

CATALAN WRITING

7

EDITORIAL

ACTIONS & VOICES

INTERVIEW

ON POETRY

WORK IN PROGRESS

PUBLISHING NEWS

LITERARY SOCIETY

ON LINE

WHO'S WHO

Chief editor: Dolors Oller

Editor: Carme Arenas

Editorial Staff:

Josep Bargalló

Miquel Berga

Patricia Gabancho

Ramon Pla Arxé

Jaume Subirana

Illustration: Narcís Comadira

Coordination and documentation:

Glòria Oller

Translation: Robin Vogelzang

Design: Azuanco & Comadira

Printed by: Igol S.A.

Edited and distributed by:

PEN Català

Canuda, 6, 5è

08002 BARCELONA

T 93 318 32 98

pen@pencatala.cat

www.pencatala.cat

Novembre 2009

PEN
català

Pen és una associació sense ànim de lucre que té com a objectiu principal promoure i difondre la llengua catalana a través de la literatura i la cultura. Pen és una associació sense ànim de lucre que té com a objectiu principal promoure i difondre la llengua catalana a través de la literatura i la cultura.

lll institut
ramon llull



EDITORIAL

The *Ethnologue* says that some 6,000 languages are spoken in the world, of which more than 5,700 (95%) are spoken by fewer than a million people. Many linguists believe that the majority of these small languages will disappear before the end of the twenty-first century, as well as, perhaps, a good portion of the 239 (3.9%) languages spoken by between one and ten million people. It is probable that these languages will be replaced by a new diversity. But that is no consolation for those who fear for their own tongue: an emotion, the *pain of language*, which explains the resistance to its disappearance.

Is it true that we need languages? Babel, which has always been perceived as a punishment, seems to tell us we do not, and

would not justify the desire to return to that *labium electum* of our origins. But if in the beginning there was one language—and every day there are more who agree on that point—while today there are so many, it must be because diversity has brought some kind of evolutionary advantage. Someone has suggested that languages define spaces of collaboration and, thus, fix the limits of community. In this sense, they would be inevitable.

Thus, we must work towards diversity in today's global world. From a western and thus partial perspective, until recently the tensions of plurilingual states were only produced between two languages: that of the state and the historical tongue of every territory the state needed to eliminate in order to become a nation-state. But today territories are not closed spaces and some degree of multiglossia is inevitable. How can we include the historical languages to avoid their disappearance? Some spaces are not worth fighting for because they are predetermined by magnitude or ethnicity (for example, the spaces of international relations, on one hand, or of family relationships, on the other). But there are other spaces that offer opportunities. The most important is that of vehicularity. In situations of multilingualism it is necessary to find guidelines for behavior in everyday life. Today, none of us can assume what language a stranger speaks, and in a situation like this a language known to everyone is necessary to serve as a vehicular language. And this space will determine the visibility of languages.

At the moment, migratory movements favor state languages to occupy the space of vehicularity. It is often thus because the states themselves benefit from the situation to expand the language of the state. In the case of Catalonia, unfamiliarity with Catalan by a large part of the immigrant population makes it a language that cannot be taken for granted and that, in consequence, cannot function as a vehicular language. This is why Spanish is used so often to speak with a stranger. To ensure that a non-state language might function as a vehicular language we must guarantee its obligatory comprehension (and this does not mean a state language must not be spoken as well).

But the nationalism of the states that want to become nations pushes all non-official language towards disappearance because the nation-state is, by definition, incompatible with multilingualism. This is why the attempts to make all citizens of a bilingual territory know both languages, which is the only guarantee that the speakers of the historical language can always use their tongue in anonymous communication, have become the preferred target of the attacks of state nationalism. From this perspective, if we want to allow some possibility for the survival of non-state languages, we must begin to change the idea of the nation-state: to move from the nation-state to the plural state, to forget unity in order to promote union.

JOSEP M. NADAL

ACTIONS & VOICES

Greek and Latin classics in Catalan: the Fundació Bernat Metge collection

In 1923 the Fundació Bernat Metge undertook the translation of Greek and Latin classics into Catalan, thanks to the initiative and patronage of Francesc Cambó. The publishing project aspired to the translation and publication of all the classics, in three hundred volumes and ten years. It was to be a collected work of superior quality and sought to stand among the ranks of other European collections of the time. Its unprecedented cultural mission had the support of the bourgeoisie, who had to defend the values of Catalan identity in the midst of the unfavorable situation of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. The selection of Greek and Latin authors who were to be translated into Catalan also required establishing a literary canon of the classics and went hand in hand with a desire to influence the language at a very crucial moment of its formation. However, after an initial euphoria, and especially from 1929 onward, reality compelled some changes to the initial project. A few years later, the barbarity of the civil war would put an end to the first phase of publication, of an uneven quality. In 1947, work was resumed and has continued up to the current moment, a third era of publication that still maintains a rhythm of six volumes every year. The historical collection today includes more than three hundred fifty volumes and a quite exhaustive catalogue of the primary Latin and Greek authors. Now, for the first time, a specific study on one author has been published, an unimaginable idea at the beginning of the project. The essay *Introducció a la Ilíada: Homer, entre la història i la llegenda* (Introduction to the Iliad: Homer, between History and Legend; Alpha, 2008), by Jaume Pòrtulas, professor of Greek philology at the University of Barcelona and member of the Board of Directors of the foundation, has been awarded this year's National Literature Prize by the newly created National Council of Culture and the Arts.

MONTSERRAT FRANQUESA

INTERVIEW



JAUME PÒRTULAS

MONTSERRAT FRANQUESA

Jaume Pòrtulas (Barcelona, 1949) has dedicated more than five hundred erudite pages to Homer and the Iliad, bringing history, archeology, and legend to bear on Homeric poetry. A specialist in the ancient Greek world and in the translation of the classics, Professor Pòrtulas is aware of the precarious situation of classical languages in our national school programs and the lesser value that today's society grants to humanistic knowledge.

The study of the Iliad is the fruit of many years of research, when you also were a teacher of various generations of students. What were the reasons that drove you to study classics?

This question requires me to go back almost to the beginning, even before I entered university. My interest in the ancients came from before that, from secondary school. I was able to follow an excellent course of studies, which lasted seven years, five of them in Latin. Greek and Latin fascinated me because they were languages that were not used for daily communication; they were languages through which one could access a world that is not ours, in contrast to the "living" languages that can be used to ask for the time or a coffee, a remote world one can only get to by knowing two distant and difficult languages. For me, due to family tradition, Latin had from the first been the language of liturgy. I remember my fascination with it: it transported me to a different realm. I can still recite from memory some of the introits and psalms that won me over with the seductive, fascinating force of words that seemed to come from the beyond.

Who were your teachers, the professors who were able to respond to that fascination for ancient languages?

I began to study at the Institut Milà i Fontanals when it was still at Carrer de la Canuda. It was an excellent place, one of the seven secondary schools in Barcelona at the time. I remember the physics and math classes, of a superior caliber; but I didn't exactly take advantage of them... They were difficult and demanding, with some brilliant professors who called to mind, even for biographical reasons, the Institut-Escola from before the Civil War. The oldest of them had been teachers there; the director of the time, Doctor Casulleras, had been a student; and Josep Vergés had been the secretary. I particularly remember the literature and philosophy classes, very solid, and especially the Greek and Latin classes. The Greek professor, Ribera, who had studied in Salamanca with Unamuno, focused us on learning the language and in those three years I learned more Greek than in the years right after... It was an uncompromising style of teaching, based on memorization. With Latin it was quite different. If the word "humanist" has any real meaning, Vergés was a true humanist. I think now, however, that he was more of a Horace man than Virgil, the author that we translated at the time. He also liked Catullus quite a lot, and he made me read him, even though it was not part of our studies. With Vergés we went through the sixth canto of the *Aeneid*; really it was through Virgil that I came to Homer, as is the case for so many people.

Although the original project of the Fundació Bernat Metge did not foresee the publication of specific studies about authors or works, doesn't an introduction to Homer now come too late?

The initial proposals for the Fundació Bernat Metge happened in an irregular and uneven way. In a kind of foundational document, Joan Estelrich had already suggested that the lyric fragments had to be treated in a special manner. Even now, the catalogue of the Fundació has some significant gaps. Carles Riba himself took some time to get to essential authors such as Aeschylus, perhaps because he thought that going straight to the tragedies would not have pleased the collection's audience, in those years quite limited in size and not well taught. It was certainly a question of phases, or maybe a result of chance, that the Introduction arrived in 2008. I had always wanted to write about Homer; it's probably the unconfessed desire of any Hellenist!

During its first stage, lasting up to the civil war, the FBM collection played a very important role in establishing the Catalan language. After the conflict, from 1947 on, it focused on the task of survival. Today the FBM is experiencing a third phase. What role should a collection of bilingual classics have in our society?

Some time ago, a bookseller friend told me that the classics might be in a state of crisis at the university level, but not in the bookstore. We live in an era of multiple translations and many literary studies, on every level. It is appropriate for a normal culture to have several translation of the same author competing at the same time. One must hope that what can be lost at the high school or college level is compensated, as much as possible, by the fact that people read the great authors on their own; at least, we can't say that they are not well translated! The Fundació does not have a monopoly on the classics any more, as it did in practice for so many years. The market offers many more options; the Bernat Metge collection coexists with others, some of an excellent quality, and each one has its potential audience. This is good in every respect, and also should prompt the Fundació to redefine and specify its own space.

ON POETRY

Salvat-Papasseit, Joan. Barcelona, 16 May 1894–7 August 1924. He began his poetic career with the publication of the poem *Columna vertebral, sageta de foc* (Vertebral Column, Arrow of Fire, 1917) in the journal *Un enemic del poble* (An Enemy of the People), a career that would affect the evolution of avant-garde poetry in Catalonia, even as he adopted the most critical stances of Italian futurism. The books *Poemes en ondes hertzianes* (Poems in Hertzian Waves, 1919) and *L'irradiador del port i les gavines* (The Port Beacon and the Seagulls, 1921), subtitled *Poemes d'avantguarda* (Avant-Garde Poems), were to follow. From then on, Salvat-Papasseit's poetry underwent a change, consisting in the progressive abandonment of the avant-garde thesis and a closer approach to popular poetry: this is the case of the book *La gesta dels estels* (Epic of the Stars, 1921), or the cultivation of nationalist themes contained in the book *Les conspiracions* (Conspiracies, 1922). In 1923 he published *El poema de la rosa als llavis* (The Poem of the Rose on the Lips), a unified love poem, a love story between a girl, the "apprentice," and the poet, "master of love." Gravely ill of tuberculosis, he wrote *Óssa menor* (Ursa Minor, 1925), published posthumously.

SOTA EL MEU LLAVI EL SEU

Sota el meu llavi el seu, com el foc i la brasa,
la seda dels seus rulls com el pecat més dolç
—i l'espatlla ben nua
ben blanca
l'ombra corba
incitant
de l'esguard:
encara un altre bes
un altre
un altre
—quin parfum de magnòlia el seu pit odorant!

From the book *El poema de la rosa als llavis* (1923)

UNDER MY LIPS, HERS

Under my lips, hers, like fire on embers,
the silk of her locks like the sweetest sin
—and her back so bare
all white
the curving shadow
inciting
glances:
still another kiss
and another
and another
—perfume of magnolia her scented breasts!

Translated by Dominic Keown and Tom Owen

CARME ARENAS

WORK IN PROGRESS



Jordi Puntí was born in 1967 and lives in Barcelona. He is a regular contributor to *El Periódico* and *L'Avenç*. He has published three books of short stories: *Pell d'armadillo* (Armadillo Skin) (1998), *Animals tristos* (Sad Animals) (2002) and *Set dies al vaixell de l'amor* (Seven Days on the Love Boat) (2005), with drawings by Mariscal. His books have been translated into Spanish, Italian, German, French, Croatian and Portuguese. He has recently finished his first novel, *Maletes perdudes* (Lost luggage), to be published in 2010.

Selection from *Maletes perdudes*, chapter 4.

Destiny, scatterbrained and playful as a puppy, situated Gabriel and Bundó in a boarding house, property of one Senyora Rifà. Senyora Natàlia Rifà was a small, energetic and high-strung woman. She was a good fifty years old, single, distrustful, a belligerent coquette, and she moved through her house as if always stamping out fires in some room or another. Despite disappointments in love, she had never stopped putting herself together each morning. She was clean and demanded that her boarders be as well: if she saw that they had a future in the house, she educated them in neatness. She cooked passably, that is, with liberal administration of salt but without much flourish, and thus she only accepted men as boarders, because she knew they were more likely to be tolerant.

The pension had not been renovated since many years before the war. In the summer the walls sweated and in some rooms, when it rained, humidity stains formed on the walls, which took a long time to disappear (a student from Jaca, superstitious to a fault, saw faces in them). The furniture creaked of age and this somewhat musty atmosphere was made even more noticeable due to the greatest peculiarity of the house: the stuffed and mounted animals.

Birds, canines, rodents, and felines: each room exhibited its own embalmed beast. In the entryway, half hidden above the coat and hat rack, a shiny-coated fox was custodian of the entrance—do come in, don't come in. On the ground, next to the umbrella stand, a friendly-faced dalmatian kept him company, seated on his haunches, seemingly waiting to be petted by someone coming or going. A squirrel with its tail bristled just like a feather duster climbed the bookcase in the hallway. In the dining room china cabinet, a light blue parrot and a cockatoo with multicolor plumage and open beak eternally twittered, imitating the words most often repeated by the inhabitants of the house. In another corner of the same cabinet, an iridescent hummingbird sipped from a plastic flower, its wings in perpetual still movement. A civet with its mouth half open, perched on top of the old buffet table, yearned for that succulent prey.

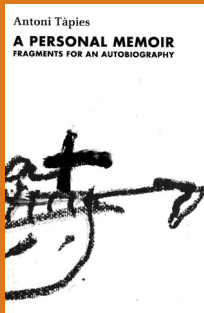
This dedication to taxidermy even extended to the landing of the stairs outside. With the permission of the other neighbors in the building, who saw it as a point of distinction that benefitted the whole property, Senyora Rifà had hung a wild goat's head next to the door, one of those goats with spiraling, sharp horns. When long-term guests had gained the approval of the mistress of the house, "the secret of the goat" was revealed to them: the nearly closed teeth of the animal guarded a copy of the key to the boarding house for those who were late and forgetful.

The invasion of still animals had happened some time ago, when Senyora Rifà had a boarder who was a salesman of Rioja wines. Gabriel and Bundó had barely missed meeting him, but another lodger was moved to explain the mystery to them. That gentleman, a widow with two unmarried daughters who exasperated him, stayed at the house for close to four years. In the beginning he spent one week of every month there, the time necessary to make the round of businesses and restaurants in Barcelona, but after half a year the stays had lengthened and, claiming a heavy workload, he allocated twenty days to the pension and ten to Logronyo. He and the Senyora spoke familiarly to one another and, doubtless, coincided every night on the same mattress. Her cohabitation with that man gave Senyora Rifà the happiest days of her life. In the end it also gave her the collection of embalmed animals.

The gentleman from Logronyo was a great lover of taxidermy. Every Friday afternoon he visited the taxidermy shop on Plaça Reial as if he were an explorer out for the hunt. He examined and reexamined the exhibited pieces and once in a while, when one stole his heart, he spent the money required to bring it home. Senyora Rifà would receive the new acquisition with only a wrinkling of her nose, but she was swift to find a place for it. In each new adoption she saw a sign of attachment. As long as the animals were there, she thought, the gentleman from Logronyo wouldn't dream of abandoning her.

Needless to say, she was wrong.

PUBLISHING NEWS



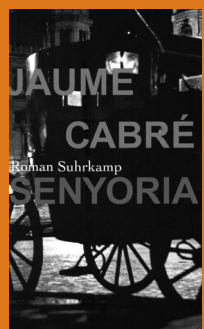
Antoni Tàpies

Memòria personal (A Personal Memoir)

Translated into English by Josep Miquel Sobrer
Indiana University Press and the Fundació Antoni Tàpies

Antoni Tàpies is certainly the most widely recognized living Catalan artist. The importance of his pictorial work and his role in the history of international art are now reinforced with the publication in English of his written works, in two volumes. The first contains A Personal Memoir, a collection of autobiographical texts with historical photographs from the private and family archives of the artist. It also contains a chronology and a sampling of Tàpies' artistic writings, from the 1940s to today. The book is already published in Spanish, French, Italian, German and Chinese versions. The publication of the second volume of the complete works in English is planned for 2010, and will also be a co-edition between Indiana University

Press and the Fundació Antoni Tàpies. The literary critic Sam Abrams considers the written work of Antoni Tàpies to be equal to that of his plastic artworks: "It is a robust literary text, and completely independent—to such a degree that I would dare to say that had he never painted but only written, he would enter history as a writer." Antoni Tàpies has published seven books between 1970 and 1999, which according to Abrams, add up to 1468 pages.



Jaume Cabré

Senyoria (Lordship)

Translated into German by Kristen Brandt
Suhrkamp Verlag

Jaume Cabré was one of the most championed Catalan authors during the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2007, where Catalan culture was the guest of honor. Joschka Fischer, the German ex-minister of foreign affairs, praised *Les veus del Pamano* and the editors of Suhrkamp and booksellers supported the work, which has also won public favor: last year more than 232,000 copies had been sold in Germany. Now, Suhrkamp is publishing another important title of Cabré's literary oeuvre, *Senyoria*. The novel deals with the merciless struggle for power in eighteenth century Barcelona, a struggle that results in a string of victims, some more innocent than others. *Senyoria*, published in Catalan in 1991, has already been translated into Spanish, Hungarian, Portuguese, Romanian, Galician, French, Italian, and Albanian.



Multiple authors

New Catalan Fiction

Edited by Jaume Subirana
The Review of Contemporary Fiction, no. 28
Dalkey Archive Press of the University of Illinois

The twenty-eighth volume of The Review of Contemporary Fiction, from the University of Illinois, is dedicated to new Catalan fiction. It includes stories from five classic authors of the twentieth century (Mercè Rodoreda, Pere Calders, Salvador Espriu, Jordi Sarsanedas and Jesús Moncada) and fifteen contemporary authors: Maria Barbal, Quim Monzó, Mercè Ibarz, Josep M. Fonalleras, Imma Monsó, Sergi Pàmies, Vicenç Pagès, Màrius Serra, Albert Sánchez Piñol, Empar Moliner, Jordi Puntí, Manel Zalaba, Toni Sala, Francesc Serés and

Pere Guixà. The anthology is edited by the writer Jaume Subirana and includes an epilogue by hispanist Mary Ann Newman, director of the Catalan Center in New York. The volume was presented in May of 2008 during the World Voices festival.



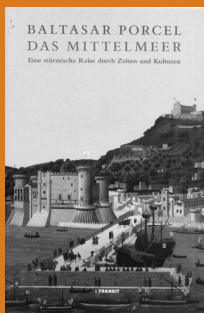
Emili Rosales

La ciutat invisible (The Invisible City)

Translated into Japanese by Hiromi Kimura
Kawade

The prestigious publishing house Kawade is publishing a Japanese edition of Emili Rosales' *La ciutat invisible*, a novel that was awarded the Sant Jordi prize in 2004 and became a Catalan sales success in 2005. With this publication in Japan and another in the fall in the United Kingdom, *La ciutat invisible* has now been published in twenty-five countries. Among the countries where it has had the greatest impact are Italy, Germany, and France, where it was a finalist of the Médicis prize for the best foreign novel of 2007. *La ciutat invisible* is a personal adventure and historical mystery novel, with a secret love story as background, set in motion by the greed provoked by the supposed existence of a lost painting of the last great master

of Italian painting, Giambattista Tiepolo. It transports us to the eighteenth century, following the trail of the now-forgotten and nearly secret plans of King Charles III to create a great city at the delta of the Ebro River, in the image of Saint Petersburg.



Baltasar Porcel

Mediterrània. Onatges tumultuosos (Das Mittelmeer. Eine stürmische Reise durch Zeiten und Kulturen; Mediterranean: Tumultuous Swells)

Translated into German by Kirsten Brandt
Tränsit Verlag

Just before his death, Baltasar Porcel traveled to Berlin on Saint Jordi's day to present the German version of *Mediterrània: Onatges tumultuosos*. During the presentation he said: "I was born under a religious and political dictatorship. I soon realized that everything surrounding me did not at all resemble what I had been taught. Thus I had to reconstruct my world from nothing. In a certain way, this book follows a parallel path, that of the struggle against absurdity and impositions." The book, which falls somewhere between journalism and travel narrative, tells the great adventure of the Mediterranean civilizations, from prehistory

to today and through all of its lands: from the arid Berber mountains to luminous Greek sculpture, touching on Christianity, the Ottoman Empire, Jaume the Conqueror, Columbus, Hannibal, renaissance painting, Egyptian tombs, piracy, the passage of time in the Majorcan countryside, the Rome of blood and glory, the wars between Arabs and Jews... Following the book, Catalonia Television produced the documentary series "El mar de l'home" (The Sea of Man), the writer himself playing the lead role.



Ausiàs March

Poemes (Gedichte)

Translated into German by Isabel Müller
LIT Verlag and the Fundació Lluís Carulla

An anthology in Catalan and German that seeks to transmit a representative image of the most classic and global poet of the Catalan language. Thus, in addition to some of his most well known poems, such as "Cant espiritual," the work also includes the songs of love and some of his songs of death, and a representative selection of moral and philosophic compositions.

The introduction and translation were undertaken by Isabel Müller, linguist and researcher at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität of Munich. This is the second volume of the Katalanische Literatur des Mittelalters (Medieval Catalan Literature) collection, which

began with the German version of the chivalric novel *Curial e Güelfa*. Furthermore, the agreement reached by the two publishing houses also anticipates the German translation of texts by Ramon Llull, Bernat Metge, Anselm Turmeda and Jordi de Sant Jordi.

MONTSERRAT SERRA

LITERARY SOCIETY

Cultural Diversity

One of the perversions of globalization is that it demands size, critical mass. It tacitly expects everything to be big: the businesses competing, the cultures at play, the languages that circulate, and the financial heights that make everything possible. In the field of language and culture this is a catastrophe, because the size of the market can only be inversely proportional to the intellectual demand of the competing product. And the ambition of the market corresponds, almost always, to the excessive dimension of the business that makes the investment.

Around the western world the publishing industry has tended to concentrate in a few gigantic groups that generate synergy among their diverse collections, but their parameters ultimately become close to those of mass culture, which is to say, a broad reach through the promise of entertainment. The rigorous, stimulating, and creative product remains in the hands of small publishers, who are guided more by the instinct of the editor than by fashions of consumption. Yet another empty space is opening in the cultural heritage: the continual publication of the classics, local and international, which makes reading something more than a way to pass time, and which is declining for lack of a market and educational standards. We defend diversity in nature with more conviction than diversity in culture. But as much in one arena as the other, if we fail we will pay the consequences.

PATRÍCIA GABANCHO

ON LINE Around the World

The Anglo-Catalan Society

<http://www.anglo-catalan.org/>

Founded in Oxford in 1954, the Anglo-Catalan Society is one of the oldest and most important international Catalanist institutions. In English.

Fundació Bernat Metge

<http://www.bernatmetge.com/>

Created in 1922, the Bernat Metge Foundation is the institution that has allowed our culture to count on one of the best world collections of the Greek and Latin classics in translation, with more than 360 volumes. In Catalan and Spanish.

TopobioGraphies of the Catalan Exile

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

An innovative (with digital mashup) and collaborative proposal to present the physical and literary itineraries of the great Catalan writers who had to go into exile after the Spanish Civil War. In Catalan, Spanish, French and English.

Senyoria, at Suhrkamp

http://www.suhrkamp.de/autoren/jaume_cabre_6075.html

After *Les veus del Pamano* [Die Stimmen des Flusses] was one of the triumphs at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2007, promoted by the presence of Catalan Culture as guest, the publisher Suhrkamp presents a new book by Jaume Cabré in German: *Senyoria*. In German.

Catalan Poetry in Madrid

http://www.llull.cat/_cat/_multi/vid_lite.shtml?seccio=multi&subseccio=lite

The website of the Ramon Llull Institute allows us to see a large portion of the "Readings of Catalan Poetry" event that took place on April 14, 2009 in the Teatro Español of Madrid. In Spanish.

JAUME SUBIRANA