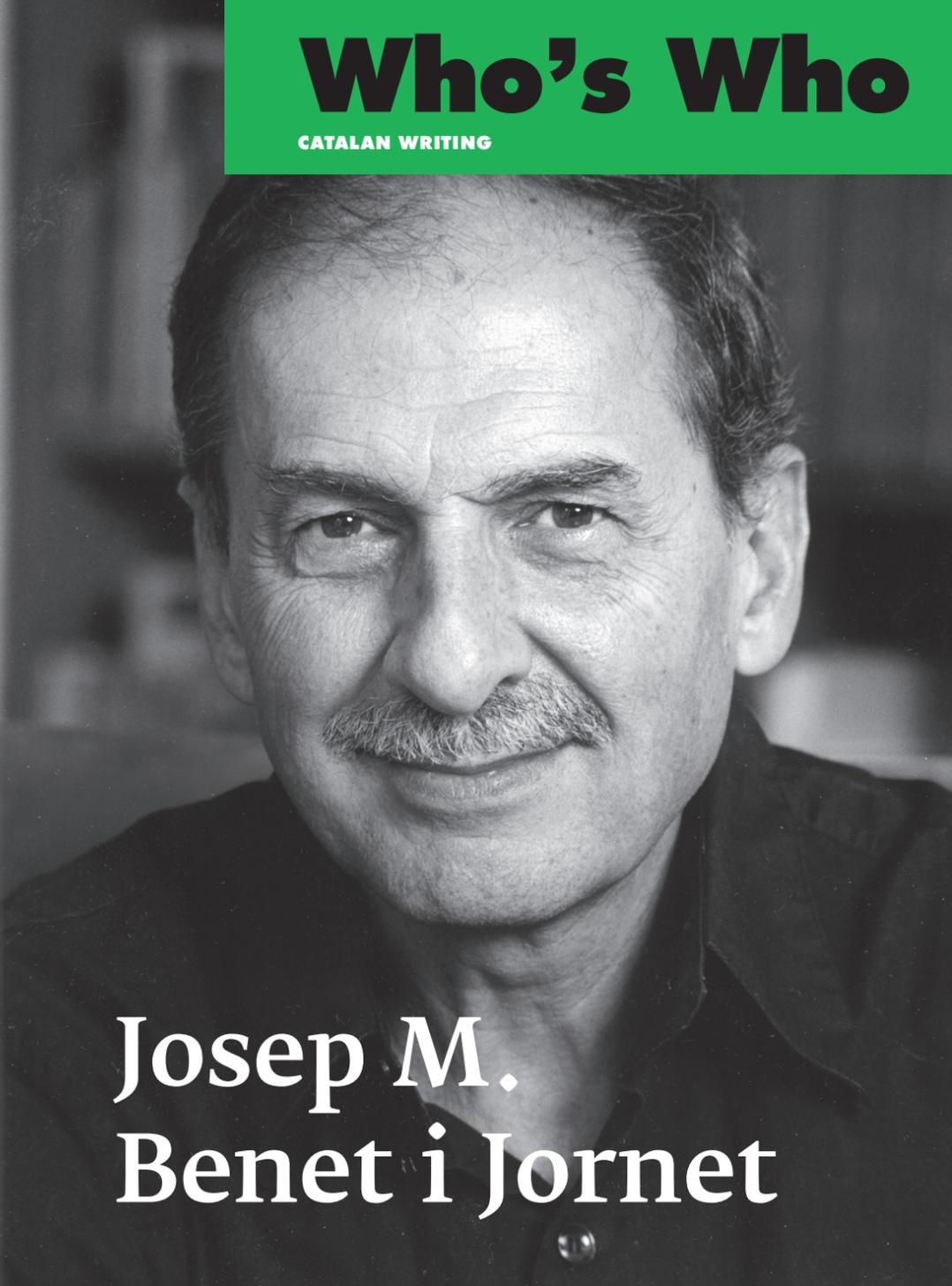


- 1940 Born in Barcelona.
- 1962-1966 Arts Degree, specialising in Romance Studies, at the University of Barcelona.
- 1963 *UNA VELLA, CONEGUDA OLOR* (An Old, Familiar Smell), winner of the 1964 Josep M. de Sagarra Prize.
- 1964 *FANTASIA PER A UN AUXILIAR ADMINISTRATIU* (Fantasy for an Office Worker), winner of the 1967 City of Palma Prize.
- 1966 *CANÇONS PERDUDES* (Lost Songs).
- 1968 *MARC I JOFRE, O ELS ALQUIMISTES DE LA FORTUNA* (Marc and Jofre, or the Alchemists of Fortune), winner of the 1970 "Serra d'Or" Critics' Prize.
- 1969 *LA NAU* (The Spaceship).
- 1971 *BERENÀVEU A LES FOSQUES* (You Had Tea in the Dark), winner of the 1971 City of Sabadell Prize.
- 1973 *LA DESAPARICIÓ DE WENDY* (The Disappearance of Wendy).
- SUPERTOT* (Supereverything).
- 1975 *REVOLTA DE BRUIXES* (Witches' Revolt).
- EL SOMNI DE BAGDAD* (Baghdad Dream).
- 1978 *DESCRIPCIÓ D'UN PAISATGE* (Description of a Landscape).
- 1979 *QUAN LA RÀDIO PARLAVA DE FRANCO* (When the Radio Talked about Franco).
- ELISABET I MARIA* (Elisabet and Maria).
- BARALLA ENTRE OLORS* (Battle among Smells).
- 1984 *EL MANUSCRIT D'ALI BEI* (Ali Bei's Manuscript), winner of the 1984 Spanish Society of Authors Prize, and the 1986 "Serra d'Or" Critics' Prize.
- 1987 *HISTÒRIA DEL VIRTUÓS CAVALLER TIRANT LO BLANC* (The Story of the Virtuous Cavalier Tirant lo Blanc).
- 1988 *AI, CARAI!* (Oh, Gosh!).
- 1989 *DESIG* (Desire), winner of the 1989 "Serra d'Or" Critics' Prize, the 1988-1990 National Prize for Catalan Literature (Best Play), and the Extraordinary Barcelona Theatre Critics' Prize for Twenty-five Years of Playwriting.
- 1991 *CARLOTA I LA DONA DE NEU* (Carlota and the Snow-woman).
- 1992 *FUGAÇ* (Fleeting).
- 1993 *E. R.*, winner of the 1994 "Serra d'Or" Critics' Prize, the 1995 National Theatre Prize, the Fernando de Rojas Prize for the best text by a living Spanish author (for *ALGÚN DÍA TRABAJAREMOS JUNTAS* – the title of the Spanish translation of *E. R.*), the Celestina (Lunes de Teatro) Prize for the best Spanish author staged in Madrid in 1996 (for *ALGÚN DÍA TRABAJAREMOS JUNTAS*).
- 1995 *TESTAMENT* (Legacy).
- 1996 *EL GOS DEL TINENT* (The Lieutenant's Dog).
- 1997 *PRECISAMENT AVUI* (Precisely Today).
- Awarded the Creu de Sant Jordi (Saint George Cross) by the Generalitat (Government) of Catalonia.
- 1998 *OLORS* (Smells).
- 2000 *AIXÒ, A UN FILL, NO SE LI FA* (This, You Don't Do to Your Kid).
- 2001 *L'HABITACIÓ DEL NEN* (*LES TRETZE DE LA NIT*) (The Boy's Room (Thirteen O'Clock at Night)), winner of the 2003 Max Prize for the best play written in Catalan / Valencian.
- 2004 *SALAMANDRA* (Salamander).
- LA VENTAFOCES* (*POTSER SÍ, POTSER NO*) (Cinderella (Maybe Yes, Maybe No)).
- 2006 *FINAL*. (End).
- SOTERRANI* (The Cellar).



Josep M. Benet i Jornet

The Theatrical Landscape of Benet i Jornet

Enric Gallén

Over forty-four years, Josep M. Benet i Jornet has been shaping a compact theatrical universe, consisting of forty-six plays and characterised by a number of themes, his quest for new formal and expressive codes and by his desire to not associate this theatre with any aesthetic trend. In his early works – *Una vella, coneguda olor* (An Old, Familiar Smell, 1963), *Fantasia per a un auxiliar administratiu* (Fantasy for an Office Worker, 1964) – Benet, influenced by Spanish and American realist theatre, offered a dislocated vision of the 1960s through young characters who are unable to confront a reality they perceive as hostile and oppressive. Retracing his footsteps, and by means of a trilogy he bases on the myth of Drudania – *Cançons perdudes* (Lost Songs, 1966), *Marc i Jofre, o els alquimistes de la fortuna* (Marc and Jofre, or the Alchemists of Fortune, 1968) and *La nau* (The Spaceship, 1969) – Benet then reflected on his country, the system, and western society in general, using techniques he had learned from Brecht and epic theatre. He culminated his Brechtian apprenticeship with *Berenàveu a les fosques* (You Had Tea in the Dark, 1971), in which he settled a score with certain ideological and political attitudes that prevailed in Catalan society during the years of the Franco regime. The failure of the work when it was staged, however, obliged him to demonstrate, without renouncing the path he had so far taken, that he could also develop his now-questioned capacity of theatrical imagination and experimentation. This was the impetus for the appearance of *La desaparició de Wendy* (The Disappearance of Wendy, 1972), a bittersweet exposition of passion for the theatre, and this was followed by two plays for children and young people, *Supertot* (Supereverything, 1973) and *El somni de Bagdad* (Baghdad Dream, 1975). Finally, with *Revolta de bruixes* (Witches' Revolt, 1975), Benet pushed the realist basis of his text to the limits with the aim of transforming it into a vehicle for expressing impossible communication and to present the ideological debate between reason and irrationality.

Noteworthy among the plays he wrote between 1976 and 1988 are *Descripció d'un paisatge* (Description of a Landscape, 1978) and *El manuscrit d'Ali Bei* (Ali Bei's Manuscript, 1984). In the former work, Benet hints at the dual themes of human discontent and the impossible dream of Atlantis, both of which had appeared in *La nau*. Moreover, he continued with his exploration into the confrontation between reason and irrationality, an issue he had already dealt with in *Revolta de bruixes* and *Elisabet i Maria* (Elisabet and Maria, 1979), as well as raising again the matter of passion for theatre, which had appeared in *La desaparició de Wendy*.

With *Desig* (Desire, 1989), he returns to the theme of unattainable happiness, which he had dealt with implicitly in *La fageda* (The Beechwood, 1977). None of the characters in *Desig* can attain a state of total happiness because the human being is unable to prevail over a destiny that denies them this ideal. It is only possible to achieve isolated moments of fulfilment and these are manifested in unhealthy and fleeting desires. As a result of the resolute stylistic, formal and linguistic revival that occurred with *Desig* under the significant influence of Harold Pinter, some themes that he had previously touched on (feelings, for example) became more prominent in his work. Hence, through the six characters of *Fugaç* (Fleeting, 1992), Benet discussed the question of the different ways of approaching the meaning of Life. One year later, he wrote *E. R.*, a "parable on the world of theatre". Given that *Fugaç* seemed to have led him into a cul-de-sac, Benet then sought an "optimistic" vein in the nihilist attitude of his doctor character and found it in developing the stance taken by the character of the Friend in *Fugaç*. The result was *Testament* (Legacy, 1995), which recognised that an intellectual or artistic legacy can give meaning and justification to life. In another order of things, with *El gos del tinent* (The Lieutenant's Dog, 1996) and *Olors* (Smells, 1998), Benet perhaps brings to a culmination some of his thematic obsessions. In the former work, interwoven with certain political concerns discernible in *Berenàveu a les fosques* and *Descripció d'un paisatge*, is Benet's attack on totalitarian power that uproots everything and crushes it without a second thought or any remorse. In *Olors*, Benet closes the trilogy that he began with *Una vella, coneguda olor* and *Baralla entre olors* (Battle among Smells), offering a desolate vision of the devastating passage of time over the ways of life in a neighbourhood and in the milieu of ordinary people who look on impotently at the radical and arbitrary disappearance of spaces and buildings – their memories – at the hands of urban planners steeped in arrogance and contempt for others.

In 2000, Benet finished *Això, a un fill, no se li fa* (This, You Don't Do to Your Kid,), a spare and caustic comedy along the lines of Joe Orton's theatre. One year later, with *L'habitació del nen* (The Boy's Room), Benet presented an extreme situation arising from an apparent accident and the death of a son. Who is right? The father who believes that traumas have to be accepted because you can learn from them and they help you to grow, or the mother who is afraid to accept the loss of the person she loves? Benet limits himself to "observing" the characters and leaving the answers to the views of each reader/spectator. Finally, in *Salamandra* (Salamander, 2004) Benet, via other approaches, goes back to the issues expressed in *Cançons perdudes* about the preservation of Catalan culture. Benet's concern over one of his greatest loves – the Catalan language – is set against the global danger of extinction, which stalks a number of symbolic characters that represent a humanity condemned to live with pain, even while hoping for its salvation.