

CATALAN WRITING

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More translators needed

We are experiencing a new golden age in the translation of Catalan literature to other languages. This is not strictly speaking a Catalan phenomenon; the entire world is enjoying a golden age of translated literature. Literary traditions have gained permeability; publishers are looking for relevant works of literature from hitherto almost invisible sources, readers accept and even prize works originating in other cultural contexts thus providing new points of view and new ways of narrating or writing poetry. There are more translations than ever into more languages than ever.

This wave of international interest in translation certainly favours international diffusion of Catalan literature. Nevertheless, it does not guarantee it. What I mean to say is that despite the presence of this type of wave, Catalan literature can ride on the crest of it or fall behind. In not all parts of the world has literature been projected in the same measure. Some have scarcely felt the effects of the wave. Thus, at this favourable juncture, other considerations should be taken into account. Catalan literature has assets that clearly act in its favour. First and foremost, an outstanding quality and quantity in production, an extraordinary variety of aesthetics, with the intention of contemporaneity and perfectly exportable. Secondly, a deeply rooted disposition for internationalization. Thirdly, the work that has been done and continues to be done in many sectors, from the PEN to publishers, from governments to academic institutions. We like to think that from the Ramon Llull Institute, in one way or another, we also participate with our work built up over almost ten years and which currently we still carry on. Our present tasks lie not only in the area of cultural projection and support for translation, but also in the coordination of an extensive

network of lecturer positions in more than a hundred universities all over the world. Among other things, this enhances interest in Catalan culture, creates a public, trains translators and acts as a cultural embassy.

We therefore have assets to get onto the wave, and that is why we are here; translations have multiplied, funding for translation has doubled and activities aimed at diffusion and promotion are five times the amount they were eight years ago. Frankfurt was extremely important. However, after Frankfurt, positive progress is being maintained. We are riding the wave, but there is no guarantee we will be on top permanently, unless we adapt to inevitable changes. What should we do to keep up with the wave? For example, diversify the literatures into which we are translated. There is a certain concentration in the western world. Markets should be opened up in Asia, in the Arab world, in ample cultures such as the Turkish. The map should be widened. And that demands efforts of many kinds, but I will stop to focus a moment on just one of them, mentioned previously: more translators will be needed. More competent translators and in more languages. Not only those closest, also those that seem furthest from us right now. In order for there to be translation, there have to be translators. It may seem obvious, but this has to be done. That is why, for example, it is important that new Catalan lecturer positions should be created, like the one in Tokyo that starts this year. That is why we should renew our efforts. More translators. More translations. Into more languages. We stopped being invisible a long time ago. Now we should try to fill the whole scene. With good literature.

VICENÇ VILLATORO

Director of the Ramon Llull Institute