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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.

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Foreword

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FOREWORD

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Maria Aurèlia Capmany (1918-1991) and Montserrat Roig (1945-1991) had become the foremost spokeswomen of their generations by the time of their untimely death in 1991. They had emerged as the strongest, most committed feminine voices in the struggle to regain a collective memory for the Catalan nation. Nationalism and feminism were at the core of their political lives and narrative careers. Both were born in Barcelona, the capital city of Catalonia, and were fascinated by the history of their city and their country. Both were the first women writers to be elected to high positions in intellectual institutions: Maria Aurèlia Capmany became the president of the Catalan section of the PEN club and Montserrat Roig was elected vice-president of the AELC (Catalan Writers Association).

In bringing the evocation of their figures together in this special issue of *Catalan Review*, we would like to render them homage while reassessing their enormous contribution to the ongoing process context of establishing Catalan women as fully participant subjects in the historical and symbolic reconstruction of the Catalan nation in the context of a new European union. Another common trait shared by Maria Aurèlia Capmany and Montserrat Roig was their multifaceted engagement in the cultural and political scene in Catalonia, at first, under Francoist strictures and, later, during the difficult years of the transition to the new democracy. Neither of them ever hesitated to use any platform in order to make their voices heard. They worked for the written press, in TV and radio stations. They taught, they performed and they wrote: novels, dramas, testimonials, songs. Moreover, they became actively engaged in leftist Catalan political parties. It is this last aspect, however, that might have been their only true divergence. Maria Aurèlia Capmany became a popular figure amidst the intellectual «cadres» of the PSC (Catalan Socialist Party), a position that brought her to public office under Pasqual

Maragall socialist mayorship of Barcelona. Montserrat Roig, who had run under the PSUC (Communist Catalan Party) during the first post-Franco democratic elections, became more and more disillusioned with her militancy in the PSUC, inasmuch as she felt that women were not given enough spiritual and ideological space wherein to inscribe their difference. True feminist engagement was, for Montserrat Roig, the attempt to find precisely a historical space where (Catalan) women could emerge from centuries of economic and symbolic dependance without having to renounce their emotional lives.

At a personal level, I would like to state here that very rarely if ever in my life have I encountered a human being so capable of combining the sharpest intellect with the most empathetic and emotional way of reaching out to the other, be it an occasional listener or her ideal interlocutor. When Montserrat Roig visited me at the Reed College in the spring of 1990, she already knew that angel of death was haunting her. Her generosity, sensitivity and genuine curiosity marvelled me and all of my students. I finally came to understand her emotionally; for I knew then how and why she had been capable of writing *Els catalans als camps nazis* (The Catalans in Nazi Camps) or of conducting her unforgettable series of TV interviews. She could listen with an utmost degree of empathy as if her own self had completely dissolved in favor of the other's voice.

In editing this special issue of *Catalan Review*, I have tried to select a collection of essays that attempt to recapture that sense of immediacy and urgency of Maria Aurèlia Capmany's and Montserrat Roig's human and verbal presences. Largely dealing with the three major notions of Woman, History and Nation, the essays gathered here are primarily oral testimonies that, combined together, try to position the reader as an ideal interlocutor with whom to continue the never ending dialogue between the voices of Maria Aurèlia Capmany and Montserrat Roig and those of their imagined audiences; and thus enlarging the sense of our «imagined community», which, as Benedict Anderson has it, is the best way to establish a national identity.

In keeping with the oral texture of the volume, I have chosen to

open it with Alex Broch's lecture. This lecture was delivered on March 25, 1992 at the Aula Magna of the University of Barcelona in the context of a public homage rendered to Maria Aurèlia Capmany and Montserrat Roig. Five more essays were also orally presented: Maria Teresa Valdivieso's inquiry into the nationalism of Maria Aurèlia Capmany as inscribed in her dramatic recreation of the figure of Francesc Layret was read within the session on «Nationalism and Feminism in Contemporary Catalan Literature», that I chaired during the «Louisiana Conference of Hispanic Language and Literatures», held in New Orleans, in february 1993. Marta Marin's comparative essay on Capmany and Rodoreda was read in the North American Catalan Society Colloquium, held at the University of California, Berkeley in June 1993. That was the same venue that saw the special session dedicated to Montserrat Roig. Three of the four papers read at that session, those of Isolina Ballesteros, Josep Ignasi Prado i Feliu and Alejandro Varderi are published here in their original oral format.

The volume is divided in five sections and a foreword. The first, as I have already pointed out, contains the lecture given by Alex Broch. It offers a careful trajectory through the ways in which both Maria Aurèlia Capmany and Montserrat Roig imaginatively (re)constructed Barcelona, the city they loved so much. As Broch writes, his essay shows: «the profound inscription of the urban space of Barcelona in the textual body of the two authors». This article becomes, therefore, a crucial point of reference inasmuch as it provides a general framework for the entire collection.

The second section includes those essays devoted to Maria Aurèlia Capmany's work. The first article, written specially for this issue by French professor Anne Charlon, constitutes a significant overview of Maria Aurèlia Capmany's entire production. Reacting against a common reductionist view of the «feminine novel», Anne Charlon shows how Maria Aurèlia Capmany overcomes its supposed shortcomings with her multiplicity of characters, male and female, and of narrative spatial and temporal approaches which, together with the fact of her being one of the pioneers in restoring

the thriller genre in the Catalan context, sets her clearly apart from the «limitations» of a feminine literature. Professor Charlon emphasizes also Maria Aurèlia Capmany's lifelong commitment to deconstruct the «feminine ideal» imposed by Franco's fascist ideology. Marta Marin's comparative approach to Mercè Rodoreda's *El carrer de les Camèlies* (Camellias Street) and Maria Aurèlia Capmany's *Feliçment, jo sóc una dona* (Fortunately, I am a Woman) retakes the theme of the city as textual body outlined in Broch's essay. It shows the inner construction of the city as a physical and as a spiritual space, occupied by two female protagonists who embody the ultimate marginal position of prostitutes. In this way, Barcelona becomes a kind of imaginary Other, an almost impossible space that frames their symbolic and initiatory trajectory from the margins to the center of a new feminine perception/inscription of the city. Montserrat Palau's essay elaborates also on the theme of the «feminine mystique» extolled by Pilar Primo de Rivera, the sister of the founding father of the Spanish Phalanx, José Antonio. Professor Palau develops a careful reading of Maria Aurèlia Capmany's biographical evolution in relationship with her narrative double gesture of inscription/rejection of those Francoist ideals which clashed directly with the enlightened and liberal education she had received in the Institut Escola, prior to the Spanish Civil War. Montserrat Palau uses Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf, two women writers greatly admired by Capmany, to recall the «bell jar» as a metaphor for the stifling suffered by Maria Aurèlia Capmany and to invoke the figure of Antigone that, in Virginia Woolf's formulation, is the woman who does not compromise her independent values in front of patriarchal laws. Antigone, in the Catalan context and after Salvador Espriu's drama of the same name, became the emblematic figure of the strong and spiritual woman whose ultimate goal is to heal the wounds of the civil war. A role that Maria Aurèlia Capmany embodied to her very last day. Janet Pérez's essay shifts the focus of analysis placing Maria Aurèlia Capmany *Quim/Quina* (1971) in the context of the apocalyptic tradition. Recent history is displaced by this time-travelling narrative that expands from the ending of the first millenium and the fears of

the «Second Coming» to the contemporary terrors of twentieth century apocalyptic wars. It is the Spanish Civil War, however, a crucial event in recent history, that constitutes the familiar backdrop for both *Quim/Quima* and Mercè Rodoreda's *Quanta, quanta guerra* (1980), the two novels brought together here. As professor Pérez suggests, both Rodoreda and Capmany use the escathological genre in an «ironic and subversive way» inasmuch as the outcome of the apocalyptic event, the Spanish Civil War, could not be regarded as the beginning of a new and better world by the two most committed and powerful women writers of the Catalan postwar period. Maria Teresa Valdivieso's essay, the last one in this section, focuses on Maria Aurèlia Capmany's dramatic work, in particular on her *Preguntes i respostes sobre la vida i la mort de Francesc Layret, advocat dels obrers de Catalunya* (1976) (Questions and Answers on the Life and Death of Francesc Layret, Advocate of the Workers of Catalonia). Professor Valdivieso's formal approach shows how Maria Aurèlia Capmany both appropriates and distances herself from Brechtian alienation effect and from Jaussian typologies in her remarkably believable recreation of the historical figure of Francesc Layret, one of the most influential characters in the configuration of Catalan nationalism. Valdivieso's analysis underlines the supplemental quality of Maria Aurèlia Capmany's text in her reinvention of the «questions and answers» left unspoken by the historical protagonists of the events portrayed in her fictionalized docudrama.

The third section contains the articles dedicated to the analysis of Montserrat Roig's production. Special emphasis, as indicated by the title of the section, is given to her careful construction of «la mirada femenina», that «mirada bòrnia» or double gaze that allows women writers to inscribe at the same time their inclusion and their exclusion within a patriarchal context. I have referred to this crucial aspect of feminine writing in an essay on the poetics of double articulation in the work of Mercè Rodoreda which was included in the special issue «Homage to Mercè Rodoreda» that I edited in 1987. (*Catalan Review* Vol. II. N. 2. December 1987). The influence that Mercè Rodoreda had on Montserrat Roig is well documented by

both Roig herself and by numerous critical analyses. It seems fitting to start the introduction of this section with an evocation of Rodoreda's own presence in the creation of a new feminine/feminist aesthetic, an aesthetic which has in «l'escritura parlada» (oral writing) its most important element. Isolina Ballesteros' essay, the first article in this section, confronts the opposite critical reactions to Montserrat Roig's texts concerning their relationship to different notions of feminism. Roig herself envisioned her narrative production as an attempt to inscribe the contradictions of the historical situation of most Catalan women in her generation who found themselves trapped in the «frontier between ideals and reality». Specially significant is the dilemma of heterosexual love in the context of the feminist ideal of independence. According to professor Ballesteros, Roig's achievement is precisely her double articulation of the inside/outside position still existing for (Catalan) women in the historical context she has textually recreated. Ramon Buckley's article emphasizes one aspect of this historical contradiction: the double repression effected on Catalan women intellectuals, at first, by the open suppression of Franco's regime and later by the strict party line imposed on them by different political organizations. Buckley underlines the importance of the inner voice in the aesthetic change he perceives in Montserrat Roig's two last novels which, in his view, manage to overcome the «dialectics of castration» that had stifled her previous production. Cristina Duplàa's essay clearly delineates Roig's three major thematic interests which correspond to the three major themes of this collection: her feminism, mostly visible in her narrative work, her nationalism, strongly inscribed in her journalistic work and her constant fascination with Barcelona and with the recovery of a collective historical memory. Duplàa's critical approach differs, however, from others in this volume. She studies Roig's production in the context of testimonial literature, a genre directly linked with revolutionary ways of inscribing traditionally marginalized voices. Her analysis focuses on *Els catalans als camps nazis* (The Catalans in Nazi Camps) (1977) and strongly argues for an enlarged theoretical and historical context wherein to discuss the boundaries of testimo-

nial literature. Kathleen Glenn recovers the topic of the importance of «escriptura parlada» in Roig's narrative work. She paraphrases the Argentinean Marta Traba in her formula of the «bond of complicity» to explain the relationship created by Roig and her audience in *L'òpera quotidiana* (Daily Opera), 1982; a novel the essence of which is precisely constituted by the orality of its narrative and operatic form. Glenn's study reflects, however, the ultimate failure of most characters in *L'òpera quotidiana* to satisfactorily engage in a truly operatic and significant duet beyond their isolating, dream-like arias. Josep Ignasi Prado i Feliu retakes Glenn's operatic approach and explores in great detail the musical intertextuality that is woven into the melodramatic private space of senyora Patricia Miralpeix's daily opera. In his own postmodern and musical style, Prado i Feliu (un)ravels the multiple layers of operatic intertextuality that constitute this most theatrical and poliphonic of Roig's narrative texts. Melissa Stewart's essay focuses on *La veu melodiosa* (The Melodious Voice), 1987, Montserrat Roig's last novel. It clearly shows how the polar gestures of forgetting and remembering are at work in the (re)construction of Catalonia's historical past. In analyzing L'Espardenya, the fragile youth shielded from the outside world by his nationalist grandfather, Stewart emphasizes one of the subtlest characters created by Roig. An allegorical character who embodies a sort of historical anti-Lacanian mirror scene. L'Espardenya is indeed not only prevented to see his own reflection on a mirror but he is also forced to ignore the «other world» until the dramatic moment of his own othering by fellow activists in the anti-Franco struggle. Alejandro Varderí's article provides an appropriate ending to this section since it recaptures most of the concepts alluded to in Alex Broch's introductory essay, especially, that «mirada que encara no havia trobat les paraules» (a gaze that had not yet found the words). To find the place of the female gaze in the recreation of the real and symbolic urban space that constitutes Barcelona is what Montserrat Roig undertook in her fiction and Varderí emphasizes in his essay. Varderí's own critical gaze focuses primarily on Montserrat Roig's initial novelistic trilogy: *Ramona, Adéu* (Ramona, Goodbye), 1972;

El temps de les cireres (The Time of the Sherries) (1977) and *L'hora violeta* (The Violet Hour), 1980. In this way, the volume finds its own retrospective look, our own «mirada bòrnia» that will hopefully contribute to enlarge the understanding of the enormous creative contribution offered by Maria Aurèlia Capmany and Montserrat Roig, two of Catalonia's most important writers.

The volume contains two other sections, one composed by my own review-essay on the recent publication in the United States of two influential collections of Catalan feminine writing: Kathleen McNerney ed; *On Our Own Behalf. Women's Tales from Catalonia* (1988) and Geraldine C. Nichols: *Escribir, Espacio Propio: Laforet, Matute, Moix, Tusquets, Riera y Roig Por Si Mismas* (1989). Both collections posit the questions of a new tradition in the context of Catalan writing. My argument presents some of the theoretical implications and historical limitations inherent in such a possibility. My discussion centers around the difficulties of avoiding the pitfalls of essentialism while trying to categorize feminine writing in the historically specific realm of Catalonia's struggle to regain a sense of national identity. Needless to say, the problem of Catalan as the necessary language to articulate such an identity looms large in my considerations, which, I hope, may become an invitation to rethink this debate in a larger theoretical framework. The final section of the volume is constituted by the bibliographical compilations of Maria Aurèlia Capmany's work, prepared by professor Maria-Lourdes Soler i Marcet and that of Montserrat Roig's texts, written by professor Cristina Dupláu.

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