Jacint Verdaguer

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**Life**

Jacint Verdaguer i Santaló was born in Folgueroles (in the Osona region of Catalonia) on 17 May 1845. His parents were modest but relatively cultured country people. At the age of ten he entered the Vic Seminary, where he took ecclesiastical studies. He was ordained as a priest in 1870 and celebrated his first mass in the chapel of Sant Jordi de Puigseslloses. From 1863 to 1871 he resided at the "can Tona" farmhouse, halfway between Vic and Folgueroles and here he produced his first literary works.

Folgueroles, 1845 - Vallvidrera, 1902. Poet and priest

After a short time as parish priest at Vinyoles d'Orís (1871-1873), and afflicted by severe headaches, he spent two years plying between Spain and Cuba as a ship's priest on the steamers of the Companyia Transatlàntica, property of Antoni López, the future Marquis of Comillas. In 1877, Verdaguer became the family chaplain and six years later he was entrusted with the position of almoner. In the more than fifteen years that he lived in the Comillas Palace on the Barcelona Rambla, he had the opportunity of mingling with personalities from Catalan and Spanish high society, and also going on long excursions through the Pyrenees, staying in the spas and residences belonging to the Marquis, and making long journeys through North Africa, the Central European countries and the Middle East, which he later described in his literature.

In 1886, on his return from a journey to the Holy Land, he underwent a spiritual crisis, which made him long for purification and asceticism. This was accompanied by an increase in the duties of his ministry and, in particular, those pertaining to his job as almoner. After 1889 he was in contact with clairvoyants and exorcists and would soon begin to proselytise these activities that were not exactly recommended by the Church and prohibited by the Bishop of Barcelona. When Verdaguer was in debt after purchasing a property at Vallcarca, where he wanted to save an already-existing chapel and establish a place of prayer and penitence, Claudi López, the second Marquis of Comillas decided to dispense with his services as almoner priest and, with the help of the bishops of Barcelona and Vic, Català i Morgades respectively, he organised Verdaguer's transfer to Vic, under the pretext of his needing a rest cure. In May 1893, after some days at the Episcopal palace of Vic, Verdaguer went to live at the Virgin's shrine at Gleva (in the Osona region), where he would remain two years.

In April 1895, and disobeying the orders of his bishop, he left Gleva and settled again in Barcelona, this time in the home of the Duran family - a widow and two daughters - whom he had met some years earlier. In June he published a communiqué in the Barcelona press declaring "before the honourable people" of the city that he had been the victim of unjust persecution. Morgades then prohibited him from celebrating mass and carrying out his priestly functions. Verdaguer responded to this proscription with a series of newspaper articles "in self-defence", causing a great uproar. The confrontation between the poet priest, his superior in the Church, the marquis who had taken him in and other close friends and relatives (Canon Jaume Collell and the lawyer - his cousin - Narcís...
Verdaguer i Callís), acquired a social dimension that went beyond the strictly ecclesiastical domain. It was a huge scandal. The "Verdaguer case" became the centre of opposing political and social interests. Two years later he delivered a second series of articles to the press that were even more virulent and belligerent than the first. At the end of 1897, however, thanks to the intervention of the Augustine fathers of El Escorial and the Bishop of Madrid, Morgades agreed to a reconciliation, which was formalised with his acceptance of a written retraction by Verdaguer. The following January the latter's priestly functions were restored.

Assigned to the Bethlehem Church with a stipend, he spent his last years in Barcelona until, after a long battle with tuberculosis, he was transferred to the hillside mansion of Vil·la Joana de Vallvidrera, where he died on 10 June 1902. Three days later he was buried in the Montjuïc cemetery amid the greatest manifestation of public mourning ever seen in the history of Catalonia.

Works

Even when he was very young, Verdaguer revealed a notable literary talent. After a few early satirical and playful poems along the lines of the baroque and popular compositions of modern Catalan literature, he began to write poetry with pastoral or love themes in accordance with Spanish-influenced neoclassical precepts or basing himself on the more usual patterns in popular Catalan poetry (folksongs ?) and even imitating the romantic model of Frédéric Mistral's pastoral epic Mirèio. Some of these early compositions were published posthumously, for example Amors d'en Jordi i na Guideta (The Courtship of Jordi and Guideta, 1924) and Jovenívoles, (Juvenilia, 1925).

In his years of shaping himself as a writer, Verdaguer tried several literary genres, including an epic prose-poem on the discovery of America (unfinished and published posthumously with the title Colom (Columbus)), imaginative stories and autobiographical writings (that remained unpublished until recently) and, in particular, a long poem in neoclassical style Dos màrtirs de ma pàtria, o siga Llucià i Marcìa (Two Martyrs of my Country, or Llucia and Marcia), which was published in 1865 in serial form by the Vic newspaper Eco de la Montaña. In May that year Verdaguer had made his literary debut with the Jocs Florals (literary competition) in Barcelona where he was awarded second prize and an extraordinary prize for two compositions in verse, of patriotic tone and romantic orientation. These distinctions earned him the recognition of the Jocs Florals organisers and led to his making personal contacts - that would be decisive in his future literary career - with the most outstanding figures of the Catalan renaissance movement (Mià, Aguiló...).

Encouraged by this success in Barcelona, Verdaguer once again took up the theme of Columbus in a long poetic composition called L'Espanya naixent (Nascent Spain), which he presented without success for the Jocs Florals in 1868. Shortly afterwards, he began to work on a more ambitious project that, almost ten years later, would bring him literary recognition both inside and outside Catalonia. This was his epic poem L'Atlàntida (Atlantis), which received the Extraordinary Prize in the 1877 Jocs Florals in Barcelona. On a grandiose scale and powerfully descriptive, the poem included geological elements and mythological figures. Two years later saw the appearance of the volume Idil·lis i cants místics (Mystical Idylls and Cantos), a volume of highly exquisite lyrical compositions on religious themes, which confirmed Verdaguer's literary talent in a considerable range of genres.

In 1880, on the occasion of the thousand-year anniversary of the finding of the Virgin of Montserrat, he published Cançons de Montserrat (Songs of Montserrat) and Llegenda de Montserrat (Legend of Montserrat), which he would revise and publish some years later in a volume of poetry entitled Montserrat (1889). Two years after this, a first version of Lo somni de sant Joan (Saint John's Dream) appeared, which was reworked and extended to appear in a subsequent version (1887) under the same title. Then there was a collection of Franciscan-style romances that he also reworked some
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Literary news about Jacint Verdaguer on Lletra, the UOC’s virtual space devoted to Catalan literature

<https://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/jacint-verdaguer>

years later for a volume dedicated to the "poor little man" of Assisi, Sant Francesc (Saint Francis, 1895). At the end of 1885, after producing the poetry collection Caritat (Charity) and translating Frédéric Mistral’s Nerto, Verdaguer published Canigó (Canigó) - regarded as his best epic poem - which earned him the symbolic coronation, by Bishop Morgades, as "poet of Catalonia". If L’Atlàntida was a classical-leaning epic with a Hispanic view of the discovery of the New World, Canigó was a romantic "legend" concerned with exalting the Christian origins of Catalonia. Another miscellaneous volume, also along the lines of Romanticism and entitled Pàtria (Patria, 1888), led to his being recognised as Catalonia’s national poet. In 1887, he had brought together, in a volume called Excursions i viatges (Excursions and Journeys), the literary impressions of his travels that had appeared as journalistic pieces in a number of publications and, in 1889, he produced a second book of his travel writings - Dietari d’un pelegrí a Terra Santa (Diary of a Pilgrim to the Holy Land) - regarded by some as his best prose work.

At the beginning of the last decade of the century, he published the poetic trilogy Jesús infant (Child Jesus), which was based on his experiences in Palestine and consisted of the three books Nazaret (Nazareth, 1890), Betlem (Bethlehem, 1891) and La fugida a Egipte (The Flight to Egypt, 1893). While he was living at the Gleva sanctuary, and at the start of his conflict with the Church, he had sent to press the aforementioned poem, Sant Francesc (1895) and the miscellaneous collections Roser de tot l’any (A Rose for all the Year, 1893), Veus del Bon Pastor (Voices of the Good Shepherd, 1894) and Flors del Calvari (Flowers of Calvary, 1896), which, taken together, might be seen as the poetic equivalent of his first series of journalistic pieces that were collected into one volume entitled En defensa pròpia (In Self Defence, 1895).

In the last years of his life, he accepted the post of literary director for some reviews - L’Atlàntida, La Creu del Montseny and Lo Pensament Català - while also bringing out three further volumes of poetry: Santa Eulària (Saint Eularia, 1899), Aires del Montseny (Airs of Montseny, 1901) and Flors de Maria (Flowers of Maria, 1902). Then there were the posthumous publications of the volumes of poetry Al Cel (In Heaven), Corpus Christi (1903) and Eucharistiques (Eucharistics, 1904), a collection of folktales (Rondalles) and another collection entitled Discursos (Discourses, 1905). These were to be followed by a volume called Folklore (1907), a poetic return to Columbus with Colom, and then Tenerife (1907), after which came a volume that consisted of two titles in verse - Els pobres. Els sants (The Poor. The Saints, 1908) - some glosses on Ramon Llull entitled Perles del “Llibre d’Amic e d’Amat” (Pearls from The Book of the Lover and the Beloved, 1908) and a version of Càntic dels Càntics (Song of Songs), which were preceded by the prose work Los jardines de Salomó (Solomon’s Gardens, 1907).

Two volumes, Escrits inèdits (Unpublished Writings, 1958, 1978), and a complementary collection, Poesies juvenils inèdites (Unpublished Poems of Youth, 1966), along with an extensive Epistolari (Collected Letters, 1959-1993) complete Verdaguer’s literary production at present and constitute a first-class documentary and biographical source.

Jacint Verdaguer was the most outstanding Catalan writer of the nineteenth century and the most representative of the Catalan literary Renaixença (Renaissance). As the author of highly ambitious, learned works he took traditional themes and forms to convey the ideas of the conservative Catalanism and Catholicism of his time. He returned to Catalan the prestige of a language of culture that had been lost and, despite his unbalanced moments, he produced a perfectly coherent oeuvre in the service of the ideals of his faith and his homeland. Verdaguer has been used from opposing ideological positions and invoked, above all, as a symbol of all that is Catalan. His expressive effectiveness and the social rebound of his conflict with members of the Church ensured that in his
lifetime he was popularly esteemed more for his person than his literary work, which stood in the way of a strictly artistic assessment. Though his figure is still the subject of debate even today, his works have acquired the dimensions of classics.

A selection of texts

Text

- WEB: Two chapters of Canigó
  On the web page of Miquel Alonso you can read the first two chapters of this work.
  http://www.xtec.es/~malons22/personal/canigo.htm

- WEB: Magisteri Teatre-Mag Poesia
  A considerable number of fragments from Verdaguer and links.
  http://www.mallorcaweb.com/Mag-Teatre/poemes-solts/verdaguer.html

- WEB: Eucarístiques (Eucharistics)
  Digital edition of this work at BVJLV.
  http://lluisvives.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=004853&portal=1

- WEB: Colom seguit de Tenerife (Columbus and Tenerife)
  Digital edition of this work at BVJLV.
  http://lluisvives.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=004848&portal=1

- WEB: Selection of Catalan Poetry
  Half a dozen poems (including the impressive "Sum vermis") and a brief biographical note.
  http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/especials/folch/verdague.htm

- WEB: "A Barcelona" ("To Barcelona")
  Digitalisation, jointly prepared by the Biblioteca de Catalunya and the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, of the complete text of the ode "A Barcelona" ("To Barcelona") based on an 1883 edition.
  http://cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/bc/088146068722516230224842/

- WEB: Canigó: llegenda pirenayca del temps de la Reconquista (Canigó: A Pyrenean Legend from the Times of the Reconquest)
  Digitalisation, jointly prepared by the Biblioteca de Catalunya and the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, of the complete text of Canigó based on an 1896 edition.
  http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/043820949954069258563607/

- WEB: "Vespres d’espellofada" ("Evenings of Husking")
  Brief text by Verdaguer (with analysis of the vocabulary) in a page on Osona.
  http://www.xtec.es/~evicioso/osona/vespres.htm

- WEB: "El castell dels comtes de Pallars" (The Castle of the Counts of Pallars)
  Brief text by Verdaguer.
  http://www.xtec.es/~evicioso/pallsobi/castpall.htm
Bio-bibliography

Biography

WEB: The author in the Catalan Encyclopaedia
http://www.grec.cat/cgi-bin/hecangcl2.pgm?&USUARI=&SESSIO=&NDCHEC=0070084&PGMORI=E

WEB: In Wikipedia
Biography, works and links on the author in the free encyclopaedia.

Bibliography

WEB: Works in the Biblioteca de Catalunya
http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*eng/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Verdaguer+Jacint&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D

WEB: The author in The European Library
http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/search/%28%22creator%22+all+%22verdaguer+jacint %22%29.query

WEB: The author in the Congress Library (US)
http://catalog.loc.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&PAGE=First

WEB: The author in the COPAC Catalogue (UK)
http://copac.ac.uk/search?&au=Jacint+Verdaguer

Comments on the author

Criticism

WEB: Jacint Verdaguer on the IletrA website in Catalan
Including more resources and reading suggestions.
http://www.uoc.edu/iletra/noms/jverdaguer/index.html

WEB: Un dels "Dotze mestres" [Twelve masters]
IletrA page on this work by Maurici Serrahima.
https://lletra.uoc.edu/ca/obra/dotze-mestres-1972/

WEB: Website of the AELC
Biography, information, publications.
http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/verdaguerj/pagina.php?id_sec=2368

WEB: Jacint Verdaguer in the City of Barcelona Literary Corpus
Biography, links and transcription of articles on this author.

WEB: Verdaguer Year: Resources
Collection of resources and activities of teaching centres to celebrate the centenary.
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< https://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/jacint-verdaguer >

http://www.xtec.es/recursos/catala/verdaguer/index.htm

WEB: Jacint Verdaguer
A very comprehensive page with texts, biography and an interesting list of links by Miquel Alonso. 
http://www.xtec.es/~malons22/

Miscellaneous

WEB: Verdaguer Foundation in Folgueroles
Information about the Jacint Verdaguer Foundation at the website "Espais escrits. Xarxa del Patrimoni Literari Català" [Written Spaces. The Catalan Literary Heritage Network].

WEB: The Verdaguer Chair
Page of the Verdaguer Chair of Literary Studies at the Universitat de Vic.
http://www.uvic.cat/node/402

WEB: "Amic, Amat": Llull-Verdaguer-Bonet
Poems on the recording of Maria del Mar Bonet devoted to Perles del "Llibre d'Amic e Amat" de Ramon Llull (Pearls from Ramon Llull's "Llibre d'Amic i Amat" ["Book of the Love and the Beloved"]) by Verdaguer.
http://www.bonet.amics.ppcc.8m.net/amic,amat.html

WEB: Religious Couplets on Internet
Texts of religious couplets written by Jacint Verdaguer.
http://www.enlloc.com/goigs/autors/verdaguer.htm

WEB: Jacint Verdaguer on Video
Information on the video Jacint Verdaguer, un escriptor per al poble (Jacint Verdaguer, a Writer for the People). Order form.
http://www.ictisp.com/~ge382930/Verdaguer.html

WEB: Barcelona and Verdaguer
Page of the Barcelona City Council devoted to the Verdaguer Year and the different Verdaguer-related activities in the city.
http://www.bcn.es/cultura/verdaguer100/

WEB: Verdaguer in the Catholic Encyclopedia
Biographical note in English.
http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15350a.htm

WEB: Virtual Literary Itineraries
From the website of the Consorci de Biblioteques de Barcelona , you can go to the Verdaguer Itinerary, in the "Barcelona i el mar" section.
http://www.bcn.cat/biblioteques/itineraris/iti2/intro.htm