

ON POETRY

Gabriel Ferrater (1922-1972) is the author of a poetic oeuvre composed in a very tight span of time (1958-1963) and soon gathered into one volume: *Les dones i els dies* (Women and Days; 1968). Ferrater's literary proposal, with its blunt power, was radically eccentric at the time it appeared, but became an important reference for many poets (and readers) of later generations. With the passing of time, naturally, a part of what made this poetry provocative has become dulled, but on the other hand it has not lost any of its capacity to shock us. The poems of *Les dones i els dies* still speak with a deliberately colloquial tone, still attract the reader's attention to what we could call the moral life of an ordinary man, and still know how to transform lucid observation into genuine artistic experience. Any subject is likely to serve as impetus for a good poem. Such is the case of this one, translated into English by Ferrater himself, who explained: "This was suggested by a reading of *Huckleberry Finn* — Twain's mad running after the body's memories."

A L'INREVÉS

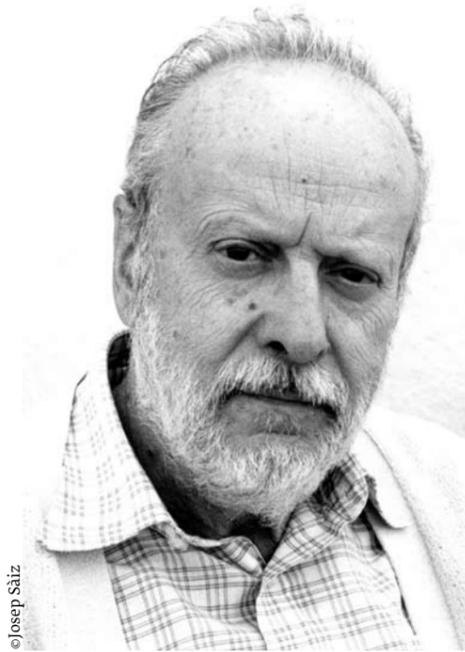
Ho diré a l'inrevés. Diré la pluja
frenètica d'agost, els peus del noi
caragolats al fil del trampolí,
l'agut salt de llebrer que fa l'aroma
dels lilàs a l'abril, la paciència
de l'aranya que escriu la seva fam,
el cos amb quatre cames i dos caps
en un solar gris de crepuscle, el peix
llisquent com un arquet de violí,
el blau i l'or de les nenes en bici,
la set dramàtica del gos, el tall
dels fars de camió en la matinada
pútrida del mercat, els braços fins.
Diré el que em fuig. No diré res de mi.

CONTRARIWISE

I will say it contrariwise. I will say the frantic
rain in August, a boy's feet
curling on the edge of a diving-plank,
the acute foxhound-jump the scent of lilacs
makes in April, the patience
of the spider writing down its hunger,
the four-legged two-headed body
in an evening-gray vacant lot, the fish
slippery like a violin-bow,
the blue-and-gold of girls biking,
the dog's dramatical thirst, the cutting-through
of lorries' lights into the putrid
dawn of the market-hall, the smooth arms.
I will say what goes from me. I will say nothing
about me.

JORDI CORNUDELLA

WORK IN PROGRESS



Joaquim Carbó (Caldes de Malavella, 1932) is one of the most prolific and important writers in contemporary Catalan fiction. His extensive output embraces both novels and short narrative and is an obligatory reference for his major contribution to literature for young adults and children, with more than seventy titles, among which we should highlight the already mythic "La casa sota la sorra" (The House Under the Sand). Linked to the journal "Cavall Fort" since its foundation in 1961 and to the Ofelia Dracs Collective, Carbó's work has been awarded with the most important prizes, such as the Víctor Català (1964) or the Joan Santamària (1965). It has also won the "Serra d'Or" Critics' Prize on two occasions and, in 2007, was recognized with the Trajectòria Prize. Currently, Carbó is working on a volume of microstories, *Histèries del metro* (Metro Hysterics), of which we present a taste.

The Irresistible Impulse

Standing up, he focuses his attention on the neck of the girl sitting with her back to him. She is moving in an almost imperceptible way, as if she were practicing a gymnastics made up of smooth rotations of the neck, movements so subtle that that they cause him to bring his hands up to her neck without

calculating the risk such a forbidden gesture. After the initial surprise that causes the girl to contract slightly, more disconcerted than offended, he makes himself move his hands with more discretion until she relaxes and lets him touch her, without even turning around to find out who is making her feel so good, or what he looks like. If one were observing, one might think that there was a deep complicity between the two of them. When the girl hears the loudspeaker announce the name of the next stop, which is hers, she gets up, but slowly, so she won't break off that strange relation too abruptly. Then she turns, looks at him, smiles, stands on her tiptoes and kisses his cheek: "Thanks, sweetheart," she says, and heads for the door. Now the boy, with his hands so empty, regrets not having followed her, or asked for her name, where she lives, or... Later, when he takes his apartment keys from his pocket, he finds the card of someone named Esperança, and on it is written: "Call me!"

The Round

He couldn't hear the tone of the lovebirds' conversation: it had to be high voltage because their eyes smoldered. They break their embrace, the boy gets off regretfully, and she, retouching her makeup, continues. One stop later, when another young man gets on, the girl is already set to offer him her cheek to receive a light kiss before beginning a dialogue of a calmer kind. During the three stops that they travel together, both show discrete affection, not as tempestuous as with the earlier boy. Thus, when she is alone again, there is no need to redo her face before receiving the hurried embrace of a third friend who disappears immediately. The observer, when he realizes that the girl is about to descend, tries to tell her that he would also like to participate in... The girl cuts him off, lets him know that she was aware of his interest and offers to reciprocate it during the part of the trip that stretches from where she was left alone until now, since she has to get off... The boy accepts, with the idea that later on he will have her to himself, but time passes, and as much as he insists, he will not prevail. The girl's intent is to distribute small doses of happiness.

Men and Mice

He leaves the house for work with enough time to take a stroll before entering the underground transit tunnel. Once he is there, and sees that the train will arrive in two minutes, he sits on a bench next to the bars of an air vent. Near the ground something is moving: it is a darling mouse, alive, quick and wiggling. Nothing to do with those sewer rats that run down the tracks! If it were the morning he could give it some morsel of the breakfast that his dearest prepares so lovingly, but he doesn't normally eat snacks. He rummages through his pocket and finds only some threads of tobacco. No, what he needs is a cheese rind. He looks at the clock: he has time. What of it, if he loses his ticket! He exits at the street and walks toward home with brisk steps, doesn't wait for the elevator and takes the stairs two at a time. Entering the apartment he hears a whispering in the bedroom. He goes in without knocking and finds his wife in the arms of a neighbor. He doesn't know what to do or say, and flees for the street. He walks mechanically towards the station, and when he sees the mouse again he is sorry not to have a dose of venom to make him pay for the disgrace that has befallen him, all the mouse's faultz.