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## ***Introduction: New Directions for Catalan Studies*** **Josep-Anton Fernàndez and Elisa Martí-López**

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## INTRODUCTION: NEW DIRECTIONS FOR CATALAN STUDIES

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This special issue of *Catalan Review* contains a selection of papers presented at the joint conference held by the Anglo-Catalan Society and the North American Catalan Society at Eton College (England) in December 2004. Formally, this was the 11<sup>th</sup> Colloquium of the NACS and the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the A-CS, but the occasion for this joint event was the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the A-CS. The meeting was a milestone in the transatlantic collaboration that both organisations had been engaging in for some time, and it represented the confluence of two not always so different trajectories of Catalan Studies abroad.

Catalan Studies in the United Kingdom have obviously made enormous progress since Joan Gili, Josep Maria Batista i Roca, Josep Trueta and others founded the A-CS in 1954. Today Catalan is taught in over fifteen British universities, including Birmingham, Cambridge, Cardiff, Liverpool, London, and Sheffield, and research in Catalan Studies is conducted in a similar number of institutions. In addition to all the lecturers in Hispanic Studies who have a research interest in Catalan and include some courses on the subject in their teaching, there are four academic posts entirely or partially devoted to Catalan (Cambridge, Liverpool, London, and Sheffield), and degree titles that include Catalan are awarded at four universities (Liverpool, London, Sheffield, and Swansea).

Perhaps the most important characteristic of British Catalan Studies is its interdisciplinary nature. Although most specialists in the field conduct research on language and literature, there has always been an emphasis on exchanges between disciplines, and academic fields such as sociology, history, history of art, and political science have long been a part of our intellectual activity. This transversal, interdisciplinary approach has also manifested itself in the mainstream component of Catalan Studies in the UK, namely literary studies, as demonstrated by the theoretical and philosophical content of the work of Arthur Terry, who sadly passed away in 2004.

Clearly, the position of Catalan Studies within British universities is good. It is well integrated in a substantial number of departments of Hispanic Studies, and despite the fact of still being considered a "minority" field, its research output is highly valued and regarded by

universities as an important contribution to the Research Assessment Exercise—the national evaluation of research on which a substantial part of higher education funding depends—within the overall field of Iberian and Latin American Languages. There are, however, challenges ahead, the most important of which is the institutionalization of the discipline at several levels. One of such levels has to do with the field's practitioners: now that the great figures in British Catalan Studies have passed away, such as Robert Pring-Mill and Arthur Terry, or retired, such as Henry Ettinghausen, Geoffrey Walker, or Alan Yates, a good number of younger specialists, of ages comprised between thirty and fifty, have taken the reins of the field and are contributing to its development. In this respect the challenge is to see each of these individuals promoted in the academic hierarchy. At another level, the general tendency in the UK to create departments of Modern Languages has some advantages for us, in that the prejudices that some Hispanists might have vis-à-vis Catalan Studies are diluted and the possibilities of intellectual exchanges with colleagues of other areas are increased; but it also entails some problems. Being part of a Modern Languages department increases the visibility of Catalan Studies, but this is what we could call an uncomfortable visibility, because it highlights our subordinate position, both as a discipline and as a culture: Catalan is still, in most cases, the only minoritized language taught in those departments, and this makes the effects of Catalan's lack of political recognition even clearer. Finally, the institutionalization of Catalan Studies in the UK also requires its reproduction and continuity as a field, not just in terms of attracting new Ph.D. students who will become the specialists of tomorrow, but also regarding its continuity in the specific departments where it already exists: the presence of the discipline is highly dependent on the individuals who teach it, and whose departure might signify the end of Catalan at that institution. For this reason perhaps efforts should now go into the creation of permanent posts in Catalan Studies at selected universities.

The study of Catalan language and literature has also a long history in Canada and the United States. It has its most recent drive right after the Spanish Civil War, when an important number of exiled Catalan professors and intellectuals settled in American and Canadian universities, often after teaching for some years in Latin America. Joan Coromines (University of Chicago), Josep Roca-Pons (Indiana University), and Manuel Duran (Yale University) are some of the most prominent scholars who settled in the USA and Canada from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. Working together with professors such as Josephine de Boer, a pioneer in the study of Catalan in North America, this generation introduced Catalan language and literature into the curriculum of departments of Romance Languages or Spanish, as well

as into the intellectual discussions that dominated their discipline in those years. The combined effort of Catalan exiled professors and American colleagues made possible the creation in 1958 of a section dedicated to the discussion of Catalan and Provençal languages and literatures within the Modern Language Association of America (MLA), the most important professional organization dedicated to the study of languages and literatures in North America. These scholars were also influential teachers. They trained a new generation of young professors, many of them Catalans who came to the United States to study with them. The founding of the North American Catalan Society in 1978, the celebration since then of bi-annual professional meetings (*Col·loquis*), and the creation of the scholarly journal *Catalan Review* in 1986 marked the willingness of these scholars (both established and young) to consolidate and expand the presence of Catalan Studies in their universities. Since then the field of Catalan Studies in North America has grown to include other scholars trained in Europe or those who have arrived at Catalan Studies from diverse disciplines and intellectual interests.

The current situation regarding the study of the Catalan language, its literature and the culture of the Països Catalans in North America is both encouraging and difficult. On the encouraging side it should be mentioned the group of established professors who are actively involved both in the training of students and the creation of a variety of academic initiatives which have as exclusive or main focus Catalan literature and culture. As a result, there is an increasing number of universities, often among the most prestigious, offering regular courses, lectures, and symposia on Catalan literature and culture. Brown University, Georgetown University, Harvard University, New York University, the University of California at Santa Barbara, the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the University of Massachusetts, are part of the "xarxa de lectorats dels Estats Units" for the academic year 2006-2007, and Catalan can also be studied at, among others, Cornell University, Indiana University, Stanford University, University of Toronto, and the University of Florida. Among the most recent initiatives it is worth mentioning the inauguration of the "Càtedra Joan Coromines of Catalan Studies" at the University of Chicago in 2006 and the future Catalan Center in New York. The success of these initiatives depends on the work of committed faculty and is often based in the collaboration between our universities and institutions and universities in the Països Catalans. The collaboration between institutions and universities on both sides of the Atlantic is crucial, and the Institut Ramon Llull will have to keep playing, as it has recently, a central role. Without this collaboration

—which should support, for instance, the translation of Catalan works into English— there will be no significant expansion of the study of Catalan authors and culture among students and colleagues.

The study of Catalan literature and culture in Canada and the United States is also at a key moment in its history. Linguists and medievalists predominated in the early stages of the development of Catalan Studies in North America and these are still strong and innovative fields of research and teaching. The eighties and nineties saw important developments in the study of modern Catalan literature, often driven by scholars interested in Gender Studies. Works by Mercè Rodoreda, Montserrat Roig, and Carme Riera, among others, became common readings in many Spanish departments, even if often in their Spanish or, when available, English translations. Moreover, although literary criticism still remains strong institutionally, the interests of students and scholars in the culture of the Països Catalans have expanded to include diverse disciplines, in particular, visual arts, music, architecture, and theater. These new interests are often driven by the increasing popularity of Cultural Studies and, despite the inertia or opposition of traditional Hispanists, the growing interest in Iberian Studies. One of the main challenges of *Catalanística* in North America is precisely the creation of intellectual dialogues with different disciplines and the reconceptualization of the relationship between Catalan and Spanish in a new field of Iberian Studies. To survive and to grow Catalanists need to be part of, and contribute decisively to, these intellectual initiatives and trends. In this regard, as in the case of our British colleagues, the creation of permanent posts in Catalan Studies at selected universities is essential.

The recent change in status of Catalan and Catalan literature within the Modern Language Association exemplifies well the encouraging and challenging position in which we find ourselves today. The MLA has now granted permanent status to the "Discussion Group on Catalan Language, Literature and Culture" which replaces the section on Catalan and Provençal and those created by the North American Catalan Society over the years as an "Allied" and as such, external (to the MLA) organization. The MLA thus acknowledges the strong participation shown in the sessions organized by the Group during the first three years of its provisional existence and, thus, the increasing role attained by Catalan Studies in the American academy. This is certainly good news. We should not forget, however, that we are not yet a "Division," a category under which we find disciplines such as American, English, French, German, Italian, and Hispanic literatures, and fields such as Comparative literature, or Interdisciplinary Approaches. Let us hope that, as in the case of the United Kingdom, the institutional and financial retreat from the Humanities shown in

recent years by provosts and a wavering support from the Països Catalans do not preclude and cancel our insufficient but always passionate efforts to make Catalan language and the culture and history of the Països Catalans a field seen not only as "normal" but also exciting.

There is clearly much in common between Catalan Studies in North America and the United Kingdom, beyond the obvious fact of the linguistic and cultural proximity of both countries. There is a very similar academic and intellectual ethos, and a shared strategic purpose. The critical revision of Hispanism and the contribution of Catalanists to the development of approaches to newly established disciplines such as Cultural Studies, Iberian Studies, and Latin American Studies, should help to change the institutional sensibility regarding the study of Catalan language, literature, and culture. Despite the progress we have made, we have not yet been able to create an institutional environment that understands well enough the importance of knowing Catalan and recognizes the relevance of scholarly work on Catalan literature and culture. This is why specialists of Catalan Studies are still mostly hired to occupy positions in Spanish. Our academic future on both sides of the Atlantic probably lies in our success in effecting this change. Students and scholars alike need to sense this recognition and need to do it in the only way that matters, that is, by enjoying professional opportunities similar to scholars who work in other fields, i.e., when submitting an abstract for a professional conference, an article to a prestigious journal or a book to a publisher, and when applying for a job.

The expansion of Catalan Studies in North America is key for achieving critical mass in English-speaking academia, and therefore for reaching a higher global profile of the discipline, but this objective can be met only by building on the experience and existing development of Catalan Studies in Great Britain. Thus transatlantic collaboration offers us plenty of opportunities for the development of personal and academic friendships, intellectual innovation and exchanges, and institutional growth. It is in this spirit that the Anglo-Catalan Society and the North American Catalan Society agreed to hold a joint conference to foster our common endeavours and to celebrate in style the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the A-CS.

The conference was a great success thanks to the efficiency of local organiser Josep-Lluís González (Eton College), elected president of the A-CS in 2005; the leadership of A-CS president Montserrat Roser i Puig (University of Kent at Canterbury) and secretary Helena Buffery (University of Birmingham) on the one hand, and NACS president Jaume Martí-Olivella (University of New Hampshire) on the other; and the generosity of Eton College, the Institut Ramon Llull, the Fundació Congrés de Cultura Catalana, and the Societat Cata-

lana de Llengua i Literatura (Institut d'Estudis Catalans), to whom both associations reiterate their heartfelt thanks. The conference programme, co-ordinated by Josep-Anton Fernández (Queen Mary, University of London) and Elisa Martí-López (Northwestern University), was extremely ambitious and truly made this joint meeting a major academic event.

We were lucky enough to welcome three very prominent guest speakers: filmmaker Ventura Pons gave the North American Catalan Society lecture, and offered a captivating account of his filmography to date; the Fundació Congrés de Cultura Catalana lecturer, linguist M. Carme Junyent (Universitat de Barcelona), spoke on the increasing linguistic diversity of Catalonia in her talk "Conviure a la Catalunya multilingüe"; and writer Joan Francesc Mira gave the Joan Gili Annual Lecture under the title "L'espai de la llengua escrita: entre el risc i la riquesa". The bulk of the programme consisted of ten sessions with a total of thirty-four papers by scholars from Great Britain, the United States, Canada, the Catalan Countries, Poland, and Greece.

In addition to two panels on language and linguistics, the programme featured sessions such as "Theatre, Aesthetics, and Politics", "History and Politics", "Reflections on Criticism and Translation", "The Body and Its Representation", "Perspectives on Early Modern Culture", "The City and the Imagination", "History and Literature", and "Cultural Interfaces: Pre-war/Post-war culture". A round table under the title "New Directions for Catalan Studies" included representatives of both associations (Brad Epps, Harvard University and Josep-Anton Fernández, Queen Mary-University of London), of the Catalan universities (Salvador Climent, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya), and of cultural practitioners in the Catalan Countries (novelist Toni Cucarella), and provided a forum for reflecting on the current position of Catalan Studies in our specific institutional contexts and the possibilities for future development. The conference concluded with a session that since Eton has become an element of the A-CS annual conference: the RIMAT (Readings In Memory of Arthur Terry), which on this first occasion was a homage to two major figures in British and North American Catalan Studies that had recently passed away: Arthur Terry and Albert Porqueras-Mayo. The homage was in the form of poetry readings conducted by Dominic Keown (Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge) and Jaume Martí-Olivella (University of New Hampshire), with a musical performance by Christina Ball and Jenny Stern (Eton College).

This issue contains a selection of the papers presented at the joint conference. Despite the necessarily heterogeneous nature of this volume, we have been able to group the contributions into different sections. Firstly, "Language, Identity, and Diversity" includes two of

the guest lectures, by Joan Francesc Mira and M. Carme Junyent, and the text of one of the interventions at the round table, by novelist Toni Cucarella. The three pieces in this section explore the social, symbolic, and political dimensions of the current situation of the Catalan language, in a context of increasing diversity in demographic and cultural terms, and of continuing political subordination. Next, "The Politics of Language: Norm, Dissent, and Speech" includes four papers on linguistics, ranging from sociolinguistics to morphology and syntax. The four contributions share an interest in variation and the standard; however, the focus on the linguistic norm and its deviations is not applied here from an ideological point of view, but from a perspective internal to the discipline.

The rest of the volume is concerned with literature and other forms of cultural production. The three contributions to "Perspectives on the Avant-Gardes" outline a tradition of the Catalan avant-garde, and share a concern with identity: not only in its sociopolitical manifestations, but primarily that of the creative self and its object. Thus the papers in this section examine the Catalan background of Dalí's work, the cross-fertilization between visual arts and poetry in the collaboration between J.V. Foix and Joan Ponç, and the experimentation with text, theory, and subjectivity produced by avant-garde writers in the 1970s. In "Identity and the Politics of Representation", these authors explore, through detailed analyses of narrative texts (Villalonga, Monsó) and television (Dagoll Dagom), a range of issues related to gender and the body, sexuality, and national identity. In this section particular attention is given to visibility and representation, to relations of domination and subordination, and to the politics of literary criticism. Finally, if the previous section brings Catalan Studies closer to cultural studies, "Archeologies of the Literary Heritage" establishes links of continuity with the philological origins of the discipline and participates in the rediscovery and documentation of a textual legacy either lost or buried. Focusing on different periods (the eighteenth century and the post-civil war decades) the articles in this section engage with the materiality of writing as an intellectual exercise, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the Catalan literary system and its history.

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