

**Carles Torner**

# *Catalan Culture: Frankfurt, New York and beyond*

**This year, 2007, is a significant one in terms of international recognition of Catalan literature and art, for two important reasons: in October 2007 Catalan culture will be the guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair and from March 7<sup>th</sup> to June 3<sup>rd</sup>, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art is holding an exhibition—the biggest of its kind ever held outside Catalonia—titled *Barcelona and Modernity*, and covering Catalan art between 1868 and 1939.**

Both of these events fortuitously coincide with the centenary celebration of the founding of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans [IEC] on June 18, 1907. The Institute, established as an Academy of Sciences, was the fruit of the First International Congress for the Catalan Language in Barcelona, which had taken place eight months earlier and put forth the idea of creating an institution capable of overseeing and organizing cultural affairs throughout all Catalan-speaking territories. The IEC's Philological Department has acted as an unofficial Academy of the Catalan Language for the past century (IEC's Catalan language dictionary can be accessed at <http://pdl.iec.cat/entrada/diec.asp>). In 1922, the IEC was admitted to the International Union of Academies. This was only fitting, given that the 1907 Congress was itself universal in focus and the result of collaboration between Catalan researchers and their European colleagues.

In this second issue of **Transfer**, we have published a dialogue between the eminent Catalan philologist, Antoni M. Badia i Margarit, and Tilbert D. Stegmann, professor at the University of Frankfurt and director of the *Estudi d'Investigació de Catalanística* at the same institution. They look back over a century of close collaboration between Catalan and German researchers in the fields of Catalan literature and language.

The 2007 edition of the Frankfurt Book Fair is, therefore, a grand opportunity to show Catalan literature in all its richness. Catalan is spoken today in a wide arc extending from Perpignan in the North to Alacant in the South and from the Western strip of Aragon to Alguer (Sardinia) in the East. Though split between four countries, the whole area shares a common body of literature. The wealth of dialects and registers enrich the writings of Catalan authors—a literary tradition that began over eight centuries ago with the works of Ramon Llull.

# editorial address transfer // SPRING 2007

The first issue of **Transfer** was very well received around the world. The publication modestly aims, among other things, to be a voice expressing the pluralism of Catalan culture. The journals from which the articles are drawn —based in Valencia, Palma, Lleida and Barcelona— reflect a broad range of viewpoints on current issues. The editorial board believes that this wide selection of writers and points of view is one of the main strengths of **Transfer**'s monographic issues, which take articles published in Catalan cultural journals (located in different cities) and translate them into English for a wider audience. This is what the Institut Ramon Llull (IRL) strives to achieve in its efforts to project Catalan culture abroad: namely, to reflect the output of the Catalan-speaking community as a whole, weaving together a diverse cultural network, rather than just focusing on a single capital city or allowing for political and administrative divisions to weaken its voice. **Transfer** is a clear expression of this aim and an important means of promoting this multi-centred vision of Catalonia to foreign audiences.

As the title of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition suggests, Catalan cultural identity is inextricably linked to modernity. Indeed, IEC's President, the sociologist Salvador Giner, speaks of a culture rooted in a "tradition of modernity". Under the gaze of Gaudí, Picasso, Miró or Dalí, turning their eyes to us from New York, this year we will see a rich selection of current translations of Catalan authors.

The writers are drawn from throughout the Catalan-speaking territories and their works either have been, or are about to be, published in various foreign languages. To mention several examples, the translations into the German language include Ramon Llull's *Llibre de les meravelles*; Mercè Rodoreda's *Quanta, quanta guerra!*; Josep Pla's *Quadern Gris*; Llorenç Villalonga's

*Bearn*; a complete collection of Salvador Espriu's poetry; Jaume Cabré's *Les veus del Pamano*; Joan Margarit's *Joana i altres poemes*. Into French: the definitive edition of Joan Sales' *Incerta Glòria* with a foreword by Juan Goytisolo; Maria Barbal's *Pedra de tartera*; Ferran Torrent's *La vida en l'abisme*; Mercè Ibarz' *A la ciutat en obres*; and Joan-Lluís Lluís' *El dia de l'ós*; Narcís Comadira's *En quarantena*. Into Rumanian: Baltasar Porcel's *Cavalls cap a la fosca*. Into Greek: Emili Teixidor's *Pa negre*. Into Russian: Pere Calders' *Aquí descansa Nevares*. In English, there is a superb translation by Arthur Terry of *Les dones i els dies* (Women and days), a complete collection of Gabriel Ferrater's poetry, with a foreword by the Nobel Prize-winner Seamus Heaney; *Dins el darrer blau*, by Carme Riera; and *La magnitud de la tragèdia* (*The enormity of the tragedy*) by Quim Monzó.

The translation of some of these literary works has been funded by the IRL, which is also now beginning to provide support for the translation of Catalan essays and non-fiction into other languages.

This year, 2007, in New York, Frankfurt and beyond, we invite you to learn more about Catalan culture through the unique and, at once, universal work of its artists and writers **||**

**Carles Torner**, a writer and poet, is head of the Humanities and Science Department of the Institut Ramon Llull.