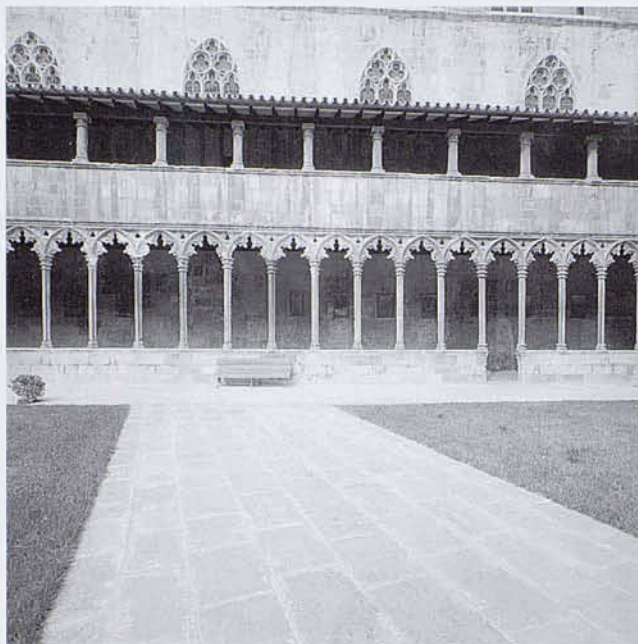
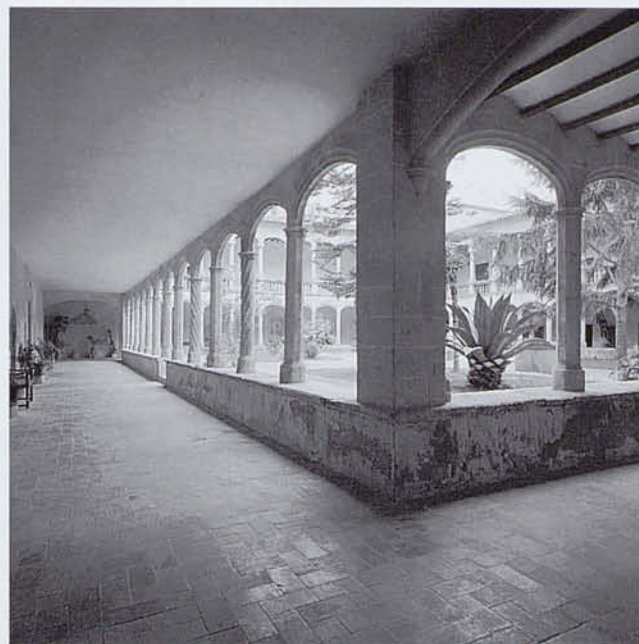




CLOISTER OF THE CHURCH OF SANT FRANCESC. PALMA DE MALLORCA



CLOISTER OF THE ABBEY OF SANTA MARIA DE LA REAL. PALMA DE MALLORCA

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# A GEOGRAPHICAL AND SPIRITUAL TOUR OF RAMON LLULL

JORDI GAYÀ MEDIEVALIST

ENFRA LA VINYA I FENOLAR  
AMOR ME PRÈS: FÈM DEUS AMAR  
ENFRE SOSPIRS E PLORS ESTAR

AMIDST VINES AND FENNEL  
LOVE SEIZED ME: GOD MADE ME LOVE  
AMIDST SIGHS AND LAMENTS

**I**t may have been Miramar that Ramon Llull remembered in these lines: as so often in his work, a vague insinuation, reality poured forth in metaphor. The rest of his biography was the same, even the story *Vita coetanea*, which, it's said, was based on his own words.

In this way, against the light of metaphor, the whole of Ramon Llull's life (1232-1316) obeyed a single purpose: *integre Christum deservire*.

The decision marked a before and after. Behind him were the first thirty years of the citizen born in Mallorques (present-day Palma de Mallorca), the son of one of the men who had accompanied the King of Aragon, James I, in the conquest of the island (1229). Ramon married Blanca Picany and had two sons. His work (we have to trust the little evidence

there is) was divided between the administration of the family heritage and his occasional post in the incipient public administration. Following the conquering king's wishes, Mallorca was gradually taking shape as a political unit and the *infante* James would become its first king. The decision was dramatic. The religious shake-up that caused it is described in the episode of the five visions of Christ crucified and in the attraction of the acts of Francis of Assisi described in a sermon by the Bishop of Mallorca. Llull's answer was his wish to adopt a life of penitence. In the second half of the thirteenth century there was no lack of examples of this kind of life. The founding of the mendicant orders had done anything but restrict this plurality.

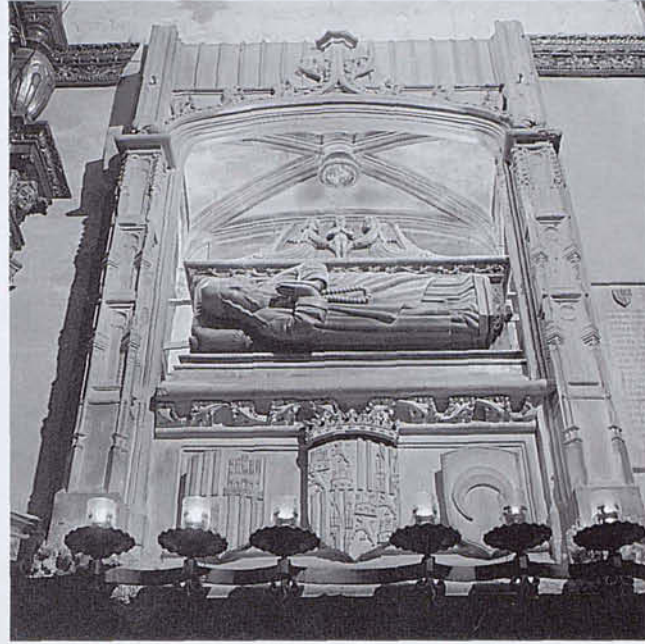
Ramon Llull's world seemed clearly to

point him in one direction: to attend to the infidels, chiefly Muslims. How? The question was to take up a number of years. The situation was also socially complex. There was still a considerable Muslim presence in the society of the island at that time. The immense majority, though, were slaves, either descended from the former inhabitants or recently imported. What did Llull hope for: to improve their living conditions to the point of social integration through baptism? What language, and what sort of language, would he use to converse with them?

In the beginning, Llull put off answering these questions and undertook a pilgrimage to Rocamadour, in southern France, and to Santiago de Compostela. On his way back he wanted to visit Paris, but Ramon de Penyafort advised him against it.



FORMER GRAMMAR ROOM AT THE SHRINE OF CURA, MALLORCA



RAMON LLULL'S TOMB, CHURCH OF SANT FRANCESC, PALMA DE MALLORCA

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Llull returned to Mallorca and started a long period of life as a penitent in search of the best way of going about his proposed objective.

*Christum integre deservire*. First the integrity of the faith. To arrive at an understanding of what is spoken by word of mouth. Believing is initially that: receiving and repeating those words that contain the truth about God, about Christ, about the Church. The articles of faith. Understanding is not only grasping the meaning of those words, but passing it on. This is the eternal aim of theology. And the theology of Ramon Llull's days did so fundamentally by adducing the writings of the Bible and of the ecclesiastic tradition. But Llull lacked a proper training.

Ramon's was a very personal quest. What means did he use? It is impossible to tell. All that remains is the certainty that a slave taught him Arabic. He also withdrew for spells to devote himself to contemplation, and we know that his wife had to appear before the mayor of the city requesting assistance in the administration of the family heritage which Llull neglected (1276).

Long years of genesis. The time of his gift. Because the understanding of received faith must itself be a grace: "and I tell you that I bring a general Art/ which once again has been given me as a spiritual gift". It was the period of contemplation that made it possible for searching and gift to be the twin roots of understanding. As Llull summed it up: *inveni gratia Dei*.

Ramon was now able to formulate his objective more clearly; to write "the best book in the world" for the conversion of infidels; to ask for training centres to be founded for missionaries and to set off himself for the land of the infidels.

The news of his findings closes the period of reclusion on his native island. Summoned by the King of Mallorca, James II, Ramon Llull travelled to Montpellier and his books were revised by Franciscan friars. In 1276, at the request of the same king, Pope John XXI confirmed the foundation of the monastery of Miramar.

Forty years ahead of him and all the world to travel. From the city of Montpellier, Ramon Llull was to multiply his efforts to achieve his proposed aims. With enough insight to grasp the changing re-

alities of the time, Montpellier became his centre of operations.

It is in Ramon's writings that we find the clues to his itinerary. In fact, the works written from the nineties on indicate the precise date and place where they were finished. This information is missing from the series of works we can attribute to Llull's activity between 1276 and 1287. If the analysis of these writings is anything to go by, we can see that the standpoint from which Llull formulated his projects varied considerably. While the framework for the *Llibre de contemplació* is dominated by the personal and autobiographical nature of the undertaking, the *Art* project makes for the construction of a system far more in keeping with the intellectual forms of his time.

Montpellier's university tradition was identified almost exclusively with the activity of its doctors. At the heart of the discussion was the debate on the definition of medicine, on its eminently theoretical or practical nature. The accumulation of the various classical (Galen, Hippocrates), Arab and Jewish traditions provided abundant material for study. In this way the consideration of medicine on the basis of



MIRAMAR. NORTH COAST OF MALLORCA BETWEEN VALDEMOSSA AND DEIÀ



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the broader approach of elemental physics (based on the theory of the four elements) gradually made headway.

Llull's writings from this time suggest that these issues were the ones he believed were of most help for the founding of his system. The physical constitution of reality reveals a metaphysical and theological consideration centered on meaning and the use of examples. Out of all this, the affirmation of the divine dignities (attributes of God) was to be the central pillar of his work.

This was an important step forward. On the basis of this formulation of his system, three broad fronts appear in Llull's activity: the missionary task of explaining the Christian faith; the methodological task of perfecting and presenting his system; and the scientific task of investigating practically every field of knowledge with the principles of his system.

Similarly, putting the programme into practice opened up geographical circles of activity in which Llull was to live and work with incomprehensible intensity for thirty years.

In 1288, Ramon went to Paris for the first time and exhibited his Art in public. Over the coming years he was to make three further visits. Llull had to face up to the surprise his Art caused in the academic circles of the Paris university. In the rejection it met with Llull thought he saw the pernicious effects of Averroism, which he proceeded to fight against with a whole series of writings. Meanwhile, his stays in Paris gave Llull the opportunity to cultivate good relations with Philip IV and build up a circle of friends at the university and at the Carthusian monastery of Vauvert. Of all of them, Thomas de Myésier stood out as the firmest support for the survival of Llull's writings.

A second geographical circle comprised the territories closest at hand and most familiar. As well as Montpellier and Mallorca, Llull stayed with some frequency in Barcelona, Genoa, Naples, Rome and Pisa. These trips almost always had a definite motive: to present his projects for missions, crusades or reforms to Popes, to the Kings of Aragon and to other influential figures.

Finally, the third circle is formed by the four missionary journeys, three to North Africa and one which took him to Cyprus and Asia Minor. These journeys provided him with the opportunity of putting into practice the style he had so strongly recommended: dialogue with a few learned figures with responsibility in the government of the community. Here, too, he was unable to successfully test the efficacy of his ideas. Attacked, imprisoned, shipwrecked on his way home, Master Ramon's tracks fade away sometime during 1316.

"I am an old man, poor, and laughed to scorn; no man on earth can help me, and I have taken on too great a task; I have not sought greatness in the world; but have set a good example; I am little known and little loved. I want to die on the high sea of love."

This was Llull's itinerary. One fine day he broke with his family, his work, his land and started to travel the world. He found little shelter. To many his convictions were folly. But it is unlikely that history will count him among those who fell by the roadside. ■