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Gustau Muñoz (ed.), *Els reaccionaris valencians: La tradició amagada* (Valencian reactionaries: the hidden tradition), Catarroja, Afers, 2010

Salvador Vendrell-Grau

IES Joan Fuster
Sueca, València
vvendrell@gmail.com

In the essay that serves as an introduction to the seven biographies making up this volume, Gustau Muñoz already makes it clear how little we know of the roots, texture and doctrinal derivations of Valencian reactionary thought. We also know little of its influence on the present day, mainly due to the fact that it is a legacy claimed by no one. The pro-Spanish Right has been in charge in Valencia for so many years that many ask themselves: Where is the country with an undeniably liberal, left wing and republican tradition that we thought we lived in? Has it simply disappeared? Or was this undeniable fact just a myth that no one sought to question? We already know that the values of the Valencian Right now in power in our institutions are different, more closely connected with interests than ideals, but perhaps one of the keys to their success is the combination of modernity (the ivory-coloured curves of Calatrava, Formula 1, the America's Cup, etc.) with the most reactionary of positions, practising and preaching "national Catholicism". We also know that our country has changed greatly in terms of all its social and economic structures. We live in different times, when ideological sources tend to be imported via the media, and when traditional intellectuals no longer have the role they once enjoyed. One can no longer claim as an influence the Council of Trent, Italian fascism or German Nazism, but it is clear that, in the attitude and background of this self-fashioned "modern" Right, we can still find aspects of the old guard.

The purpose of this book is to analyse the mark left by Valencian reactionary thought via seven representative personalities of the most right-wing ideological line of the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries. Xavier Serra looks at two philosophers of law (Rafael Rodríguez de Cepeda and Josep Corts Grau), Miquel Àngel Fabra at Vicent Gay, Francesc Pérez Moragon at Eduard

Martínez-Sabater, Pau Viciano at Joan Beneyto, Sara Prades at Rafael Calvo Serer and, lastly, Guillem Pascual at Diego Sevilla. Their examination of these individuals provides a good insight into the theoretical underpinnings of Valencian reactionary thought. They are representatives of Catholic inflexibility, the most oft-repeated clichés of Valencian regionalism, the justification of authoritarianism and the crusade against progress. They are the ideologues of the most reactionary thought of the Right. In the words of Muñoz: “This cast list of figures, although lesser, of a reactionary Valencia (with its conservative and, on occasion, fascist background) which nobody claims as theirs, and whose existence at times nobody even wishes to acknowledge, invites us to take an in-depth look at a history that is far more complex, with more dark episodes, than was sometimes believed to be the case. Today, we are lucky enough to find ourselves in a new age, and this history is merely prehistory”.

However, when it comes to reconstructing the thought of these gentlemen and their influence upon Valencian society of their time, we find few sources. We enjoy an extensive bibliography on Blasco Ibáñez and *blasquisme*, and a range of studies on workers’ revolts and trades union, but there are very few on Valencian reactionary thought. Xavier Serra warns us of this: left-leaning historians have not dealt with the subject in any detail, but neither has anyone else, because “they muddy the waters rather than clear them”. Francesc Pérez Moragon also recognises this fact when he states that we are far from understanding, with all due detail and rigour, how the set of ideas and clichés that makes up the most commonly-accepted view of Valencian society has developed within the said society.

This is why this book is important. It lays bare the intellectual mediocrity and mental sloth of these characters, leading Xavier Serra to write: “There are human beings of an irremediable, leaden greyness, of an unalloyed mediocrity. To write of these individuals is infuriating, because their careers are literally indescribable”. It also shows a Rodríguez de Cepeda enslaved by the strictest Catholic orthodoxy and concerned by social problems and class struggle, which he regarded as a consequence of the disappearance of proper values. He had no wish to consider either their economic causes or the exploitation of the working classes: the blame for everything lay with the abandonment of religion. The solution to social problems was thus extremely simple: charity and resignation. Charity from the “haves” and patience from the “have-nots”. We can note the whiff of the sacristy in the biography of Corts Grau, a charlatan who sought to show off his role as latter-day “crusader”, even though he took no part in the Spanish Civil War, and who ended up as a mediocre pet philosopher of the regime and as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Valencia. We also witness the more active role of Diego Sevilla Andrés, who also enjoyed being labelled as an ideologue of Franco’s regime. A character who hoped for the military coup

during the Second Republic and, when it failed in Valencia in 1936, fled to San Sebastian to join Franco's troops. Of the same period is Vicent Gay, whose ideological principles culminated in a rapprochement with the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini. He was dazzled by a Germany that knew how to secure itself a position on the international stage and that had plans for colonial expansion involving clear confrontation with other important powers of the time, such as Great Britain and France. Gay complained of the indecision of Spain's foreign policy. He found Spain to be humiliated, defeated and sad, its colonies lost and its plans for North Africa never realised. He therefore advocated a crusade for its renaissance. Gay was grateful for the influence of German culture in breathing new life into Spanish philosophy, and believed himself to be in the debt of intellectuals such as Wagner, Weber and Schmoller, who, he felt, had received a scientific education from their German teachers. It is because of all this, but also due to conviction, that he said: "It is for sentimental reasons that I am led to defend German prestige". We will also recognise the comprehensive catalogue of clichés on the Valencia's *fet nacional* (separate national character) formulated by Eduard Martínez-Sabater, in his 1922 work *Claridad. Aspectos valencianos* (Clarity. Valencian aspects), which we can see reproduced in the positions of today's regionalists and the most pro-Spanish Right. Another reactionary of ours was Joan Beneyto, whose position varied, at different times of his life, between Valencianism, the Catholic Right, fascism, pro-Nazi totalitarianism and the most intransigent wing of Christian Democracy. Also chameleonic was Rafael Calvo Serer, Opus Dei's Valencian connection, who held a neo-traditionalist, monarchist position and who defended the rights of succession of Juan of Bourbon in the 1940s and 1950s, only to declare himself in favour of democracy in the last moments of Franco's life.

In short, this volume will give us some of the keys to understanding a past that still lives on amongst us.