

## ■ review

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# Miquel Carreras i Costajussà, *i la filosofia catalana d'entreguerres (1918-1939)*

[Miquel Carreras i Costajussà and Catalan philosophy of the interwar period (1918-1939)].

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Anna Punsoda

Fundació Joan Maragall. Barcelona  
[annapunsoda@gmail.com](mailto:annapunsoda@gmail.com)

When Miquel Carreras i Costajussà left university in 1928, three years would still have to pass until the Spanish Constitution recognised the Generalitat's powers over higher education. So, after he graduated in Law and Philosophy in Barcelona, and still a lad, born and rooted in Sabadell, he had to leave for Madrid to study for his doctorate, despite the fact that he never submitted the papers that would allowed him to obtain the qualification. His career could be explained, in part, by the influence his uncles, two intellectuals committed to the *Lliga Regionalista* in the city of birth, had over him: it was through Lluís Carreras i Mas, a Catalan cleric close to Torras i Bages, that he began to study law, and it was through Joan Costa, political editor of *La veu de Catalunya* and President of the Catalan Journalists' Association from 1932 until the Spanish Civil War, that he entered the world of journalism.

Although he never became a member, his relationship with the so-called *Colla de Sabadell* ("Sabadell Group"), and particularly Armand Obiols, was also decisive in shaping him, as was that with Latinist Joaquim Balcells, a member of the Council of the *Universitat Autònoma*, who tried in vain to help him become a law professor at the university. His relationship with politics, although more intimate after 1931, when he became closer to the *Lliga*, was always critical and prudent in nature. Especially noteworthy was his work as a

teacher of history and philosophy at the *Institut-Escola Manuel Bartolomé Cossío*, founded in Sabadell shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War and named after one of the most influential educators of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*. Modern readers may be unaware of the importance of these *Instituts-Escola*, but it should not be forgotten that, before their creation, any Catalans wishing to enter secondary education had to apply to private schools or travel to Barcelona. The figure of Miquel Carreras, author of *Línies d'història ciutadana* (1930), of *Elements d'història de Sabadell* (1932) and, under the pseudonym “Miquel Costa”, of *Conceptes i dites de Martí Rialp* (1938), is still not celebrated enough. And it is precisely because a person's work and relationships are never enough to fully explain their career and aims that it is worth reading *Miquel Carreras i Costajussà i la filosofia catalana d'entreguerres (1918-1939)*.

The work seeks, on the one hand, to reconstruct the context in which the Sabadell author's career took place and, on the other, to give an insight into him from different fields and viewpoints. Thus, Sam Abrams provides a schematic look at the relations between philosophy and literature in Catalonia until the outbreak of the War, which explain to a large degree our current situation: the great difficulty there is in reconciling conceptual depth with lyricism, stemming from the forty years of dictatorship that made open dialogue and the free exchange of ideas between Catalan intellectuals impossible. Pompeu Casanovas and Josep Monserrat provide a brief historical summary of university education in Catalonia, to focus more particularly on the academic world experienced by Miquel Carreras, and to remind posterity of the short-lived but intense work of the first *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*.

Josep Xirau i Palau –member of the council of that early *Universitat Autònoma*– and his efforts to modernise higher education in Catalonia and open up Spanish and Catalan procedural law to new European developments, receives extensive coverage from Manuel Jesús Cachón Cadenas. Pompeu Casanovas revives the figure of Cristòfor de Domènech, an author difficult to pigeonhole who spanned a range of genres, who was ridiculed by some of his contemporaries (such as Josep Pla) and who has been ignored by later scholars. Domènech's thought, which formed part of left-wing Catalan nationalism (he was an active member of the *Unió Socialista de Catalunya*), was interpreted as an attack on the Catholic faith and the Catalan bourgeoisie. His activities –and criticism of intellectuals hidden away in their ivory towers– provide a good example of the links that were established in those years between thought and political activism. Also in this first part of the book, Antoni Mora takes a fresh look at the figure of Father Miquel Esplugues and his work at the head of the journal *Criterion* to explain the opening up of the Franciscans, something which made possible the dissemination of ideas as ideologically distinct as those of Eugeni d'Ors and Tomàs Carreras i Artau.

Finally, returning to the figure of Miquel Carreras, Àngels Casanovas details his relationship with his family and the influence its members had upon his professional career. Salvador Domènech i Domènech tells of his time at the *Institut-Escola Manuel Bartolomé Cossío* and summarizes the mission of these institutions and, more specifically, the role played by Carreras in Sabadell. Joan Comasòlivas and Jordi Torruella cover his work as an archivist, Esteve Deu his side as a historian and Àlex Trujillo his achievements as a lawyer. This work, complemented by others, such as Pompeu Casanovas's *Els anys de formació de Miquel Carreras i Costajussà (1923-1930)* (The formative years of Miquel Carreras i Costajussà (1923-1930)) show us in the form of a puzzle this example "not of lack of solidarity, but of solitude", as Marçal Pascuchi described (despite his public activities) his good friend Miquel Carreras. The philosophy carried out in Catalonia between 1918 and 1939, as well as its academic and university activities, feature in this work as a framework to situate, explain and in part justify the short life of this diligent and committed man, killed in the Battle of the Ebro a year before the end of the Civil War.