

†**P.T. Ricketts, O.B.E. (1933-2013)**

*mas si.ns membram d'Arnau Daniell
e tots aquells que la terra.ls es vel...
Desert d'amics, de bens e de senhor*

Peter Thomas Ricketts held chairs in Romance Philology and French at his *alma mater* and elsewhere. His first contribution to scholarship was successfully completed 'while demobilized' (a colleague) and submitted as a Ph.D. dissertation thesis to the University of Birmingham (1960, supervised by John Hathaway). Full tribute has been paid to him by Dominique Billy and Ann Buckley (*Études de langue et de littérature médiévales: offertes à Peter T. Ricketts à l'occasion de son 70ème anniversaire* [2005.]) That delightful volume also contains a full bibliography together with biographical details. It remains here only necessary to record the happy fact that, at his death, the Provençalist Ricketts left all his projects in a state of advanced completion.

The remaining two volumes of his *Matfre Ermengaud* will appear posthumously, together with the final two tranches of the *Concordance de l'Occitan Medieval*. In his own words: The decision was taken, in the late 1960s, to put all the texts of Medieval Occitan (a Romance language still spoken in the south of France),* written between 1000 and 1500 into a computer, between five and six million raw words, permitting electronic access to the complete lexicon of the language and to the meaning of items via their context.

He exited this world happy in the knowledge that his last joint venture had also reached proofs. In the words of a colleague, 'his final labour of love and affection' apparently consists in 'the turning into French of the work of a *Monsieur de Riquer*', which one can only assume consists of the three volumes from 1964, whose only fault when they were reviewed was found to lie in their 'lavish illustration' (G. J. Walker). One hopes the publisher of the French edition will attend to this infelicity.

Ricketts will be remembered as the founder President of the *Association Internationale d'Etudes Occitanes* (est. 1981), which he served in the capacity of Secretary to the British Branch until the end. As the only fitting testimony to the friend, the scholar and the gentleman, we may cite the following words:

Erat Collega quem aestimabam multum et, quamvis eum non saepe vidissem, semper amicabilem inveni, collega quoque qui me semel in difficultatibus cuiusdam carminis occitanici sapienter adiuvit. Sum felix quia memoriam eius sic honorasti (a colleague).

The passing of P.T. Ricketts thus closes a revolutionary and productive chapter in the history of Romance Philology. In celebration of a happy life well spent in the service of others, I am in receipt of an epitaph from a colleague which it is my happy duty to reproduce:

MAGISTRO LUDORUM SEMPER VIVENTI CORDIBUS
NOSTRIS · CARISSIMAE UXORI MONICAE ET
MINORIBUS · AMICIS DISCIPULISQUE · PUERIS
PUELLISQUE · QUI ERAMUS SICUT ET FUTURIS ·
MAGISTRISQUE MEIS · GRATIA DEI SIT OMNIBUS
VOBISCUM · LAUS DEO USQUE AD DIEM
RESURRECTIONIS ULTIMAE.

He died as he had lived, happily, in the arms of his loving wife, a few days after his last academic engagement, where he served as Magister Ludorum presiding over the Floral Games of Toulouse (est. 1323). Provincia deserta.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
(Keats)

*According to the latest report, in 1914 there were 13 million speakers of Provençal. In 2012 it was calculated that perhaps 100,000 remain.

By this unhappy estimate, the last speaker, it is estimated, will pass away within the next 30 years.

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