

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BIEL MESQUIDA

- 1975** *L'adolescent de sal*. (The salt adolescent) Prudenci Bertrana Prize, 1973. Barcelona: Edicions 62.
- 1977** *Self-Service* (with Quim Monzó). Barcelona: Iniciatives Editoriales. Ucrònia Collection; and «Matèria de Cos» (Body Material) with Steva Terrades. Barcelona: Els Marges, 10 (May). Pages. 65-70. In 2009 Steva Terrades produced a limited edition of two copies of *Matèria de cos*.
- 1978** *Putà Marès (ahí)* (*Bloody Lumps of Sandstone, (there)*). (Barcelona: Iniciatives Editoriales. Ucrònia Collection. Translates into Spanish with Alberto Cardín *El baile de las locas* (*The dance of the wolves*) by Copi. Barcelona: Anagrama.
- 1980** *Mallorquins a Barcelona*. (*Mallorcans in Barcelona*) Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona. Starts to collaborate every week with the Majorcan press.
- 1981** *Notes de temps i viceversa*. (Notes on time and vice versa) Manacor: Casa de Cultura: "Sa Nostra".
- 1982** *Xenius, Escriptura, Premsa*. (*Xenius, Writing, Press*) Bellaterra: Degree Thesis. Autonomous University of Barcelona. Faculty of Media Studies.
- 1985** *El bell país on els homes desitgen els homes*. (*The beautiful country where men desire men*) Barcelona: Laertes. A clandestine mimeographed edition of this work was produced in 1974.
- 1987** Translates *Incidents* by Roland Barthes. Barcelona: Empúries.
- 1990** *Doi*. (*I give*) Barcelona: Editorial Empúries.
- 1993** Starts to collaborate with *Diario de Mallorca* (*The Mallorcan Daily*). In 1999, these chronicles will then lead to books such as *T'estim a tu*, (*I love, you*) *Els detalls del món* (*World minusculae*) or *Acrollam*.
- 1994** *The Blazing Library*. Palma: University of the Balearic Islands. Servei de Publicacions i Intercanvi Científic (Publications and Scientific Exchange Service).
- 1996** *Excelsior o el temps escrit*. (*Excelsior or the writing of time*) Barcelona: Editorial Empúries. Premi Ciutat de Barcelona i Nacional de la crítica (National and City of Barcelona Critics prize).
- 1999** *Vertigens*. Barcelona: Editorial Empúries. City of Palma Prize 1998. *Som l'altre* (*We are the other*). Barcelona: l'autor (Collectors edition). *Veu de poeta* (*The Poet's Voice*). CD presenting verses recited by the author.
- 2000** Co-writes the script with Antoni Aloy and Agustí Villaronga for the film *El mar* (*The sea*), based on the novel of the same name by Blai Bonet.
- 2001** *T'estim a tu*. (*I love, you*) Barcelona: Editorial Empúries.
- 2002** *Camafeu* (*Cameo*). Barcelona: Editorial Empúries. *Paraula de poeta* (*The Poet's Word*). Conselleria d'educació i Cultura de les Illes Balears (Education and Culture Council of the Balearic Islands). Palma, 2002.
- 2004** Starts his blog *Plagueta de bord*. (*Log book*) Publishes the poetry pamphlet *Com passes d'ocell a l'aire* (*How you move from bird to air*) with drawings by Margalida G.R. Sancho. Barcelona: Els ulls de Tirèsies Collection. Editorial Cafè Central.
- 2005** *Els detalls del món*. Barcelona: Editorial Empúries. National Culture Prize for Literature 2006. *Homersea*. Barcelona: Vilaweb. Receives the Cross of Saint George.
- 2007** *Un escriptor europeu en llengua catalana diu* (*A European writer of Catalan says*). Opening speech about Catalan literature in the inaugural act of the programme about the culture of Catalonia, the invited guest of the Frankfurt Book Fair.
- 2008** *Acrolla' m*. Barcelona: Editorial Empúries.
- 2009** Publishes the second bilingual edition, Catalan-French, of *The Blazing Library*. Barcelona: Institució de les Lletres Catalanes. Translates *Desaparición da nieve* (*The Disappearance of Snow*) by Manuel Rivas. Madrid: Santillana.
- 2010** *Esmolar la garrova*. (*Carob grinding*) With prints by Sandra Lehnis. Arenys de Munt: Murtra Editions.

Who's Who

CATALAN WRITING



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BIEL MESQUIDA: WHEN WRITING MEANS DISPERSAL

The work of Biel Mesquida (1947) is frenetic, passionate and disturbing literature, altered writing, text that turns things into what they were not before, leaving us speechless and troubled. It is in this ploughed up landscape that we become most aware that it is a kind of writing that strips away the layers, that it is non-mixtifying and that it allows us to see what is hidden beneath the dead skin of the words. It never, but never, consigns agitation to order and always presents an aesthetic of resistance to convention, to anything that whiffs of doctrine and ignores any desire to become a word of order. Even controversy, criticism and a kind of aesthetic of refusal and blame in this work undergo the stripping process and lay the living flesh of words and things open to view, to the air. Even so, many have never dared go further than the agitated superficial effervescence. They search the surface froth, without realising that what makes the literature so disturbing is to be found in the depths. But whenever anyone tries to pin it down, make a cliché out of it or read it simply as an unweildy yet spectacular discourse, it always departs by the back door, its natural habitat, into that permanent oscillation of the restless word. That is its vanguard. *Don't forget that I never write anything that is sure*, says one of the characters of the stories in *Els detalls del món*, confirming and even demanding that this is what great literature tends to do. Mesquida's work is a laboratory in which it is possible to ask oneself questions in the midst of the bellowing of time. It allows us to see things that are not shown, things we would miss if we were not really alive. Traffickers of language takes a risk, a magmatic and magnetic risk, in the false, honeyed crust of reality – like an antiseptic, a bleached word that reflects the bubbling of the moment. It is a permanent state of foreignness. Taking one thing for another, that is what makes for the extreme malleability in his prose and verse – forging its own way forward in a desire to capture everyone in mid-agitation. All of this is easily detectable in the work, from what has become established as the cornerstone of the Mesquidian corpus, *L'adolescent de sal* (*The salt adolescent*) to more ambiguous pieces – artefacts somewhere between journalistic chronicles and the type of urgent novel that make up his latest books.

Much has been made, too much perhaps, of the type

of textualistic relationship linked to the *Tel Quel* group in *L'adolescent de sal*, for its diffuse and dissolvent structure, in a desire to place it among the avant-garde practices of the seventies. There have also been attempts to find links with the *bildungsroman*, when the text is actually more about magmatic self-dissolution. We are talking about a chant for deformation, not about the *bildungsroman* of the time, which invites the desire to break away. This insubmission comes from the irreverent profile of the main character who rips up the path on purpose. It uses verbal and corporal pornography and devises eroticism and the celebration of the body as the freshest forms of opening windows on the stuffy atmosphere of the Franco era. Some day we will have to read *Self-Service* and *Putà marès (ahí)* in this trajectory of disintegration that tried to dismantle itself, exhaust itself to the point of coming dangerously close to the aphasia of its own foundational hegemony and which had placed it on an avant-garde pedestal. Its radicality consisted in not allowing itself to become a fetish, not even from its own textualist exaltations, even when it tests the paths that are currently being pursued in postproduction and collaborative art projects. A permanent aesthetic of migration towards a research into its own instability, that escapes from its own ways, distancing itself from the narcissism that is claimed by those who want it to be a Catalan version of *telquelism*. Destabilising itself in the research of its own eclipse, placing itself in a permanent state of crisis and being a continual site of work in progress, emptying itself.

In fact, towards the eighties a period of research began, which set out from the only certain knowledge that in his work there had been nothing final and from the anxiety to reinvent himself through a process that involved disarmament and which plays dangerously with fragility, failure and that process of sinking that puts him right at the top of the dizzy heights of disarticulation. From this enriching process of erratic dispersion and metamorphosis, we find what floats up to the visible surface of the work: especially poetry (*Notes de temps i viceversa* and the publication of a poetic text that ran backwards and forwards, *El bell país on els homes desitgen els homes*, a translation (*Incidents*, by Roland Barthes) and his work with the press.

Without leaving aside the poetical research that he tends to use as the true horsepower for that permanent work in progress that forms the Mesquidian corpus, he published *Doi* (1990), in which he explores the possibilities of short narratives from an unfixed fulcrum, not in an attempt to

procure a model or to return to traditional formulae, but as a way of testing them out unmercifully. On the contrary, he tried always to graft literary forms onto one another, to adulterate them, in an attempt to delve into the most fertile disparity, always sounding out a literary method that never ceases to be exceptional in the way in which it pursues high performance testing. That is precisely what he would do with the novel in the works published in the nineties: *Excelsior o el temps escrit* and *Vertigens*. Always trans-generic, always in the process of revising literary tradition and his own findings, never falling back into the comfort of a finished work. In fact, many people await the "next novel" without realising that it has already journeyed into other literary areas. Recycling, re-establishing meaning, from newspaper to book, the texts published in the *Diario de Mallorca*, or on his blog, later appear in the books *T'estim a tu*, *Els detalls del món* and *Acrollam*, to make the tableau of the landscape of contemporary dispersion and daily ruins from the insular panorama. Instantaneous snippets that absorb a saturated world, overloaded, unarticulated, with the congestion of the present and speak through those liminal and archipelagic words, through that writing of evacuation, the soluble world of contemporary simulacra. That is why he starts with the islands, a genuine laboratory of liquidated forms from present-day life. And he writes from the instability of this temporary, silencing space, which is now nothing more than a spectacular and volatile event, but also from the precariousness of the literary system in the panorama of the audiences. That is why many of his stories are staged as collapse, accident, emergency and rupture, between chronicle and fiction.

But it is also in poetry that Mesquida shines in the viscous tenacity of the book from the facts to research into the sublimity and lightness of the winged words spoken by Homer. You only have to read *Com passes d'ocell a l'aire* (2004) or *Esmolar la garrova* (2010) to be able to perceive that vehemence of working with the un-tethered word that grazes on disparity, on the poem as an insect in the amber of life.

More than the linguistic gold-working for which he has rightly been praised, more than applauding the work of Mesquida through purely verbal gesturing, his writing must be considered as one of the riskiest narrative projects in the Catalan literary scene today.

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