

**Editorial note**

‘Memòria personal dels antecedents de l’Anglo-Catalan Society’ was delivered by Sr Joan Triadú to the Society’s XLVI Annual Conference, held at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 15-17 December 2000. Internet publication of an English version was approved by the Committee as part of the programme of activities to celebrate the Society’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Authorization for this edition granted by Sr Triadú is gratefully acknowledged, as is permission given by Dr Ramon Gubern to reproduce the photograph taken at the Society’s first meeting, held in Oxford in April 1955.

It is hoped that availability of these two items will be a significant contribution to the official history of The Anglo-Catalan Society, both for the documentary content and as stimulus to other members to provide comment, reminiscences, etc.

Translation of the original Catalan text was done by Alan Yates. A few explanatory details have been incorporated into the English version, indicated by square brackets.

THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE ANGLO-CATALAN SOCIETY: A PERSONAL  
MEMOIR

By  
JOAN TRIADÚ

Although I would very much like to, I shall not be reconstructing here the actual origins of The Anglo-Catalan Society, a history with which some among you, of course, have first-hand familiarity. Nor am I in a position to bring to light significant new findings or assessments regarding how, over the past fifty years, Catalan culture has been influenced by a diverse and many-sided relationship with British culture, especially in the university sphere. The fact is that a study of this subject, claiming or merely envisaging comprehensiveness, would of itself exceed the time allowed for a single lecture and also the time available for me to undertake it. As we get older time gets shorter, as did our clothes on us when we were growing youngsters, and so we must establish priorities and be sparing with our use of it. It is not just a matter of the Horatian *tempus fugit*, ‘el temps que fuig’ as Tomàs Garcés expressed it, but of the time that has already fled.

I fear, then, that you must forgive me, for these and other reasons, if what was to have been an academic dissertation thus becomes a strictly personal account of a number of themes that date back more than half a century. These may, however, help to define some features of a certain common cultural space: one which all those years ago was just beginning to take shape, vague in outline, fragmentary, but which, now, is more clearly defined and set more or less firmly in an historical frame. I must still request your forbearance, nonetheless, even though ultimately I am addressing you in an *historic* capacity.

Almost ‘prehistoric’, if I might say so. Although my first contact with England dates from 1948, the year in which I was appointed to the lectorship at Liverpool University, it was in fact ten years before that, in 1938, that I came across a book which proved to be for me both formative and prophetic: *Hores angleses*, by Ferran Soldevila, who had been Spanish Lector, at Liverpool, for the sessions 1926-28. I was between sixteen and seventeen years old, working as a school-teacher for the Generalitat during the Civil War, a short-term position that proved in fact to be fixed-term. But everything was new to me and I was just setting out on life: my first salary, my first private diary, the first acquisition of books for my classes, for the cultivation and education of the novice teacher, a process still so incomplete. Ferran Soldevila’s chronicle, published by the Institució de les Lletres Catalanes in that ill-omened year of 1938, evokes an England which was very different from the country that I encountered ten years later. But I was not to know this. What I felt immediately –almost to the extent of living it vicariously– was the contrast between the distillation of a culture functioning within a stable peace, as evinced for me in those pages, and the reality of living in utterly defenceless exposure to danger in a small town (Granollers) cruelly battered by air-raids. Soldevila’s journal illuminated my adolescent dreams: on the one hand, to write, and to write in the language which I used habitually and which I taught in school (although I had never formally studied it); to write as did the authors I had discovered through my teaching (since we had never ‘done’ them in my senior school), in the manner of Joan Maragall, for example, mimetically copied, or in the manner of Josep Carner’s translations of Dickens. The other dimension of the dream was the journey, another mode of discovery, and *Hores angleses*

was my travelling-companion, in night-time reading sessions, to the extent that I memorized whole passages, those that were most suggestive for the stuff of dreams, the itinerary of an inner journey.

At this same time, though, I felt a persistent urge to respond as a literary critic. I was intrigued and amazed by the fact that a historian, the author of a brief manual of Catalan history that we used in class, was also the observant and sensitive author of a book that was so evocative and finely detailed, but also at times gently elegiac or delicately wrought, and even, like the prose of his brother, Carles Soldevila, flecked with some slightly *risqué* touches that were deemed tasteful and fashionable in those inter-war years. Alongside observations of the eminent historian and practising humanist scholar, Ferran Soldevila had the gift of evoking, in a masterly narrative prose, such diverse episodes of his stay in England, like his visit to the Lake District, complemented by his readings of the English poets; or his dramatic experience at the hands of a no less English barber; or when he pauses for a moment to note ‘a kind of youthful softness in the air’ and then, elsewhere, records the impression made on him by the graceful allure of young women’s legs as glimpsed, for example, in Liverpool’s Lord Street, one of the cities where at that time, he avers, skirts were worn shorter than anywhere else in Europe. (While I have been writing these pages, the second volume of Soldevila’s *Dietaris de l’exili i el retorn* has been published. Here, in a note corresponding to 30 April 1947, the author writes: ‘Triadú comes up to me. Well pleased because I have put out a new edition of *Hores angleses*, which had been one of his favourite bed-side books. They are going to review it in *Ariel*.’ The review appeared, indeed, in Number 12 of the journal.)

That same year of 1938 had seen the appearance of Marià Manent’s *Versions de l’anglès*, a short book but one which attained mythical status. I did not see a copy until some time after publication, courtesy of Josep Palau Fabre, my mentor in poetry and also in some intense difficulties I was experiencing at that time, relating to the final months of my university studies and the first months of my confinement at home through illness, when he visited me regularly. This was some four or five years after *Versions de l’anglès* was published, in the suffocating atmosphere of clandestine cultural resistance. Books put out under the imprint of Edicions de la Residència d’Estudiants, including Manent’s, could not be displayed in bookshops and it was a struggle to obtain one even in a library. This is why a sepulchral silence enclosed for so long Bartomeu Rosselló Pòrcel’s posthumous *Imitació del foc*, a collection which had been adopted as the insignia for a cause, first by Palau in his publication *Poesia* and then by our group in *Ariel*. Palau had included in *Poesia* previously unpublished translations by Josep M. Sagarra of two lyrics by Shakespeare, and also, in a number devoted to women’s poetry, a sonnet of Elizabeth Barrett Browning translated by Manent. During those years, following immediately upon the closing phases of the Second World War, the prestige of Great Britain was at its zenith, while we in Catalonia were deeply disoriented and distressed to the point of despair by our awareness that, after the War, although things might not have been any worse than before, they were certainly no better for us. To think of England, to read poetry in English, became a kind of evasion. Carles Riba’s review of *Rupert Brooke, Poemes*, translated by Manent, appeared in the second edition of *Per comprendre* that came out in 1938, although I did not get a copy until some years later. It was reading Riba’s text that I picked up a name which I would put forward as the possible title for the first the first Catalan journal devoted to literature and the arts of the post-War era, *Ariel*. I had already encountered it in Josep Carner’s translation of *The Tempest*, from much

earlier, but without taking on board all the resonances of the name. Let us recall Riba's words: 'Shakespeare, according to Coleridge, stays upon "the high road of life". What we would call the high road of great literature in English: the road along which, from Chaucer to Joyce, have travelled so many formidable dramatists and novelists from the two islands, in all conditions and in all casts of mind; sympathetic, all of them, to dark Caliban, perhaps because of the ineffable efficacy of Ariel's song, miraculously renewed and ever present for them.' And Riba adds: "Ariel, Brooke? In every genuine lyrical poet there is a principle of elemental purity..., etc."

It would be impossible now to summon up the imagination necessary to appreciate how important for us, and for many others from diverse walks of life, were our direct relations with England and with English culture. Nevertheless, a simple perusal of the twenty three numbers of *Ariel* does provide some indication of what was happening in this regard, despite its being a clandestine phenomenon which depended upon private patronage. As examples we have the translation of *Paradise Lost* by Boix i Selva and Manent's version of *Epipsychidion*, notice of both being carried in the journal even though neither at the time could get past the Censor. The same would have been true of the greetings addressed by *Ariel* to the BBC, which on 7 April 1947 had begun its fortnightly broadcasts in Catalan, and likewise to the Jocs Florals which were held in London in that same year. Less politically correct was publication of a note signed JT and entitled 'Homenatge a George Orwell', together with the translation of a short extract from *Homage to Catalonia*. Then, among other items, there were two studies by Derek Traversi, at that time Director of the British Institute in Barcelona, devoted to D.H. Lawrence, officially a non-existent writer, and an article by C.M. Thomson on contemporary English writing, translated by Paul Russell-Gebbett.

We are talking about signs of what was in the air, in my surroundings and within my reach. Obviously there were too any number of other signs of the same anglophile interest, linking with a respectable and well known tradition. Furthermore, the aspect of admiration for Great Britain in political terms had not disappeared either, prior to 1948, despite a certain disillusionment that was setting in. I believe that the situation in general, with its positive features and the inevitable negative counterweight, was conducive, three years or slightly more after the end of the World War, for certain British universities, where the links already existed, to think again about appointing Catalan lectors and receiving Catalan students. In this spirit approaches were made to friends in Barcelona by Professor Allison Peers of Liverpool University, a corresponding member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. These friends asked me if I would be interested in the lectorship, and I accepted the proposal with enormous excitement. I was going to occupy the post which had been held twenty years earlier by Ferran Soldevila! Just before this Carles Riba had lined me up to do some work for the Fundació Bernat Metge, of which he was the *de facto* director, and to undertake the translation of Pindar. My fear was that I should have to choose between England and Greece. Riba, however, who appreciated the situation, not only set my mind at rest (in the sense that he thought that my work for the Foundation could be done in Liverpool, as was indeed the case) but also pointed me towards his English friends and his fondest memories of Great Britain: Professor González-Llubera of Belfast University, a companion from his days as a doctoral student in Madrid, and Joan Gili. The emotion with which Riba recalled his third Bierville Elegy [dedicated to Joan and Elizabeth] spread through the dimly lit room where that unforgettable conversation was taking place, like a ray of bright light.

England, moreover, could be proud of the singular prestige of ‘her’ exiles, that is, of ‘ours’, the Catalans in exile there. I attempted to evoke something of this in the pages I devoted to ‘That English Exile’ in my book *Una cultura sense llibertat*. I say ‘singular prestige’ because other exile-communities or individual exiles there did not enjoy such considerable status. There was a background to this. Carles Riba himself –who had turned down the invitation to go, with other major figures, into exile in Mexico– had explored possibilities of moving to England, as his correspondence makes clear. The names of Josep Trueta, of Josep Maria Batista i Roca and of the BBC journalist who went under the name of ‘Jorge Marín’ were well known and respected from afar, and admired without any intellectual or political reservations. In this context, when it became known that Professor Atkinson of Glasgow had enlisted one of our leading lights, Jordi Sarsanedas, there was in the local congregation (borrowing the term from a famous poem by Salvador Espriu) a strong and sustained commotion. In addition, the art historian and essayist Enric Jardí, sadly no longer with us, and others too packed their bags for the UK before we did, in their case via 49 Wentworth road, Golders Green, Batista i Roca’s address in London. That was where I too made my way, one greyish morning in early October 1948, although Senyor Batista was not at home, neither when I arrived nor some hours later. Finally, as it was growing dark, I turned up at Bush House and there Josep Manyé [‘Jorge Marín’], who was expecting the visit, restored my flagging spirits and morale with a welcome as cordial as it was positive, and for which I was ever grateful to him. It saddens me that I can no longer tell him so again. We left those, for us, mythical BBC studios in the company of Batista i Roca, who had by then turned up there, and we initiated, in our conversation, a friendship which was to be lifelong. Batista spoke to me immediately of how important it was for me to make contact with young English students interested in Catalan and in Catalan literature. The following day, though, I was leaving for Liverpool ready to start giving my classes. Awaiting my arrival, with a justified but stiffly compulsive impatience, was Professor Allison Peers.

Most if not all of the people involved in the setting up of The Anglo-Catalan Society are directly aware that J.M. Batista i Roca was an educator. He came from a background in anthropology and he understood history as a means of shaping individuals and peoples. In the first letter he wrote to me, a month after we had met, he said: ‘My first contact with this country was in 1914. I would not claim that 34 years on I have got to know it. But I have progressively discovered some landmarks which have guided me in my dealings with the English. A fundamental principle that experience has taught me, through the empirical method of “trial and error”, is that we [Catalans] are always at great pains to appear cleverer than we really are, while the English are always at great pains to appear dafter than they really are.’ And he added later: ‘I discussed with [Enric] Jardí my idea that Catalonia’s second *Renaixença* must arise out of a critique of our collective character. It is an historical fact that the Castilians are largely responsible for Catalonia’s misfortunes. But it is too facile to lay all of the blame at their door. A larger responsibility must be borne by us, for failing to understand ourselves and to create adequate defences.’ In my view these criticisms are as valid today as they were then, over half a century ago.

During the Easter vacation Batista arranged the meeting with some young English students to which we had been looking forward, and lasting friendships were begun here for Jardí and Sarsanedas as well as for me. Terry and Ribbons were involved, and perhaps some other individuals I cannot recall. Batista, moreover, kept close track of scholars

going to Barcelona, as is evident in his letters over many years. 'Currently in Barcelona,' he wrote in 1953, 'are two young scholars doing research in the Archive of the Crown of Aragon. They are in touch with Soldevila, but they need to be looked after, so that they don't wilt and wither among the parchments.' Letters, notes, brief memoranda keep on arriving, more or less regularly, throughout this whole period. A central theme was, of course, that of channelling the connections he was so persistently building up between young British scholars and Catalonia. He also recorded with great pleasure how interest in Catalan literature was growing. 'Two years ago,' he wrote [from Cambridge], 'I began with one student; last year I had four and this year, eight.' Everything had to be done, discreetly, however, as he used to say, without making a fuss. Sometimes he even wrote in code, in Castilian. I have one letter from him signed 'Apolonio de Ruedas', with all references to events, people and places given a South American identity, explaining a projected journal to be called *Nuevo Mundo* (that is, *Vida Nova*, in Occitan and Catalan, that was published in Montpellier), with contributions from writers rejoicing in the names of Don Maximiliano, Don Gumersindo or Don Alberto. I am sure that his sense of humour was well indulged in such jokes, but his coded messages sometimes made my head spin. In a letter written to announce the visit of a Miss E.F. who was coming to Barcelona for a few weeks of research, he said that she would be interested 'to make the personal acquaintance of Messrs Ariel and Curial, SA', that is to say the clandestine journals that bore these names. Then, in the same letter there was a postscript explaining: 'A good bit of news: Mr Paul Russell-Gebbett has been appointed Reader and Head of the new Department of Hispanic Studies in the young University of Nottingham.' That was in 1949. Ten years afterwards he sent me news that there was to be a special homage dinner for Professor González-Llubera, on 2 October, and that the following day the annual lunch of The Anglo-Catalan Society was to be held. Another four years later, around Christmas 1963, he sent me from Cambridge another such letter-cum-bulletin, the first two paragraphs of which I am pleased to reproduce for you now: 'I think you will enjoy meeting my colleague from this University, Mr G. Walker, who will be in Barcelona for the holiday period. Mr Walker is one of our good English friends who soon you will be able to admit as an honorary Catalan. No doubt you will be able to help him make contact with our people, and for this both he and I will be deeply grateful to you.'

I am aware that all I am doing here is to pick out from here and there diverse instances of an active Anglo-Catalan affinity to which you, all those years ago, gave institutional form with this Society. This was done, very properly, out of recognition of a real state of affairs, and also to provide further stimulus. To let it be known, by implication, that there were Hispanists who took fully on board the multiculturalism entailed in the proper study of Hispanic culture.

Despite all the years that have since passed ('dark' years, perhaps, rather than 'light years'), I cannot omit mention here of how we used to receive from Great Britain published denunciations of the implacable persecution suffered by the Catalan language and Catalan culture, with the suppression of all social and political rights. Specifically, I must take this opportunity to give thanks for expressions of support received from England in two situations that affected me personally. One of these was when the police arrested Sarsanedas and me in my house (where he just happened to be visiting, with Senyor Àlvar Pérez of the 'London Club') in connection with the denunciatory leaflets written in English that fluttered down from the balconies of the Liceu opera house (never more appropriate was the term 'flier') at a concert given for the American fleet then

visiting Barcelona. The other incident occurred some years later in connection with an academic homage that was organized for Dr Jordi Rubió. Quite a few arrests were made, of the so-called ring-leaders or the simple collaborators, with even an international figure among them, the philologist Joan Coromines; but only five of us, who must have looked the most twisted and shifty, ended up spending some days in the Model prison. My point in mentioning these incidents is to give examples of the practical nature of that active Anglo-Catalan affinity I have referred to. We had no doubt, especially in the latter, more recent episode, that news and comment appearing in the English press spiked the guns of repression in our country and at the same time enhanced the value of that particular modest act of cultural resistance.

Obviously I am not overlooking similarly motivated measures, taken at a much higher level, by Dr Trueta [from his Oxford chair in surgery]. When I say ‘a much higher level’ I mean it, as you can see in this paragraph I’ll now read from a letter sent to me in Liverpool by Dr Trueta on 5 March 1950: ‘You will know already that the former Professor of Surgery at Barcelona University (Dr J. Trias Pujol), who was arrested by the police, had his head shaved and was kept *incommunicado* (how symptomatic that English should have accepted this [Spanish] word for which it has no equivalent!), was released from detention as soon as a foreign government ministry requested information about what had happened to the said professor.’ In the same letter he told me that he had written formally to the Faculty of Medicine in Barcelona requesting official denial that an order had been made for the destruction of three tons of scientific literature written in Catalan. In a later letter he remarked that he had asked Carles Riba and Marià Manent for the names of two young Catalans with a knowledge of English who might want to further their studies in England, adding that there was available a bursary in pounds sterling – ‘funded by a friend of ours’, as he put it – sufficient to cover a stay of six months.

Furthermore, at that same time, Dr Trueta had been trying to formalize the ever closer and more regular links between English university circles and their connections, generally young people, in Barcelona, in spite of the actual or potential difficulties placed in the way by the Spanish political regime. Soon afterwards there was a parallel initiative organized by Ramon Aramon i Serra in the shape of the summer courses for foreign students under the aegis of the Institut d’Estudis Catalans. What Dr Trueta already had in mind, though, was the creation of what he called an ‘Anglo-Catalan Club’. We had discussed the matter during a weekend I spent with him and his hospitable family, predominantly female, at their Oxford home. Dr Trueta had not only his wife and daughters but also quite a few nieces. But his idea was that the Club should have a *chairman* (a more modest office, designed to keep order in the roost, than that of president) and a secretary, specifically a female secretary. Trueta wanted to set up in Barcelona a group that would provide a welcome and company for visitors interested in Catalan culture, organizing the occasional meeting, on the small scale made necessary by circumstances at the time, for the exchange of impressions and for discreet but soundly informed comment on the cultural situation. The project failed to take shape, largely because its aspirations outgrew its potential function. At a later date, when Dr Trueta’s stay in England was coming to an end, he wrote to me in another letter about what he now called the ‘Society of Friends of England’, seen as a frustrated initiative which might have had a very useful function. Even so, I think we should consider what was positive about it regarding relations between the two cultures and as an antecedent of this Anglo-Catalan Society, at least as an anticipation of the Society with its base in Barcelona.

This kind of function was partially fulfilled in those years by what we called *The British*, our way of referring to the British Institute in Barcelona, installed at the time in a large house on the Diagonal which had been cultural centre, perhaps among other things, of the Third Reich. I have mentioned already one of the Institute's directors immediately after the end of the Second World War, Mr Derek Traversi. He became a good friend to many of us and did much to ensure that the Institute became a place where Catalans with literary interests, especially in English literature, could meet Englishmen (Englishwomen too, of course) who wished to make contact with a virtually underground Catalan culture, a culture that any visitor might not have been aware of unless they came with the objective of encountering and getting to know it. There were too some families, like those of Sr Ramon de Casanova and Dr Pere Gabarró, friends of Trueta and Batista, who opened their doors to English students with the aim of helping them get to know our country and make contact with like-minded young Catalans. Needless to say, the British university students who arrived in Barcelona already speaking some Catalan were extremely well received and excited such admiration and optimism among the beleaguered local citizens who greeted and made a fuss of them: to such an extent that I fear some of the visitors must have felt rather overwhelmed by so much attention and eagerness to please, manifest in morning outings, frequent cultural visits (despite polite objections that they had already been to this place or the other) and especially abundant family meals, with an *arròs a la cassola* that they could not always face up to. The outcome, though, was often sincere and lasting friendship.

It is also true that the England that I went to engendered the same kind of relationships and bonds sealed by the war years, still so recent. Regarding the Catalan exiles, with the Spanish war also fresh in their memories, these bonds (at least among some of the people that I got to know) can be described with the title of Raïssa Maritain's memoirs, so widely read at the time: *Les Grandes amitiés* [translated into Catalan as *Les grans amistats* and into English as *We have been friends together*]. I confess that I was to some extent surprised by this. I had travelled through France and had been able to see for myself the truth of information we had been getting in Barcelona for some time about political and personal disagreements among the Catalan exiles living there. In Great Britain, on the other hand, I saw how people of very different backgrounds and commitments not only felt bound together in a common cause, beyond or regardless of politics, but also were united by genuine affection, respecting and supporting one another as true friends. There was more to it than even this: I was impressed to observe that between the recent exiles and the Catalans with longer residence in the country, there had emerged a kind of loosely knit colony that was marked out by a shared cultural formation: 'England is the only country that makes men,' Patxot used to say. It was something acquired in those years, something which enabled them to be at ease in their dealings with the English without jettisoning anything at all of their Catalan identity, so that they could enjoy both conditions, without snobbery and without lingering regret for what they had left behind. Perhaps this was why all of the ones I got to know had achieved, each in his own sphere, an outstanding degree of professional and personal recognition. First there was Trueta, as eminent scientist; and then the publisher Joan Gili; Batista i Roca, university lecturer, mentor and benefactor; the businessman Gaspar M. Alcoverro; the writer and broadcaster-journalist Josep Manyé; the distinguished doctor Frederic Duran i Jordà; the composer Robert Gerhard; the orientalist Joan Mascaró, with a world-wide reputation. These and others, including many so-called 'anonymous' citizens –using the



term without any pejorative hint at all— who made their mark through their efforts and through their dedication to the country that had received them, while being active in groups that proclaimed a Catalan presence and fraternity, involving themselves in corresponding public occasions, like the splendid celebration of the Jocs Florals held in London in 1947, as I have already mentioned, the memory of which was still very fresh in everybody's mind when I arrived there the following year.

There is scarcely any need for me to speak here about the good relations enjoyed with members of staff in British universities, since this is something obvious and, as Josep Carner wrote many years ago, we Catalans must be on constant guard against being *obvious*, a national vice according to him. But it is a fact that —thanks primarily and very specially to Batista i Roca— without the good understanding that was built up with the Departments of Hispanic Studies, the life of The Anglo-Catalan Society would have been more insecure or vulnerable, even supposing that it had come into being. I myself have been aware, particularly as I have been preparing this talk, that the antecedents of the Society, although I cannot define them exactly, were present in what is often referred to with the rather august term of 'signs of the times'. I shall mention two very different instances. One sign that something was beginning to move was that a good half dozen of young people, some English, some Catalan, used to go around together during the university vacations, either in London, Oxford or Cambridge, under the guidance of a respectable-looking middle-aged gentleman [Batista i Roca], with every bit the appearance of a very English university don, engaged all of them in animated if discreet conversation, *in Catalan*. The story goes that in Catalonia one of this company had needed to ask a favour of someone and that the good person who provided the favour, was quick with the rejoinder, thinking it very clever: 'And next time, sir, there is no need to pretend to be a foreigner!'

The other instance I said I would remark on is of a very different order. It concerns the relevance, complementary and as precursors of what was to come, of two books, both published some years earlier, which contributed to the understanding of Catalonia in England. I refer, of course, to Josep Trueta's *The Spirit of Catalonia* [1946] and the first edition of Joan Gili's *Catalan Grammar* [1943]. With the first one a scientist had offered to the English-speaking world a synthesis of a nation's trajectory down the centuries and of its contribution —in science, thought, the arts and culture in general— to Civilization. With the second of these books, a publisher served up a first-hand product, as though he were letting his public in on a secret. He disclosed the most directly operative and at the same time most intimate identity of that 'spirit' of which his illustrious compatriot spoke, of that 'clandestine civilization', as it was spontaneously called by a pupil of Professor Sloman after hearing a lecture given by the latter in Trinity College, Dublin.

Joan Gili was not an exile but a resident in the United Kingdom, and he obtained British nationality the year I arrived in the country. When he put out his *Catalan Grammar* he was well known as a distinguished publisher of Spanish literature: Unamuno, Lorca, Santillana, Cernuda and Calderón. But then he presented, with the propriety and the modesty with which Batista wanted things to be done, a very different product: a manual for the study, from threshold level, of a language's grammar, accompanied by an overview of its history and its literature, a selection of literary texts and a vocabulary. What were the clients of the Dolphin Bookshop, both the regular customers and the new ones, to think of this slightly unusual initiative? What new line

had Mr John L. Gili pulled out of his hat, and out of his repertoire which, until then, had been unidirectional, select and serious? Another sign of the times, then, but this one with contradictory aspects. Both books had been written by their authors in a time of great crisis for England, when the outcome of a long and arduous struggle could not even be foreseen. They displayed, then, a high morale and an unshakable, undoubting faith, both towards Catalonia, on account of their subject matter, and towards England, on account of their confidence.

Ten years after the appearance of the *Catalan Grammar*, in 1953, Gili published an *Anthology of Catalan Lyric Poetry*. As soon as we had been introduced, he explained to me his interest in making Catalan literature, especially poetry, known in England and in the English-speaking world. He reminded me that already in 1938 he had displayed a selection of Catalan books at the Sunday Times National Book Fair, as is recorded by Susan Griffin in her brief history of the Dolphin Book Company. The Anthology was the work of the two of us, or, to be more precise, three of us, because Jordi Sarsanedas also collaborated. The publisher, however, wanted the book to go out under my name. It is worth remarking that Gili's interest and his formal commissioning of the project coincided with the work I was doing, during my stay in England, on the two other anthologies, one of poetry and the other of short stories, that were published in Barcelona, in 1951, in J.M. Cruzet's Editorial Selecta, half a century ago. Once again I must apologize for the personal references, but they are unavoidable, I think. I used the stocks of Catalan literature held in the Cohen Library at Liverpool University and, on occasional trips to London, I was able to work in the British Museum collection thanks to the intervention and support of Batista i Roca, who was also delving into material there, until supper time at Lyons' Corner house, 'as usual' as he would say, and then time for me to go to my bed in the Great Russell Street YMCA, also 'as usual'. With work on the selection for the Anthology almost completed and with my Introduction already written, I spent a weekend at the Gili home, in Oxford. The contrast with my life in the lonely boarding house in New Brighton, facing out towards a grey sea that was invisible as often as it could be seen, was a sort of shock that was almost painful.

Joan Gili, conducting his publishing business, reminded me of one of the masters whom I most admired, J.M. de Casacuberta: on account his thoroughness, his professional rigour and his commitment to the book project in hand. Through him I got to know Robert Pring-Mill, who had been charged with translating into English my preliminary study: with translating it and with making it clearer, more down to earth. Despite this revision, Batista complained that his students found it contained too much theory. In one of our working sessions I found the excellent Pring-Mill with tears in his eyes and I was quite alarmed, but it was Spring-time and my friend was suffering from hay fever. Finally, the eight thousand words requested by Gili for the Catalan text went happily into English, and I have always felt that, although the final word-count was under the said limit, the English text softened almost imperceptibly some of the rougher or perhaps slightly opinionated edges of my original. The final version carried a mature *seny* (the English have this Catalan virtue as well, it seems) and had acquired a measure of Oxford aplomb and of the translator's lullian 'art'.

As Arthur Terry remarks in his prologue to the *Miscel.lània Joan Gili*, it is not at all easy to discuss the merits of Joan Gili. Even so, although I shall speak only of the period before the foundation of The Anglo-Catalan Society, I want to give two examples, different in kind and even belonging to two quite different categories. When a Spanish

government decree stopped the appearance of our journal *Ariel*, to which I have already referred, I commented to Joan Gili that there was a firm intention to start up publication again, in agreement with another of the founder publishers, as soon as I returned to Barcelona, but with two precautions designed to anticipate another expected clash with authority and the corresponding interrogation: first, putting instead of the title, in place of the incriminated name, the simple number of the journal; and then making it clear that the publishing and administrative headquarters were abroad, in the case of Great Britain at the Dolphin Book company, 14 Fyfield Road, Oxford. I did not have to put it to him twice, and thus it officially appears in print, at the risk of misleading the odd researcher (although the censorship was not misled for long), from number nineteen of the journal until number twenty-three, the last to appear.

Then, secondly, I want to relate a very different happening, as I have said, which in my relationship with Joan Gili left a most intimate and personal memory, one which stays with me always. At Christmas 1948 J.V. Foix sent me the first of his Christmas poems which together make up his book *Onze nadals i un Cap d'Any*. For me it is the best poem in the sequence, a great piece of Foix's best writing, full of movement and of inspired impulses to make selfless offerings, and which begins *També vindrem, Infant, a l'hora vella* ['We shall come too, Child, at the old hour'] and ends *Vindré mudat, al costat de la dona/amb els vestits de quan ens vam casar* ['I'll be wearing a change of clothes, with my wife beside me/dressed as we were when we married']. That same year, the poet's marriage with Joan Gili's sister had entered an irreversible process of dissolution. The beautiful image of these last two lines, applied in the most tender and poignant context, had nothing pathetic about it when my friend and publisher, on his own initiative, talked to me on the subject. He simply said, with a smile, closing his eyes slightly as he did typically, that Foix himself had read the poem to him and that, at this point, emotion had choked his voice. But as he was explaining this to me Joan Gili, respectfully, held back his own, sincere distress, thinking less of himself than of the poet, his friend and a person he always admired. Many years later, the day he was invested with the Creu de Sant Jordi, I went up to congratulate him and he showed me a telegram he had received from his children, with just the single word 'Love'. It was the word which most befitted him.

Concerning my two academic years in England I must say –to bring this chronicle to a conclusion, as you may now reasonably expect, after your attention has been so exploited– that I came across an effectively functioning Anglo-Catalan Society in all but name. I even have the impression that during that time I spoke more in Catalan than in English. Is it perhaps to be considered a youthful error, a serious one, committed through a deep-seated concern with what Maragall called *el sentiment de pàtria*, a feeling for the homeland? I do not know. But the truth is that I did not take fullest advantage of the situation I was in. On arriving back home, I returned to the profession of being a teacher of two dead languages and a prohibited one. Every person has the languages they deserve, it seems. But I hope that I have been deserving too of the friendships I formed. With Josep Manyé, for example, who took me several times to the BBC and allowed me to voice (in 1949!) the well-known sentiment about a country 'as free as England and as pretty as Catalonia'. In those times (and, to an extent, at all times) we had to be content with being *pretty*. Given the prestige of the BBC, still intact from the war-time experience, that chink which was opened up *nord enllà*, 'towards a distant north', managed and kept open by Josep Manyé for as long as he was able, was for us one of not

many small lights in the dark night, at a time when we had to cling on to anything at all in order to affirm our difference, in order to declare that at least as a language and as a culture we still had a presence.

Sometimes this preoccupation was made evident in the small but significant things, about which Manyé and Batista had warned me, reminding me that I would soon have to go back to Barcelona, and that this was the right thing. It meant, though, leaving a situation where in principle there was no problem about my using the Catalan version of my own name, something I could not do in Catalonia, except in private. This did have some odd consequences. I used to receive invitations to social tea-parties and be told that I could attend with my husband if I wished, or I would be sent the occasional catalogue for women's clothing, to the consternation of the good soul who was my landlady in New Brighton. I have recently found among my papers the card which I wrote from there to my parents, dated 5 December 1949, where I say: 'I have just got back from Oxford, now, at 3.45 on Monday afternoon. If I wrote you a letter we would arrive in Barcelona at the same time, whereas this card, if I post it now, might reach you by Friday. The trip to Oxford went very well. They did not let me leave until this morning. At the Gili home I was treated right royally. They took me everywhere by car, and as well as covering all my travel expenses he wrote me a cheque for ten pounds for the book. We did a lot of work, with no disagreements. On Saturday afternoon Batista came up from London to be able to join in the conversations. I went to the Truetas' house and also went out with them, to a religious function where Christmas carols were sung. So, then, I can be pleased with things, in every way. As you know, I leave on Thursday evening on the coach to London, hoping to arrive in Barcelona on Saturday afternoon, God willing.'

I now move on a few years and, in conclusion, refer to a particular historical document which concerns directly both The Anglo-Catalan Society and, as you will see, myself. The document is a letter, brief in length but substantial in content, sent by my friend Geoffrey Ribbans, posted in Sheffield on 2 June 1959 and received by me in Barcelona. The first paragraph explains, in Catalan, that Ribbans has been notified that I have been awarded the Anglo-Catalan Society Prize at the Paris Jocs Florals, and that he, as Treasurer of the Society is pleased to issue me with a cheque for ten guineas, to be sent on by a friend in London (from Wentworth Road). Ribbans goes on to say how pleased he is that my fine book has won the prize..., etc. I think that now is the moment for me to express my gratitude, in person, to the various generations of The Anglo-Catalan Society, for the distinction conferred on me back then and for the attention I have received from you all the time it has taken me to deliver this talk.