

# Reviews

## || Globalisation, interculturalism and multilingualism

Joan Melià

Isidor Marí, *Mundialització, interculturalitat i multilingüisme* (Globalisation, Interculturalism and Multilingualism), Lleonard Muntaner, Palma, 2006, 220 pp.

This book by Isidor Marí has a feature that has been characteristic of the best work in Catalan sociolinguistics for some time now. I refer to the convergence of two different but desirably complementary strands. The first is an interest in questions pertaining to the Catalan linguistic community and the second projects these issues and situates them in an international framework so that they can help us both to understand the particular fact and to enrich knowledge in general.

It is not surprising that the situation of the Catalan community should be of interest, not only in the field of Catalan sociolinguistics but also in the international domain. Not only is this a singular community with regard to the limited recognition it is accorded within the Spanish State and European Community frameworks but, given its considerable demographic presence and its cultural production, it also displays the majority of factors that have a bearing on the process of linguistic substitution and, more recently, on elements that tend to be part and parcel of the socio-political processes in the recovery of the social use of a language. At the same time, however, and despite the fact that the Catalan-language territory is a continuous space (discounting the sea that breaks it up), fragmentation into administrative divisions (state and regional) obstructs cohesion and recognition of linguistic unity and explains the different stages in processes of substitution / official usage of Catalan today, ranging from places where it is the only official language through to others where it does not enjoy any kind of recognition at all. Moreover, in the particular case of the Balearic Islands, there is an additional interest because, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they underwent considerable demographic expansion —almost exclusively based on alloglot immigration— which has doubled the population, redrawn territorial distribution and brought about thoroughgoing changes in economic activity, which is now almost totally based on tourism. There are two further factors that complicate matters even more, with regard, for example, to Catalonia: the questions of the unity and name of the language and that of territorial fragmentation —four islands— which involves division and gives rise to doubts in feelings of belonging. This complex situation, which makes the Catalan case an ideal one for testing linguistic planning proposals and for predicting what might happen in the near future in many other places, explains, among other reasons, the constant topicality of the linguistic question (in the press, political debates and so on), the abundant sociolinguistic production that has taken place in the linguistic domain as a whole, and the interest in the situation among international authors and associated circles.

As I have already noted, Isidor Marí's book is a particularly good exponent of this diversity of approaches to the question. On the one hand is its familiarity with international sociolinguistic production, especially in matters that are of most concern from the Catalan point of view. On the other hand is its description and analysis of the Catalan situation in general (with special emphasis on the Balearic Islands, in this case).

Furthermore, as one can amply confirm in the Prologue by Damià Pons, this book offers the viewpoint of a writer who, apart from his many other activities, embodies all the profiles that, in one way or another, are related with sociolinguistic concerns or analysis: university research and teaching, political and technical management in the domain of sociolinguistic assessment and planning (of both corpus and use) and social promotion and awareness-raising. This, then, is an excellent combination of qualities for furnishing us with an account of the situation that is drawn from complementary points of view.

Isidor Marí, who has a large body of written work and considerable experience of participation in international forums in the field, collects in this book several papers that have appeared in a range of publications (reviews, contributions to collective works), along with lectures he has given at seminars and congresses. There are twenty-five chapters in total, consisting of material that, while it cannot be considered totally new in its parts, might convey this impression to a good number of potential readers when taken as a whole.

*Mundialització, interculturalitat i multilingüisme* offers a perfect combination of analysis and reflection—in which the author frequently establishes close links between the local situation and the more determinant contributions of management and thought in the international sphere—with detailed proposals for action, both general and specific, with regard to issues that are of greatest priority in present-day society and efforts to reconcile individual linguistic rights with the collective rights of traditional linguistic communities. Marí's extensive knowledge of the situation in the international sphere of the issues that concern him, and his experience at the head of numerous initiatives guarantee the soundness and interest of his contributions.

All the texts that appear in this volume are recent. With the exception of one that dates from 1997, the others were written after 2000 and, to be more specific, most are situated between 2004 and 2006. This is therefore a work of evident topicality.

The themes Marí deals with are diverse but all of them, as the title of his book indicates, revolve around three phenomena that are so tightly interwoven that it is difficult to approach them separately: globalisation, interculturalism and multilingualism. As one might expect, the boundaries between the different articles are diffuse and permeable. However, in an attempt to classify them on the basis of the central theme of each one, we might say that some deal with interculturalism and reception of immigrants ("Un projecte intercultural compartible per tothom" [An Intercultural Project for All to Share], 2005; "De l'acolliment lingüístic a la interculturalitat" [From Linguistic Reception to Interculturalism], 2005; "L'acolliment lingüístic de la immigració: Bones pràctiques" [Linguistic Reception of Immigrants: Good Practice], 2004; "Educació i ciutadania intercultural: El paper de la societat" [Education and Intercultural Citizenship: The Role of Society], 2004), some with planning and regulation of linguistic diversity in different settings ("Les actuacions de la UNESCO envers la diversitat lingüística: una perspectiva catalana" [UNESCO Activities Concerning Linguistic Diversity: A Catalan Perspective],

2006; “Quin model de pluralisme cultural per al segle XXI?” [What Model of Cultural Pluralism for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?], 2003; “Cap a una declaració universal de drets lingüístics” [Towards a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights], 2001; “El multilingüisme de les empreses en el mercat mundial: l’estratègia britànica com a exemple” [The Multilingualism of Companies in the World Market: The British Strategy as an Example], 2006; “Drets lingüístics i mundialització: La diversitat lingüística, una dimensió negligida de la diversitat cultural” [Linguistic Rights and Globalisation: Linguistic Diversity, a Neglected Dimension of Cultural Diversity], 2006), some with multilingualism in the European Union (“El multilingüisme a la Unió Europea: tendències recents” [Multilingualism in the European Union: Recent Trends], 2006), some with the need to intervene in order to modify sociolinguistic realities (“Del debat a l’acció col·lectiva” [From Debate to Collective Action], 2003), some with the position of the Spanish State with regard to linguistic plurality (“Cinc questions entorn del plurilingüisme estatal” [Five Questions about Plurilingualism at the State Level], 2004); “La invenció de la cultura nacional espanyola” [The Invention of a National Spanish Culture], 1997), while still others discuss the case of linguistic substitution in the Balearic Islands (“La balearització lingüística: una destrucció coherent” [Linguistic Balearicisation: Destruction that Makes Sense], 2004).

As is easy to deduce from these titles, the book is about a subject with increasingly universal implications and multiple local versions: multilingual immigration, unification of markets, the powerful impact of the mass media, state hostility to any languages spoken in only part of its territory, the permeability of the frontiers of linguistic communities, the need for linguistic planning, regulation of linguistic rights in large organisations (public or private), and the need for social commitment in the process of introducing a language as official. All of these issues affect a considerable part of present-day linguistic communities in different ways. An outstanding example is the situation of the Catalan community throughout its territory and, in particular, in the Balearic Islands, a reality that Marí knows in great depth and that, as I have noted above, is useful as an outstanding illustration that can help to foster understanding of many other realities around the world.

One should also say that, although this book is comprised of different articles about closely related themes, it has very little redundant material, unlike what sometimes happens in this kind of collection of different writings. In addition, the diversity of the concerns that have generated these pieces means that, formally speaking, informative intentions prevail in some chapters while, in others, the format is more academic without, however, any undermining of clarity and rigour in either case.

In societies that are caught up in a permanent oscillation between advance and regression in the field of linguistic substitution/official usage, public discussion frequently polarises, on the one hand around people who either reject substitution or want to pretend there are no problems with it and, on the other, people who declare that the end of the language is imminent or unavoidable. However, the reality is too complex to be presented in such simplistic terms, either in evaluating it or in seeking the necessary solutions. It is simply not possible to find easy solutions or interpretations that can be summarised in a single sentence. Between these hypothetical extremes, there is the reality, both convulsive and full of contradictions, in permanent evolution. Then again, there are major contributions

that have been made towards understanding this complex reality, for example the writings of Isidor Marí, which are solidly situated between the all-is-lost and the all-is-fine camps, offering solutions that would make maintaining linguistic diversity possible. As Marí points out, although there is no “easy way to put these principles into practice”, there is a “model that can guide us towards an ecological and sustainable linguistic diversity all around the world” II

## II On dreams and nightmares

### Enric Sòria

Ferran Sáez Mateu, 2008, *Els bons salvatges*  
(The Good Savages). Edicions 62, Barcelona, 188 pp.

From time to time, the Catalan-language publishing world comes up with a pleasant surprise and this is precisely what has happened for me with the book by Ferran Sáez Mateu I am presently talking about. Interestingly enough, the title has appeared in a Grup 62 collection called L'Arquer which has hitherto been notable for its unawareness in programming. There is no doubt about it —the spirit blows where it will, as they say.

Ferran Sáez is a teacher, originally from Lleida, who has been able to conserve the good humour of those parts. He is an attentive observer of everyday matters, discrete conservative and a subtle, very well-informed music lover. In brief, he is a highly civilised person. His books oscillate between anthropology, political criticism and analysis of social mentalities and are written in clear, very lively prose that makes for good reading. In one of his essays, *Dislocacions* (Dislocations), which was published in Valencia, he has shown an abundance of these qualities. In *Els bons salvatges*, he has taken on a great theme because he uses this protean myth as the key for understanding a mentality that has had tragic consequences throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that, in its different modes, is still very widespread.

The “good savage”, as we know, is the human being who is not yet corrupted by the artifice of social norms and who lives in the pure innocence of the original state. This myth (with evident precedents), invented in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to criticise the errors of society at the time, which were accentuated still more when compared with an idyllic model, became the cornerstone of the main projects of social emancipation after Rousseau, something that is striking in Marx’s manuscripts but also in the brutal de-civilising project of Pol Pot, or in the Aryan fantasy of the Nazis. For Ferran Sáez, then, the “good savage” is no marginal figure, but the founding subject of a good part of the influential ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> (and also 19<sup>th</sup>) century. This is an imaginary subject that becomes the basis for theorising a future society that would redeem human nature from its downfall —whether it be private property, the State, or soothing Christianity,

or whatever. Sáez points out two of the most paradoxical aspects of the project: substituting a real subject (the exploited proletariat of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the Germans impoverished by the Versailles Treaty) by a chimerical counterpart and then trying to bring about an anthropological revolution in order to construct a new man who will be none other than primitive man. The first paradox implies that the real subjects of social change, specific people with specific problems and desires, are of no use in manufacturing utopias; ideological phantoms work a lot better (and it follows from this that real people, alienated or impure, can only be the victims of such transpositions because becoming a myth is not within the reach of everybody and this is why the twentieth-century utopias were so lethal). The second reveals, in all its stupefying folly, a theory that identifies the future (normative) of humanity with its origins (imaginary).

Ferran Sáez is an impressionist writer: he accumulates anecdotes, digressions and perspectives —moving from the calvary of the inhabitants of East Europe to the tragedy of counter-culture junkies by way of the illusions of trendy good-guyism— to the extent of losing track of his line of argument although without ever breaking it. Starting out from one point, he conveys the impression that, rather than going more deeply into the theme, he is moving around it. However, this structure enables him to tackle the matter from many angles, and to see the deep relationship among apparently dissimilar phenomena —pulling them together through meaning— and tracing a highly revealing map. In fact what Sáez is demonstrating here, using the figure of the good savage, is the best possible indicator of a theme which is still more vast and ominous: the influence of naturalism in the mentalities of recent centuries, where naturalism is understood as the way of thinking that sees the state of nature as the lost ideal of humanity, while civilisation is only its perversion and the source of all evils. That this primordial state of nature can be understood as an Arcadian paradise or as the setting for the Darwinian struggle for survival is not as important (though the consequences vary greatly) as the notion that all human civilisation —all we have done and all that makes us— is nothing more than an imposture that must be destroyed so that we can go back to who we are in the pure state. Whether it is in the haven of Paradise or the Golden Age, the naturalist utopia is one of the most persistent temptations of European civilisation and its potential for devastation is incommensurable. Ferran Sáez's book rightly warns of the danger of this multiform fantasy. As he very rightly stresses (because there will always be somebody who understands everything in reverse), forsaking one's faith in this utopia does not mean ceasing to seek a better society. It simply means no longer basing such projects in Fata Morgana notions that can only lead to all-too-real disasters ■■

## II Genealogy of the neocons

**Gustau Muñoz**

Joan Vergés Gifra (ed.), *Cons i neocons: el rerefons filosòfic*  
(Cons and Neocons: The Philosophical Background),  
Documenta Universitària, Girona, 2007, 204 pp.

We need books like this one. In the present state of Catalan culture, competent approximations to problems of general interest, along with appropriate doses of complexity, rigour and erudition are absolutely necessary. Maybe the number of readers will, in principle, be limited. Maybe the media response will be paltry. Yet without such contributions, without the urge to nourish its more elevated component, the appeal of the culture that uses the Catalan language as its vehicle of expression will be drastically diminished.

Here we have a first-rate contribution dealing with a matter of general interest, which is the historical background, in the domain of ideas, of the phenomenon of the neocons or, in other words, of the intellectuals who have organised the ideology and certain policies in the milieu of the American right, from Reagan through to Bush. This has not just been a matter of “neoliberalism”, in the sense of the deregulating logic and oversimplification of the supply-side economics, liberalisation and flexibilisation of all markets. It has been rather more than this: an activist focus on international policy, a rehabilitation of “patriotism” understood as unilateralism combined with populist discourse, and an instrumental approach to the religious phenomenon, setting up a marked distancing from the inherent secularisation of western societies.

The neoconservative phenomenon is ably set out in the introduction by Joan Vergés. The present-day impasse is also well described. It is correct to see part of the neocon attraction as resulting from the fact that the Rawlsian (and I would add Habermasian) paradigm has worn thin. Again, there is an emergence of elements that alter the scene, a “change of philosophical taste” that rehabilitates previous thinkers and issues such as the essence of politics, power, war, chaos, authoritarianism, religions, political theology, and so on. Also true is the statement that, “the question of justice is moving into a second-level order”.

However, the neocon phase may be coming to an end because of the inadequacy of unilateralism and Manichaeian discourse in a far more complex world in which the maelstrom of conflicting interests and situations cannot be reduced to a binary logic (as a Schmittian interpretation would require) of friends and enemies. We are no longer in the world of revolution and counterrevolution, no longer in the world of the Cold War (free world versus communism), nor even in the world of the Axis of Evil ranged against some fuzzy notion of the Axis of Good. Climate change, the depletion of energy resources, the new economic geography of the world are throwing up highly ambiguous horizons. The self-affirming and simplifying recipes adopted by George W. Bush and chorus leaders like J. M. Aznar are going nowhere, and this is increasingly being understood.

However, this book, more than anything else, is a set of very tightly-argued contributions on the great references of contemporary conservative thought:

Michael Oakeshott (J. Vergés), Ernst Jünger (R. Alcobarro), Carl Schmitt (J. Olesti), Leo Strauss (J. M. Ruiz Simon), Alexandre Kojève (J. M. Esquirol), the “second” Fukuyama (J. M. Terricabras), larded with transversal contributions by Miguel Herrero de Miñón, J. M. Bermudo and Toni Negri. It is not the least of the volume’s virtues to see such figures as different as Toni Negri and Miguel Herrero coming together in its pages!

The historical reconstructions are in general impeccable and dense with ideas as well as references to their particular settings. Some contributions, for example that of Ruiz Simon, are memorable. This book is an excellent package of material for acquiring a little more understanding of the philosophical background of the neoconservatives and for finding better answers to enigmas such as the power of attraction —going beyond the right in all its variants— of these sophisticated but profoundly reactionary thinkers, steeped in culture, at times visionary and, in some cases, plain sinister. We are talking about supreme ambiguity, a source of confusions and of theoretical weakness that needs to be laid bare ||

|| **Sound after Bach.**  
*A Reflection on Contemporary  
 Europe Based on the  
 Music of J. S. Bach*  
**Joaquim Rabaseda**

|| *El silenci abans de Bach*

Director: Pere Portabella

Scriptwriters: Pere Portabella, Carles Santos, Xavier Albertí

Actors: Àlex Brendemühl, Feodor Atkine, Christian Brembeck, Daniel Ligorio, Georg C. Biller, Thomanerchor Leipzig, Antonio Serrano, Ferrán Ruiz, Georgina Cardona, Franz Schuchart, Jaume Melendres, Christian Atanasiu, Johannes Zametzer, Lucien Dekoster, Lina Lambert, Jordi Lordella, Thomas Sauerteig, Daniela Wick, Alvar Triay, Fanny Silvestre, Mariona Solanas, Jens Wittwer, Bert Kripstädt, Gertrud Kossler, Beatriz Ferrer-Salat.

Production: Films 59

Year: 2007

Seventeen years after his last film, Pere Portabella has recently premiered a new work on contemporary Europe starting out from the music of Bach. *El silenci abans de Bach* (Silence before Bach) is experimental cinema, basically poetic, in which narrative and fiction are subordinated to a sonorous evocation of scenes from everyday life. Bach and some of his compositions are the elements that explicitly run through all the sequences with a sensibility that is manifestly attuned to the crafts and activities associated with music: the student, the teacher, the performer, the composer, the tuner, the copyist, the bookseller, the salesperson, the carrier, the tourist guide and the equestrienne. Although there are only two points at which the images are concerned to offer direct representation of the eighteenth-century composer, Bach’s leading role is constant. The cantor at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig is present, too, in Mendelssohn’s passionate gaze when he discovers the treasure of a bloodstained score that the butcher had used for wrapping up meat, it is there in the mathematical perfection with which three cars seem to align themselves by chance when overtaking on a motorway, and it is there in the steady, serene strength of the hand that delicately stretches a string until it is in tune. The film is not

a more-or-less faithful biopic or cinematographic rendering of one of history's outstanding biographies. It is a rich, beautiful polyhedron that brings together and adds the pieces of a necessarily fragmented and apparently disconnected reality.

Portabella, who worked with Carles Santos and Xavier Albertí on the script, invents a refreshing series of occasions with which to inform us of the composer's life: the recorded lesson on a tourist boat in Dresden that describes the insomnia of Count Hermann Carl von Kayserlingk and the commissioning of *The Goldberg Variations*; the well-documented and performed spiel of a guide who recites Bach's chronology and production for visitors to Leipzig; the girl who sings the myth about the legendary discovery and historic recovery of the *St. Matthew Passion*. However, this use of audiovisual languages goes far beyond being a sage demonstration of mechanisms: the aquatic lesson also describes the wartime wounds of the Goldberg landscape; the guide's sentences masterfully elaborate the step from direct to indirect style in the stories of the past; the song links up, without intermediaries, with the ballad and other forms of oral narrative. In other words the avant-garde experimentation of this film owes nothing to arrogant stylisation, it does not pursue abstract and essential purity and neither does it overlook the assimilation of its messages. Highly conceptual, *El silenci abans de Bach* seeks simple and comprehensible elements in order to reach the viewer, to move him or her intimately and to convey something of complex roots.

The first images show an empty space: the walls of a museum gallery stripped of exhibits, panels, sofas, guards. White on white, aseptic as an operating theatre, this artistic space has no art. It is mute and silent. Then an old pianola appears, robotised on wheels and dancing around as it performs the initial aria of *The Goldberg Variations*. The notes sound old, as if from a gramophone. The movement of the keys played automatically by the instrument itself, heightens the phantasmagoria of the atmosphere. The music seems dehumanised, free of performers who might corrupt it, eternal for all its mechanical precariousness. The solitude of the player piano has something that appeals and yet at the same time frightens: the reduction of Bach to the movement of a machine. This example of taxidermy suggests that the music is not just music, that this ingenuous and dangerously extremist conception is now fossilised, as is this sonorous monster that doles out sadness and abandonment with the attractions of an automaton. From here onwards, the film focuses on the humanity of the music in its gestures, memories and experiences and in its functions, discourses and silences.

Portabella has stated in interviews that music should be understood amidst sounds. The soundtrack stresses this dialogue and gives priority to the fundamental role of sound, especially urban sound, of the motor rumbling in the depths of a truck, the rhythmic beat of the noise of a tram, the mobile phone that interrupts the study of a bassoonist who is sheltering from a storm in a motel, the shrill chatter of a market, and the steps and words that are lost in the dense acoustics of a motorway bar; but also less up-to-date sounds, that of bed linen hung out in a shelter partly open to the sky, the stops of an organ that Bach unhurriedly leaves spick and span after he has finished playing, the cloth that rubs over and cleans a black tombstone, the steps and words that disappear into the empty resonance of a light-flooded church. Sound does not compete with music but cohabits with it. The racket of the cutlery that Anna Magdalena drops when she leaves a score on the table humanises the prelude of *The Well-Tempered Clavichord* which is being played





**Bulimia (Bulímia)**, Jaume Plensa (2008)  
Mixed media and collage on paper, 50 x 33 cm

by Johann Sebastian. Portabella seems to be saying that, for many years now, it has not been possible to love music and be an enemy of sound.

This agreeable cohabitation with sound, however, has no continuity with the contrast between music and the range of discourses that envelop it. Bach's mystical and naturalist arguments have the air of a truth surpassed; aesthetic divagations on the relativism of taste spring from the lips of a romantic butcher; modern reflection on Auschwitz and the pain of music is written on the pages of the antiquarian. It is no paradox that the cliché of high and popular culture in the Nordic countries and the uncivilised nature of the south is repeated by a Spanish truck driver who speaks good German and plays chamber music with the members of his family. The selfsame truck driver has decorated his truck with gaudily-dressed baroque and Andalusian virgins. Hence his observations rightfully marry up with the humble and sincere character of certain traditional devotions. Far from dogmatism and impermeable certainties, which are closer to kitsch, the discourses on music in *El silenci abans de Bach* discover and celebrate the flimsy segmentation of knowledge.

One has the feeling that, after Bach, Europe has been sailing on historic rivers of great volume, that it is criss-crossed with urban public transport, articulated by arteries of motorways, and that the silence of contemporary culture follows a moment of far-reaching superficialities and enfeebled antagonisms that enable it to confront the future with calm energy and optimism —like the group of boys and girls who, silently head for the Barcelona metro station after having played together the prelude to *Cello Suite no. 1*. It is an excellent metaphor: beneath our cities, flush with the surface, robust young knowledge is swiftly moving, the sap that will make the aging tree come into bud again ||