



Goethe in Catalan

by Miquel Desclot

Although Goethe began to circulate around the Catalan Lands at the beginning of the nineteenth century it wasn't until almost a hundred years later, when Modernism decided to enrich the ground gained with the "Renaixença" by incorporating great world literature, that Goethe began to speak in Catalan.

From that time on - the last decade of the 19th century - up until the end of the three year war, Goethe not only became one of the great masters of Catalan intellectual life, but was also translated assiduously by first and second ranking figures from our literary world. In 1932, the centenary of the poet's death, the Generalitat went as far as to publish a volume of selected translations from Goethe for use in local schools! Since he started out with the *Roman Elegies* in 1889, Joan Maragall never stopped translating Goethe, for publication for the theatre or to be sung. A year after his death, the publisher Gili was able to publish a volume of more than three hundred pages of his translations of Goethe, which included items as significant as *Iphigenia in Taurida*, extracts from *Faust*, various lyrical poems and *pensées*. On the other hand, in 1906 a younger man, Jeroni Zanné, published his version of the seventeen sonnets to Wilhelmine Herzlieb. After Maragall's death and Zanné's "flight", the incorporation of Goethe's work was left to a younger generation: Eugeni d'Ors translated the *Conversations* (1904), Josep Lleonart proved to be a worthy successor to his uncle, Joan Maragall, with ambitious versions of *Torquato Tasso* (1908), *Hermann and Dorotea* (1918) and the two parts of *Faust* (1938), among others. Manuel Raventós did *Goetz from Berlichingen* (1920) and Joan Alavedra *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1929). The Modernist Joaquim Pena also contributed with *Egmont* (1937).

After the war, a long time passed before more translations of Goethe were undertaken, until in 1982 and 1984 the anthological volumes *J. W. Goethe en els seus millors escrits* [A Goethe Reader], edited by Miquel Arimany, and the *Antologia de la poesia alemanya* [Anthology of German Poetry] edited by Feliu Formosa appeared. From this time on, accurate translations began to appear on a regular basis: *Wilhelm Meister* (Josep Murgades, 1985), *Elective Affinities* (Carme Gala, 1991), *Maxims and Reflections* (Gustau Muñoz, 1992), *Conversations with Eckermann* (Jaume Bofill i Ferro, 1994) and *Italian Journey* (Rafael Bofill, 1996). At the end of the year 2000 an anthology of the best Catalan versions of Goethe's lyrical poetry was published, edited by this writer.

With the exception of *Poetry and Truth*, then, Goethe's most important work can be read in Catalan, though some, unfortunately, have not been reprinted.

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