

VERSOPOLIS THREE

The cicada's apotheosis

L'apoteosi de la cigala

Josep Pedrals

Translated from the Catalan by Anna Crowe

Versopolis at Ledbury Poetry Festival

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VERSOPOLIS

is a unique, Europe-wide platform.

*It gives emerging European poets
the chance to reach an audience beyond
the boundaries of the language they write in
by translating and publishing their poems
and inviting them to perform at festivals.*



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JOSEP PEDRALS was born in Barcelona in 1979 and has performed his poetry since 1997 throughout Europe, Asia and America, giving thousands of recitals in all kinds of festivals and cycles. He has received awards in various recital contests, including the Osaka International Slam (2009).

Not a good student (always against impositions), he left his public relations studies to focus on poetry and literature. He works in poetry education for children and adults and gives lectures and courses on poetry, prosody and oral literature in schools, colleges and universities.

He has developed poetry spaces on radio and television (now on Betevé–Barcelona TV) and has collaborated in art and culture sections of various publications (now on El País). He published a sonnet every day in the newspaper *Ara* for a couple of years (2010-2012).

From 2002 to 2015 he coordinated, the HORINAL (Obrador de Recitacions i Noves Actituds Literàries – Workshop of Recitations and New Literary Attitudes) directing little poetry festivals and some poetry cycles around Catalonia.

Josep Pedrals has written several theatre plays, including *Wamba va!* (Mercat de les Flors, Barcelona, 2005), *En comptes de la lletera* (La Planeta, 2011), *El furgatori* (La Seca, 2012), *Safari Pitarra* (TNC, 2014), *Fang i setge* (Teatre Victòria, 2016).

He was the keyboardist of the funky-pop band Explosion Bikini (1999-2004) and currently leads the ironic pop group Els Nens Eutròfics.

He was awarded with the “Lletra d’or” prize in 2013 (for the best Catalan book) and the Time Out Barcelona – Best Artist of the Year 2014 prize.; and more recently he has been given the Homo Fabra prize (2018) for the best contribution to Catalan language and the City of Barcelona prize (2018) for Literature.

PUBLICATIONS

- ‘Els límits del Quim Porta’
(labreu edicions, 2018) – Poetry-essay-novel . . . / book
- ‘Exploradors, al poema!’
(Estrella Polar, 2014) – Poetry manual / book
- ‘En helicòpter’
(LaCasaCalba, 2013) – Pop songs / CD
- ‘En Francesc Pujols [Petita història de Francesc Pujols]’
(Editorial Mediterrània, 2012) – Biography / book
- ‘El romanço d’Anna Tirant’
(labreu edicions, 2012) – Metaliterary tragedy / book
- ‘Esquitxos ultralleugers’
(El Tigre de Sibèria, 2009) – Happy songs / CD
- ‘El motí’
(L’Auditori, 2007) – Children Cantata / CD
- ‘En/doll’
(Bankrobber/labreu, 2007) – Selfhelp audio / book+CD
La gran nota translated by Anna Crowe
- ‘En l’Ai, adéu!’
(Cafè Central, 2006) – Love poems / book with charts
- ‘El furgatori’
(labreu edicions, 2006) – Studies on folkloric poetry - novel / book
- ‘És un poema!’
(‘Qui no mereix una pallissa’, L’Esfera dels Llibres, 2005) – Essay / book
- ‘Escola italiana’
(Edicions 62/Empúries, 2003) – Fake poetry translations and literary theory / book

Se'm dilatava el forat de l'orella.
Vents geladors em creuaven el cap.
La carcanada, coberta de gebre,
i el moll de l'os, trepanat d'una febre
de gel ardent, em portaven a perdre
tot moviment: tremolor enravenat.

Fet escultura en tensió, que mossega
els petits buits on no encaixa el queixal;
garratibat, reduint perifèries,
reconcentrat bloc de massa homogènia,
tot el meu cos comprimeix la matèria
i em converteixo en un home nan blanc.

Perdré la llum, m'aniré tornant negre,
cap escalfor em farà córrer la sang,
i al cap d'un temps no em podreu ja ni veure,
seré confós amb l'espai, seré neutre,
però sabreu de la meva presència
amb un calfred, si em passeu molt arran.

My ear-hole began to open wider.
Freezing winds were rushing through my skull.
My carcass, blanketed in frost,
my bone-marrow, trepanned by a fever
of burning ice, meant that I lost
all power to move: rigid but trembling still.

Become a sculpture under stress, teeth clamped
on little gaps where the jaws don't meet;
huddled, benumbed peripheries,
of homogeneous mass a shrunken span,
my whole body compresses matter
and I become a white-dwarf man.

I'll lose the light, start turning into darkness,
no heat to make the blood run through my veins,
and in a while I'll be invisible,
I shall have melted into space, shapeless,
but you'll know something of my presence:
if you pass close to me, you'll feel a chill.

Si freguem aquest poema
amb les pàgines veïnes,
amb la calor que hi desprenen
les mans que l'acaricien,
separem en les molècules
les càrregues positives
de les que són negatives
i el poema se'ns carrega
(i es carrega tot el llibre)
d'electricitat estàtica,
que pot provocar guspires
que encenguin, de cop, la pàgina
i converteixin en flama
tot això que ara hi llegies.

And if we rub this poem
against its neighbouring pages,
with the heat that's given off
by the action of our hands,
we separate, in the molecules,
positive charge
from negative charge
and the poem itself is charged
(and the entire book is charged)
with static electricity,
which can engender sighs
that all at once may set alight the page,
turning into blazing flame
all that lies before your eyes.

La teva mort va macerant-se
i et fa més ànima dins meu
si se m'acut pensar el cadàver
que es va desfent.
No et faig concret en cap pensada
ni en cap pellofa putrefacta,
perquè hi ha un altre ser present
que vessa en el temperament
a regalims, no pas a impactes.
Ja no depens de cap carcassa;
roman l'amor incandescent
que et torna angèlic i vivent.
És sorprenent:
jo encara ric amb el qui em falta.

Your death is softening,
turning more to spirit within me
than if I had been minded of the corpse
disintegrating.
I give you no shape in any thought
or in any rotting husk,
since there's another being present
who flows out into nature
drop by drop, not in a gush.
You depend now on no carcass;
the incandescent love endures
that turns you angelic and alive.
It is surprising:
I can still laugh with one I lack.

Tinc ganes d'un poema que sigui un encanteri
que, en dir-lo, les paraules emmenin el lector
a un èxtasi ben físic pel gust de la dicció,
que els mots portin la llengua cap al plaer veneri,
que en moure's per la boca, mercès a un vell misteri,
l'articular de l'òrgan sigui com fer un petó.
Somio que desvelo el desllorigador
d'aquest fraseig erogen que fa perdre el senderi
concitant l'endorfina en recitar segur.
És com aquells secrets d'antiga saviesa,
màgies impenetrables, coneixement ocult,
enigmes que conserven furtives confidències
i que només s'atorguen a aquells que ja són mestres.
El vers que vull escriure és un gest de kungfu.

I want a poem that may turn out to be a spell
so that its words, spoken aloud, may lead the reader
to a fine physical ecstasy through diction's pleasure,
so the words may carry the tongue to venereal delight,
and moving inside the mouth, thanks to an ancient mystery,
the organ's articulation may be like giving a kiss.
I dream that I'm unveiling the solution
to that erogenous phrasing that makes you lose your wits
inciting the endorphine to tongue it true.
It's like those secrets locked in ancient wisdom,
impenetrable magic, knowledge deeply hidden,
enigmas preserving confidences furtively given
and granted only to those who have attained mastery.
The line I want to write's a movement in kung-fu.

Vull donar la paraula al bolígraf
i que escrigui, que marxi en el text,
espargit pel traçat de les lletres,
dessagnat en uns tolls de paraules,
esmenat en guixades furioses,
impacient en fragments il·legibles,
separant com li sembli els períodes
amb els límits de la puntuació,
fent grumolls per excessos de flux
o esborrat si la punta es desseca;
i que sigui el dipòsit de tinta
el que dicti durada i cadència,
que imagini damunt de la pàgina
l'aventura, l'escriure vivent.

I want to hand over the word to the pen
and let it write, let it walk through the text,
spreading along the letters' wavy line,
bleeding into pools made by words,
emended and corrected in angry scrawls,
impatient, fretting at fragments it can't read,
dividing sentences as it thinks best
within the limits set by punctuation,
leaving blots where it flows out to excess,
fading to nothing if the nib dries out;
and let the ink-well be the one in charge,
the one who has the say on length and cadence,
and let it imagine hovering above the page
the adventure, the writing alive and kicking.

Us heu acumulat al cementiri
i us extraiem els greixos sense esforç,
amb vidres mig tintats perquè es respiri
més llangorós l'aspecte de la mort.

I us anem resumint de mica en mica
en un selecte arxiu de breu conhort,
com civilització ben comprimida,
premsada en la memòria d'un terròs.

Que fàcilment s'explica cada vida
sense aventura oberta i sense cos!

You've been accumulating in the graveyard
where we extract your fats with no exertion,
with stained-glass windows so we may savour
death's most languorous complexion.

Thus crumb by crumb you're been engraved
in a select archive of little comfort,
as civilisation, well-behaved
and pressed in the memory of a clod of earth.

Each life's explained – how easily –
with no adventure told and with no body!

En el fracàs que em pot sobrevenir
(cúmulo de despropòsits que m'assetja),
sé que hi veuria bella la més lletja
i que m'adaptaria a no morir,

sé que treballaria el gest, la petja
on distingir el meu peu del del veí,
i encara amb la vergonya de l'ahir
em permetria el just orgull d'heretge.

Seria l'exconvicte eternament,
aquell que va assolir només defectes,
i entre clemència i burla de la gent
creuria que ningú m'ensuma infecte.

Encara així, ridícul indigent,
riuria.

No per foll,
sinó perquè en sé el nèctar.

In the fracas that may well overcome me
(piling-up of absurdities that besiege me),
I know I'd see the plainest girl as lovely
and I'd adapt in order not to die,

I know I'd work on movement, on how I walk,
so that my footsteps differed from my neighbour's,
and still with all that past shame round my neck
I'd keep the just pride of the heretic.

I'd be the ex-con for eternity,
the man whose failures were where he excelled,
and between people's taunts and clemency,
I'd think no one would sniff out my bad smell.

In this way, still, ridiculous pauper,
I'd laugh.

Not through madness,
but because I know its nectar.

La troballa-que-porta-al-poema
s'amagava entremig dels matolls
i, en no veure-la clara i concreta,
no volguérem forçar inspiracions
i deixàrem d'anar-li al darrere
perquè així fos per ella mateixa
que es mostrés, ni que fos uns segons.

Mentrestant, vam deixar l'escopeta
i, observant antics rinoceronts
dissecats, que estiraven la testa
des dels murs envellits dels salons,
vam glosar l'esperit de la bèstia
a través dels exemples ja morts.

The find-that-carries-the-poem-in-it
was hiding deep in vegetation
and, not seeing her clear and well-defined,
we didn't want to force any inspiration
and left off creeping up on her from behind
because it should be her own decision
to show herself, even for half a minute.

Meanwhile, we left behind the gun
and, observing ancient rhinos in the halls,
their withered heads
protruding from crumbling walls,
the spirit of the beast was commented on
via the examples here, already dead.

Hi haurà un poema que em donarà fama
tot satisfent l'afany vel·leïtós,
un poemot d'aquells que el cor inflama
i eleva l'ànim i escampa les pors,
un mix perfecte de comèdia i drama:
íntim i al mateix temps majestuós.

Mentre no l'assoleixo, distrec l'ànsia
i escric un simulacre dissolut
ben sobri i senzillet, que sa virtut
serà que no voldrà deixar constància.

Neutralitzant l'excés de petulància
assoliré l'art desapercebut,
l'insignificant, minso i diminut:
l'apoteosi de la irrellevància.

One day there'll be a poem to bring me fame
while satisfying zeal and its caprice,
a great poem that sets the heart aflame
and lifts the soul and brings the mind some peace,
a perfect mix of the comic and dramatic:
intimate and, at the same time, majestic.

Failing meanwhile, I cheat anxiety
by writing a disgraceful counterfeit,
sober and unaffected, whose remit
shall be that it will maintain constancy.

By neutralising excess petulance
I shall achieve the art that goes unnoticed,
the insignificant, the flimsy and diminished:
the apotheosis of irrelevance.

La ceguesa d'estimar-te,
el turment de la passió,
fa que busqui el teu contacte
constantment, sense raó,
i quan un tràfec t'aparta
sento l'estranya basarda
de perdre el meu sustentacle
i quasi m'agafa por.

Per això vull abraçar-te
fins a aglomerar la unió
amb la punya que em descarna
per ser més tu que no jo
i entreteixits i fets xarxa
adherir-nos l'un a l'altre,
escanyats en l'abraçada
i ofegats en un petó.



The blindness of loving you,
the torment of passion,
means that I try to reach you
constantly, without reason,
and when some chore keeps us apart
I feel the strange terror
of losing all support
and am nearly gripped by fear.

That's why I want to embrace you
until that union melds
with the strife that's wasting me
into being more you than myself,
and interwoven and enmeshed
we cling to each other,
strangled by our embrace,
and stifled in a kiss.