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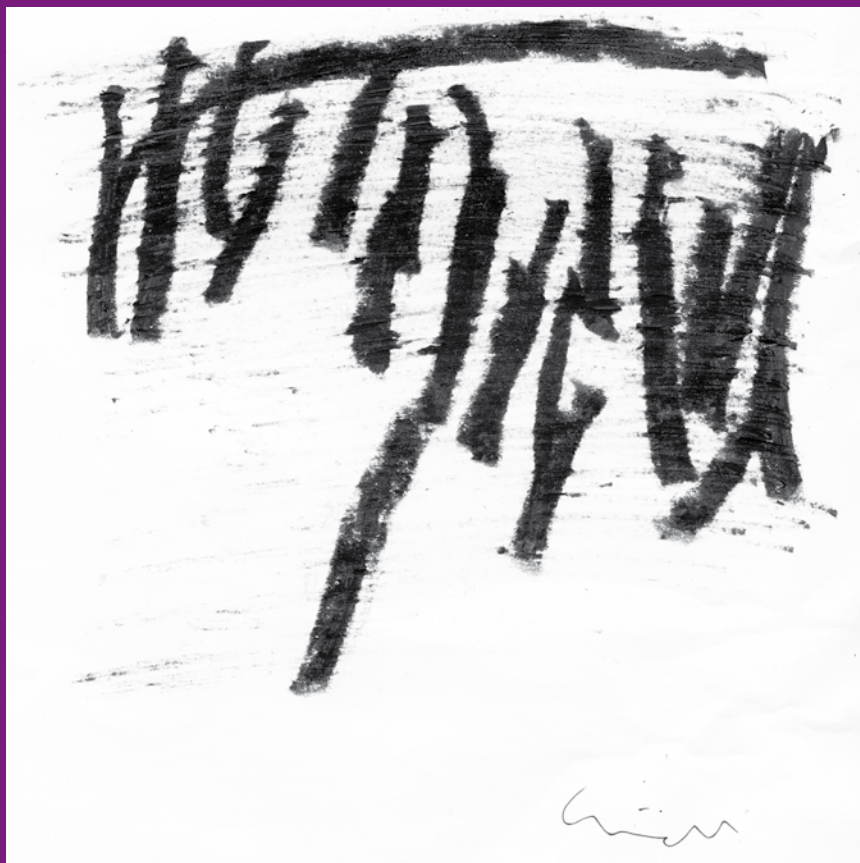
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ramon llull



EDITORIAL

Catalan Literary Translations after Frankfurt 2007

With the distance of time, it has become clear that being the guest of honor at the Frankfurt International Book Fair was a strong affirmation of Catalan culture by the German editors: in just one year—as a result of the translation work carried out during the prior five years—fifty-three Catalan literature titles were translated into German. The work was rigorous, making use of the whole arc of Catalan literature: medieval classics (Ramon Llull, *Tirant lo blanc*), classics of the twentieth century (Salvador Espriu, Josep Pla, Mercè Rodoreda...), many current fiction writers (Quim Monzó, Carme Riera, Albert Sánchez-Pinyol, Josep Maria

Fonalleras, Jordi Puntí...), as well as poets (Pere Gimferrer, Joan Margarit...) and works of theatre and essay were translated. The Germans discovered a literature unknown to many of them, but more significantly, they discovered it as readers. In addition, from Holland to India, Portugal to Greece, the success achieved by the German editors has spread like wildfire.

In 2008 we can verify the effect of Frankfurt 2007: the IRL has granted 81 translation subsidies. This fact clearly shows that translations into German are remaining at a good level and are increasing in other languages. In 2007, the IRL subsidized 82 translations, 13 of which were into German and 69 into other languages. In 2008, translations into German have understandably diminished, although translations remain at a good pace, with seven subsidies granted to several of the publishing houses that published Catalan literature in previous years by repeat authors, such as Maria Barbal—who published a second novel with a third on the way—, Baltasar Porcel, Teresa Solana and Sergi Pàmies, and by newly translated authors, such as Toni Sala.

A couple of cases might serve as examples of the circulation of titles and authors from country to country. Thus, the impressive success of *Les veus del Pamano*, by Jaume Cabré, in Germany (unanimous critical praise and 250,000 copies sold), came after the publication of translations in Hungarian and Spanish, and was followed by the the Dutch and Italian versions in 2007, Portuguese and Romanian in 2008, and French and Greek in 2009.

Mercè Rodoreda, in the year of her centennial, has been confirmed as a classic of European literature, widely read: *La plaça del diamant* appeared in a German paperback edition, translated into Hebrew and in a new Dutch edition in 2007, in an extraordinarily well-sold Italian edition in 2008, and translated into Sardinian in 2009. *Quanta, quanta guerra* was translated into German in 2007, and a new edition in French, together with *La mort i la primavera*, appeared in 2008.

In spring of 2009 the English version of *La mort i la primavera* was introduced in New York by a new publishing house specializing in translations (Open Letter), which represents a thaw in the language most resistant to them, English. In 2008 an extraordinary Verdaguer anthology was published, and in the US and Great Britain, recent English translations of Joan Margarit, Jordi Coca, Quim Monzó, Teresa Solana and Jaume Cabré have been published. The classics collection by the New York Review of Books is translating *El quadern gris* by Josep Pla. Finally, the publication of a monograph dedicated to “New Catalan Fiction” by the prestigious *Journal of Contemporary Fiction* from the Dalkey Archives in Spring 2008 confirms the United States’ growing interest in Catalan letters.

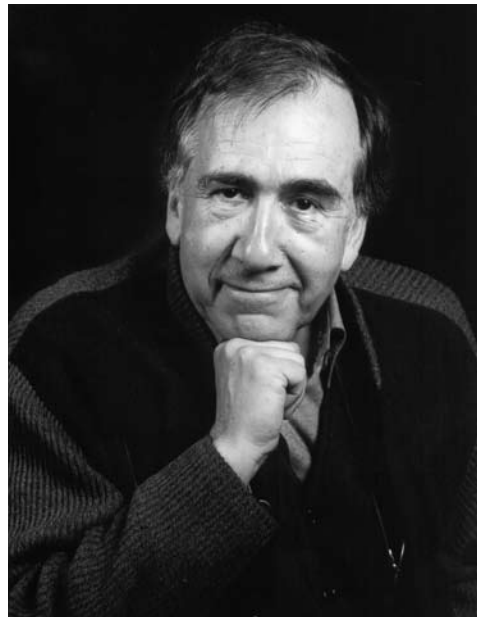
CARLES TORNER
Humanities Department, Institut Ramon Llull

ACTIONS & VOICES

The Presence of the Catalan Language at Universities Worldwide

One of the efforts of the Ramon Llull Institute is to aid the presence of Catalan language and culture studies in the curricula of universities outside of the Catalan-speaking territories. Currently there are 164 universities outside of these territories that impart some kind of teaching of Catalan culture, in large part in arrangement with our Institute. This entails a presence on five continents, with a total of 7,000 students. It is not a uniform presence, for obvious reasons—beginning with geographic, cultural or linguistic proximity: 123 universities in Europe, 33 in America, four in Asia, two in the Middle East, one in Africa and one in Oceania. The studies undertaken are also diverse: from doctoral degrees—in higher-level research centers—to the “complementary qualifications” that we have started in eight German universities: aside from the degree program that each student follows, he or she has the option to take a 150-credit course of Catalan language and culture. Thus, students obtain the degree title in their field, and at the same time a qualification in Catalan that, for example, might permit them to have an internship in our country’s businesses. We might say that Catalan is the European language without official status in any state of the Union that achieves the largest international university teaching presence, more even than a good number of those that are official, which is also the case for Catalan in other fields, such as web pages or literary translations. Still, once we have achieved what we might call a satisfactory quantity, the challenge is to create a qualitative leap: more presence of Catalan language and culture in curricula—especially in literature, thought, art, etc.—, more research centers, more presence in regions further away...

JOSEP BARGALLÓ I VALLS,
director of the Ramon Llull Institute



INTERVIEW

JOAN MARGARIT

PATRÍCIA GABANCHO

He defines his poetry in one word: clarity. The clarity of human beings facing life. Joan Margarit, considered one of the best contemporary Catalan poets, analyzes and transmits his experience with precise, stripped down, and entirely elegant language: literary austerity to explain the pain and consolation of being alive. As a professional architect, the house, this refuge-space, is a recurrent metaphor: “I say again, pointing at an abstract space / like the one from my childhood: *this is home*. / And all places are nothing more than death.”

Poems don’t fall from the sky. As a poet you are always searching. One doesn’t write a poem every day, but one must work every day, starting from inspiration. Image? Word? Inspiration is never linguistic. Poems are in the world, around you, because experience is the primary material with which you work. You have a family, professional, economic, social, emotional, and sexual life, and it doesn’t matter whether you are an architect or a plumber. The important thing is the experience of life, because that is where you search for the poem. I am not at all a hunter but I imagine that if you make a hunter, for example, cross a forest, he will not be able to help but find tracks, signs that tell him whether it is partridge or rabbit season. The poet has an eye trained to find poems in life.

In your poetry there is a very intense, very sad experience, and a very naked way of expressing it. And also the intuition that life goes on.

I would say that what defines my poetry is clarity. There is, of course, also pain and consolation. To take the last three books, *Càlcul d’estructures* (Structural Calculations) is a book about pain and *Casa de Misericòrdia* (House of Mercy) is a book about consolation. *Misteriosament feliç* (Mysteriously Happy) is to begin to recognize, without any dissembling, that a mysterious path leads us to happiness in life, and mysterious I think is essential here. We don’t know how, but there is the possibility of approaching a kind of happiness. Life is worthwhile, but you have to work. Without this effort, possibilities diminish and life might be reduced to a couple of cheers when your team wins on a Sunday. One can live like that, certainly, but it is not very rich. If we had 27 lives it wouldn’t be a problem for one of them to be reduced to that, but we only have one life after all. So it is necessary to deepen it.

Poetry is, thus, an instrument of knowledge?

Of course. As much for the poet as for the reader: to read and write poetry is the same thing. The point of departure is not democratic because not everyone can write poetry, just as not everyone can paint a painting, but that doesn’t matter: a poet is only the composer and the poem is the musical score, a piece of paper. The reader is not the person who goes to hear the concert, but rather the musician, and depending on how you read, and the moment in which you read, the poem changes. A musician does not play the same way on one day as another; it depends on the experiences borne in each moment. It is not easy to be a reader of poetry, and that is why there are so few.

In *Casa de Misericòrdia*, poetry is defined as a refuge where one is welcomed after pain. Is it a refuge for the reader as well?

Basically, for the reader. Without readers poetry does not exist. The interpreter makes the poem reality.

Does poetry always tell the truth?

Yes, if there is not truth it is a bad poem. We don’t know why, but the reader can see it. You don’t return to a bad poem. If you aren’t certain that you will return, or that you can return to it, that poem is worthless. And it is always the poet’s fault.

In poetry, is it true that less is more? Does learning to write consist of stripping language, taking away ornament to leave only the essence?

Poetry tends towards the naked truth, or at least my generation thinks that language becomes more powerful if it is rid of artifice. Now, maybe another generation will think the opposite. It wouldn’t be the first time.

Is writing in Catalan the ballast for global dissemination?

I manage in two linguistic areas, in Catalan and Spanish. I always write the first version of the poem in Catalan, but beyond that I work in two languages at the same time. I have readers in Catalonia and in Spain. I’m not too worried about the rest of the world; I don’t have that ambition, because I know that language is not universal like music or painting. In another language it is another poem. That’s why they say that only a poet can translate poetry, or at least that it’s better for a poet to do it.

Does the fact that you are considered one of the best living Catalan poets mean that you have found good readers?

First, thank you for that “living,” because it means that I can keep enjoying life; after that, all in God’s good time, as the old folks say... It is difficult to be a good reader of poetry, but there is a nucleus of experience that makes us all equal: facing the death of a loved one. It doesn’t matter if you are a king or a pauper. Afterwards, different things will happen to you, but the experience is the same for all. Poetry has to explain this nucleus that is common to all of us. If the poem turns out badly it is because the poet has fallen into a cliché, has put on a mask. Or because the story is so personal that no one is interested.

“Frostless, above the hard earth / with its black rime, the birds depart” (...) “A melted purple on the horizon, / the mountains draw near like guilt.”

ON POETRY

Gabriel Ferrater (1922-1972) is the author of a poetic oeuvre composed in a very tight span of time (1958-1963) and soon gathered into one volume: *Les dones i els dies* (Women and Days; 1968). Ferrater's literary proposal, with its blunt power, was radically eccentric at the time it appeared, but became an important reference for many poets (and readers) of later generations. With the passing of time, naturally, a part of what made this poetry provocative has become dulled, but on the other hand it has not lost any of its capacity to shock us. The poems of *Les dones i els dies* still speak with a deliberately colloquial tone, still attract the reader's attention to what we could call the moral life of an ordinary man, and still know how to transform lucid observation into genuine artistic experience. Any subject is likely to serve as impetus for a good poem. Such is the case of this one, translated into English by Ferrater himself, who explained: "This was suggested by a reading of *Huckleberry Finn* — Twain's mad running after the body's memories."

A L'INREVÉS

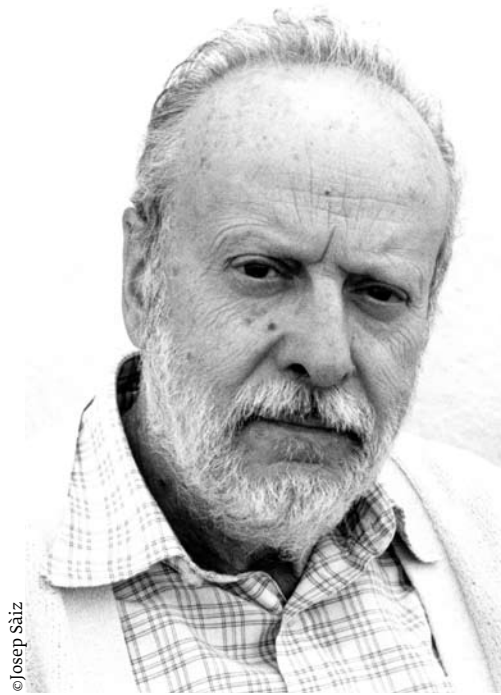
Ho diré a l'inrevés. Diré la pluja
frenètica d'agost, els peus del noi
caragolats al fil del trampolí,
l'agut salt de llebrer que fa l'aroma
dels lilàs a l'abril, la paciència
de l'aranya que escriu la seva fam,
el cos amb quatre cames i dos caps
en un solar gris de crepuscle, el peix
llisquent com un arquet de violí,
el blau i l'or de les nenes en bici,
la set dramàtica del gos, el tall
dels fars de camió en la matinada
pútrida del mercat, els braços fins.
Diré el que em fuig. No diré res de mi.

CONTRARIWISE

I will say it contrariwise. I will say the frantic
rain in August, a boy's feet
curling on the edge of a diving-plank,
the acute foxhound-jump the scent of lilacs
makes in April, the patience
of the spider writing down its hunger,
the four-legged two-headed body
in an evening-gray vacant lot, the fish
slippery like a violin-bow,
the blue-and-gold of girls biking,
the dog's dramatical thirst, the cutting-through
of lorries' lights into the putrid
dawn of the market-hall, the smooth arms.
I will say what goes from me. I will say nothing
about me.

JORDI CORNUDELLA

WORK IN PROGRESS



© Josep Stiz

Joaquim Carbó (Caldes de Malavella, 1932) is one of the most prolific and important writers in contemporary Catalan fiction. His extensive output embraces both novels and short narrative and is an obligatory reference for his major contribution to literature for young adults and children, with more than seventy titles, among which we should highlight the already mythic "La casa sota la sorra" (The House Under the Sand). Linked to the journal "Cavall Fort" since its foundation in 1961 and to the Ofelia Dracs Collective, Carbó's work has been awarded with the most important prizes, such as the Víctor Català (1964) or the Joan Santamària (1965). It has also won the "Serra d'Or" Critics' Prize on two occasions and, in 2007, was recognized with the Trajectòria Prize. Currently, Carbó is working on a volume of microstories, *Histèries del metro* (Metro Hysterics), of which we present a taste.

The Irresistible Impulse

Standing up, he focuses his attention on the neck of the girl sitting with her back to him. She is moving in an almost imperceptible way, as if she were practicing a gymnastics made up of smooth rotations of the neck, movements so subtle that that they cause him to bring his hands up to her neck without

calculating the risk such a forbidden gesture. After the initial surprise that causes the girl to contract slightly, more disconcerted than offended, he makes himself move his hands with more discretion until she relaxes and lets him touch her, without even turning around to find out who is making her feel so good, or what he looks like. If one were observing, one might think that there was a deep complicity between the two of them. When the girl hears the loudspeaker announce the name of the next stop, which is hers, she gets up, but slowly, so she won't break off that strange relation too abruptly. Then she turns, looks at him, smiles, stands on her tiptoes and kisses his cheek: "Thanks, sweetheart," she says, and heads for the door. Now the boy, with his hands so empty, regrets not having followed her, or asked for her name, where she lives, or... Later, when he takes his apartment keys from his pocket, he finds the card of someone named Esperança, and on it is written: "Call me!"

The Round

He couldn't hear the tone of the lovebirds' conversation: it had to be high voltage because their eyes smoldered. They break their embrace, the boy gets off regretfully, and she, retouching her makeup, continues. One stop later, when another young man gets on, the girl is already set to offer him her cheek to receive a light kiss before beginning a dialogue of a calmer kind. During the three stops that they travel together, both show discrete affection, not as tempestuous as with the earlier boy. Thus, when she is alone again, there is no need to redo her face before receiving the hurried embrace of a third friend who disappears immediately. The observer, when he realizes that the girl is about to descend, tries to tell her that he would also like to participate in... The girl cuts him off, lets him know that she was aware of his interest and offers to reciprocate it during the part of the trip that stretches from where she was left alone until now, since she has to get off... The boy accepts, with the idea that later on he will have her to himself, but time passes, and as much as he insists, he will not prevail. The girl's intent is to distribute small doses of happiness.

Men and Mice

He leaves the house for work with enough time to take a stroll before entering the underground transit tunnel. Once he is there, and sees that the train will arrive in two minutes, he sits on a bench next to the bars of an air vent. Near the ground something is moving: it is a darling mouse, alive, quick and wiggling. Nothing to do with those sewer rats that run down the tracks! If it were the morning he could give it some morsel of the breakfast that his dearest prepares so lovingly, but he doesn't normally eat snacks. He rummages through his pocket and finds only some threads of tobacco. No, what he needs is a cheese rind. He looks at the clock: he has time. What of it, if he loses his ticket! He exits at the street and walks toward home with brisk steps, doesn't wait for the elevator and takes the stairs two at a time. Entering the apartment he hears a whispering in the bedroom. He goes in without knocking and finds his wife in the arms of a neighbor. He doesn't know what to do or say, and flees for the street. He walks mechanically towards the station, and when he sees the mouse again he is sorry not to have a dose of venom to make him pay for the disgrace that has befallen him, all the mouse's faultz.

PUBLISHING NEWS



Mercè Rodoreda

La plaça del diamant (The Time of the Doves)

laNuovafontiera
Translated into Italian by Giuseppe Tavani

Colometa's story, Mercè Rodoreda's most popular and oft-translated novel, is reborn in Italian—with unprecedented success, according to the publisher laNuovafontiera. The 25,000 copies sold in two months placed it on the list of the most well sold foreign literature books. Its commercial success has been accompanied by critical blessing from the principal communication media of the country. The Rodoreda phenomenon in Italy coincides with the centennial of the writer's birth. *La plaça del diamant* was published for the first time in Italy in 1970 and again in 1992. The present edition incorporates a new translation undertaken by Giuseppe Tavani. For laNuovafontiera, *La plaça del diamant* leads off a series of editions of Rodoreda's most outstanding titles, among which are included *El carrer de les camèlies* (Camellia Street) and *Jardí vora el mar* (Garden by the Sea).



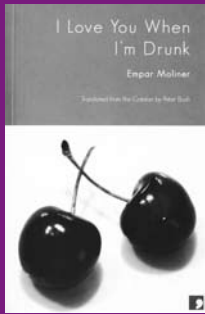
Josep Pla

Nocturn de primavera (Noapte de primăvară; Spring Nocturne)

Bucharest: RAO
Translated into Romanian by Anca Bărbulescu and Joan Llinàs Suau

Nocturn de primavera is one of Josep Pla's few incursions into fiction during the course of his very extensive oeuvre. The novel is set in a town of the Empordà (it could be Palafrugells or also La Bisbal d'Empordà, which Pla calls Vilaplana), where an important banker gathers the town's most distinguished citizens to celebrate his daughter's wedding. The celebration becomes the backdrop against which the tensions that dominate this small society are made visible. Pla paints a clear portrait of the country and, in a way, the human condition. *Nocturn de primavera* appeared from the publisher Selecta in 1953, but years later was lengthened and restructured by the author and appeared thusly in the 1972 Complete Works. Three years ago,

the writer Baltasar Porcel and the publisher Destino recovered the first edition of the novel to commemorate the twenty-five years since Josep Pla's death. The Romanian translator has chosen the second version, the one that Pla rewrote.



Empar Moliner

T'estimo si he begut (I Love You When I'm Drunk)

Comma Press
Translated into English by Peter Bush

T'estimo si he begut contains thirteen stories that portray situations of strictly contemporary life with irony and humor. They are everyday situations carried to the limit, portraits of modern life that range from comical to bitter, written with a style as rigorous as it is impudent, employing fresh, direct language. Moliner makes rigorous use of humor to denounce certain behaviors. The author speaks of a feminist group that organizes a talk against discrimination; of a man who gets angry with his boyfriend after dreaming that he has caught him in bed with another; of a couple who attend a course required for adoptive parents... Empar Moliner's bibliography includes stories as well as novels and opinion

articles. She is a "media savvy" writer, known to a wider audience for her participation in various radio and television programs. *T'estimo si he begut* won the Lletra d'Or Prize.



Anonymous

Llibre de Sent Soví (The Book of Sent Soví: Medieval Recipes from Catalonia)

Translated into English by Robin Vogelzang

The *Llibre de Sent Soví* is the oldest book of medieval recipes known to exist in Catalan. Tamesis Books has published the English edition, based on a version edited by Joan Santanach, who modernized the spelling in order to make this valuable volume more approachable to a wider public. Santanach based his version on the only manuscript that exists, a copy made in the fifteenth century and currently at the Historical Library of the University of Valencia. This gastronomic treatise is believed to have been compiled towards the first half of the fourteenth century, but the compiler remained anonymous, as the result of successive interventions. Santanach says that the recipe books was seen as a practical text, a working tool at the disposition of cooks who, while using it, included new

procedures, left out recipes or added notes about certain aspects of the dishes. The *Llibre de Sent Soví* demonstrates that the Catalan culinary tradition is a long one. Already a vibrant force during the old Crown of Aragon, this tradition continues to the current moment of great prestige for Catalan cuisine in the world. Tamesis Books (a branch of Boydell & Brewer), according to an agreement with the publisher Barcino, is internationalizing the medieval Catalan classics: they have already published an anthology of Ausiàs March and the chronicles of Ramon Muntaner in English, as well as works of Ramon Llull and Francesc Eiximenis.



Teresa Solana

Drecera al paradís (Shortcut to Paradise)

Editorial Piper
Translated into German by Petra Zickmann

This is the second volume of satirical murder mysteries whose main characters are the occasional detectives Eduard and Pep, twin brothers, created by Teresa Solana. The first book, *Un crim imperfect* (An Imperfect Crime), Solana's first work, had a warm welcome from the Catalan public, was distinguished with the Brigada 21 Prize, and was translated into several languages, including German (as well as Spanish, Italian, French and English), to coincide with the 2007 Frankfurt Book Fair, with more than 12,000 copies sold. The publisher Piper has championed this author by translating her second mystery novel. *Drecera al paradís*' story begins with the murder of a well-known and best-selling writer at Barcelona's

Ritz Hotel, on the same night that she wins a prestigious literary prize. A frustrated writer with a strange alibi is accused of the crime: at the exact time of the murder, the writer in question is attacked by a translator who finds himself in a dire economic situation. In this novel Teresa Solana infiltrates the miseries of Barcelona's literary world. "I could care less about a certain attitude in literature and I denounce situations like those of translators, who often live badly on very low salaries."



Emili Teixidor

Pa negra (Black Bread)

Ed. Castanotis
Translated into Greek by Caterina Tzoridu

Halfway between memoir and fiction, the story revolves around Andreu, a boy who lives in central Catalonia in the most crucial years of the post-war. He is child of the losing side: his father, a man of firm Republican ideals, is in prison, and his mother has to work in a factory. Andreu lives in the farmhouse with some relatives, caught between a childhood about to become adolescence, space of life's initiation, and a world of adults, which he senses is full of secrets and fear. When the novel was published in 2003, it was immediately successful among critics and the public, for the language employed and its narrative construction. Emili Teixidor (Roda de Ter, Osona, 1934) has an extensive and successful

literary career. He has written children's and youth literature and personal essay, habitually appears in the media, and has written television and movie scripts. With *Pa negra* he won the National Literature Prize, the Lletra d'Or prize, the Crexells award and the Maria Angels Anglada award, all for published work.

MONTSERRAT SERRA

LITERARY SOCIETY

THE BERNAT METGE COLLECTION

The Bernat Metge collection is one of the most outstanding cultural initiatives of the twentieth century in Catalonia. Instituted in 1923 by Francesc Cambó, and sustained to this day by his heirs, the Bernat Metge numbers among the most select collections of the world, offering a bilingual edition of the works of Greek and Roman authors, the original text edited, translated and annotated with philological rigor. Because of these characteristics, and its long history, this Catalan collection is probably only comparable on an international level to the Loeb Classical Library (available since 1911 in the Anglo-Saxon world) and the Budé (the Collection des Universités de France published, since 1920, by the Association Guillaume Budé).

During the course of more than eighty-five years of history, the Bernat Metge collection has published 368 volumes; thus, it has made great strides in its attempt to make the written legacy of the classics (literary, historical, philosophical, scientific, and other types of works) available to the cultured Catalan reader. Fortunately, there is still a lot of material left to cover. One avenue for exploration is to increase the availability of old titles, which in itself constitutes an essential asset in contemporary Catalan culture.

For this reason the Institut Cambó, which is the owner of the Bernat Metge collection, and Grup 62, an irrefutable reference in current Catalan publishing, have reached an agreement. The combined effort of both entities has already begun to bear fruit. Just a few weeks ago fifty selected titles from the Bernat Metge collection began to be distributed at newsstands. At the moment, the idea has been warmly welcomed, and this suggests an optimistic outlook for new initiatives planned by the Institut Cambó and Grup 62 in order to spread the classical heritage among the largest possible number of readers.

FRANCESC GUARDANS I XAVIER MALLAFRÉ

ON LINE Medieval Literature

The Llibre dels feyts of Jaume I

<http://www.lafactoria.eu/EILlibreDelsFeyts/>

A recent digital production that allows computer users to see, read and listen to one of the great Catalan royal chronicles, written in 1343.

RIALC

<http://www.riale.unina.it/>

This "repertorio informatizzato dell'antica letteratura catalana" of the the University of Naples "Federico II" is a true archeological site that provides direct access to the corpus of medieval poetry in Catalan. Won the 2001 Lletra Prize for the best digital initiative in Catalan literature.

Llull DB

<http://www.llull.cat/>

The Ramon Llull Institute is the official body responsible for the exterior promotion of Catalan Culture. It subsidizes translations from Catalan to other languages, and organizes periodic events for the promotion of Catalan works and authors at international fairs and festivals. In Catalan, Spanish and English.

NARPAN

<http://www.narpan.net/>

Defined as a "Catalan Literary and Cultural Space," this web page provides access to the work of the most important university research team on literature and culture in the Low Middle Ages.

Literatura catalana medieval (Medieval Catalan Literature)

<http://www.editorialuoc.com/literaturacatalanamedieval/>

These course materials from the Open University of Catalonia (UOC), provided by professor Albert Soler, present an original multimedia journey through the authors and texts of the period.

Textos medievals catalans (Medieval Catalan Texts)

<http://www.tlcat.net/>

A joint web page of various collections to disseminate editions of texts and studies of medieval Catalan writings. In Catalan, Spanish and English.

JAUME SUBIRANA