



JOSEP M. MUÑOZ, PATRÍCIA GABANCHO, GUSTAU MUÑOZ, JOSEP M. NADAL, VENTURA PONS

# After Frankfurt, Catalan culture today

**PATRÍCIA GABANCHO** (Buenos Aires, 1952): She has lived in Catalonia for many years. She is a journalist. In 1980 she published *Cultura rima amb confitura*, a book proposing a debate on the state of Catalan culture at the time self-government was getting underway. Twenty-seven years later she has touched once more on the subject with *El preu de ser catalans*. A book with a provocative subtitle: "A Thousand-Year-Old Culture in Danger of Extinction".

**GUSTAU MUÑOZ** (Valencia, 1951): An economist, essayist and translator, and one of the driving forces behind the Publications Department of Valencia University, he is editor-in-chief of *L'Espill*, the journal founded by Joan Fuster, a member of the team coordinating the journal *Caràcters*, and correspondent of *L'Avenç* in the Valencian Country.

**JOSEP M. NADAL** (Girona, 1949): Professor of Catalan Philology at Girona University, of which he was also the first vice-chancellor from 1991 to 2002, he has published, with Modest Prats, a *Història de la Llengua Catalana* (Edicions 62) and numerous theoretical papers on linguistics and the history of the language. His latest book is *La llengua sobre el paper* (2005).

**VENTURA PONS** (Barcelona, 1945): A film director, for years his work has been characterised by adaptations of the work of writers of Catalan literature: Quim Monzó, Josep M. Benet i Jornet, Sergi Belbel, Lluís-Anton Baulenas, Jordi Puntí and Ferran Torrent. His latest film is *Barcelona (un mapa)*, based on a play by Lluïsa Cunillé.

**The presence of Catalan culture at the Frankfurt Book Fair as guest of honour constituted a magnificent shop window for the international projection of our literature. However, over and above Frankfurt and the need to continue presenting our "singular and universal" culture to the world, we have felt it right to resume the internal debate about the current state of Catalan culture. A debate not unrelated to the controversies generated by the Catalan presence at Frankfurt, but which we have above all wished to focus on questions like the structuring of a national culture or the situation of the Catalan language. The round table was held at the Ateneu in Barcelona.**

- **Josep M. Muñoz:** After the controversy about which authors ought to go to Frankfurt, and in light of the fact that Patrícia Gabancho upholds in her latest book that in Catalonia there is a clear, clean division between the two cultures, the Catalan and the Spanish, I would like to ask her if she thought it possible to overcome this division by making a commitment, as some sectors have, to a conception that could possibly include the writers in Catalan and Spanish in a single "Catalan letters".

- **Patrícia Gabancho:** The reply has to be two-fold. Firstly, I uphold that Catalonia, as it is a bilingual country, is also a bi-cultural country (leaving to one side for the moment the phenomenon of immigration, which has brought us many other cultures). There are two hegemonic cultures, Catalan and Spanish. Catalan creators may be part of one of the cultures, or they can work alternatively in both, but they are always two separate cultures. Therefore, one thing is the cultural reality, which is bilingual and includes everyone who creates culture in this country (whatever their origins,



language and preference), and another thing is the cultural product, to which of the two cultures it belongs. So I do not believe in a catch-all “Catalan letters”.

Having said that, I feel that the question is aimed in another direction. Because in fact this division between two cultures is not useful for the cultural user, but for the analyst. The people consume, enjoy the two cultures, without asking themselves which culture a particular product belongs to. But when you make an analysis, you can't say that Catalan music works fantastically well because Estopa sell a lot of records, because Estopa are not Catalan music.

I also think that the question was aiming to see the link between these two worlds. There used to be a great deal of complicity between the worlds of writers in Castilian and writers in Catalan, especially in the 1970s (a little less so in the 1980s, because there were some controversies), but in general many spaces were shared and there was a certain degree of mutual respect. They all read each other and were friends.

## **It is now no longer an attitude of indifference, it is aggressive**

**PATRÍCIA GABANCHO**

And this complicity has been broken. We are now separated by a virtual wall, virtual but existing, and this is an awkward situation that is not good for the country. This virtual wall has become very

evident in the case of Frankfurt, because, if you look closely, not one positive comment has come from the Castilian side—in Catalonia, not Spain—in relation to the Catalan presence at Frankfurt. No praise at all for how things have been done. No satisfaction over the opportunity that was offered to Catalan culture. Quite the contrary. As Catalan culture was able to increase its prestige, both external and internal, Spanish culture in Catalonia has devoted itself to torpedoing this operation in order for Catalan culture to reap no rewards from it at all. In other words, it is now no longer an attitude of indifference, it is aggressive. To give one example: in many newspaper columns Félix de Azúa has written against the Catalan presence at Frankfurt, against the politicians who went there, saying that the writers were servile, the politicians were manipulators, etc. Beatriz de Moura, the publisher, wrote a column in the same paper making fun of the Catalan presence at Frankfurt, and saying that the Catalans would almost certainly not find hotel rooms there because the hotels had to be booked a year in advance and that nobody would have thought of it. In other words, insulting. When Spain was invited to Frankfurt no one said it was an expensive, pointless operation. A few years before, Catalan culture was invited to the Guadalajara Book Fair, the Latin-American Frankfurt, when the fondly remembered Catalina Mieras was minister; everyone went there, Spaniards and Catalans together, and the result was that there was no criticism of the Catalan presence by Spanish culture, and that no one realised that Catalan culture was the guest culture. Neither the Mexicans, nor the Catalans. It went completely unnoticed, because, as you might expect, the Mexican press, which knew Juan Goytisolo, Vázquez Montalbán or Marsé, devoted itself to following them around and interviewing them, and the Catalans there were pushed into the background, when we were the guests.

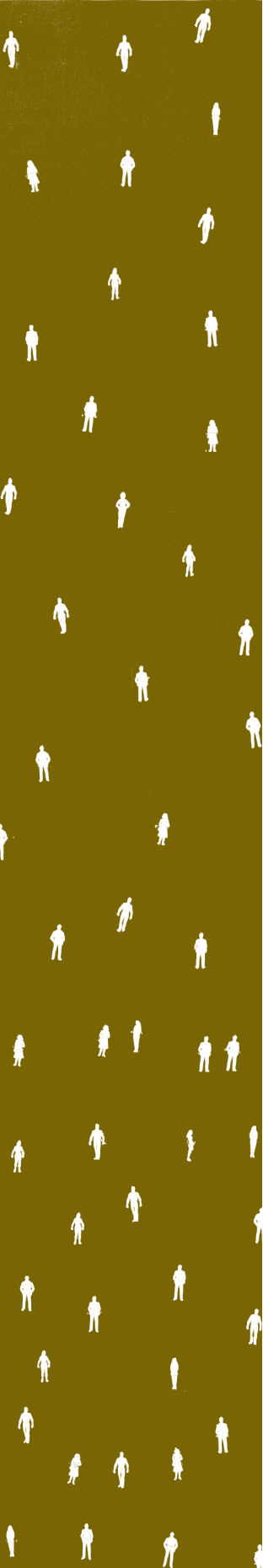
This attitude is now belligerent. For example, Esther Tusquets was asked not long ago in an interview if she read books in Catalan and she said no. Full stop. No shame

whatsoever for a cultural attitude that looks down upon another of the country's cultures. Therefore, the battle that is currently being waged between the two cultural —not national— communities is for prestige. Spanish culture in Catalonia is totally prepared to dispute the prestige with us centimetre by centimetre: they won't let our prestige grow, because one of the things that Catalan culture needs in order to survive is prestige. The battle we are fighting is ideological, and for prestige, and moreover I think that the battle is being won by them.

**- Josep M. Muñoz:** The Frankfurt Book Fair controversy has shown up, once again, the Fusterian “names issue”. Namely, when we talk of Catalan culture, are we talking about the culture produced in Catalonia or the culture produced in the Catalan-speaking Countries? With regard to this, I would also like to ask Gustau Muñoz how he thinks a national culture can be organised on top of the various autonomous community borders, especially bearing in mind the opposition that the unitary concept of Catalan culture meets in significant areas of Valencian society.

**- Gustau Muñoz:** The question is basically one of premise, because it affects the definition of the cultural framework. And the answer is quite clear. Catalan culture is that of the Catalan-speaking Countries, despite all the obstacles there may be. A restrictive, limiting view would be impoverishing and directly suicidal. Because, can Catalan culture be understood without the Valencian contribution or the Balearic contribution? Can we really speak of Catalan culture and leave out Ausiàs March, *Tirant lo Blanc*, Jaume Roig, Jordi de Sant Jordi, the entire history of the Valencian *Renaixença* or, in more recent times, without considering Joan Fuster, Vicent Andrés Estellés, the work of Joan Francesc Mira, Josep Piera, Ferran Torrent, Enric Sòria, Martí Domínguez, Vicent Alonso, or the journal *L'Espill*? Catalan culture is an interrelated whole, its foundations are the common language, and it cannot be compartmented or broken up without adding to it yet another, very serious, element of weakness. It would be a veritable attack against its integrity and its possibilities. Moreover, the name says it all, and it is beyond doubt, it is Catalan culture, the culture of the territories to which the shared language, Catalan, belongs. We might also call it *bacavesa* culture, but then the Germans wouldn't understand anything and there would be no Frankfurt Book Fair or anything.

You asked me also how the national culture could be organised with this division of the territory into autonomous communities and with the visceral opposition of some sectors of Valencian society and the institutional authorities to the unitary concept of Catalan culture. We Valencians, unfortunately, always have to talk about the Valencian conflict, so tedious and long lasting. I understand this and, in a disciplined way, I will. We have a very serious problem. One part of Valencian society does not accept the unitary concept of Catalan culture; it does not identify itself with it. One part of indigenous Valencian society, because it has to be said that Valencian society has evolved rapidly in recent years and is far more complex than the fixed images we have of it. It has grown by a million inhabitants in the last ten years and there are now five million inhabitants. A million immigrants from outside the community, you might say, with whom there have been absolutely no mechanisms of integration, and



who have been added to the earlier immigration. It is a society with a serious internal identity conflict. So, one part of Valencian society does not accept the unitary concept of Catalan culture. The more they have given up the language, the more they have become Castilianised, the more Spanish-supporting right wing they are, ideologically speaking, the less they accept Catalan culture. And there are even cores of organised fascist activism, specialising in attacking the expressions of Catalan culture in the Valencian Country with low-intensity terrorist methods, and who have important connections because up to now these attacks have been carried out with impunity. And it's a fact that in Valencia the Partido Popular government and the right-wing press (the three Spanish right-wing newspapers based in Madrid have offices and editions in Valencia: *La Razón*, *El Mundo* and *ABC*; notice that no Catalan newspaper has a Valencia edition) follow this line and act on a daily basis creating opinion, and also in politics and in administrative decisions, acting emphatically and ruthlessly, in a spiral of radicalisation that rises or falls according to the circumstances. And at the moment it is rising. However, this is only one part of the story; taking a stroll around Valencia and seeing how it has been Castilianised you might think that the battle is lost already. But there is another part of Valencian society, very important, that has no problem with the unitary concept of Catalan culture. The three town councils, Morella, Sueca and Gandía, that signed an agreement with the Institut Ramon Llull to attend the Frankfurt Book Fair have saved the institutional honour of the Valencians. There could have been many more, but the idea was to make a symbolic list, not a very long one. And I know for a fact that more than one council in the *comarques* (shires) run by the Partido Popular would have signed up but were quickly called to order. The situation is therefore very complicated.

Then there is the university, and a dense civil network, quantitatively considerable and qualitatively important. There is the *Escola Valenciana* (Valencian School) movement, and moreover I should add that at a difficult moment, right at the start, the unity of the language and the unity of the rules were saved, albeit in complicated, baroque ways and with a certain degree of ambiguity. A cascade of court sentences endorses the unity of the Catalan language in its application in the university, academically and for all administrative purposes.

The Valencian problem is internal. It is not a conflict between Valencians and Catalans, it is a conflict between Valencians, relative to the place and possibilities they wish to give the indigenous language and culture. Those who opt for death throes and extinction in favour of Castilian are certain about it:

anti-Catalan phobia as a compensatory myth and zero social use of the language, zero concern for their own culture in the hope that time will finish off this awkward nuisance that is *Valencià* (Catalan in the Valencian Country). Something that, moreover, they are careful not to mention in public. On the other hand, those who choose their own language and culture, through being handed down in the family or because they have consciously accepted them, are quite clear that only a shared cultural framework, that of Catalan culture, offers possibilities for projection, development, and is a guarantee for the future, besides being true to the history and expression of a reality consolidated over the decades. A situation experienced

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**GUSTAU MUÑOZ**

by today's generations, those of the *Nova Cançó*, those of the resumption of the 1960s and 70s, those who have been schooled in *Valencià*, those who have been watching TV3 for over twenty years, etc. This is also a reality that has to be borne in mind.

What can be done in these conditions? It will be necessary to follow quite a qualified strategy, without allowing ourselves to be affected by the conflict or the obstacles. It won't be easy; we will have to be able to deal with the conflict, live with the conflict. I think that a good dose of pragmatism, of different ideas according to the situations and the contexts, is totally inescapable. We have to overcome a complicated situation, that of the government of a party that is adverse, and at times deeply adverse. A situation of hostility emanating from the institutions of self-government that could last for years, and I say years because the current situation is strife-torn, and complex, but it seems to be lasting, although I hope it is not definitive. I mean that the current situation is not an interlude; Valencian society is heading for a serious conflict, for a rethink that will have to result in a change and a collective maturing. Sooner or later this will change. Meanwhile, it will be necessary to seek institutional approaches wherever possible, patiently and with a capacity for dialogue, and make headway through actions, as has been done with the Frankfurt episode, with three town councils giving minimum institutional support to the Valencian presence. It is a case of organising culture from below, increasing the two-way exchanges, ensuring the circulation and the regular presence of writers and creators all over the territory, of music and theatre groups, and of looking into all the digital and audiovisual possibilities. And operating on all levels of culture, from the academic, where things are easier, to the more popular, searching for fertile ground. The future will have to be a raft of institutional agreements in cultural matters, whenever possible, of the Catalan-speaking territories, which would top off the organisation of national culture. In a world of growing dimensions and markets, in which things are tough for minority cultures —let's be honest— breaking up the Catalan cultural arena would be a barbarous thing to do.

- **Josep M. Muñoz:** Let's turn now, if we may, to the Catalan language. Since the *Renaixença* Catalan has existed side by side with Spanish, but it seems obvious that, due to the migratory and social changes of recent years, Catalan society has entered another paradigm. I would like to ask Josep M. Nadal, a historian of the language concerned not only about its past, but also its present and future, for his thoughts on the current situation.

- **Josep M. Nadal:** In Europe there are really only a few languages. Linguistic density in Europe is relatively low, especially if we compare it to Africa, for example. The construction of Europe from a language point of view has been carried out by concentrating the linguistic diversity into just a few languages. In the Europe of the few languages there is, moreover, a permanent tendency to reduce the diversity of languages, most clearly seen in the creation of the nation states and therefore in the attempt to make one language, and one only, correspond to each nation state. The formula "one state, one nation", above all from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, is the predominant one in all areas and the one that, in part, generates conflicts. However, aside from this tendency to linguistic reduction, there has been some, only a little, resistance to this process. There have been languages that have proposed an alternative to the construction of the state language, trying to make another language within the same state possible.

Catalan would be case in point, a language that offers resistance to the universalisation of the state language. Not all the languages there have been in Europe have gone through the same process: for example, Occitan has virtually not done so. I always say, as a joke,

**Not all languages are equal,  
which does not mean that  
they do not have the same  
rights. But the different  
size is part of the problem**

**JOSEP M. NADAL**

that Catalan has sat and passed a series of examinations. When they start writing, not all the languages write, and therefore some fail. When they begin to have a coded language in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, some of those that had passed now fail. And Catalan passes, it makes its mark, etc. When the creation of states takes place, many languages fail; so does Catalan, but with a mark of four and a half out of ten and it therefore has the right to

re-sit. Therefore, the case of Catalan is quite different from what has occurred in many parts of Europe, where the language of the state has been imposed all over the territory. This is the situation up to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The basic linguistic struggle was between the language of the state and the resistance that some communities offered to this attempt by the state. But things are very different now, because most languages have ceased to exist isolated in their territory. And therefore the "language-territory" pairing has to be reconsidered. I know that we are conditioned by the proximity of the previous paradigm in which the fight was between the language of the state, trying to impose itself, and the language of the territory, trying not to disappear under the pressure of the state language. But today Europe has experienced a radical change in the states

themselves and in relation to other countries. The linguistic complexity is radically different now from that of fifteen years ago.

This linguistic complexity, how do we deal with it? I believe starting with a basic element that we do not usually take into account, because it makes us feel awkward, but if we do not start from this fact, we will not be able to resolve anything.

The fact is that languages are not equal. Catalan is not like Castilian. And I do not mean that it does not have the same rights, but for Catalan to have the same rights we have to be aware that they are not languages equal in size and that this difference is part of the problem. We find it hard to accept that languages are not the same, especially those of us who speak small languages, but it is evident. It is said that about 6,000 languages are spoken in the world, and of these 319 (only 5%) have more than one million speakers. Catalan is one of the 319, in 91<sup>st</sup> place. Catalan, a small language, is 91<sup>st</sup> out of the 6,000 languages in the world with regard to the number of people who speak it. On the other hand, there are 5,770 languages with fewer than one million speakers (95%) and of these there are 4,945 that do not reach 100,000 speakers.

**The problem is the nation-state, because the concept of the state that we live with today is by definition incompatible with linguistic diversity**

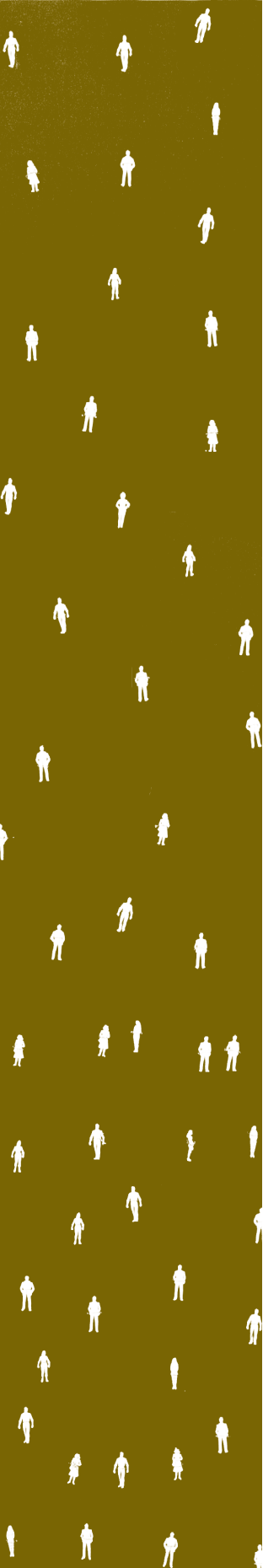
**JOSEP M. NADAL**

Therefore, if we wish to try to make linguistic diversity sustainable and make policies to ensure it is maintained, we have to know that there are 5,000 languages with less than 100,000 speakers and that next to them there are 8 languages with over one million speakers, and that there is one with more than 900 million speakers, Mandarin Chinese. And this fact cannot be ignored. A language with 100,000 speakers is absolutely powerless against one with 900 million. Languages, then, are not equal. The result of this linguistic inequality in the world is that a very small percentage of speakers in the world (4%) live in territories where there are many languages and they are forced to practise multilingualism.

4% share 96% of all languages. All these speakers, moreover, are forced to acquire one of the major languages and, if they live within a state, the language of that state. So all speakers of small languages are bilingual, while the speakers of major languages are usually monolingual. And everyone, speakers of languages great and small, takes it for granted that by using one of these major languages they will be understood.

In this respect, the small languages have ceased to be part of the group of things we take for granted, of the guidelines of behaviour in situations governed by anonymity. The linguistic consequences of this fact are easy to imagine. The small languages have ceased to be safe. And this is the fundamental change in the paradigm in the Catalan-speaking Countries. Up to fifteen or twenty years ago, although we knew it wasn't true, we could take it for granted that anyone we met in the street, and did not know, spoke Catalan. Today, we all take it for granted that, if we do not know the person we meet in the street, they probably do not speak Catalan. Therefore, with people we do not





know we speak in the language we think is safer, which is Castilian. This is the fundamental thing about the linguistic change that has occurred in recent years. The mass of people that has come here no longer makes it possible to take it for granted that everybody knows the Catalan language. And, therefore, as, contrary to this, we take it for granted that everyone does know Castilian, Castilian becomes the language of personal dealings.

We ought to admit that in the world of the future there are linguistic functions that small languages do not perform. For example, Catalan will never be an international language when making a European treaty, or discussing a world problem at the UN. Therefore, fighting to enter the ecological niche of an international language is a pointless struggle for Catalan. Nor will Catalan easily be admitted, at least in organised politics, to issues of private ecology. In other words, at home, with their partner, children, friends, when they pray, people will speak the language they want to. Those who speak Berber will continue to speak Berber, and then we shall see what happens in 30 or 40 years' time, with their children or grandchildren. There is therefore no possibility of making linguistic policies either outside state level, where the fundamental functions are reserved for major languages (and major languages means no more than 7 or 8), nor in more local spheres, more closed, where the people have the right to speak the language they wish. The linguistic policy that should be made is in the sphere of the language of personal dealings, the *lingua franca*. That is, that we may take for granted that we can go out onto the street and use the language we wish, without thinking, "Let's see, what language shall I use? Castilian, because otherwise I might not be understood". People don't want to live with problems; they need behavioural guidelines that allow them to function without problems. I go out and speak in the language that I know will not cause me problems. So we have to make Catalan the language that does not cause problems. How? There is a condition *sine qua non*: Catalan must be known —otherwise, it's a lost cause— by the whole population living in Catalonia. This famous rule established by the *Estatut* that Catalan is obligatory for everyone with Catalan citizenship is the conditioning element (insufficient, but necessary), so that Catalan may become everyone's supposed language. Everyone has to learn Catalan. If we all know that everyone knows Catalan, I know that I can go out and speak in Catalan, because everyone will surely understand me, and then the other person can answer me in the language he/she likes. The problem is not whether there are Spanish-speakers in Catalonia, but that we Catalans cannot use Catalan freely because we know that there is a part of the population that does not know Catalan. And moreover

we do not know who these people are, people do not wear a sign saying “I don’t know Catalan”, so what you do is talk to them in Castilian.

What I am calling for, which is essential, is that Catalan ought to be usable in the Catalan linguistic territory without any problems. This is the battle that has to be fought, not a battle against Castilian, which is completely senseless. Today the problem is not so much a struggle against the language of the state or to achieve functions that do not correspond to us, but a struggle to make Catalan usable in Catalonia. What’s the problem? The problem is the nation-state, because the concept of the state that we live with today is by definition incompatible with linguistic diversity. Because the nation-state is a state that is not a nation and which is trying to become a nation. That is why states are nationalistic, although they may wish to hide it and say that the others are the nationalists. The nationalists are the states, wanting to turn the hegemonic nation into a state. And we have to make the states plural, make them admit that they are not a nation, but compound states and that, moreover, they have several languages. Only this way will we be able to think that the survival of a language like Catalan is possible.

**- Josep M. Muñoz:** Everybody agrees in considering that any culture needs prestige to survive, but also an active presence in mass culture. In this respect, the cinema is or ought to be a basic element. How far can Catalan cinema perform this function?

**- Ventura Pons:** I feel very proud to have been to Frankfurt to give support to the film season, even though my films are already habitually present at film festivals. I would like to take the opportunity to say that we made a good impression at Frankfurt. Catalonia, for its demographic size, has a level of creativity—in different disciplines—of the first order at this moment in time in the context of Europe. Obviously, in theatre, in literature, in architecture, in dance, in film... I don’t know why our friends (those who used to be our friends, as Patrícia said) are so upset about something they should have accepted as their own, the fact that things are going well for the people who make culture in this city. They ought to see someone about it. I mean them, because we have enough on our plate doing them. If things go well, we take them round the world, and if not, we stay at home, like all cultures do.

Having said that, to begin talking about film we have to talk about the linguistic issue, and before we talk about the linguistic issue we have to talk about the subject of dubbing first, and then film production in Catalan. There are only four countries in the world, Italy, France, Germany and Spain, that see films dubbed.

The normalisation of films in Catalan has been greatly conditioned by the fact that, in the main, films, basically American films, are seen dubbed. Why are they seen dubbed into Castilian? It’s not the Americans’ fault, but because at some time in this country, when attempts could have been made to normalise or at least balance the situation, between films dubbed into one language or another, there were some Catalan exhibitors that were the first to place all the obstacles in the world in the way. It was the companies in this country that said no. Later, a series of mistakes, one after another, by all the Catalan administrations there have been (CiU, the *tripartit*) have done nothing to help. Things reached a point at which they were releasing a dubbed film and giving it 10,000 seats in Castilian and 100 in Catalan, so that they could

say, “Can you see that no one goes to see the film in Catalan?” If there is no equality of opportunities between Catalan and Castilian, it’s impossible! And this has really affected things a lot: the people making films, and the spectators who have not had the right to see things in their language. You can go and buy and read a newspaper in Castilian or Catalan, but you can’t see a film in your language. People are being denied a right, but this has not been the fault of people coming from outside, but the people here and the governments we have had (who we have warned many times) have done things just about as badly as it is possible to do things.

As to Catalan cinema, Catalonia traditionally looked northwards and everything was fine, we grew up looking to France, England... but now that the new generations have begun to look to the west, this has finished. In recent years, the film industry has changed a lot. 20 or 30 years ago, the Americans, who control the cinema at world level, decided (if it can be said in this simple, common way) to expel intelligence from their cinemas and leave them for just a certain type of consumption, of popcorn and hamburgers, and for copies of the copy of the copy, when up to then American cinema, which we had grown up with, was marvellous. This means that here, and in any other country around us, locally made films have been restricted to certain ghettos, and the cinema as entertainment, as mass culture, has ended up in that sector of films for a very young audience, from fourteen to twenty-something years old. We don’t know where the audience that might like a kind of more restrained film, not just Catalan, but European, is. At times when you make the films, you wonder: “where is the audience?” You put on a play or a concert, or an opera, and you know where the audience is; in the case of films, you don’t know who you are doing it for. However, this is not just

**Catalonia has, despite its size, a level of cultural creativity of the first order, in different disciplines, within the context of Europe**

**VENTURA PONS**

a Catalan phenomenon, it’s the same in other countries around us.

In the last fifteen years, at the most important film festivals (Cannes, Berlin, Venice) there have always been productions from Barcelona, in Catalan or in Castilian. Very often, there are absolutely no Spanish ones. We have a certain kind of cinema that makes a greater commitment to

quality, due to the situation we have been forced into by the American cinema and due to the competition —very strong— from the Spanish cinema, because they have all the media, and devote themselves to promoting their stuff. This is why in Catalonia we make films that are committed to products outside the market, quality, experimental, documentaries, et cetera, made in Catalan or in Castilian, that we have taken to many festivals and places in the world, but which have given the work of Catalan filmmakers continuity. It has also been the case that, because the profession has been unable to explain itself, and because of certain Catalan media, not all of this reaches people. At times I am asked, “um, what films are being made?” Oh yes! Last year I think 70 films were made here industrially. So there really is a cinema with a less industrial and

more artistic bent that has achieved its aims. The films that have been developed more industrially, and which have been made in Spanish, have not been successful either, because the others already do it and why should people go to see the copy when they already have the original?

What we have to do, just like any other European country, is what we were saying in Frankfurt: be unusual, because that's the way to be universal.

And perhaps the big problem with part of the Catalan film industry is that it has not been unusual enough to be universal. But the only way to be successful, for those of us who are not inside the American majors, is our truth. And our truth is given to us by

our singularity. And singularity means not imitating Castilian products, because among other things Castilian (a marvellous language) is not much use from a film point of view. When you cross the Atlantic, Castilian is no use for the Hispanic market, due to the grammar, the phonetics... Just the opposite in fact: when they buy your films they are continually asking if they can dub them. If Castilian was that much use in the cinema, these Spanish films that so many millions are spent on would be doing the rounds all over South America. So in the cinema, all this business about Castilian is also a myth.

We have to make a commitment to quality because quality travels, and films that are no good and don't have something special aren't successful. The commitment the majority of European countries are making, and us with them, is more or less the same. To make products that are real. The only difference is that they really believe it, in their countries. What I liked most about Frankfurt is that we introduced ourselves to the world very well, but the fact is we don't believe it. We have a frankly good level. In the 1980s, when we got democracy back, there were Catalan films doing very well at the box office (I'm talking about a million and a half spectators!): those by Antoni Ribas, the comedies of Francesc Bellmunt... Now we also get these spectator numbers on television, so things are not that bad. The thing is that we have had, on the one hand, American competition that has ousted us from the cinemas with a certain kind of film and, on the other, the growth of the Spanish industry, which has managed to sell itself very well. We don't have to compete with them at all, but we do have to have a discourse of our own, because only that way will we get anywhere. And in that respect we are no different from any other country; perhaps the only thing that makes us different from other European countries is that they love their things more. The problem is that we don't love ourselves.

**- Josep M. Muñoz:** I would like to look at the issue of the current perception of the lack of vitality of Catalan culture. Why, 30 years after recovering democracy and self-government, should we be talking, as some are, in terms of "extinction"? What's gone wrong, in all these years?

**Catalan culture has kept the quality part for itself. The problem is that the education system is not producing new users of culture**

**PATRÍCIA GABANCHO**



- **Patricia Gabancho:** I would like to refer to the matter of prestige. Obviously, there was a campaign in the 1990s against the nationalisms and identifying nationalism with culture. Therefore, the user of culture has believed that if you went to certain events (like a Catalan rock concert), you also had to wear the nationalist badge. This was a deliberate campaign aimed precisely at undermining the prestige. It has been said of Catalan culture that it is a culture bound up with identity. All cultures are. Lluís Llach singing in Catalan is no more bound up with identity than Sabina singing in Castilian.

But saying it was bound up with identity was a way of reducing its audience. At the same time another phenomenon has arisen, and this is the most serious, the sharp fall in the prestige of culture. Catalan culture is a *highbrow* culture, precisely because it has not developed the culture or leisure industry. This industry uses Castilian as its vehicle or comes from the Spanish industry. And Catalan culture has kept the quality part for itself. The problem is that the education system is not creating new users of culture for us; it is bringing uncultured young people to the market, incapable of enjoying culture because they are not given any at school. If they are not given any in their daily lives or in the family, these young people are no good at consuming culture. Catalan culture's audience is not being reproduced in the new generations. And this really is serious for Catalan culture, which is a culture of excellence, which demands a minimum of intellectual effort to enjoy it. Going to see a film by Ventura Pons is not the same as seeing a Hollywood movie. And the schools are producing consumers of Hollywood movies, because culture creates critical citizens and the system is not interested in organised critical citizens, capable of asking questions. It wants citizens who consume and therefore it points them towards the leisure industry. Therefore, we have a problem of prestige and also of too much quality. Culture doesn't have to dumb down, the level of the public has to rise.

- **Gustau Muñoz:** I totally agree with Josep M. Nadal that the universalisation of the language is necessary to make chance encounters safe, and for there to be no temptation to change languages. Here in Catalonia this is in the *Estatut*, on paper, and we shall see if it happens in practice. In the Valencian Country and the Balearic Islands it is not so, and it would be a demand horizon. The problem this poses is that passive knowledge is not enough, because with that you do not make consumers of culture, you do not create a culture market. Today, coming from Valencia, I have read an interview with Quim Monzó, absolutely apocalyptic, in which he said that in 20 years' time Catalan literature will be finished because there'll be no readers. The problem with predictions is like that of utopias, they may come true... I think it is excessively apocalyptic, but in any case it reflects a mood of very serious concern for the future of Catalan culture. The Frankfurt Book Fair was really a great success for Catalan culture, and this has to be shouted from the rooftops because it's true and because it has been heavily criticised. Despite the massive campaign that was mounted and which was reflected in the German press (it would be necessary, in this respect, for someone to make an analysis of how the criticisms were received), despite that, a large part of the German public and the appropriate authorities have seen that Catalan





culture is incredibly dignified for a culture without a state. And a presence in Germany is very important, because it is a place of dissemination over Central and Eastern Europe and other parts of the world. This ought to be borne in mind with regard to assessments and predictions.

I would like to refer briefly to the question of what has happened in the last two or three decades. There are serious problems in the peripheral areas of Catalan culture, but now also in the core area. I shall refer to Catalonia as the central core of Catalan culture. I think there were two moments in the past in which, from Catalonia, a great commitment was made, a great endeavour, a great initiative in favour of a modern culture, viable and useful on all levels. The first is during the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with *Noucentisme*, up to the Republican Generalitat, with various comings and goings. It is the age of the modern institutionalisation of Catalan culture (the definitive establishment of the rules of the language, the creation of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, the appearance of publishing houses, magazines, the creation of a modern intelligentsia,

**The current situation is highly ambiguous. The cultural impetus of the 1960s and 70s produced results, but it is beginning to run out of gas**

**GUSTAU MUÑOZ**

et cetera). All this was halted by the Civil War and a really harsh post-war period. Then, in the 1960s and 70s there was once again a spirit of resumption, of starting from scratch, of creating lasting, solid, strong institutions, and of bringing Catalan culture up to date in relation to universal culture. This is our current situation. We are the children of these two attempts. The first one, which marks us and makes us viable as a culture, and

the second, whose denouement we are currently witnessing. The situation is highly ambiguous. Unimaginable things have been achieved, very valuable, of a very high cultural level, but we have a social problem, the creation of a cultural market to make so many things viable that, if they are not supported socially through the market, through consumption, cannot be done in Catalan.

In the 1960s and 70s, and up to the 80s, a great effort was made (Enciclopèdia Catalana, the publication of such important collections as “Textos filosòfics” or “Clàssics del pensament modern”, the creation of institutions, schools, TV3, and so on). All this absorbed a great deal of energy, and was extremely positive. But after a certain moment this impetus began to fade. It produced results but it began to run out of gas. What had happened in the meantime? Two very important social and cultural things had happened. One, the consolidation of a highbrow culture in Castilian in the Barcelona area (it goes without saying in the Valencian Country, where this has been the case for ages), the centre of publishing in Castilian, the home of the companies publishing in Castilian for a much larger market, previously unheard of in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And obviously the massive arrival of immigrants, who have been gradually integrating socially but not culturally, who may achieve a passive knowledge of the language, but not enough to integrate on a large scale. This is an issue that has not been given enough



consideration, because the question is what part has insertion in the Spanish state as an autonomous community played to make feasible an enlarged reproduction of a situation in which Catalan culture is losing ground. In some ways, the explicit non-recognition of the multi-nationality and the inertias of the state, with its autonomous communities, help to sanction, at most, the mere passive knowledge, but not the in-depth cultural insertion of the new populations, which are to all intents and purposes part of Catalan society.

In short, I feel that from a given moment the creative energy of the second modernising wave of Catalan culture became exhausted.

And we see how some endeavours

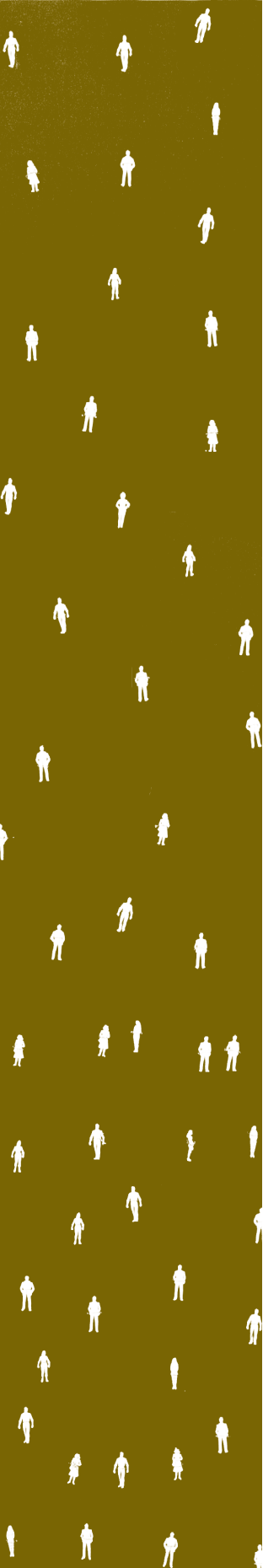
begin to be sidelined, and problems start to appear: from the shortage of translations of contemporary thinking to the state of ideas and cultural magazines at the end of the 1990s (I think it's different now), the rather anaemic state of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, and so on. I think that there is an evident loss of energy. And also a lack of consideration of the effects of subordinate insertion in the political framework of the Spanish state, with no explicit acknowledgement of the multi-nationality and therefore of the plurality of cultures, with all that implies. In other words, giant steps have been taken, yes, but we are in a situation that requires critical reflection.

**- Josep M. Nadal:** I would like to stress that when I spoke of the widespread knowledge of the Catalan language included in the *Estatut*, I said that this is a necessary condition, but not enough. Without this we can do nothing, and with it we can begin to do things, but things must be done. I am not as pessimistic as Quim Monzó. It's not that I don't see problems out there, it's that I react positively to them, otherwise I wouldn't be here. But I understand the apocalyptic attitudes when the language or culture is mentioned, because it's the only thing that gives us meaning. If we were merely speaking of the economy or the roads, I don't care if I belong to a state or not. What concerns us is the language and the culture, because the language acts as a vehicle, in all senses. Faced with the problem and the uncertainties, of which there are many, some react apocalyptically and I understand it, although I would uphold not doing so. It is true that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a boost and that in the 1960s there was another boost, but next to that, in both those moments, we had a state with a culture promoted by the very feeble state itself. Spanish culture in the 1930s, 40s and 50s was a feeble culture; I'm not saying that there weren't extraordinary things, but that the transmission of culture through the state was relatively feeble and even negative. On the other hand, whether we like it or not, since the 1960s, 70s and 80s the improvement made by Spanish culture has been spectacular, and the promotion of Spanish culture too. They've done it well, what can I say. The Cervantes Institute is carrying out a splendid policy of expansion, something that has never been done

**Immigration forces us to consider what integration will be like. In Catalonia, Spanish is learnt out of necessity, Catalan, because you want to**

**JOSEP M. NADAL**





for Spanish before. The French language, for example, has fallen behind considerably in the face of the expression of the Spanish language. And this puts us in a difficult position.

At the same time, alongside this spectacular improvement of Spanish culture, there has been an enormous rise in immigration to Catalonia, which we should be glad of for various reasons, but from a cultural and linguistic point of view we cannot ignore the fact that it represents a new situation that could either go well or badly. That in the 1950s and 60s nearly a million migrants arrived in Catalonia from the rest of the state, that now a million (and perhaps another million in a few years' time) foreign immigrants have arrived is fine by me, but it forces us to think about how to get the new population to integrate in the country and in which culture: Spanish, Catalan, or both. I have had a cleaning lady from Senegal at home for six months, who arrived speaking English, French, Arabic and I don't know what other languages. The first thing she said to me was that she wanted to learn Catalan. I sent her to classes and after three months she said: "ja parlo espanyol" (I speak Spanish now). Spanish is learnt in Catalonia out of necessity, and Catalan has to be learnt because you want to. This cannot be resolved if the state does not help. There has to be a clear willingness by the state to promote Catalan. The state has to have a positive attitude towards the languages and cultures within it. This forces us to consider two options: if the state continues to be a nation-state which, by definition, practises ethnic cleansing, as all states do, eliminating the cultures and the languages that are not the dominant one. All states are like that: they come out of a plural situation, they were once compound states, and they want to turn the plural state into a national state, promote one and only one nation, and that's why they need to eliminate the others. Today this is beginning to be questioned in all parts, but in the Spanish state the reaction in the face of this questioning produces a worry: this is why there is a spectacular Spanish national recovery. The debate about the *Estatut* has appeared just at the time when the nation-state could be changed for a plural state. And then there is the reaction of certain sectors, opposed to it. If this is not achieved, there is only one possible solution —and I am radically opposed to it, because I believe it will take us nowhere— but without a state guaranteeing the existence of all cultures, the Catalan included, we shall have to seek our own state. And for this reason we have to fight to change the state, because independence is quite difficult. Do real possibilities of changing the state exist? I think so. It must be achieved.

- **Josep M. Muñoz:** We have not talked much about the role of the public authorities to reverse this situation. This brings us to the relationship between culture and politics, which has also been one of the other subjects for reflection based on the experience of Frankfurt.

- **Patricia Gabancho:** The activism of the 1930s has been mentioned and I believe that without that process Catalan culture would now be dead. It was what provided the moral strength to get through the post-war period. At that time, with all the problems and the political decay, there was a coming together of the economic, political and cultural forces. There was a project shared by what we could call the powers-that-be. Admittedly, this project was very conservative to begin with, but it gradually spread to other parts of society and ended up being a project encompassing 70% of the social, economic and cultural

spectrum of the entire country. Obviously, it was a very unfair society, with huge social tensions, and it finished up that way. Apart from that, the problem now and during these 30 years of democracy (which is the same length of time: Catalan culture was re-founded in 30 years, and in 30 years we have dismantled it) is

that this coming together has not taken place. Politics has not done its job, culture has not had enough impetus to impose its project, and above all the economic forces have tended to consolidate their market, which they took to be the Spanish one, because up until globalisation it really was. Therefore, these three factors have been adverse and Catalan politics has been very weak. None of the governments has given culture the structuring role that it had always had in this country. Catalonia has always been constructed from and through culture. Conversely, democracy decided to build the country through the economy, and culture has been pushed into the background, by both the right and the left.

**It is necessary to get involved in mass culture, but also in higher-level culture. Otherwise, Catalan is left with a mid-brow, and that is very limited socially speaking**

**GUSTAU MUÑOZ**

- **Gustau Muñoz:** I would qualify this because, as I see it, the second resumption tried to do the same as the first, but with instruments from the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the meantime society had changed radically. It was now a society of the masses, penetrated completely by the impact of the media, with a dizzying development whose pace has been lost. And finally, we are facing a digital revolution that is also slipping out of our grasp in some important ways. We could also make a positive balance, above all in the context of where I come from. Observing it from a certain distance, and taking into account the shortcomings, you find some terrible criticism of TV3, when for us TV3 is very good. And they are unfair criticisms, often, because of the ordinary language, the lowering of the level, etc. The small concessions to popular

mass culture, with the aim of broadening TV3's scope of action, are often criticised, and I think this is unfair. On the contrary, there ought to be more ordinary things on. Catalan culture will be ordinary or it will not be at all.

- **Josep M. Nadal:** I don't think that culture is overly promoted by Catalan television, either the popular or the elitist.

- **Gustau Muñoz:** I meant that it is necessary to get involved far more in mass culture, with the dangers that this entails, without denying for a moment the consideration that one of Catalan culture's assets is its high creative level. I agree entirely with the analysis of the cinema made by Ventura Pons. But don't think that on the level of highbrow culture, more elevated, everything is just fine. There are also some very serious shortcomings in Catalan culture, at the more discursive, more intellectual level, even in the universities, which are also subjected to linguistic pressure. For example, the master's degree industry is forcing Catalan to retreat. The pressure comes from English and Castilian. Also with regard to the lecturers, because when they apply for jobs at state level they are criticised if they only publish in Catalan, because "you're too local", and so on. You go to a bookshop and the production at a certain level is overwhelmingly not in Catalan. In this area of higher-level culture the guard has also been dropped, and in the end we are left with a "mid-brow", a middle-class culture, and that is very limited socially speaking.

- **Ventura Pons:** I think that, at least in my case, the competition does not come from Castilian but English. The relationship that countries have with English will influence the future on many levels. And in this aspect we are missing the boat. You go to Sweden and you don't know if they're Swedish or English. You go to Slovenia and the taxi-drivers speak English. And here we are still worrying about whether Spanish culture should be taking us around the world. It will only take us within the borders of the Spanish state. You go to Biarritz and it's no use to you. For our own sake, we ought to be changing our ideas. Because the same thing happens with French and Italian too. The only difference is that there are more of them. The language that matters in the world is English, there's no other. We are wasting time pathetically over an issue that's getting us nowhere. In Spain, in fact, the problem is much worse for them, because we, by having two languages in our heads, find it easier to learn a third. Let's advance a little. All is not lost; it's just that more specific steps have to be taken. The Cervantes is all very well with regard to the international projection of Castilian, but... By the way, the Cervantes has helped Catalan cinema a lot, and if we have not taken advantage of it from here it is not the fault of the Spanish laws. There is positive discrimination, in fact. The problem has been within, we Catalans do not believe in ourselves and our potential. And if we believe in it, we'll make progress II