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Jaume Cabré



Who I Am and Why I Write

Jaume Cabré (Barcelona 1947) is one of most widely read writers of contemporary Catalan literature. He is the author of an extensive body of work that includes fiction,

television screenplays and theatre. His writings have been translated into many languages. *Senyoria* [The Judge] won the Méditerranée prize (2004) and *Les veus del Pamano* [Voices from the Panamo] won the National Critics' Prize.

I've often been asked why I write. At first, I would evade the issue, as even I did not know why, or perhaps I was tempted to churn out a more or less worthy discourse on the literary event. Now, when I'm asked, I still evade the issue but with some elements of personal clarification as the time has come when I have realised that, for me, writing is a need in the same way as reading has been for some time. One thing is certain: I've come to writing through reading. As a reader, opening a book becomes the acceptance of the invitation that the author makes to enter the world of his or her thoughts and stylistic approaches. In the same way, writing, for me, is the chance to put my inner life into order and offer up, with the help of the great metaphor that is literature, what I am thinking, what concerns me, what I fear, what I expect, what gladdens me or what saddens me. With one great added benefit: the medium I use, language, affords me an aesthetic approach that I find ever more pleasing. The phonemes, the words, the sentences, the paragraphs, are all live, beating materials, which interconnect and take on their own rhythm and cadence and which, and this is the miracle, take on a meaning of their own.

In every literature, controversy regularly arises regarding the level of literary quality at that time, and the fatal blow occurs with the appearance of two opposing stances: those who argue that we are on the verge of disaster as the entirety of what is currently being produced is irrelevant, and those who feel that things aren't so bad and who even bandy about specific publications and names to prove that this quality exists. I've been invited to take part in these disputes on more than one occasion, but, despite the fact that I see them to be useful (every review is good), I also regard them as sterile for personal reasons that stop me from getting involved. I speak of them now as they have a great deal to do with my understanding of literary practice.

For me, to write is to doubt. I do not believe myself to be in possession of the truth, but at most of opinions. Yet in a dispute, stances are simplified and they take on the nature of dogma. Personally, that troubles me. I do not think it is fair to compare literary corpses that are being made, that are being constructed, with literary corpses that are ended, established and repositioned in their historical context with the ease afforded by the passage of time to "remember" only the culminating points of that whole production, which has completed its cycle and which has already been analysed by scholars of it. This apart, neither am I satisfied with a large part of today's literary production, even though I recognise that it is more exposed to analysis based solely on the personal tastes of the consumer. Moreover, sales success or failure may influence evaluations, which does not occur when we talk of a book published sixty years ago. What I mean is that it does not seem relevant to "compare" [Solitud](#) [Solitude] with *Ventada de morts* [Gust of the Dead] or [Estances](#) [Stanzas] with *En*

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quarentena [In Quarantine] or *L'edat d'or* [The Golden Age]. (I am giving examples of works that I value highly, so as not to get my fingers burnt). It also happens that in a controversy of this nature, much polemic arises based on the personal tastes of the polemicist. In light of this experience, I am very well aware that what I write appeals to some, does not appeal to others, and leaves yet others indifferent. This is logical. But as we writers (in common with all creators) are touchy, we get things out of focus and find it extremely difficult to distinguish objective reasons from personal prejudice, publishing strategies, individual empire-building or the preferences of the age. It is very hard to be objective. As I said before, for me to write is to doubt. It is to expose one's own hesitations and hopes; it is a way of life. I think that time will sort everything out, and in the meantime I'll restrict myself to finding (personal) time to face the blank or half-filled page, which is what really enthuses me.

I have told all this to make it clear to the reader who is still with me that I am not particularly disposed to making a personal evaluation of my work, which is what I have been asked to do, in a more or less veiled way, in this introduction.

What I am able to do is give a descriptive review of how things have gone. The moment "I found myself writing" was a kind of epiphany: I discovered that a good piece of music, good reading, a good film, a good conversation, a good experience all poured out of me onto paper; I have spent many, many hours doing this. With an extraordinary faith (for one who is so insecure) in what I was doing. I spent the first three or four years writing, looking for the technical or stylistic elements that would help me express what I wanted to say, reading and rereading authors who had touched my heart to find in them the magic ingredient, what it was in their writing that seduced me. And throwing away lots of paper. I published a couple of books of short stories from which I now feel I am very distant, especially the first. At that time, I recall, I was very interested in keeping a distance from what I wrote. I was afraid of being caught in the fallout of what I wrote. Dissatisfied with this, I decided to change my attitude and commit to what I was writing. That was the case with my first short novel, which is the story of a mid nineteenth-century brigand who is a hero but who is afraid. The book is called *Galceran, l'heroi de la guerra negra* [Galceran, the Hero of the Black War] and despite its brevity, it took me a long time to decide it was ready. I have recently revised it thoroughly. With *Galceran...* I felt more involved with what I was writing. I felt good constructing a character with contradictions and placing them in a landscape of my childhood. Besides the hypothetical objective value of the novel, I recognise an inflection in my attitude towards what I was doing. Then came *Carn d'olla* [Beef Stew] (1978), also in the same vein of involvement. It is a novel I remember fondly.

When I was completing *Carn d'olla*, the embryo emerged of what would be the three Feixes books; but first I wanted to clear my head of an idea with which I was obsessed, and in little over a year I wrote *El mirall i l'ombra* [The Mirror and the Shade] (1980), a novel that has gone so unnoticed that I almost regard it as a secret. Meanwhile, a short story, five lines long, which spoke of nuns and vampires at a spa and which I had written three or four years earlier, started to grow inside me. I was living at that time in Vila-real, working as a teacher at the local secondary school. There, I wrote *Luvovski o la desraó* [Luvovski or the Unreason], which is a short novel about that spa atmosphere with which I was obsessed. It is a story of love and selfishness with a musical background and which became the creative motif of the Feixes cycle. I think that from that moment on, I have not been able to see writing as anything other than a commitment of personal involvement with the story that I am writing, the language that I use and the artistic event in general; since then, I do not "write" my novels but "live" them. Maybe because of this, I take a long time to complete them. For six years, I immersed myself in the world that little by little became *Fray Junoy o l'agonia dels sons* [Brother Junoy or the Agony of Sleep]. While I was nurturing this novel, a phase relating to the family of a nun led me to take a two-year parenthesis, which became *La teranyina* [The Spider's Web]. I then began to see

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clearly that everything that I was telling had to be resolved in three different yet related books. The result was *La teranyina* (1984), *Fray Junoy o l'agonia dels sons* (1984), and *Luvovski o la desraó*, published in the *Llibre de preludis* [Book of Preludes] (1985). I remember perfectly that when I decided that I had finished *Frai Junoy...* and I had got it out of my system, I experienced a feeling of mental and physical emptiness that frightened me.

From that moment on, I began to work with Joaquim M. Puyal on his TV programmes, which slowly led me away from my job as a teacher and to a change in professional direction. In this new personal stage, I experienced another novel *Senyoria* [The Judge] (1991), which took me a little over five years. When I finished it and removed it from myself, I also felt abandoned, as though I was lacking something I cannot really explain.

Now, I have a mist in my head once again, a couple of hundred written pages, a character, an atmosphere, the embryo of a story and, above all, a huge desire to develop it and to carry on explaining myself in my writing. I must admit that, besides dealings with people, literature is one of my reasons for living, a way of loving. If I did not see it this way, I am certain that I would not devote so much effort and time out of my life into this adventure. It would make no sense. I know that what I do may or may not please; and that taking it as I do, I am taking a gamble. But I would not know any other way to do it.

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A selection of texts

Text



PDF: "Paraules al Palau"

Discurs de l'autor al Palau de la Música en recollir el Premi d'Honor de les Lletres Catalanes (14/06/10).

http://sites.google.com/site/nuria77/paraules_al_palau/paraules_al_palau_jcabre_14062010.pdf?atredirects=0



WEB: Fragment de *Senyoria*

Se n'inclou també les traduccions hongaresa, italiana, albanesa i romanesa. A la pàgina del CTDL del PEN Català.

<http://www.visat.cat/traduuccions-literatura-catalana/cat/fragments/18/12/0/0/0/jaume-cabre.html>



WEB: Fragment de *L'ombra de l'eunuc*

A la pàgina del CTDL del PEN Català. Amb la traducció a l'eslovè, a l'hongarès i al romanès.

<http://www.visat.cat/traduuccions-literatura-catalana/cat/fragments/19/12/0/0/0/jaume-cabre.html>



WEB: Fragment de *Les veus del Pamano*

Amb la traducció a l'hongarès, a l'holandès i a l'italià. A la pàgina del CTDL del PEN Català.

<http://www.visat.cat/traduuccions-literatura-catalana/cat/fragments/17/12/0/0/0/jaume-cabre.html>

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WEB: "Mi lectura de Andréi Platónov"

Jaume Cabré convida a llegir aquest escriptor rus. A la revista *Lateral* (maig 2000).
<http://www.circulolateral.com/revista/revista/articulos/065jcabre.html>



WEB: Extracts from his works

Summary of the literary production of Jaume Cabré, with extracts from *Senyoria* [The Judge], *L'ombra de l'eunuc* [The Eunuch's Shadow] and *Les veus del Panamo* [Voices from the Panamo].
http://www.visat.cat/traduuccions_literatura_catalana/fitxa-autor.php?id_autor=12&idioma=eng

Bio-bibliography

Biography



WEB: A la Hiperenciclopèdia

http://www.enciclopedia.cat/fitxa_v2.jsp?NDCHEC=0013180



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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/qeq/FitxaAutors.asp?nom1=cab&nom2=&cerca=Cerca&quiform=form1&NRegistre=11&idregistre=131>



WEB: The author in the Catalan Encyclopaedia

<http://www.grec.cat/cgibin/heclangl2.pgm?&USUARI=&SESSIO=&NDCHEC=0013180&PGMORI=E>



WEB: A la Viquipèdia

Biografia, obra i enllaços sobre l'autor al web de l'enciclopèdia lliure.
http://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaume_Cabré



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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/qeq/FitxaAutorsuk.asp?nom1=cabr%E9&cercauk2=Search&quiform=form1&NRegistre=1&idregistre=131>



WEB: Membre de l'IEC

Jaume Cabré, membre numerari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans.
<http://apmembres2.iec.cat/detall.aspx?pkMembrePLE=417>



WEB: In Wikipedia

Biography, works and links on this author in the free encyclopaedia.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaume_Cabré



WEB: Jaume Cabré 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/CabreJaume.shtm>

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WEB: Member of the IEC

Jaume Cabré, a permanent member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Institute of Catalan Studies).
<http://apmembres2.iec.cat/detall.aspx?pkMembrePLE=417>



WEB: Jaume Cabré 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/CabreJaume.shtm>

Bibliography



WEB: Què hi ha a la Biblioteca de Catalunya

http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*cat/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Cabr%C3%A9+Jaume&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=Cabr%C3%A9+Jaume&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=23



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques públiques

<http://argus.biblioteques.gencat.cat/iii/encore/search/C|SCabr%C3%A9+Jaume|Orightresult|U1?lang=cat&suite=pearl>



WEB: Per comprar-ne llibres

<http://www.llibres.cat/ca/detall-autor/cabre-i-fabre-jaume>



WEB: Articles de l'autor (Traces)

<http://traces.uab.cat/search?f=author&p=Cabr%C3%A9%20Jaume%20&sc=1&ln=ca>



WEB: Articles sobre l'autor (Traces)

http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=ca&p=Cabr%C3%A9%2C+Jaume&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=Cabr%C3%A9,+Jaume&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+%22cabr%C3%A9+jaume%22%29.query>



WEB: The author in the Congress Library (US)

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

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WEB: The author in the COPAC Catalogue (UK)

<http://copac.ac.uk/search?&au=Jaume+Cabr%C3%A9>

Comments on the author

Criticism



WEB: Sobre el cinema i la literatura catalana

Pàgina de lletrA dedicada al cinema i la literatura catalana.

<http://lletra.uoc.edu/ca/tema/cinema-i-literatura-catalana/>



WEB: Jaume Cabré a l'AELC

Inclou biografia, obra, premis, transcripció d'articles, fragments de la seva obra i enllaços.

<http://www.escriptors.com/autors/cabrej/>



WEB: L'autor al Corpus Literari Ciutat de Barcelona

Biografia, enllaços i transcripció d'articles sobre Cabré.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=294



PDF: Pluja seca

Dossier didàctic sobre aquesta obra, amb proposta d'activitats i bibliografia. Al web del Teatre Nacional de Catalunya.

http://www.tnc.cat/uploads/download?fichero=uploads/carrega/2000-2001/ca/arxius/programacio/00_01/guia_plujaseca.pdf



WEB: Jaume Cabré, traduït

A la pàgina del Comitè de Traduccions i Drets Lingüístics del PEN Català.

http://www.visat.cat/traduccions_literatura_catalana/fitxa-autor.php?id_autor=12



AUDIO: Cabré a Com Ràdio

Jordi Sacristán repassa la trajectòria personal i professional de l'escriptor.

http://www.comradio.com/directe/pup_radio2.asp?arxiu=http://podcast.comradio.com/P_27012006_21_1.mp3&pup_pk=15800



PDF: "Bandolerisme i literatura"

Treball de M. Àngels Claramunt i Carles Vega al Seminari didàctic "El gust per la lectura" (2001-2002).

http://www.xtec.es/lic/centre/professorat/dossiersgust/Bandolerisme_2001.pdf



PDF: "El guerriller beat"

Carles Miró ressenya *Les veus del Pamano* a l'*Avui* (12/02/04).

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av02419.pdf>



WEB: Jaume Cabré on the lletrA website in Catalan

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< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/jaume-cabre> >

Including more resources and reading suggestions.

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



WEB: Lletra d'Or Prize

lletraA page devoted to the Lletra d'Or Prize, which the author won for *L'ombra de l'eunuc* [The Eunuch's Shadow].

<http://lletra.uoc.edu/ca/premi/premi-lletra-dor/>



WEB: On cinema and Catalan literature

lletraA page devoted to the cinema and Catalan literature.

<http://lletra.uoc.edu/ca/tema/cinema-i-literatura-catalana/>



WEB: Jaume Cabré in AELC (Association of Catalan Language Writers)

Includes biography, works, prizes, interviews and fragments of some of his works.

http://www.escriptors.com/autors/cabrej/pagina.php?id_sec=384



WEB: Jaume Cabré in the City of Barcelona Literary Corpus

Biography, links and a transcription of articles on this author.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=294

Miscellaneous



WEB: Isabel-Helena Martí entrevista Jaume Cabré

L'autor conversa sobre literatura, la salut de la literatura catalana, la seva trajectòria literària i la independència. Al n. 10 del butlletí de l'associació Sobirania i justícia (novembre 2010).

<http://www.sij.cat/article.php?id=165>



WEB: Jaume Cabré i la Vall d'Àssua

Descripció de la ruta literària dedicada a l'autor (Vilaweb Lletres).

http://www.vilaweb.cat/www/noticia?p_idcmp=3618474



WEB: "Jaume Cabré i els seus traductors"

Notícia a *Vilaweb Lletres*.

http://www.vilaweb.com/www/noticia?p_idcmp=1610014



WEB: Cabré a l'alemany

Notícia sobre la publicació de la versió alemanya de *Les veus del Pamano* a la prestigiosa editorial Suhrkamp.

http://www.vilaweb.cat/www/noticia?p_idcmp=2477822



WEB: Premi de la Crítica 2004

Notícia sobre la concessió del premi de narrativa, per *Les veus del Pamano*.

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WEB: Comentaris sobre diverses obres de Jaume Cabré

Al web Què llegeixes?, dins de l'Any del Llibre i la Lectura 2005.

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WEB: Fòrum sobre Les veus del Pamano

Els lectors opinen sobre la darrera novel·la de Cabré.

<http://ploma.quellegeixes.cat/llobres/fitxa/273>



WEB: Premi Lletra d'Or

Pàgina de lletrA dedicada al Premi Lletra d'Or que l'autor guanyà amb *L'ombra de l'eunuc*.

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/premis/premilletrador/>



WEB: Cinema i literatura catalana

Pàgina de lletrA dedicada al cinema i la literatura catalana, amb informació sobre les adaptacions cinematogràfiques de l'obra de Jaume Cabré.

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/tematica/cinemailite/index.html>



PDF: 'With our own state, we Catalans would be happier and would live more peacefully'

Eva Piquer interviews Jaume Cabré. In *Catalan International View*, n. 7.

http://international-view.cat/armari/internationalview:internationalview/2/civ07_18.pdf

The author 2.0

Blogs of blogs



WEB: La blogosfera diu...

http://blogsearch.google.es/blogsearch?hl=ca&ie=UTF-8&q=Jaume+Cabré&lr=lang_ca



WEB: The blogosphere says...

http://blogsearch.google.es/blogsearch?hl=ca&ie=UTF-8&q=Jaume+Cabré&lr=lang_ca