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Baltasar Porcel



Who I am and why I write

Baltasar Porcel

Baltasar Porcel (Andratx, 1938 - Barcelona, 2009) is one of the Catalan writers that has received the most international acclaim and is an irreplaceable figure of contemporary Catalan literature. Translated into many

languages, his works have been awarded prizes in Italy (The Bocaccio Prize), France (The Méditerranée prize) and the United States (Critics' Choice). His creative output includes drama, non-fiction and journalism. For many years he has contributed a daily article to the newspaper La Vanguardia, which has become one of the most widely-read columns in the country.

While it is becoming more and more difficult for me to express what I might call my poetics, responsible critics are defining it with ever-greater success. In this regard I am referring especially to the authors of the recent prologue-studies of my *Obres completes* (Complete Works), beginning with [Joaquim Molas](#), who has written the first and most extensive of these. But I find with every day that passes that things are increasingly difficult in their theoretical aspect, precisely because I find their practice increasingly more concrete. When, of course, I can give them the form that I am searching for, something that is not always easy and often is impossible.

I have never been interested in experimental authors or in members of the avant-garde. Or they have interested me very little, except when they have made use of form to achieve an astonishing effect. Like Kafka. Or Faulkner. But very often this literary procedure goes no further than an ingeniousness and exhibitionism that seeks to find expression by means of distortion. And it fails to find it, except for those who live in that domain and consider the world not through what it is but through what they appreciate in it.

Nor do I believe in authors who take refuge in conceptualism, in a theoretical scaffolding, as a primordial defence of their work. They tend to fare very well with certain lecturers, when what justifies one is strength and harmony, only. An author may develop an explanation of what he feels when creating, as some have done on occasion, beginning with Conrad. But however much the inner void of a book of poems may be adorned with uplifting pseudo-philosophy, it will continue to be a fraud. There is a sort of essay *à la française* that confounds verbal incontinence with content. I much prefer reflection of the Anglo-Saxon kind, bound as it is to concrete realities.

Concerning myself, I have to say that I suspect that I write from an ecological and pantheistic awareness. In other words, I see man, the landscape, death, the effects of light, as an interconnected whole. It has been said of me, and I have said, that at times I am rather baroque. But I was writing in the same way when it was said of me, and I said, that I was actually a realist: there are human passions and the colours and forms of nature in my writing. Sometimes, looking at the night-sky, I feel the spherical nature of the Earth, the way that it spins through the frightful void of the Universe. A wide valley in repose beneath the onslaught of the wind stirs me much more deeply than any human contact. People and animals - Carme Arnau has written about this and *Cavalls cap a la fosca* (*Horses into the night*) - sometimes strike me as unquestionably alike: they are like us as children? and death

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is matter in transformation, a drama like that of the fish caught on the hook. Happiness resembles a tree in flower, almond-blossom under the February sun?

Style, the word, must respond to this deep conviction: writers are words. But there are writers of living words - [Maragall](#), the poet, had a theory about this that I know nothing of - and others of the empty, though inflated, word. Life in language flows from the semantics on which the author has sucked, from the obscure relationship between touch and the sensation of things, emotion, and the defining words through which the writer, the man, has known them. The lack of all this is the great shortcoming of wonderful stylists and great verbal creators such as Azorín and Valle Inclán. In contrast, it is the superb virtue of [Josep Pla](#), when he does not convert it into a knitting-machine. And this is one of the struggles in the midst of which I always find myself. When I read a text of my own and it does not rise up as if it were a scale model, I erase it.

Let us return to technique. I have made novels as best I have been able. Very often the construction of what I might call a unitary argument eludes me. But not because I find it difficult, as I have elaborated it - and well, I think - in *Els escorpins* (The Scorpions), *Les pomes d'or* (The Golden Apples), and *El divorci de Berta Barca* (The Divorce of Berta Barca).

The thing is that for what I want to say in other books, I find a conventionally-articulated story too short and closed to be able to encompass the plans, motivations, atmospheres, and characters that struggle among themselves to appear and that make up the story that I intend to write. Hence the various stories and the multi-layered time that flow together there, and as a result the necessary - for me - technique of zigzag or mosaic on the basis of which I tend to write. And there are some splendid conventional arguments that express diverse realities: first and foremost, *War and Peace*, by Tolstoy.

Man and his passions: here is the deepest motivation of my novels. One that unfolds through various spheres of humanness. Violence: there is a fury that underlies smiles, and only through ferocity can one commit the great deeds and great crimes inherent in existence. Love: the greatest happiness is found in sexual fusion, and it is even more divine if that fusion of bodies is also an emotional fusion, with the pleasure of touch, mental obsession, the paroxysm of orgasm. Time: we are a transformation in time, we struggle to convert its passing into a dynamic, to make of it a destiny in which our volition will impose itself on circumstantial conditioning factors. Action: it is enlivening and exhausting, and above all, immobility draws death closer to us. And sarcasm and smiling evanescence and?

The myth of Andratx - have I created it? Well, yes. But I must say that in various of my works - *Els escorpins*, *Les pomes d'or*, *Els dies immortals* (The Immortal Days), *El divorci de Berta Barca*, the Chinese stories, and those in the section "Altres terres, altres mans" in *Tots els contes* (Complete Short Stories) - I have described surroundings far removed from my village and from the island of Majorca.

I never proposed to achieve anything of a literary kind with Andratx: neither to write a novel about it, nor to offer a myth concerning it. What happened, however, was that through the chance of literary education and reading - both of which very deficient in my case - I found myself obliged to write about what I knew, which is, or was, Andratx. More properly speaking, it happened that if when "filling out" a situation or a character I placed it in Andratx, it seemed to me to acquire a greater sensuality, to stand out more clearly, to fit more closely. Experience as the platform of the imagination.

Until I was fifteen, I had always lived in Andratx. I have never given up going there for between one and four months of the year, to Sant Telm, to the small family property. As I was growing up I came to

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know the world, man and the landscape, the taste of things, and hopes, in Andratx: a glass through which it was better for me, when I was writing, to contemplate and remake the world. At the same time, a reading that marked me deeply: realistic novels, rural ones, such as those by the Castilians and the Italians of the nineteen-fifties: Fernández Santos and Aldecoa, Pavese and Carlo Levi, provided me with a certain guideline. Nonetheless, I never subjected myself to it: irony, transcendentalism, the taste for language: a thousand things separated me from it. I very much like *Dead Souls* by Gogol, which is the same as those novels, and not at all the same.

But the real Andratx has remained frightfully behind: I now have what I have created for myself with memories. The myth of Andratx is there even for me, though I cannot say whether it will operate as a generator of other novels? I suppose that the myth will. And that the 'glass' will not. The fact is that *Les primaveres i les tardors* (*Springs and Autumns*) was already almost nothing but the myth, even though the place and the spirit were more or less the ones associated with my house in Sant Telm.

I suppose that I should also say something about my books on travel and the theatre, and about the great deal of writing I have done for newspapers, from the interviews in *Destino* and [Serra d'Or](#) to the present politico-sociological column in *La Vanguardia*. And about television: my programme on travel, *El món en català* on the Spanish Television was the first in our language, Catalan, that dealt with the wider world. But I now intend to refer no further to that, because I am fundamentally a writer who as his maximum objective and over and beyond conjecture and fame has proposed to write some good novels.

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A selection of texts

Text



WEB: Baltasar Porcel

Two prose fragments in Catalan, English and German.

http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/porcelb/pagina.php?id_sec=1902



WEB: Porcel a EPdLP

Nota biogràfica en castellà amb un fragment d'*El cor del senglar* a El Poder de la Palabra.

<http://www.epdlp.com/escritor.php?id=2160>

Bio-bibliography

Biography



WEB: A la Hiperenciclopèdia

http://www.enciclopedia.cat/fitxa_v2.jsp?NDCHEC=0052130



WEB: Fitxa al "Qui és qui a les lletres catalanes"

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/qeq/FitxaAutors.asp?nom1=por&nom2=&cerca=Cerca&quinform=form1&>

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WEB: A la Viquipèdia

Nota biogràfica, obra i enllaços sobre l'autor al web de l'enciclopèdia lliure.

http://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltasar_Porcel



WEB: The author in the Catalan Encyclopaedia

<http://www.grec.cat/cgi-bin/hecangcl2.pgm?&USUARI=&SESSIO=&NDCHEC=0052130&PGMORI=E>



VIDEO: Porcel a Veus literàries

Documental sobre la vida i l'obra de l'escriptor, realitzat per l'AELC.

http://www.edu3.cat/Edu3tv/Fitxa?p_id=34441&p_ex=baltasar%20porcel



WEB: The author in the Who's Who of Catalan Literature

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/peq/fitxaAutorsuk.asp?nom1=porcel&cercauk2=Search&quinform=form1&NRegistre=1&idregistre=7102>



VIDEO: Porcel in Veus literàries [Literary Voices]

Documentary on Porcel's life and work made by AELC (Association of Catalan Language Writers).

http://www.edu3.cat/Edu3tv/Fitxa?p_id=34441&p_ex=baltasar%20porcel

Bibliography



WEB: Què hi ha a la Biblioteca de Catalunya

http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*cat/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Porcel+Baltasar&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques universitàries catalanes (CCUC)

http://ccuc.cbuc.es/search*cat/a?SEARCH=Porcel+Baltasar&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=23



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques públiques

<http://argus.biblioteques.gencat.cat/iii/encore/search/C|SPorcel+Baltasar|Orightrresult|U1?lang=cat&suite=pearl>



WEB: Per comprar-ne llibres

<http://www.llibres.cat/ca/detall-autor/porcel-i-pujol-baltasar>



WEB: Articles de l'autor (Traces)

<http://traces.uab.cat/search?f=author&p=Porcel%20Baltasar&sc=1&ln=ca>



WEB: Articles sobre l'autor (Traces)

http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=ca&p=Porcel%2C+Baltasar&f=keyword&action_search=Cerca&c=Traces+%3A+base+de+dades+de+llengua+i+literatura+catalanes&sf=&so=d&rm=&rg=10&sc=1&of=hb

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WEB: Works in the Biblioteca de Catalunya

http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*eng/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Porcel+Baltasar&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D



WEB: The author in The European Library

<http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/search/%28%22creator%22+all+%22porcel+baltasar%22%29.query>



WEB: The author in the Congress Library (US)

<http://catalog.loc.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&PAGE=First>



WEB: The author in the COPAC Catalogue (UK)

<http://copac.ac.uk/search?&au=Baltasar+Porcel>

Comments on the author

Criticism



WEB: Premi Lletra d'Or

Pàgina de Lletra dedicada al Premi Lletra d'Or que l'autor guanyà amb *L'Emperador o l'ull del vent*.
<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/premis/premilletrador/>



WEB: Porcel i els moviments literaris contemporanis a les Balears

Biografia de l'escriptor dins del web patrocinat pel Govern de les Illes Balears.
<http://www.hudaweb.com/movlit/autor.php?autor=85>



WEB: Pàgina de l'AELC

Biografia, informació i publicacions.
<http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/porcelb/>



WEB: L'autor al Corpus Literari Clutat de Barcelona

Biografia, enllaços i transcripció d'articles sobre l'autor mallorquí.
http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=2278



WEB: Baltasar Porcel on the Lletra website in Catalan

Including more resources and reading suggestions.
<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/noms/bporcel/index.html>



WEB: Lletra d'Or Prize

Lletra page devoted to the Lletra d'Or Prize, which the author won for *L'Emperador o l'ull del vent* (The Emperor or the Eye of the Wind).
<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/premis/premilletrador/>

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WEB: Website of the AELC

Biography, information and works.

http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/porcelb/pagina.php?id_sec=1904



WEB: Baltasar Porcel in the City of Barcelona Literary Corpus

Biography, links and selection of articles about this author.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=2278

Miscellaneous



WEB: Premi Salambó

Baltasar Porcel va guanyar el Premi Salambó 2004 al millor llibre de narrativa en català. A Clubcultura.com.

<http://www.clubcultura.com/clubliteratura/salambo/ganadorcat04.htm>



PDF: El moment present

Baltasar Porcel parla amb Vicenç Llorca sobre l'estat actual de les lletres i la cultura catalanes. A l'Avui (10/02/05).

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av03703.pdf>



WEB: The present time

Baltasar Porcel talks to Vicenç Llorca on the current state of the arts and culture in Catalonia. In Avui (10/02/05).

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av03703.pdf>

Comments



WEB: Sobre Olympia a mitjanit

Entrevista a eitb.com (Euskal Irrati Telebista) amb Baltasar Porcel. En àudio.

http://www.eitb.com/pompas/lib_entrevistas.asp



PDF: "Baltasar Porcel, un gran reserva"

L'escriptor Àlex Susanna comenta *Olympia a mitjanit*. A l'Avui (06/05/04).

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av03115.pdf>



WEB: "L'element autobiogràfic en la narrativa de Baltasar Porcel"

Un altre article de Pere Rosselló publicat a la revista de literatura *Cairell*, núm. 4 (maig de 1980).

<http://perso.wanadoo.es/lipmic/cairell/Num4/rossello.htm>



WEB: About Olympia a mitjanit (Olympia at Midnight)

Interview on eitb.com (Euskal Irrati Telebista) with Baltasar Porcel. In audio.

http://www.eitb.com/pompas/lib_entrevistas.asp

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WEB: "Baltasar Porcel, un Gran Reserva"

Writer Àlex Susanna comments on *Olympia a mitjanit*. In *Avui* (06/05/04).
<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av03115.pdf>



WEB: Springs and Autumns

Review of the English edition of *Les primaveres i les tardors*.
http://www.uapress.com/titles/fa00/porcel_springs.html
