

*reviews*



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# Reviews

## || Poetry in a postmodern society Jordi Rourera

Jordi Julià, 2005, *Modernitat del món fungible*  
(Modernity of the Perishable World) Barcelona, Angle editorial, 165 pp.

This is a tempting book. It is tempting because, first of all, if there is anything we lack, it is thoroughgoing studies of our present-day literature and, in particular, overview analyses that explain trends, classify authors and evaluate their works. In brief, studies that offer some order. And the aim of *Modernitat del món fungible* is to obtain a picture of some of today's poetry (non-existent evaluation aside). It is tempting, too, because it offers an all-embracing account of some twenty poets who now constitute the most consolidated "young generation". The temptation of a brilliant project that is capably presented should not, however, prevent us from seeing some of the more debatable—in the true sense of the term— aspects of this essay.

The poet, critic and lecturer in Literary Theory, Jordi Julià (1972), sets out to analyse and classify the poetry of writers of his generation (those born in the 60s and 70s) in the light of studies of postmodern society. Julià's thesis is that political and sociological changes in the world over the last twenty-five years mark this generation that grew up under another paradigm (a "world of yesteryear") and that, as a result, produce poetry that he calls *reflexive realism*, in particular the poetry they have produced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These are third-millennium poets, the "Fall of the Wall Generation", and this historic event is taken as a symbol of the collapse of the world in which they were raised.

To begin with, Jordi Julià situates the reader in postmodern society. He then reveals the evolution of poetic tendencies from the 1980s through to the present and proposes an updated classification. Finally, he describes how reflexive realism is a poetic response to the historical and social circumstances of this generation, situating it in his schema as a synthesis of poetry of experience and metaphysical poetry while also indicating its main formal features: alienation, digression and condensation.

Julià's account of the contributions of the most outstanding thinkers of postmodernity (Taylor, Lipovetsky, Bauman, Virilio, Lacroix and Rosset) is in itself an excellent summary article, in which he moves from the metaphor of the liquid (changing and uncertain) world through the extreme individualism that gives pride of place to instrumental reasoning and leads to the cult of immediate emotion to the detriment of feelings, and the notion of the perishable world in which, in the absence of stability, everything is susceptible to being consumed. Julià tight-weaves his account by introducing numerous quotes from the aforementioned theoreticians and some illustrative poems, and his exposition is rigorous, clear and comprehensible.

The third section, on the other hand, is the one that gives rise to the most methodological and general doubts. It is possible that the examples of the poems that Julià cites reflect what he wants (and, moreover, the interpretation can be judged as biased in some) but it is obvious that the work of several poets (Manel Forcano and Susanna Rafart, for example) is taking totally different paths. In other words, the examples he offers constitute the exception but not the rule. Once again, the features of reflexive realism do not characterise the bulk of these poets and, furthermore, they are sufficiently vague to be found in writers of other generations. The procedure tends to make one think that, starting out from a preconceived idea —the influence of the perishable world on the poets being studied— Julià has sought to corroborate it, come hell or high water.

Again, some of his premises for distinguishing the poets he has analysed from others are contentious, for example the idea that this generation should have felt the “collapse of the world of yesteryear” more than the previous generation or that, although they were producing work since the 90s, they did not practise reflexive realism until the turn of the millennium with the 9/11 attacks as catalyst. Then again, is it liquid postmodern society (which would not affect them exclusively) that marks them or the change of historic paradigm?

To deny the influence of society on poetry is as wrong-headed as to imagine that society alone *significantly* explains it. Sociological approximations to literature are useful, in particular, for seeing how literature is, in some respects, a reflection of society (and they explain the society more than what lies in the strictly literary domain). In this regard, Jordi Julià’s work is correct. One cannot deny the close link between what he describes in the first part of his book and works such as Hèctor Bofill’s *Les genives cremades* (Burnt Gums) or Sebastià Alzamora’s *Benestar* (Well-being), but neither his own poetry nor that of anyone else is explained as reflexive realism alone, nor is this exclusive to the poets under consideration. The problem appears when Julià tries to use historical and social facts to account for an entire generation of quite widely differing poets, as if their work were merely a mirror of the past twenty years. Literature also consists of literature and of very diverse personal experience that goes beyond the common coordinates that the epoch assigns to these facts.

This mechanical relationship between the literary work and society seems to be something out of other times, pertaining less to Julià’s reflexive realism than to social (or, as we would call it here, historical) realism. It makes one think of the questionnaire that the review *Poemes* sent out to a number of poets in 1963, the sixteenth question in the order of the survey being, “Have you been influenced by historic events?” There was no lack of respondents who spoke of superstructures. Gabriel Ferrater, more ironic and mocking, answered, “Yes, very much. And members of my family even more”<sup>11</sup>

## || A place where people and books lived

Simona Škrabec

|| Arnau Pons, 2006, *Celan, lector de Freud*  
(Celan, Reader of Freud), Lleonard Muntaner, Palma, 117 pp.

There is a deep-rooted conviction that a poem, especially if it is hermetic, conceals several readings. Whatever the case may be, every text bears within itself a different face for each reader. Arnau Pons, author of the book *Celan, lector de Freud*, is more than compelling in showing the harmful effects of such haziness. The quest for the *meaning* of the poem is adapted from the outset to the expectations of the reader. The text is not seen as a text that some other person has written but becomes instead nothing more than some kind of reflection of the reader. Hence, it is not possible to establish any bridge to the otherness that the text represents.

In the case of Paul Celan, a reading that overlooks the artist and his historic position perpetuates even more “disrespect and dubious cultural celebration”. In countering these effects, Pons’ brief book is a study in critical hermeneutics. The most important feature of this methodology is that it recovers the notion of subject. A poem cannot be stripped of its chronology and neither can the particular experience of the poet be overlooked.

With his attentive reading of this one writer, Pons manages to fashion a tool for reflection that is highly appropriate for the times in which we live. For Celan’s readers in general it is difficult, not to say impossible, to take in the seriousness of the poet’s caveat that one must understand the texts, the rhetoric and the seduction of the words.

Celan accuses us. He accuses us because the inability of, let us say, Europeans to decipher the seduction of the discourse of power led to genocide, systematically perpetrated by the Nazis. He wants us to learn how to read so that we can steer clear of the siren song. But we still haven’t learned much, not much at all.

In Bukovina, said Celan, when he received the City of Bremen Prize, there used to live people and books. The name of the region is closely linked with books. *Bukva* in Russian means “letter” and *buk* is beech, just as the German noun *Buche* (beech) takes us to *Buch* (book), on the assumption that soft beechwood blocks were once used in printmaking. Who then, as Arnau Pons asks, can forget that the people and books of Bukovina were burned by the Nazis?

How is it possible to overcome the dense silence of oblivion? How can the advance of this invasive forest be avoided? In his poem “Stretto”, Paul Celan describes the landscape of afterwards in just two words: “*Gras, auseinandergeschrieben*” (Grass, written asunder). He describes the grass, letter by letter. The setting is still a landscape, but a written landscape. The reader is deported into the text.

This crystallisation of memory —the tear never shed but changed into a sharp-edged stone that endures, in a poem— is his great difference *vis-à-vis* the method in which Freud trusted. The inventor of psychoanalysis sought to borrow *catharsis* from Greek

tragedy. He thought that one only needed —I am simplifying things!— to express the trauma through language, and the painful memories could be overcome.

Celan breaks down the Freudian conviction with an aphorism of Kafka, who also exclaimed at the fact that it seemed that all explanations could be found in psychology. Celan's irony about the curative power of the word is sharp, and it hurts. Celan knew that both Kafka and Freud died of occlusion of the larynx, of throat cancer and tuberculosis respectively, which made it impossible to swallow food in the final stages ("A Hunger Artist"), or to speak ("Josephine the Singer").

The shadow of aphasia over someone whose language is being broken down and the physical illness that makes it impossible to articulate anything but guttural sounds project a palpable threat because then we see the fragility of language, Paul Celan's "breath-crystal". Pon's reflections on these dense verses help us a great deal to discover, to perceive, little by little, their sound, their *sense* ||

|| **Robert Graves  
and his world**  
Joan Carles Simó

|| Maria Rosa Llabrés, 2006, *Robert Graves i el món clàssic*  
(Robert Graves and the Classical World),  
Leonard Muntaner, Palma, 376 pp.

M. Rosa Llabrés, head of a secondary school Greek department and well known for her contributions on the classical world in different spheres (lectures, translations and publications), has also published a major collection of lyrical poetry of Ancient Greece translated by herself. This book demonstrates her enormous ability in working with material that is of great use for anyone who is interested in the different aspects of the classical tradition.

Those of us who know about M. Rosa's fascination with the work of Robert Graves, and who have heard her speaking about it more than once, were waiting for this definitive work on the dimension that the classical world acquires in the work of the Deià dweller. It rarely happens that an essay can be described as indispensable but this one is precisely that in being both something long-anticipated and also comprehensive. In fact, all the Graves scholars and devotees of the classical world have been waiting for this book on the relationship between Graves' work and the classical tradition. We all know that the work of the writer from Wimbledon who went to live in Deià has been the starting point for many a passion for the classical world. It is as if the love-hate relationship that Graves professed for all that the Greco-Roman world entailed stimulated his readers to approach the classics in the same personal way that Graves aimed at and achieved. However, this matter of awakening interest in, and passion for, the classical world (and who has not admired his novel *I, Claudius* even if only because of the television series?)

was hitherto bereft of any study on the use that Graves made of the classical world and of the sources of classical culture in general, and on the very special links between Graves and Greco-Latin culture. M. Rosa Llabrés' book has now filled this void, correctly situating Graves' work and person but without any kind of adulation or, on the contrary, hint of condescension about the fact that his writing is not only creative but also for popular consumption.

I have also noted that Llabrés' book is well-rounded and it is so because it engages in a minutely-detailed, unhurried, and serious survey of each and every one of Graves' works that contain references to the classical world, while sources are analysed passage by passage and their use evaluated with all the professional aplomb and rigour that comes from the author's profound knowledge of both the classical tradition and the relevant elements of Robert Graves' life, all of which led Graves to offer, through his work, a personal interpretation of the classics that was also much more of a serious endeavour than some critics have wished to recognise.

It is of no little importance to highlight, in this regard, that Graves' enlistment in the army in the First World War was a virtual departure for Troy, a *fatum* that governs events, like the *fatum* of the emperor Claudius that sets out for a remote posterity to be resuscitated by Graves as a literary ploy. As M. Rosa Llabrés points out, this character who will mark Graves' future contains in his misunderstood personality that, while not fitting in anywhere, is also deeply human, traits that are sufficiently clear to offer glimpses of a certain autobiographical component.

This personal use of historical data will represent the take-off point for modern historical narrative: the presentation of events in dramatic form, along with the personalised, highly-detailed nature of the way he tells history in the style of Suetonius and the historiography of the imperial era, are characteristics that belong to 20<sup>th</sup> century historical narrative, and these are due, in great part, to the contributions of Robert Graves.

Again, Llabrés' study explores Graves' psychological dimension, just as he too was interested in the new psychological trends of his times. In fact, his psychological treatment of Claudius but, in particular, the significance he gives to the female figure that is omnipresent in his novel about the emperor, and in Graves' own life as well, is a constant in his work. *The White Goddess* and *Homer's Daughter* are two clear exponents of this female presence in Graves' subsequent work.

Nonetheless, perhaps Graves' Claudius, as Llabrés makes clear, is no more than the first stone in the impressive edifice constructed around his theories on the fact of mythology and of poetry in general. It is a first stone that is by no means light and this is worth remarking on because this book contains novelistic elements that situate it among other works in the genre that have marked the tendencies of later periods. The point is that Graves produces a version of the events and the characters that nobody had previously been able to manage. This is an account of an almost unknown emperor, with a complex and difficult personality, who uses cunning and adulation to save himself and to survive, seasoned with a great profusion of details that satisfies the reader's curiosity.

M. Rosa Llabrés rightly locates Graves' huge mythological opus (*The Golden Fleece*, *The White Goddess*, and *The Greek Myths*) in the context of his reflections on poetic creation and the universality of the mythological fact. Even though this leaves room for doubts as

to whether his work might be considered as scientific, it is no less true that Graves, with his “historical grammar of poetic myth”, stimulates any reader who is interested in the mythological fact to start asking questions, while also pointing out new paths to explore without failing to appreciate the poetry his books exhale.

Whatever criticisms have come from the academic world, the popular success of his opus cannot be ignored, and it is this fact that M. Rosa Llabrés book situates in its rightful place. His use of classical language in an innovative way, above all in personal and demythologising senses, along with his more intimate and profound treatment of the classical tradition, and the fact that his poetic vision is the expression of an ancient and unique subject matter have meant, without a doubt, that Graves’ work has brought on an addiction to classical themes in many people, while fleeing possible “dizzying, tiring or rigidly scientific” standpoints.

Not to be ignored, either, is the account that M. Rosa Llabrés offers in her essay of Graves’ brief works: short stories, articles, poems and translations, all penned with boundless fantasy and always true to his poetic-mythological theses. In these short pieces one sees Graves’ immense intellectual baggage, especially with regard to his knowledge of the classical world.

In brief, this is a splendid work that offers a great deal of information about the creation of Graves’ particular mythological world and the importance of the presence of the classical world in his *oeuvre*. This is a Robert Graves who, once installed in Deià, incorporated ideas into his work that cannot be detached from his own way of living and feeling life, and that are closely bound up with theses such as those he upheld about living in harmony with the natural world, ideas that make him a true precursor of new social currents appearing in Europe after the 1960s: ecological movements, alternative therapies, new religious or musical forms... And all of this through the massive prism of the classical tradition and universal mythology that give both coherence and form to the thought of Robert Graves as a whole II

## || A major contribution to Catalan philology

**Brauli Montoya**

Antoni Ferrando Francés and Miquel Nicolás Amorós, 2005,  
*Història de la llengua catalana* (History of the Catalan Language),  
UOC/Pòrtic, Barcelona, 540 pp.

This is a voluminous work comprising 539 densely packed pages. It builds on *Panorama d'història de la llengua* (Historical Panorama of the Catalan Language-Tàndem, Valencia: 1993), another work of the same authors, but is longer, more than double the number of pages, and has a thesis. More importantly, includes considerably more developed and expanded material. The book is divided into 12 chapters and, except for chapter 1, each one traces the chronology of the history of Catalan from its origins (chapter 2) to the year of the book's publication in 2005 (chapter 12). Chapter 1 deals with the theory on which the rest of the book is built. It is the only chapter that strays from the work's chronological organisation. The book begins with a prologue by the authors, Ferrando and Nicolás (herein F and N), and is followed by a general bibliography. Each chapter in turn contains a more specific bibliography so that, in total, there are 20 pages of bibliographic reference material.

Without a doubt, *Història de la llengua catalana* fills a gap in the history of the Catalan language, which until now had not been conveyed in as complete and as rigorous a manner. From now on it is possible to say that those university professors who are required to teach the history of the Catalan language will have an extremely helpful tool at their disposal, while their students will equally reap the benefits of a good analytical guide to Catalan's linguistic history. With F and N, professionals in the field of linguistics, both professors and students are in good hands. Ferrando has made many contributions to studies of crucial episodes in the history of the Catalan language, studies on, for example, the linguistic origin and identity of Valencians; on Bernat Fenollar and Jeroni Pau's medieval text *Regles d'esquivar vocables* (Rules for Avoiding Certain Words), etc. in A. Ferrando, *Consciència idiomàtica i nacional dels valencians* (The National and Linguistic Awareness of Valencians), Institute of Valencian Philology, University of Valencia: 1980; and "On the Authorship of the *Regles d'esquivar vocables*, again", *El Marges*, 70, 2002, pp. 67-98. Meanwhile, Nicolás is quite well known for his incisive, critical examination of the history of Catalan language in M. Nicolás, *Història de la llengua catalana: la construcció d'un discurs* (History of the Catalan Language: Construction of a Discourse), Publications of Abadia de Montserrat, Interuniversity Institute of Valencian Philology, Barcelona-Valencia: 1998.).

In order to evaluate the core content of *Història de la llengua catalana*, we must begin with the prologue, F and N's veritable declaration of principles (and intentions). In the prologue, the authors affirm an "emphasis on sociolinguistic factors and on ideological representations" (p. 15) and an aim "to problematise received interpretations" (p. 18). But this sociolinguistic emphasis and problematisation of received interpretations depends a lot on the scientific specialisation readers bring to bear on the text. That is to say, if this

book is read by sociolinguists, they will find it lacking in emphasis on important social and political events in the history of the Catalan language, while other specialists in Catalan's linguistic evolution will find it lacking in other pertinent aspects.

Yet this could just be the book's principal virtue. Everybody will find something they are looking for, but nobody will find everything. For a history of the Catalan language which espouses, quite wisely, a wholistic approach to methodology, with serious attention given to themes that are important to historians of the Catalan language, it could be no other way. After all, F and N's book can be used as a university textbook on a course on the history of the Catalan language. The authors communicate this clearly with the formal structure they have chosen for the book. The distribution of chapters is didactic in the sense that theory comes first and applied knowledge second. So that it meets the historicist needs of the history field, it is also chronological. Meanwhile, in many instances, explanations are accompanied by texts and illustrations from the historical moments to which they pertain. Then, in chapters dealing with applied components, there are well-detailed diagrams such as "chronological tables", which contain complementary extensions to the material. Finally, there is a bibliography organised according to the book's various themes, appearing at the end. The final, overall result is a book which is ideal for pedagogical purposes.

Nevertheless, details of the work and its material are certainly open to debate. In naming Spanish and Catalan kings, F and N adopt the numbering system of the dynasty of the House of Barcelona, instead of the Castilian system of designation. This could cause problems for readers wishing to identify kings from the sixteenth century onwards, after the Catalan court was transferred to Castile and people began to understand the monarchy according to its Castilian numbering (in this scheme of things, "Philip II," famous for his line about his territorial possessions being so vast the sun never set on them, becomes for F and N "Philip I"). As for the book's contribution of documentary material, although this material is well conceived, it leaves us in desire of more. The same for the book's illustrations, which, in black and white and small in dimension, hinder a full appreciation of the historical moments described in them. Finally, there is the question of the bibliographies. Their disaggregated arrangement may slow some readers down when consulting citations.

But for all these criticisms, F and N are well intentioned. In the case of the numerical designation of Catalan and Spanish kings, F and N wish to pay homage to the sovereignty of the old territories of the Aragonese Crown, as far as the Nova Planta decrees. Furthermore, in the designation of kings according to their royal nicknames rather than their official numbering, which is consistent with established Catalan tradition, the authors wish to avoid certain confusion. Finally, with respect to the sometimes difficult deciphering of illustrations, this is due partly to the book's formal design and style, its use of poor-quality paper, its absence of colour, its small letter size, its small overall size relative to its number of pages, etc. These are decisions of the publisher and not the authors.

Although F and N maintain their emphasis is on sociolinguistic factors, the truth is a variety of eclectic selections govern the book's material and direction. In the condensed conceptual and terminological definitions of the field of linguistics, which appear in chapter 1, the authors put forward a nomenclature for and delimitation which is

somewhere between a social history and a sociolinguistic history of Catalan (p. 38), even though they insist on a “cleanly social perspective” (p. 39). The authors also accept, however, the more traditional disciplinary orientation, as represented by, for example, Rafael Lapesa’s classic *Historia de la lengua española* (The History of the Spanish Language) (Gredos, Madrid: 1980). It is no coincidence that purely historical events, and in some cases even purely social events, are separated out from the linguistic events pertinent to the development of Catalan. Starting in chapter 2, these linguistic events are usually placed in a section of their own at the end of the chapter. Figure 1.2 (p. 40) is typical of this. In this figure, the authors have organised the various disciplines and sub-disciplines that comprise Catalan-language studies into a neat, clearly synthesised chart, but they have left out sociolinguistic history which they had just finished discussing two pages before.

F and N’s chronological explanation begins in chapter 2 and carries on throughout the rest of the book. Each subsequent chapter corresponds to a concrete epoch or era in the history of Catalan, delimited by key dates marking the history of the language. One problem with this formulation is that F and N do not allot equal proportionality to each historical period. We are struck by the quantity of pages dedicated to the contemporary era, in all, 215 pages covering the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Meanwhile, the ten previous centuries, divided into seven chapters, occupy just 252 pages. Of course, there is in general much more information on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries than on the centuries before these. Still, it is questionable whether F and N can write such a lopsided mass of contemporary history with a sufficient sense of perspective for such recent times as the last couple of decades, let alone the last couple of years all the way up to the publication of *Història de la llengua catalana*, as they indeed do.

But in spite of everything, F and N’s contribution is greatly welcomed. Other histories of the Catalan language are less thorough. In one case, they focus on more distant rather than recent epochs. Two distinguished works that fall into this category, which cover the history of Catalan only as far as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, are Sanchis Guarner’s *Aproximació a la història de la llengua catalana* (Approaches to the History of the Catalan Language-Salvat, Barcelona: 1980) and J. Nadal and M. Prats’s *Història de la llengua catalana* (History of the Catalan Language-Edicions 62, Barcelona: 1982-1996). Both these histories were designed as works in progress, with the intention they would one day be continued for the contemporary era. In the other case, Catalan histories tend to centre on the 16<sup>th</sup> century and onwards, in an often fragmented manner. With F and N, however, we have our first complete history of Catalan from antiquity to the present in one volume.

Each chronological chapter begins with an historical introduction, or an “historical frameworks” as F and N call it, and ends with “chronological tables” that include the political and social events of the period side by side with the purely linguistic events (or in some cases, the sociolinguistic events). Naturally, each chapter’s body covers the events that properly mark the history of Catalan. In this breakdown, F and N could have shortened and simplified each chapter’s introduction and expanded each body section to include, say, more exemplifying text or illustration. They could also have chosen a more readable font, particularly in view of the small size of font that was chosen. But F and N do provide explanations and source texts that clearly match their purposes, as in chapter 2 (pp. 61-62), where they present a sequence of fragments which give a good sense

of the detail involved in the evolution of Catalan from Latin. In this same chapter, F and N make a significant contribution to correcting the misnomer “Mozarabic”, the traditional designation of that language inherited by the Christians of Al-Andalus from Latin, to “Romance” or “Romanic Andalusian”.

Most of the chapters do not limit themselves to mere descriptions of vicissitudes in the history of the Catalan language from the time of its establishment in the territories of Catalonia until today. Rather, critical examinations, sprinkled throughout with largely unexplored observations on the societal uses of Catalan, predominate. An example of this is when F and N speak about the differences in the use of Catalan between the genders: “After 1500,” they argue, “there were indications that noble and cultivated women, secular and religious, were more recalcitrant about the Castilianisation of Catalan than men” (p. 160). Another example is when F and N give details on a generational discontinuance of Catalan amidst the Valencian nobility: “Many nobles and also court servants of the new monarchy contracted the services of Castilian tutors for their children, for the purposes of coaching them in the command of Castilian” (p. 199).

A third example is when F and N mention the town of Montsó, “an Aragonese village, but Catalan speaking” (p. 189). We would like to know more about this village in those times. Similarly, it would be nice to know about the “*twelve* populations in the western region of the Kingdom of Valencia whose dominant tongue was Castilian-Aragonese” (p. 199, the reviewer’s italics).

On the topic of changes to the Catalan linguistic frontier over time, the material is divided up between the different chapters of the book. There is some description of this in maps (figures 3.1 and 6.2), but it is not examined in great detail. Instead, F and N spend a lot of time in investigating the representations of Catalan by writers, intellectuals, and chroniclers, starting in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (see chapters 5, 6, and 7). Among other figures of the period, the authors cite Cervantes and Valdés, and native thinkers such as Ponç d’Icard and Pujades. F and N discover a general interest in Catalan in these persons, for a period in which the prestige of Catalan was in decline all over. However, these authors also seem to be compensating for Catalan’s disuse by Catalan authors in any erudite sense. Another theme F and N tackle are the linguistic shifts that split the more unified Catalan of the era prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The emergence of “apitxat,” the dialect of Catalan spoken in the city of Valencia, or differences in the pronunciation of the letter “r” at the end of words, are examples of these linguistic shifts (chapter 4, p. 175 and chapter 5, p. 218).

F and N divide the institutionalized repression that Catalan has suffered in the last two centuries (chapters 6 and 7) into two separate periods, and to mark this divide they choose the year 1759. This was the year that the reign of Charles III commenced and the application of a clear despotism began. Although always helpful to readers, perhaps the book’s chronological organisation is too strict for a more cohesive treatment of the themes F and N undertake, particularly those themes extending well beyond centuries in the history of Catalan. On the other hand, by the time we arrive at the end of the book, the different themes become more condensed in time and we can appreciate them better, partly because F and N have written more for this period than for previous periods.

The final chapters include a study of the Catalan traditional oral model, maintained all the way up until 20<sup>th</sup> century, and an analysis of contemporary anti-Catalanism in the region of Valencia. But this discussion is limited by insufficient depth and analysis. The phenomenon of the “vertical linguistic substitution in the principal cities” (Barcelona, Valencia, and Perpignan), occurring in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (chapter 8, pp. 304, 322), requires more extensive treatment, and had this treatment been given it would have permitted a better understanding of Catalan’s current sociolinguistic situation. The linguistic choice of Castilian by Valencian writers in the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a point which the authors touch on in chapter 9 (pp. 376-377) but only very superficially, similarly requires greater detail and analysis (B. Montoya: “La representació del conflicte lingüístic en la literatura valenciana contemporània [amb un esguard especial a la narrativa valoriana]”-“The representation of linguistic conflict in contemporary Valencian literature [with special consideration given to Enric Valor’s narrative work]”, *Llengua & Literatura*, 13 [2002], pp. 59-92).

In the end, however, the selection, focus, and level of detail given to the different themes appearing in any one work will always reflect the authors’ personal criteria and biases, as products of certain scientific tendencies. Thus, as a kind of counterbalance to the criticisms that have been offered here, the final evaluation of F and N’s work and their version of the history of Catalan could not be anything but positive. With this book, we are in the presence of a major contribution to Catalan philology II



