

## **Catalan identity projected abroad. The example of the journal *Cataluña***

Emili Samper Prunera

Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Tarragona)

[emili.samper@urv.cat](mailto:emili.samper@urv.cat)

### **Abstract**

The aim of the present article is to study the journal *Cataluña: revista quincenal il·lustrada* (1907-1908) edited by Cels Gomis i Mestre, analyse its content, determine why it lasted for such a short time and contextualise the role played by its editor in context. This will shed light on the reasons why a journal created in Catalonia with Catalan authors and dealing Catalan issues was written in Spanish and aimed at an external public. In subsequent years before and after the Spanish Civil War other authors would also publish journals with the same title (*Catalunya* or *Cataluña*) in which the choice of language was also intentional.

### **Key words**

Catalonia, journal, identity, language, Cels Gomis

### **The journal *Cataluña*<sup>1</sup>**

On 1 October 1907 a new publication appeared in Barcelona entitled *Cataluña: revista quincenal ilustrada* (Catalonia: fortnightly illustrated journal). Published by the Vda. de Luis Tasso publishing house and edited by Cels Gomis i Mestre, the journal was written in Spanish and was intended to provide Spanish-speaking regions with a realistic perspective of Catalonia. The aim was to raise awareness of the true situation in Catalonia, to highlight the wrongs suffered by the Catalans and to explain the reasons behind their demands. Typographically, the publication's appearance was excellent and its articles were accompanied by photographs of a very high quality. It was fortnightly and lasted less than a year until 15 September 1908, with a total of 24 issues.

In the first issue, next to the list of "Collaborators" (actually more of a projection of the authors who would, in theory, participate) is an editorial explaining the reasons why the journal was created. This first text is signed by the "The Editor" (Cels Gomis) and is a full declaration of intent under the title "Nuestro propósito" (Our Aim). It states:

<sup>1</sup> The present study is one of the results of the research project FFI2015-64128-P (MINECO/FEDER) and forms part of research conducted by Universitat Rovira i Virgili's research group Grup de Recerca Identitats en la Literatura Catalana (GRILC), which is recognised by the Catalan Government (2014 SGR 755).

We are tired of seeing how some newspapers discuss our region with the same degree of accuracy that they would have employed when talking about China before it was opened up to European trade; we are amazed by their total lack of knowledge regarding not only our aspirations, but also regarding our men and our things; we are stupefied by how their crass ignorance (to avoid using a stronger term) twists the events in our country that are plain for all to see; and so we have resolved to launch a new journal that will faithfully reflect the past and present of Catalonia (Gomis 1907a).

To embark upon this initiative, they sought the collaboration of “the most important personalities in our region, without any regard at all for their political, religious or sociological ideas” (Gomis 1907a). The intention was, therefore, to offer a complete and unprejudiced picture of the Catalan lands.

The journal could have been launched by March 1906 as Gomis already had graphic materials that he could use but, as he explains in a note to this initial text, the death of Lluís Tasso Serra had meant that the project had to be put back to July of the following year. This publishing house was founded in 1847 in Barcelona by the printer and bookseller Lluís Tasso Goñalons, a native of Maó. In 1878 (two years before the death of his father) Lluís Tasso Serra assumed charge of the family business. After the death of Lluís Tasso senior, the firm renamed itself Vda. de Lluís Tasso (Widow of Lluís Tasso). The widow was Elena Matamala, but the real driving force behind the business was Alfonso Vilardell Portuondo, brother-in-law of Lluís Tasso through his marriage to Magdalena Tasso Matamala (Arranz 2008).

In the summer months before the launch of the journal, the editor Cels Gomis contacted some of the collaborators, one of whom was Ernest Moliné i Brasés, to whom Gomis wrote a letter on 10 August 1907 explaining the editorial project and inviting Moliné to participate:

Dear friend, given that the Spanish press in general and that of Madrid in particular talk about us and our land in the same way that they would have spoken about China before it was opened up to European trade, we and the Tasso publishing house have decided to launch an illustrated fortnightly journal to raise awareness of Catalonia in all its manifestations (art, literature, science, history, industry, commerce, etc.). Given that we already know ourselves well enough, our

objective is for others to learn about us, and so we will write it in Spanish as it is the only way that they will understand us.<sup>2</sup>

This declaration of intent appeared in the first issue of the journal, albeit slightly softened by the omission of the explicit reference to Madrid or to the use of Spanish, a topic that would be referred to more often in subsequent issues.

The publication of the journal's first issue was commented on in the local newspaper of Guadalajara, *La Región: periódico bisemanal*, which shared the journal's objectives with its readers:

The aim of this publication is to enable its readers to learn about every possible aspect of the past and present of Catalonia through monographs and articles on its geography, history, archaeology, science, literature, art, laws, sociology and industry which together will result in the most comprehensive, well-rounded and general study that has ever been undertaken of this most important of regions.<sup>3</sup>

The newspaper goes on to say that the journal benefits from the “collaboration of eminent writers who, together with a splendid design, herald a level of success that all of us truly hope that it will achieve”. The same newspaper would go on to comment on subsequent issues of the journal, always using words of praise and encouraging its readers to participate actively in the new publication.

### **Cels Gomis: the editor**

As has been seen, the driving force behind the project was Cels Gomis i Mestre. He was born in Reus in 1841 and died in Barcelona in 1915, and was a multi-faceted and prolific writer. Known, above all, for his active role in the Catalan Excursionist movement and as a folklorist (Samper 2013: 85-141), his progressive ideology can be seen not only in his folklore writings but throughout his work, which included political texts, scientific books and literary compositions.

An engineer by training and profession, he also had experience in the publishing world and his appointment as editor of *Cataluña* was no coincidence as he had already participated in other projects with Tasso, particularly after the latter moved permanently to Barcelona in 1894. For example, first with Lluís Tasso and then with Vda. de Lluís

<sup>2</sup> Manuscript 330-II, num. 253-254 in the Biblioteca de Catalunya. I am indebted to Ferré (2007: 156-157) for the reference to this letter.

<sup>3</sup> *La Región* VII, num. 665 (4.10.1907).

Tasso, Cels Gomis wrote the first eight volumes of the “Biblioteca de Primera Enseñanza” (Early Learning Library), which was a collection of manuals on geography, geometry, cosmography, arithmetic, reading and grammar aimed at children and which described the latest advances in these different fields. The volumes were first published in the 1900s and were reprinted on numerous occasions. It was also with Lluís Tasso that Cels Gomis published a collection in 1906 of *Cantares* written in Spanish, in imitation of these Castilian compositions and their emphasis on themes of love. In addition to this, Gomis translated literary works and edited and expanded different manuals in Spanish with the Libreria de Juan y Antonio Bastinos at the end of the 19th century (one of the first Spanish publishers in the field of education) and he was responsible for a new illustrated edition of the *Diccionari Labèrnia*. He was also involved in the Enciclopèdia Il·lustrada Seguí (Samper 2013: 143-161). This breadth of experience prompted him, in a letter to Ernest Moliné i Brasés, to explain that he did not want to edit the new journal “without having enough original material for the first three issues, because I know from experience the difficulties of trying to ensure that publications of this type are original, good and varied”.

Cels Gomis’ contributions to the journal can be divided into two main groups: the articles that he published as editor and those that he published merely as another author. The first group consists of three texts; the first is the aforementioned “Nuestro propósito” (Our Aim), which was signed by “The Editor” and describes the aims of the journal. The entire front page of the second issue (15 October 1907) was dedicated to a justification of the journal’s use of Spanish, entitled “Por qué escribimos en castellano” (Why we write in Spanish). On this occasion, Gomis signed the text with his name. As stated in the first issue, the aim of the journal was to “inform the various regions of Spain and the Latin American countries about every aspect of our way of living”, hence the decision to use Spanish to ensure that this was understood, despite the fact that “the vast majority of the writers are Catalans and we write almost always in Catalan”.

We write in Spanish because we bear no ill will towards any language, even though we do reject the imposition of Spanish for official matters in our country, to the exclusion of our own mother tongue, which has also been pushed out of the schools that we send our children to, schools paid for by us with our own money and which the State organises as it sees fit in a manner that, incidentally, is far from rational or well-judged (Gomis 1907d).

Thus Gomis does not reject Spanish as a language in its own right, but he does make absolutely clear his own rejection of its imposition in official acts and education. He asks how the Castilians would react if they were prohibited from using their own language in public acts and made to use another. They would protest, and justifiably so. And this is exactly what the Catalans do:

This is precisely what we Catalans do, although this does not mean that we hate their language, just as we do not hate the way they are. Those of us who have spent our lives in favour of fellowship among all peoples of the world should not in old age incite hatred and bitterness among sister nationalities (Gomis 1907d).

Here Gomis is referring to his political activism as a member of the International Workers' Association during his youth, particularly his exile to Geneva after the failure of the federalist revolt in 1869. The anarchist ideology that he defended so actively during these years is present throughout his work and continued, as he explains, in his old age in Barcelona, even though he was no longer connected with these organisations or political developments.

The choice to use Spanish was made “of our own free will”, for which reason Catalan would also be present in specific cases such as “descriptions of traditions and short novellas in Catalan, because they would lose their local flavour if they were published in Spanish”. There is one instance where this was not observed. It is a story entitled “El hombre de la carreta” published in issue 4 of the journal (15 November 1907), which contains a footnote stating that the text has been translated by the author, who is none other than the writer Carles Soldevila.

The third text in this group in which Gomis appears as editor (and spokesman) was published in the fourth issue of the journal on 15 November 1907. As in the previous example, the text takes up the whole of the first page and is also signed by the author. The title is also quite explicit: “Lo que queremos y lo que no queremos” (What we want and what we don't want).

Gomis criticises Madrid's centralising policies but does not want to see this substituted with centralisation from Barcelona because he believes this would be even worse:

We detest Madrid's absurd centralisation, the principal, if not only, cause of modern Spain's backwardness and deep depression; but do not want to exchange this for centralisation handed down from Barcelona as this would surely weigh

even more heavily on the villages of our region precisely of its proximity (Gomis 1907f).

This criticism of centralisation from Madrid and the outright rejection of centralisation from Barcelona are ideas shared by other authors with similar ideological beliefs to Cels Gomis (for example Josep Llunas i Pujals, also from Reus) and it can also be found in other texts by Gomis. In a letter published in *L'Atlántida* on 9 September 1899, in response to a request from General Ginestà i Punset for his opinion on a public competition to write new words for the anthem “Els segadors”, Gomis rejects the proposal. His reasoning is quite clear, “It is not worth changing the current order of things just to substitute Barcelona for Madrid or the dirt from here for the dirt from there” (Samper 2013: 78-82). On other occasions his rejection of Madrid’s centralising policies is accompanied by graphic images such as Madrid “as an enormous octopus which uses its tentacles to paralyse the efforts and life out of the rest of the Iberian peninsula” while Barcelona “is considered to be brain of Spain” (Gomis 1880: 141).

His response to this centralisation was to demand freedom, a freedom that was to extend to all areas of life and include regional autonomy (along with autonomy for municipalities and individuals), freedom of thought and education for the poorer classes. It is precisely this last point that Gomis insists on and puts into practice during his work to provide workers with intellectual tools so that they can defend themselves against exploitation and against others making decisions on their behalf. He demands “absolute freedom of education, without regulations or text books or professors imposed by the State”. This education had to be free to guarantee access to all.

Alongside these demands in the field of education, Gomis called for a relaxing of bureaucracy and freedom to decide whether or not to do military service. In short, he proposed complete liberty of the individual:

In one word, we want liberty in all areas of social and political life; but not the kind of liberty accompanied by labels that denature or destroy the individual, instead complete liberty that has no limits other than the liberty of others (Gomis 1907f).

### **Cels Gomis: the author**

In addition to acting as editor, Gomis also published various articles as if he was just another one of the authors working for the journal. The texts in this second group vary

in length and cover various topics such as important figures, institutions and territories that Gomis is very familiar with and even literature.

The articles on important figures form part of a specific section in the journal that covers prominent Catalan politicians and writers. Gomis writes two, one on Valentí Almirall (Gomis 1907b) and the other on Prósper de Bofarull i Mascaró (Gomis 1908d). The first is particularly interesting because of the personal relationship between Gomis and Almirall. Gomis begins the article by recalling when they met for the first time:

We first met in the Casas Consistoriales of this city on the memorable night of 29 September 1868, and since then we have been united by a very close friendship, a friendship that was not threatened in the slightest by the different views that would subsequently emerge between us (Gomis 1907b).

These “different views on sociological questions” are the clear political differences between both men, one a defender of federalism and the other of anarchism. Gomis goes on to make clear that ideological separation occurred later and that at the beginning he too embraced federalism precisely because of Almirall’s influence. It was to be later on that, as with other authors at the time, his political thought would lean towards anarchist ideas, leading to his involvement in the International Workers’ Association. Despite this, they remained friends, as is demonstrated by the fact that Gomis was charged with translating Almirall’s *Lo catalanisme* into Spanish in 1902.

In this biographical text, Gomis reviews the most important episodes in the life of Almirall and often expands on them and comments on his political ideas. For example, he states that:

His federalism was Catalanist and this differentiated him from federalists in the rest of Spain who, being still tainted by centralising ideas, could not conceive the idea that each region could constitute itself in a particular manner (Gomis 1907b).

Gomis refers the so-called “federal pact of Tortosa”, which failed because some of the delegates present “had followed the fashion of calling themselves federalists without knowing what the Federation was”, and to the publication of *El Estado Catalán* (The Catalan State) in Madrid, which he calls a “singular idea” that was a complete “waste of time and money” because “it was akin to preaching in the desert”. Whilst praising Almirall’s qualities as a writer, Gomis also drew attention to his deficiencies as an orator. According to him, it was this lack of “people skills” that prevented him from winning over everyone in Catalonia.

One of the qualities of the journal *Cataluña* is its design, which features a well-chosen typography and numerous illustrations. A good example is a long article divided into two parts that Gomis writes on the geography, history and culture of the Camp de Tarragona region (1907c). On this occasion, the text is signed by C. E. de Campflorit, that is Celso Enrique de Campflorit, a pseudonym that he frequently used with slight variations.

Despite moving his family to Barcelona and travelling around a good part of Spain through his work as a highway engineer, Gomis was nevertheless born in Reus and maintained a close connection with his place of origin, as is shown by the article on the Camp de Tarragona region. According to Gomis, “if the saying ‘a Catalan can get bread out of a stone’ is true of anywhere in Catalonia, it is of that beautiful district”; that is, with hard work and perseverance one can achieve things that seem impossible. The author journeys down the highways and byways of the district and describes how they have improved in recent years. The illustrations of an “artisan from the capital” and a “farmworker from the Camp de Tarragona” show their clothing as it would have been in the 1860s although “unfortunately this has now been lost and today only a few examples remain”. This melancholy (and romantic) tone is also extended to the changes that had occurred to everyday customs.

The second part of the article is accompanied by a particularly high number of photographs from the most important places in the area and in truth closely resembles a tourist guide. It shows the façade of Tarragona Cathedral, the city’s walls, the bell tower of Sant Pere in Reus, Pere Mata Avenue, the tower of Salou and general images of Valls. In relation to the latter, Gomis explains that “among the typical customs observed in Valls are the *xiquets* or boys who form towers made out of human flesh”. The description of *castells* (human towers) is accompanied by the following reflection:

This pyramid of human flesh is a living image of the way our society is politically organised: those at the bottom, the masses, the people, sustain and support the classes above them, who in turn support others right up to the very highest level of the pyramid, which crowns the whole social edifice. And to complete the picture, around the base of the human tower is a large group of people so that if one of those above should fall, they at least have a soft landing; if anybody has get hurt, let it be those at the bottom of the pile (Gomis 1907c: 30).

The insertion of these kinds of reflection in a descriptive (and, to modern eyes, even touristic) text is common in texts by Gomis, whatever their nature. There is another example in the same journal. In the article on “El cementerio del Sudoeste” (Cemeteries south-west Barcelona), Gomis describes the pomposity and vanity of the most opulent mausoleums found in that region and relates the following scene:

One day in front of these magnificent pantheons, a group of workers stood in conversation and one exclaimed:

“What a joke! While the dead are buried so magnificently, we workers have barely a hovel in which to shelter”.

At which point I felt compelled to enter the conversation:

“The vanity of the dead puts bread on the table for many of the living” (Gomis 1907e: 38).

Or, to put it another way, “half of humanity, at least, lives off a few others and their love of luxury”.

In 1895 Cels Gomis was a member of the Board, along with Valentí Almirall and Conrad Roure, that would found the Biblioteca Pública Arús (Arús Public Library) and from then on worked as its secretary. It is no surprise, therefore, that one of the articles that he wrote for *Cataluña* is dedicated to this library, which was an example of public foundation created out of a private initiative, in this instance instigated by:

Our late friend and companion Rosendo Arús y Arderiu, who was always so active in the ranks of the Catalanist far left and who had a highly developed sense of altruism (Gomis1907g: 44-45).

Thus, in his will Arús y Arderiu bequeathed to the people of Barcelona “a house belonging to him, located in Paseo de San Juan, number 152, all of his books, and sufficient money to turn it into a public library”. Gomis describes the transformation of this private house into a library, its different architectural and decorative elements and, of course, the 24,000 volumes that could be perused when it was inaugurated on 24 March 1895 and which have since reached 30,000. The author finishes the article condemning the fact that the foundation has to pay taxes on the building, despite being dedicated to culture:

Because in Spain we still have no law that exempts private buildings used as cultural establishments from tax, which is entirely in keeping with our politicians’

way of thinking and their complete indifference to the general culture of the people (Gomis 1907g: 46).

The demand for liberty is, once again, the subject of an article which he entitled “La uniformidad” (Uniformity) in order to contrast the two concepts. Gomis uses a personal experience (his refusal to wear a cap at school and his aversion to anything uniform or symmetric) to put forward his arguments against uniformity (which in his eyes is antiaesthetic) and social and political life, which he condemns as monotonous, sad and exasperating:

Words cannot convey the enormity of the fact that all men and all organisations are measured with the same stick, made to march in time, to think in the same way, that the diversity of their gifts and aspirations is ignored while their intelligences atrophy and all their initiatives are stamped out (Gomis 1908c).

And concludes that:

For there to be life, there must be liberty, and uniformity, incompatible with the former, represents the annulment of the human personality and the death of those people over whom it rules (Gomis 1908c).

It has already been stated that, although most of the journal was written in Spanish, a place was reserved for Catalan in the “descriptions of traditions and short novellas”. Some of these texts were written by Gomis. The first is entitled “Lo minaire” (The miner) and is a story describing the hard nature of that occupation. The text was originally published in *L’Avenç* in 1890 and contains numerous technical terms and notes containing their corresponding definitions (*trinxada, sauló, avançament, stross, pistolet, massa-copla i xulana*), thus clearly showing his training as an engineer and his experience in this kind of work. Moreover, his anarchist ideology is evident in the themes that recur in this type of literature, such as the power of science manifested in electric lighting or the locomotive, both of which result from the efforts of the workers:

Tomorrow, when work and human perseverance have triumphed in this gigantic struggle, when the locomotive reverberates around the vault of this long mine with its piercing whistle, people may remember the name of the engineer who directed the work. But who will remember the poor miner who did the work? Who on the day after the battle will remember the poor soldier whose courage helped win the victory? (Gomis 1908a: 91).

The other literary text relates to this theme. Entitled “La inauguració” (The inauguration), it tells the story of the inauguration of a railway and contrasts the presence of an “important figure who promoted the work” and the workers who actually carried it out. Gomis sides with the workers and explains how one of them sings the “Cançó del carrilaire” (The Song of the Railway Worker), which is a poem by Gomis in which he defends the virtue of work, using the railwayman as his example. It was originally published in 1880 in *Lo Catalanista* (as Gomis states in the notes) and is in the same style of Josep Anselm Clavé’s “La Maquinista” (The machine worker) from 1867, which paints a tableau of workers’ living conditions. Josep Anselm Clavé is the protagonist in an article published in two parts, the first dedicated to his work as a “musician-poet” and the second to his work as a “sociologist” (Roure 1908). It is the latter part that refers to “La Maquinista” and to the “holy mantra of the worker”, which is none other than “Progress, virtue and love”. Conrad Roure, author of the article, emphasises that the “glorification of the work, education and progress of the worker never left the mind of the musician-poet” (Roure 1908: 162).

In his song Gomis describes the hard work of the railwayman and concludes with a homage to work:

Victory is ours at last.  
Long live work!  
But where shall we go now  
to earn our bread?  
Who knows if tomorrow, perhaps,  
we will have to go and beg;  
the right to live  
is by no means  
(Gomis 1908b: 129).

What Gomis does not say is that he has another much more radical version of this poem which he published in 1884 in the pages of *La Tramontana*, the anarchist newspaper edited by Josep Lluнас. After exalting the work of ordinary men (exemplified by the railwayman) he goes on to criticise the terrible conditions that they suffer compared to other social classes (Samper 2016: 123-126). In the text published in *Cataluña*, Gomis prefers to use the much more moderate first version of the song.

### **“The journal will not be political”**

In the letter that Cels Gomis wrote to Ernest Moliné i Brasés on 10 August 1907, he makes a clarification regarding the political content of the journal:

Just to be clear, the journal will not be political despite the fact that each issue will have a political section. It will be little more than a snapshot of Catalan politics, but without opinions or comment intended to tip the scales one way or the other.<sup>4</sup>

Gomis refers to the section “La quincena política” (The political fortnight) written by Mario Aguilar and which appears in only the third, fourth and sixth issues. In the latter, the title was changed to “Quincena ciudadana” (The citizen’s fortnight). As has been seen, despite Gomis’ assertions, *Cataluña* featured reflections of a political nature, which comes as little surprise given that the publication was intended to explain to readers outside Catalonia what Catalans thought and on which rights they based their demands. In addition to the aforementioned texts by Gomis, particularly those that he signs as editor of the journal, there is one in a similar vein by Pompeu Gener. It is a response to an article published by Pío Baroja in *El Mundo* in which he discusses the “Catalan problem” under the title “Influencia Judaica” (Jewish influence). Gener, who had already openly positioned himself against another Spanish intellectual, Unamuno, for his opinion on Barcelona and Catalonia (Gener 1907a), takes Baroja’s arguments apart one by one:

So there we are; Mr Pío Baroja not only knows nothing of anthropology or races, he is also ignorant of the words that correspond to the names, which is a serious failing in a writer, because this is the least that he should know, as the great Larra said [...]

Baroja generalises too much; and worst of all he does not realise when they are pulling his leg (Gener 1907b: 57).

Gener uses Baroja’s own words to demonstrate that his prejudices have no foundation and several times recommends that he should do some reading “because it would do him some good”. Baroja describes all Catalan artists and writers as Jews (hence the title of his article), including Gener himself, who defends himself with anthropological and ethnographic arguments (as a member of the Anthropological Society of Paris) and even dares to classify Baroja in response:

<sup>4</sup> Manuscript 330-II, num. 253-254 in the Biblioteca de Catalunya.

You, Mr Baroja, are one of those degenerate Ugric-Finnish and Visigoth half-breeds which the Emperor Honorius sent over here because he did not know what else to do with them. And this is imprinted on your entire figure, particularly your countenance (Gener 1907b: 59).

In such a dispute, characterisations are inevitable. For Baroja, all those who are against “black Spain, that is, the part of Spain subject to despotism”, are Jews, as are those who sympathise with Catalonia. Gener gives an energetic response:

We Catalans have neither hatred for nor a sense of solidarity with anybody. What we want is for our country to choose its own government and for the provinces to cease being the political fiefdoms of Madrid, and if this being Jewish, may God strike me dead.

The hatred resides solely with you, Mr Baroja, and it is the most serious symptom of your illness (Gener 1907b: 59).

Gener concludes his response to Baroja by rejecting violence and repeating the image of the half-breed: “And your proposal to use *violence* to save Spain is, believe you me, an outrage worthy of Ugric-Finn onto whom a degenerate Goth has been grafted” (Gener 1907b: 59).

### **Contact with contributors**

One of Cels Gomis’s responsibilities as editor of the journal was to find contributors and we have evidence of some of the contacts that he established thanks to the letters that have survived. A clear example, studied by Irene Muñoz (2009), is the seven letters sent by Cels Gomis to Caterina Albert (Víctor Català) between 3 October 1907 and 22 January 1908. The editor of *Cataluña* asks her for a picture to accompany a critical study of her by Miquel i Planas (which in the end remained unpublished), a story for the journal (to be included in the section on “descriptions of customs and short novellas in Catalan”) and a novel for the library which will be distributed every three months to subscribers. Caterina Albert responds that the financial conditions offered are not a problem, that she wants to have literary ownership of the story, but that prior commitments prevent her from giving him anything. She also declines to give him a picture of herself. Gomis insists:

Letter 69 [8.10.1907] On the other hand, I beg you earnestly to favour us as soon as possible with one of your descriptions of country customs, and I assure for my

part that I am not afraid of anything. I know our farm labourers well enough to realise that they are in no way as simple and gullible as is maintained by those who go around saying that everything we do and have is the best in the world. Unfortunately we have a lot of flaws to iron out (Muñoz 2009: 122).

Finally, Gomis got his way and in issue 6 (15 December 1907) Caterina Albert published the short story “En Pelifet”, illustrated by Joan Pellicer i Montseny (Joan d’Alart), which would later be included in *Mare balena* in 1920. She also sent in the work “Caires vius [Sharp Edges] and the Spanish version of some of her ‘rural dramas’ with the title *Vida tràgica* [Tragic Life]” (Muñoz 2009: 125). Curiously, in the letter dated 6 December 1907, Gomis wrote to her in Spanish before apologising and finishing in Catalan, “And I have just realised that I have been writing to you in Spanish, but I am sure you will forgive me if I do not write it all out again” (Muñoz 2009: 124).

Gomis was not so lucky with Joan Maragall. On 27 February he wrote a letter to him (in Spanish) asking him if he could do a biography of the journalist Joan Mañé i Flaquer to include it in the journal’s portraits section:

The idea would be, if it seems reasonable to you, to do a biography of Mañé i Flaquer, the journalist, because one of the objectives of our journal is to raise awareness of political men from our region who do or have done politics in the Catalan way; and despite his conservative ideas, which I do not share in anyway, this gentleman is one of those men.<sup>5</sup>

Once again, politics makes its presence felt in the journal. Gomis repeats his request again on 25 September 1907, this time in Catalan, but again without success.

He was to have a similar experience with Menéndez Pelayo. Gomis wrote him a letter on 1 February 1908 asking him if he would write a portrait of Manuel Milà i Fontanals in honour of his memory.<sup>6</sup> It only needed to be two pages long and Menéndez Pelayo was at liberty to set his own fee. Again his request fell on deaf ears, although in issue 15 (1 May 1908) he would eventually publish a portrait of Milà i Fontanals written by Ramon D. Perés.

<sup>5</sup> Two letters from Cels Gomis i Mestre dated 1907 in the personal archive of Joan Maragall in the Biblioteca de Catalunya.

<sup>6</sup> Collected letters of Menéndez Pelayo, volume 19, letter num. 474.

### **The end of the adventure and the beginning of other initiatives**

The last page of issue 24 of *Cataluña*, published on 15 September 1908, contained the following announcement: “With this issue, publication of the Journal will cease”. Thus, this publication edited by Cels Gomis and published by Tasso folded after not quite a year in existence. The warm welcome (and subsequent following) by *La Región* in Guadalajara shows that it achieved its objective of reaching a wider public outside Catalonia, but not sufficiently to warrant continuing with a project such as this. Anton Busquets i Punset lamented this fact in a letter sent to Caterina Albert on 4 April 1908, in which he informs her that it is precisely this journal that enabled him to read “‘Pelifet’, a delightful tale”:

What a shame that Tasso’s *Cataluña* has not been more popular. It would have spread our literature around the world. Perhaps it may still do so, we shall see (Muñoz 2006: 53).

In their study of the Catalan press, Torrent and Tasis rate the journal very highly, not only for its editorial quality but also for its aims, which would be taken up by later publications:

We have already stated that, in material terms, the journal *Cataluña* was magnificently presented with a profusion of illustrations, photographs and some drawings. The motivation behind the journal was also excellent and led to it being well executed. Later on we will return to this idea of writing in Spanish to increase understanding of Catalonia in the rest of Spain when we look at other equally meritorious publications, some of which even used the same title (Torrent and Tasis 1966, I: 393-394).

As Torrent and Tasis go on to show, subsequent publications appeared under the title *Catalunya* or *Cataluña* expressing the same intention. Thus, the 18 January 1913 saw the reappearance of the literary journal *Catalunya*, this time in its third manifestation. During its first phase, the journal was edited by Josep Carner and published from January 1903 to April 1905. It had a rollcall of authors from preceding literary generations and, importantly, several young authors such as Carner himself (who at this point had not even turned twenty), as well as the influence and guidance of the Mallorcan poets (Givanel 1931-1937, I: 273-274). In its second phase the journal was published in Spanish under the title *La Cataluña*. In the third phase, the journal returned to publishing in Catalan but its first issue was numbered 275, thus carrying on from

where the Spanish version had left off. The journal explains the change of language by saying that it was unsustainable (literally “torture”) to use Spanish to speak of living things (Torrent and Tasis 1966, I: 510). According to Givanel (1931-1937, I: 369), the journal followed the same editorial line as in the previous phase and received contributions from young intellectuals closely involved in the Regionalist League at a time when the Mancomunitat (Commonwealth of Catalonia) was coming into being with Enric Prat de la Riba as president of Barcelona Provincial Council.

Another journal entitled *Catalunya* appeared on 28 June 1919, this time edited by F. Salvador Rosés. In its first article (“Nostres propòsits” [Our Aims]) the journal declares that it wants “to work for Catalunya, to construct” and to:

Give space in our publication not only to political, scientific, literary, artistic and sporting questions (providing they highlight Catalan life), but also to economic and sociological problems and to those great problems that preoccupy humanity today.<sup>7</sup>

Torrent and Tasis (1966, I: 488) state that only two issues were published and add that this publication cannot really be compared with the journal edited by Cels Gomis.

In October 1930 the journal *Catalunya* appeared in Buenos Aires under the editorship of the writer and painter Lluís Macaya. Torrent and Tasis (1966, II: 627-628) define three phases of this publication. The first was notable for its exceptional intellectual quality and coincides with the 1939 exodus from Spain and arrival in the Americas of numerous Catalan journalists and writers. The second phase began in 1947 under the direction of the writer Joan Merli, in which each issue offers an editorial in Spanish (in the section entitled “Mirilla”) that summarises the issue’s content. During these first two stages, the journal received contributions from writers and artists resident in France and the Americas, including Cèsar August Jordana, Antoni Rovira i Virgili, Anna Murià, Agustí Bartra, Pere Quart and Domènec Guansé. During the third phase the journal was edited by Joan Rocamora and became in reality the organ of the Catalan Association of Buenos Aires.

Also published in exile, this time in Cuba, was the bilingual journal *Catalunya*, edited by Joan Güell i Ferrer. The first issue appeared on 10 September 1907 and became the voice of Catalans on the island (Torrent and Tasis 1966, II: 631). In much the same vein

<sup>7</sup> Citation from Torrent and Tasis (1966, I: 488).

was the journal *Catalunya*, published in São Paulo in 1963 and containing news and reviews of books and other journals (Torrent and Tasis 1966, II: 630).

Mexico City in 1926 saw the publication of the second phase of a monthly journal entitled *Cataluña*, which was free for members of the Catalan Choral Society. Edited by E. Blanch, its content is mostly Spanish, although there is the occasional poem in Catalan. The presentation of the journal explained the reasons why such a publication was deemed necessary in Spanish:

A Catalan journal written in Spanish is most necessary in Mexico, just as it is in the other regions of Spain. Extolling everything that is great about Catalonia and all manifestations of life there is a duty, an unavoidable obligation. Our traditions, our marvellous monuments, that speak to us of a glorious past, our artists, who have a place of honour in universal intellectual enquiry; the cultural foundations and the great industrial factories; the movement of its commerce and the beauty of its cities and villages; everything, absolutely everything, will pass through these pages.<sup>8</sup>

Another example published in exile was issue 560 of the journal *Germanor* in Santiago de Chile. This special edition for January and February 1951 bore the title *Cataluña* and was written entirely in Spanish with the explicit aim of “relating to the people of Chile and, more generally, to the whole of the Americas the real nature of all aspects of Catalan life” (Torrent and Tasis 1966, II: 652). It is a declaration of intent that coincides 100 per cent with that of Cels Gomis almost half a century earlier. This special issue included contributions from Manuel Serra i Moret, Josep Pallach, Salvador Abril, Domènec Guansé, Albert Junyent and Leopoldo Castedo, who together offer brief summaries of the history, literature, art and music of Catalonia (Torrent and Tasis 1966, II: 652).

As Cels Gomis says at the end of the article “Por qué escribimos en castellano”, “there are many ways of serving a cause”, and his, through the publication of the journal *Cataluña*, was to attempt bring the truth about Catalonia to the rest of Spain by using the Spanish language. His attempt was without doubt worthy of merit but unfortunately fraught with difficulties that, in the end, were too great and led to the end of the adventure. Despite this, the 24 issues published were of the highest quality, in terms of both style and content, and over 100 years later should be recognised as such.

<sup>8</sup> Citation from Torrent and Tasis (1966, II: 639-640).

Furthermore, various subsequent authors in the 20th century also independently felt the need to adopt similar initiatives.

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