

EDITORIAL

SVMMA Editorial Board

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The editorial of the second issue of SVMMA (Fall 2013) evoked the demise of Martí de Riquer and, on the basis of his figure, advocated what we could call relaxed and mature knowledge and wisdom, opposing them to the massive and accelerated production of specialized information that becomes overwhelming and leaves no room for critical reflection. Finally, the editorial wondered whether the former was still possible and also if it was what our society demanded. Such reflections are especially fitting in the spring of 2104 when several events commemorating the centennial of Martí de Riquer are being held and when political and academic authorities have decided to terminate the undergraduate programme in Romance Philology offered by the University of Barcelona; this decision brings about the end of the only degree in Romance Philology offered by a Catalan university, and the only Spanish programme of the sort oriented towards medieval studies, which should occupy and concern the readers of a journal entitled, precisely, “of Medieval Cultures”. Beyond this specific situation and the reasons justifying the resolution (a low number of students) and their validity, this event can also serve to resume our reflection about the demands of society, what we can offer and what we see fit to offer; a consideration which has also appeared in other spheres, such as non-specialized press. If society, and even the university itself, demands the fast and low-cost production of students trained in a technique or science that allows them to rapidly become cost-effective—for whom, we could ask—not only our disciplines but also what we call the Humanities, will meet the same fate. Certainly, the image of hundreds of young medievalists, quickly trained in three or four years, and immediately cost-effective—through the lease of commercializable patents or their job in a great firm—is surreal and even ludicrous. If that is what society or the university demand, it is evident we cannot oblige. However, several voices more authorized than ours have reflected on the need society has of educating people and citizens able to generate critical thought, which results in the collective well-being of society. There is no need to recall again Cicero and Petrarch’s reelaboration of his thought, or the opinions of prestigious current thinkers who have recently insisted on this topic, here and in other European countries. However, our task must be two-fold. Not only should we contribute to the education of people able to develop critical thought, but we should also show society, convincingly, that they will be instrumental in its progress, even economically, and that their absence compromises and endangers its future and well-being severely. Certainly, the latter will require initiative and imagination since it will probably be even harder than the former.

With that spirit, SVMMA includes in the present issue several articles on philosophy. One of them explores the philosophical background of several literary works. The other deals with an even more general interest—if such a thing is possible—the popularization in the Middle Ages of the Aristotelian theory of the intellectual virtues. This concept of “intellectual virtue” was left behind by Modernity, which focused almost exclusively on the conception of virtue as a “moral” virtue; come to think of it, a reductive concept, for every-day language itself still applies adjectives such as “good” and “bad” not only to the field of ethics but also, evidently, to others such as art.

Therefore, in this sense, we hope to offer with the present issue of SVMMA a “good” instrument of knowledge and reflection.

