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Manuel Forcano



They Have Said ...

Indebted to poets like Kavafis and Yehuda Amichai, the latter of whom he has translated, he frequently presents historical or cultural motifs from Antiquity, which contrast

with the vulgarity of the present. A further contrast is between the pervasive erudition of his poems and his simplicity of tone and forms. Love and nostalgia for a glorious past are the two great themes in Forcano's poetry. He has received many prizes for his poetic work.

Manuel Forcano, who was born in 1968, is a lecturer in Hebrew Literature at the University of Barcelona and an experienced translator from Hebrew, Arabic and English. A powerful presence of the culturalist element may be detected in his writings, while the essential features of his poetic work may be traced back to his first published volume, *Les mans descalces* (*Barefoot Hands*) (1993). In Forcano's writing, references to ancient works -above all the Old Testament and Latin and Greek poetry- have always been present but, in the course of his literary production, they have undergone a process of phagocytosis until becoming consciously amalgamated into the most recent poems. Hence, the exordium work is marked by quotes that accompany an itinerary of reading that is measured in sessions, but it is only in the poetic epilogue that, after explicit allusion to the Book of Daniel, one of Rilke's poems is incorporated to function as a final gloss. *Les mans descalces* is Forcano's hitherto most descriptive collection, in which the lyrical "I" seems to dally in the pages of a paradoxically atemporal diary. Poems like "A l'habitació ... (In the Room)", "Els calaixos són plens...(The Drawers are Full)" and -although for ideological reasons- "Dies irae" seem to have flowed directly from the pen of the Federigo Tozzi of the brief pieces in *Bestie*, and also the prose miniatures of *Cose* and *Bestie*.

In *De nit* (*By Night*) (1999), Forcano works to perfection the architectural idea of the book with a tripartite thematic organisation, "Cels" (Skies), "Aurores" (Auroras), and "Platges" (Beaches), within which he distributes his texts. This is, in fact, something of a mirage since the interflow of internal interchanges and echoes subverts the apparently schematic division, while one glimpses in filigree his predilection for crepuscular or auroral images, an attraction for chiaroscuro, and a non-adjectivised sense of panic by way of Orphic stimuli, although the whole is not necessarily flawed by Apollonian contamination. And the cultural references that are at times manifested, even in titles, are integrated into each poem to open up or resolve an all-embracing similitude. The image that flows into the commonplace generates a curious form of objective correlate, in which the citation is treated as an object and is compared -in a kind of communion or comparison, frequently with an epiphanic function- with some biographical vicissitude of the poetic "I", specifying it or in opposition to it.

[...] *Corint* has a more molecular organisation: a set of macro-structures weave extremely compact relations between the different components, imposing a reading without any solution of continuity. Like centrifugal waves after the fall of a solid mass, Forcano's poetic quest continues in circular expansions and fixes the reason for the journey as memory's point of departure, while the collection as a whole is structured as the mental geography of a longed-for body.

Francesco Ardolino, "Manuel Forcano. Le mani scalze", *Poesia*, N.º. 174 (July/August 2003).

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Translation by Laia Noguera.

Every time I open the slim volume of *Corint* I start to hear the different kinds of music of the rain, while the dance of the light, incisive words of these brand-new verses assails the steadiness of my gaze. It is like watching the growth of an alphabet that comes to kiss the lenses of the glasses I wear for eyestrain. I contemplate the world through the intensities of an epiphanic gaze that reveals to me anew -prodigy of the newly-aged- the seasons of desire, the deep pools of broken loves, the warmth of a touch, the always-running wound of being alone and out on a limb.

[...] Behind some lines worked with touches that seem *demodés*, or below well-worked veils in Photoshop sepia, or within dictions engraved with the canons of the romantic "I", we find the eternal: what is being raised right now as a classic.

[...] At this historic moment in the year MM, in which there is a generalised loss in the quality of cultures and knowledge, of cities and landscapes, of human relations and debates, of wine and food, of words and languages, of sentiments and sensibilities, etc., this small volume of poems by Manuel Forcano is an oasis of emotions for the traveller thirsting and hungering for a few crumbs of knowing knowledge and sensual wisdom.

Biel Mesquida, "Cal·ligrafies per a un poeta". Pròleg a *Corint* (Calligraphies for a Poet. Prologue to *Corint*) (Proa, 2000)

In the journey of *El tren de Bagdad* (winner of the Carles Riba Prize, 2003) through the Near East, Ethiopia and Sudan, the omnipresent amorous relationship is evoked from memory with the melancholy of what has been lost or what never was. Superficial melancholy, nonetheless: a skin of memory beneath which the wounds of desire are open.

The expression of this thematic nucleus is based, above all, on giving expression to an ideal and voluptuous Orient, a brimming sensuality that constitutes the space of this collection. It is no mere backdrop but a wholly significant space. It is the sensorial banquet of a rain of honey, of squeezed fruit, of bodies skin-to-skin.

[...] The almost permanent conflict engulfing the region is also present in some of the poems and the loves that are evoked are thus charged with more tragic connotations, especially in "Beirut", a city in ruins that is reconstructed only to be destroyed once again, and in "Sudànica" (Sudanica) where "those wars that never were / yet that continue still" contribute to creating a feeling of latent violence that dominates the entire composition.

Jordi Rourera, "Totes les ferides del desig" (All the Wounds of Desire", *Lluc*, N^o. 838 (March-April 2004)

[*Corint*] is another offering from one of our most delicate, limpid and profound poets. Reading Manuel Forcano is always a guarantee of transparency and conceptual richness, which is doubtless due to his classical training -he has a doctorate in Semitic Philology- but not only this, for his sensibility is finely tuned to the times in which it is his lot to write.

His is not the poetry of somebody who would want to live in a country that is not his, or in a time that is remote, because the readings and writers he summons up are not elegies of scholars but, rather, testimonies to their continuing relevance more than anything else (and, needless to say, an invitation

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to prove this for oneself).

Forcano writes today, and for us -from insecurity, broken-heartedness and longing, like any of the so-called poets of experience- with a baggage of references that are by no means hermetic but ready to be shared, and this baggage seems to be even more valuable and more effective than any of the erratic and puffed-up verbal mumbo-jumbo we tend to find when the aim is merely to make it seem that the writer has something ineffable to say.

Each poem is surprising as an attempt to salvage, with a few, well-chosen words, a setting where feelings have been manifested, though not poured out (outpourings would be of no help). We have the journey -Hellas, Israel and Austria are present- as an occasion of isolation and reflection and also as a stimulus for amorous nostalgia.

Manuel Castaño, "Salvació de records" (Salvation of Memories), *El Periódico de Catalunya. Llibres* (2/3/2001)

Forcano is one of these rare poets who has what seems to be an innate ability (although it never is that, or not just that) to reconcile truth and beauty, as the good old poet Horace wished, and of proceeding to the construction of a discourse that, in its difficult balancing act between delicacy, depth and power, has its most characteristic sign of identity. [...]

Besides being a poet, Manuel Forcano has a doctorate in Semitic Philology, which has enabled him to translate Israeli poets such as Yehuda Amichai and Pinkhas Sade. Much of the lyrical subtlety of these poets is shared by Forcano who, like them, displays a vast cultural background sweeping from the Greek and Latin classics through to modern writers such as Kavafis and E. M. Forster (whom Forcano has also translated), by way of the Bible, pre-Socratic philosophy, German expressionist painting and operatic *bel canto*. All these references, however, far from piling up and becoming an impediment for the reader, are nuanced in Forcano's voice and sieved through lived experience, which is often the experience of sensuality and love (or the failure of love, or death and, as we know, they go together), although there is also longing for faraway places (Forcano is depicted as an inveterate traveller) and pure and simple contemplation of the world and its denizens, in a symphony that moves from nostalgic portrayals of specific scenes through to the wondering, enthralled gaze of the Lullian Fèlix.

Sebastià Alzamora, "Manuel Forcano, *Corint*", *Serra d'Or*, N° 496 (April 2001)

Even if one must suppose that the improvement has been widely recognised, the original title [*De memoria* (From Memory)] is illuminating with regard to the thematic scheme that runs throughout the book, which is, in short, oblivion, desired or undesired, with all the classical themes related with it: the fleeting nature of time, the volubility of love, the fragility of life and of the images that mark it. Forcano takes all this on [?] with an attitude not unlike that of the Persians who, when they sacked Athens, stole its statues for no other reason than they could not resist their beauty, according to Herodotus. Along with this idea of theft are underlying Promethean resonances and, with the idea of the irresistible power of beauty, the echoes are Odyssean. These mythological references, however, when filtered through the sensibility and (decidedly Apollonian) writing of Manuel Forcano, become loftily, surprisingly lyrical, as the plenitude of *Corint* confirms. It is more of the same, which in this case is a lot: elegance, tension, sensuality, subtlety, emotion-infused serenity, style in the noblest sense of the term.

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Sebastià Alzamora, "Manuel Forcano, *Com un persa (Like a Persian)*", *Serra d'Or*, N^o. 499-500 (July-August 2001)

A selection of texts

Text



WEB: Al Daltabaix Poètic!

Nou poemes de l'autor en aquest web independent de poesia que acull poetes de tendències ben diferents.

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



WEB: Selecció de poemes

Dos poemes de l'autor al web *Viu la poesia*.

http://www.viulapoesia.com/membrespocio/arxius/lletra/mforcano_index_poemes.html



WEB: Manuel Forcano in Daltabaix Poètic!

Nine poems by Manuel Forcano offered by this independent poetry website.

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

Bio-bibliography

Biography



WEB: A la Hiperenciclopèdia

http://www.enciclopedia.cat/fitxa_v2.jsp?NDCHEC=0258283



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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/qqq/FitxaAutors.asp?nom1=for&nom2=&cerca=Cerca&quinform=form1&NRegistre=6&idregistre=8604>



WEB: Poetes catalans d'ara

Exposició amb referències biobibliogràfiques i enllaços a Internet, organitzada per la Biblioteca d'Humanitats de la UAB.

<http://ddd.uab.cat/pub/expbib/2009/poetes/forcano.htm>



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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/qqq/fitxaAutorsuk.asp?nom1=Forcano&cercauk2=Search&quinform=form1&NRegistre=1&idregistre=8604>



WEB: Catalan Poets Today

Exhibition with bio-bibliographic references and Internet links, produced by the Humanities Library of the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

<http://ddd.uab.cat/pub/expbib/2009/poetes/forcano.htm>

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Bibliography



WEB: Què hi ha a la Biblioteca de Catalunya

http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*cat/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Forcano+Manuel&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=Forcano+Manuel&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=23



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques públiques

<http://argus.biblioteques.gencat.cat/iii/encore/search/C|SForcano+Manuel|Orighresult|U1?lang=cat&suite=pearl>



WEB: Per comprar-ne llibres

<http://www.llibres.cat/ca/detall-autor/forcano-manuel>



WEB: Articles de l'autor (Traces)

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



WEB: Articles sobre l'autor (Traces)

http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=ca&p=Forcano%2C+Manuel&f=keyword&action_search=Cerca&c=Traces+%3A+base+de+dades+de+lengua+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=Forcano+Manuel&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+%22forcano+manuel%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=Manuel+Forcano>

Comments on the author

Criticism

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WEB: Pàgina de l'AELC

Biografia, informacions, publicacions.

<http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/mforcano/>



WEB: L'autor al Corpus Literari Ciutat de Barcelona

Biografia, enllaços i transcripció d'articles sobre aquest autor.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=957



WEB: AELC Page

Biography, information, publications.

<http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/mforcano/>



WEB: Manuel Forcano in the City of Barcelona Literary Corpus

Biography, links and a transcription of articles on Forcano.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=957

Comments



PDF: "La delicadesa"

Sebastià Alzamora fa una crítica sobre el poemari *Corint*. A l'*Avui*.

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av00227.pdf>



PDF: Sobre El tren de Bagdad

Susanna Rafart ressenya el llibre guanyador del premi Carles Riba 2004. A l'*Avui* (15/04/2004).

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av02500.pdf>



PDF: "La delicadesa" (Delicacy)

Sebastià Alzamora reviews the poetry collection *Corint* (*Corinth*). In the newspaper *Avui*.

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av00227.pdf>



PDF: On El tren de Bagdad (Baghdad Train)

Susanna Rafart reviews the book that won the 2004 Carles Riba Prize. In *Avui* (15/4/2004).

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av02500.pdf>



WEB: Activitats per treballar poemes

Dos poemes amb propostes al web *Viu la poesia*.

http://www.viulapoesia.com/membrespocio/arxius/lletra/mforcano_index_props.html