

CATALAN LITERARY MAGAZINES

ONE OF THE GAUGES OF A COUNTRY'S CULTURAL TEMPERATURE ARE THE LITERARY MAGAZINES, A FIELD IN WHICH CATALONIA CAN BOAST A LONG ROLL OF TITLES.

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The gauge of a collective spirit has a number of reference points which, properly combined, determine the cultural temperature of the social corpus. One of these reference points consists of the literary magazines, a field in which Catalonia can boast a long roll of titles. The precedents aren't recent; they go back a long way, have well-known names and make up a long list, though the limited space available prevents my giving an exhaustive account of them. If we split the history of the last hundred years into two periods divided by the civil war, the first thing we find are the publications which arose at the end of the last century astride the Catalan Modernist movement. *Quatre Gats*, *Pel & Ploma* and *L'Avenç*—in which, to a greater or lesser degree, literature and art existed side by side—are the most significant titles.

Later on, at the peak of the *noucentista* movement, we find *D'Ací d'Allà* and the *Revista de Catalunya*, which appeared during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and published more than a hundred numbers, the last of which came out in exile in Paris, Sao Paulo and Mexico. The *Revista de Catalunya* is still available in the bookshops, having reappeared in October 1986, since which time more than forty numbers have been published.

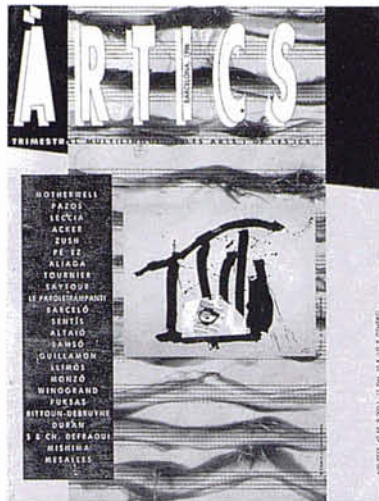
Publications were the most important channel for the difficult cultural recovery which took place in this country after the war. A channel which, in view of the circumstances, should be given the importance it deserves, since the risk of prohibition and clandestinity was always present.

From this period, we should mention *Ariel* (1946-51), *Dau al Set* (1948-54) and *Germinàbit*, published by the ab-

bey of Montserrat from 1949 and transformed ten years later into the present *Serra d'Or*. Also worth a special mention is *El Pont*, created in 1959 by Miquel Arimany and with over a hundred numbers published so far.

When the regime's tolerance began to remove—very slowly, of course—the threat of persecution, a new difficulty appeared on the horizon of the literary magazines: the public's limited interest in reading, aggravated by the rise of television, which began to occupy the free time which until then had been devoted to books.

But this situation didn't discourage the cultural agitators. On the contrary, the number of literary magazines that have appeared in Catalonia over the last thirty years has been extremely high, though we mustn't close our eyes to the element that provides a realistic counterpoint to these apparently brilliant fig-



ures: a great many of these magazines function very precariously and therefore have a somewhat ephemeral existence. Nevertheless, this entrepreneurial effervescence can only be interpreted as a sign of good health. There are people who are concerned and prepared to create a platform for the analysis and expression of the literary phenomenon, and this is good. As regards the magazines to be found on the market at the moment –once again I must point out that the list isn't an exhaustive one–, to the already mentioned *Serra d'Or*, *El Pont* and *Revista de Catalunya* can be added such illustrious names as *Els Marges* or *Quaderns Crema*, which bring us to the field of technical and scholarly publications. The following also deserve a special mention: *Reduccions*, a quarterly magazine published in Vic by Eumo Editorial since 1977. About fifty issues have appeared so far, some of which are of outstanding importance, like the one dedicated to Joan Vinyoli (September 1983).

Saba Poètica, another remarkable case of longevity in publications specializing in poetry. Begun in 1980 and published in Esplugues de Llobregat with an exemplary economy of means, *Saba Poètica* is about to bring out its twenty-fifth issue. Quite a record for presence amongst the readers, which can be compared to the case of the *Gra de Fajol*, born in the same year as its colleague from Esplugues.

Lletra de Canvi, begun in November 1987 as a satellite of the Castilian magazine *Quimera*, with which it was sold

jointly. This marriage only survived five numbers before it became independent. After No. 21 (September 1989), coinciding with a series of changes in the layout and with a new structure based on monographic numbers, the critic Julià Guillamon took over as director. Its successful treatment of the subject matter and attractive visual presentation make *Lletras de Canvi* one of the most interesting Catalan literary magazines of recent years.

In the spring of 1989 a unique magazine appeared: *L'Home Invisible*. The four numbers that have been published at the time of writing these notes leave one in no doubt that the idea is one which combines a demanding aesthetic approach with a quite remarkable level of creativity. A perfect example of this is to be found in No. 4 (winter '89), in which forty writers summed up in a maximum of five type-written lines two hundred titles from universal literature. With another type of approach, different to the last one, *Urc, Monografies Literàries de Ponent* appeared at the end of 1989. The magazine, published by the town councils of Lleida and Tàrrrega, is intended to be a mouthpiece for the literary movements of the region around Lleida. No. 2 is devoted to Manuel de Pedrolo, whose vast bibliography is being published for the first time in a complete edition.

I have intentionally left for last a magazine which, while not belonging to the strictly literal field, contains certain elements of creativity which make it impossible not to include it in an inventory of

the important publications that have appeared in Catalonia in the last few years. The magazine in question is *Àrtics*, born under the direct inspiration of Vicenç Altaió –poet and dealer in ideas, according to his own definition–, founder of the magazines *Tarotdequinze* (1972-75), *Èczema* (1975-84) and, in September 1985, of *Àrtics*, which, however paradoxical it may seem, is about to die at the peak of its maturity.

The explanation can be found in the introduction that opened the inaugural number: "Made from Barcelona, halfway between the manifesto magazines and the news-stand magazines, *Àrtics* –a multilingual quarterly of the arts and the ics– heads home to the iceberg of experimentation and new languages. *Àrtics* –a meeting point of tongues, cultures, tendencies and individualities– offers itself as a radical, attentive gaze at the most innovatory registers of contemporary writings and arts, from the hand of the instigators themselves. *Àrtics* presents itself as an opening and is at once the beginning of an awaited end: 17 numbers will make up the complete collection, which belongs to the second half of the decade of the eighties".

With the decade of the eighties already over, the final number of *Àrtics* marks the end of a publication which, over and above its particular sphere of action, can be considered a symbol of the sensitivity of Catalonia towards everything that is meant by avant-garde, creativity and cultural expression. A sensitivity for which the literary magazines have been a splendid vehicle. ■