

■ memoirs

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The immediate posterity of Eugeni d'Ors. Writings by Joan Fuster and Josep Roure-Torent

Eugeni d'Ors died in the autumn of 1954 in the town of Vilanova i la Geltrú. When Joan Fuster heard the news, he immediately decided to open a debate in the Catalan journals published in exile, to shed light on some obscure aspects of this figure. Any endeavour of this kind would have been unthinkable in the Spanish press, which was censored by the Franco dictatorship. The article by Fuster, which was published in *Pont Blau*, a journal of Catalan exiles in Mexico, provoked an indignant reply from Josep Roure-Torent, and thus a controversy arose that would fortunately lead Josep Maria Capdevila to write his articles in the “Un testimoni” (A testimony) series some years later.

The Editors

JOAN FUSTER: *Diari 1952-1960*, Edicions 62, Barcelona, 1969, pp. 144-145.
Saturday, 25 September [1954].
Sueca.

Yesterday Eugeni d'Ors died. What a difficult obituary is required! So difficult that nobody dares to write it. What I mean is a calm, honest obituary, with neither excessive devotion nor resentment. Of this death too, we should not speak “except after a very pure silence”. But for reasons that are very different from those that prompted Xènius to make this statement on the passing away of Maragall.

JOAN FUSTER: *Quaderns inèdits*, Bromera, Alzira, 2004, pp. 197-198.
26 [September 1954], night:

Yesterday morning, in the Chapel of Sant Cristòfol in the town of Vilanova i la Geltrú, Eugeni d'Ors died. I have always had a special attraction to the work of this “illustrious turncoat”, and now I cannot remain indifferent to this sad news. I have decided to write a long obituary for *Pont Blau*: Ors's figure should be vindicated before Catalan nationals. That is, the aspects that can be vindicated of course. The press has reported the news, at varying length,

depending on the affection that “each newspaper” felt for the writer. In official quarters, the mourning has been insignificant. The radio and news agency, which are under direct orders of the Spanish State, have provided just a few, short news items. It is sad: Ors placed his prestige and his writing in the hands of the current regime, from the start of the Civil War. Why? It would be difficult to explain. Did the immense vanity of the former Xènius lead him to believe that General Franco was a Spanish Prat de la Riba who was going to give him the position of “spiritual dictator” in the State? Ors’s adherence was real; it was not nominal like that of Azorín, or along the lines of “silence means consent” as in the case of Baroja, nor that of Ortega’s adept excuse. And Ors knew what the new regime meant, and what had happened in the entire geography of Spain, and what could happen... Him, a man who tried to revive the attitude of an eighteenth-century French intellectual! Did the “despotism” that was looming here give even the slightest indication of being enlightened? What was there that could have made him think of his hopes of “heliomachy”, the struggle towards the sun? Intelligence, friendship, dialogue, antinationalism, Europeanism, standards, light? As there was none of this, there was not even tradition—tradition in the sense of Ors... Perhaps the reason was baser—more human: the money? Perhaps it was fear of “the others”? Perhaps—as I said already—it was the vanity that he expected to satisfy once and for all? Or maybe it was all three things at the same time. If today, if the day before yesterday, Ors had examined his conscience on this matter, wouldn’t he have felt disappointed? So much indignity for what; in return for what? For some regular, well-paid work with a newspaper, which he might equally have obtained without doing all of that? For an academic secretaryship that only existed on paper? For a false professorship that he did not need and was not able to enjoy? And now, not even one minister at his funeral. It’s clear that the devil does not pay those who serve him at all well.

JOAN FUSTER: *Correspondència*, vol III, Tres i Quatre, València, 1999.

Joan Fuster to Ernest Martínez Ferrando

Sueca, 15 October 1954

[...]

And what do you say about Don Eugenio’s death? A priest from here who went to the funeral complained about the absence of Catalan intellectuals. It was to be expected, of course, this corporate indifference. But now the body of Don Eugenio has gone, the irritating part of Xènius that had survived, it would be well worth looking at him with a little more sympathy. I must confess that I still get a lot of satisfaction from reading the old *Glosaris*. And it has to be said out loud that no Catalan writer after him has had such literary grace, or such ingenuity, or such depth of vision. But perhaps they were not as frivolous either.

JOAN FUSTER: "En la mort d'Eugeni d'Ors", *Pont Blau*, no. 25 (Mexico, November 1954), pp. 368-370, included in the collection *Papers d'exili 1950-1967*, Curial, Barcelona, 1995, pp. 279-282.

On 25 September, Eugeni d'Ors died in his residence at the Chapel of Sant Cristòfol, in the town of Vilanova i la Geltrú. For Catalan literature, he had already "died" around thirty-five years ago, but even so, the passing of the illustrious writer has led to a voiceless rekindling of our intellectuals' old animosity against him. And I say "voiceless" because the expressions of this animosity, which could be neither positive nor openly declared, have been limited to reticence, to cold silence, which has made them equally clear. At the funeral, which was held in Vilafranca del Penedès, there were hardly any figures that are at least moderately representative of our literary world, from what I gather. By all appearances, in a more favourable climate, the Catalan obituaries for Eugeni d'Ors would have been written in a harsh tone of reproach, of bitter hostility. But, if we had been able to read one that could be considered Catalan, it would hide the fact that it was inspired by the same inner feeling. Anyway—and I want to assume this, in honour of our moral integrity—it would not have detracted from at least the "strange sadness" that, in the words of Josep M. de Sagarra, some more than others, but almost all of us, felt when we heard the sad news.

The statement of this fact leads us to question—we, the innocent, distant observers—what was really behind the *Ors case*, which has continued to have such a long, festering impact. I confess with total candour that I am completely unaware of the magnitude and nature of the incidents that led to Xènius's desertion; I have found nobody who could explain them satisfactorily, with one of those explanations that could meet the impartial demands of posterity. Clearly, this point is only of very secondary interest, because Ors was not right because, at the end of the day, Ors stopped being right, if he ever had been, the moment he abandoned the language and the mission that he had adopted. However, the fact that his attitude was unjustifiable does not mean that the attitude of others—and I repeat, I do not know who they are or who they were—was justified. I believe I am not far wrong in considering that this conflict was reduced to a struggle between the vanity of the writer—almost certainly an enormous vanity—and the imprudent obstinacy of those who confronted him. In short, this already discredits the latter.

When I read pieces from that and later periods, I am always surprised by the two-pronged, and in some way contradictory, reaction that Ors's departure had on Catalonia. There was a tendency to diminish the importance of the work and figure of Xènius; and at the same time the clearly resentful criticism he received was quite unusually persistent and aggressive. In no time at all, and from a very important collection—*Cataluña ante España*, "Cuader-

nos de La Gaceta Literaria”, 1930—we can extract some brilliant examples of this: “esprit faux”, “theatrical”, “illustrious turncoat”, “this is not, exactly, worthy of a hero of Plutarch”, “he was attracted by the rich bride”, “we could manage perfectly well without his daily column”, “we could continue on our way without the need for a personal power with encyclopaedic and absolutist tendencies”... This is what Estelrich, Riba, Garcés and Soldevila said. There is no doubt that all of this was true, but at the same time as it was true, it was unjust, and, above all, it was—except in some cases in which it was compensated by the corresponding praise—an expression of vehement ingratitude. If Xènius was only an “esprit faux” and all of that, if he could be pensioned off without any danger, then why was his defection lamented? And it is clear that it was lamented. Every invective contained a secret desolation. In short, it seems that by denying his usefulness and tumbling his prestige, the full responsibility for the incident was made to fall, morally and exclusively, on Ors. In other words: the accusation against Xènius does not appear to be as disinterested and honest as it should have been, but instead concealed the defence of other things, which were perhaps not exactly sublime.

But I am inclined to believe another theory. It is not too farfetched to imagine that at the fore of the sharp remarks against Ors was a feeling of disappointment, and, what is worse, disappointment that we would now find to be unfounded. Writers whose age or inclinations would position them as natural successors of Xènius—including the aforementioned writers and others—probably got carried away in their opinions of this dazzling man. Ors gave Catalonia the first taste of European-style normality, strived to sweep from our culture the ever-problematic domesticity and spontaneity, and displayed a repertoire of formulae and instructions that appeared to be offering salvation, that was suggestive and convincing. Without them really wanting this, couldn't that Xènius become their idol, the complete image that was needed? Perhaps this was only subconscious. But I am convinced that, without any interference of a personal kind, the generation following that of Ors felt for Xènius a respect beyond measure, which was perhaps even a little puerile. And when suddenly they realised, and what is more in a violent way, that their idol had failed them due to misfortunes that were all too human, they must have been painfully disappointed. It was not only a political fickleness that they saw in Ors's position, but a total betrayal of the highest principles and of the entire path of a promising life. They were still young: Ors was almost a big brother to them, more than a teacher, but they were attracted to his exemplariness, as if it really was the truth.

Clearly, Xènius was not indispensable. He was not indispensable when he went off with the “rich bride” as Estelrich said; and he was not indispensable before that. The cultural shift of Noucentisme would have happened with-

out Eugeni d'Ors, because it was being driven inexorably by time. But would it have been as extensive? And, above all, would it have happened so quickly? Consider that, in a race against time, Catalan culture since the Renaissance has had to cover the stages that were still pending, due to its historical abnormality. Many of our writers—and we have been lucky that their genius has been devoted to the purpose it was meant for—have, alone, accomplished what in other literatures would correspond to a literary movement or a period lasting more than one generation. Xènius was one of these writers. His *Glosari* is proof of this. On another level, his initiatives are proof of this. Despite everything, Xènius was a *dilettante*—only a *dilettante*? Yes. But an exceptional *dilettante*. To do what he had to do, this condition was essential and sufficient. None of the Catalan writers after him had this: their rigour may be more tenacious; their work, in general, more solid; their ambition, more honest; their loyalty, more (but not always) secure; their efficiency... but in a circumstance such as noucentisme they would not have been capable of being so lively or so effective.

I would not want this to be interpreted as a vindication—which is literally impossible—of Eugeni d'Ors; or even a vindication of Xènius, who disappeared in around 1920, and may well deserve it. The tragic clowning around of the writer, after the date above, no longer affects us; nor, unfortunately, does his mature work belong to us. My intention is only to provide some considerations, simplistic if you like but observant, for the “*mise au point*” of a topic that now, taking the opportunity of this “strange sadness”, should be returned to and aired. When I write this, I cannot avoid, in the end, the uncomfortable feeling—shared no doubt by many Catalans of my age—that we have been cheated of a great writer: that Catalonia has been cheated. Perhaps it is not worth considering what is singular about the *Ors case*, but we should stop to think about its instructive nature. Everyone should meditate on it. And even above all this, we should forget the anecdote, for a moment, instead of raising it up to a category—to what category?—and pay tribute to a man who was ours, who was *also* ours, and who has left us some of the most elegant, ingenious pages of twentieth-century Catalan literature.

J. ROURE-TORENT: “El cas Ors. Rèplica a Joan Fuster”, *Pont Blau*, no. 27 (Mexico, January 1955), pp. 31–32, included in the collection *Papers d'exili 1950-1967*, Curial, Barcelona, 1995, pp. 283–285.

Following Eugenio d'Ors's death, Joan Fuster questions the reason for the outcry sparked in Catalonia in around 1920, against the writer Eugeni d'Ors, that brilliant, profound Xènius who sought the Europeanisation of Catalan literature and had become the authority on our literary world. Not finding an answer that he considered satisfactory, Fuster ventured to suggest that the

“sharp remarks against Ors” reflected the “imprudent obstinacy of those who confronted him” and the predominance of “a feeling of disappointment, and, what is worse, disappointment that we would now find to be unfounded”. In his opinion, Fuster considers that the invectives against Ors when he went over to Spanish literature, made by Carles Riba, Joan Estelrich (who would think it today?), Carles Soldevila and Tomàs Garcés (to name just the authors that Fuster cited), were unfair and indicate, above all “an expression of vehement ingratitude”, and he even states that he has the “the uncomfortable feeling [...] that we have been cheated of a great writer”.

After thirty-five years, what is known as the *Ors case* may not seem very clear to our friend Fuster, but there is no doubt that the most notable fact of the entire affair was the defection of Eugenio d’Ors, and that this decisively condemns the accused. The eulogist recognises that Xènius had “almost certainly an enormous vanity”, but he also arrives at the assumption that those who attacked Xènius made him into a turncoat. It was, in fact, the pride and vanity of Ors, which became unbearable, that would determine the need to stop him in his tracks and remove him from the direction of the Biblioteca de Catalunya; Jaume Bofill i Mates, the deputy director, a personal friend of Ors and attached like him to the Noucentisme movement as a poet under the pseudonym Guerau de Liost, raised the case on behalf of the Mancomunitat de Catalunya, and Eugeni d’Ors reacted unreasonably, and this soon led to his defection. If we assume—to position ourselves as close as possible to the doubts expressed by Joan Fuster—that the first attacks were associated with the anecdote, then there was no justification for the defection, and the anecdote only serves to qualify the attackers. In an oppressed country like ours, relinquishing the dignity of being a Catalan writer to serve the literature of the oppressor constitutes an unforgiveable act. Whatever the reasons that lead to desertion, anyone who defects turns against the mother country. Ors himself provides irrefutable proof of this with his pro-centralist position and—as Fuster states, although he considers it does not affect us—his subsequent “tragic clowning around”. If, in the face of an attack, a Catalan quickly withdraws his loyalty to Catalonia, then his loyalty was not very solid, and some day or other he would have defected. A patriot faces his adversary, even if he is very vain, and resorts to whatever means possible before he considers the attraction of another literature and betrays his own. Eugeni d’Ors, fallen from grace, sought first the admiration of the syndicalists, the university students and other social groups, but when he was rejected by them he went over to the enemy camp. In the years that he invested in the pursuit of his lost devotion, he took advantage of all opportunities to attack his attackers and the Mancomunitat de Catalunya, and it was under the protection of the Presidency of the Jocs Florals de l’Empordà (Empordà Floral Games) of 1922 that he began move over

to the other side, with his speech *L'arúspex de Castelló d'Empúries* (*The Haruspex of Castelló d'Empúries*). From that moment, everyone realised that, despite his talent, he only wanted the greatest benefit for himself and the idolisation of the writer that he was, without caring whether he was known as Eugeni d'Ors with the Catalan spelling, Xènius, or Eugenio d'Ors with the Spanish spelling. If in Catalonia he had adhered to the doctrine of Catalan independence, in Spain he would stand among the pillars of the pro-Spanish camp. The change clearly rewarded his vanity, but Eugenio d'Ors would never be the writer he had been before, because in the Spanish language he lacked the sap that had nourished him, and he lived from the glory obtained through his Catalan works. He probably felt satisfied, as they never scrimped on his honours, but whoever looks critically at his output in Spanish will see for themselves that his flame began to wane right from the very beginning and the lustre was lost a little every day, until we reach the grey articles, mere plays on words, of his later years, such as those that he published in the newspaper *Excelsior* in Mexico in 1953 and 1954.

We fully recognise the value of the works that Xènius contributed to our literary world, but, as members of Catalan-speaking countries, with the same impartiality, we cannot see in Ors's gesture, the source of the "Ors case", anything but betrayal of the mother country, blinded by a vanity that did not allow him to see that this country was the reason for the new existence as a writer, and seduced as he was by the greater reach his name would have in Spanish literature.

Why then, my friend Fuster, do we have to "pay tribute to a man who was ours", if he stopped being ours precisely to become a traitor? If you yourself recognise that "Ors was not right because, at the end of the day, Ors stopped being right, if he ever had been, the moment he abandoned the language and the mission that he had adopted", why then, in a desire to have it both ways, do you almost attempt Ors's vindication—specifically you say that "Xènius, who disappeared in around 1920", and "well deserves it"—and you almost forgive him for having turned to Spanish literature, for the ideology he held subsequently and for his "tragic clowning around" with "the uncomfortable feeling... that we have been cheated of a great writer"? A people such as ours cannot excuse turncoats, because, although it is true that a Catalan person educated in a Spanish environment can write in Spanish without being anti-Catalan, the writer who betrays the Catalan language always follows base desires and his ideology, which he had previously concealed or perhaps was only a resting ferment in his subconscious, is inevitably opposed to the sacred interests of the homeland.

JOAN FUSTER: “Noves precisions sobre Ors. Dúplica a J. Roure-Torent”, *Pont Blau*, no. 31 (Mexico, May 1955), pp. 165-169, included in the collection *Papers d'exili 1950-1967*, Curial, Barcelona, 1995, pp. 286-291.

No, no, my friend Roure-Torent: that was not what I wanted to say; what is more, I believe that is not what I did say in my obituary for Eugeni d'Ors. So your reply is well worthy of this rejoinder. However, I should make it clear from the beginning, unreservedly, that I did not intend to rekindle the old debate on what is known as the *Ors case*, nor do I intend to follow you there, so please take it up again yourself. Above all, I have not tried to justify the unjustifiable, or to vindicate anything that cannot be vindicated: I believe that this point was made *literally* in my piece. Now: if, despite that, you were able to interpret me in a way that was so distant from the intention behind my article, then it must be that I did not dot all the i's and cross all the t's. Allow me then, Roure-Torent and the readers of “Pont Blau”, to add the ones that were missing. If, that is, some were really missing, something that—forgive me my arrogance—I doubt.

First of all, I relinquish the right to complain because Roure-Torent, in his considerations, has distorted the meaning—that I found, and find, of course—of certain words of mine. He not only isolates and mixes phrases that were written to make several specific points, outside of which they can only be misinterpreted, but he also overlooks some crystal clear statements used to organise part of my analysis. This, after all, is natural and often occurs in controversies such as the one that has sprung up between us. Each challenger tends to attribute to his proponent whatever he wants to refute. I will try, for my part, not to fall into the error I have indicated, although I consider it to be a very human error, and I am just as vulnerable as anyone else. Likewise, on reading Roure-Torent's article, I wondered whether my impertinence consisted not so much of the fact that I presented some opinions—accurate or not—about Ors, but of the much simpler fact that I spoke about Ors. I believe that for many Catalan intellectuals, the topic of Ors is taboo.

Non ragioniam di l'Ors, ma guarda e passa (let us not talk of Ors, but look and pass) stated one of these writers quite gracefully, in a play on a verse by Dante. And, all things considered, that, this combination of contempt and fear, this stubborn denial, is in itself good material for reflection.

For me, at this stage, the ins and outs of the quarrel between Ors and the Mancomunitat is only of—as I already stated—“very secondary interest”. I have never been much of a fan of digging into the past for gossip, and those incidents, seen with the perspective of time, are merely a perfectly forgettable anecdote. However, whether we like it or not, one day they may be an object of curiosity for scholars of our cultural history—we could place ourselves on

this level, without too much trouble—and then a question mark will hang, inflexible, serene and clinical, over each and every one of the reasons for the quarrel. In my article, I declared my ignorance of the events in question. The information that Roure-Torent furnished in his article convinces me of what I already suspected: that the bottom of this issue—the apparent bottom, and the paradox is valid—was extremely trivial, a bureaucratic dispute. Carles Soldevila—I have been assured—recounts in his memoirs that Ors was accused of misappropriating his department's budget by purchasing lace curtains and curios for the tables. The case was to take on grotesque proportions beyond all expectations.

Starting then from my ignorance, and drawing on an urge to make deductions that was not very daring, I proposed the hypothesis of a struggle between the vanity of the writer and the “imprudent obstinacy of those who confronted him”. I am not sure by virtue of which logical connection Roure-Torent detected a strange idea in this: namely, that I imagined there was a causal association between what we could call the bureaucratic attacks on Ors and his defection. As if this were not enough, my final conclusion would have been to attribute to the people from the Mancomunitat—if they were from the Mancomunitat, something I am unaware of—all of the blame. With respect to Ors, my terms could not be more explicit: “Ors was not right because, at the end of the day, Ors stopped being right, if he ever had been, the moment he abandoned the language and the mission that he had adopted”. Not one word more then. With respect to Xènius's detractors, I confined myself to qualifying them—or disqualifying them—by referring to their “imprudent obstinacy”. I go no further than that, but also come no nearer. Imprudent is everything that has a negative result, a loss, a diminishing of collective heritage. When Xènius departed, I believe we all lost something. That, of course, is my opinion!

So I am not trying to exonerate Xènius. Nor do I wish to say that his enemies were the cause of his defection. But can we not reproach them for allowing it to happen, for not stopping it? It is this sin of omission—which it seems did occur—that I wanted to highlight, and that I branded as imprudent. Everyone in “noucentist” Catalonia knew *who* Xènius was and *what* Xènius was like. They knew the worth of Xènius, both for what he had given and what he could give. And they knew what his character was like and what his ideology was: they knew that he was not a *nationalist* in the classical sense of Catalan nationalism; they knew that he was immensely vain. But was there no place among us for a man like that—a place such as the one he occupied in Spain, where he was also not a nationalist in the classical sense of Spanish nationalism and where his vanity could not be, or was not, satisfied any more than in our homeland? Was it not worth making some kind of effort to pre-

vent his impending defection? Was it so hard to find a solution to the bureaucratic incident? Not having found one was a political mistake.

Roure-Torrent could tell me about the dignity of being a Catalan writer and loyalty to Catalonia. If he has read this far with the serenity that I hope for, he will have realised that I have now correctly underscored this aspect of the “Ors case”—the only one that I have always found to be discussed. Even so, I wanted to say something about the other side of the problem, and because of this I highlighted the “instructive nature” of the events that we are discussing. I am not sure whether it would be appropriate to discuss this without euphemisms. In any case, an indication would not hurt. The obligations of Catalan writers to Catalonia has often been written about—in relation to the total or partial “turncoats” described in our current literature. We all agree that loyalty to the language and the mother country should be required of Catalan writers, even heroism, if necessary. All well and good. But, when will we talk clearly about the obligations of Catalan society, of Catalans—of pro-independence Catalans—to Catalonia when this country is represented—yes, represented—by Catalan writers? Let us put aside don Eugeni, and instead consider the current situation of most Catalan writers. If every Catalan who criticised a certain novelist or a certain journalist who occasionally writes in Spanish, bought just one book in Catalan, most of our semi-defectors—I am not referring to *those who are defectors by vocation*—would have no need to be this. How can pro-independence Catalans expect to have a solid Catalan culture, if they do not provide the help that is needed? The pro-independence Catalan who is not a writer can earn his living doing business in the Catalan or Spanish language—and if he works in Spanish, he does not have a guilty conscience. Now, from this position, it is very easy to require heroism of those who live by the pen.

I hasten to add that *I do not* intend to defend the tendency to defect either. I am merely announcing, or denouncing, a fact, and explaining it. What is more, I know that this is just one facet of many in the problem of our current culture. Probably—I accept—my view is affected by a lack of experience, and who knows if this removes my right to speak of these things; probably, moreover, my being from Valencia gives all of this the wrong appearance. But I will not resign myself to the idea that there is not any truth in what I have just said. Let me reiterate: I do not defend the tendency to defect. I simply ask that we comply with our evangelical principle of only casting the first stone if we are without sin. And, above all, I ask that we consider the many forms of the sin of omission could take apply to Catalans today. Many writers have resisted the temptations of defection: they are the best and the healthiest part of our literary corpus and we should be proud of them, and grateful. They are both an example and a guarantee. The fact that there is an abundance of them among the young is the best sign, the most encouraging. However, we

should think what it would have cost to prevent sporadic defections, and to what extent we are *also* responsible. You see, my friend Roure-Torent, my friend the reader, what an unexpected—unexpected?—direction my obituary of don Eugenio took. Sometimes I am on the verge of believing that peoples—like men as the saying goes—have the fate that they deserve... and that ours has deserved, or is deserving, defection. But this would be an extreme conclusion. Let us leave it there.

Perhaps I have also gone too far with the tone—that I hope you do not find too poignant—used in the paragraphs I devoted to the Ors case. It almost seems that the case was a national disaster, which of course, it was not! In fact, much of my obituary “En la mort d’Eugeni d’Ors” revealed the exaggerated attitudes of Catalan intellectuals in their reactions to the former-Pantarch’s resignation from the Catalan language. Unlike the *petite histoire* of the dispute between Ors and the Mancomunitat, which I consider to be quite trivial, an analysis of this reaction appears to be of great importance to the cultural evolution of Catalonia in the twentieth century. Without going into great detail, I should explain a little more about that “disappointment” and the “vehement ingratitude” that surprised Roure-Torent so much. And I will begin—*sed primo*, as Sant Vicent Ferrer said—by quoting a Spanish verse that I learnt from reading the works of Ors.

*Yo tengo una prima hermana,
la presenté al Padre Santo,
y el Padre Santo me dijo:
«¡Hijo mío, no es pa tanto!»*

*[I have a first cousin, I introduced her to the Pope, and the Pope said to me:
“My son, it’s not so bad, you can cope!”]*

In fact: it was not *so bad*. Catalans from the start of the century—at least many of them—received Eugeni d’Ors as a kind of messiah-panacea, if you will allow me to pair these words. In the area of culture, Xènius knew everything and came to straighten out everything. Hadn’t his aspirations to be “spiritual dictator of Catalonia” met with a high degree of tolerance, that of the most intelligent of the politicians in the Principality? Everyone knows what “Noucentisme” means in Catalan literature; and to what extent Xènius was its manager. If we compare the real value of Ors, of the Catalan Ors, with the value bestowed on him, we can see a great imbalance in favor of the latter, an imbalance that can only be explained by the abnormality of our cultural life. (We should not be ashamed to say that, even today—today more than ever—Catalan culture is an abnormal culture.) Ors was held in greater esteem than he was worth, and he was worth a lot. When he left, even though his star was perhaps on the wane, the upheaval had to be quite considerable, in

quantity and quality. Only thus—*only thus*—can I understand the hostility in the expressions I extracted from the work *Cataluña ante España*, spoken several years after the event, by the mouths of some of the clearest, most distinguished minds in Catalonia at the current time.

Xènius disappointed his public. The strange thing about the case is that the intellectual disappointment only seemed to occur after the “patriotic” disappointment. We could say that we were only able to see Ors’s faults, his weakness, or weaknesses, when he started to write in another language: things that were, in fact, already present in his Catalan works, and were, what is more, quite evident. Suddenly, it was discovered that Ors was not a genius, but an “esprit faux”, “theatrical” and all the rest. Today, even the most inattentive reader who re-examines the *Glosaris* will quickly find that a lot of the young Xènius was posturing and tricks. There must have been a very special fascination with him not to realise this when he was glorified. However, the situation seems to have gone from one extreme to the other, and in the end he has been refused the literary bread and water. Here too, we could repeat the line: “My son, it’s not so bad”. That is why I spoke of “vehement ingratitude” when the reproaches were not accompanied by the “corresponding praise”. With all his faults, Xènius was a great promoter of culture and a notable writer; we have had few like him since then.

And this Xènius does deserve vindication. He does deserve that we stop denying his rightful place among our writers. Some subtle pages by Ferrater Mora in *El llibre dels sentits*—which Mora has promised to expand and turn into a book—already hint at this rectification. We ought to pursue this, without excessive devotion, but also without resentment. I ask for nothing more. It is all the same to me if this is interpreted as “having it both ways”. I have already said that Ors’s work after 1922 does not affect us greatly. Leave it to the Spanish over there to discuss its value and its ideology. Personally, I believe that Ors continued to be a great writer. We would be mistaken—as those of the “disappointment” and “ingratitude” were mistaken—if, due to contempt from outside the literary sphere, we tried to deny the evidence. The idea is to stop measuring Ors’s degree of “Catalan-ness”—although more unwitting Catalan-ness *subsisted* in the former-Xènius than in the ineffable Jacinto Grau, for example, or in most of the Hispanised Catalan writers. The idea is only to clarify whether he was or was not a valuable intellectual, in order to consider what we have lost. And he was: fifty or sixty volumes, maybe more, with studies on art of an unsurpassable ingenuity, with philosophical digressions that are at the very least curious, with all the kinds of *mirabilia* that are found in a writer of ideas. All of this we have lost. It is always Catalonia that loses.

And that was all, or almost all.