



You are accessing the Digital Archive of the Catalan Review Journal.

By accessing and/or using this Digital Archive, you accept and agree to abide by the Terms and Conditions of Use available at http://www.nacs-catalanstudies.org/catalan_review.html

Catalan Review is the premier international scholarly journal devoted to all aspects of Catalan culture. By Catalan culture is understood all manifestations of intellectual and artistic life produced in the Catalan language or in the geographical areas where Catalan is spoken. Catalan Review has been in publication since 1986.

Esteu accedint a l'Arxiu Digital del Catalan Review

A l' accedir i / o utilitzar aquest Arxiu Digital, vostè accepta i es compromet a complir els termes i condicions d'ús disponibles a http://www.nacs-catalanstudies.org/catalan_review.html

Catalan Review és la primera revista internacional dedicada a tots els aspectes de la cultura catalana. Per la cultura catalana s'entén totes les manifestacions de la vida intel·lectual i artística produïda en llengua catalana o en les zones geogràfiques on es parla català. Catalan Review es publica des de 1986.

Josep Roca-Pons (1914-2000): A Remembrance **Philip D. Rasico**

Catalan Review, Vol. XIV, number 1-2, (2000), p. 9-16

JOSEP ROCA-PONS (1914-2000): A REMEMBRANCE

PHILIP D. RASICO

On August 29, 2000 Josep Roca-Pons, co-founder and first president of the North American Catalan Society, passed away in Sant Pere de Ribes (Garraf), Catalonia, after an extended illness.¹ At the time of his death Roca-Pons, a distinguished linguist and member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, was Honorary President of the North American Catalan Society and Honorary Editor of the journal *Catalan Review* which he had helped to established in 1986.

Josep Roca-Pons was born on December 12, 1914 in Sarrià (Barcelonès) which was then a separate municipality from that of Barcelona. As a boy he studied at several schools in the Barcelona area, including that of the Germans de la Bonanova in Sarrià, although as he would later relate with a certain delight, his earliest formal education, between the ages of four and eight years, was received in the Aranese dialect of Gascon, as well as in French, in the Vall d'Aran where his family resided for lengthy periods due to the demands of his father's occupation. Upon returning to the Barcelona area Josep Roca-Pons studied for the *batxillerat* degree at the Institut Balma and then later entered the University of Barcelona, where he received a degree in law in 1935. He soon realized, however, that the legal profession was not where his interests or talents lay; in fact, he rather would have preferred to study music or philosophy. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), however, forced Roca-Pons to set aside for the moment any further contemplation of a change in career. Once that conflict was ended, he decided to return to the University of Barcelona in order to study philosophy, although it soon became apparent that the political and culture environment resulting from the victory of the fascist forces under the command of then dictator Francisco Franco, especially in Catalonia, offered rather dismal prospects for an aspiring philosopher concerned with issues such as ethics or aesthetics. Consequently, Roca-Pons decided to pursue studies in Romance philology at the University of Barcelona where he received the degree of *Llicenciatura* in 1941. He continued his studies in this same field at the University of Madrid (then the only Spanish university which offered a doctorate in Romance philology) where, in 1953, he submitted his doctoral thesis

1. An earlier and slightly different version of this note was published in Catalan in the journal *Estudis Romànics* 23 (2001): 443-447.

"Estudios sobre perífrasis verbales del español" which was directed by Dr. Antoni M. Badia i Margarit (who was then professor of Spanish historical linguistics at the University of Barcelona and who would later become the first Honorary President of the NACS). Roca-Pons' thesis won the Menéndez Pelayo award for 1953 and was subsequently published in 1958 by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid. This study is still considered today to be obligatory reading for the analysis of verbal periphrases in Spanish and other Romance languages.

Roca-Pons' *Estudios sobre perífrasis verbales del español* was not, however, his first publication in the field of linguistics. At the time of its appearance he had already in press several articles on verb morphology and syntax, among which may be noted "Entorn del valor auxiliar del verb castellà *ir* amb el participi"; "*Estar* amb participis, adjectius i complements preposicionals"; "Verbs auxiliars afins a *estar* en català antic". He had even ventured into the field of dialectology with "Algunas particularidades del habla del Valle del Flamisell". There subsequently appeared with admirable regularity and in prestigious publications the studies "*Tenir* + participi en català antic"; "*Estar* més gerundi en català antic"; "Le sujet et le prédicat dans la langue espagnole"; "Estudio morfológico del verbo español"; "Morfología verbal catalana"; "El aspecto verbal en español", among others, several of which are exceptionally innovative in nature in that they employ a structuralist approach to the analysis of the Catalan and Spanish verb systems. In this regard it should be noted that Roca-Pons was one of the first to apply the methods of structuralism to the study of Catalan, as may be appreciated in his article "La llengua catalana i les noves tendències en lingüística". While he was preparing his first linguistic publications Roca-Pons taught classes in Romance philology and in general grammar at the University of Barcelona, where from 1947 to 1955 he held the positions of *professor adjunt* and *professor encarregat*. And, as was then common, he also taught private classes outside of the university. Nevertheless, given the political and cultural situation in Catalonia at that time as well as the fact that faculty positions at the university were extremely limited, it seemed to Roca-Pons that his prospects for obtaining a permanent teaching position at the University of Barcelona, or for that matter at any other Spanish university, were quite remote. He therefore decided to accept a position as professor of general and Hispanic linguistics at the University of Oriente in Santiago de Cuba. Unfortunately, though, the closing of the universities occasioned by the civil and military conflict in Cuba, and specifically by the uprising of the revolutionary forces led by Fidel Castro against the dictatorial regime of Fulgencio Batista, caused Roca-Pons to leave Cuba in 1956 and to travel to the United

States. He temporarily settled in New York City where he received a warm welcome from the distinguished Spanish linguist and professor of Columbia University, Tomás Navarro Tomás. In New York Roca-Pons, still officially a member of the faculty of the University of Oriente, completed work on his book *Introducción a la gramática*, which was published in two volumes and became one of his most successful studies with numerous later editions published by Editorial Teide of Barcelona. A pirated Cuban edition of the same volume appeared in the 1970s.

It was during his stay in New York (1956-1958) that Roca-Pons received an offer to join the faculty of Indiana University (Bloomington, Indiana) as professor of Spanish. This opportunity arose as a result of conversations between two friends and colleagues: Agapito Rey, a Galician who was at that time chairman of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Indiana University, and the aforementioned linguist and professor of Columbia University, Tomás Navarro Tomás. Roca-Pons decided to accept the former's offer and moved to Bloomington in order to begin what would be a long and productive professorship at one of the country's most distinguished public universities (1958-1981). There he established a strong friendship with Professor Rey (Roca-Pons later would edit, in honor of his friend and colleague, the volume *Homenaje a Don Agapito Rey*) who, in turn, supported Roca-Pons when the latter, only a short time after his arrival at the university, expressed his desire to teach a couple of Catalan courses, one on language and the other on medieval and modern literature, in addition to his regular classes on Spanish language, linguistics, and occasionally literature. Thanks to Roca-Pons' personal efforts and to the support of several of his colleagues, especially that of Professor Concha Zardoya, the two original Catalan courses soon developed into four: language, linguistics, medieval literature, and modern literature.

In addition to his position at Indiana University, Roca-Pons accepted various invitations to teach at other institutions as a visiting professor during a summer term, a sabbatical leave, or a leave of absence, including the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras (summer, 1962), Georgetown University (academic year 1962-1963), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (summer, 1967), and the Autonomous University of Barcelona (academic year 1970-1971 and summer, 1978).

The very same year that Roca-Pons joined the faculty of Indiana University also witnessed not only the publication of his aforementioned book on verbal periphrases in Spanish, but also a Spanish edition, prepared in collaboration with Antoni M. Badia i Margarit, of J. Vendreyes' *Le Language (El lenguaje)*, with a new,

complementary chapter "Panorama de la lingüística moderna" co-authored by Roca-Pons and Badia i Margarit. Roca-Pons' *Introducción a la gramática* subsequently appeared, followed by the innovative *Introducció a l'estudi de la llengua catalana* in which the author applied to the analysis of Catalan a number of principles from transformational-generative theory as developed by Noam Chomsky, Morris Halle and others, including the concept of underlying linguistic representations. Two additional books published by Roca-Pons should also be noted: *El llenguatge* written in part with the collaboration of Pere Julià, and *Introduction to Catalan Literature* which was written primarily for an English-speaking public. The appearance of the latter volume was especially significant in that it not only resulted from the personal passions of the author, but also represented a change in Roca-Pons' professional interests and research: the international projection of Catalan culture, and, more specifically, the teaching of Catalan language, literature and culture in North America.

Josep Roca-Pons' professional activities at Indiana University, although initially related to Spanish linguistics, changed over time and became increasingly focused upon Catalan language, literature and culture. In this respect one may describe this change not as an awakening or revival of Roca-Pons' interest in Catalan, in reality a passion that had never waned, but rather as the beginning of a true apostolate on behalf of his own language and culture, a fact which led to the decision to concern himself almost exclusively with Catalan in both his teaching and research as of approximately 1976.

While the volume *Introduction to Catalan Literature* was still in press Roca-Pons, together with Albert Porqueras-Mayo of the University of Illinois (Urbana), had begun preparing with the invaluable assistance of two young Catalan graduate students, Carme Rey-Granger and Jaume Martí-Olivella, the First Colloquium of Catalan Studies in North America which was held on March 30-April 1, 1978, at the University of Illinois (Urbana) with Josep Roca-Pons and Albert Porqueras-Mayo as co-presidents and Antoni M. Badia i Margarit as president of honor. And within the context of this first colloquium the North American Catalan Society was founded, with Roca-Pons as president and Porqueras-Mayo as vice-president. It was on the occasion of the celebration of this meeting that Roca-Pons initiated, with the inaugural lecture "La projecció exterior de la cultura catalana", a series of studies on the diffusion of Catalan culture as well as on the social condition of the Catalan language that subsequently would appear principally, although not exclusively, in the published proceedings of the colloquia organized by the NACS. Among these may be noted "Per la difusió de la llengua catalana"; "La NACS

(North American Catalan Society)"; "La cultura castellana i la catalana"; "La situació social de la llengua catalana"; and "La catalanística als Estats Units i al Canadà".

Roca-Pons' teaching in North America, and specifically at Indiana University, was always very personal; and, especially where Catalan language and culture were concerned, it was a truly passionate endeavor that encouraged and inspired students with their professor's selfless enthusiasm and scholarly example. He, however, never wanted his students to feel the least bit obliged to study his language and culture. There really was no need for such concern. The very personality of Josep Roca-Pons: intellectual, idealistic, honest to a fault, and absolutely convinced of the great importance and value of his own language and culture, was more than sufficient to attract a sizeable group of students and to inspire in them a lasting esteem for the Catalan language and a fierce loyalty to their professor. It should be noted, nevertheless, that in spite of the innumerable personal and professional merits of Josep Roca-Pons, a considerable amount of the success enjoyed by his teaching at Indiana University would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support and collaboration of his wife Teresa Boix i Gubert, a native of the village of Palamós (Baix Empordà) on Catalonia's Costa Brava, whom he had married in the summer of 1964 at the Abbey of Montserrat. In Bloomington they were an inseparable couple, even to the point where on occasion both would converse in Catalan in the classroom so that the students would have the opportunity to hear this Romance language. And not infrequently did the Roca-Ponses invite groups of friends, including colleagues and students, to their home in Bloomington to discuss matters of common interest, to listen to music (the Catalan *Nova Cançó*, etc.), and to enjoy some of the culinary delights of the Empordà accompanied by wines from the Penedès.

By 1981, the year that Roca-Pons retired from Indiana University and returned permanently to his beloved Catalonia, he had directed a half-dozen doctoral dissertations on Catalan themes and had formed a group of Catalan scholars in North America most of whose members continue today the work of their mentor. Nonetheless, the retirement of Roca-Pons hardly represented his exit from the academic and cultural scene. On the contrary.

In 1975 Josep and Teresa Roca-Pons bought a flat in Sitges, a village located just south of Barcelona in the coastal region known as the Garraf, that for many years had captured the heart and imagination of some of the most distinguished Catalan writers and artists such as the poet Josep Vicenç Foix, a native of Sarrià and a close friend of Roca-Pons since the latter's early youth. It was from Sitges, initially during summer months and then year-round as of the summer of 1981, that

Josep and Teresa Roca-Pons continued their activities on behalf of the Catalan language and culture, often receiving in their home former students and members of the NACS. In October, 1995 Josep Roca-Pons' many contributions to the field of Catalan studies were recognized and celebrated at the Eighth Colloquium of Catalan Studies in North America held at Indiana University (Bloomington); and, at that same meeting, the Roca-Pons Archives of Catalan Studies were inaugurated at the Indiana University Library.

Once settled in Sitges and free of teaching responsibilities, Roca-Pons helped to organize several summer programs of study for North American students in that picturesque seaside village; and, in the mid-1980s he and Manuel Duran became co-editors of the *Catalan Review*, an international journal of Catalan culture with which Roca-Pons was actively involved until 1998 when his declining state of health forced him, reluctantly, to become emeritus editor of that publication.

Josep Roca-Pons' many personal and professional contributions to the Catalan language and culture while in North America and later from his residence in Sitges, perhaps more accurately described as a veritable apostolate, were officially recognized and celebrated by the Generalitat de Catalunya which awarded him its highest honor, the *Creu de Sant Jordi*, on December 27, 1988. The following year he became a permanent member of the Philological Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, the official and most distinguished authority on the Catalan language. In his typically modest fashion, however, Roca-Pons accepted these honors, as he had accepted others before, not on his own behalf, but rather on that of his former students, those who would continue his work beyond the geographical boundaries of the Catalan linguistic territory.

Those former students, those colleagues and friends of Josep Roca-Pons, among whom this writer is honored to be counted, deeply regret his loss. We shall all miss him. *Adéu estimat amic i mestre, Josep. Adén siau.* He would have liked for us to say good-bye in those words.

PHILIP D. RASICO

WORKS CITED

- Actes del Segon Col·loqui d'Estudis Catalans a Nord-Amèrica*. Eds. Manuel Duran, Albert Porqueras-Mayo and Josep Roca-Pons. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1982.
- Actes del Tercer Col·loqui d'Estudis Catalans a Nord-Amèrica: Estudis en Honor de Josep Roca-Pons*. Eds. Patricia Boehne, Josep Massot i Muntaner and Nathanael B. Smith. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1983.
- Actes del Cinquè Col·loqui d'Estudis Catalans a Nord-Amèrica*. Eds. Philip D. Rasico and Curt J. Wittlin. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1988.
- Actes del Novè Col·loqui Internacional de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes*. 3 vols. Eds. Rafael Alemany, Antoni Ferrando and Lluís B. Meseguer. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1993.
- Estudis de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes 5: El català a Europa i a Amèrica*. Eds. Jordi Carbonell, Germà Colon, et al. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1982.
- Estudis de Llengua, Literatura i Cultura Catalanes: Actes del Primer Col·loqui d'Estudis Catalans a Nord-Amèrica*. Eds. Albert Porqueras-Mayo, Spurgeon Baldwin and Jaume Martí-Olivella. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1979.
- ROCA-PONS, JOSEP. "Entorn del valor auxiliar del verb castellà *ir* amb el participi". *Estudis Romànics* 4 (1953-54): 95-110.
- . "Estar amb participis, adjectius i complements preposicionals". *Revue des Langues Romanes* 82 (1955): 5-23.
- . "Algunas particularidades del habla del Valle del Flamisell". *Actes du Deuxième Congrès International d'Études Pyrénéennes*. Toulouse, 1955: 70-81.
- . "Verbs auxiliars afins a *estar* en català antic". *Estudis Romànics* 6 (1957-58): 189-193.
- . *Estudios sobre perífrasis verbales del español*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1958.
- . *Introducción a la gramática*. Barcelona: Vergara, 1960.
- . "Tenir + participi en català antic". *Miscelánea filológica dedicada a Mons. A. Griera*. Barcelona, 1960: 292-312.
- . "Estar més gerundi en català antic". *Estudis Romànics* 8 (1961): 1-5.
- . "Le sujet et le prédicat dans la langue espagnole". *Revue de Linguistique Romane* 29 (1965): 249-265.
- . "Estudio morfológico del verbo español". *Revista de Filología Española* 49 (1966): 73-89.
- . "Morfología verbal catalana". *Estudis Romànics* 12 (1963-68): 227-254.

- , "El aspecto verbal en español". *Linguística Antverpiensia* 2 (1968): 385-399.
- , "La llengua catalana i les noves tendències en lingüística". *Serra d'Or* (desembre, 1964).
- , *Introducció a l'estudi de la llengua catalana*. Barcelona: Vergara, 1971.
- , *El lenguaje*. With Pere Julià. Barcelona: Teide, 1973.
- , *Introduction to Catalan Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.
- , ed. *Homenaje a Don Agapito Rey*. Lleida: Virgili, 1980.
- , "La projecció exterior de la cultura catalana". In A. Porqueras-Mayo et al., eds., 41-57.
- , "Per la difusió de la llengua catalana". In Manuel Duran et al., eds., 262-272.
- , "La NACS (North American Catalan Society)". In Jordi Carbonell et al., eds., 42-54.
- , "La cultura castellana i la catalana". In Patricia Boehne et al., eds., 261-272.
- , "La situació social de la llengua catalana". In Philip D. Rasico and Curt J. Wittlin, eds., 242-257.
- , "La catalanística als Estats Units i al Canadà". In Rafael Alemany et al., eds., 427-429.
- , and A. M. Badía Margarit, eds. *El lenguaje*. Mexico: Muntaner y Simón, 1958.