

JORDI PERE CERDÀ

CERDÀ'S POETRY HAS THAT INIMITABLE PERSONAL TOUCH
WHICH DISTINGUISHES IT FROM WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.
IT IS A MASSIVE ATTEMPT TO CONVERT THE WHOLE WORLD
INTO WORDS, TO MAKE IT AT ONCE SIGNIFICANT AND
SIGNIFICATE, SOUND AND MEANING.

ÀLEX SUSANNA AUTHOR

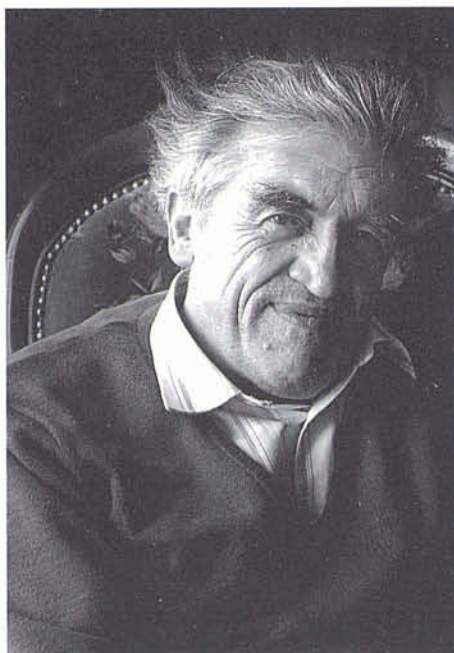
You are born.
Your fable starts,
still in blazing carmine.
A cry –yours–
thrilling as the sun's
with its announcement. You are born.
You are you. A leaf distinct
from thousands of other leaves
of your mother, of me.
We search for the likeness
that will set the mark of day on you,
when death has come to us.
You emerge tied to the womb
in blue. The blood
that courses in your body
through the captive navel
still returns to the trunk
four seconds;
son and mother
androgynes.
You are you,

and you are I,
as though across time
I assisted at my birth;
weighing you down with all I cannot be,
the burden of the man and lover.
The scissors cut you free,
making you my equal. Not mine:
you.
For you are now the keel that slides across the shore,
severed from the land,
putting out to sea.
I am left with the silent flower of night,
your mother with the pain of her empty belly
swollen by your living
and the aching of your passing.
You come into the cold
in the struggle of each day.
I baptise you father
that you may be.

from *Dietari de l'alba*

The world of Jordi Pere Cerdà (b. Sallagosa, Cerdanya, 1920) is an unfathomable one. Few people have looked so deeply into human nature as he has with his observation, study and apparent isolation. After a period of intense concern for the world around him, for his powerful native landscape –the Cerdanya–, Jordi Pere Cerdà started to experience the dizziness of plunging into himself, of searching in the abyss of his own personality. This dance –and tension– between extroversion and introspection marks the whole of his human and intellectual development. Between one and the other is a period of total political commitment. Three phases which almost correspond with the three stages of which Kierkegaard speaks: the aesthetic, the ethic and the religious.

After some years with little recognition, one can say that the literary results of all these processes –ten books of poetry (*La guatlla i la garba*, *Tota llengua fa foc*, *Cerdanese*, *Dignificació del carràs*, *La pell del Narcís*, *Dietari de l'alba*, *Un bosc sense armes*, *L'agost de l'any*, *Ocells per a Cristòfor* and *Cantor*), five plays (*Angeleta*, *El sol de les ginesetes*, *La set de la terra*, *El dia neix per a tothom* and *Quatre dones i el sol*), a book of stories (*Col·locació de personatges en un jardí tancat*) and one volume of memoirs (*Cant alt*)– have over the last few years made a spectacular recovery with the critics and the reading public. All this has been helped by the regular publication of his latest works. In 1984, his book of stories, *Col·locació de personatges en un jardí tancat*, appeared, a collection of writings which the author himself described as a “recomposition of the physical world, revised, readjusted, re-invented by the kaleidoscope within us” and as “the accurate or inaccurate, immediate or secular images which have managed to penetrate my deep shelter, my closed garden”. In 1988 *Dietari de l'alba* was published for the first time in the form of a single volume, which probably constitutes one of the high points of the literature of the Cerdanya. The book is an account of a whole love cycle seen in both historical and ahistorical terms, in which we find some of the most striking poems ever written in our language. Finally, two books have just appeared which without any doubt at all are amongst the most important books published over the last few years. These are the volume



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Poesia completa, on the one hand, and on the other, his literary autobiography, *Cant alt*, a fascinating text of more than three hundred pages, in which the author reveals the tangled twists and turns of his extensive personal and intellectual career.

His poetry, in each of the stages that go to make it up, has that inimitable personal touch which distinguishes it from anything that has gone before and from what is yet to come. It is a solitary island, standing out against the high plane of the Cerdanya. It is a huge effort to convert the whole world into words, to make it significant and significate, sound and meaning, as Valéry would have said. It is a work which the author

has constructed with calm and tenacity, as if they were sculptures worked in some difficult, untamed material, far from the malleability of poetry, because his poems give the impression of having been made from stone, of being rare gems one finds when walking in those wilds.

As I said earlier, this long, exhaustive poetical development, although unquestionably a coherent whole, is divided into four stages: the first includes the first four books (*La guatlla i la garba*, *Tota llengua fa foc*, *Cerdanese* and *Dignificació del carràs*), all of which are directed mainly at marking out a poetic geography, a space to settle and patrol with, his imagination; the second (formed by *La pell del Narcís* and *Dietari de l'alba*), in which the author begins a fascinating process of interiorization which is to lead him to write a type of poetry which is more abstract and elliptical, but always anchored in the deepest, most ancestral ‘I’ (in other words, the step from an external to an internal landscape); a third period in which the social element features more than anything else, and which includes *Un bosc sense armes* and *L'agost de l'any*. These books are characterised by the ease and confidence of the poetry, in which the poet successfully examines, with passion and insight, some of the most secret folds of our social fabric. The thrust of Cerdà's poetry, which in his previous period had given rise to some of the most intense poems ever written in Catalan, now led him to write poetry of such energy that it could be described as a masterly fusion of lyricism and epic.

Finally, we come to *Ocells per a Cristòfor* and *Cantor*, two books which are very different one from the other. The first is almost a *divertimento*, or perhaps more exactly, poems which are intentionally “chamber music”. Cerdà's skill and mastery are revealed in the thirty-six memorable short poems he wrote about the birds and animals he best knew and loved, and dedicated to his new-born son. The second of these, *Cantor* (a term borrowed from the world of dreams, that is, a pure significant) is where these different stages I speak of come together. It is no exaggeration to say that it contains some of Jordi Pere Cerdà's best poetry: writings which exude all the human and poetic wisdom the author has gathered during his life. ■