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FROM LLULL-TÀPIES (1973-1985). PUBLISHED BY DANIEL LEONG (PARIS) AND CARLES TACHÉ (BARCELONA)

# THE PATHS OF LULLISM IN EUROPE

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**R**amon Llull was not just the greatest medieval thinker in the Catalan language; he was also the only philosopher in our country to cross borders and to have been given any consideration, rightly or wrongly, by some of the great names of European thought. Lullism in its several forms was present in the passage from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, in the Renaissance and Baroque dream of a universal science and in discussions on scientific method at the beginnings of Modernity.

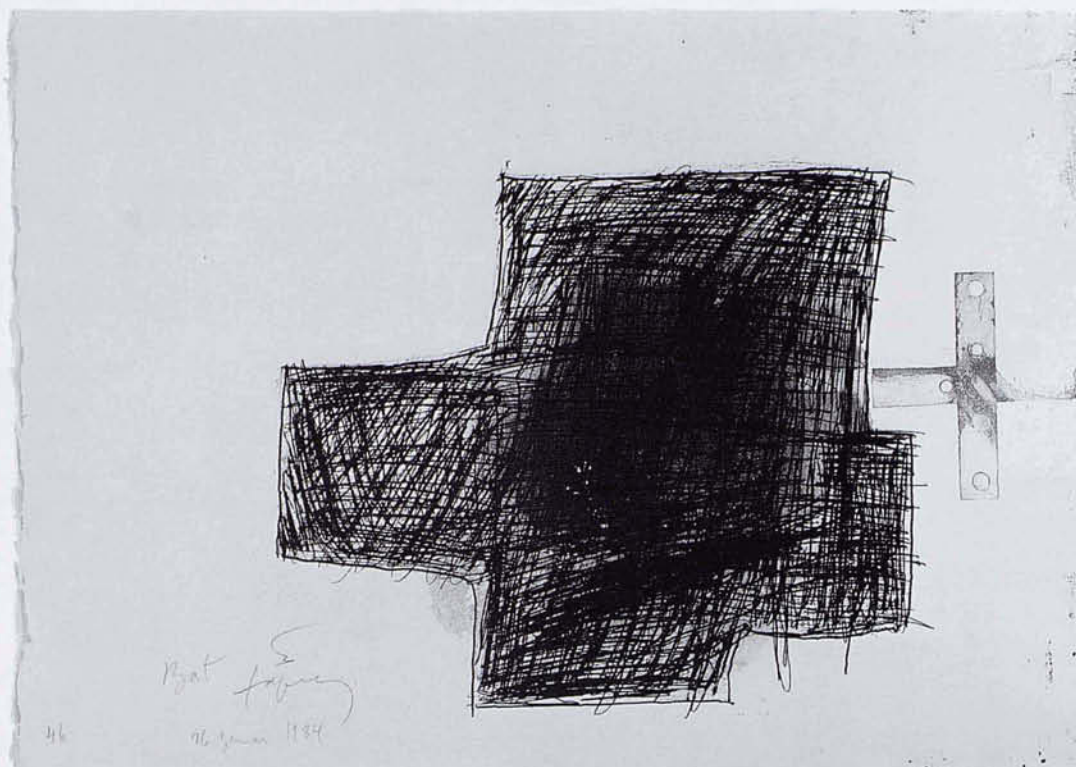
The roots of this extraordinary cultural phenomenon lie partly in the multiplicity of interests present in artistic thought, which for this very reason is capable of attracting the attention of authors of all sorts. The legend did the rest. Soon after his death, Llull was attributed with the

*Testamentum*, the central work of pseudo-Lullian alchemy, which soon gave rise to some eighty similar texts in which the alchemists' recipes for manufacturing gold and the elixir of life are mixed with the letters, figures and combinatorial procedures of the Art. The same was to happen a century and a half later with the *De auditu cabbalistico*, an attempt to harmonize the Art and the Cabbala whose author was the Veronese doctor and philosopher Pietro Mainardi but which soon passed for the work of the Master Ramon. As such it was included in Lazarus Zetner's famous Lullian anthology published in Strasbourg in 1598 and republished in 1609, 1617 and 1651. For many people of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Llull the legendary alchemist and cabbalist almost took the place of the real Llull.

Nevertheless, as A. Bonner has pointed out, our justified aversion to apocryphal literature must not blind us to the fact that these works also form an important part of the history of Lullism and even of European thought during the Renaissance and the Baroque.

The history of Lullism in Europe begins with the efforts of Master Ramon to disseminate his thinking. Towards the end of his life, and to help this dissemination, Llull took care to entrust three collections of his writings to the Franciscan convent in Palma, the Carthusian monastery in Vauvert, near Paris, and to Perceval Spinola, his friend and host in Genoa. To all this must be added his many travels. Our tireless vagrant visited Paris three times and Italy fifteen or so. It's not surprising, then, that the earliest paths of Lullism





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should have taken in France and Italy. In fact, French Lullism originated in Master Ramon's contacts with the university atmosphere of Paris in search of a handful of followers to keep the flame of his thinking alive. This was the case of the two teachers at the Faculty of Arts, Pierre de Limoges and Thomas Le Myésier (d. 1330). A devoted and enterprising follower, Le Myésier put together a rich collection of Lulliana at his home in Arràs, where he had settled as a priest. Following the death of the Master, the good priest used this as a basis for three collections of the mystic's writings: the *Electorium magnum*, a voluminous compendium expounding Lull's doctrines in the form of a selection of writings taken from his works; the *Electorium medium*, a second, shorter compilation; and the *Electorium parvum* or *Breviculum*, a third, even smaller compilation, which, in the manuscript preserved at the Karlsruhe library, includes a marvellous series of

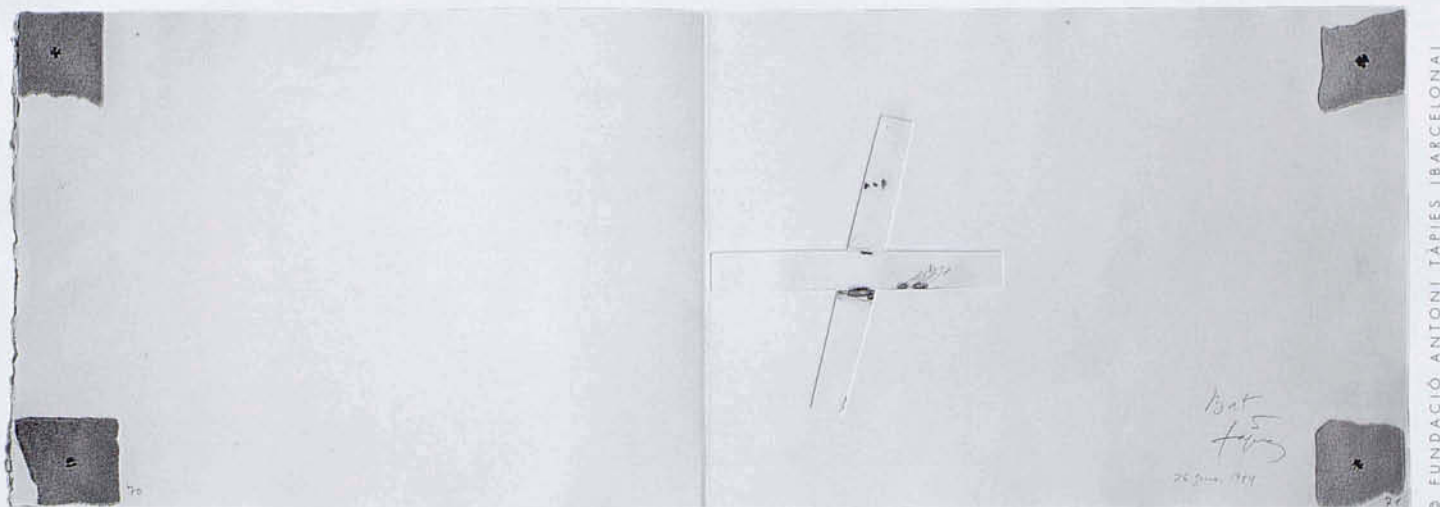
twelve miniatures with scenes from Lull's life, produced to commemorate the ceremonious presentation in court by Le Myésier himself of the three drafts of his work to the Queen of France and Navarre Joan of Evreux.

Of the Parisian Lullism of the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth we know practically nothing. Nevertheless, the seed sown by Lull and nurtured by Le Myésier was not yet dead, as is borne out by the fact that everything possible was done to prevent it taking root. In about 1390, the Faculty of Theology in Paris, won over by the new nominalist trends, proclaimed a decree prohibiting Lullian doctrines in theological teaching. To make matters worse, an official letter was sent to the Carthusian monastery at Vauvert requesting that the mystic's works, which teachers and students from the Sorbonne went to consult, be removed from the library. These measures were advocated by Pierre d'Ailly, then

chancellor of the University, and his successor and pupil Joan Gerson. Gerson soon began a far-reaching antimystic controversy in which the author most criticised was Master Ramon. Gerson reproached him his doctrinal oddities and his use of extravagant language. The anti-Lull controversy reached its peak in the short treatise *Contra Raimundum Lulli*, dated in Lyon in 1423, in which the chancellor inveighs against the theological rationalism of the *Liber de articulis fidei*.

As a result of this prohibition and of Gerson's literary orchestration, those authors who followed in Lull's footsteps had to hide their true faces. This is the case of Ramon Sibiuda (d. 1436), a Catalan doctor and theologian who taught at Tolosa del Llenguadoc and who in the well-known *Liber creaturarum seu De homine*, subsequently translated and commented by Montaigne, once more takes up Lull's project of a rational justification of the dogmatic content of Christian faith, but in





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plain language and without making use of the logico-metaphysical apparatus of the Art. Sibiuda's work marks the beginning of the anthropological turn in modern thinking and at the same time hints at an apologetic line which was to culminate in Pascal.

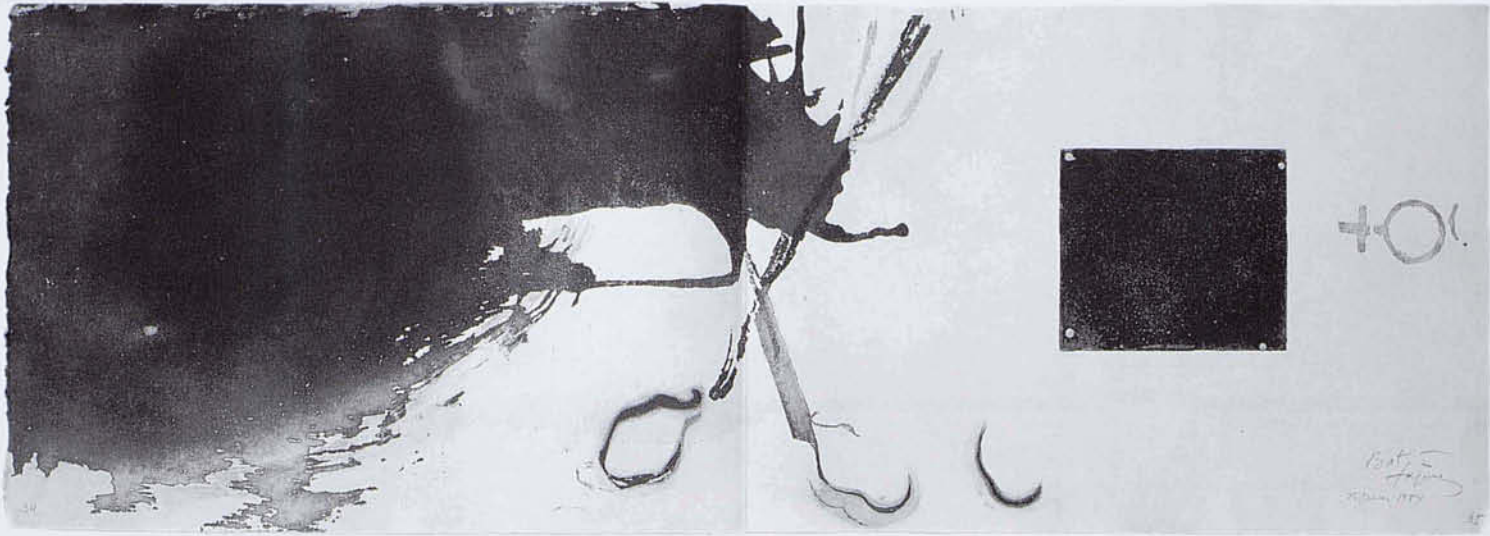
As had happened in France, the first seed of Lullism in Italy was sown by the mystic himself. During his fifteen visits to the Peninsula he wrote some twenty-five works and was active in various cities, especially Genoa, Rome, Naples, Pisa and Messina. There are accounts of a Lullian school that existed in Naples, where Landolfo of Columba learnt the Art, and of small Lullian nuclei in Messina and Genoa, related respectively to Franciscan Spiritualist circles and to ancient monachism. But it was in Padua – not far from Venice, which at the beginning of the fifteenth century had the richest and most valuable Lull collection in Italy – where a more influential Lullian circle flourished around the university lecturer and later bishop Fantini Dandolo. This is proved by the fact that in September 1433 the Barcelona Lullist Joan Bolons visited his home

to read the Art. Padua at that time was a bastion of Latin Averroism and heterodox Aristotelianism. Paduan Lullism could be interpreted as a reaction against the trend which for the whole of the fourteenth century had ruled unchallenged at the university.

The meeting of these two paths marks the encounter of Lull's work by Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), a German who studied law at Padua. Encouraged by Eimeric van den Velde (1395-1460), a Flemish teacher who graduated from the Sorbonne and who introduced him to theology at Cologne, Nicholas of Cusa went to Paris to study the Vauvert collection of Lulliana *in situ*. Nothing was farther from Nicholas of Cusa's nature than to become an epigone, even of such a brilliant genius as Master Ramon. But his immersion in the legacy of the mystic, evident from his rich library of Lullian manuscripts, many of them transcribed or annotated by his own hand, steered his thinking decisively towards a vision of God or the Infinite as an absolute identity (the theological sense of the famous principle of the coincidence of opposites) and at the same

time towards a metaphysico-cosmic conception of Christ, God in human form, as an intermediary between the Infinite and the finite, between God and the world. Sibiuda and Nicholas of Cusa mark the start of the age of splendour of Lull's heritage in Europe. Suddenly, rather than a possibly interesting, but ultimately provincial episode, the history of Lullism entered the mainstream of history. In this respect it is indicative that interest in Lull should have been associated from the start with Sibiuda and Nicholas of Cusa. Thus we find Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1455-1536), a distinguished publisher of several of the mystic's works, amongst them the *Libre de contemplació*, the *Libre d'amic e Amat*, the *Fantàstic* and the *Arbre de filosofia d'Amor*. His pupil, Charles de Bouelles (1479-1553), author of a biography of Lull, was also an admirer of Sibiuda's *Llibre de les criatures*. For his part, the great Italian humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) combined his interest in Nicholas of Cusa with an attempt to discover a combinatorial method which would integrate both the Art and the Cabbala. The most out-





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standing figure in this Llull-Cusa symbiosis, though, was Giordano Bruno (1548-1600). Author of a large number of works on the Art, the famous turncoat monk combined his interest in combinatorial art and mnemonics with hermeticism and sketched out a monistic line of thought which expanded on Nicholas of Cusa's and Llull's concept of God as a Nature-God, the object of a new cosmic devotion.

The seventeenth century is in philosophy the century of method. It is therefore not surprising that the last stage of the history of European Lullism should have turned on this issue. The Art was seen above all as an *ars inveniendi*, an attempt to outline an alternative method to Aristotle's, one which was at once inventive and not just deductive and valid for all sciences. The first step along this path had been taken at the beginning of the previous century by the Franciscan Bernard de Lavinheta (d. 1530). His *Explanatio compendiosaque apolicatio artis Raymundi Lulli*, by mixing the treatment of the Art with encyclopaedism, alchemy and mnemonics, was to be decisive for

the future development of Lullism. It was also this mixture that fascinated the German encyclopaedist Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1588-1638), who in his early *In Artem brevem Raymundi Lulli commentarium* turned Llull's attempt into a sort of "pansophistic art" of discourse. Later, another German, Johann Einrich Alsted (1588-1638), in his *Clavis artis lullianae*, attempted to harmonize the three "sects of logic" current at the time: the Aristotelians, the Ramists and the Lullists, and saw in the Art a method, akin to mathematics, capable of structuring and systematizing all knowledge.

As the culmination of this movement, the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680), influenced by *Pharus scientiarum*, the work of his Spanish colleague Sebastián Izquierdo, wrote his immense *Ars magna sciendi* in an attempt to make the Art a "science of science" suitable for the preparation of an encyclopaedia of all human knowledge. Although this work has been described as a "fascinating mixture of science and nonsense", we must not forget that Kircher, like Izquierdo before him, identifies combinatorial

art with mathematical calculus and tries to bring the procedures of the former in line with those of the latter. This brings us to Leibniz's (1646-1716) famous *Dissertatio de arte combinatoria*, in which the great philosopher of modern rationalism reformulates Llull's project in more scientific terms and at the same time makes a first attempt to elaborate a mathematical logic and create a universal language, which is still continuing today. Obviously, there was no lack of authors like Bacon de Verulam and Descartes, who condemned the Art as an attractive way of "scattering droplets of science" or "speaking without judgement on things one knows nothing about". But neither these more or less justifiable criticisms nor Rabelais's sarcasm prevented Ivo Salzinger (1669-1728), an enthusiastic Lullist who thought that Master Ramon himself had already succeeded in constituting the encyclopaedia, of getting down to work on the project of a monumental edition of Llull's work. The eight volumes of the Mainz edition are a beautiful finale to European Lullism's four long centuries of history. ■