

Literature on Gaudí and related topics – A critical attempt

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The architect Antoni Gaudí i Cornet was born 25th June 1852 in Reus (or Riudoms) near Tarragona, Spain, and died 10th June 1926 in Barcelona. Without doubt an immense knowledge on Gaudí is hidden in books, with his name in the title, and in other, without appearing his name in the title. The author owes over 300 of such books, gathered over a period of thirty years and they were released in numerous languages. If one would search articles on Gaudí's master piece Sagrada Familia one could simply count all international magazines and one would have a good guess that 20 % of them will have written about the ongoing building site and many even more than once. Yes, the books on Gaudí have reached the thousands, maybe even the three or five thousand and the articles or chapters listed by author, surely reach more than hundred thousand.¹

Of course this introduction is not of the scientific kind, but it may illustrate the problem of a reliable and balanced bibliography on Antoni Gaudí, his work and topics around it, like on his outstanding collaborators or on the hanging model, which one could gather under the word *Gaudinism*.²

However, one may reduce substantially the number of publications when one takes into account renewed releasing of an existing publication and translated versions. For an international public this is a good announcement, since, at least after 1975, many publications have become available in English.³ On the other hand quite a number of publications are only available in Catalan, or Spanish, what of course is not so easy to enter for young foreign researchers, as the author knows by experience from his start in the matter in 1976.⁴ Important Institutions for Gaudí research are the Càtedra Gaudí in Barcelona, formerly directed by Joan Bassegoda Nonell, and the re-founded Centre d'Estudis Gaudinistes, organized by Luis Gueilbert Talmazán and Benet Meca Acosta, formerly also by Toshiaki Tange.

Bibliographies have been released earlier. As the first book with a notable bibliography one may count Rafols' Gaudí, released in 1929, few years after Gaudí died. Much later came Collins renown bibliography, as a complete book, and Bassegoda, Molema and Torii gathered more original written sources.⁵

¹ Google search machine shows about 450,000 entries, and the name Gaudí is very rare. In 2002 he was considered to be the most famous architect of the 20th C.

² Early critical use of the the word *Gaudinism* in *Martinell Gaudí* 1975.

³ Actually many important publications since 1980, in course of the renewed emancipation of the Catalan region, have been issued in Catalan and it is a nice feature that the Catalan officials intended that only with included translations, they would avoid cultural isolation.

⁴ The author trained architecture at Delft University, Netherlands, and he was co-founder of the Gaudí research group Delft (1976) directed by Jan Molema; see *Molema 2001* and *Bak 1979, Moro 2003, Motro 2004, Molema 2005, Molema sueños 2009, Molema dreams 2009*. His thesis was on Gaudí's hanging model, which was reconstructed by Graefe, Otto, Tomlow, Walz in 1982; see *Tomlow model 1989*. With Rainer Graefe and Martin Trautz he worked on Construction History at the Institute for Lightweight Structures IL, Stuttgart University until 1990 directed by Frei Otto. Since 1995 he is teaching and researching Professor at the University of applied Sciences Zittau/Görlitz in Zittau, Germany.

⁵ See *Rafols 1929, Collins 1973, Martinell Gaudí 1975, Bassegoda gran Gaudí 1989, Molema 1987, Molema 1992, Torii 1983* as well as contributions on Gaudí publications in *Giralt exploring 2002* and *Bohigas 2002*.

In Gaudí's life-time only little was published.⁶ On the Sagrada Familia project (first stone 1882), an expiatory church, devoted to the holy family and especially to St Joseph, has been released a review since 1866. "El Propagador de la Devoción a San José" appeared until 1947 and from then on it was named "Temple" in Catalan language.

In his later years, despite his fame, one could not call Gaudí a man who was part of Barcelona society, although his funeral was a kind of political manifestation for Catalonia and against the Spanish government like Giralt-Miracle stated. He hardly gave interviews to journalists and he did not like to be photographed.⁷ His social contacts, apart of quite a number devoted collaborators⁸ and some interested architectural students, were of religious nature.⁹ In regional old monuments he was interested and he took part in excursions, without being involved in the organization. He never married or showed serious attempt to found a family. Of no lasting female friend, even in platonic sense, exists knowledge.¹⁰

Of such an introverted person one does not hold much knowledge about his psychology, about his views on life, family, sex or politics. On top of this, with the academic world, only sparse contacts existed, and those specifically for Gaudí's own research in the static and building material field. He did not report in public about his work and he did not comment the results of others at length. Since he did not travel much, we also do not know how he behaved in such situations where diplomacy was needed. It is quite astonishing how many new contacts, especially foreigners, report that he refused to speak Spanish and that he tended to state promptly that Catalonia, eventually enlarged somewhat to the Mediterranean world, would be superior to all other places. Such a harsh attitude is the best guaranty that no fruitful discussion could take place, even with good-humored visitors.

On the other hand he was quite communicative in all that mattered the execution of his designs. He could make every aspect clear to any worker on his "un-describable" architecture. As a "boss" he was liked and admired by his collaborators.¹¹ Some of them tried to fill in the role of his lost family, after few relatives like his father and a niece had died.

Did Gaudí write? In his earlier time, when he still studied architecture at the young Barcelona University, he wrote for some time a diary and formulated thoughts about family life, architecture and general matters. The writing of this person with antecedents in copper handcraft in the Reus region is rather poor, both stylistically and orthographically, and he did probably not intend to publish it.¹²

If one would ask what is the most important goal or desideratum for Gaudinist research to-day, one could answer that this would be the formulation of Gaudí's theories. The question could be: "Do exist such theories?" The question is correct, since many artists, inventive builders and artistic architects seem to work without a theory and Gaudí, was surely an architect that one could call

⁶ See as few examples Sellés 1903, Rubió 1913, Sugrañes 1923. Futher items in Ráfols 1929, Puig 1929, Bassegoda gran Gaudi 1989, Torii 1983.

⁷ See Martinell Gaudí 1975, Stamm 2004.

⁸ See Freixa 2002.

⁹ See Martinell Gaudí 1975, Bassegoda gran Gaudi 1989, Bassegoda sagrados 2002, Barranco 2002.

¹⁰ See Bergós 1974, Bassegoda gran Gaudi 1989, Hensbergen 2003.

¹¹ See Freixa 2002.

¹² See Martinell Gaudí 1975, Bassegoda gran Gaudi 1989, Mercader 2002.

“idiosyncratic” after having seen his colorful work in such a formal variety. Yes, one may state, Gaudí thought in a rational manner in the development of his designs and without understanding his way of thinking, every attempt to understand or categorize his architecture in the architectural realm will be hopeless, so the author and some colleagues argue.

“How can one find Gaudí’s theories when he did not write and hardly communicated his personality?” First let us discuss the biggest problem for Gaudinist research. Apart of his work a very small amount of sources, even one could call it “below zero”, on the design processes of his buildings exist. Of the general books only Rafols’ “Gaudí” and Puig’s 1929 book on the Sagrada Familia was written with all archive materials intact, although probably it did not exist as an orderly archive in the modern sense. The published drawings tend to show differences in respect to the execution or are not coherent with other plan material.

In 1936, during the Spanish Civil War, a cultural brigade of anarchic political forces was established to search for catholic cultural sources in order to simply destroy it, without documentation. The start was with the church interiors, than came the archives, and than the architectural designs of such famous, devoted religious persons like Gaudí. Even clergy was chased and sometimes killed on quasi-juristic or no grounds.¹³ Both in the Sagrada Familia workshop, as well as on most of his other building designs, sketches, calculations and models were destroyed, like was the case with some parts of his buildings. His grave was damaged. The sparse remains are some 200 design drawings and many of them only as photographic image.¹⁴ Noteworthy is the immense effort of former pupils and successors to reconstruct the model heritage for the Sagrada Familia designs.¹⁵

This very lack of sources is one of the main challenges for any research on this work, what makes the major basic difference to most other architecture. On Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Pierre Cuypers or Norman Foster, to name just a few, tons of sources remain, and now have been digitalized in high definition and published in full color.

So, for establishing a bibliography we have not only the problem of a personality who kept silence about the true nature of his exact thinking, but we have also a very poor information about the buildings themselves, let alone about the design processes.

But at least he expressed his thoughts and gave insights in his feelings by talking in a way one could characterize as interviews to some disciples. Most important are Bergós, Martinell and Puig Boada.¹⁶ And these persons, all of them architects or engineers who will establish a honorable scientific record, carefully wrote down the statements of the master, and published the results. One direct collaborator, Rubió Bellver may be interpreted as formulating a rather deep theory based on Gaudí’s work even when subsequently certain distance between the approach by these distinguished

¹³ For an overview of attacks by republicans on roman catholic institutions during the Civil War 1936-1939 see *Bassegoda profanada 1990*.

¹⁴ See *Collins 1983*.

¹⁵ See *Puig 1982, Bonet 2000, Burry 2007, Faulí 2006*.

¹⁶ See *Bassegoda 1974, Codinachs 1982, Martinell 1969, Puig 1981, Matsukura 1985, Puig 1995*.

personalities may be detected.¹⁷ Berenguer¹⁸, Rubió¹⁹ and Jujol²⁰, the third being Gaudí's most brilliant artistic collaborator, executed own work in a defined gaudinist manner. The fact that Gaudí's statements show a certain redundancy, when one compares the different interviews, may be taken as a sign of the coherency of his thoughts. On the other hand until now they mainly figured as occasional illustrative texts for an author's opinion, like on the Sagrada Familia and the Colònia Güell church. And as a whole they cannot be read as a coherent set of chapters of a book.

A further question is, with what artefacts Gaudí was surrounded during his life time. We know of his house in Park Güell and later his living area and workshop²¹ in the Sagrada Familia, by photographs or original remains and occasional descriptions. He possessed or borrowed quantities of books on architecture and religion and he bought photographs on distant cultures, never to be visited by himself. These were analyzed by scholars and interpreted as sources toward his intentions.²²

The reason that Gaudí became world wide known is partly because his devoted pupils took up his thoughts and communicated them towards the public, explaining the built results, or they varied his schemes in their own work.²³ Certain early public discussions arose whether Gaudí used the talents of his collaborators (Berenguer, Jujol, Rubió) without enough crediting. It is part of his genius that his design methods seem to have a big amount of objectivity, which means that notable remarks by his pupils may be inspired by the geniality of Gaudí's work, as such.

At least since the mayor general publications by Collins, Pane, Sweeney/Sert and Martinell in the sixties it became clear that a good part of the drawn images (plan material) were of minor quality.²⁴ All these books show erratic drawing material. The first measured drawings – of superb quality – were done by Isidre Puig Boada, LLuís Bonet Garí and Joan Bergós Massó and their staff, all involved or interested in the continuation of the Sagrada Familia. On the one hand these were intended for restoration and reconstruction of the Sagrada Familia, but a mere scientific purpose also seems to have existed in the cases of Casa Batlló, Colònia Güell church²⁵ and Colegio Teresiano²⁶. Later a new generation completed and increased the measured drawings, a process that is still continuing, both for cases like restoration and for scientific purposes.²⁷ Also a considerable

¹⁷ See Rubió 1913, Rubió 1991.

¹⁸ See Pevsner 1973.

¹⁹ See Solà-Morales 1975, Tomlow Rubió 1995.

²⁰ See Flores 1982, Ligtelijn 1996 , Llinàs 1992 and on Montferri church see Bassegoda 1994, Tomlow Jujol 1994, Tomlow Jujol 1995, Tomlow Jujol 2002.

²¹ See Gómez 1996.

²² See Descharnes 1982, Torii 1983.

²³ See Martinell Gaudí 1975.

²⁴ See Collins 1960, Martinell Gaudí 1975, Pane 1964, Sert 1960.

²⁵ See Puig 1976.

²⁶ See Barranco 2002.

²⁷ See Tarragó 1977, Bak 1979, Molema 1987, Baranco 2002, the new drawings also being published in Bassegoda 1979, Güell 1987 and used by the Espay Gaudí museum Giralt 1979. A considerable amount of measured drawings were produced for or by the conservation authorities: González 1994, González 1995, González 2000, González 2002, González 2004,

amount of reconstructions were established of non-built projects or unfinished work²⁸ especially the Sagrada Família.²⁹ Reconstructions may be seen as a typical approach method to Gaudí's work, which reached a high international standard.³⁰

Another factor, interesting for art-historical survey, is the impact of Gaudí's name and work and its marketing, in economic sense. Statistics says that the number of tourists visiting the Sagrada Família in 2008, was 2,731,690 or half the Barcelona tourists in total³¹. If one supposes all these persons to stay averagely for one day, visiting Gaudí's work in Barcelona, plus part of the travel costs for this cause, plus shopping of Gaudí products, one may conclude that a total spending by tourists of more than 1,000,000,0000 Euro each year can be estimated realistically. Another cause interesting in economic sense is the finishing of the Sagrada Família, scheduled now for around 2025 or some 143 years after the first stone ceremony in 19.03.1882, and binding each year many millions of Euro. Also Gaudí related museums and their shops give work to numerous persons.

In the following 285 publications on Gaudí are listed, mainly books, certain articles and some book chapters.

Finally the author would like to ask readers for help to find errors or important holes in this attempt to establish a bibliography on Gaudinism. Please send remarks to: j.tomlow@hs-zigr.de.

²⁸ See for the project of Tangiers Mission Post *Torii 1983* with modifications in *Molema 1987, Molema 1992, Tomlow Tanger 1989*, for Gaudí's hanging model(s) and Colònia Güell church *Tomlow Model 1989, Graefe 2008* (The reconstructed hanging model can be seen in the Sagrada Família Museum); for Gaudí's workshop *Gómez 1996*, for Jujol's Montferri church, *Tomlow Jujol 1995*; for Rubió's Son Servera church *Tomlow Rubió 1995*.

²⁹ See *Puig 1982, Bonet 2000, Tomlow primer 2000, Faulí 2006, Burry 2007*.

³⁰ See *Burry 2007, Graefe 2008*.

³¹ Source: *Barcelona turisme 2008*.