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Laudatio academica of Professor J osep Gulsoy on Occasion of a Honorary Doctorate from the University of Valencia on February 24th 1999

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LAUDATIO ACADEMICA OF PROFESSOR
JOSEPH GULSOY ON OCCASION
OF A HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM
THE UNIVERSITY OF VALENCIA
ON FEBRUARY 24th 1999

ANTONI FERRANDO

Illustrious President of the University of Valencia, eminent representatives of the Civil Authorities, distinguished colleagues, friends:

The day after the President of our University announced that the Board of Governors had decided to grant Professor Gulsoy a honorary doctorate, I received an electronic message from another Canadian professor, Curt Wittlin, exclaiming on the subject line: *BEN FET!* ("Well done!"). I guessed right away that he was referring to the Board's decision. Professor Wittlin, who, just like our honorary doctorand, had been President of the North-American Catalan Society, expressed the satisfaction felt by Catalanophile North-American academics in seeing their admired colleague thus rewarded.

In his *e-mail* Prof. Wittlin also mentioned other reasons why he was delighted by our University's decision. "I can assure you —he wrote— that Mrs Hildegard Gulsoy too will be very pleased. After all those years in which her husband dedicated uncountable hours—including entire summers spent in Pineda with Coromines—to the study of Catalan words, she can now see that his efforts and loyalty have been appreciated". We can only surmise that Mrs Gulsoy might have asked her lexicographer husband, once in a while, if he can justify, with sensible and sober reasons, his selfless dedication to this minority language, ignored by most academics, persecuted during the Franco years, still today discriminated against in many places, without the the prestige some other European languages, with even less speakers than Catalan, but having the status of national languages. Mr and Mrs Gulsoy together can, today, take satisfaction in the honor bestowed by our University; it will be one more pleasant memory linking them to Valencia, city which for them is special also for personal reasons: it was here that they first met, many years ago.

It has to be pointed out that today's honorary doctorate from Valencia is not the first public appreciation of Gulsoy's contribution to Catalan studies. In 1988 he received from the Institut d'Estudis Catalans the *Premi Catalònia*; in 1989 the *Fundació Congrés de*

Cultura Catalana honored him with its Fourth *Premi Internacional Ramon Llull*. In 1994 he was elected Corresponding Member of the Philological Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, and in 1994 he was granted a honorary doctorate from the University of Barcelona. The complex socio-political situation in Valencia made a public recognition of Gulsoy's work unthinkable outside the narrow circles of academia. Today's gesture from our University is the first official Valencian acclamation of Gulsoy's lifetime contribution to the study of our linguistic and cultural heritage. A lifetime of studies which, as is well known, began precisely here, in Valencia. It was here that Gulsoy learned how to do philological research, on Valencian topics. In the Fall of 1957, Gulsoy arrived here as a young doctoral student, to gather materials for his study and edition of the old *Diccionario Valenciano-Castellano* by Manuel Joaquim Sanelo from Xàtiva. It is understandable that today, forty-two years later, receiving a honorary doctorate from Valencia represents a moving experience, for Professor Gulsoy and for his wife Hildegard.

Many among you might ask, why our honored friend should have decided to study Catalan philology and write a dissertation about a lexicographer from Xàtiva. After all, Gulsoy was born in Ordu, in Turkey, of Armenian origin, in 1925. He then emigrated to North-America, where he studied at the universities of Vancouver (BA 1953), Toronto (MA 1955) and Chicago (PhD 1961). In 1947 he received a scholarship to spend half a year in Spain. He lived three months in Barcelona, and then three in Valencia. In Barcelona he got to know inspiring scholars of the stature of Josep Maria de Casacuberta, Pere Bohigas, Ramon Aramon i Serra, Antoni Badia i Margarit. He also met Joan Coromines and was invited to go with him on an excursion to the Pyrenees, as an initiation to dialectal field-work. He was impressed by the great Master's ability to talk to rural folks in their own linguistic register, encouraging their full collaboration. It was Coromines who recommended to Gulsoy he study and edit as doctoral dissertation, under his direction, Sanelo's *Diccionario*. He also sent him to Palma de Mallorca on a visit to Manuel Sanchis Guarnier (who gave him, as methodological models, his *Noticia del habla de Aguaviva de Aragón* and his *Gramática valenciana*), and to Valencia, to get to know Josep Giner.

While in Valencia, Gulsoy learned to speak our variety of Catalan. He practiced it talking with the owner and the personnel of the *Pensió* he stayed in. He also talked 'valencià' with the vendors at the *Mercat Colón* and the vegetable growers working on their lots at the City's limits. He fit so well into the social world of the district he lived in, the *Patraix*, that, in 1958, the fraternity of that neighbourhood declared him honorary *faller* [active participant in the *Falles*, a famous

springtime festival (note by the translator)]. Well counselled by Josep Giner, Gulsoy also learned much about the local language reading genuine Valencian popular authors, such as F. Martínez i Martínez, Martí Gadea, Constantí Llombart and Eduard Escalante. More than once, he was asked by people who admired his Valencian accent, but noticed something 'foreign' about him, if he was the son of Valencian emigrants. When he told them his life story, they couldn't understand why someone would want to learn their way of talking, a *patuès* without social prestige. Others, noticing that he even knew how to write that 'dialect', felt ashamed having to confess that they were never taught, and had never learned, how to write their own native tongue.

While in Valencia, Gulsoy worked in the libraries of our University, of our City Hall and of the Foundation Alfons el Magnànim —which was at the time, under the directorship of Arturo Zabala, a refuge for academic freedom. Zabala invited Gulsoy to contribute articles of his to the *Revista Valenciana de Filologia*. Josep Giner helped Gulsoy with his thesis by giving him a copy of the *Diccionari de la rima* he had compiled together with Francesc Ferrer in 1956. He also convinced him of the necessity to publish a facsimile edition of Joan Esteve's *Liber elegantiarum*, from 1472. We can only surmise what kind of questions Gulsoy asked Giner when he discovered that many Valencians denied the fact that their language and the language spoken in Catalonia and on the Balearic Islands are one and the same. As a linguist, Gulsoy knew how totally false and absurd their position was —and is, and will always be.

Gulsoy also traveled to Sueca and Castelló, to familiarize himself with local dialects and to meet scholars such as Joan Fuster, Fermí Cortés and Àngel Sánchez Gozalbo. As we have mentioned, he had to travel to Mallorca to see Sanchis Guarner. But on later visits to Valencia, he could meet him right here. Sanchis helped Gulsoy by guiding him to publications Sanelo had made in the *Diario de Valencia* in 1802 and to the manuscript of Sanelo's *Silabario de vocablos lemosines o valencianos*. He also suggested they study as a team the dialect of Èngera and of the Canal de Navarrés. Together they went on a philological excursion to the southernmost towns of the Valencian region in order to determine the linguistic border.

Gulsoy also got to meet the major figures of the Valencian *intelligentsia* of the time. At the gatherings at Xavier Casp's house he was introduced to many members of the *Rat Penat*, such as Miquel Adlert, Emili Beüt and Maximilià Thous i Llorenç.

In 1961, Gulsoy presented his doctoral thesis on Sanelo, directed by Joan Coromines, at the University of Chicago. Three years later the Societat Castellonenca de Cultura published it with the title *El*

"*Diccionario Valenciano-Castellano*" de Manuel Joaquín Sanelo. *Edición, estudio de las fuentes y lexicología*. Having achieved this, Gulsoy could have returned to study Spanish and Portuguese, fields much closer to his academic teaching obligations. But fascinated by Coromines' scholarship—he had felt the enchantment already in 1954 when he consulted for the first time his *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*—he accepted his invitation to become his collaborator. And so it happened that, in 1962 and then again in 1965, Gulsoy and Coromines traveled together to several Southern Valencian towns collecting first-hand information on lexicon and toponymy. More than once they had to explain their activity to suspicious agents of the *Guardia Civil*. They could show them a letter of introduction written by the President of the Royal Spanish Language Academy, Ramón Menéndez Pidal. The materials collected were then used in the *DECat* and the *Onomasticon*, of which we will speak later. In 1965 and 1973 Gulsoy went on his own to Ènguera and to the Canal de Navarrés to gather materials for the project he shared with Sanchis Guarner, project which was never completed. This is much to be regretted, since it would have led to interesting discussions between Sanchis, who considered the dialect of that region of Castilian origin, and Gulsoy, who believes it to derive from Aragonese (see his paper "L'origen dels parlars d'Ènguera i de la Canal de Navarrés", *Estudis Romànics*, 12, 1963-68, 317-38). His expertise on Valencian speech communities led also to publications on "The Background of the *xurro* Speech of Upper Mijares" (*Romance Philology*, 24, 1970, 96-101), "La lexicografía valenciana" (*Revista de Filología Española*, 6, 1959-62, 3-35), "El sentido del valenciano *atzucac*" (*Romance Philology*, 14, 1961, 195-200), "El origen del catalán *corruixa(r)*" (*Romance Philology*, 15, 1962, 284-92), and "El *Silabario de vocablos lemosines o valencianos*, de Manuel Joaquín Sanelo" (*Miscel·lània Sanchis Guarner*, 1, Valencia 1984, 159-65).

In addition to these papers on Valencian topics, we have to mention also his publications written for the international community of Romanists, where he demonstrates that the language spoken and written in the regions of Valencia, Catalonia and the Balears is one and the same. It was Gulsoy who was asked to show this unity from the perspective of a lexicologist in the *Llibre Blanc sobre la Unitat de la Llengua Catalana*, published on occasion of the Second International Convention on Catalan (ed. Barcelona, Barcino, 1989, 129-60). While the six other contributing foreign specialists—among which Gulsoy's student Philip Rasico—demonstrated Catalan linguistic unity from their perspective, Gulsoy established that from a lexicologist's point of view the words of all semantic fields represent just *one* language, from the Roussillon in today's France to the Southern-most region of

Alacant, and from Andorra and the upper reaches of the Ebro Valley in the West to the Balearic Islands and the town of Alguer on Sardinia in the East. While regional words, meanings and pronunciations are not uncommon, it is all but one language: Catalan.

Next to his decision to study Catalan and to chose a Valencian topic for his doctoral thesis, the second most important date in Gulsoy's academic career must have been accepting, in 1974, Coromines' invitation to become his collaborator in the *DECat* and the *Onomasticon*. Between 1976 and 1983 Gulsoy spent every summer in Pineda de Mar, working side-by-side with the Master. All entries in the *DECat* beginning with the letters N, O, Q and U are from his pen, in addition to several words included elsewhere, all together enough to fill over four-hundred pages. His participation in the *Onomasticon* was also significant. Many entries in the *DECat* written by Gulsoy concern words of special importance for Valencian, such as *oroneta/oronella*, *orxata* and *mero*. Gulsoy's etymological entries are remarkable for their methodological rigor, expository sobriety and professional presentation, free from the personal animosity which mars so many of Coromines' articles. In 1984, on the 3rd of June, Coromines and Gulsoy presented a public talk here at our University in which they were pleased to be able to announce that they had completed the *DECat*. They took advantage of their visit to thank Josep Giner for having sent them so much Valencian information for the *Diccionari etimològic*. In 1998, when I assembled, regretfully only after Giner's death, a major collection of his works, Coromines could still send me a short letter of appreciation and eulogy to be included in my anthology; it was the very last page he wrote in his long and fruitful life.

But while collaborating with Coromines Gulsoy had to show his expertise in lexicology, on his own he worked also in the field of historical Catalan phonology and grammar. Among his numerous studies we will only mention two: his article on "El desenvolupament de la semivocal -w en català" (1977) and "L'evolució de les *ee* tòniques del català" (1981). This last paper deals masterfully with one of the most complex questions in the history of Catalan, directly related to the beginnings of Valencian differentiation from standard (Northern) Catalan. In the field of historical morpho-syntax, we should mention Gulsoy's studies of the evolution of the endings of the Present Indicative and Subjunctive in Catalan dialects (see Bibliography, entries for 1976, 1987 and 1993). As for his contributions to the *Onomasticon*, he worked especially with toponyms from Northern Catalonia and the Roussillon, region from where many other place names were treated by his student Philip Rasico.

As has already been pointed out by Professor Joan Veny, Gulsoy's

works are also great models of methodological rigor. His solid background in Romance philology, including the fields of dialectology and structuralism, made it possible for him to address Catalan questions with a detached, coherent and professional point of view. He doesn't limit himself to abstract linguistic theorizing, but —while always meticulous and perfectionist in linguistic details— he never forgets the humanizing value of philology, that is, the 'love of language'. The voluminous anthology of his articles published with the title *Estudis de gramàtica històrica* by our University and the publishing house of the Abbey of Montserrat in 1993, revised and brought up-to-date by Gulsoy, amply demonstrates this.

Gulsoy also exerted a positive and stimulating influence on his fellow Catalanists through his participations in public academic conventions and congresses —as a matter of fact, he organized the third *Col·loqui* of the NACS in his hometown Toronto in 1982—, by assigning Catalan topics to his graduate students (for instance, critical editions of sections of works by Francesc Eiximenis, such as the *Dotzè*, by Donna Rogers, or the *Terç*, by Jorge Gracia), and by being a member of the Executive Committee of the Associació Internacional de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes from 1982 to 1988. Gulsoy's loyalty to Catalan and our culture has to be appreciated even more because it began already in the difficult years of Franco's dictatorship. It was, and remains, an inspiration for many Romanists and linguists in the United States and in Canada.

Gulsoy's retirement from academic duties coincided more or less with the completion of the two great manuals he wrote together with Joan Coromines: the *DECat* and the *Onomasticon*. The time has come for the Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana to not just profit from Gulsoy's expertise —for instance as Member of the Editorial Board of our journal *Caplletra*— but to take the initiative to have his admirable and exemplary lifetime academic achievement publicly recognized by our University. Therefore, with the support of the entire Faculty of Philology, we solicited the Board of Governors to bestow on Joseph Gulsoy the degree of a honorary doctorate. The fairness of this request was so obvious that their agreement was not only unanimous, but was expedited with uncommon efficiency, in order to include this academic ceremony in the festivities commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of our *Alma mater*.

And so, dear Professor Gulsoy, today's solemn investiture as *doctor honoris causa* is not just a recognition of the enduring academic value of your publications, but also a heartfelt appreciation of the human value of your contributions to Valencian and Catalan scholarship, given freely out of your unfailing generosity and abnegation, a model of intellectual integrity and collegiality. Honoring

your accomplishments we also pay tribute to the driving force behind those monuments of Catalan lexicology and toponymy which are the *DECat* and the *Onomasticon*, that is, your mentor, *mestre* of us all, Joan Coromines. Our University had wished to pay homage to him with a honorary doctorate when he was already close to ninety years old; but he declined, knowing that he had to dedicate every minute of his last years to bring to completion his two great projects. That he still was able to see all his projects in print is to a large extent, Professor Gulsoy, due to your collaboration.

Professor Gulsoy, rest assured that in proposing you as candidate for a doctorate *honoris causa* the Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana has only done what is just and right. The Board of Governors has also judged you fully deserving of this honor, and the eminent Civil Authorities express their agreement with their valued presence here today.

Mestre Gulsoy: in closing we wish you many more years of active research on Catalan/Valencian topics. You honor this University by letting us add your name to the list of scholars who have preceded you in promoting —nay, dignifying and preserving— our native language.

ANTONI FERRANDO
UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA