginning, only the fact of leaving, of going away; only the relation between one state of abandonment and the next. Not even that: there is no state to speak of, only

1. With thanks to Elizabeth Sarah Coles for her input and for revising the English text of this article.

an abandoning, a mode of becoming that refuses the state of being. The sustained discipline of emptying the archive is an active metaphor for this abandoning in every season of our being, which constitutes a whole ontology of exile and pilgrimage. There is no method to fit such an action unless we are to understand the concept of method literally: μέθοδος (a compound of *meta* and *hodos*), the search for a path; an organization of action that goes always beyond the action itself, and not only with the aim of yielding results. In the first case, we would be talking about a method that deals in real metaphors – almost impossible, for we cannot imagine a metaphor that has a static, rather than ecstatic, vocation. Metaphor excites thought, leaving it in a state of crisis that compels it outwards, or better: a path whose exit is to be understood as an entrance (Meister Eckhart). Let us abandon, for the moment, the concept of method, now more a straitjacket on thinking than an attitude to life (Vega, Weibel & Zielinski 2018). For the kind of archive I am dealing with, I suggest the concept of *Guide* – as in Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed (Dux Neutorum)* (13th century) or Miguel de Molinos' *Spiritual Guide (Guía Espiritual)* (17th century) – which allows me to extend my response to an unknown end while maintaining the tension of the itinerary driven by restlessness. Unlike the concept of “guide”, the notion of method first emerges in society as a pretension to scientific truth and in a period when the idea of the human broaches a new, darker territory. The Thirty Years' War saw the birth of philosophical modernity with the *Discourse on Method* (1637), in which Descartes outdoes his forbears by practising doubt as a form of methodical negation. Descartes is not tilting at windmills because he has an idea of truth that coincides with the real. In his search for truth, he recognizes no authority and one of the very few authors he invokes by name, if only to downgrade his method, is Ramon Llull (1232-1316).

The religious wars between Catholics and Protestants which followed the Lutheran Reformation in Europe highlighted not only the irreparable distance between different modes of feeling and understanding the mystery of the sacred. What they showed, principally, was the impossibility of establishing a sphere of rational understanding for the dogmas of theology. This had been Llull's exact project three centuries earlier: to develop a method of knowledge in religion, the practice of which would consist in an “art of finding truth” (*ars inveniendi veritatem*) (Rubio 2008, 243-297). Llull knew that the only way to bring about dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims was through intellectual seduction: winning over scholars of the different faiths on the basis of an unwavering, perhaps unreasonable, trust in the reforming capacity of understanding. The fact that Llull was convinced of the truth of Christian dogmas and believed Jews and Muslims were in error does not invalidate his strategy. For Llull did not place his hopes for dialogue in the sphere of faith and feeling – where there is no place for error, which is a category of intelligibility – but in the fact that reason had, hitherto, been absent from the conversation. In order to reach a place of consensus between religions, he began with aspects of each religion that were acceptable to the others – such as the contents of each of the sacred books (the *Torah*, the *Bible* and the *Qur'an*) – and

sought a common context of language in order to yield a common context of meaning. In doing so, he did not lean on static principles, such as the respective dogmas of each religion, but turned instead to the recitation of the “Names of God”, whose cordial circulation in contemplative prayer was a common praxis among the different faiths. Thus, the Names of God (*dignitates dei*), insofar as they shared the same meaning, had the value of what he called “necessary reasons” (*rationes necessariae*). The religious feeling was not inspired by dogmas, which lead only to fanaticism and intolerance. It was, instead, the dynamic centre of gravity of dialogical thinking in motion.

Llull's “art of finding truth”, which he attributes to divine illumination, consists in producing combinations of concepts that signify the Names of God, each of which is assigned a letter. The binary or ternary combination of letters memorized in advance by the artist (practitioner of the Lullian *Ars*) results in a series of tables of algebraic notation, the mechanics of which were inspired by the methods of mystical prayer (Figure 1). The *Ars*, the word Llull uses to define his method – though in reality it functions as a guide –, is conceived from the outset as a “new way” of finding “new and brief rationales” for understanding. Llull insists that his Enlightenment at the top of Mount Randa in Majorca – which should be understood as an intellectual illumination – was not a revelation of dogma but of a way of proceeding. The terms of this grammar or *ars combinatoria*, as it would come to be known centuries later in the work of Leibniz, were the Names, but the means of combining them was based on the *art de trobar*, the troubadour's craft in which Llull, from his previous life at the royal court in Majorca, was already well versed.

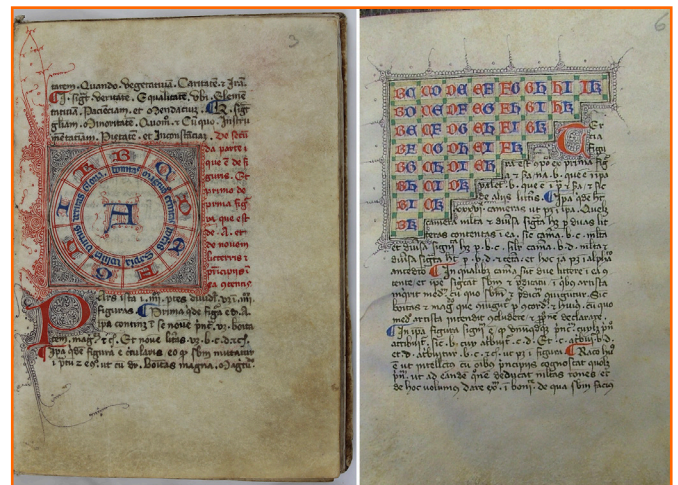


Figure 1. Ramon Llull, *Ars brevis*, fol. 3 and fol. 6 (14th century)

Source: Royal Collections: National Heritage. Library of the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial

At the foundation of Llull's scientific method (*scientia*) is a poetic practice whose creative end is to be of use to human spiritual life. The defining condition in this way of proceeding is the need to place finding before searching. There is no search without a prior encounter. That is

the only truth of a method formed both for finding truth and for living with it. There is no method, finally, in Llull's *Ars Magna*. What there is, is a guide to reading what we have in its stead: Llull's life, or his account of it, as dictated by him to the Charterhouse monks of Vauvert in Paris in the year 1311.

2. A tomb in Armenia

In the summer of 2001, my mother gave me a copy of a typed document that describes the violent death of a distant relative during an ambush by Barbary pirates on the Turkish coast in 1729. This bewildering document tells that our ancestor was travelling with a friend, who also perished in the raid, and that both were buried in the cemetery of a small town in Armenia. The relevant folio of the book of burials produced by the town parish then trails off into liturgical matters concerning the funeral services ordered by the relatives, the costs, the people who attended the service, the number of candles used and other questions regarding consular arrangements following the death.

What first caught my attention was the mention of Armenia in an 18th-century document. When I got home, I made some enquiries: in 1782, Armenia had passed from Ottoman hands to the empire of the Russian Tsar. Two years later Turkey accepted the Russian annexation of Crimea. The Lepanto War was behind us, and in 1784, diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Porte and Spain were re-established. With the Treaty of Constantinople, as that historic event is known, the High Porte undertook to intercede for Spain to make peace with the Barbary regencies of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, so that ships from both countries could find refuge in their ports from enemy attacks. On re-reading the account of my ancestor's death, I was left in no doubt that the Armenia where he was buried was not in the Caucasus, more than a thousand kilometres from the Turkish coast, but Armenia Minor or the Kingdom of Cilicia, thriving until the 14th century, which later passed into Turkish hands.

That night, I took down the *Vita Raymundi* from my bookshelves and went straight to the passage in which Llull narrates his journey to the East:

3. Port of Famagusta, 1301

"While Ramon was labouring at these tasks the news happened to be spread abroad that Cassan, the emperor of the Tartars, had attacked the kingdom of Syria and was trying to bring it all beneath his dominion. When he heard this, Ramon, having found a ship about to embark, sailed to Cyprus, where he discovered that this piece of news was completely false.

Seeing himself frustrated in his intent, Ramon tried to find some other way in which he could employ the time granted him by God, not in idleness, but rather in work acceptable to God and beneficial to his

fellow man. For he had stored in his vigilant heart advice of the Apostle who said: 'Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not' (Gal 6:9), and of the Prophet who said: 'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him' (Ps. 125 [126]: 6).

Ramon accordingly went to the king of Cyprus and eagerly entreated him to exhort certain unbelievers and schismatics, namely Jacobites, Nestorians and Muslims, to come to hear him preach or to dispute with him. At the same time, he begged the king of Cyprus to send him, once he had done what he could for the edification of the above-mentioned people, to the sultan, who was Saracen, and to the king of Egypt and Syria, so that he could instruct them in the holy Catholic faith. The king, however, was not interested in any of these things.

Then Ramon, trusting in 'he who preaches good tidings with great power' (Ps. 67: 12), set to work among them with sermons and disputations, with the sole help of God. But, persisting as he did in preaching and teaching, he felt sick with a serious bodily illness.

Two people waited on him, a clergyman and a servant, who, not setting God before their eyes (Ps. 53:5 [54:3]) and forgetting their salvation, plotted to strip with their criminal hands this man of God of his belongings. And when he found out that they were poisoning him, he gently dismissed them from his service.

Upon arriving in Famagusta, he was cheerfully received by the master of the Temple, who was in the city of Limassol, and he stayed in his house until he had recovered his health.

After this, Ramon sailed to Genoa, where he published many books. He then went on to Paris, where he successfully lectured on his Art and wrote several books" (Ramon Llull 2010, 67-71).

4. *Vindiciae lullianae*

This brief account of the journey to the East is found in the *Vita Coae-tanea*, the title given to the autobiographical narrative dictated by Ramon Llull to the Carthusian monks in Paris. For reasons unknown to us, this brief text does not cover all the movements of its protagonist between 1301 and 1302, the period during which he is known to have remained in the eastern Mediterranean. The *Vita* can be presumed to originate with Llull insofar as it sets out facts that are adequately backed up by historical studies; yet the full truth of these facts remains uncertain. When we contrast the *Vita* with other contemporary texts by Llull – in which, alongside his signature, he records his current location (among others, Armenia and Jerusalem) – we sense a distance opening up between the oral and the written. We do not know why Llull's autobiographical dictation has gone down in history under the name of the *Contemporary Life*, but whoever made this decision in the 18th century understood the true meaning of the events it narrates: contemporary to its author, but also contemporary to its readers: untimely (Nietzsche's *unzeitgemäß*), out of time and in all time, not only exceeding the time of the textual

narration but the temporality implicit in events whose only corroboration is a work of fiction, such as the *Book of Wonders* and the *Blaquerna*.

Every autobiographical text is addressed to an audience, and in Llull's case, on the trail of Augustine's *Confessions*, the aim is to put exemplary life testimony through the rigours of a spiritual itinerary (what Mallarmé calls a "precise spiritual mise-en-scène"), where philosophical reflection moves alongside bare autobiographical facts. In Llull, too, philosophical thought is "contemporaneous" with the facts of life, to the point that there is no entirely abstract thought independent of his perceptions and experiences. His is a kind of "metaphysical realism," not only because it assumes the real has consequences for our lives, but that the real itself is configured by them: that our lives contribute to the formation of the reality we live. Far from our so-called "speculative realism", which gives the lie to "correlationism" (Meillassoux 2006, Harman 2010), Llull's *Vita Coetanea* is a unique testimony of transitivity between an absent and a present time, between dictation and its silences, which constitutes a kind of realism that does not neglect that which actually occurs. The events take place in parallel moments and are described using different modes of narration.

The Armenia Archive – my archive – has been filling up with these silences. In the expectation that they overflow the emptiness that is their resting condition, I have decided to pull out some more material. Here is the next:

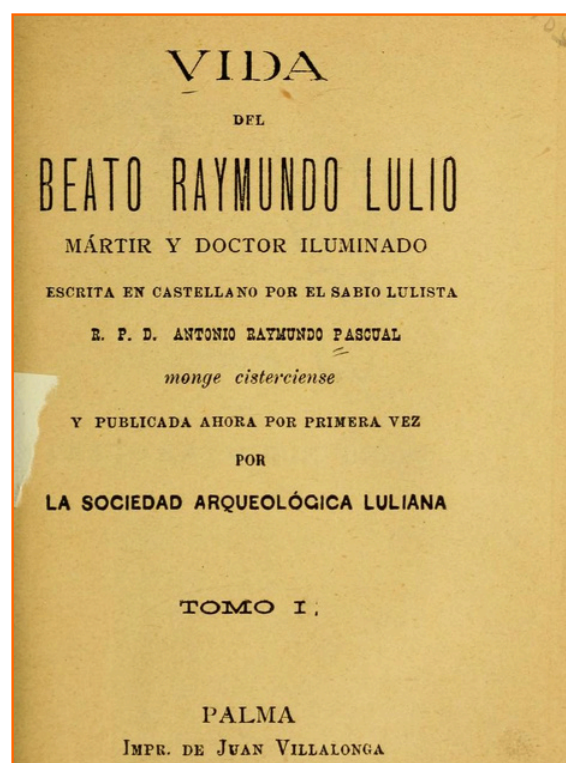


Figure 2. Frontispiece, *Vida del Beato Raymundo Lulio* (Palma 1890)

This is the frontispiece of a biography of Ramon Llull written by a Majorcan Cistercian monk. In his prologue, the author says it is a

translation of the biography that Llull himself published in Latin in the first volume of the *Vindiciae Lullianae* (Avignon 1778) (Figure 3), a thick book in which the Catholic orthodoxy of the Majorcan visionary is defended against continuous attack by his detractors. In fact, in addition to being shorter, the writing of this biography is very different. In Chapter XII of the first volume, reference is made to Llull's journey: "to Germany to deal with the Emperor. - He then went to the northern parts, Tartary, Georgia, Greece, Turkey, Jerusalem, India, Egypt, Ethiopia, Barbary... Morocco, England, Spain..." (Pasqual 1890, 261-310). If we consult historical studies, with the exception of Barbary (Tunisia) and quite probably Jerusalem, Llull would not have visited any of the places mentioned by Father Pascual. Yet Pascual, who had no intention of engaging in narrative fiction, places Ramon in the countries that appear in the novels, taking for granted – as Oxfordians do with Shakespeare's dramatic settings – that the author had knowledge of those places.

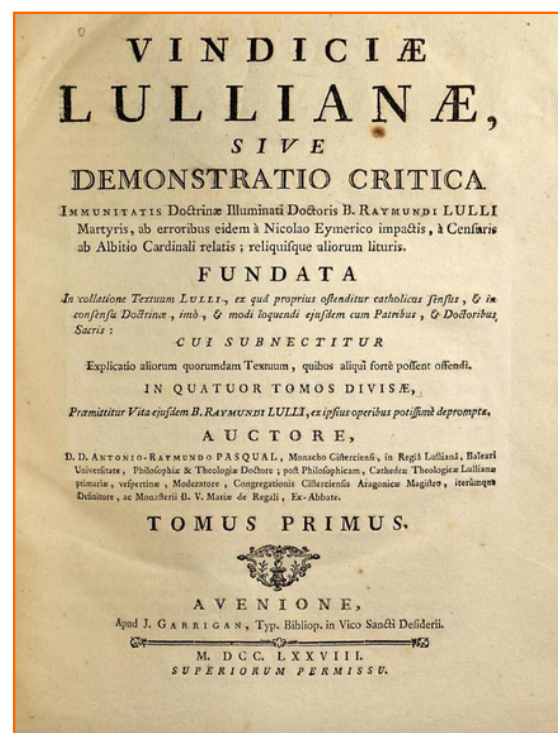


Figure 3: Frontispiece, *Vindiciae Lullianae* (Avignon 1778)

The distance between fact and fiction is the same as that between a definition and its corollaries. The definition attempts, by means of reason, to delimit the object of study in conceptual terms, while the corollaries show a healthy sense of realism by adding, here and there, aspects that do not fit the definition. Something similar happens with reality: from the perspective of the person who studies or observes it, the real admits no greater addition than that of its ostensible unity or meaning, and yet it so often gets poured into stories that not only disprove it but change it entirely. This is also the case with the scientific method: under its rigours, law soon turns to fiction, as new experi-

ments, hitherto inhabiting the realm of the improbable, come to reshape the consensus entirely.

Life behaves in a similar way for those who seek to tell it. It is only when the story begins to be told that a unity of meaning is acquired that did not exist before. It is the drive of the story itself that confers reality, since reality advances to the extent that the invention itself structures and combines events that actually happened; in the event of its writing, it combines what has been lived and what has been understood of one's own life. Regarding the dictated life, there is no greater guarantee than the fictions that emerge in recounting the cycle of finding and searching. The true meaning of finding is invention, where to invent is to have found something new. But in what sense is this the case? Invention is not necessarily something that has *not* happened. The story itself is a lived event. The naturalist point of view defends a weak realism: the invention would be the result of a search process that confirms a reality thus obtained. In a metaphysical sense, however, what has been found, as the beginning of a search, is what the author undeniably considers necessary, not certain (what we call the facts). Necessity is of the essence here: the imperative to recount one's own life, not because we want to manipulate it, but because, in recounting it, we live it anew with the elements that our understanding of past events brings to that past (Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*, Proust's *temps perdu*). We are not talking about positive events of the type: in 1301 Ramon Llull was the guest of Jacques de Molay, Grand Master of the Order of the Temple, in Cyprus. That fact does not affect the present unless – as Proust does with his madeleine – we recover it from an inert past to bring it into the plenitude of our here and now. Reality is the convergence between the selective memory of one's own facts and data and the will to give continuity to those facts and data through the experience of the present. Neither the here nor the now constitute reality because they are defined as something present. It is the actualization of an eternal or continuous present that turns isolated facts in memory into something contemporary.

Ramon Llull rehearsed different models in bearing witness to his life, in accordance with distinct objectives: some are apologetic in nature, such as the *Vita*, and share the mission of presenting a martyr of the faith, a preacher to the hearts of readers; others aim to convince the powers that be of his enterprise; others, more scientific, are honed for the seduction of scholars – academics and infidels – by the compelling truth of his model of thought; while others can be classed as novels. Aware that his scientific work was complex, and after frustrated attempts to bring it to the attention of academics, Llull turned to fiction to spread the same doctrine in a new form. Llull's project aspires to a method, a way of saying and transmitting content, but the mode (which was the content of the revelation) is a matter of language or of different uses of language. That these are fictitious does not alter the truth of the message, whose potential iterations are many. The *Vita* is an artefact designed to accompany and guide the readers of his scientific works through time, and as such, in an appendix at the end of his Testament (1313), Llull chose to incorporate a list of his works, indicating the places where they would be kept: Paris, Pisa and Majorca.

My inquiry in *The Armenia Archive* recalls the “archaeology of deep time” of Siegfried Zielinski, a time in which the strata of culture – sometimes translated as historical data, sometimes as thought and discourse – resists systematic and diachronic archiving (Zielinski 2013, 427-466). We have sets of fragments with which to put together an atlas, like Aby Warburg, who built the foundations of *Kulturwissenschaft* on the fragments of his own pathology. Like Ramon Llull – who called himself “Ramon the madman” (*Ramon lo Foll*) – he is an exceptional case of how the singularity of the soul can lead us to search for the motives and gestures of the form that survives in tradition, whether as an Idea in Plato or in Husserl, as a work of art, a grammatical syntagma, an affliction or a clinical case. And at the same time, in the search for this map of fragments, there is a yearning for healing, for cure, for self-care as a response to contingency.

The science of culture – in its orientation towards poetic rather than scientific-technical knowledge, and insofar as it needs the biographies of its authors to produce its yield of erudition – is also a fiction of its own making. Its ideal of perfection conceals an anomaly, which can become the germ of an anthropological theory or a renewed and revived humanities. If, after Nietzsche, there is nothing beyond hermeneutics, then the theorist of culture must turn to his own life for the constants that will lead him, by glimpse and trace in the archives, in books and in the cities of which these books speak – where, in turn, these archives are to be found –, to the silent witnesses of his own anomaly. So, interpretation escapes exegesis and the glossing of texts. So, interpretation is the transporting of structures, rather than contents, from one place to another, and argument and subject matter what happens on the move.

References

- Harman, Graham. *Towards speculative realism: Essays and Lectures*. Winchester, Hampshire UK: John Hunt Publishing Ltd, 2010.
- Llull, Ramon. *A Contemporary Life (Vita Coaetanea)*. Barcelona: Barcino-Tamesis, 2010.
- Meillassoux, Quentin. *Après la finitude. Essai sur la nécessité de la contingence*. Paris: Seuil, 2006.
- Pasqual, Antonio Raymundo. *Vida del Beato Raymundo Lulio, mártir y doctor iluminado*. Palma: Imprenta Juan Villalonga, 1890.
- Rubio, Josep E. “Thought: The Art”. In: Alexander Fidora and Josep E. Rubio (eds.). *Raimundus Lullus. An Introduction to his Life, Works and Thought* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).
- Vega, Amador; Peter Weibel and Siegfried Zielinski. *Dia-Logos. Ramon Llull's Method of Thought and Artistic Practice*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2018.
- Zielinski, Siegfried. “Bedeutsame Verschiebungen. Auf dem Weg zu einem Institut für Südliche Modernitäten [ISM]”. In: Herausgegeben von Siegfried Zielinski und Eckhard Fülus. *Variantologie. Zur Tiefenzeit der Beziehungen von Kunst, Wissenschaft & Technik*. (Berlin: Kadmos, 2013).

CV

**Amador Vega**

Professor of Aesthetics and Art Theory. Department of Humanities
Pompeu Fabra University
amador.vega@upf.edu

Barcelona, 1958. BA in Philosophy, University of Barcelona, 1982; PhD in Philosophy, Albert-Ludwigs Universität, Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany), 1992. He holds the Chair in Aesthetics and Art Theory in the Department of Humanities, Pompeu Fabra University, and is the director of the Fundació Joan Miró-UPF Chair of Contemporary Art. He was Joan Coromines Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago (2007), Visiting Professor at the Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut (2010), Visiting Professor at the Hochschule für Gestaltung (Germany)/Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (2016-17), and has been Visiting Lecturer at the Carl G. Jung Institute in Zurich since 2014. He is the author of numerous books on subjects including 20th-century art, mysticism and religious thought, and on figures such as Mark Rothko, Rainer Maria Rilke and Meister Eckhart. His latest books include: *Ramon Llull's Method of Thought and Artistic Practice* (with P. Weibel and S. Zielinski), Minnesota University Press, 2019), *Tentativas sobre el vacío. Ensayos de estética y religión* (Fragmenta 2021).