

Francesc Parcerisas

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When one speaks of the course of Catalan poetry over the last thirty years, one must, without a doubt, speak of Francesc Parcerisas (Begues, 1944). Perhaps with more clarity than any other figure of the same generation, his poetry, having weathered crises and evolved, has been in every moment perfectly representative of the general trend of the period in which it was written; a poetry that, until being consolidated as the magnificent example of moral poetry that it is today, has found its expressive success in the most diverse stimuli.

In this sense, the books collected in the volume *Triomf del present* (Triumph of the Present), covering the period from 1965 to 1983, are an exceptional testimony of a continual experimentation in every direction, in all styles, and a veritable kaleidoscope of its epoch. As if presided by Blake's famous motto, from his *Proverbs of Hell* ("You never know what is enough until you know what is more than enough"), the poetry of Parcerisas during all these years goes from the civic and social preoccupations of *Vint poemes civils* (Twenty Civil Poems), in 1967, to the culturalist poetry of *Homes que es banyen* (Men Bathing), in 1970, and also to the audacious avant-garde embodied by the 1974 book titled *Latitud dels cavalls* (Horse Latitude). Whoever comes to this compilation of his first works discovers a long poetic apprenticeship, intact and immediate, and of a Picasso-like versatility, as it were, that certainly can be read, if we follow the pronouncement of the poet and critic Sam Abrams, as a veritable "autobiography in verse."

In spite of this, the poetic maturity of the author, his conquest of a round and distinctive voice, was not consolidated until the composition of the book *L'edat d'or* (The Golden Age), published in 1983, which Catalan criticism greeted immediately and unanimously as an impressive achievement, without hesitating to promote it to a place of privilege in the end-of-century canon, an evaluation which the years have only confirmed. The absolute novelty of the book in Parcerisas' evolution lies in the fact that the poetry of personal introspection and the analysis of moral experience, which had appeared only from time to time in his prior production, were here affirmed with deliberation, a security in vocal modulation, and a variety of registers and noteworthy methods. With time, the orientation suggested by this work has manifested itself as a very consistent choice: both *Focs d'octubre* (October Fires), in 1992, and *Natura morta amb nens* (Still Life with Children), in 2000, fall back into a meditative poetry, applied to quite diverse pretexts of genre but always with an undeniable basis of generous humanity, the latter of which should be looked for in the poet's compositional depth. The elegaic tone and bitter background among which discourse the poems of *Dos dies més de sud* (Two More Days of South) (2006), his most recently published book, have not substantially varied these estimations, except, perhaps, by having a sharpened intensity and rigor of expression.

On some occasions, Francesc Parcerisas has recognized that his imagination is essentially visual, something that has always contributed, to the benefit of all his readers, to an enormous poetic advantage. His poetry is invariably of a great plastic beauty, in combination with what are perhaps his two principle virtues: the capacity to infuse life into the sometimes most insignificant objects, a recourse that helps to anchor experience in well-drawn situations, and a constant agility of image, which draws the reader through continual changes of perspective, a dynamism that affects the time and space of the poem equally. Often the poetic *I* blends one consciousness, which brings back the things of the past, with another, able to shoot towards the future. All of this results in rich, dense, heterogeneous poems, which frequently and successfully complete the difficult challenge, as stated in one of his poems, of writing “the resplendent poem of words.”

It is worth remembering, lastly, that this is a poet whose dedication to the lyric has surely been favored by his well-known status as an eminent translator and critic, occupations that have even further refined his sense of language, especially that which writers decide to submit to the demands of their art.

Translated by Robin Vogelzang