

An Itinerary

Narcís Comadira was born in Girona in January of 1942. Painter and poet from an early age, he sustained exceptionally active and parallel involvement in both fields; neither of the two can be interpreted as a simple illustration of the other. Reflecting on the central meaning of each of the titles that form Comadira's poetic corpus, and establishing the sequential argument they comprise is a good strategy for understanding the flux of thematic motifs that reign in his work. To do so, one can simply consult his last poetry compilation, *Formes de l'ombra. Poesia 1966-2002* (Shapes of the Shadow: Poetry 1966-2002; 2002), and survey the titles of books collected in this volume, which presents the whole of his recognized and canonical work, to which one should add the last published title, *Llast* (Ballast; 2007).

The itinerary framed by the 2002 collected works begins with *La febre freda* (Cold Fever; 1966) and *Papers privats* (Private Papers; 1969), his two first books, now recovered in this volume, and ends with the penultimate title, *L'art de la fuga* (The Art of Fugue), published in 2002. In between, the route covers *Amic de plor* (Weeping's Friend; 1969) and *El verd jardí* (The Green Garden; 1972), two books that situate the poet within the coordinates given him in life: the personal and the historical, taking a position within his poetic inheritance. We then find *Les ciutats* (Cities; 1976), a book that registers a reflection on the city as synecdoche and index of a European identity, and *Desdesig* (Undesire), also from 1976, which includes *Un passeig pels bulevards ardents* (A Walk Down Burning Boulevards), from 1974. The latter is a long and powerful narrative poem of postmodernity: a voyage through desolate landscapes where the self's identity and the contemporary artist's mission are debated among injustice and chaos, liberty and terror. After *Desdesig*, a lyric cry with metaphysical roots, come *Terra natal* (Land of My Birth; 1978) and *Àlbum de família* (Family Album; 1980), two books of reflection about the historical and personal circumstances that construct an already divided and problematic conscience. This reflection is followed by *Enigma* (Enigma; 1985). In the collection we are following, *Formes de l'ombra. Poesia 1966-2002*, *Enigma* is preceded by the book *Lírica lleugera* (Light Lyric), which in fact has a much later date of publication (2000). This light lyric contains various poems of various time periods and various circumstances, song lyrics, and some satiric invectives full of humor and witty formal talent. *Enigma* (1985) includes, besides many poems of varied theme and execution, two extensive poems of high reflexive tension, a profoundly liturgical "Requiem" and "Triomf de la vida" (Triumph of Life), which develops into a Darwinian description of the process of life leading to the human animal. *Enigma* is an important book within the evolution of Comadira's poetry, because it represents both a synthesis of his most characteristic features and a marker of change heading towards his later books, which will be more hermetic in their figurative conception and more expressionist in their invention of themes and motifs. Indeed, the books that follow, *En quarantena* (In Quarantine; 1990), *Usdefruit* (Usufruit; 1995), and the aforementioned *Lírica lleugera* (2000) and *L'art de la fuga* (2002), reveal a lyric voice already pure in its formal investigation and with an absolute dominion of different

levels of reflection and speaking, of poetic discourse. Lastly, outside of the collected works, on January 22, 2007, the day of his birthday, Comadira published *Llast*, a work that gathers in its poems a surprising thematic and reflective flexibility, and a fabric where grammatical and logical precision are put to the service of poetic language in order to achieve that inspired synthesis of emotion and spirit, thought and culture, in the most profound sense of the word.

In the realm of literature Comadira also composed plays that have already been published and performed, such as *La vida perdurable* (Everlasting Life; 1992), *L' hora dels adéus* (The Hour of Farewells; 1995) or *El dia dels morts* (All Souls' Day; 1997). Comadira's drama is principally textual and the action is developed through language. Comadira is also a recognized translator, primarily of poetry, but also of theater. The dramatic works that have been performed, though they are unpublished, include his translations of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Candide*, a musical with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and Richard Wilbur and music by Leonard Bernstein, Molière's *Tartuffe*, *Orgia* by Pier Paolo Pasolini and *El silenci del mar* (The Silence of the Sea) by Vercors (2008). His latest translations, both published and performed, are: *Les tres germanes* (The Three Sisters) by Chekhov (2005) and *Els gegants de la muntanya* (The Mountain Giants) by Luigi Pirandello (1999). He has translated from Latin, *Himnes cristians llatins antics* (Ancient Christian Latin Hymns; 1988), and from English, but his primary focus in this field has been Italian translation. Besides the novels *L'Airone* (The Heron), by Giorgio Bassani, and *Fratelli d'Italia* (Italian Brothers), by Alberto Arbasino, both in Spanish, he has focused on Italian poetry. His *Antologia de la poesia italiana* (Anthology of Italian Poetry) in two volumes (1985 and 1990), which covers Francis of Assisi to Pier Paolo Pasolini, vouches for his extensive knowledge of this poetic tradition. His dedication to Italian poetry culminates in the well-received translation of the *Canti* (Songs) of Giacomo Leopardi (2004).

As an essayist, in addition to his weekly column in the *Quadern* of the newspaper *El País*, his articles on questions of art, literature, or poetic thought reveal an original writer, informed and precise in his contributions, and with a noteworthy capacity to present his arguments in a lively and convincing manner. These are the qualities found in his books of prose and essay, such as *Girona, matèria i memòria* (Girona: Material and Memory; 1989), *Fórmules magistrals* (Masterly Formulas; 1997), *Sense escut* (With No Shield; 1998), *L'ànima dels poetes* (The Soul of Poets; 2002), and *Camins d'Itàlia* (Paths of Italy; 2005). On the other hand, also within the field of reflective essay, Comadira—who holds a degree in art history—is devoted to the analysis of European plastic arts and architecture of the first half of the twentieth century, and is a specialist in the Catalan *noucentista* movement. In this field, his study on one of the fundamental Catalan architects of this period, *Rafael Masó, arquitecte noucentista* (Rafael Masó, Architect of Noucentisme; 1996/2007), and also his last work of aesthetic and cultural essays on the movement, *Forma i prejudici. Papers sobre el Noucentisme* (Form and Prejudice: Papers on Noucentisme; 2006), are significant. D. O.

