

GABRIEL

FERRATER

WOMEN AND DAYS



TRANSLATED BY **ARTHUR TERRY**
INTRODUCTION BY **SEAMUS HEANEY**

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“Like Wordsworth, Ferrater endeavours to keep his reader in the presence of flesh and blood... [He] not only brings us to our senses, but like all true poets, he keeps us wondering what this means.”

SEAMUS HEANEY

The Catalan poet, Gabriel Ferrater, is a poet of personal experience, a poet who succeeds like no other in capturing the feeling of Catalan society both during and since the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Because he came to poetry relatively late (he was 38 when his first collection was published), he was able to draw on a body of experience which was not available to younger poets. Like Hardy, a poet whom he greatly admired, he wrote simply, from a sense of his own life, using detailed observation of personal encounters and situations to convey the wider, more general picture.

Rich in metaphor and imagery, Ferrater's remarkable poetry is presented in this volume in an equally remarkable translation by Arthur Terry whose affinity with the poet is not only declared in his translator's preface but is also self-evident from the powerful poetic 'voice' he creates in English. Terry started to translate Ferrater whilst Professor of Spanish at Queen's University, Belfast in the 1960s: "by happy coincidence, these were the early years of the Belfast Writing Group [which] included a number of excellent poets and critics... whose presence first encouraged me to translate seriously." A member of this group, Seamus Heaney, came under the spell of both Ferrater and Terry and his introduction to this volume is as illuminating to the new reader of Ferrater and as full of insight as Terry's undoubtedly was for those young writers more than forty years ago.



ISBN 1-900072-90-4



FI DEL MÓN

Puc repetir la frase que s'ha endut
el teu record. No sé res més de tu.
Aquesta insistent aigua de paraules,
sempre creixent, va ensulsiant els marges
de la vida que vaig creure real.
La terra pedregosa i fatigosa
de caminar, i els arbres que em ferien
els ulls amb una branca delicada,
tan vivament maligna, convincent
amb la prova millor, la de les llàgrimes,
sembla que no són res. Es van donant
a l'amplària grisa, jaspiada
d'esperma pàl·lid, embafós. Tot cau
amb una fressa lenta i molla, i flota
sense figura, o s'esfonsa per sempre.
Tot fa sentit, només sentit, tot és
tal com ho he dit. Ja no sé res de tu.

ÍDOLS

Aleshores, quan jèiem
abraçats davant la finestra
oberta al pendís d'oliveres (dues
llavors nues dins un fruit que l'estiu
ha badat violent, i que s'omple
d'aire) no teníem records. Érem
el record que tenim ara. Érem
aquesta imatge. Els ídols de nosaltres,
per la submissa fe de després.

END OF THE WORLD

I can repeat the phrase which has carried off
your memory. That's all I know of you.
This insistent stress of words,
continually rising, is dirtying the banks
of the life I thought was real.
The tedious, stony earth on which
I walk, and the trees which strike
my eyes with a delicate branch,
so vividly malign, convincing
with the best of evidence, with tears,
it seems that they are nothing. They give themselves
to the grey expanse, streaked
with pale, sickening sperm, and float
without image, or sink forever.
Everything makes sense, but only sense, everything
is as I have said. Now I know nothing of you.

IDOLS

Then, when we lay
in one another's arms before the window
open to the olive slope (two
naked seeds inside a fruit which summer
has flung open, and which fills
with air) we had no memories. *We were*
the memory we have now. Idols of ourselves,
for the submissive faith of afterwards.