

A Chivalric Reading of Early Twentieth Century Catalanism

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Objectives

In 1908, two years after the appearance of *La nacionalitat catalana*, by Enric Prat de la Riba, and the beginning of the *Glosari* by Eugeni Ors, Diego Ruiz published the essay *El poeta civil i el cavaller* (1908) in issue number 76 of the collection, “Biblioteca Popular de l’Avenç.” Ruiz promoted a new model of poet, the knight, which was partly a reaction to the Noucentista intellectual postulated by Ors. This conception of the poet was included within author’s philosophy project (the *Clavis Methodica*) which he developed in the works *Teoría del acto entusiasta*, *Genealogía de los símbolos* and *Llull, maestro de definiciones*, published between 1905 and 1906.

In *El poeta civil i el cavaller* Ruiz, who sympathized with the Catalan Solidarity (*Solidaritat Catalana*) movement and had contributed to *El Poble Català* since 1906, expounded the programme for what he called a “Dictadura espiritual de Catalunya”, which had to be led by what he referred to as the “poeta civil”, the interpreter of the collective spirit. Through this neomedieval figure the philosopher offers a reformist-style re-reading of the mottoes of the Floral Games (*Jocs Florals*): *patria, fides, amor* (country, faith, love).

What relationship did Ruiz’s chivalric theorization have with political Catalanism? How can this medievalizing reading be understood within the political framework of the early twentieth century? What links can be established between the theory of Ruiz and the contributions by Prat de la Riba, Eugeni Ors and Gabriel Alomar? The aim of this article is to answer these questions by analyzing the role of medieval iconography in the Catalan theorization that took place between 1906 and 1908. The main sources of information are basically newspapers. They include the articles published by Ors in *La Veu de Catalunya* in 1906 and 1907, articles by Alomar and Ruiz in *El Poble Català* for the same period and the book by Prat de la Riba. To contextualize my approach, we also consider, as secondary documentation, some samples of Modernist prose and the ascent of Maragall in Ruiz’s work. All of this helps in the understanding of the evolution which took place in Catalanism at the turn of the twentieth century insofar as it involves a review of the national mythology and symbolism (key to understanding the constitution of discourses of identity) created in the nineteenth century (Sunyer 2006, 15).

Prolegomena

As analyzed by Joan Lluís Marfany in *La cultura del catalanisme* (1995), the recovery of the Catalan historical past in order to legitimate certain political positions and justify cultural actions, brought together through the development of the Catalan literary renaissance –or *Renaixença*–, can be related to Hobsbawm’s idea of “invented tradition.” Hobsbawm understood that the concept “is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.” (1983, 1).

This repetitive, ritualized use of traditions implies a re-semantization in the present, which gives them a “quite novel purpose” (Hobsbawm 1983, 6). The agents that take part in this creation are “political institutions, ideological movements and groups” (Hobsbawm

1983, 7, 263), many of which acquire an undeniably leading role in the formation of nationalisms. So, claims Hobsbawm, from the time of the industrial revolution invented traditions “seem to belong to three overlapping types: a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior” (1983, 9). Traditions are practises that, once adopted by the community, become “emotionally and symbolically charged signs” (Hobsbawm 1983, 11). It was precisely between 1870 and 1914, when the democracy was expanding and a politics of the masses was consequently emerging, that the largest number of invented traditions appeared (Hobsbawm 1983, 267-268).

If Marfany’s book proposes a sociological analysis of the Catalanist movement from 1888 to 1906, from the cultural practises of that time (excursionism, popular choirs, local dances like *sardanes*, the use of a certain model of language, etc.) which facilitated cohesion and gave visibility to them, this study will be centered on a case bounded between the dates 1906-1908. The Catalanist arena studied in such great detail by Marfany was already consolidated by 1906 and, with notable variations, had become the basis for a “nationalist” program covering a broad social spectrum. A spectrum which, do not forget, was marked by the emergence at the turn of the century of political Catalanism and the foundation of the Regionalist Union (*Unió Regionalista*) and the National Catalan Center (*Centre Nacional Català*) in 1899, which would merge two years later to form the Regionalist League (*Lliga Regionalista*). From that context, the recovery of historical clichés, from 1906, can be understood as part of that set of practises considered to be invented traditions, since they aspire to becoming cohesive symbols which legitimate specific public positions and guide certain ways of thinking and, with the development of political Catalanism, action.

According to Marfany’s findings (1995, 28), from 1898 to 1901, Catalanism experienced rapid growth and suddenly it became “la forma d’un típic nacionalisme modern.” During that process, it made an ideological use of its medieval past: “Els catalanistes fan al·lusions al gloriós i «independent» passat medieval, a Guifré el Pilós, al Consolat de Mar, a Roger de Llúria, als almogàvers i al rei En Jaume, però una mica per inèrcia, seguint la tradició romàntica. Els mites històrics realment importants, ara, són uns altres: la suposada democràcia medieval catalana i els episodis de resistència davant els castellans” (Marfany 1995, 192). The medieval institutions (the Courts and the Consell de Cent) and the episodes relating to 1640 and 1714 would steal the limelight by recreating the historical figures mythologized by the nineteenth century writers and from medieval mythology there would only remain a few *almogàvers* (professional soldiers during the Middle Ages) stripped of the meaning that they had been given by the Romanticist history (Marfany 1995, 194).

The new political and symbolic framework, which emerged from the creation of the Republican Nationalist Center (*Centre Nacionalista Republicà*) in 1906, gave a voice to the left-wing Catalanists –with the magazine *El Poble Català* as a platform for them to express themselves. From May 1906 it would become a daily newspaper under the direction of Francesc Rodon. Writers like Diego Ruiz participated in an articulation of an alternative nationalist counter-position to that of the conservative Catalanist group, the Regionalist League. In parallel, the constitution of the Catalan Solidarity movement in 1906 permitted the articulation of a transversal platform which included all the different orientations of Catalanism, and which reached its highest point during the electoral victory of July 1907 (Camps i Arboix). As we shall see, the political proposal of Ruiz stands firmly within the Catalanist and labor movement framework.

As Sunyer commented at the end of the nineteenth century, “la mitologia i la simbologia nacionals catalanes estaven establertes, tant, que el Modernisme va poder concentrar-se en la tria i la utilització” (2006, 18), selecting the moments which it considered to be the most adequate in view of specific expressive presuppositions. The myth, which had been duly re-semanticized, was the starting point for many of the Modernist “re-readings” of the past (Sunyer 2006, 33), and involved certain forms of expression, exemplified in *Visions & Cants* (1900) by Joan Maragall. In his poems Maragall reduces the legends to their essence and centers on the invention of characters considered as the “mothers” of the Catalan spirit, which would embody values that were both timeless and, at the same time, fiercely modern, such as Nietzschean vitalism and individualism.

Within this process of giving order to the past, which aimed to legitimate a symbolic world (Berger and Luckmann, *apud* Sunyer 2006, 36), the importance of the medieval legacy declined. If the medieval heroes prevailed during the eighteen fifties (with a clear favouritism –literary and iconographic– for Jaume I), from the eighteen eighties this overlapped with the heroes of the modern age (Sunyer 2006, 41). At the beginning of the twentieth century the progressive defense of the classical and Mediterranean legacy in Noucentista ideology (Murgades; Vallcorba) made the medieval past less attractive. This would necessarily mean a de-romanticization of the medieval imagery associated with the national idea inspired by Fichte, Humboldt and Herder, and disseminated by historians such as Víctor Balaguer and Antoni de Bofarull, following in the footsteps of Pau Piferrer (Sunyer 2006, 28, 29). It is still significant that two novels from the beginning of the twentieth century have been identified as the carriers of ideas belonging to a national mythology: *Solitud* (1905) and *La Ben Plantada* (2011) (Simbor) make a clean break with the past and adopt aesthetic elements of contemporary thought –the discourse of the living word or *paraula viva* (in the first case) and the harmonic classicism of Noucentisme (in the second).

In the next section we will analyze the importance of medieval iconography in the Catalanist theorization of the beginning of the twentieth century and in contemporary Catalan Modernist fiction. This will allow us to see how the creation of a certain image of the nation was reached, based on a reading (or re-reading by now) of history. As Sunyer reminds us in his summary (based partly on the work of Pere Anguera) of the contribution of the Catalanism of the eighteen nineties in its use of Romantic myths and symbols, much of that iconography was already obsolete in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. That is why the Modernist group of *L’Avenç* proposed “una depuració del llenguatge poètic que liquidés finalment la retòrica romàntica” and the mythical-symbolic material associated with it and was, in part, carried by institutions considered to be anachronistic like the Academy of the Floral Games (Sunyer 2012, 55). The myths generated for the new code, that of a Modernism which intended to break with a past associated with the most conservative hubs of Catalanism by creating a new language, started out from an abstraction which made identification in a patriotic or nationalist code difficult. Similarly, the re-creation of an atemporal past in certain narrations such as *Les multituds* (1906) and *Drames rurals* (1902), which describe a backward and atavistic society, aimed to explore the instinctive and irrational dimension of human psychology. This relates to the principle of intensity propounded by Casellas, which intended to provoke a specific emotional effect that would also serve as criticism and social revolt.

It should also be remembered that one of the inroads to medieval imagery was an interest in Pre-Raphaelitism (Cerdà Surroca, 228-233). Cerdà Surroca emphasizes how “l’amalgama romàntico-política del catalanisme cerca en l’expressió i la personalitat

catalana en l'època de màxima esplendidesa, és a dir, els segles XIII i XIV" (Cerdà Surroca, 154). End-of-the century Danteism and Wagnerism instilled imagery based on the recovery of a legendary and chivalric past, duly spiritualized and quintessentialized by the Pre-Raphaelite authors. It is well known that in the view of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, art comes from the religion of the artist priest, enthroned by the Decadent movement, whose greatest aspiration was to achieve beauty, in the face of the materialism of the modern age. In parallel, Raimon Casellas, who was strongly influenced by this new trend, promoted the importance of "Gothic-Catalan" painting in 1892, and Jaume Massó i Torrents analyzed Catalan and Provençal medieval poetry.

As Cerdà i Surroca notes, turn-of-the-century platforms such as *Joventut* and *Pèl & Ploma*, in addition to using some of the typical icons of the Decadent movement, also recovered certain medieval elements, such as the Knights of the Holy Grail (identified as the "símbol ocult de la identitat primigènia") and the image of Saint George's fight against the dragon (a representation of the knight who kills the monster to redeem beauty) (Cerdà i Surroca, 171). Some of the other authors influenced by the British trend, and supporters in all their shapes and forms of the redeeming capacity of Art, Nature and Humanity, through motifs such as the *donna angelicata*, fairies and the flower-woman, were Apel·les Mestres, Alexandre de Riquer, Santiago Rusiñol, Jeroni Zanné and Adrià Gual and then, in the context of Noucentisme, Guerau de Liost. This imagery has to be related to the Romantic revival at the end of the century, which Alan Yates analyzes, linking the symbolism of the Decadent movement to the set of motifs that made up the so-called *Romantic agony* (Yates, 61-80). It is significant that the only attempt by Josep Carner to write a novel, *La malvestat d'Oriana* (1910), was a "pastitx medievalitzant en la forma d'eximpli d'Oriana i Fra Marsili", which precisely parodies part of this reading of the medieval imagery through the filter of Pre-Raphaelitism (Yates 1975, 78-79).

It is also important to note that the significance of the historical novel, so greatly cultivated during the nineteenth century and the carrier, in many cases, of a political-national ideology, would decline at the beginning of the twentieth century. No novel with medieval themes would appear again until 1919, when *Blanca d'Alamany* was published by the physician and writer Pere Manaut, based on an episode in the conquest of Mallorca by Jaume I (Serrahima & Boada, 148-158).

The theorization of Prat de la Riba, Eugeni d'Ors and Gabriel Alomar

As contemporary historiography has shown, the 1906 publication of *La nacionalitat catalana*, a book of circumstances written as a "pastitx d'urgència cara a la campanya de crida de la plataforma unitària i transversal que fou Solidaritat Catalana" (Ucelay Da Cal, 8) was particularly important. It is well known that this booklet had a great impact and was widely read, giving theoretical weight to the thinking of conservative Catalanism which, from that same year, would have as an influential platform for its diffusion Ors's *gloses* in *La Veu de Catalunya*.

Prat's intention was to defend the need for self-government in Catalonia; in other words, to achieve an autonomy that involved the reform of the State, which would become a State composed of small confederated and associated states (Prat de la Riba, 54-55). His proposal was legitimized by the assumption that "Catalunya no té solament una llengua, un dret, un esperit i un caràcter nacionals, sinó que té també un pensament nacional" (Prat de la Riba, 64). From there he propounded the idea of "nacionalitat" as a "unitat de cultura o de civilització" which included all the cultural elements (we would refer to them as cultural or social practises) that identified it (Prat de la Riba, 81) and which gave it a collective spirit or *Volksgeist* (Prat de la Riba, 84).

It was time, Prat de la Riba postulated, that each nationality should have its own State (Prat de la Riba, 103), and it should be assumed that that the regionalism which aspired to “restaurar la llengua, mantenir el dret, conservar la riquesa” (Prat de la Riba, 120) had been left behind. Now, as he defined in a formula, which Ors would make his own and which he would repeat on numerous occasions, the time was right for an imperialist nationalism that would have the “aspiració [de] constituir l’Estat-Imperi, [d’]acoblar una ramat de nacions sota el poder d’un sol pastor” (Prat de la Riba, 114). It was a question, he concluded, of a “força de civilització” (Prat de la Riba, 116) moved by the ideal of a life of its own.

Which part of the medieval past gives form to a collective spirit, molding the works of the present and contributing to the shaping of national thought? Basically, as Prat de la Riba understood it, there were four elements: the poetry of the troubadours as a “florida de l’esperit d’un gran poble”, “naturalisme severíssim, senzill i ben proporcionat de l’art romànic”, “la fesomia ben nostra de l’arquitectura gòtica” and political, juridic and econòmic unity which came to an end as a result of the marked individualism of the Catalan people (Prat de la Riba, 100-101). As we can see, his interest resided in highlighting collective work –poetic, architectural and artistic, and also institutional– at the expense of individual contribution mythologized by certain contributions of cultural modernism filtered through Ibsen and Nietzsche. In short, he was postulating the need for a collective work similar to that which had existed at the time when Catalonia was an autonomous nation (later Prat de la Riba would call it a “nationality”).

In view of that, it is not surprising that Eugeni d’Ors, who, inspired by Pratian theorization, would produce a hyperbolic rhetorical mesh leading to a meaningful praxis, would eliminate the medieval references. One only has to remember that the historical substrate which informed the cultural nationalism of Noucentisme and the historiographic thinking that derives from it is Classicism.¹ An illustrative *glosa* of this elimination of medievalism (filtered through Romanticism) by Classicism is “Versailles, a la moda.” Ors highlights the collaboration of Henri de Régner for an issue of *Vers et Prose*, where he comments that, following the obscuration which it experienced during the nineteenth century, “per gràcia de Romanticisme i Naturalisme”, Versailles, and its Classicism (Neoclassicism, we would say) became fashionable again. Ors celebrates having pushed aside the attitude of the “passejador romàntic” who preferred “runes mitgevals” and that the “gust francès”, as understood by Régner, had evolved towards “una millor comprensió de la nostra edat clàssica.” All this led the *glosador* to declare: “És oberta una era nova de Classicisme” (Ors, 335-336). On other occasions, over the years 1906 and 1907, he would take the opportunity to offer new indications of what he understood by “clàssic”, such as the capacity to rhyme energy “en elegància” (Ors, 260) and the identification between Classicism and Imperialism, insofar as the latter involves “el triomf de la Norma” (Ors, 705). The classical code, which goes back to the idea of the empire in the Greco-Latin antiquity, thereby becomes the instrument used to transport a series of values in which aesthetics (measure, rhythm, limitation) become ethical (the conservative system of values which go hand in hand with these aesthetic “notions” with which the bourgeoisie of the time identified).

¹ Ors identifies Classicism with Neoclassicism because both movements imply a victory against nature: “tot classicisme és un neoclassicisme, perquè comença a existir just d’ençà que la natura que ha estat ja superada” (*apud* Rius 1991, 191). Jardí notes that Ors’ interest in Classicism –considered as an aesthetical result of his Catalanism– appears after 1906, when he vindicates Mediterranean aesthetics and Humanistic thought (1990, 68-69).

The four *gloses* which Ors dedicated to King Jaume I between November 1906 and March 1907, for the 700th anniversary of his birth, deserve a separate section (Ors, 351-352, 382-383, 384-386, 418-419).² If his interest in the figure of King Jaume lies in the extent to which his work, as an imperialist king, is “d’unitat i expandiment” then his commemoration should be recognized as *imperial work* and should be paid homage to as the “*afirmació internacional i definitiva de la Catalunya nova.*” It should therefore be remembered “arreu del món i més enllà dels sigles” in relation to its present value, as incentivating (and referential) to Catalan political imperialism, once the “regionalisme localista” was overcome. The possible results of that commemoration, the work of “una gran força arbitradora, una constant febre d’utopisme”, are enthusiastically commented on the *gloses*, which refer to initiatives such as the publication of *Diplomatari* by Rubió i Lluch, the restoration of the monastery at Poblet and the construction of an equestrian sculpture. In short, the event had to serve not only to remember the politics of the past, but also to do imperialist politics (and propaganda) in the present. A kind of politics, as the final *glosa* of the series points out, aimed at “guanyar les pròximes eleccions.”

The main theoretical contribution (and the most influential) by Gabriel Alomar to political Catalanism was the public talk “El futurisme”, given at the Barcelona Athenaeum (*Ateneu Barcelonès*) on 18 June 1904 and published in *L’Avenç* in 1905. The text was partly an ideological synthesis of the significance of the breakaway by the liberal and republican group from the Regionalist League in April 1904, as a result of a disagreement over the welcome offered to King Alfons XII on an official visit to Barcelona. According to Castellanos, it is important also to understand this as the translation of a social and personal ethic and, finally, as a political praxis that would have the magazine *El Poble Català* as a unifying platform for Catalanist republicans and *modernistes* (2000, 17). Alomar set out from the idea that the world moves according to an ideal of progress based on the destruction of the present: “La llei futura no s’obté precisament sempre del present actual, sinó que sovint se produeix contra ella i a costa de la seva destrucció” (2000a, 50). His thoughts on tradition were that it should only remain that part of the light which leads to the “humanitat futura” (2000a, 54). In this process the poet is “qui sent batre dins son cor, intensament” the resulting diversification, during Romanticism, of the Protestant reform, “i la revela en la forma més altament sentimental, més religiosa, si val a dir-ho” (2000a, 57).

He highlights Classicism as an eternal condition of “tota visió estètica” and points to the preceding influence of Goethe, Shakespeare and Nietzsche, among others, on Futurism, in their aspiration to the perfecting of man. The new ideal, however, was embodied in Rudyard Kipling, who wanted to “exaltar l’home com a dominador, i fonamenta les seleccions en la força” (2000a, 65). At that time, Kipling was vindicated thanks to his poem “The White Man Burden: the United States and the Philippine Islands”, where he justified the imperialist North American politics in that they involved a civilizing force.³ That attitude was impelled by the “desig de fixar un ideal nou, després de la caiguda de l’ideal vell”, based on “la matèria prístina de l’art, o sia de la religió.” (2000a, 65). Taking up once again the art-religion identification of the Decadent movement he states that it is necessary to give way to an ideal of purity that

² See “Per al centenari del Rei En Jaume” (24-XII-1906), “Per al centenari” (18-I-1907), “El centenari” (22-I-1907) and “Del centenari” (2-III-1907). Catalanist press widely covered the commemoration. Josep Carner wrote the poem “Balada de l’Alta Naixença del Rey En Jaume”, *La Veu de Catalunya* (1-II-1908), that will be included in the book *La malvestat d’Oriana* (1910). Joan Maragall dedicated a lecture to Jaume I’s chronicle in June 1908 (Maragall 1960, 811-820).

³ Harrington has indicated that Kipling’s poem could have influenced Prat’s *La nacionalitat catalana* (Harrington, 64).

allows “la integració de la humanitat” and set it free –something that has to be done by a new aristarchy, selected from the old one (2000a, 67).

In Alomar’s view, social change arising from the revolution led to movements like Catalanism, characterized by “*esser actual*” and which would only “*trionfarà a condició de ser futurista*” (2000a, 70). After having been articulated as a conservative movement it had to *Futurize itself*; in other words, diversify ideologically for the benefit of “*la vida espiritual de Catalunya*” (2000a, 74). This “*pàtria nova compatible amb el món actual i amb el futur*”, which had to serve as a platform for all manifestations of Catalanism and broaden its social base, (Alomar’s ideal), is what gave shape in 1906 to the Catalan Solidarity movement.

As Pere Gabriel notes, that movement, in terms of both political and electoral dynamics, from the point of view of public mobilization to the constitution of a symbolic and iconographic Catalanist corpus, opened up “*el pas a la problemàtica i les formulacions renovades del nou-cents, també en l’àmbit del republicanisme i molt en especial en el republicanisme nacionalista i catalanista*” (2008, 132). During that cultural moment, Alomar’s formula, which had taken on an almost prophetic tone, vouched for the symbolic advantage of a motif associated with progress (the *futur*), and accompanied by a Decadent symbolism which was still effective at the start of the twentieth century (Camps 2000, 32). Despite not agreeing with the re-reading of the medieval past in articles published in *El Poble Català*, Alomar resorted frequently to motifs that, from different perspectives, would be the touchstone for the discourse of Ors and Ruiz: the civil poet and the future city (the Alomarian *Neàpolis*). The construction of the latter would be possible thanks to the task of an aristarchy inspired in Carduccian Messianism (which would, in turn, influence Ruiz). This spiritual aristarchy can be related to the revision of the myth of Prometheus mentioned in some of Alomar’s articles in *El Poble Català*, and implies an intervention in the political reality of the time (Camps 2000). It is precisely on this platform that Alomar and Ruiz coincide, the latter offering “*la imatge de filòsof radicalment renovador i, alhora, la de l’immigrant radicalment nacionalista*” (Castellanos 2000, 28).

Diego Ruiz

As we shall see, while not ridding himself of the Decadent elements that are also found in Alomar’s discourse, Ruiz’s contribution involved a radicalization of the Catalanist discourse that we have commented on up to now. The political position of Ruiz has to be situated within the cultural and political context that preceded the formation of the Catalan Solidarity. But who was Diego Ruiz? Surely, he was one of the most controversial figures in Catalan culture of the new century, underestimated and overvalued in equal measure, and characterized according to the observations of his contemporaries, by an egocentrism which earned him more than one enemy.⁴ His relationships with Joan Maragall, who helped him to gain a name as a Catalan writer, and Eugeni d’Ors, with whom he shared an interest in science and philosophy, and which moved from admiration to a cooling off and ultimate rupture, are good examples.⁵

⁴ Ruiz has received anecdotal attention –the fact that he went around dirty and dishevelled, with a penetrating gaze and was accompanied by a young man who he introduced as his “*col·laboradora sexual*” (Jardí 1985, 80; Cabañas i Guevara; Bladé).

⁵ Jardí explains that Ors collaborated with Ruiz in the project of creation of a Catalan School of Philosophy. This school was presented in 1906, at the Barcelona Athenaeum (1990, 143). Ors dedicated to Ruiz the *glosa* “*Un filòsof*” (21-III-1906), where he is introduced as a “*un jove estrany*” who walked around Madrid with “*una singular i torbadora barreja de dolçor i esquerperia*”, without finding intellectual stimulation. Once he arrived in Barcelona, where he found resources to diffuse his work (Ruiz had just

The most lasting of his works are probably the two series of stories that he published: *Contes d'un filòsof* (1908, re-published in a version revised by the author in 1936) and *Contes de glòria i d'infern* (1911), clearly influenced by the Decadent movement and by D'Annunzio (Anglada Bau 1990). These works of prose recover Pre-Raphaelite motifs such as the woman-flower, based on an irrational approach to reality, with hallucinatory and oneiric episodes, belonging to speculative fantasy literature (Olcina)⁶. Besides these books, what really made him popular and turned him into a controversial author was the writing, jointly with Prudenci Bertrana, of the pamphlet *La locura de Álvarez de Castro* (1910), and the scandal of his mismanagement of the provincial mental hospital in Salt from 1909 to 1910. It was precisely this controversial biographical piece that was to become the centre of the novel *Jo! Memòries d'un metge filòsof* (1925), by Prudenci Bertrana, which appeared in 1925 in the midst of the discussion on the non-existence of a continued tradition of the novel in Catalan (Yates 1975). But what else is behind this “médico, filósofo, poeta, jándalo o gitano” who Luis Cabañas Guevara (100) met at the Barcelona Athenaeum.

Enric Jardí was the first person to write about him at any length in a study published during the transition to democracy (1985, 79-146). In it, he aimed to recover the memory of some left-wing men generally characterized by “l'aplicació incondicionada del principi de sufragi universal, l'anticlericalisme, el refús del catolicisme o la proclamació del lliure pensament i un republicanisme franc o decidit en oposició no sols al monarquisme oficial sinó també a aquell indiferentisme respecte a les formes de govern [...] del catalanisme conservador” (1985, 6).

The extensive biographical study by Joaquim Jubert Gruart, based on consultations of the archive sources, has enabled the confirmation and/or rebuttal of some of the information provided by Ruiz, perpetuated in part of the existing bibliography on his life and work. We know that he was born in Malaga in 1881 and moved to Barcelona at the age of 14, where he lived with his maternal uncle Rafael Rodríguez Méndez. He began studying Medicine and Surgery in 1894 but did not finish his degree (with four subjects pending). However, and probably thanks to the influence of his uncle, who was a professor of hygiene at the University of Barcelona, in 1902 he managed to obtain a grant to do his PhD in Italy, as a resident of the College of Saint Clemente in Bologna. Even so, there is no doctoral thesis filed and when he returned to Barcelona in 1905, after spending three months in Paris, he also failed to complete his studies. It is that period, from 1905 to 1909 (the year that he was nominated director of the mental hospital in Salt) that interests us in terms of his links to political Catalanism.

The entry into political life of a writer who, up until then, had been known as a philosopher is inextricable from the emergency that was taking place in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century for a series of intellectuals who were aware that they formed part of an educated elite and who, consequently, “estaven obligats no sols a divulgar la seva opinió sinó, sobretot, a donar orientacions i a fer de «guies»” (Riquer, 48-49). As we shall see, the phenomenon of Ruiz would involve the defense of a Messianic conception of the intellectual, which would acquire particular significance in the context of a multiplicity of platforms for expression addressed at society at large and in which they felt motivated to take part in political life.

published the *Genealogía de los símbolos* and *Llull, maestro de definiciones*), he is ready to do “obra bona d'imperialisme” (Ors 1996, 58-59).

⁶ Cf. “Els contes de Ruiz s'han considerat modernistes pel seu desig d'oferir una realitat marcada per la irracionalitat i el misteri, però ofereixen en alguns casos l'aspecte de reportatge o d'itinerari narrat en primera persona per un observador implicat característic de cert romanticisme” (Fernández, 32).

When the presumed Dr Ruiz arrived in the city, he brought with him the reputation of being an “[h]ome d’un talent monstruós, [que] escrivia en català pobre, gairebé correcte, sobre tota mena de temes, de preferència els pregons i intricats” (Ametlla, 200). Claudi Ametlla, the author of this description, knew him through the *El Poble Català* and remembers the impact that his eloquence had at a time of great social and political activity: “Donà centenars de conferències amb les quals escalfà el cap de tants autodidactes com hi ha hagut sempre a Catalunya. Després d’aquesta obra desconcertant, de llampecs de lluïssor entre boires opaques i impenetrables, desaparegué sobtadament de circulació.” (Ametlla, 200). At that time, Ruiz had already published a book: *Fisiología del sueño* (1900) and he was planning to create his own philosophical system –the Clavis Methodica– the three volumes of which would appear between 1905 and 1906: *Teoría del acto entusiasta*, *Genealogía de los símbolos* and *Llull, maestro de definiciones*. Despite the interest that these books could have had, their complexity, and even inaccessibility,⁷ meant that they had a limited impact. It was almost certainly the publication of the pseudoautobiography *Nieto de Carducci* (1907), full of anecdotes and false statements that contributed to this author coming to the attention of Joan Maragall, Eugeni d’Ors and an extremely young Manuel de Montoliu.⁸

In this process of adaptation to the turn-of-the century Barcelona, Ruiz adopted the Catalan language as his own language of expression in his essays and articles. His relationship with Maragall had a lot to do with this progressive introduction into the Catalanist *milieu* and, as is evident from the correspondence between the writer and the poet, exhumed by Imma Farré (19-49), it was marked by continual sad requests for favors and money. Thanks to Maragall, Ruiz was able to publish *Contes d’un filòsof* in the “Biblioteca Joventut” in 1908, without having to take on the usual co-financing (normally the author would have to pay for the printing). The book, with a prologue by Maragall, gave him an advance of 500 pesetas, and situated him as part of the Decadent revival of the period 1906 to 1910 in the pages of the *El Poble Català* (Castellanos 1987, 30-33).

Maragall presented him as a philosopher: an “home fortament interessat en el misteri de la vida i lliurat amb totes les seves potències i sentits a la contemplació a la contemplació d’aquest misteri i a comunicar de calent en calent els espasmes soferts en aquesta contemplació” (1936, 9). Centered on “aquella regió on nostra vida s’acaba”, in Maragall’s opinion, Ruiz created prose marked by a style that was “personalment exasperat” and “violentament interessant” (1936, 9-10). His stories were full of oneiric and supernatural elements (objects which come to life and elements from the afterlife), whose ambivalence was based on the construction of an internal narrator (Anglada Bau 1996, 81). The desire to tell stories with irrational elements forced the author to situate some of the tales in foreign places (such as North Africa and Italy), but not in the past. There were also many characters imbued with Messianism: priests and mad scientists who conjured up resurrections and natural disasters. In March 1909 his relationship with Maragall was put on hold. Ruiz had asked him to talk to Cambó in order to obtain the position of rector at the College of Saint Clemente in Bologna. Maragall refused and Ruiz responded angrily by complaining about the censorship of the religious elements in the stories, which had been written for financial gain.

⁷ In the preface to *Teoría del acto entusiasta*, Dr. Dorado Montero complains about the “manera de hacer y escribir del autor, concisa, sentenciosa, llena de alusiones a cosas que no explica” (*apud* Rigau, 11).

⁸ Ruiz’s book *De l’entusiasme com a principi de la moral futura* (1907) was dedicated to Montoliu.

El Poble Català

From January 1906, Diego Ruiz contributed to *El Poble Català*, with articles on political, social and cultural topics, which he used to participate in the “combat espiritual per Catalunya” prior to the emergence of the Catalan Solidarity movement (Jardí 1985, 87). These contributions also gave him a small stipend to live on. Despite identifying with the left-wing Catalanists of the newspaper, Ruiz stood out for being abrasive and belligerent, alongside a gradual siding with the labor movement. Below we will analyze the articles in which he voices his political opinions, especially those under the heading of “De la dictadura espiritual de Catalunya”, which, in part, articulate the publication *El poeta civil i el cavaller*. In general, using a language full of Messianic and vitalistic elements, Ruiz defended the labor movement and Catalanism as part of the same social system of justice. In the face of Nubiana (the name given to refer to Spain), the place of the “cementiri de les voluntats i les esperances”, the movement, which had begun in Catalonia with Platonopolis (Barcelona) as a “ciutat naixent”, for him meant going towards Life.⁹

From the start, Ruiz referred to the Catalanist movement as a “generació que lluita per un ideal”, and relates it to “[l]a rapida substitució del patriotisme a la manera anglicana per un nou entusiasme regional.”¹⁰ If, in his opinion, Catalonia was the hope of a New Life, it was because this movement towards freedom, which had emerged from the liberation of Cuba in 1898, had to inspire other nations in the Iberian sphere: “ALMA CATALONIA, MATER IBERORUM.”¹¹ He considered the Catalanist project to be inextricably linked to a project of culture which should be based on enthusiasm and should involve a renewal of science and philosophy. From there, he promoted projects such as the “La Fulla lulliana”, a magazine in which “gent que pensi, que edifiqui, que treballi, gent creadora” participate to revive the spirit of Llullian philosophy.¹²

The series of articles “De la dictadura espiritual de Catalunya”, published from 7 August to 11 November 1906, followed by an epigraph of the topic,¹³ highlight some of the elements (and references) of the political-cultural project that Ruiz had for Catalonia. It was based on the idea of a *spiritual dictatorship*; in other words, the creation of an intellectual aristarchy that would lead it. If Alomar based his idea of aristarchy on an aristocracy convinced of their capacity to be a people (*ser com a poble*), and that only universal suffrage would make the propagation of that spiritual strength possible (2000b, 104-106), Ruiz specified the idea of the clairvoyant poet (*poeta vident*). As he set out in *El poeta civil i el cavaller*,¹⁴ the clairvoyant poet has an enthusiastic optimism and the capacity to make things happen. In terms of ethics, the poet has to *give himself* to the other in activities such as trade, understood in a new sense: moral, artistic and aristocratic. Therefore, he held that trading was the terrain of

⁹ “De la dictadura espiritual de Catalunya” VI: “Els bons odiadors”, *El Poble Català*, 244 (14-X-1906).

¹⁰ “Els nous ideal d’Ibèria”, *El Poble Català*, 62 (13-I-1906).

¹¹ In that sense, Ruiz approaches to Pratian theory. Prat de la Riba aspired to create a large Iberian federation, which would include Catalonia, Spain and Portugal.

¹² According to Ruiz, who was inspired on Lull’s philosophy, definitions can become actions: “La definició deu transformar-se en la *cosa demanada*”, “Programa i manifest”, *El Poble Català*, 166 (29-VII-1906).

¹³ See *El Poble Català*, 176 (7-VIII-1906), 207 (7-IX-1906), 219 (19-IX-1906), 229 (29-IX-1906), 238 (8-X-1906), 244 (14-X-1906), 258 (28-X-1906) and 272 (11-XI-1906).

¹⁴ The conception of a civil poet is based on Goethe. The civil poet can redeem men through the ideal: “Sols l’home pot l’impossible: ell distingeix, tria, jutja, sols ell fa que durin els moments.” “De la poesia civil. Goethe i el poble”, *El Poble Català*, (17-VIII-1907).

the spiritual aristocrat-dictator,¹⁵ of the man who “dóna” himself in accordance with the imperative “*Sigues un medi pels altres*.”¹⁶

The idea of justice is one of the driving forces in Ruiz’s articles, and it justifies the unbreakable union between Catalanism and the labor movement: “Catalanisme es justícia-Obrerisme es justícia.”¹⁷ In order to achieve this justice emotional involvement is necessary, and, more specifically, enthusiasm and effusion, considered to be essential for action. Ruiz understood the Catalan Solidarity movement as a great idea or “Llei”, a law which is an “ideal de civilitat” and is “vista a través d’un temperament actiu.”¹⁸ It is the ideal of justice that moves scientific works and also the emancipation of “les petites nacionalitats.”¹⁹ For that reason, he understood Catalanism as an emancipating project that went well beyond national boundaries: “l’home no pot esser un *medi* pera l’home. Si tot té una finalitat, y *ha de esser*, com dieu obreristes o feministes també us heu de dir catalanistes.”²⁰ For him, the success of Catalanism would depend on an enthusiastic belief in the ideal of justice, according to the principle that Catalanism cannot be transitory because that would be saying it is unjust.²¹ Ruiz was very critical about the question of how poverty was handled and thought that a poor person was a “prova d’ignominia”, an “acusació d’injustícia”,²² to which the response should be a fairer distribution of resources and wealth.²³ He also took a position against the law in favour of the free competition because it did not guarantee the right to a job, which he considered to be part of Life. The prevailing thought was that “l’únic valor de la Vida és la Vida” i “[a]quest fet és capital en tota Nació nova” which, like Catalonia, gives a spiritual education to its children.²⁴

His contact with labor movement centers led to him giving talks²⁵ in schools and social centers where he was particularly involved with young people.²⁶ It was in the cultural centers of Terrassa, Sabadell and Sant Martí that, according to him, the “dipòsit espiritual” of popular culture existed. He also understood that the Catalanist project went far beyond any specific national space (the right of a Nation to return to Life) because the emancipation of the workers is also the emancipation of society at large. So, he considered that the redemption of the nation is not possible without the participation

¹⁵ Ruiz also introduces André Chénier, who is considered an intellectual involved in the social change. “André Chénier y la consciencia radical”, *El Poble Català*, 604 (12-X-1907).

¹⁶ “Sacrifici i comers”, *El Poble Català*, 527 (27-VIII-1907).

¹⁷ “De la dictadura espiritual de Catalunya” III: “Obrerisme i catalanisme”, *El Poble Català*, 219 (19-IX-1906).

¹⁸ “De la dictadura espiritual de Catalunya” IV: Intelectualitat efusiva, *El Poble Català*, 229 (29-XII-1906).

¹⁹ “Solidaritat Catalana es una forma de la qüestió social”, *El Poble Català*, 296 (5-XII-1906). Later, the ideal of freedom would be related to the myth of chained Prometheus: “lligat per sempre als Ideals i, pels Ideals mateixos, a la vida.” “La voluntat de somniar”, *El Poble Català*, 671 (18-XII-1907).

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ Ruiz does not support the idea that Catalonia should act on Spain. He states that, if Catalonia emancipates, it will become a model for Spain. “La qüestió prèvia en la possible acció de Catalunya sobre Espanya”, *El Poble Català*, 457 (18-V-1907).

²² “La supressió dels pobres”, *El Poble Català*, 331 (10-I-1907).

²³ “Els amics dels peixos y’ls amics dels homes”, *El Poble Català*, 516 (16-VII-1907).

²⁴ “El preu de la vida”, *El Poble Català*, 339 (18-I-1907).

²⁵ He insists on the importance of the meetings (which force the poet to *give* himself to the audience). “Per la dignificació del miting”, *El Poble Català*, 507 (7-VII-1907).

²⁶ Ruiz exhorts young people to aspire to the glory. They have to study in a quiet, sensitive and slow way: “Sensibilitat per les idees! Cordialitat per sentirles, per veureles com a coses vives, com a sers palpitants!” See: “Joventut i estudi”, *El Poble Català*, 582 (20-IX-1907); “Joventut i glòria”, *El Poble Català*, 590 (28-IX-1907) and “Joventut i sensibilitat”, *El Poble Català*, 597 (5-X-1907). Cf. “Crida als estudiants”, *El Poble Català*, 639 (16-XI-1907).

of the people. Finally, he thought that there was also an indestructible tie between justice and poetry: where there is *reason, law and justice*, there is also *poetry*.²⁷

In the task of social acculturation which the project involved, Ruiz called on the need to draw in the others through empathy, in line with the greats: Goethe, Spinoza, Da Vinci. The poet has to be “l’home que s’emociona per tots” (Ruiz 1908, 13; cf. Marfany 1975, 177). It is Nietzschean vitalism, then, that influences the tone of the articles, which reproduce some of the central elements of the republican culture of the time as an organicist vision of the process of solidarity and history.

Of the initiatives from 1906, one that is particularly significant is the Catalan School of Philosophy,²⁸ a project set up with Ors which failed, and the First Congress of the Catalan Language, which led him to reflect on the aptitude for the Catalan language for teaching philosophy, based on thinking very close to that of Alomar and Ors, for whom the event was a manifestation in favor of the unity and vitality of Catalan as a modern and cultivated language with aspirations to official status (Riquer, 59). In Ruiz’s view, the life of the language is decided by the changes of the present moment, “les necessitats efusives de l’època en què es parla”, and therefore it has to incorporate dialecticisms and archaisms, especially those of the Lullian tradition.²⁹

In terms of the idea of a spiritual dictatorship, Ruiz considered that it involved a union between inactive contemplation and the fever of unconscious works.³⁰ Considering the evolution of Catalanism, he identified three moments: 1) Literary, with poetic preludes (the age of the “Oda a la patria” by Aribau) where there is an “aspiració vers una realitat fortament volguda”; 2) The moment when the “Verb de Catalunya crea la forma política - la protesta política, et desitx d’autonomia”, which is when the *Catalanist sentiment* appeared along with the Catalanist ideology; 3) The current time, when a nation, finding its own words, can claim its right to life. The next period would occur when people would take direct action for change; when Catalanism, in its political evolution, would be “una llei, una funció, un principi d’evolució.”³¹

El poeta civil i el cavaller

Some of the ideas disseminated in *El Poble Català* would give shape to *El poeta civil i el cavaller* where the “poeta civil” is identified with the interpreter of the collective spirit, according to the models specified in the texts of Leopardi, Alfieri, Mazzini, Gioberti, Azeglio, Rosetti i Carducci; “el poeta de la indignació”, of whom he considers himself the son. The book, which is dedicated to Eduard Marquina, is divided into six sections: “Scribamus epos”, “La veu dels altres”, “Emperador i cavaller”, “L’antig lema del cavaller (Velles inspiracions de la poesia civil): Fides, patria, amor”, “De l’evangeli de la nació nova (Inspiracions modernes de la poesia civil)” and “El cavaller parla als treballadors (Inspiracions futures de la poesia civil).” At the beginning, he explains that the most outstanding thing about poets like Goethe, Carducci, Leopardi and Chenier is the close link they have with the society that has made them. They are the “veu dels altres” like aristocrats who have given themselves to

²⁷ “Catalunya com ideal humà”, *El Poble Català*, 422 (12-IV-1907). Cf. “De l’Estètica del moviment nacionalista”, *El Poble Català*, 473 (3-VI-1907).

²⁸ Cf. Ernest Vendrell, “De la preparació a totes les coses catalanes”, *Catalònia*, 22-IX-1906 (Cacho Viu 1984, 319-323)

²⁹ “De la dictadura espiritual de Catalunya” IX: “Els enemics de la nostra ànima”, *El Poble Català*, 272 (11-XI-1906). Lull was object of a certain veneration at the beginning of the twentieth century.

³⁰ See the example of the Universitat Popular of Terrassa. “Fam i sed de cultura”, *El Poble Català*, 576 (11-IX-1907).

³¹ “Per la tercera evolució del catalanisme”, *El Poble Català*, 407 (27-III-1907).

others, as well as fighters who “han assolit un grau d’entusiasme decididament heroic” (1908, 11).

Ruiz extracts the motif of the poet-knight from the tradition of the Floral Games whose motto, *patria-fides-amor*, he reinterprets as follows. First, he considers that the *patria* has an internationalist sense: it is the whole of humanity, where every country has a cosmopolitan ideal. And so, “Cada «patria» té la llevar de l’Humanitat” (1908, 65) in a progressive sense because “[l]es *forces revolucionaris* [sic], transformadores del conjunt i de les parts, dels sistemes i dels articles, exerceixen llur acció en els credos religiosos.” (1908, 65). Then, he considers love to be “amor de la bellesa”, a desire for something you do not have (1908, 70) and to involve a new language: “s’ha de cantar *novament*” (1908, 72). This reformulation means that love is inseparable from aesthetics (as he said in *De l’entusiasme com a principi de la moral futura*, 1907). Finally, religion has to be the basis of the new priesthood, anchored on the effort to change society and the start of a new social movement.

He also reminds us of the inalienable nature of work and insists on the identification of *patria* and land. He considers that the national struggle is an aesthetic question, “un moviment d’ànima vers un Ideal” (1908, 88) and that that ideal has to lead to a peaceful revolution, like the separation of the United Monarchy of Sweden and Norway in 1905. From the idea that “nacionalisme és social” (1908, 90), he supports an anti-state socialism: “L’esforç nacional, la «protesta nacionalista», és, fonamentalment, la temptativa de socialisar la terra” (1908, 91). In that sense, the nation is a step towards the future, towards “la possessio de la terra” (1908, 92).

He concludes by saying “El cavaller, avui dia, es el defensor de la terra: el Poeta n’és el cantor. Ja se senten les primeres veus... «La poesia tot just ha començat»” (1908, 96). So the poet-knight identifies with the land (or the *patria*, understood in an internationalistic sense) and strives for social change through love which is the driving force. It is a love identifiable with a civil priesthood, conciliating “un moviment d’ànima vers un Ideal” which is based, in the end, on the union between the labor movement and Catalanism. In his view, this type of social justice which embodies the poet-knight had to shake the Iberian Peninsula and, in the end, the whole of humanity.

As mentioned above, some of the ideas on which Ruiz bases his discourse in this book can be related to *L’entusiasme com a principi de la moral futura*, published one year earlier in 1907. His thinking is inspired by the key authors of the turn of the century: Dante, Ruskin and Maragall. From Dante and Ruskin, he recovers the ideal of love as a force of thinking to understand and move the world (1907, 26-27). And from Maragall, he adopts the notion of the inspired and pure word: “*parlar poc y en plenitut de puresa*” (1907, 37). Once again we see the idea of a “Dictador espiritual” which is identified with the “Ciutat o Patria y Déu” (1907, 50). The spiritual colonization that has to take place leads to a “divinització de la Vida” and an increase in sensitivity (1907, 64, 65). Finally, he considers that nationalist and socialist movements like Catalanism demonstrate the independence of the individual, their greatness and beauty, although they are not limited to a specific territory since they include the freeing of “tota esclavitud” universally (1907, 75).

Conclusions

The appearance, in 1906, on the political scene of Catalanism of figures such as Diego Ruiz, who represented and defended the ideal of the civil-knight-aristocratic poet is the result of a combination of circumstances. On the one hand, it was a time when Catalanism became a political cause with broad social support which, in the seat of the Catalan Solidarity movement attracted a wide range of supporters, from the Carlists to

members of the Catalanist Union, the Republican Nationalist Center, the federals, the left-wing Catalanists and the Regionalist League. On the other hand, the understanding among intellectuals and politicians would create the message for a general defense of an intellectual model which could enter into political life. Within the socio-symbolic dynamics of Catalanism, this process involved a reformulation of political life and of the representation of the nineteenth century iconography. As part of this reformulation, the Catalanist and eclectic Ruiz introduced elements from the turn of the century, from the Decadent movement, from Pre-Raphaelitism and Parnassianism, the Nietzschean individualism and Carducci's Messianism: "Sigues ben bé tu! Tu, I no un altre! Tu mateix! Fes-te la llei! Sigues una voluntat, un poder, un destí. Veieu el manament de la Nació als fills de l'època. Per la llibertat de cadascú espera la Nació assolir la llibertat col·lectiva. De manera que enganya ls altres aquell sofista que desprecia la Nació, com a forma arcaica de la vida." (1908, 78-19). This "Statement of the nation", from *El poeta civil i el cavaller* (1908), resonates Emerson's "Self Reliance", as well as Prat de la Riba's *La nacionalitat catalana*: "Sigues tu mateix. No imitis, no cerquis en els altres, cerca dintre teu. No t'emmotllis als altres, fes que els altres s'emmotllin a tu. Sigues llei i senyor de tu mateix." (*apud* Harrington, 63).

Ruiz adopted two motifs of the medieval tradition (the knight and the motto of the Floral Games) and, aware of their symbolical potential, he gave them new meanings. Just like the Pre-Raphaelites, who inspired him, he reduced the *topoi* to its essence (like the spiritual nature of the knight, the identification between art and religion and the redeeming conception of the artistic act) and he gave them a modern function: civil and moral. Despite having adopted similar positions to colleagues on *El Poble Català* –like Alomar's defense of an individual and Messianic action, by which the poet became "l'àrbitre suprem de tota vida nova" (2000a, 217-226)– his most recurrent and disperse discourse, based on an egalitarian idea of justice, is very syncretic. The lack of a clear program and the gradual move towards the labor movement nuclei radicalized his Catalanist position. In that sense, and as his writer colleagues could see, his discourse went much further than that "intel·lectualitat relativament jove que assumí el repte d'una definició política dels catalanisme des de paràmetres liberal" and came into direct contact with the tradition of federal culture, seeing itself obliged to reform Valentí Almirall's federalism (Gabriel 2008, 118). In the case of Ruiz, his collaboration with the Catalanist republican project would lead, in 1908, to him taking part in the Republican Youth congress where, together with Gabriel Alomar, he would stand in favor of "una política de caràcter més intervencionista, que lligaria amb el model estatista que ja llavors plantejava el Noucentisme" (Casassas, 210). A decade later, this tradition of "cert populisme messianic and anarcoide" would influence the avant-garde poet Joan Salvat-Papasseit (Marfany 1975, 26-27). But that topic is outside this area of research.

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