

If you want to cite this page...

Literary news about Biel Mesquida on Lletra, the UOC's virtual space devoted to Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/biel-mesquida> >

Biel Mesquida



Who I Am and Why I Write

Biel Mesquida

Telloc, 21 November 1995

My very dear and beloved soul-mate P-M, I have toiled long before reaching this point. A few days and nights ago, or a couple (in the Mallorcan sense), I was trying to thread together a few strings of words to respond to questions you are putting to me almost without knowing you're doing it and that put me on edge because I don't know how to answer them. Among them, the one that bothers me is the one you insinuate almost as if you are reproaching me for it: Why do you write? Before picking up my Montblanc and the Indian handcrafted paper that Oscar Pujol -my wise and poetic friend who is putting together a Sanskrit-Catalan dictionary- brought me from Benares, and jotting down the first few words, I unsuccessfully tried to put on *El lado más bestia de la vida* (Take a Walk on the Wild Side), my old friend Lou Reed, my new friend Albert Pla! The record player has only let me hear a Lluís Llach, his voice painted with all the colours of Porrera and set to music with scenographic sounds where "Els masos cauen" (Farmhouses Fall) and "Europa creix sobre els vostres morts mercadejats sense vergonya" (Europe shamelessly grows over your bartered dead). When Lluís was reciting to me his "passen els núvols talment com antics vaixells/roden món/greus i misteriosos/van cap a Sarajevomathausen..." (clouds go by just like old ships/ sail the world/ mysterious and grave/ heading for Sarajevomathausen ...) you came in all of a-flurry, P-M of my soul, and told me that now they have peace in Yugoslavia. I followed you to look at the telly and with contained joy saw Clinton giving all the details of how, this autumn Tuesday, the Serbs, Bosnians and Croats have signed the Peace Agreement in Dayton (Ohio), which has put an end to a war that has lasted four years and murdered two hundred and fifty thousand people, in particular members of a defenceless civil society.

To cap it all, yesterday, you ask me, just like that, to write a few words to explain to you my obsession with writing. I said that you ask the question and you answered it. You looked at me as if you found that strange. You know that we dwell between crusted walls where I would like to paint the simplest and most seductive graffiti that that come and go in my head in an exercise of reading and thinking with all sorts of pathways and vice-versas. I think you're going to tell me that I'm mixing up the shadows of words to make lights that are sometimes black. Yes, I'm trying to construct a minor literary oeuvre with the strong-box of the words of the Catalan clans (that have almost got to be, with the new IEC dictionary, a hyper-data bank), and you know that I am a lover of the mega-millionaire ways of speaking of the polyphonies of the different Catalanesque geographical and cultural zones and that I try to produce some kind of stuttering with the blend of letters and senses that would be expressed by a couple (once again in the Mallorcan sense) of literary-minded pieces of music that entertain humans and give them the pleasures of enjoyment. You will say, lucid and severe, P-M, that I've begun to rave, without being afraid that this is one of the few skills I practise. Making my fingers fly full of letters in pursuit of frail and beautiful forms. You will respond that you know that beauty is terrible and that every beautiful act has a price. You spend too much time listening to the mass media and especially its audiovisual forms. Yes, I know you think Internet is crude and that living in digital is not your forte. But it wasn't long ago that you were reading to me words of Gilles Deleuze, when he said the last so bestially human "no", which you said could be applied to some of my "things". I find it

If you want to cite this page...

Literary news about Biel Mesquida on Lletra, the UOC's virtual space devoted to Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/biel-mesquida> >

incredible that you call my writings "things". And you read, "*Faire du nouveau en littérature, c'est faire bégayer la langue, c'est-à-dire la minorer, tant il est vrai que les grans écrivains inventent un usage mineur de la langue majeur dans laquelle ils s'expriment. Écrire, c'est dérégler, déréglementer le langage, lui faire suivre des lignes de sorcière.*" Like the bolt of lightning finds the head that will stop it and gather it in, a shining light has made me see that much of my work of writing has but one passion: making of an apprenticeship of the letter and its practice in conscientious productions of Literature & Sons, an art of living. Maybe it is thanks to this basic idea through which you will be able, beloved P-M, to glimpse me like somebody peeping through Venetian blinds. I live, and kiss me after I tell you this, in a state of intimate dissatisfaction, of acute self-ignorance and loss of identity. This is why I want to use the language, play tricks with it, without the least illusion. There are hours when I don't like writing and others when it is a fount of almost physiological pleasures. I feel omnisexual and it is through the letter that I can quest in territories of sexes that really excite me.

I don't know if that was what I wanted to tell you. But my head is boiling with my reading and you appear before me out of the worldly aquarium like a voice that makes me feel I'm about to have a breakdown. I'm so little used to hearing words that dismantle me with the exquisiteness of the great corrosive spirits of the century (such as my pals Nietzsche, Turing, Barthes and Wittgenstein, who knew a lot about it and put it into practice), that when I listen to you I think I'm dreaming. Some words of the master Valéry that you quoted to me a few hours ago are flying around me like a paper kite. "*Je n'ai jamais su qui j'étais...*" And I have found some words written by Paul (Valéry), just before he died, for André (Gide), words that have wings and I could put my name to them because they are so akin to my own feelings. Look at this: "*Je dois à mes amis presque tout ce que je suis. Ils ont cru en moi qui ne croyais pas en moi-même... Ils m'ont tant instruit, et de tant des choses... Mon vieux, il ne faut pas oublier ceci, ni t'oublier.*"

Do you want me to say it even more directly, illustrious P-M? You want me to let fly without the least scrap of shame (my brain should be blushing all over). Who are we? Should it be the effect I have on one or the other? It's the same as with my recorded voice: I hardly recognise myself. It's not because of being "intelligent". I know we're not that! Don't you find the *rien ne va plus* cheeky?

Postscript. Amorous liquids. I haven't signed off and I've signed up for everything. This is why I was amused to find on the floor a small *papier* that I sent you a while ago and that you said you loved. It's an excellent translation by Antoni Martínez of Xàtiva of the poet Ibn Hazm of Cordoba. It says, "To write a love letter, knowing it's been read, to receive the answer to it, is the kind of pleasure that is close to that of meeting the beloved, which is why one can see lovers caressing their letters, pressing them against their breasts and keeping them like a treasure. There are letters written in ink mixed with tears, or with ink and saliva and even letters written in blood." Maybe, multiple and near-to-me P-M, I wouldn't have translated using the word "letter" but with "Writing" steeped in amorous liquids.

Copyright © 1998 Institució de les Lletres Catalanes

Come on in and See the Show

José Carlos Llop

Every Tuesday, Biel Mesquida publishes in this newspaper one of his *Cròniques* (Chronicles). They started to appear nine years ago and have since changed their title from *Cròniques escèptiques* (Sceptical Chronicles) to *La Darrera* (The Last). Although the page and format have changed several times, it has never stopped being a typically Mesquidan product. With guarantee of origin and quality but also with a precise genealogical tree. Yet in these chronicles there is a certain Orsian touch. I

If you want to cite this page...

Literary news about Biel Mesquida on Lletra, the UOC's virtual space devoted to Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/biel-mesquida> >

refer to the column called *Glosari* by Eugeni d'Ors, the man of letters who was determined to sculpt his life and work in marble, as if pigeons didn't shit on marble. Mesquida doesn't want to be in marble because he knows that nowadays all materials are perishable. And it is precisely this knowledge, this awareness of a use-by date, that has made of him a very able public figure. I have said on other occasions that he is a complete government of his own invented republic: the Bielmesquidan Republic. By this I mean that Mesquida is his own Minister of Propaganda and also of Foreign Affairs. He is Minister for the Environment and his own President of the Government. Furthermore, he is like instant coffee that can be served in any circumstances. Whether we agree or not with the communiqués of this invented republic is another matter. However, that his reverberating and agitated -agitprop-like- presence has been a fact since the early 1970s is incontrovertible.

Sometimes, on Tuesdays, when one of his *Cròniques* appears, Mesquida and I speak by phone. There are times when I insult him, or chide him, or criticise with certain brutality the photograph that has been chosen to illustrate his article because of his facile pursuit of scandal. Yet there are other times when I am perplexed -and (why not confess it?) fascinated- by the dazzling effect of some of his written images and the electric flow that frequently characterises his narrative discourse. There was even a time -something that rarely happens- that I wavered, staring at one of the women whose photo has appeared with his texts. I recall that on this occasion I said, "With a woman like that, it wouldn't matter if you hadn't written a word". He knows that I frequently don't share his theses or his sporadic delight in social corrosion, and that I refute his ideas with a mixture of irritation and patience of the kind that we only devote to people we are close to. It is too wearing to waste it on others. One of the senses of this dialectic we have established arises from the seismic nature -quite high on the Richter Scale- of Mesquida himself, which, if it foils anything, it is the tedium of the society in which he lives. This is no small thing. Then there is his voice, a voice that has imbibed of the best of Blai Bonet, the more ghostly Rodoreda or Villalonga at his most snobbish, to cite only three witch doctors of the tribe. This is not to overlook -but rather the contrary- his attentive (perhaps too attentive) gaze in his ephemeral reflections on the fashions (literary, cinematographic and artistic) of today's world.

A couple of years ago, Mesquida remarked to me that he was about to set out on a series of *Cròniques* that would be more narrative in style -based on literary versions of events in Mallorca- using the second person singular, the poor relation of fiction, though not of poetry, and the notable form of the *Nouveau Roman* and Telquelian experiments. I reminded him that Juan Goytisolo had already given new lustre to this second person with the trilogy consisting of his novels *Señas de identidad* (*Marks of Identity*), *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* (*Count Julian*) and *Juan Sin Tierra* (*Juan the Landless*). He replied that this hardly existed in Catalan and I was left with the conviction -perhaps not very charitable or perhaps mistaken- that Goytisolo was going to be the reading basis of this new experiment. The result was that Mesquida wrote his new *Cròniques*, which were read with greater relish than the earlier ones and Matías Vallés ended up baptising them the Mallorcan American Beauty. Mesquida was delighted: they had understood him.

These *Cròniques* have now been rescued from their newspaperly ephemerality to be included -revised, polished and metamorphosed- in this bookish ephemerality entitled -and this is so Mesquidan- *T'estim a tu*. Here he describes an apocalyptic and shrill Mallorca that is akin to the scandalous vocation -heir of surrealism- that so often stimulates Mesquida. It is a Mallorca that mixes melodrama with modernity, ghoulishness with the goal of recovering a paradise lost, witnessing an epoch with fancified fantasy. It is a Mallorca that is at the top of a blob painted by Miquel Barceló with the distorted form of Mallorca. Is this distortion a warning? Maybe. Literature and art distort reality to create a new reality that ends up becoming -when it is literature, when it is art- more real than reality itself. In *T'estim a tu* there are readings, intertextuality -a very Mesquida touch- telephone

If you want to cite this page...

Literary news about Biel Mesquida on Lletra, the UOC's virtual space devoted to Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/biel-mesquida> >

conversations, anecdotes told by friends, word plays, tittle-tattle, news from local newspapers ? as if the narrator is taking the pulse of life and as if his stories were born from the life that surrounds him, transported to Callejón del Gato and its deforming mirrors. In brief, this is the craft of the chronicler, who makes use of everything.

However, the novelty of this book hinges on two of its aspects. First is the inclusion of poetry based on fragments and theoretical snippets, which divide up its parts and establish, on the one hand, new sense in the stories and, on the other, situate the writer both before the world and before literature itself. These are brilliant fragments, taken perhaps from a personal diary, in which Mesquida remains true to a Barthesian conception of literature, based both on the pleasure of the text and on recognition through the text, while he keeps dipping into a possible theory of modernity that dogs him like a shadow -and this is the Mesquidan *shadow* from his time as a diligent *Tel Quel* disciple. The second aspect of its novelty lies in a universal verification, which is that any independent story, brought together with other independent stories, acquires new sense, the part of the corpus that was there even before it existed in itself: the backbone of the author. *T'estim a tu*, then, can be read as if it had not existed piece by piece. In fact it did not exist before in order to exist now, when it shapes for the reader a new piece in the Mesquidan puzzle. New and not interchangeable, but faithful to be sure to the concept that Mesquida was able to introduce into Catalan fiction writing after [L'adolescent de sal](#): I refer here to the poetic motto of [Foix](#) that went something like this: *I exalt the new and am in love with the old*. Maybe it was the reverse, but that is of little import here.

This article appeared in *Diario de Mallorca*. Reproduced with the author's permission.

A selection of texts

Text



WEB: "Plagueta de Bord"

Bloc personal de Biel Mesquida a *MÉS Vilaweb*.
<http://blocs.mesvilaweb.cat/bloc/2140>



WEB: Un poema manuscrit

La revista *Baleigs digitals* inclou un poema manuscrit de l'autor.
<http://www.mallorcaweb.net/edataviques/bal/mesquida.html>



WEB: "El rei de la fesomia pròpia i humorosa"

Article de Mesquida sobre Gabriel Galmés a *The Barcelona Review*, núm. 25 (juliol-agost 2001).
http://www.barcelonareview.com/25/c_b_m.htm



WEB: Fragments

Fragments de "El cor no fa vacances" i "Rififi a l'Aquàrium", de Biel Mesquida a *The Barcelona Review*, núm. 26 (setembre-octubre 2001).
http://www.barcelonareview.com/26/c_bm.htm



WEB: Al Daltabaix Poètic!

Poemes inèdits de l'autor en aquest web independent de poesia que acull poetes de tendències ben

If you want to cite this page...

Literary news about Biel Mesquida on Lletra, the UOC's virtual space devoted to Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/biel-mesquida> >

diferents.

<http://www.sant-cugat.net/daltabaix/biel.htm>



WEB: Biel Mesquida

Four prose fragments in Catalan, English and German.

http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/mesquidab/pagina.php?id_sec=1718



WEB: A Manuscript Poem

The review *Baleigs digitals* includes a manuscript poem of the author.

<http://www.mallorcaweb.net/edataviques/bal/mesquida.html>



WEB: "El rei de la fesomia pròpia i humorosa" [The King of Particular Humorous Physiognomy]

Article by Mesquida on Gabriel Galmés in *The Barcelona Review*, iss. 25 (July-August 2001).

http://www.barcelonareview.com/25/c_b_m.htm



WEB: Fragments

Fragments from "El cor no fa vacances" [The Heart Takes No Holidays] and "Rififi a l'Aquàrium" [Rififi at the Aquarium], by Biel Mesquida, in *The Barcelona Review*, iss. 26 (September-October 2001).

http://www.barcelonareview.com/26/c_bm.htm

Audio



AUDIO: L'autor recita un poema

L'autor recita un poema

http://lletra.uoc.edu/anterior/noms/bmesquida/html_especials/bielmesquidarecita1.html



AUDIO: A poem recited by the author

A poem recited by the author.

http://lletra.uoc.edu/anterior/noms/bmesquida/html_especials/bielmesquidarecita1.html

Bio-bibliography

Biography



WEB: A la Hiperenciclopèdia

http://www.enciclopedia.cat/fitxa_v2.jsp?NDCHEC=0042167



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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/qq/FitxaAutors.asp?nom1=mes&nom2=&cerca=Cerca&quiform=form1&NRegistre=6&idregistre=7292>



WEB: A la Viquipèdia

If you want to cite this page...

Literary news about Biel Mesquida on Lletra, the UOC's virtual space devoted to Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/biel-mesquida> >

Nota biobibliogràfica i enllaços sobre l'autor al web de l'enciclopèdia lliure.

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



WEB: The author in the Catalan Encyclopaedia

<http://www.grec.cat/cgibin/hecangcl2.pgm?&USUARI=&SESSIO=&NDCHEC=0042167&PGMORI=E>



WEB: Biel Mesquida a l'Institut Ramon Llull

Nota biobibliogràfica dins l'espai dedicat a la Fira Internacional del Llibre de Guadalajara 2004.

http://fil04.llull.cat/cat/02protagonistes/mesquida_biel.shtm



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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/qeq/fitxaAutorsuk.asp?nom1=Mesquida&cercauk2=Search&quinform=form1&NRegistre=1&idregistre=7292>



WEB: Biel Mesquida in the Ramon Llull Institute

Biobibliographical note on this author on a page devoted to the Guadalajara International Book Fair.

http://fil04.llull.cat/eng/02protagonistes/mesquida_biel.shtm

Bibliography



WEB: Què hi ha a la Biblioteca de Catalunya

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



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

http://ccuc.cbuc.cat/search*cat/a?SEARCH=Mesquida+Biel&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=23



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques públiques

<http://argus.biblioteques.gencat.cat/iii/encore/search/C|SMesquida+Biel|Orightresult|U1?lang=cat&site=pearl>



WEB: Per comprar-ne llibres

<http://www.llibres.cat/ca/detall-autor/mesquida-biel>



WEB: Articles de l'autor (Traces)

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



WEB: Articles sobre l'autor (Traces)

http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=ca&p=Mesquida%2C+Biel&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



WEB: Works in the Biblioteca de Catalunya

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

If you want to cite this page...

Literary news about Biel Mesquida on Lletra, the UOC's virtual space devoted to Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/biel-mesquida> >



WEB: The author in The European Library

<http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/search/%28%22creator%22+all+%22mesquida+biel%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=Biel+Mesquida>

Comments on the author

Criticism



WEB: Sobre *L'adolescent de sal*

Pàgina de lletrA sobre aquesta obra de l'autor.

<http://lletra.uoc.edu/ca/obra/ladolescent-de-sal-1975/>



WEB: L'autor al Corpus Literari Ciutat de Barcelona

Biografia, enllaços i transcripció d'articles sobre Mesquida.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=1548



VIDEO: "Un escriptor en llengua catalana diu"

Biel Mesquida parla sobre la llengua catalana en el web de l'IRLL per a la Fira de Frankfurt.

<http://www.llull.tv/videos/detall.cfm/ID/26549/CAT/biel-mesquida-escriptor-europeu-llengua-catalana-diu.html>



WEB: Biel Mesquida on the Lletra website in Catalan

Including more resources and reading suggestions.

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/noms/bmesquida/index.html>



WEB: On *L'adolescent de sal* [The Adolescent of Salt]

lletrA page devoted to this work by Biel Mesquida.

<http://lletra.uoc.edu/ca/obra/ladolescent-de-sal-1975/>



WEB: Biel Mesquida in the City of Barcelona Literary Corpus

Biography, links and transcription of articles on this author.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=1548

Comments



WEB: Els detalls del món

Breu ressenya de l'últim llibre de Biel Mesquida apareguda a Vilaweb-El Punt (20/12/2005).

If you want to cite this page...

Literary news about Biel Mesquida on Lletra, the UOC's virtual space devoted to Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/biel-mesquida> >

http://www.vilaweb.cat/www/elpunt/noticia?p_idcmp=1664426



WEB: "Els vídeos literaris de VilaWeb TV"

Presentació del llibre de Biel Mesquida *Els detalls del món*, a la llibreria la Central del Raval de Barcelona, enregistrada per l'equip de VilaWeb TV.

<http://www.vilaweb.cat/media/attach/vwedts/video/mesquida/mesquida.html>
