

# NARRATIVE IN THE CAMP OF TARRAGONA OR THE ABILITY TO ENDURE

If such do occur, can we doubt (remembering that many more individuals are born than can possibly survive) that individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving and procreating their kind? On the other hand, we may feel sure that any variation in the least degree injurious would be rigidly destroyed. This preservation of favourable individual differences and variations, and the destruction of those which are injurious, I have called Natural Selection, or the Survival of the Fittest.

Charles DARWIN, *The origin of the Species*, chapter IV.

To be able to discuss the fictional literature that is being created at a specific time and in a specific place, first we need, on the one hand, to set some clear parameters that will determine what texts need to be taken into account, and on the other, to establish how they are received from an broad perspective, in other words, bearing in mind that narrative from the Camp de Tarragona shares characteristics that currently define the social situation of Catalan literature.

In order to obtain an exhaustive body of literature, one question has become indispensable: who may be considered a fiction writer? Somebody who has a book published – even if it is only one –; somebody who writes texts which, for various reasons, will never be published; somebody who considers himself/herself as such; somebody who society labels as such, or somebody who makes a living exclusively from the profession of writing?

The possible responses make us realize that the existing textual universe has now become unattainable. Literary workshops proliferate and blogs have become the most immediate locations for unpublished texts to see the light. In addition to the numerous local literary competitions organised by

various bodies, for various reasons and with equally varied financial prizes.

Literature has become one more feature of the consumer society and frequently the laws that govern it are those of supply and demand. Trusting in the existence of an ideal majority reader, who shuns the books in the shop window and relies on the recommendations of critics, is naïve because the power of the mediatised literary product is unstoppable. A clear example of this is National Book Day. The author Julià de Jodar explained in an interview that was published in the culture supplement of *Avui* on 23 April 2006 that on the National Book Day he signed a book for which that same year he had won the Prudenci Bertrana Award – one of the most prestigious awards within the Catalan literary panorama – and his feeling was one of absolute solitude. Few books were signed, because to potential purchasers he was, in social terms, unknown.

The book has simply become a product. The metro stations of Barcelona are full of book machines, located alongside food and drink machines. Famous or acclaimed texts can be photocopied and consulted in full via the Internet, in spite of the existence of copyright law. The ivory towers have given way to social concessions. The death of the author has lost its meaning. Nowadays most authors have a face and the number of copies of books sold often depends on the degree to which that face is recognised. The needs of readers, with increasingly less free time, perpetuate novels that do not prioritise the aesthetic. Schools continue to emphasize texts from two centuries ago and overlook that fact that books are still being written today. The few television or radio programmes that attempt to deal with literature in an artistic way are either short-lived or are broadcast outside of peak viewing hours.

It is often said that it is easy to publish, yet few novelists would agree with this statement. Literary events remain one of the most effective ways of becoming known. If one enters the culture section on the website of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia ([cultura.gencat.net/prelit/index.asp](http://cultura.gencat.net/prelit/index.asp)) one can see the many literary awards that are given out every month, which reach a peak during the month of April. Yet despite so many events, it can be seen that publishing a text is no easy task, since literary awards offering large financial sums are often entered by professional writers, while more local awards do not usually publish the winning text. It is surely for this reason that webpages such as [www.relatsencatalà.com](http://www.relatsencatalà.com) or [www.joescric.com](http://www.joescric.com) have become worthy solutions that allow curious readers to discover what is being written.

It is paradoxical that although many authors exist, few can make a living out of writing. Objectively speaking it is a licit aspiration to be able make a living out of what one likes doing, but it seems that achieving this through literature is an objective that few can fulfil. It is therefore logical to ask one's self on who or what does change depend, or whether things need to change at all. Should writers make sure they have a good literary agent who can negotiate contracts and promote them externally, or should subsidies be increased and more money invested in the diffusion of local literature?

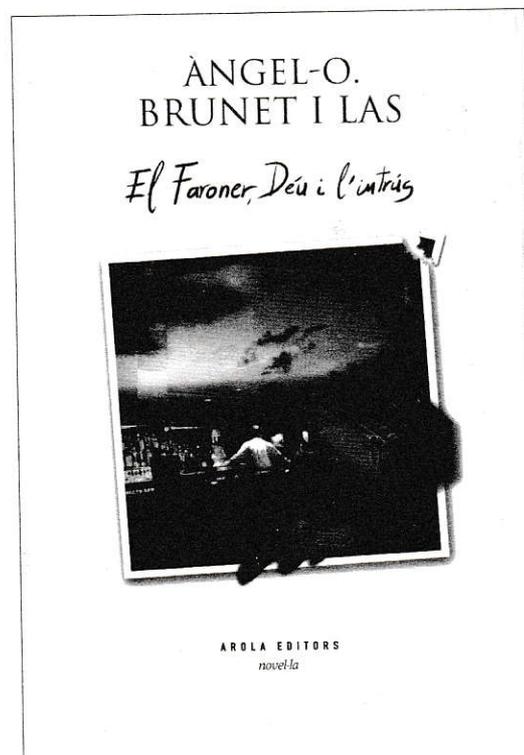
Without doubt, the reader is always the one who decides, and the success or failure of a book depends on the number of copies sold. However, just as there are different

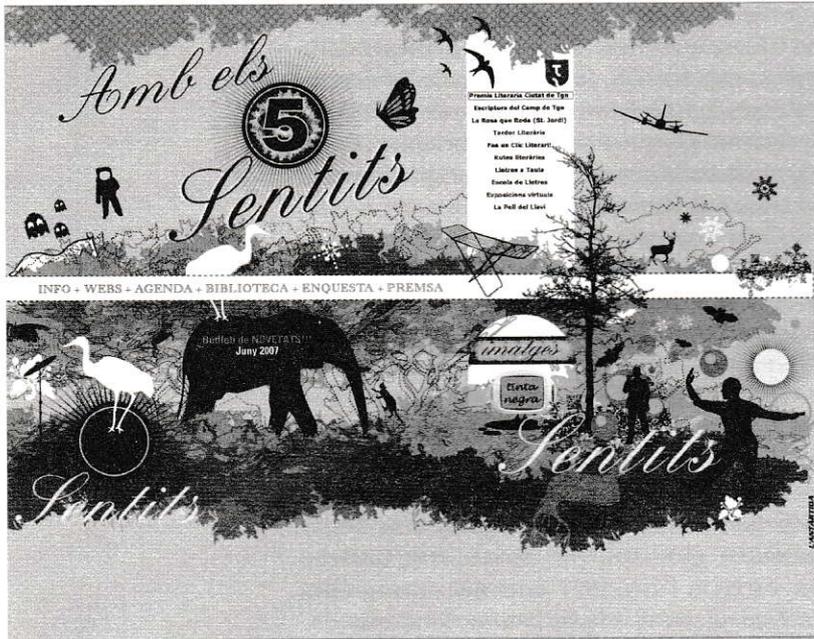
types of reader, there are also different types of writer, and perhaps we should allow these different types of author to enjoy the same temporary opportunities for creation.

The professional situation of the majority of writers is not an enviable one since, apart from the difficulties already referred to, their output is usually short-lived. Every week bookshops receive new titles that take the place of the new titles of the previous week. Best-sellers occupy key positions in shop windows and eclipse the works of authors who will never be among the best-sellers. However, major sales do not guarantee eternity, and a book that only sells a hundred copies a year could end up, a century later, becoming the subject of doctoral theses and university seminars. Although longevity is a consolation, it does not bring the immediate satisfaction pursued by authors when their books are published. Because, for example, what is the point of awarding John Kennedy Toole a posthumous Pulitzer prize if he committed suicide, discouraged because all the publishing houses systematically returned his original copy of *A Confederacy of Dunces*?

Within the Catalan literary panorama, every year new authors appear hoping that their voices will be heard and will endure; determining which ones will resist the passing of time is premature, because natural selection depends on many factors: personal life, publishers, critics, readers, promotion, external diffusion...

In the article entitled «Reflections on the Catalan literature of today: certain characteristics of narrative works of the 90s» which Montserrat Corretger wrote in 1997 in the *Kesse* special edition dedicated to literature in the Camp de Tarragona, the names of certain writers of fiction from the Camp de Tarragona appear, being new authors at that time, such as Adam Manyé, Rosa Pagès, Montserrat Palau and Magí Sunyer, as well as the names of other authors with more published works, such as Margarida Aritzeta, Olga Xirinaes and Jordi Tiñena. Ten years on, some new names have been added to these, such as Noemí Bagés, Àngel-Octavi Brunet and Òscar Palazón. If one enters the website of the Association of Writers from the Camp de Tarragona ([www.tarragonalletres.org](http://www.tarragonalletres.org)) a list of all their members appears, currently one hundred and four: only time will tell which ones will survive literature's natural selection.





## Fiction authors for adults of the Camp de Tarragona

• Born after 1966

Author	Fiction works for adults with ISBN
Mònica Batet	2
Àngel Octavi Brunet	10
Àdam Manyè	1
Rosa Pagès	3
Òscar Palazón	1
Pep Puig	1
Sílvia Veà	1

• Born before 1966

Author	Fiction works for adults with ISBN
Jordi Agràs	2
Xavier Aguilar	1
Xavier Amorós Corbella	1
Maria Lluïsa Amorós	4
Xavier Amorós	7
Margarida Aritzeta	22
Josep Antoni Baixeras	6
Pep Blay	1
Josep Lluís Burguera	3
Joan Carnicer	2
Joan Cavallé	4
Jordi Cervera	5
Aleix Cort	2
Lluís Figuerola Ortiga	2
Josep Gironès	1
Ramon Gomis	2
Miquel S. Jassans	1
Isabel Olesti	5
Montserrat Palau	4
Ramon Pallicé	3
Eugeni Perea	1
M. Carme Rodríguez	1
Andreu Sotorra	5
Magí Sunyer	3
Jordi Tiñena	8
Xulio Ricardo Trigo	9
Francesc Valls	1
Olga Xirinacs	19

