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## Marta Pessarrodona



### The Memorable Poetry of Marta Pessarrodona

Pere Ballart and Jordi Julià

In different attempts to take in Marta Pessarrodona's poetic *oeuvre* as a whole, the response of one of the first readers of this poet from the Vallès region (and doubtless one of the most discerning she will ever have) is frequently invoked. In the Prologue to *Setembre 30* [September 30], the book with which she made her official debut into Catalan literary circles, [Gabriel Ferrater](#) was of the view that the contents of this poetry were "judicious" and that they excelled in the craft of "sincerity, in an apposite and moderately modulated tone of voice". It would seem however, that one should also say the best description of Marta Pessarrodona's poetic style was also made by Ferrater, not directly but when he was trying to classify his own, celebrated "Poema inacabat" [Unfinished Poem]. Two of its lines read, "I shall be digressive and cursive, / anacoluthonic and allusive". If we now try to apply this standard to Pessarrodona's poems, it would be sufficient for one to understand why it is always possible to recognise her unmistakable voice even when only reading four or five lines of her poems.

To start with, hers is a digressive and cursive voice: just as happens with the articles she regularly publishes in the newspaper *Avui*, in her poems, fluent and unpredictable life continually enters, leaves, and filters through the innumerable interpolated clauses of a discourse that seems to have grasped very well that reality should not be forced too much if one wants to surpass it. It is also allusive because the mundaneness of her anecdotes, on the one hand, and, on the other, the conviction that "a book is a synthesis / of a whole heap of books read", inevitably project her verses on to an intertextuality made up of cultural and artistic references. That it is also, at bottom, anacoluthonic is what, ultimately, we would consider to be its most distinctive and personal feature: the situations of Pessarrodona's poems never seem totally explicit, because the poem, as if it were a conversation between two people who know each other well, leaps from one idea to another in the certainty that none of its subtexts will be lost along the winding way.

The author of *Vida privada* [Private Life] and *A favor meu, nostre* [In My, Our Favour] has always understood poetry as a superlative form of civilisation, as the last word in refinement of human, social relations. Nothing could be more alien to her style than imagining it bemused in speculation over some formal aspect of nature, or forcing words to avoid their primordial sense. This, then, is a conception that makes of the poem a natural prolongation of a real, interrupted dialogue, as if the words could gauge by lyrical condensation the exact point of affection or disaffection the relationship presents, thus converting the reader into an invariable accomplice. There are so few of her poems that do not seek an ear to hear them! If she herself is not the imaginary mirror, then we shall find that there is always somebody who, absent, ends up apostrophised in photographic effigy, or in memoriam or, alternatively, there is a very present you that the words seek to cling to: "I shall probe to know with sureness / all the bits of me that are you, / and all that remains in you of me" ("Bonjour, tristesse").

Hers is a poetry that practises with total spontaneity something that Western poetry has found difficult

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for a long time, something that causes it great problems. Marta Pessarrodona's poems are always talking to somebody, they know who they are addressing and are situated before a "you", whom they immediately make an accomplice. This poetry swims against the tide at a time in which it might be said that a sense of privacy does not seem to consent to any sort of expression that is not intellectual perplexity, or the circumstantial pleasures of a body become pure and simple sensation. It is not that this kind of poetry lacks sensations and ideas but, when they do appear, they do so by way of those words that we could almost write with capital letters because they occur so frequently in such verses: Love, Fidelity, Pain, Frailty, Friendship, Nostalgia, Devotion, Happiness, Desire, Emotion, Sadness.

And, as if this weren't enough, there is one last oddity, no less surprising than the rest, especially if we think about the years in which the author of these books started writing poetry. If she held that a book is a synthesis of many others, it is logical enough that the number of cultural references appearing in these poems should be enormous: an exhaustive inventory of the names of the men and women writers to whom she alludes would be encyclopaedic; another of toponyms would place a wide-open atlas in our hands. Yet, Marta's cultural bent has nothing decorative about it. It is not that brand of Venetianism that revels in simple -let us say museum-style- accumulation of erudite and artistic allusions that were so in vogue when she published *Setembre 30* in 1969. There is nothing postiche about her cultural stand, nothing superimposed on the poem. It is not, as we have said, decorative and it has therefore not gone out of date like the pretence of culture does (and there is nothing that gets more outmoded than simple decoration because it is dated, like certain styles of printed fabric or a summer song). In her work, the mention of a Jewish ritual or a street in Berlin or a Victorian literary anecdote is necessary to the extent that it sets the scene for an experience that turns out to be indistinguishable from these stimuli, which cannot be understood as anything but a response to the impression that these places or these stories have made on the author. They are necessary because they have become stopping-off points in the itinerary of a life that is summed up poetically in these almost forty years.

Once these qualities, these precious "oddities" have been identified, it is easy for us to describe the imaginative structure of Marta Pessarrodona's poems. To begin with, and as we have already remarked, she always imagines an act of speaking, addressed to a real, present or imaginary "you", with whom she enters into dialogue or invokes to make her poem credible. She is more concerned with establishing and specifying an interlocutor than with delimiting his or her voice. We shall not find in her poetry the typical "dramatic monologue" but an inner voice that comes out, that refrains from describing the character but strives to express his or her feelings. It is a good example of this judicious, sincere, moderately modulated tone of voice that Ferrater was able to pinpoint so early. Hence in her poetry we find few "soliloquies" (the title of one of her poems in *Setembre 30*), and catch her instead in an exchange, present or imaginary, with somebody. In keeping with an influential contemporary poetic tradition, she makes the most of the title of a poem for something rather more than making sure that the typesetter (or layout designer as we are supposed to say nowadays) doesn't get distracted or mess up the text. In this initial epigraph, we often find delimited (1) the identity of the interlocutor; (2) some historical-cultural allusion that has a metaphorical function *vis-à-vis* the poem's content; (3) a syntagmatic structure (pertaining to a quote) that has seduced the poet's imagination and given rise to the poem; and (4) the harbinger of a specific style or some kind of literary (hence verbal) play that the poem will bring out.

The poem begins with a few assertive lines, as if verifying a fact, state of mind or accepting some great or small truth, which is important to note at the time because the "I" has taken it on as its own. The rest of the poem tends to be a digression or variations on the theme of the title or the opening lines, whether in a more or less abstract fashion, more or less metaphorical or applied to a specific

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anecdote or circumstance. Sometimes the poem is constructed as a form of mental or verbal meandering but it is always attentive to the theme and the general and personal consequences arising from that. There is, however, one variant in this structure that is so typical of Pessarrodona's poetry, which does not invalidate the imaginative approach but modifies the execution of it. Starting out from an intertextual and allusive title, an ingenious phrase or productive syntagm, the poem is structured in strophes, each of which is headed by the same syntactic parallelism. And in each new stanza the content of the poetic "I" is taken up, modified, modulated. This form of composition is very close to the song and in the volume *A favor meu, nostre* it is confirmed as one of Marta Pessarrodona's great forms of composition.

The poetry of Marta Pessarrodona is not just confessional, not just poetry of experience, not just personal. Another virtue stands up to be counted from among her lines and this is her ability to link the destiny of the poetic persona of the time to the collective fate, which is frequently uncertain or, unfortunately, adverse. In conclusion, this Catalan poet is probably the best Catalan woman poet today (and this is tantamount to saying one of the most outstanding existing poets in absolute terms if we leave out of the equation the political-economic power of languages, cultures and countries) because of the poetic substance of her voice, the singularity of her poetry and the versatility of the word within her unmistakable poetic timbre.

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## A selection of texts

### Text



**WEB: Pessarrodona a Magisteri Teatre-Mag Poesia**

Inclou força fragments de la seva obra.

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/magpoesia/pessarrodona/pessarrodona.html>



**WEB: Pessarrodona llegeix "Cançó com una oració"**

Al web de l'Ajuntament de Barcelona.

<http://www.bnc.es/images/tresors/12/mpessarr.mpg>



**WEB: El poeta del mes per Biel Barnils**

Pessarrodona fou el poeta del mes (març 2007) al web CiutatOci.com, inclou una breu nota biogràfica i quatre poemes.

[http://www.ciutatoci.com/literatura/docs/d07/lit\\_poeta\\_marta\\_pessarrodona\\_0703.php](http://www.ciutatoci.com/literatura/docs/d07/lit_poeta_marta_pessarrodona_0703.php)



**WEB: Al Daltabaix Poètic!**

Dos poemes inèdits de l'autora en aquest web de poesia que acull poetes de tendències ben diferents.

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



**WEB: Donasses: Carme Karr**

Fragment de *Donasses* al web de l'AELC.

[http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/karrc/pagina.php?id\\_text=2034](http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/karrc/pagina.php?id_text=2034)

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**WEB: Dos inèdits**

L'autora llegeix dos poemes inèdits a la llibreria Àgora de Mallorca.

<http://video.google.es/videosearch?q=%22marta+pessarrodona%22&hl=es&emb=0&aq=-1&oq=#>



**WEB: "A favor meu, nostre"**

Aquest poema de l'autora al bloc de Biel Barnils Tinta Xinesa.

<http://tintaxinesa.blogspot.com/2008/03/marta-pessarrodona-favor-meu-nostre.html>



**WEB: "La mala educació"**

Article de l'autora sobre l'educació dels fills publicat a l'*Avui* (06/12/07).

<http://paper.avui.cat/article/dialeg/108019/la/mala/educacio.html>



**PDF: "Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer: una incògnita catalana"**

L'autora s'acosta a la vida i obra de Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer en aquest article publicat a la revista *VIA*, núm. 4 (abril 2007).

<http://www.jordipujol.cat/files/articles/MPessarrodona.pdf>



**WEB: "Per a Maria Antònia, Caterina i Clementina i tantes -no moltes- d'altres"**

Un poema de l'autora al web *Viu la poesia*.

[http://www.viulapoesia.com/pagina\\_2.php?itinerari=13&tipus=1&subtipus=2&idpoema=926](http://www.viulapoesia.com/pagina_2.php?itinerari=13&tipus=1&subtipus=2&idpoema=926)



**WEB: Pessarrodona in Magisteri Teatre-Mag Poesia**

Quite a number of fragments of Pessarrodona's work are offered on this web site.

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/magpoesia/pessarrodona/pessarrodona.html>



**WEB: Pessarrodona reads "Cançó com una oració" [Song As A Prayer]**

On the Ajuntament (City Council) of Barcelona web site.

<http://www.bnc.es/images/tresors/12/mpessarr.mpg>



**WEB: Two unpublished poems**

Pessarrodona reads two unpublished poems in the Àgora bookshop in Mallorca.

<http://video.google.es/videosearch?q=%22marta+pessarrodona%22&hl=es&emb=0&aq=-1&oq=#>



**WEB: Three poems**

Three poems by Marta Pessarrodona translated into English by Sam Abrams on the La Il·lustració Poètica Metropolitana & Continental web site.

<http://perso.wanadoo.es/lipmic/Pluricat/eng/pessarrodona.htm>

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## Bio-bibliography

### Biography



**WEB: A la Hiperenciclopèdia**

[http://www.enciclopedia.cat/fitxa\\_v2.jsp?NDCHEC=0050554](http://www.enciclopedia.cat/fitxa_v2.jsp?NDCHEC=0050554)

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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/peq/FitxaAutors.asp?nom1=pes&nom2=&cerca=Cerca&quinform=form1&NRegistre=2&idregistre=2622>



**WEB: A la Viquipèdia**

Breu biografia, obra i enllaços sobre l'autora al web de l'enciclopèdia lliure.

[http://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marta\\_Pessarrodona](http://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marta_Pessarrodona)



**WEB: The author in the Catalan Encyclopaedia**

<http://www.grec.cat/cgibin/hecangcl2.pgm?&USUARI=&SESSIO=&NDCHEC=0050554&PGMORI=E>



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

<http://cultura.gencat.net/ilc/peq/FitxaAutorsuk.asp?nom1=pessarrodona&cercauk2=Search&quinform=form1&NRegistre=2&idregistre=2622>

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## Bibliography



**WEB: Què hi ha a la Biblioteca de Catalunya**

[http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search\\*cat/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Pessarrodona+Marta&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D](http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*cat/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Pessarrodona+Marta&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=Pessarrodona+Marta&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=23](http://ccuc.cbuc.cat/search*cat/a?SEARCH=Pessarrodona+Marta&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=23)



**WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques públiques**

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



**WEB: Per comprar-ne llibres**

<http://www.llibres.cat/ca/detall-autor/pessarrodona-i-artigues-marta>



**WEB: Articles de l'autora (Traces)**

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



**WEB: Articles sobre l'autora (Traces)**

[http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=ca&p=Pessarrodona%2C+Marta&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](http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=ca&p=Pessarrodona%2C+Marta&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=Pessarrodona+Marta&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D](http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*eng/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Pessarrodona+Marta&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D)

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**WEB: The author in The European Library**

<http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/search/%28%22creator%22+all+%22pessarrodona+marta%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=Marta+Pessarrodona>

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## Comments on the author

### Criticism



**WEB: L'autora al Corpus Literari Ciutat de Barcelona**

Biografia, informació bibliogràfica, enllaços i transcripció d'articles sobre Pessarrodona.  
[http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show\\_news&news\\_id=2230](http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=2230)



**WEB: Marta Pessarrodona on the lletra website in Catalan**

Including more resources.  
<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/noms/martapessarrodona/index.html>



**WEB: Marta Pessarrodona in the City of Barcelona Literary Corpus**

Biography, bibliographical information, links and a transcription of articles on this author.  
[http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show\\_news&news\\_id=2230](http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=2230)



**VIDEO: Premi Nacional de Literatura 2011**

Entrevista a l'autora a TV Sant Cugat.  
[http://www.youtube.com/user/tvsantcugat#p/search/0/swoLtiOuW\\_g](http://www.youtube.com/user/tvsantcugat#p/search/0/swoLtiOuW_g)



**WEB: Xerrada de Pessarrodona a Valldoreix TV**

L'autora parla sobre la dona treballadora. A YouTube.  
<http://www.youtube.com/v/STMbK8dAtLw&hl=es>



**WEB: Convidada al Festival Poesia i + de Caldes d'Estrach**

L'autora va participar en un recital a la Fundació Palau i Fabre amb Jaume Siurana i Teresa Colom.  
<http://www.fundaciopalau.cat/fundacio-palau/ca/festivals/2008/activitat11.html>

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## Comments



**WEB: "La poesia no sempre és un bàlsam; a vegades, inquieta"**

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< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/marta-pessarrodona> >

Breu entrevista a Pessarrodona publicada a *El Periódico* (14/05/08).

[http://www.elperiodico.com/default.asp?idpublicacio\\_PK=46&idioma=CA&idnoticia\\_PK=509148&idsccio\\_PK=1038](http://www.elperiodico.com/default.asp?idpublicacio_PK=46&idioma=CA&idnoticia_PK=509148&idsccio_PK=1038)



**WEB: "Les llàgrimes encara fan mal rera els ulls"**

Entrevista d'Israel Clarà al web de l'Editorial Omicron.

[http://www.editorialomicron.com/entrevistes\\_marta.html](http://www.editorialomicron.com/entrevistes_marta.html)



**WEB: Entrevista a Marta Pessarrodona**

Marta Pi parla amb l'autora al web Telepolis.

<http://www.telepolis.com/cgi-bin/web/urnredir?tema=librosentr&dir=lessing>



**WEB: Una antologia de l'autora**

Bartomeu Fiol ressenya *Poemes 1969-2007* al *Diari de Balears* (05/02/08).

<http://www.normalitzacio.cat/testimonis/index.php?n=5316&sec=testimonis>



**WEB: Sobre Mercè Rodoreda**

Joan Pinyol comenta al seu bloc una conferència de Marta Pessarrodona sobre l'obra de Mercè Rodoreda.

<http://blocs.mesvilaweb.cat/node/view/id/81621>



**WEB: "Nit de poetes"**

Comentari d'Oriol Izquierdo sobre el recital de la Fundació Palau a El bloc del Director (ILC).

<http://blocs.mesvilaweb.cat/node/view/id/101212>



**WEB: "La poesia no sempre és un bàlsam; a vegades, inquieta" [Poetry isn't always a balm; sometimes it's disturbing]**

Brief interview with Pessarrodona in the newspaper *El Periódico* (14/05/08).

[http://www.elperiodico.com/default.asp?idpublicacio\\_PK=46&idioma=CA&idnoticia\\_PK=509148&idsccio\\_PK=1038](http://www.elperiodico.com/default.asp?idpublicacio_PK=46&idioma=CA&idnoticia_PK=509148&idsccio_PK=1038)



**WEB: Lessing according to Pessarrodona**

Interview with Marta Pessarrodona in which she speaks of Doris Lessing and the translation of her works on the Telepolis web site.

<http://www.telepolis.com/cgi-bin/web/urnredir?tema=librosentr&dir=lessing>



**WEB: Activitats per treballar "Per a Maria Antònia, Caterina i Clementina i tantes -no moltes- d'altres"**

Un poema amb propostes al web *Viu la poesia*.

[http://www.viulapoesia.com/pagina\\_6.php?tipus=1&subtipus=2&itinerari=13&idpoema=926](http://www.viulapoesia.com/pagina_6.php?tipus=1&subtipus=2&itinerari=13&idpoema=926)