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Literary news about Blai Bonet in Lletra, the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) virtual space for Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/blai-bonet> >

Blai Bonet



Blai Bonet

The work of Bonet (poetry and novel) is very much associated with light and colour. Light, as a metaphor of God, and colour, as the passions of light (Goethe): hence, poetry as the colour that gives character to life. Bonet once said that "my intention when I write is to illuminate those who read me". Bonet's work is also a meditation on God and human life, and offers a certain prophetic vision within the current of Christian existentialism. In regard to this relationship between God and man, Bonet also reflects on sin and its epitome, Judas, a recurrent figure in his poetic and novelistic universe. The poet, according to Bonet, explains the world through synthesis and, as a repository of Art, is called on to dispel darkness from mystery.

Santanyí, 1926-1997. Poet and novelist. In 1939 he entered the Palma Seminary, where he read Hesiod, Pindar and Homer. Tuberculosis was soon to mark his life and his work. He left the seminary in 1948 and thereafter alternated his stays between Santanyí and the sanatorium in Caubet. He was discovered as a poet in 1950 when Bernat Vidal i Tomàs read *Quatre poemes de Setmana Santa* (*Four Holy Week Poems*) in the [Guillem Colom](#) literary group. The poems present scenes from Nature interpreted through Christian rituals, where the poet is invited to enjoy life while expressing his pain at not being able to join God. In *Entre el coral i l'espiga* (*Between Coral and Wheat*) (1952) he heightens his treatment of the humanised landscape. The work consists of two antithetical parts, the coral and the wheat, images of "blood" and "mysticism", of "sea" and "land", of health and illness, of the lover and the beloved. The word flowers here in an outpouring of amorous symbols and metaphors in which the poet laments the absence of the beloved.

In *Cant espiritual* (*Spiritual Song*) (1953; Óssa Menor Prize, 1952) he brings together religiousness and sensuality, while alternating intense oration and light prayer. These poems reflect the mark left on him by the classics, from *Song of Songs*, [Ausiàs March](#), Saint John of the Cross and [Joan Maragall](#), to members of the Generation of '27: Lorca, Alberti and Guillén. He lived in Barcelona between 1953 and 1968. With *Comèdia* (*Comedy*) (1960 Critics' Prize) he moves closer to social realism. This is a collection of nineteen poems, tracing his biography until he entered the Seminary. He also deals with the relations between Catalonia and Spain, with echoes of [Espriu](#), [Sagarra](#), Blas de Otero and Goytisolo. *Comèdia* closes the cycle of poetry brought together in the book *El Color* (*Colour*) (1986), following Goethe's epigraph to the effect that, "Colours are the passions of light". For Bonet, poetry is the colour that gives character to life.

L'Evangelí segons un de tants (*The Gospel According to One of Many*) (1967, 1962 Carles Riba Prize) is the start of a new cycle that would continue with *Els fets* (*The Acts*) (1974), the title of which evokes the *Acts of the Apostles*. It is a long, narrative and descriptive song in which he reflects prophetically on the human being.

Has vist, algun cop, Jordi Bonet, Ca n'Amat a l'ombra? (*Have You Ever Seen, Jordi Bonet, Amat House in the Shade?*) (1976) is a long poem with resonances of Ramon Llull, mixing metaphysical reflection and popular discourse in an attempt to fit together in one work different levels of language:

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the monologue, cinematic technique and collage. In *Cant de l'arc (Song of the Arch)* (1979) he reaffirms the idea of the dissolution of things and, influenced by modern theology, he asserts that the only possible atheism is that of Deus Absconditus. The title of this work comes from *David's Lament* (2S1:15-27).

El poder i la verdor (Power and the Green) (1981) and *Teatre del gran verd (Theatre of the Great Green)* (1983) are his most cryptic books. The words "power" and "green" in the former allude to the real combat between State and nature, repression and spontaneity, censorship and freedom. Anti-war sentiments steeped in humour float throughout *Teatre del gran verd*. Here the poet continues to build on his linguistic resources.

El jove (1987) and *Nova York (New York)* (1991) represent a renewal in his work. In *El jove* he opens the book with "Ecce puer", in an allusion to Joyce's poem and to the *Ecce Homo* of the Gospels, the antithesis of which is Judas, a constant figure throughout Bonet's work, and one that embodies the themes of solitude and sin. In *Nova York* the poet tackles the theme of the city as an existential ambit, metaphor of the spirit of new times.

The first of Blai Bonet's novels was *El mar* (1958; Joanot Martorell Prize, 1957), which was followed by *Haceldama (Haceldama)* (1959), which evokes Camus since this work deals with the problem of the existential character. The title renders homage to the Gospel of Saint Matthew (27:3-10) and means "Field of Blood" (the potter's field), while also referring to Judas' betrayal since the main character of the novel is a victim of war but war turns him into a killer. In *Judas i la primavera (Judas and the Spring)* (1963) he introduces the new narrative techniques of the *nouveau roman* although echoes of Christian existentialism persist in this work. He recreates here experiences from different parts of his life: his village, the seminary, the sanatorium, the poor neighbourhoods of Barcelona, and so on. *Míster Evasió (Mister Evasion)* (1969) is the story of a young man named Marc Esquert who writes a novel that stirs up his past. It is a transgressor work, influenced by Joyce's *Ulysses* since it is a kind of collage consisting of different types of language, from objective description through to dialogues, inner monologues, advertisements, etc.

Blai Bonet also wrote a number of diaries: *Els ulls (Eyes)* (1973), *La mirada (The Gaze)* (1975), *La motivació i el film (Motivation and the Film)* (1990) and *Pere Pau (Pere Pau)* (1992). *Parasceve (Parasceve)* (1957, runner-up for the Joan Santamaría Prize) is a one-act play. The title (from the Greek) refers to Good Friday and the play is concerned with sacrifice and the hatred that destroys love. Bonet also wrote pieces of art criticism, including *Tàpies (Tàpies)* (1964), *Monumentos y paisajes de España. Mallorca (Monuments and Landscapes of Spain. Mallorca)* (1965), *Testimonios de la pintura española (Testimonies to Spanish Painting)* (1966), *El movimiento románico en España (The Romanesque Movement in Spain)* (1967), *Tomeu Pons (Tomeu Pons)* (1978) and *Miquel del desert (Miquel of the Desert)* (1992).

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The Poetic Thought of Blai Bonet

Antoni Vidal Ferrando

It is clear that the majority of those present are united in at least one thing: our fascination with Blai Bonet. It is difficult to specify to what point this fascination comes from his human qualities or his literary qualities. I believe, however, that we would agree in relating it with his extraordinary prestige.

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With this as our starting point, the best thing we might do, perhaps, is to let Blai Bonet himself help to clarify things for us. He says that a writer's prestige arises from his or her human presence, independently of the quality of the writing. He believed that what really bestows stature is having the human presence that makes a setting poetic, that makes people think and that helps us to fall in love with art, renewing ourselves in this every day. Apart from this, writers have an oeuvre, which nobody would ever detach from human prestige. He believed that what is important in an artist is the image he or she leaves of himself or herself, and that prestige only comes when the work and the person fit together. This is why he had so much prestige, and why it is so difficult for us to pronounce his name without thinking of his books. By the same token, his books conjure up his everyday presence and we shall never get used to the idea that he is no longer there waiting for us to ring the doorbell of his flat in Cala Figuera or to phone him, that he can no longer offer us those three prophetic gifts of his: the gift of presence, the gift of the word and the gift of genius. If he could tell us what he thinks now, of this gathering in his honour, he would no doubt become ironic, the eternally adolescent pupils of those Picasso eyes of his would shine and he'd send us off to busy ourselves with some more worthy task. For example, to read for twenty minutes the existential pages of everyday life, or touch some skin. Then we'd have to explain to him that we do not render homage today to Blai Bonet exactly (for he was always very much above these things and, since a king resided in his body, he didn't need them), and that we offer this tribute to ourselves, to congratulate ourselves for having access to this legacy of superlative texts, with their inner ardour, these inimitable texts that he wished to bequeath to us. To ourselves and to the Catalan language. Only major cultures are able to contribute to the grandeur of our human heritage with an oeuvre of the dimensions of Blai Bonet's. Ever since *Quatre poemes de Setmana Santa*, *L'Evangelí segons un de tants*, *Nova York*, *El mar* and *Mister Evasió* have existed, nobody can say there is no point in learning Catalan. If civilisation is not a physical joke - as Blai said vanguards are - if there are still intellectuals like the Unamuno who learned Danish the better to savour Kierkegaard, it is not possible that one would not want to read all these titles in their original versions, which conserve both the steel and the dahlias of the author's talent. This is a talent that was an announcement of his availability before the cosmos. However, there is also the effect of a poetic thinking, to which I should like to refer now, although I shall do so very schematically given the limits of time. I shall refer, by way of illustration, to a long chat we had about a year ago on the basis of a set of questions I had expressly prepared for an interview with him. Although Blai Bonet was improvising when he answered, he expressed himself so brilliantly that I think it would be disrespectful if I didn't quote exactly what he said. Hence, and even though I have some qualms about doing it this way, I shall let him speak:

"My intention when I write is to offer illumination to whoever reads me. I want to illuminate reality a little, to shed a little more light on it than there already is, make it noticed. One of the basic elements of poetry throughout time is its drawing attention to reality (?). When poets write a poem it is to make things clear for themselves. Not clear for themselves in any old sense, but in the sense of making the world clearer. But since you can't be in the whole world at once, you have to limit yourself to the space you have. You have a space that is small and you recompose it. You recompose the world and synthesise it. What an essayist needs a hundred and fifty pages to elaborate can be summarised by a poet in a line and a half. For example, there is a point where Hölderlin says, "Anyone who aspires to sublimity has to opt for vitality". In one line this man made clear what all the philosophers put together hadn't managed to do. To put it very briefly, if you aspire to sublimity it has to be through your own experience and you must see that it has to be found through the things you have to hand. You can't aspire to sublimity by looking at the stars. One person can find it mopping the floor and another eating an apple (?). Another thing you want to do is to clear your head of cobwebs. Humanity has a lot of cobwebs: traditions, religions, taboos ? Then, with one of these well-written poems that in ten lines say what Saint Thomas doesn't say, you clear the reader's head of some of its cobwebs (?). With

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poetry you also manage to abolish mystery. Mystery is decadence. Things, however, tend to be clear. When poetry is truly good, it sheds light on the mystery, abolishes it. I am referring to mystery the way I see it, in the negative sense. It is mental laziness to say that this or that is a mystery. It's fear of going into it. When you do look into it, you see that it was a trap set by the powers-that-be, or some kind of nastiness, or whatever? But this business of abolishing mystery is, I think, one of the artist's greatest missions (?). Poetry doesn't exist in the same way that a pine tree exists. It is the aspiration to everything there is. That "*sonno di una cosa*", the wanting to be more. Our aspiration is wanting to be more.

One thing that I really liked writing is "el sant voler (desideratum)" We'd be living in prodigious times if everyone wrote this "desideratum", this aspiration. Life is full of examples. Look at these women who are born neurasthenic and who take a piece of brass and start rubbing and rubbing to make it gleam. It might have been gleaming for half an hour and still they rub. That is poetry at its best. Because what they are polishing is not the brass, but their own spirits. Poetry is precisely that, this frenzy to make it brighter and brighter (?). In principle, what most resembles poetry is music. Music, too, is an aspiration. You close your eyes and listen to Brahms' Symphony Number Three and you see that this is an aspiration. You aspire to something and you don't know what because there are no words for it. But you close your eyes and you feel the aspiration of that person ?

Inexpressible groans, inexpressible groans of the spirit pertain to music just as much as to poetry. (?) There is no relation between reason and poetry. Poetry, music, the most important components of people, everything that constitutes a great act, is related with the unconscious. What comes out of reason are decrees and laws, academies, senates and congresses. But in art, the most brilliant components spring from the unconscious. So what we call the unconscious is, in fact, a tremendous reality. A reality that we don't know how to express except with this word. The real reason of man is this irrational background. The academic and legal worlds are created by reason. But, human actors are humans. What happens is that, then, we have to give form to all of this. Whether you're talking of the human component or that of art, it means trying to give form to this irrational background. Naturally, in poetry, form is essential."

Friends, forty-two days after losing him, our consolation is knowing that Blai Bonet is a more immense reality than ever. True above all to his beliefs he left us no epitaph in life. It was his way of saying, "Don't be afraid".

Text read in homage to Blai Bonet at the 9th Catalan Book Week and published in issue N° 13 of *La veu*, Calvià (1 February 2001).

A selection of texts

Text



WEB: Antologia poètica bilingüe

Edició digital de l'*Antologia poètica* de Blai Bonet (Calambur, Madrid, 2004), en versió bilingüe català i castellà. La selecció i introducció és de Margalida Pons, i les versions al castellà de Nicolau Dols i Gabriel de la S. T. Sampol.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=4Q8EWwCeG-kC&lpg=PA3&dq=blai%20bonet&hl=ca&pg=PA3#v>

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=onepage&q=&f=false



WEB: Els dotze sentits

Reprodueix quatre poemes d'*El jove* (1957).

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/especials/folch/bonet.htm>



WEB: "Ets un sol"

Poema de Blai Bonet dins el recull "Estima en català".

<http://www.estimaencatala.lateneu.org/poemes.php?fer=detall&id=58>



WEB: The Twelve Senses

Reproduces four poems from *El jove (The Young Man)* (1957).

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/especials/folch/bonet.htm>



WEB: Blai Bonet

Two poems in Catalan, English and German.

http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/bonetb/pagina.php?id_sec=1929



WEB: "Ets un sol"

This poem ("You're a Love") by Blai Bonet is from the collection *Estima en català (Love in Catalan)*.

<http://www.estimaencatala.lateneu.org/poemes.php?fer=detall&id=58>

Bio-bibliography

Biography



WEB: A la Hiperenciclopèdia

http://www.enciclopedia.cat/fitxa_v2.jsp?NDCHEC=0011139



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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/qqq/FitxaAutors.asp?nom1=bon&nom2=&cerca=Cerca&quinform=form1&NRegistre=3&idregistre=7122>



WEB: A la Viquipèdia

Breu biografia i obra de l'autor al web de l'enciclopèdia lliure.

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



WEB: The author in the Catalan Encyclopaedia

<http://www.grec.cat/cgibin/hecangcl2.pgm?&USUARI=&SESSIO=&NDCHEC=0011139&PGMORI=E>



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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/qqq/fitxaAutorsuk.asp?nom1=bonet&cercauk2=Search&quinform=form1&NRegistre=1&idregistre=7122>

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Bibliography



WEB: Què hi ha a la Biblioteca de Catalunya

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



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques públiques

<http://argus.biblioteques.gencat.cat/iii/encore/search/C|SBonet+Blai|Orightresult|U1?lang=cat&suite=pearl>



WEB: Per comprar-ne llibres

<http://www.llibres.cat/ca/detall-autor/bonet-i-rigo-blai>



WEB: Articles de l'autor (Traces)

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



WEB: Articles sobre l'autor (Traces)

http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=ca&p=Bonet%2C+Blai&f=keyword&action_search=Cerca&c=Traces+%3A+base+de+dades+de+llengua+i+literatura+catalanes&sf=&so=d&rm=&rg=10&sc=0&of=hb



WEB: Works in the Biblioteca de Catalunya

http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*eng/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Bonet+Blai&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+%22bonet+blai%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=Blai+Bonet>

Comments on the author

Criticism



WEB: Pàgina de l'AELC

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Biografia, publicacions i altres materials.

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



WEB: L'autor al Corpus Literari Ciutat de Barcelona

Biografia, enllaços i transcripció d'articles sobre Bonet.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=261



WEB: Pàgina de Magisteri Teatre-Mag Poesia

Inclou biografia, cinc poemes, fragments de les seves novel·les i comentaris sobre l'autor i la seva obra.

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/magteatre/bonet-blai/index.htm>



WEB: Un dels dotze sentits

Bonet és un dels dotze poetes antologats al CD-ROM *Dotze sentits. Poesia catalana d'avui*.

http://www.iua.upf.edu/dotze_sentits/entrada.html



WEB: "La vida según Blai Bonet"

Article d'Eduardo Jorda publicat al *Diario de Mallorca* (23/12/1997).

<http://www.uib.es/premsa/desembre97/dia-23/23816.htm>



WEB: Blai Bonet on the Lletra website in Catalan

Including more resources and reading suggestions.

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



WEB: AELC Page

Biography, information, publications.

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



WEB: Blai Bonet in the City of Barcelona Literary Corpus

Biography, links and a transcription of articles on Bonet.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=261



WEB: Magisteri Teatre-Mag Poetry Page

Includes biography, five poems, fragments of his novels and comments on the author and his work.

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/magteatre/bonet-blai/index.htm>



WEB: One of the Twelve Senses

Bonet is one of the twelve poets on the CD-ROM *Dotze sentits. Poesia catalana d'avui (Twelve Senses. Catalan Poetry Today)*.

http://www.iua.upf.es/dotze_sentits/entrada.html

Miscellaneous



WEB: Casa Museu Bonet a Santanyí

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Informació sobre la Casa Museu Blai Bonet al web Espais escrits de la Xarxa del Patrimoni Literari Català.

<http://www.espaisescrits.cat/home.php?op=6&module=escriptors&ides=32&idioma=cat>



WEB: Literatura mallorquina

Text de la GEC que presenta de forma molt sintètica la literatura de l'illa.

<http://www.xtec.es/~Irius1/alcover/contextbaix.htm>



WEB: Al web de l'Ajuntament de Santanyí

Personatge il·lustre de Santanyí.

<http://www.ajsantanyi.net/infoturisme/personatges.ct.html>



WEB: Mallorcan Literature

GEC text offering a highly synthetic description of the island's literature.

<http://www.xtec.es/~Irius1/alcover/contextbaix.htm>