

Narrative work in Catalan, translations, awards, and honors

- 1975 *Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora* (*I Give You, Love, the Sea as Pledge*). Premi Recull-Francesc Puig i Llena (1974)
- 1977 *Jo pos per testimoni les gavines* (*Let the Seagulls Be My Witness*). Both with Spanish versions by the author (1980). Translated into Greek (1981), Dutch (1988), Spanish (1991).
- 1980 *Una primavera per a Domenico Guarini* (*A Spring for Domenico Guarini*). Prudenci Bertrana Prize (1980). Translated into Spanish (1981), German (1995).
- 1981 *Epitelis tendrissims* (*Tender Epithelium*). Translated into German (1994), Dutch (1991), Spanish (2008).
- 1987 *Qüestió d'amor propi* (*A Matter of Self-Esteem and Other Stories*). Translated into Spanish (1988), German (1993).
- 1989 *Joc de miralls* (*Mirror Images*). Ramón Llull Prize (1989). Translated into Spanish (1989), German (1994).
- 1991 *Contra l'amor en companyia i altres relats* (*Against Love in Company and Other Stories*). Translated into Spanish (1991), German (1996).
- 1994 *Dins el darrer blau* (*In the last blue*). Josep Pla Novel Prize (1994). Premi Nacional de Narrativa del Ministerio de Cultura (1995). Premi Crexells (1995). Premi Lletra d'Or de la Crítica (1995). Premi Elio Vittorini (2000). Translated into Spanish (1995), Italian (1997), German (2000), Romanian (2003), Hebrew (2007), Portuguese (2008), Russian (2008).
- 1998 *Temps d'una espera* (*Waiting Time*). Translated into Spanish (1998), Portuguese (2002).
- 2000 *Cap al cel obert* (*To the Open Sky*). Premi Serra d'Or Prize (2001). National Culture Prize from the Catalanian Generalitat (2001). Translated into Spanish (2000), German (2002), Italian (2002). Receives the Creu de Sant Jordi from the Catalanian Generalitat.
- 2004 *La meitat de l'ànima* (*Half the Soul*). Sant Jordi Novel Prize (2003) Rosalía de Castro Prize from the PEN Club (2004). Premi Jaume Fuster Prize of the Association of Writers in the Catalan Language (2005). Translated into Romanian (2004), Spanish (2005), French (2006), Italian (2007), Turkish (2007).
- 2006 *L'estiu de l'anglès* (*The English Summer*). Translated into Spanish (2006), German (2007)

Carme Riera

Carme Riera: Seduction of the Word

Luisa Cotoner Cerdó

The literary work of the Majorcan Carme Riera (1948) is crisscrossed by thematic motifs and narrative methods that travel from one book to the other. Fiction writer, essayist, and professor of Spanish literature, as well as an avid reader, she is a master of technique that captures the reader from the first page, since she knows the exact dose of intrigue, lyricism and irony to pour into each situation to ensure that he or she will not abandon the story. She herself has declared on several occasions that literature is an exercise of seduction by whoever is writing, to make the reader enter into the game of mirrors and reflections, simulacra and maskings that is writing. The careful manipulation of the Catalan language--permeated with Majorcan word variants; the richness and precision of her vocabulary; the musicality of her syntax; the apparent spontaneity of her characters' colloquial register; and the intertextual winks with which she alludes to classic and modern works, inserting them in her own discourse--is the first focus of attention for anyone getting acquainted with her work and constitutes the common denominator by which all of it is sustained.

In the Rieran oeuvre three clearly differentiated formal patterns can be distinguished: an intimate style of marked confidential accent, ironic distance, and the immersion in the historical genre in the search for shared identity and the recuperation of personal and collective memory. This distinction, however, should not be interpreted in an exclusive way. On the contrary, Riera has combined these elements, to a greater or lesser degree, throughout all of her production, although refining them during her thirty years of creative writing.

The public became acquainted with Carme Riera with the publication of two stories, found in collections of the same names, *Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora* (*I Give You, Love, the Sea as Pledge*, 1975), which was a spectacular success for the then completely unknown author, and *Jo pos per testimoni les gavines* (*Let the Seagulls Be My Witness*, 1977). In both of them, the facts of the story are the same, but the difference of focus among the two leaves the reader to choose between the first or second versions, thus ushering in one of the constants of her fiction: plurality of perspectives, based on polyphonic discourse. In both, likewise, the authorial voice and fictional voice are superimposed, and she uses a confidential tone through the medium of the letter. In *Qüestió d'amor propi* (*A Matter of Self-Esteem*, 1988) considered a masterpiece of the epistolary genre, the entire plot is also contained in the long missive that the writer-protagonist directs to her friend to ask her for help in taking revenge against a Don Juan. The lyricism of the first books is substituted here for lucid and wounding sarcasm. The presence of an internal conversation and the use of dates that coincide in reality and fiction accentuate the suspicion that the author is revealing an episode of her own life and, in consequence, the reader also feels like a keeper of the secret.

Experimentation with new narrative forms is found primarily in her first novel, *Una primavera per a Domenico Guarini* (*A Spring for Domenico Guarini*, 1980), where the foreign

travel of the main character functions as a counterpoint to the voyage that she undertakes, in parallel, towards the discovery of herself. Thus, generic confusion, the fracturing of temporal linearity, alternating narrative voices, the mixture of journalistic chronicles, letters, and academic dissertations, and the superposition of plots are metonymic resources for the interior instability of the protagonist, until she is able to come out of the dark tunnel. In the following novel, *Joc de miralls* (*Mirror Images*, 1989), Riera returns to the search for identity, taking the doubling theme as a starting point, with a dictatorial regime as background.

Between these novels came another collection of stories, *Epitelis tendrissims* (*Tender Epithelium*, 1981), in which Riera destroys certain taboos of the erotic genre, traditionally off-limits for female writers, using an ironic, fun, and fresh focus. We find this tone again in the stories of *Contra l'amor en companyia* (1991), although here her aim is the literary world and some folkloric stereotypes. In *L'estiu de l'anglès* (*The Summer of the Englishman*, 2006), humor is also key to a gothic intrigue, whose central character is an employee who travels to England to learn English. The tragicomic vicissitudes that surround her will give a definitive about-face to her life.

The search for shared identity and the recuperation of collective memory is the common thread among Riera's three historical novels, in which actual events are seamlessly melded with fictional plots, and real people with invented characters, made to measure out of authentic experiences. *Dins el darrer blau* (*In the Last Blue*, 1994) narrates events that took place in Palma, Majorca, between 1688 and 1691, when a group of crypto-Jews who wanted to flee the island in order to live without oppression or coercion were judged and condemned to be burned at the stake by the Inquisition. This is a choral novel, written in the third person, in which the complex interior world of the characters conquer the soul of the readers, ensuring that they feel emotionally invested in their doubts, anguish, and suffering. In *Cap al cel obert* (*To the Open Sky*, 2000) the story of the descendants of the Jews burned by the Holy Office continues, to a certain extent; they have now become, paradoxically, proud owners of slaves. Riera again uses the omniscient point of view and, following the handbook of nineteenth-century melodrama, the author recreates Cuba's colonial conflict in the second half of the nineteenth century, leading to political reflection about the national question. Lastly, in *La meitat de l'ànima* (*Half the Soul*, 2004), the reconstruction of Barcelona's Franquist post-war environment, the situation of the exiled Republicans, and focus on the anarchists are the historical framework upon which Riera weaves the search for identity by a writer-protagonist who, for her part, speaks directly to the reader, involving him or her in her investigation.

With these three novels, which as of today constitute the peak of Rieran fiction, the writer constructs an authentic *trompe-l'oeil* to give life to her characters, and uses polyphonic discourse to construct a reality that is impossible to see from just one point of view. The methods used to express this destabilizing vision vary from one book to another, but the final result is the same: to transmit a *Weltanschauung* in which there is no room for absolute truths, but rather a permanent dialectic contrast with what is farthest from ourselves.