CENTENARY
JOAN COROMINES

(BARCELONA, 1905-PINEDA DE MAR, 1997)
PRESENTATION

The year 2005 was the commemoration of the centenary of the birth of Joan Coromines i Vigneaux and the acts involved in this celebration will conclude at the end of 2006. On the occasion of this anniversary, the Generalitat (Government) of Catalonia would like to render homage to the figure of Coromines to highlight the importance of this Catalan linguist, known all over the world as one of the most important scholars of romance linguistics.

The linguist Joan Coromines served Catalonia through the study of its language, of which he had a vast knowledge, throughout all the lands where Catalan is spoken to continue building upon his life-long scientific project. We believe it is necessary, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth, to spread the knowledge of his vast work, as well as the virtues that encouraged him: tenacity, rigor and effort, values that would set a good example for us all. We are sure that this booklet will contribute to this purpose.

CARLES SOLÀ I FERRANDO
Counsellor of Universities, Research and the Information Society of the Generalitat of Catalonia
A LIFE AT THE SERVICE OF LANGUAGE AND COUNTRY

JOAN PUJADAS I MARQUES

Joan Coromines i Vigneaux was born on March 21, 1905, in Barcelona, into a well-off, although not rich, family comprised of the lawyer, politician and writer Pere Coromines i Montanya (Barcelona, 1870-Buenos Aires, 1939) and the educationalist Celestina Vigneaux i Cibils (Girona, 1878- Barcelona, 1964). Joan Coromines was the second of nine children in the family, but the fact that the first was to die soon after birth made him the heir and oldest child who was to rise considerably higher than his parents and other brothers and sisters.

EDUCATION

Joan Coromines was always a brilliant student. In 1922 he finished his secondary education at the General and Technical Institute (Institut General i Tècnic) in Barcelona with honours. He enrolled in the faculty of Law at the University of Barcelona, the usual procedure among the Barcelona middle class of the time, but more so in his case considering that his father, Pere —for whom he felt a deep love and which was mutually responded—, practiced as a Lawyer. In any case, the interest in philology had already been aroused in the young Coromines, as a very early study is still preserved on the work of an obscure Provencal poet of the Decadence period, Bertran del Falgar (XIV century), with lexical analysis included, that he completed when just over seventeen years old. Taking advantage of the fact that the first course was common to both Law and Philosophy and Arts, he also enrolled in the latter with the intention of giving rein to this incipient philological whim.

By 1923 the vocation of Coromines seemed already well defined. He received classes in Romance philology from Antoni Griera in the Lexico-
graphic Offices of the Institute of Catalan Studies, he studied antique Provençal and read basic theoretical texts on Romance philology.

The twenties were a period of considerable political effervescence in Catalonia, and the young Coromines did not remain on the sidelines, especially considering that Pere Coromines had held a relevant role in turn of the century republican politics, when he was imprisoned by the Montjuïc trial, began on the basis of a terrorist attack in the Barcelona street of Canvis Nous (1896), and which would result in brutal, indiscriminate repression which would cause him to pay for his intellectual association with anarchist groups, and which, later, as President of the Unió Federal Nacionalista Republicana (1909) (Nationalist Federal Republican Union), he would be councillor of Barcelona City Council and member of parliament until 1916. However, he temporarily abandoned politics after the failure of the pact of Sant Gervasi (1914), an alliance for electoral purposes with the followers of Lerroux that the bases of the party did not support.

In this context, by September 1923 the Captain General of Catalonia, Miguel Primo de Rivera, led a military coup d’état with the approval of Alfonso XIII. The dictatorship, which would last until January 1930, would even further rouse the Catalanist aims of Joan Coromines, who participated in the activities of the Societat d’Estudis Militars (Society of Military Studies), presided by the prestigious intellectual Lluís Nicolau d’Olwer, the members of which organised clandestine actions against the dictatorship, such as the Garraf plot (June 1925) —a failed attempt against the Bourbon king—, and the unsuccessful invasion of Catalonia —the Prats de Molló conspiracy (November 1926)—, led by Francesc Macià, to proclaim the Catalan Republic.

As a result of the Garraf plot, Pere Coromines, who had already learnt from his own experience how inhumane the Spanish military could be, embarked his son on a boat in the port of Tarragona (November 1925) and sent him to Seta (Occitan). From here he headed towards Montpellier to continue his studies which, in spite of his political activities, he would never abandon.

His stay at the University of Montpellier (November 1925-May 1926) was basic to his academic training, especially in regard to the subjects of Romance Languages and Literature, given by Georges Millardet, and Linguistics, by professor Maurice Grammont, who would provide him with a much
wider technical and linguistic training than he would have received in Barcelona. During his stay in Montpellier, apart from studying, he worked on compiling and drafting a *Vocabulari aranès* —the base of which was 5,919 cells—, that he had begun to collect in 1924, during summer holidays with the family in Lés, the Aran Valley.

In 1926 he finished studying Law and in 1927 graduated in Philosophy and the Arts with the qualification of excellent (merit) and an extraordinary prize. In January 1928 he settled in Madrid to conclude his doctorate courses, as this was the only place in Spain where he could complete them. There he would study under professors Américo Castro and Ramón Menéndez Pidal. After passing the doctorate courses with merit and defending his doctoral thesis, which was also given a merit, the Board for the Extension of Scientific Studies and Investigations of the Ministry of Public Instruction awarded him a grant for one year. His doctoral thesis, *Vocabulario aranés*, was first published in Barcelona in 1931, and then gain in 1990, vastly extended and under the title of *El parlar de la Vall d’Aran. Gramàtica, diccionari i estudis lexicals sobre el gascó*.

In November 1928 he moved to Zurich to work under this grant. At the University of Zurich he studied with the budding leaders in linguistics at the time and met Jakob Jud, who would be one of his main maestros. A year later (November 1929) he moved to Paris where, thanks to another grant, he would study with a small group of great professors.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PHILOLOGIST**

Once the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera ended in the exile of the rebellious general and king, Catalonia and the Spanish State entered a new political spring filled with expectation. In early 1930, after completing his academic training, Coromines returned to Barcelona and, in November, Pompeu Fabra, author of the grammar and dictionary of the Catalan language, gave him a position in the Lexicographic Offices of the Institute of Catalan Studies, a prestigious academic institution responsible for, among other functions, studying the language, and the Editorial Committee of the *Butlletí de Dialectologia Catalana*, tasks which he would combine with that of assistant lecturer of Romance philology at the University of Barcelona (1931-1938).
The Coromines-Vigneaux Family.
From left to right, Joan Coromines, Maria Montanya (paternal grandmother), Pere Coromines, Júlia Coromines and Celestina Vigneaux. In the foreground, Carme Coromines and Maria Coromines.
(Barcelona, May 1911)
In 1931 Coromines formed part of the group responsible for drafting a nomenclature of Catalan towns and villages together with his maestro, Pompeu Fabra, and Josep Maria de Casacuberta, who had introduced him to the study of Catalan toponyms. This nomenclature, commissioned by the recently re-established Generalitat of Catalonia (institution of government in Catalonia), was published in 1933. During these first years of the thirties, Joan Coromines was dedicated to research and investigation, specialised in the study of toponyms, while at the same time beginning a very ambitious project that was unique in Europe: the systematic study of all Catalan toponyms, and which he would finally call *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*. The basis of this work was surveys that were carried out in the field and which fully tested the young Coromines’ skills as a hiker, a sport he had practiced since a boy.

In the summer of 1935 Joan Coromines himself summarised the research of the last few years: «252 City Councils, 112 of which have been questioned by me personally. There are still 818 City Councils in the Principality and 759 in other areas dominated by the Catalan language». Coromines calculated at that time that working on it for three months each year he would take five and a half years to finish the Principality —the traditional term for referring to Catalonia— and five and a half more for the rest of the territories of the Catalan Countries —the traditional name for referring to lands with Catalan culture and language. A total of more than ten years to prepare «a monumental work, a toponymic corpus of Catalonia larger and more useful than any Linguistic Atlas and making Catalonia the first country in the world to have one, even though many others have already been planned».

**The tempest**

The outbreak of the civil war (1936-1939) found him in Madrid sitting for the entrance examination for a vacant Chair of Romance philology in the Central University. He was involved, on July 18 —date of the military rebellion led by General Francisco Franco against the established democratic order and marking the beginning of the war—, in the reduction of insurgents in Madrid. Just a few days after these events which were to change, and to what extent, the history of Catalonia, he returned to Barcelona. On November 11 he married Barbara de Haro, a simple girl from Andalusia, in
a civil ceremony, a union that was received with a certain coolness by the Coromines family. The marriage would bear no children; the couple, although going through the inevitable crises of marriage, was very stable and Barbara de Haro remained at her husband’s side until her death in 1981. Soon after his marriage, in mid December 1936, Coromines volunteered as a member of the Skiing Corps of the Alpine Brigades, with headquarters at Molina, but he was unable to adapt to the technique of skiing and at the end of January 1937 he left the militia and returned to the city.

By June 1938 he was mobilised and sent to the Information Section of the General Staff in Barcelona, where he worked as a translator and writer for the Military Information Bulletin until the end of the war. On February 7, with Franco’s troops close on his heels, he crossed the frontier and was interned in the Sant Cebrià refugee camp in Roussillon, where he stayed for fifteen days. Once liberated, he moved with his wife towards Paris to be reunited with his family.

Far from his homeland, and just like thousands of other exiles, he had to start his life all over again. Thanks to the negotiations and intervention of his friends, the professors Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Amado Alonso, Ricardo Rojas and the poet Pablo Neruda, at that time Chilean Consul in Paris, he was given the position of lecturer in the recently opened National University of Cuyo, in the city of Mendoza, deep in Argentina. On October 17, 1939 he embarked from the port of La Rochelle on board the Massilia with his wife and family, his parents, sisters Maria, Hortènsia, Júlia and brother Ernest, headed for Buenos Aires, where they would arrive in early November. Soon after their arrival in Argentina (December 1), his father, Pere Coromines, died suddenly.

The Recovery

After all these personal and collective upsets, Coromines returned to a certain normality. He dedicated himself to teaching, managed the organisation and cataloguing of the Central Library of the National University of Cuyo, founded and edited the magazine Annals of the Linguistics Institute and opened a small parenthesis dedicated to questions of Spanish philology within the field of lexicography and etymology, where he was such an expert, and later published in the two volume Tòpica Hespérica (Madrid,
1972). He would soon, however, contact his teachers and friends —Pompeu Fabra, the poet Carles Riba, the philologist Francesc de B. Moll, the historian Lluís Nicolau d’Olwer, the philosopher Jaume Serra Húnter, etc.— to offer them his aid in the difficult circumstances of the world, especially Europe, and Catalan and Spanish exiles who found themselves escaping from a civil war to find themselves in the midst of the outbreak of another even larger conflict, the Second World War.

In 1941, from Argentina, he began the research work for writing a Spanish etymological dictionary and, at the same time, recuperated the texts which, under the title of Miscel·lània Fabra and as a result of the civil war, were prevented from being published in Barcelona in 1938 in homage to Pompeu Fabra on his seventieth birthday. Finally, this volume would be published in 1944 from Buenos Aires—even though the date of publication says 1943 to make it coincide with the maestro’s seventy-fifth birthday— thanks to the tenacity and effort of Coromines and the economic aid of Francesc Cambó, Rafael Patxot and Ferran Fontana.

This same year he decided to end his stay at the Argentine university of Cuyo, because he had completely exhausted the resources of the libraries in Argentina and Chile, making it impossible to continue the task of drafting what would become the Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana, which at this time had absorbed him completely.

In June 1945 he was awarded a grant by the Guggenheim Foundation which would enable him to move to New York to continue working on this dictionary. Almost simultaneously he received an offer to join the prestigious University of Chicago, one of the most important and powerful institutions in the United States.

CHICAGO

Coromines could not refuse an opportunity like that offered by the University of Chicago. By the summer of 1946 he was already settled in the North-American city ready to take over the position of lecturer of Romance philology. The University of Chicago gave him economic stability, the peace of mind to allow him to dedicate himself to research and unimaginable resources for investigation, but... In life there is always a but, Coromines missed his homeland, Catalonia.
From left to right, the scholar Ramon d’Alòs-Moner, Joan Coromines, Lluís d’Alòs-Moner, the geographer Pau Vila, Hilde Stein d’Aramon, the publisher Josep Maria de Casacuberta, Montserrat d’Alòs-Moner, the grammarian and lexicographer Pompeu Fabra and the philologist Ramon Aramon.
(Pyrenees, February 1935)
After almost seven years of work and preparation, in 1947 he began writing the *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*. He worked untiringly with the hope that this work would be his passport to go back to the University of Barcelona or, if not, at least a European university, much closer to home. In spite of all the sincere negotiations of Ramón Menéndez Pidal to get him included in the new Institute of Hispanic Philology in Madrid, the authorities of the time delayed the question of his return, which was not to take place.

Any relationship with the devotees of the dictatorial regime repulsed Coromines, but he was aware that his work would be much more fruitful for the country if he was a lecturer at the University of Barcelona, or at least close by, rather than from Chicago, on the other side of the Atlantic, even though his return would prejudice him personally. Coromines could never quite get over the sensation that certain colleagues, even some Catalans, led him on with false promises and, since that time, felt nothing but wrath for them.

Finally, Coromines finished the Spanish etymological dictionary at the end of 1951 and it was published in four volumes between 1954 and 1957 by Francke in Bern, and Gredos in Madrid. The publication of the dictionary by Coromines, planned with a global sense in mind and edited with unusual speed in this type of works, gave our philologist enormous international projection in the field of Romance philology because he had filled a gap in the field of etymology of a language as powerful and important as Spanish. Years later, in 1980, the *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico* was extended to six volumes with the collaboration of José A. Pascual.

**The Institute of Catalan Studies**

Joan Coromines was never to cease his correspondence with Pompeu Fabra nor with his other colleagues of the Institute of Catalan Studies, whether those temporarily or permanently exiled or those still in Spain. Fabra remained in exile in Prada de Conflent, in North Catalonia, where he died on Christmas day 1948, still waiting «eagerly for the day when I can give you a welcome embrace and have you as a companion in the Institute, a member of the Philology Section!», wishes that were never to come true.
In the letters between Master and Disciple, the former always expressed a certain regret: «I am very pleased, as the friend I am and as a patriot, to know that you have become a linguist of the highest category, honouring Catalonia; but this, poor homesick Coromines, does not console the regret I have to see you so far from our land, deprived of fully dedicating yourself to the work of perfecting our language and being, as is your due, the head of the Lexicographic Offices of the Institute, of our to date hapless Offices», even though, always hopeful, Fabra was confident that «with me or without me, the interrupted work will go on, and you will be there».

In fact, only the strange circumstances of life could justify that the most brilliant Catalan philologist of his generation, Joan Coromines, did not hold the position corresponding to him in the Philology Section of the Institute of Catalan Studies. Invested with the authority that the letters from P. Fabra conferred him and, especially, moved by the yearning to contribute to consolidating Fabra’s project of linguistic purification, Coromines approached the poet Carles Riba, President of the Philology Section of the Institute of Catalan Studies, to make himself available to the Institute and claim Fabra’s fauteuil, which, as C. Riba would say, corresponded him. Joan Coromines was named, and justly so, associate member of the Philology Section of the Institute of Catalan Studies in January 1950. In any case, he would not occupy his chair until the spring of 1952 when, after thirteen years of exile, he again set foot in Catalonia.

The relationship between Coromines and the Institute had good and bad moments. Perhaps the philologist had placed to much expectation on the possibility of action of an academic association that Franco’s regime had practically reduced to clandestine activities, had economically strangled and put as many obstacles as possible in its way. The cruel reality, little by little, imposed itself. In spite of the prestige that Coromines had in the Philology Section of being the Fabra’s «heir» —in fact, Coromines occupied the chair left vacant on the death of Fabra— he was never to assume positions of greater responsibility in the Philology Section, as the position of President of the Pompeu Fabra corresponded, after the civil war, to Carles Riba and, after his unexpected death, it passed into the hands of Pere Bohigas, who would hold the position for over twenty years (1962-1989).
Coromines had several important quarrels with the Institute of Catalan Studies. For example, for the way in which they organised the second edition of the *Diccionari general de la llengua catalana*, by P. Fabra, in 1954, quickly and in a rush and without paying any attention, or enough attention, to the indications made by Coromines. This situation was almost to bring about his resignation —in fact he had written the letter— and was the final break with Ramon Aramon, secretary of the Institute, who he accused of ignoring him in the Philology Section.

**Belligerent against Franco’s regime**

In April 1953 Joan Coromines participated in the VII International Congress of Romance Linguistics, held in Barcelona, as a representative of the University of Chicago and he presented his work *Sobre els elements preromans del domini català*. “I gave all the speeches in Catalan and we told all foreign participants about the tenacious and hypocritical persecution of which our language is still a victim —wrote Joan Coromines to his brother Albert making a reference to the prohibition of using and teaching the Catalan language in all lands where Catalan is spoken and added—: The representative of Franco’s minister (sub-secretary Royo Villanova, son of the famous one) gave a speech cynically stating that Catalan and Catalan culture were protected by Franco’s government. Luckily, that same evening it was my turn to give a speech, during the closing dinner of the Congress, and I had the opportunity to refute and deny it. As I represented an American university, I said that America was concerned about the promotion of separation between the people of western Europe, in an attempt to stamp out a language of culture as is Catalan, the use of which was rigorously prohibited in schools and which was only studied at the University of Madrid but not at the one in Barcelona. Various foreigners —the Swiss, Swedish and Belgium representatives— expressed sympathy for the way in which the Catalans defended their language. My speech aroused indignation in official circles and among certain Spanish intellectuals and turncoats of ours. The governor of Barcelona presented a report. Certain colleagues have informed me that I had completely destroyed any possibility of obtaining the “chair that I certainly had in a Spanish university”; I am laughing because I know full well that nobody ever thought of giving me any such
Joan Coromines with a farmer while gathering toponymic material. (Arcavell, May 1, 1936)
chair, and on the other hand it was my obligation to do what I did and exposer this farce...».

**Unknown in Catalonia**

After 1953, his permanent return to Catalonia now ruled out, Joan Corominés applied for North-American citizenship, which was granted him in November. The University of Chicago gave him permission to concentrate his classes, and this enabled him, as of that time, to spend six months in Catalonia each year. During the time he spent in his home country he dedicated himself to attending the meetings of the Philology Section and, especially, to complete as many interviews as possible in the various territories of the Catalan Countries, to obtain invaluable data for the works and studies he still planned to produce.

Corominés, in spite of being the most important philologist of his generation, was, outside academic and specialised circles, completely unknown in his homeland. A chance text did away with this situation: in this case the article *What Should Be Known About the Catalan Language* which, commissioned by Jaume Miravitlles, he wrote in English to be used as a presentation of the Catalan language to North-Americans on the occasion of the Jocs Florals (literary competition) of the Catalan language held in New York in 1951. During the Dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975) the Jocs Florals were held in various countries around the world as an act of political and Catalan national protest against Franco’s persecution.

Unfortunately the text was not published on that occasion and remained unknown until the Minorcan philologist, publisher and cultural activist Francesc de Borja Moll, proprietor of Editorial Moll, an essential part of the difficult Catalan publishing panorama of the fifties, suggested publishing it, after the forced reconversion —by order of the government— of *Raixa* into a popular collection magazine. Corominés himself made the translation into Catalan and the Valencian philologist Manuel Sanchis Guarner, banished from Mallorca because of his republican feelings, who was at the time aiding Moll in the task of writing the *Diccionari català-valencià-balear* and other tasks related to publications, added a useful nomenclature of the towns and cities of the Catalan Countries at the back.
The result was a Catalan version of *What Should Be Known About the Catalan Language*, by Joan Coromines, the first volume of the Raixa Library and unexpected best seller. This informative booklet, published in 1954, and the success it enjoyed, proved how Catalan Society of the time was lacking in this type of texts. The Franco dictatorship, which forbade the public use of the Catalan language, had made the Catalan people illiterate in their own language. Works like this one by Joan Coromines began to timidly begin to break down this tendency.

Another of the volumes which would help make the work of Joan Coromines known in Catalonia, and which would allow him to enjoy a taste of what the *Onomasticon Cataloniæ* could be, was the double volume *Estudis de toponímia catalana*, published between 1965 and 1970 by Editorial Barcino owned by his maestro and friend Josep M. de Casacuberta.

During the decade of the fifties, Joan Coromines concluded the translation of the *Comèdies* by Terenci, in four volumes for the Bernat Metge Foundation, a project first begun by his father, Pere Coromines. Something similar happened with the translation of the Hindu drama *Vikramorvashiiya*, by Kalidasa, which Pere Coromines had first begun and which his son would finish for Editorial Moll in 1970. Another of the volumes that increased his popular prestige was *Lleures i converses d’un filòleg*, published under Club Editor by the writer and editor Joan Sales, in 1971.

**Homage to Dr. Rubió**

In 1967 Joan Coromines gained first hand experience of the repression by Franco’s regime suffered by our country. It was during the academic homage offered to Dr. Jordi Rubió i Balaguer, a scholar of international renown, who had been director of the Library of Catalonia and professor of the Autonomous University of Barcelona during the republican period, and President of the Institute of Catalan Studies, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. The ceremony organised clandestinely in the Faculty of Law of the University of Barcelona angered the rector, Francisco García-Valdecasas, who alerted the police.

According to Coromines: «I was arrested on March 3, 1967 at 9 at night while I was home alone, and I was held prisoner for more than 80 hours, the first 65 in the underground cells of the Prefecture of Police, the
remainder in a room in the Palace of Justice (Courthouse); incommunicado, in prison [...]. Released on probation at 3 in the morning of March 7. The police returned on March 8 at 20:30 to expel me and we reached La Jonquera at 11 at night and crossed the frontier in Portús on the 9th at 9:30 in the morning." The police maintained the order of expulsion on Joan Coromines until August 15, 1967, when he was again allowed to return to Catalonia.

The end of exile

In July 1967, at sixty-two years of age, Joan Coromines retired as lecturer at the University of Chicago and, soon after, finally returned to Catalonia. A note in his diary left this testimony: «16-vii-1967. Finally the end of exile. [...] Total 20 and a half years, plus 2 years of exile in my youth.» He settled in his study in Pineda de Mar and dedicated himself to labour on his great lexicographic works, turning down any other offer which distracted him from this objective.

General F. Franco finally died in 1975. After almost forty years of Franco’s dictatorship, Spain started the difficult process of political transition to democracy: the nightmare was over.

Joan Coromines began negotiations for the publication of the Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana and asked the writer Josep Pla to recommend a publishing house capable of taking on such a project with guarantees of success: «I remember the effort I made for the publication of the Catalan philological dictionary to come into being—wrote Josep Pla in Notes del capvesprol and adds—: I could not get any results—sometimes because the publishers I spoke to were too poor and others because they were too rich and so refused to take any risks— in spite of the enormous success obtained by Editorial Gredos in Madrid with the publication of other works by this author. To all intents and purposes they were against Franco; but inside they were for him. Being two faced, in this country, has always been accepted. Strange country!»

Finally Coromines contacted Max Cahner, manager of Curial Editions Catalanes, a man with vast experience in large publishing projects and who would become providential as the publisher of his philological works. Coromines had met Cahner in April 1953 during the VII International Con-
Joan Coromines reading fragments of poetry at his father's funeral.
(Buenos Aires, December 2, 1939)
gress of Romance Linguistics held in Barcelona, and they had exchanged letters during Cahner’s management of Edicions 62. Before fully confiding in him, however, the philologist wanted to put his capacity as a publisher to the test. In the first place he asked him to publish *Diaris i records* by Pere Coromines (1974-1975). After satisfactorily passing the test, he decided to give him yet another, publish *Entre dos llenguatges* (1976-1977), that was a collection of many texts and articles by Coromines that had appeared in the specialised press all over the world.

Satisfied with the work done by Curial Editions Catalanes, he gave his permission to publish his *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*, the first volume of which was released in 1980. At the frenetic rate of one volume per year, the ten volumes of the work appeared one after the other: a festival for the Catalan language.

Practically without rest, in a race against the clock, he began the writing of *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*. The first volume appeared in 1989, soon after Joan Coromines had celebrated his eighty-fourth birthday. He had begun collecting the data in 1925, when he was barely twenty years old. His physical and intellectual strength allowed him to leave it fully prepared and to see seven of the eight volumes of the *Onomasticon* published.

**RECOGNITION**

The national and international recognition of Joan Coromines could not wait any longer. In 1978 he was named Doctor *Honoris Causa* by the University of Sorbonne in Paris, one of the most prestigious academic distinctions in the world. In 1980, President Josep Tarradellas presented him with the Medalla d’Or (Golden Medal) of the Generalitat of Catalonia, the highest civil distinction in our country; in 1981, the Premi d’Honor Jaume I (Jaume I Prize of Honour); in 1984, the Premi d’Honor de les Lletres Catalanes (Catalan Arts Honours Prize); in 1996 Pasqual Maragall, then Lord Mayor of Barcelona, presented him with the Medalla d’Or (Gold Medal) of the city of Barcelona.

But Coromines also rejected many awards, such as the attempt to make him a scholar of the Royal Spanish Academy of Language during the final stages of Franco’s Dictatorship with a categorical ‘I have no more than one language, nor do I want more than one. […] Of honours, coming from the
Spanish language, I want none»; he also refused the Gran Cruz de la Orden Civil de Alfonso X el Sabio (Grand Cross of Civil Order of Alfonso X the Wise), adducing that he could not accept «an award sent by a government that reduces the rights of my homeland to a minimum, quartered into provinces, denying the necessary resources to the University of Barcelona and all of our universities, and subsidising the small groups that attack the unity of Catalan, the single language of the three countries that speak it». Finally, in 1989 he accepted with considerable reticence the National Literature Prize, after letting Jorge Semprún, then Minister of Culture, know that «the only nation of mine, and my only language, to which I offer unconditional obedience and respect are the nation and the language of Catalonia».

THE JOURNEY IS OVER

Joan Coromines died on January 2, 1997 in Pineda de Mar, at ninety-one years of age, after a fruitful life dedicated to the language of our country. He laid in state, with all civil honours, in the Sant Jordi Hall of the Palace of the Generalitat. The funeral service was held in the Basilica of Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona two days later in a ceremony that was attended by the leading political authorities of the country, headed by the President of the Generalitat of Catalonia, Jordi Pujol, and the President of the Parliament of Catalonia, Joan Reventós.

Created just shortly before the death of our philologist, and bearing the name of his venerated father, the Pere Coromines Foundation was finally constituted in April 1997 with the corporate purpose of looking after and safeguarding intellectual and moral legacy of its founder. The Pere Coromines Foundation has its headquarters in the summer house that the Coromines family had in town of Sant Pol de Mar, Maresme.
The life of Joan Coromines is intimately linked to the study of etymology, basically, but not exclusively, Catalan etymology. And within this field, he invested a very important part of his efforts in the study of toponomastics, understood as the study of place names. In fact, the interest in etymology is, we could say, almost consubstantial with the human spirit. Wanting to know the original meaning of the words we use and the names of places that form part of our daily lives is just one more aspect of the meaning of life. Perhaps we could say the Socratic maxim of «know thyself» is already implicit in the touch of etymology that we all, to a greater or lesser extent, have inside.

In fact, the research of the etymology of words, associated with the certain magic and earthy component they contain is, more or less, consubstantial with all cultures. It is a phenomenon similar to what happens with the meaning of place names, as Joan Coromines himself says: «The study of place names is one of the things that has most awakened the curiosity of scholars and even that of people in general. This is quite naturally so. These names are applicable to the heritage of which we are owners, or the mountain that fills our horizon, or the river where we take the water for irrigation, or the town or city where we were born and which we love above all others, or the region, the country or state which frames our collective life. How could it be possible that man, who since he has had use of reason, questions the wherefore of all things that he sees and feels, not seek that of the names that all of us have continually on our lips?» («Introduction to the study of Catalan toponyms», Estudis de toponímia catalana, vol. 1, p. 7).
Jorge Luis Borges and Joan Coromines during the act of investiture as Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Paris - Sorbonne.
(Paris, February 4, 1978)
Etymology, for these same reasons, was a field strewn with various lucubrations and the false etymologies of amateurs and dilettantes. Scientific etymology is a relatively modern science, which came into being in the mid XIX century. In fact, in the time of Joan Coromines, it had hardly been in existence for fifty years.

The scientific production of Joan Coromines is immense and any attempt at cataloguing, that does not take its global scope into consideration, is condemned to certain failure. If we had to make a typological division, we could divide his work into two large groups: his production of short articles and his lexicographic production. And even then we would leave out his contribution to the publication of ancient and modern authors —the most outstanding being the publication of the complete works of Provencal troubadours (xiii C.) Cerverí of Girona and Guillem of Cervera, the definition of the text of the Homilies of Organyà (xii C.), the first text written in Catalan, and the Libro de Buen Amor, by Juan Ruiz; the publication the complete works of his father, Pere Coromines: Complete works (1972), Diaris i records (1974-1975), 3 vols.) and Obra completa en Castellano (1975); and the posthumous publication of Gramàtica catalana (1956), by Pompeu Fabra—; the Latin translations of the Comèdies by Terenci (1936-1960, 4 vols.) and the Sanskrit translation of Vikramorvashiiya, by Kalidasa (1970); various collaborations, recensions, prologues, speeches and letters —the publication of his Epistolari, of which nine volumes have been released, including correspondence with his Maestro Pompeu Fabra, the philologist Francesc de Borja Moll, the writer Josep Pla, the essayist Joan Fuster, the cultural activists Hipòlit Nadal i Mallol and Avellí Artis i Balaguer, the poet Carles Riba, the writer Joan Sales, the philologist Josep Maria de Casacuberta and his father, Pere Coromines, is expected to fill a total of twenty-five volumes—, among other contributions.

Joan Coromines wrote more than a hundred articles, ranging from the very early »Etimologies araneses«, written when he was barely twenty years old and published in the Butlletí de Dialectologia Catalana in 1925, to the last »Altres fragments de poemes d’Eiximenis deixatats en les seves obres en prosa«, published in 1992 in the first volume of Miscellània Sanchis Guarner. The majority of these articles were collected in four miscellanea books which were later, revised and updated. They are Estudis de toponí-
The lexicographic production of Joan Coromines includes three versions of the Spanish etymological dictionary — *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana* (Berna/Madrid, 1954-1957, 4 vols.), abbreviated in the *Breve diccionario etimológico de la lengua castellana* (Madrid, 1961; 2nd ed., 1967; 3rd ed. 1973), re-written and extended in *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico* (Madrid, 1980-1991, 6 vols.)—, Catalan — *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana* (Barcelona, 1980-2001, 10 vols.) and *Onomasticon Catalonie* (Barcelona, 1989-1997 [1998], 8 vols.)— and Provençal: *El parlar de la Vall d’Aran* (Barcelona, 1990). However, if we wanted to make a subject classification of the work of Coromines, the difficulty would be even greater. Basically because the knowledge used by an etymologist or a toponymist is, and more so in the case of Joan Coromines, so large, vast and complex, that defining where one field begins and another ends is often quite difficult.

**The lexicographic works**

All the knowledge and all the monumental etymological and toponomastical data that Joan Coromines possessed come fully and completely into play in his lexicographic works. In fact, the Catalan lexicographic works — the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana* and the *Onomasticon Catalonie*— formed part of a titanic project that Coromines called his «daring pyramid», which had to be crowned with the ashlar of the *Gramàtica històrica*, that he was unable to begin even though he planned to do so on various occasions.

**I. The Spanish Etymological Dictionary**

If we focus our attention on the most monumental production of Coromines, his lexicographic production, the first dictionary that appears is the *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana* (1954-1957, 4 vols.) mentioned above. The first reference we have of this dictionary is a letter
from Joan Coromines to his colleague Francesc de Borja Moll (7-VII-1939), written in French from his exile in Chatou in order to avoid censorship, an incomplete letter which, surely, was never sent and in which, among other things, he said: «Il y a longtemps que je réunis des matériaux pour faire un *Dictionnaire étymologique* de ma langue maternelle. J’en ai énormément. En même temps, j’ai pris des notes assez abondantes qui pourraient servir de base à un *Dictionnaire étymologique espagnol*. Il y a là une des lacunes les plus remarquables de la bibliographie romanistique et de la bibliographie espagnole. Si vraiment je passe quelque temps en Argentine je ferais peut-être ce *Dictionnaire étymologique* espagnol. Ce ne serait pas un ouvrage aussi complet ni aussi ambitieux que l’autre, ce serait quelque chose de pratique et plutôt brief, dans le genre du *Dictionnaire roumain* de Puscariu. Cela se vendrait beaucoup, j’en suis sûr.»

It seems then, that the basic reason that led Joan Coromines to undertake this lexicographic work, apart from economic reasons —“je suis forcé of consacrer tout mon temps à des travaux dont je puis tirer une utilité pécuniaire immédiate”—, was the need for a work of these characteristics in a language with the considerable demographic importance of Spanish. This was, in fact, true.

The *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*, by Joan Coromines, was at that time, the first etymological dictionary in Spanish written with scientific criteria. He said so himself in a later letter (15-XII-1942) to Francesc de Borja Moll, written in Spanish from Mendoza, home of the National University of Cuyo, so as to be able to pass the censors: «I am preparing a Spanish Etymological Dictionary, the first scientific one to be brought out. I hope to have it ready in three years. And at the same time I am building another dictionary for which I feel even more prepared», making a clear reference to the Catalan etymological dictionary. This regret of not being able to dedicate himself to the etymological dictionary of his own language would be constant. For example, when, from New York, while enjoying a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation which enabled him to abandon the University of Cuyo where he had remained from 1939 to 1945, he wrote, still in Spanish, to Francesc de Borja Moll (10-IV-1946): «I do not well recall if I told you of my plans to move to the United States. The Guggenheim Foundation has given me a grant to come here and finish
Presentation of the first volume of the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*.  
From left to right, Josep Tarradellas, President of the Generalitat, Joan Coromines and Josep Vilarasau, General Manager of "La Caixa".  
(Barcelona, February 18, 1980)
my Etymological Dictionary (in reality there are two, of the two languages) in the libraries here, and here I am, with my wife, since Christmas, finishing up the last scraps from magazines and books, a task I have had on my hands for so many years. When I arrived I still had about 500 tomes to go and now there are only about a hundred left, but as this one has the denser contents I will be struggling to finish by June.

The timeline of the facts related to this dictionary indicate that the idea of doing it was firm soon after his going into exile and that most certainly he had been working on collecting information since 1941, probably even since the previous year and once installed in Argentina, where he arrived around November 1939. He began writing in January 1947, as confirmed in a letter to Pompeu Fabra (7-I-1947), which also expresses the hope of completing it in «less than two years» which would then enable him to go back home: «I think this is necessary so as to go back to Catalonia under the best possible conditions: that is, I think that thanks to the prestige acquired by the Lectureship I will leave behind in Chicago, and the dictionary, I will be able to partly compensate for the disastrous prejudice to my career caused by the continuation of Franco’s regime, or a more or less similar one.»

He expressed himself in comparable terms in a letter addressed to Carles Riba (16-II-1949), where he recapitulated the work done since 1940, and said that he had collected, for the Spanish etymological dictionary, «a collection of more than 200,000 cells», he confirmed that he had already written 1,600 pages and confessed that «I am passing a lot of Catalan “contraband” into this book», no more than a small vengeance that he took for not being able to dedicate himself to the Catalan etymological dictionary. Coromines was in a hurry to finish, thinking of his imminent return, which was never to come about: «These days I have begun on the letter F; all the previous letters are finished and ready for the machine, ready for the printer. However in the F there is, exactly, half the book (as you can see in any Spanish dictionary); it has now been two years since I began writing it: we can be, then, sure that I will finish by the end of next year.»

The deadlines he set were never to be met, because the task he had undertaken was daunting. During these years when he was writing the dictionary, Joan Coromines was completely absorbed in his work and led a frere-
tic Spartan life: «I get up at 7, have a quick lunch, and don’t get back home until 8:30 or 9 at night, usually, sometimes a bit later, literally exhausted by the daily effort; a complete rest on Sunday, under these conditions, is absolutely essential. It is necessary to write a certain minimum number of articles each day if I want to finish the dictionary in the deadline I have set myself (only for the words in GA—there were 155 articles—without mentioning the derivatives), and when one day I come across one or two long or difficult articles (like the ones I sent you as a sample) I have to work frenetically all day and finish at 10 at night.» (from Joan Coromines to Carles Riba, Chicago, 22-VIII-1949).

The work is advancing—«I am finishing M and therefore are 2/3 of the way through the book», he wrote to Carles Riba (14-III-1950). In fact, in November 1951, after more than ten years of uninterrupted work, Coromines finally finished the work which was first published at the end of 1954. On December 4, 1954 he wrote to Carles Riba: «At any time now I will get the first volume of my Etymological Dictionary», while I ask you to «note how I have put the name of the Institute in the most conspicuous places, how my name appears written in Catalan at the foot of the prologue and doesn’t appear anywhere in Spanish, and how the dedication is in Catalan.» In effect, the cover of the dictionary says that it was written by Joan Coromines, lecturer of Romance Philology at the University of Chicago, member of the Institute of Catalan Studies. The dedication said: «In memory of my Father, father of body and of spirit. To my beloved Mother. To my Wife, who has given me the force to finish this book.» Followed by, in Greek, a fragment (vv. 1698-1703) by Oedipus at Colonus, by Sophocles who, through Antigone, says: «Life was not sweet, yet I found it so, / When I could put my arms around my father. / O father! O my dear! / Now you are shrouded in eternal darkness / Even in that absence, / You shall not lack our love, Mine and my sister’s love!». The last page of the fourth volume also contains a Latin elegiac distich in homage to his father, Pere Coromines: «Corporis atque animi sacrum sit manibus’ patris, / patria cantantis, quod scripsi peregre.» «What I have written from exile, praising my homeland, be consecrated to the memory of the father of the body and soul.» The content is structured in two columns of sixty lines per page, numbered five by five, a lexicographic innovation that enables the precise location of any term or word. The
words are classified alphabetically by families headed by the appropriate main entry. The internal references enable any word to be easily found under the main heading.

The work was published simultaneously by the Swiss publishers Francke, in Bern, and Gredos in Madrid, as Coromines, happy and satisfied by the success, well explained to Joan Sales (Chicago, 3-xii-1957): «have you heard about my *Critical Etymological Spanish Dictionary* in 4 volumes? It has been successful among critics. All the reviews have been favourable and very praising, and they even include 3 or 4 (all enthusiastic) by some of the great names in the world of linguistics. I am even more surprised that a work as expensive as this and strictly erudite and technical in character could have had such good sales. It has been published in collaboration with Francke Publishers in Bern and Gredos in Madrid with an edition of 3,000 copies, half each, Gredos having exclusive sales in Iberian and Iberoamerican countries and Francke in all other countries. Even though the last volume was published just a few months ago, the Gredos edition is already sold out (some book sellers are already announcing this) and the one by Francke (who has completely neglected any advertising) will be sold out quite soon.»

Coromines produced a one-volume abbreviated edition of the *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana* for the editorial committee: *Breve diccionario etimológico de la lengua castellana* (Madrid, 1961), which was reedited in 1967 and 1973 («heavily revised and improved») and which has had several reprints. The dictionary was reprinted three times (1970, 1974 and 1976) and then no longer published. The reason being that Coromines was already working with José A. Pascual on extensive updating of the work. This new edition, now exclusively published by Gredos, was in six volumes, and appeared under the title of *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico* between 1980 and 1991. In fact, the five first volumes had already appeared in 1983, the sixth and last, which contained the index to the whole work, did not come out until 1991, because Joan Coromines refused to compile, as the publisher’s claimed, the index of the work and this had to be done by Gredos, thus delaying the publication of the volume that completed the work.
The philologist Carles Duarte, Joan Coromines, Albert Coromines and the Canadian philologist Joseph Gulsoy.
(Pineda de Mar, May 1983)
II. The Catalan Etymological Dictionary

The project for the publication of a Catalan etymological dictionary by Joan Coromines, predates, as we have seen, that of the Spanish dictionary. In fact, the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana* (Barcelona, 1980-2001, 10 vols.) «is the work of a lifetime», as Coromines himself states in the Preface: «Since 1922, the date the first notes were taken with this in mind, I have never stopped dedicating myself more and more to this idea. My life, and the life of those around me, obliged me to make an infinite series of twists and turns that took me away from the straight path of this work. But I always came back, and the book in a certain way took revenge, getting larger and extending both the treasure trove of ideas and information destined to this, my constant work, in a proportion that was the same or double that of the other works that I considered detours, and perfecting the methods and increasing the level of the future Catalan dictionary. The work ran the danger that its own size and rigour would discourage me from undertaking the final writing.» And in fact, this was true. The project for its publication was so often delayed because of individual and collective circumstances, that the Coromines dictionary could have ended up being no more than a drawer, an enormous drawer, that is true but nonetheless merely a drawer. When Coromines retired as a full professor of the University of Chicago and returned home in the summer of 1967, he had collected an enormous amount of material, organised in cells or file cards, stored in a large filing cabinet or set of drawers, the result of more than forty years of systematic research, but the most elusive of all was yet to be found: a publisher willing to risk money on a project that was expected to be ruinous. In this sense, meeting Max Cahner was providential, a prestigious publisher, who had planned and completed large publishing projects such as the *Gran enciclopèdia Catalan*, and who founded a new publishing company —Curial Editions Catalanes— in 1972. When Max Cahner was the editor of the important publishers Catalan Editions 62, he had already proposed publishing an abbreviated Catalan etymological dictionary, an offer that Coromines blankly refused arguing that this would not be possible until he had published the «Great» Catalan etymological dictionary, a work that only he could carry out. Cahner, now managing Curial, reiterated the offer of now finishing this great etymological dictio-
Coromines, finally —and fortunately— accepted the proposal to publish the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana* after seeing the quality of the publishers with the release of *Diaris i records* (1974-1975, 3 vols.), of his father, Pere Coromines, and his collection of articles *Entre dos llenguatges* (1976-1977, 3 vols.).

Be that as it may, in 1976, Coromines, who was then 71 years old, was involved in the process of writing the work: «I already have 300 large pages of the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana* (all BA-, as we have adjourned the A) typed, but this will be an immense work, colossal, because of the fearsome amount of material that I have gathered together: and sometimes I feel very old. And I still have many other commitments to finish. And this is why I make frail efforts to quickly set this in motion this other book that I have been preparing all my life», he wrote to Francesc de Borja Moll (12-VI-1976). In fact, Coromines must have felt very burdened, because the Preface to the first volume of the work finishes with a meaningful: «And here I finish, expressing my fond gratitude and my deep faith that God will help us to finish this ambitious effort», very symptomatic in Coromines.

In fact, Coromines repeated these complaints often, especially to his colleague Moll, who had begun the publication of the also monumental *Diccionari català-valencià-balear* and knew what he was talking about: «my duty is to not stop, not rest a single day, advancing as much as I can in writing the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*, with the uncertain hope of leaving it practically finished with my last gasps, or at least leave it so advanced that another has the heart to take over when I can no longer continue. I do not stop working on this all year, until I am saturated, overwhelmed, exhausted, so that it is inevitable that I make an exception during the four weeks that I spend in Boí at the height of the summer. There I am forced to take those thirty or so days of rest from the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*, almost for my own mental health, but this is the only exception» (20-V-1978).

Another initially involved in the project, revising originals, was the novelist and editor Joan Sales —commissioned by the Department of Education and Culture of the Generalitat of Catalonia—, with whom Coromines had published *Lleures i converses d’un filòleg* in 1971, and maintained a
long, close relationship by correspondence as shown by the Collected letters Joan Coromines & Joan Sales. «Once more I would like to tell you —said Joan Sales— that the more I advance in reading the articles of the dictionary, the more I feel admired», an admiration that was to grow even further: «I repeat that more than a dictionary it seems to me to be a poem about the language» he repeated on this and many other occasions. Sales did not tire of praising either the content or the form —«the style seems to me perfect, a model»—. And even: «I find that writing straight out as you do simply admirable —and at the rate of two pages a day!— the result is a prose so natural and correct, that it is a model for me» (21-XII-1978). And he later repeats: «your style always seems a model for me in the precise sense of the word, that is it could be used as a model for Catalan —and I don’t doubt that it will be so in the future. And not for your authority as a linguist (linguists are not always a model for good style), although this could also help, but because you really have the true instinct, inherent to good writers, of simple, direct, natural language, “clear and Catalan”». And he compares the articles of the dictionary with «true essays in the sense given this word by Montaigne» (30-IV-1979), while at the same time showing preference for «your more personal part, when it seems that I see you going up and down mountains, talking with shepherds and farmers or searching through old parchments and books of our venerable antiquity where so many treasures of our language are hidden».

The first volume of the Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana, which would include the collaboration of his Canadian disciple Joseph Gulsoy and Max Cahner, and the technical aid of Carles Duarte and Angel Satué and the economic support of "La Caixa", appeared in February 1980. And then the other volumes appeared one after the other at the incredible rate of almost one volume a year: I (A-BL), 1980; II (BO-CU), 1982; III (D-FI), 1982; IV (FL-LI), 1984; V (LL-NY), 1985; VI (O-QU), 1986; VII (R-SOF), 1987; VIII (SOG-UX), 1988, and IX (V-ZUM), 1991. The last volume, the tenth, contained a Supplement that Coromines had finished in November 1987, published together with the indexes, which processed 282,251 entries prepared by his secretary, Dr. Joan Ferrer, with the collaboration of Josep Ferrer and Joan Pujadas, and released in 2001. In fact, Coromines finished writing the Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la lleng-

35
Visit of the President of the Generalitat to his study.
From left to right, Jordi Pujol, President of the Generalitat, the philologist Joan Ferrer, the publisher Max Cahner, the historian Albert Manent and Joan Coromines.
(Pineda de Mar, May 25, 1992)
guia catalana on June 4, 1984, as recorded in volume IX of the work, when he was seventy-four years old.

III. The «Onomasticon Catalonlæ»

Almost without a rest he began on the draft for the Onomasticon Catalonlæ, but, meanwhile, he still had time to take another look at his doctoral thesis —Vocabulario aranés (Barcelona, 1931)—, and to considerably update and extend it as El parlar de la Vall d’Aran. Gramàtica, diccionari i estudis lexicals sobre el gascò (Barcelona, 1990). Let no one think that this was a homage from his old age to his forgotten philological loves of his youth, because Coromines had at no time during his life abandoned his interest and study of Provençal, a language that was practically his mother-tongue and which he considered very important for the study of Catalan. In fact, Coromines was one of the greatest Occitanists of his time. It is curious to note that the Onomasticon Catalonlæ—the «vast onomastic collection that would record and give etymological explanations of all the names of people, old and modern, used in the Catalan linguistic domain (Catalonia, Roussillon, Valencian Country, Balearic Islands and eastern part of Aragon), as well as all place names, dead or alive, located in this territory; place names in the widest possible sense of the word: names of inhabited places, sites (whatever the importance of each one), names of water courses or lakes, names of geographical features, of isolated houses, caves, springs, famous trees, etc.», was the first monumental work on which Coromines worked and to which he dedicated time and effort throughout his whole life, would be the last that he would write with a certain amount of urgency.

Joan Coromines had begun gathering materials and the field work for drafting a great toponymic dictionary in 1925, tasks that would increase after 1931, once his academic training had been completed. This toponymic dictionary would end up being called Onomasticon Catalonlæ. Evidently the civil war (1936-1939) slowed down the field work which exile would stop completely. The interviews would not begin again until 1952, the year when Coromines was first able to concentrate the first six-months on teaching at the University of Chicago and spend the second half of the year in Catalonia. After this time the interviews would become systematic until
1971, when practically the interviews in all territories of the Catalan Countries had been completed. In some cases he was aided by various assistants who Coromines would train personally and who would make various interviews for the *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*. As Coromines himself says in the Prologue to the work: «When, in 1931, we decided to put this vast project into practice, we had access not only to the abundance of toponymic and anthroponymic references that we had gathered since 1925, but also with the collections put together with the same idea in mind by Josep M. de Casacuberta, our predecessor in the Office of Toponyms and Onomastics of the Institute of Catalan Studies.

«After the years from 1931 to 1939, when we had actively dedicated ourselves to gathering material for the *Onomasticon*, and although exiled to Paris or America, we never ceased work on the material available which we had taken with us, and to enrich ourselves with new garnishings from antique and modern documents and texts. In 1952-54 and, especially, after 1955, we again began collecting living place names on a large scale. In 1931-1939 we were able to rely on the help of our compatriots Pau Miró and Enric Ribes, who, following our instructions and under our management, although paid by the Institute of Catalan Studies, continued the interviews in certain areas of the Principality. After 1954, some subventions from Rafael Patxot, of the Guggenheim Foundation and the American Philosophical Society, with the good will of our new assistants (especially Joan Sales, Josep A. Codina and Josep Giner March), these surveys were able to continue. But in the 30’s as well as the 50’s and 60’s the *Onomasticon* had to rely on our personal effort, even for gathering living toponyms from the field. Combining all this material with that collected by Casacuberta around 1921-1923, the manuscript of which he donated to us, has enabled a very vast area, corresponding to the territory of 2,000 municipalities (more than 3,000 villages) to be completely explored, including 1,600 interviews by me and 394 by different collaborators. These municipalities cover all the Catalan linguistic domain in Spain and France, plus Andorra, the Aran Valley and all Alt Aragon to Navarra (the Graus-Benasc-Anso triangle).»

In 1985, having finished writing the *Diccionari etimòlògic i complementari de la llengua catalana*, Coromines worked exclusively on the *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*. At first, Coromines planned a structure based on geographical
areas and, under this criteria, in 1989, coedited by Curial Editions Catalanes and "La Caixa", he published the first of the volumes which, under the subtitle of *Toponímia antiga de les Illes Balears*, was signed by both Joan Coromines and Josep Mascaró Passarius. Almost immediately, however, he realised that this division by areas led to continuous and constant internal references that made consulting and writing the work more difficult. For this reason, after the second volume the geographic structure was abandoned and a single criteria of alphabetic classification was adopted. The title was also changed to the definite name of *Onomasticon Cataloniæ. Els noms de lloc i noms de persones de totes les terres de llengua catalana*, with the addition of «Work founded by Josep M. de Casacuberta», followed by the names of the contributors: Max Cahner, Joan Ferrer, Josep Giner, Joseph Gulsoy, Josep Mascaró, Philip D. Rasico and Xavier Terrado.

Coromines then began writing the letters A and B, but when he reached C he was overcome by the amount of work and this meant that the writing was going far too slowly. In 1990, Joan Ferrer joined the project acting as secretary and giving a decisive impulse to the work by taking over tasks related to coordination and writing to finally give the project the kickstart it needed. The volume second (*A-BE*), the first of this new classification system, appeared in 1994 and then, without pause, the following volumes: in 1995 volumes III (*BI-C*) and IV (*D-J*); in 1996, volume V (*L-N*), the last Joan Coromines was to see in print. In any case, Coromines had left the writing of all the rest of the work ready by November 1996. Joan Coromines died on January 2, 1997. He was correcting gallery proofs until almost the end. It was his secretary and collaborator, Joan Ferrer, who finished the remaining volumes and published them in 1997: VI (*O-SAI*), even though the date of publication says 1996, and VII (*SAL-VE*). The last volume, VIII, containing the letters *VI-Z* and the *Index* to the whole work appeared in 1998, although the date of publication says 1997. The Index was built by Joan Ferrer with the collaboration of Josep Ferrer and Joan Pujadas. Even though it was *in extremis* Joan Coromines had successfully crowned his «daring pyramid».

When the philological *opus* of Coromines is seen in perspective, the conclusion is that few lives have been as positively fruitful for Catalan language and culture as that of Joan Coromines.
Joan Coromines at home. (Pineda de Mar, October 1993)

Author: Joan Pujadas
## Biographic and Bibliographic Notes

**Joan Pujadas i Marquès**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 21, 1905</strong></td>
<td>Born in Barcelona.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>September 1922</strong></td>
<td>Began courses on Law and Philosophy and Arts at the University of Barcelona.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Participation in meetings of the Societat d’Estudis Militars (Society of Military Studies) to fight against the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Publication of his first article in the <em>Butlletí de Dialectologia.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>November</strong></td>
<td>Implicated in the Garraf plot against King Alfonso XIII. He sought exile in Montpellier and attended classes by Professors Georges Millardet and Maurice Grammont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 1926</strong></td>
<td>Completion of the compilation of the <em>Vocabulario</em>, comprised of six thousand entries. Graduate in Law from the University of Barcelona.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>The police search his home and oblige him to regularly present himself at the police station.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>October</strong></td>
<td>Named assistant lecturer of practical classes attached to the Chair of Arab Language of the University for the courses 1927-1928, 1929-1930 and 1930-1931.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>December</strong></td>
<td>Graduate in Philosophy and Arts from the University of Barcelona with excellence and awarded an extraordinary prize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>January 1928</strong></td>
<td>Began Doctorate studies in Law and Arts at the University of Madrid. The Ministry Public Instruction granted him a scholarship for one year to further his studies of Romance linguistics and Germanic dialects in Germany and Switzerland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>June</strong></td>
<td>Defence of his doctoral thesis, <em>Vocabulario aranés</em>, and given the qualification of excellent. In Zurich he attended a university course with professors Louis Gauchat,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arnald Steiger, Manu Leumann, J. J. Hess von Wyss, Albert Bachmann, Otto Gröger and Jakob Jud.

**January 1929**
Presentation of his doctoral thesis and examination for the extraordinary prize of the Doctorate in Arts, which he passed brilliantly.

**November**
Studies at the University of Sorbonne in Paris with professors Oscar Bloch, Paul Boyer, Clovis Brunel, Mario Roques, Joseph Vendryes and Antoine Meillet.

**November 1930**
Pompeu Fabra named him secretary of the Lexicographical Offices of the Institute of Catalan Studies (IEC) and included him on the Editorial Committee of the *Butlletí de Dialectologia Catalana*.

**April 1931**
With Pompeu Fabra and Josep M. de Casacuberta, and commissioned by the Generalitat, he wrote the nomenclature of the municipalities of Catalonia.

**June 5**
The Ministry of Public Instruction named him assistant lecturer of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of the University of Barcelona, for a period of 4 years, to teach the course on Romance philology.

**November**
Finalised draft of the «Changes that could be made in the second edition of the “Diccionari ortogràfic” by Pompeu Fabra».
Beginning of the preliminary work for the *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*.
Publication of *Vocabulario aranés*, his doctoral thesis.

**May 1934**
Signature, with a group of fifteen members of the Institute of Catalan Studies, of the manifest *Desviacions en els conceptes de llengua i de Pàtria*.

**1935**
He assumed, as of volume XXII, the position of secretary of the *Butlletí de Dialectologia Catalana*, edited by Pompeu Fabra.

**August**
Study of the toponomastic surveys completed and he noted: -252 City Councils, 112 of which have been questioned by me personally. There are still 818 City Councils in the Principality and 759 in other areas dominated by the Catalan language."

**November**
Travelled to Valencia with Pompeu Fabra, Josep Maria de Casacuberta and Ramon Aramon to determine the nomenclature of municipalities in Valencian Country.

**July 1936**
Travelled to Madrid to take part in the examinations for the vacant chair of Romance philology at the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of the Central University. On the night of the 18th, participation in the reduction of the insur- gents who had barricaded themselves in the Cuartel de la Montaña.

**August 19**
The University of Barcelona named him lecturer in charge of the course in French, Provencal and Romance linguistics.

**November 11**
Contracted civil marriage with Bàrbara de Haro.
JOAN COROMINES (1905-1997)

December 16
Enlisted as a volunteer in the Alpine Corps of the Republican Army.

January 25, 1937
He abandoned the corps and returned to Barcelona.

November
The University of Barcelona commissioned the publication of a collection of miscellanea dedicated to Pompeu Fabra on the occasion of his seventieth birthday.

June 4, 1938
Mobilised and sent to the General Staff in Barcelona as a translator.

February 7, 1939
Crossed the border and interned in the Sant Gebrà refugee camp in Roussillon. Finally he rejoined his parents and family in Paris, where they resided. Professors Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Amado Alonso, Ricardo Rojas and the poet Pablo Neruda convince the Argentine Government to contract him as a Lecturer of the National University of Cuyo, in the city of Mendoza.

October 17
He embarked on La Rochelle with his family and headed for Argentina.

November 10
Incorporation in the University of Cuyo as lecturer in grammar and Latin.

December 1
His father, Pere Coromines, died suddenly in Buenos Aires.

November 1941
Recuperation of the articles of the Miscellània Fabra, that had been left in Barcelona.

November 2, 1943
Organisation and supervision of the climb of Cerro Blanco Olonqumini (Andes), 5,100 m. The first time this mountain peak is conquered by climbers.

February 1944
Miscellània Fabra published in Buenos Aires, after 7 years of work.

June 1945
The Guggenheim Foundation awarded him a grant for the preparation of the Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana.

June 1946
The University of Chicago contracted him as lecturer of Romance philology.

January 1947
A course in Catalan at the University of Chicago.

Beginning of the draft of the Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana after 7 years gathering material.

June 1948
The Guggenheim Foundation gave him another grant for preparing the Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana.

January 21, 1950
The Institute of Catalan Studies named him Member Attached to the Philology Section.

November 1951
Completion of the draft of the letter Z of the Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana.

May 5, 1952
Return to Barcelona after thirteen years of exile. After this time he made annual stays of six months in Catalonia, where he carried our oral research for the Onomasticon Catalonĭæ and the Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana.

April 7-10, 1953
Participation in the VII International Congress of Romance Linguistics in Barcelona and gave a speech, in English, criticising Franco’s regime.
Pasqual Maragall, Lord Mayor of Barcelona, presents Joan Coromines with the Gold Medal of the City. (Pineda de Mar, April 10 1996)
November 4

Granted United States citizenship.

April 1954

Completion of the draft of the amendments he considered necessary in the second edition of the *Diccionari general de la llengua catalana*, by Pompeu Fabra.

July

Editorial Moll published *What Should Be Known About the Catalan Language*, which he wrote in English as an introduction to the Catalan language for the North Americans on the occasion of the Jocs Florals (literary competition) in New York in 1951.

December

Publication in Bern by Francke and in Madrid by Gredos, of volume I of the *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*, which covered the letters A-C.

January 1955

He presented his resignation as member of the Philology Section of the IEC (Institute of Catalan Studies) because the new edition of the *Diccionari general de la llengua catalana*, by Pompeu Fabra, had been published without him being able to supervise the printing. Finally he decided to adjourn this decision.

April 15-16

Participation in the V Congress of Onomastic Science in Salamanca and presented the «Onomasticon Cataloniæ», in French.

January 1956

Completion of the «Preface» of the posthumous *Catalan Grammar*, by Pompeu Fabra, published under his supervision.

February 1957

He wrote the article «Catalan» for *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

May

Publication of the fourth and final volume of the *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*.

January 1960

He signed, with one hundred other personalities, a letter denouncing the situation of persecution to which the Catalan language was submitted.

May 1961

Editorial Gredos published the *Breve diccionario etimológico de la lengua castellana*, an abbreviated and improved version of the *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*.

December 1965

Publication of the first volume of *Estudis de toponímia catalana* by the Barcino Philological Library, edited by Josep Maria de Casacuberta.

February 1967


March 3

Participation in the homage to Dr. Jordi Rubió i Balaguer, which, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, was held in the Faculty of Law of the University. Coromines was imprisoned and expelled from Spain until August.

July 16

He retired as full professor at the University of Chicago. He spent long periods in his study in Pineda de Mar working on his publications.

May 12, 1968

He gave the conference «Pompeu Fabra and Catalan linguistics», in Salle
Pleyel in Paris as part of the activities of the II Catalan Book Festival.

October

Beginning of his collaboration in writing the *Basque Etymological Dictionary*, by Antonio Tovar and Koldo Mitxelena.

1970

He suggested that Editorial Gredos publish an extended edition of the *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*.

Publication of the second volume of *Estudis de toponímia catalana*.

Editorial Moll published the Catalan version of the Hindu drama *Vikramorvashiiya*, by Kalidas, begun by his father in 1911 and revised in 1959.

September 1971

Club Editor published *Lleures i converses d’un filòleg*.

November 22

He gave the conference «Problèmes de phonétique historique francaise a la lumière du catalan et des langues hispaniques», at the University of Paris.

December

He completed the compilation of the *Obres Completas* by Pere Coromines.

April 1972

He was granted the 1971 Lletra d’Or (Golden Letter award) for *Lleures i converses d’un filòleg*.

May

Editorial Gredos published *Tópica Hespérica*, a collection of articles on Spanish linguistics in 2 volumes.

June

Awarded the Serra d’Or critics’ prize for *Lleures i converses d’un filòleg*.

March 1973

Proposed as honorary member of the Real Academia Española de la Lengua (Royal Spanish Academy of Language). Joan Coromines rejected the proposal adducing that «...I have no more than one language, nor do I want more than one. [...] Of honours, coming from the Spanish language, I want none.»

February 1974

He accepted forming part as a corresponding member of the Real Academia Galega (Royal Galician Academy).

October

Curial Editions Catalanes published the first two volumes of *Diaris i records*, by Pere Coromines. The third would be published in February 1975.

January 1975

Editorial Gredos published the *Obra completa en castellano* by Pere Coromines, which he had complied and annotated.

January 1976

He began work on the final draft of the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*.

September

He completed writing the new *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico*.

November

Curial Editions Catalanes published the two first volumes of *Entre dos llen- guatges*. The third and final volume would be released in May 1977.

February 4, 1978

Investiture as Doctor *Honoris Causa* by Sorbonne University in Paris.

February 18, 1980

Presentation in Barcelona of volume I of the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*. The ceremony was attended by Josep Tarradellas, President of the Generalitat of Catalonia.
Editorial Gredos published volume I of the *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico*.

**April 8**  
The Generalitat awarded him the Medalla d’Or (Gold Medal) for his work «dedicated to Indo-European and Romance linguistics and very specially to Catalan».

**March 26, 1981**  
His wife, Bàrbara of Haro, died in Barcelona.

**May 11**  
Awarded the Premi d’Honor Jaume I (Jaume I Honours Prize) «for his high and exemplary testimony of loyalty to the Catalan language throughout a whole life dedicated to philological research and University education».

**April 1982**  
The Generalitat of Catalonia granted him the Catalan Literature Award for the best research work on the Catalan language for Volume II of the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*.

**September 13**  
He sent a letter to the King of Spain refusing to accept the Gran Cruz de la Orden Civil de Alfonso X the Sabio (Grand Cross of Civil Order of Alfonso X the Wise): «Your Royal Highness: [...] I can not accept, and return, an award sent by a government that reduces the rights of my homeland to a minimum, quartered into provinces, denying the necessary resources to the University of Barcelona and all of our universities, and subsidising the small groups that attack the unity of Catalan, the single language of the three countries that speak it.»

**May 21, 1984**  
Granted the Premi d’Honor de les Lletres Catalanes (Catalan Arts Honours Prize), for «the importance and exemplarity of his intellectual work, which has contributed in a notable and continued way to the cultural life of the Catalan Countries».

**June**  
He finished writing Volume IX (V-ZUM) of the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*.

The University of Valencia agreed to name him Doctor Honoris Causa. Coromines postponed the academic ceremony because he was involved in the correction of the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*.

**January 1985**  
Curial published the edition of *Narrativa* by Cerverí de Girona.

**June 4**  
He gave the conference «The past and future of my studies of Valencian linguistics», at University of Valencia.

**September 1986**  
The Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (University of the Basque Country) agreed to name him Doctor Honoris Causa.

**November 1988**  
Curial published *Lírica* by Cerverí de Girona, in two volumes.
The Ministry of Culture granted him the Premio Nacional de las Letras Españolas (National Spanish Arts Prize).

Presentation in Barcelona of the first volume of the *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*. The ceremony was presided over by Jordi Pujol, President of the Generalitat of Catalonia.

He was granted the Sanchis Guarner Prize for unity of the Catalan language for the publication of the first volume of *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*.

He attended the homage to his father held in the Ateneu Barcelonès on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

The Ministry of Culture published the miscellanea *Joan Coromines. Premio Nacional de las Letras Españolas 1989*.

Presentation in Viella of *El parlar de la Vall d’Aran*, rewritten from his 1931 doctoral thesis. The ceremony was presided over by Jordi Pujol, President of the Generalitat.

Curial published the critical edition of *Versos proverbials* by Guillem de Cervera.

Editorial Gredos published volume VI and the last of the *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico*.

He completed writing the *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*.

Barcelona City Council agreed to grant him the Medalla d’Or (Gold Medal) of the City.

The University of Valencia rendered homage to him in the Aula Magna of the University.

The University of the Balearic Islands rendered homage to him in the Gran Hotel in Palma.

The University of Barcelona rendered homage to him in the University Auditorium.

The Town Hall of Pineda gave the name of Joan Coromines to the new Secondary Education Institute, dedicates a bibliographic exhibition to him and coedited the miscellanea *Joan Coromines, 90 years*.

Euskaltzaindia agreed to name him euskaltzain ohorezko (member of honour).

He attended the opening of the square that Barcelona City Council dedicated to Pere Coromines in the suburb of Raval.

The Generalitat of Catalonia granted him the Premi Nacional al Foment de l’Ús de la Llengua Catalana (National Prize for Promoting the Use of the Catalan Language) for completing *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*. 
February 9, 1996  The rectors of the University of Valencia and the Autonomous University of Barcelona reiterate their proposal to name him Doctor *Honoris Causa*. Coromines adjourned the ceremony until the conclusion of *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*.

April 10  Pasqual Maragall, Lord Mayor of Barcelona, travelled to Pineda de Mar to present him with the Medalla d’Or (Gold Medal) of the City. The Institució de les Lletres Catalanes (Institution of Catalan Literature) granted him the award for the best study on language and literature published in 1993, 1994 and 1995, for *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*.

November 20  He fractured his left femur. He was operated on the same day and a prosthesis implanted.

January 2, 1997  He died in his home in Pineda de Mar. His body lay in state in the Sant Jordi Hall of the Generalitat building. The funeral service took place on January 4 in the basilica of Santa Maria del Mar. The service was attended by the President of the Generalitat, Jordi Pujol, and the President of Parliament, Joan Reventós.

April 17  Constitution of the Pere Coromines Foundation. Max Cahner was elected president.

May 30  Opening in Barcelona of Joan Coromines square, located in the suburb of Raval.

November 1998  Publication of volume VIII of *Onomasticon Cataloniæ*, containing the letters VI-Z and the index.

June 3, 2002  Presentation in the Sant Jordi Hall of the Generalitat of Catalonia of volume X and the last of the *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana*. 
BIBLIOGRAPHY

DICTIONARIES
Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana (1954-1957, 4 vols.) [DCELC]
Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana (1980-2001, 10 vols.) [DECat]
Onomasticon Cataloniae (1989-1997, 8 vols.) [OnCat]

TRANSLATIONS
Terenci. Comèdies (1936-1960, 4 vols.)
Kalidassa. Vikramórvaci (1970)
Linguistics
Vocabulario aranés. Tesis doctoral (1931)
El que s’ha de saber de la llengua catalana (1954)
Estudis de toponimia catalana (1965 i 1970, 2 vols.)
Lleures i converses d’un filòleg (1971)
Tòpica Hespèrica (1972, 2 vols.)
Entre dos llenguatges (1976-1977, 3 vols.)
El parlar de la Vall d’Aran. Gramàtica, diccionari i estudis lexicals sobre el gascó (1990)

Publications
Miscel·lània Fabra (1943)
Pompeu Fabra. Gramàtica catalana (1956)
Juan Ruiz. Libro de Buen Amor (1967)
Pere Corominas. Obres complete (1972)
Pere Corominas. Diaris i records (1974-1975, 3 vols.)
Pedro Corominas. Obra completa en castellano (1975)
CENTENARY

MISCELLANEOUS WORKS
Joan Coromines, 90 anys (1995)
Àlbum Joan Coromines (1997)
L’obra de Joan Coromines. Cicle d’estudi i homenatge (1999)

COLLECTED LETTERS
1. Pompeu Fabra i Joan Coromines. La correspondència dels anys de l’exili (1998)