

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Poetry

- 1972 *El verd jardí* (The Green Garden)
1974 *Un passeig pels bulevards ardents* (A Walk Down Burning Boulevards; translated into English)
1976 *Les ciutats* (Cities)
1976 *Desdesig* (Undesire; translated into Portuguese)
1978 *Terra natal* (Land of My Birth)
1980 *Àlbum de família* (Family Album)
1985 *Enigma* (Enigma; translated into Spanish) Awards: *Crítica Serra d'Or* and *Nacional de Catalunya*
1990 *En quarantena* (In Quarantine; translated into Spanish and French) Awards: *Lletra d'Or*, *Ciutat de Barcelona* and *Crítica Española*.
1995 *Usdefruit* (Usufruct; translated into French)
2002 *L'art de la fuga* (The Art of Fugue)
2002 *Formes de l'ombra. Poesia 1966 – 2002* (Shapes of the Shadow: Poetry 1966 – 2002)
2007 *Llast* (Ballast)

Prose and Essays

- 1992 *Girona. Matèria i memòria* (Girona: Material and Memory; translated into Spanish)
1998 *Sense escut* (With No Shield)
2002 *L'ànima dels poetes* (The Soul of Poets) *Camins d'Itàlia* (Paths of Italy)
2005 *Forma i prejudici. Papers sobre el Noucentisme* (Form and Prejudice: Papers on Noucentisme)

Drama

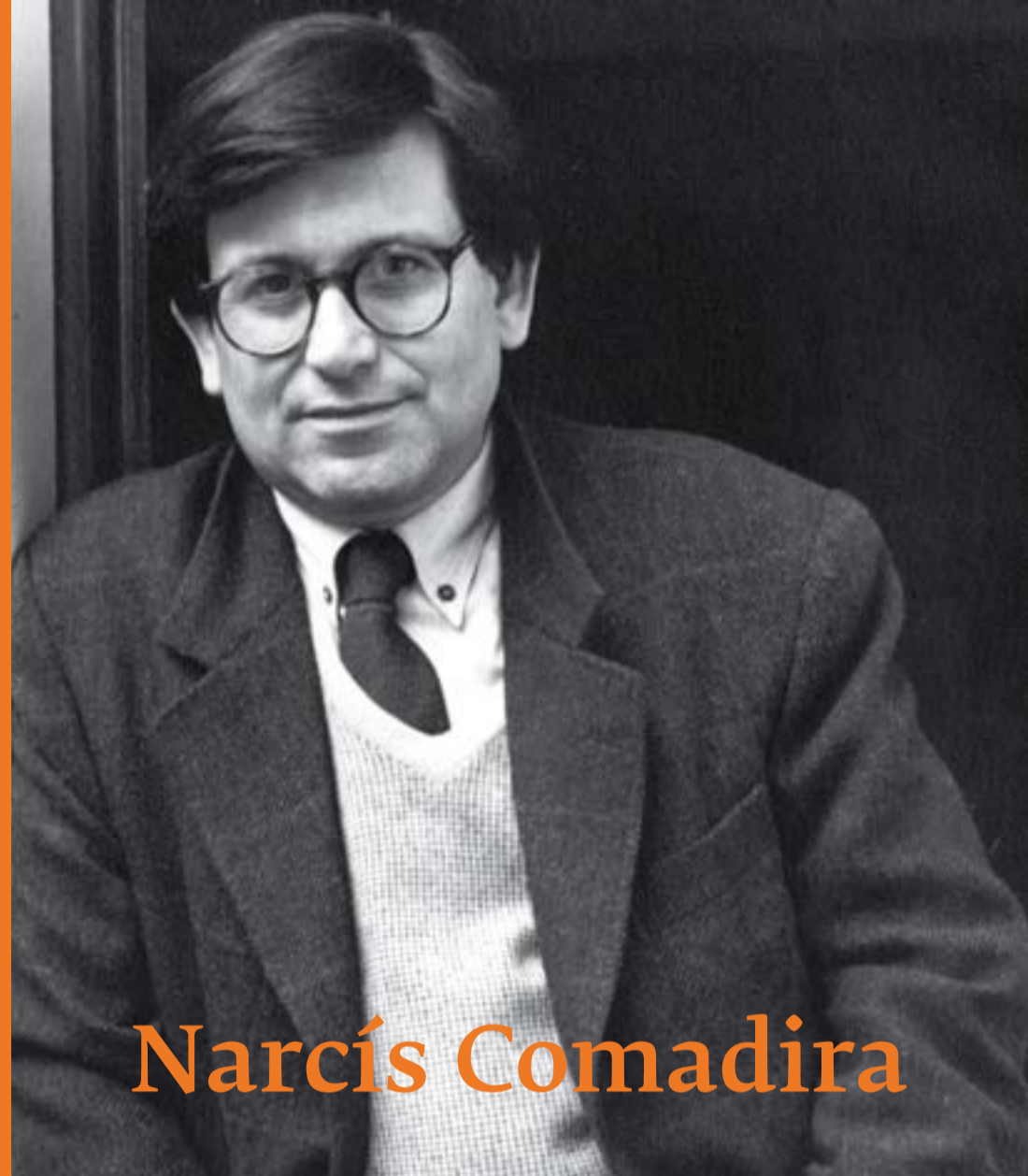
- 1992 *La vida perdurable* (Everlasting Life; translated into Spanish and French) Awards: *Crítica Serra d'Or* and *Crítics de Teatre de Barcelona*.
1995 *L'hora dels adéus* (The Hour of Farewells)
1997 *El dia dels morts. Un oratori per a Josep Pla* (All Souls' Day: An Oratorio for Josep Pla)

Poetry Translations

- 1985 *Poesia italiana. De Francesco d'Assisi a Giacomo Leopardi* (Italian Poetry from Francis of Assisi to Giacomo Leopardi)
1988 *Himnes cristians llatins antics* (Ancient Christian Latin Hymns)
1997 *Digue'm la veritat sobre l'amor* (Tell Me the Truth about Love), by W. H. Auden. *Cavall Verd* Award.
2004 *Cants* (Songs), by Giacomo Leopardi. Awards: *Ciutat de Barcelona*, *Crítica Serra d'Or* and *Cavall Verd*.

Who's Who

CATALAN WRITING



Narcís Comadira

Poetry as Diction and Dialogue

Dolors Oller

Narcís Comadira's poetic work is extensive and diverse. The variety of representations and the diversity of tessituras that comprise his poetry construct a sophisticated but at the same time natural mixture of dramatic and narrative registers, conferring a special dialogic character to a predominantly lyric verbal fabric. Variety appears in motives and themes, in linguistic and formal registers, in representations of the voice and in the tessituras of his wording. Yet, now seen as a whole, the work offers a profound coherence: a central line of thought, of narrative sense and argument, which can be followed through the successive titles of Comadira's books.

Comadirian themes of universal feelings and experiences, intimately real, can be described as inherent to the passing of time, to its effects and also its harshness. At the same time, there also appears, with a noteworthy intensity, a reflection about poetry itself, about the currently difficult mission of poets, and about the work of writing: tradition and individual talent, memory and original thought, artisanal knowledge and ecumenical thought. All of these elements compose a liturgy, a liturgy for singing life's presence in the world, with which one attempts to give form to the different experiences that constitute this life.

Characteristic of Comadira's poetics is the precise and always meaningful choice of his formal representations. Sometimes intimately sentimental and sometimes desperately nihilistic, at times ironic and at others poignant, Narcís Comadira's poetic discourse is configured according to a convention that is always elegant but with a pathos of emotive sincerity that can only be shared through a sympathetic reading. The use of collage and intertextuality; the agile creation of powerful objective correlatives; metaphorical thinking of impeccable logic; the violation of discursive logic, which, above all in the longer, more sustained poems of reflection, communicates lived experience that emerges when driven by intimate meditation: these are some of the formal strategies that produce a high-intensity discourse. Further, the inspired use of different poetic traditions and conventions becomes an energetic appeal of metapoetic reflection that denotes a voice

inscribed in actual reality and resonates with a purely contemporary attitude. Indeed, Narcís Comadira is a poet who combines the expressive force of his figure's diction with profoundly and cleanly precise forms of thought. In his poetic universe, beauty is precision, and Comadira's imaginative precision is moving because it persuades the reader's conscience of its undeniability.

Seen as a whole, Comadirian poetics are distinguished by a perfect symbiosis between a cleanly technical process, which ultimately consists of using a verbal fabric of great richness and visual and descriptive precision, and a noteworthy imaginative capacity to transfigure and subject the objects and relations peopling his thematic landscapes. The variety of tessituras and the diversity of representations confer on Comadira's poetry a sophisticated but also natural mixture of narrative and dramatic registers, and a special dialogic characteristic. With itself or with an always-present other, the Comadirian enunciative act unfolds in a permanent dialogue. In Comadirian poetry everything speaks, everything is given meaning: the arid land's cistern transformed into a cave of love, the lucid testimony of the little asters, the dignity of the blue irises, the resistance of the trees, various forms of animal life. All the voices expose, demand, utter, observe, and wait for answers. They wait for an answer that is made present in its absence. The expression of paradox is precisely one of Comadira's most fertile figurative resources, one that gives form to a hyperreal poetic experience, within in the compass of visionary reason.

This rhetorical strategy serves for poetic discourse to become a conversation, in which subjective experience, at times in the form of intimate meditation, others in the form of dialogue, and others as an investigation of contraries, becomes intersubjectivity. Somehow, the lyric process begun from a radically subjective origin parts with any personality and becomes a receptacle that can give shape to the thousand faces of a common experience. And so, reading Narcís Comadira's work introduces us to this privileged space of relationship to an other in which, as Gerard Genette says, "universal existence gains, loses, and at last again gains consciousness."

An Itinerary

Narcís Comadira was born in Girona in January of 1942. Painter and poet from an early age, he sustained exceptionally active and parallel involvement in both fields; neither of the two can be interpreted as a simple illustration of the other. Reflecting on the central meaning of each of the titles that form Comadira's poetic corpus, and establishing the sequential argument they comprise is a good strategy for understanding the flux of thematic motifs that reign in his work. To do so, one can simply consult his last poetry compilation, *Formes de l'ombra. Poesia 1966-2002* (Shapes of the Shadow: Poetry 1966-2002; 2002), and survey the titles of books collected in this volume, which presents the whole of his recognized and canonical work, to which one should add the last published title, *Llast* (Ballast; 2007).

The itinerary framed by the 2002 collected works begins with *La febre freda* (Cold Fever; 1966) and *Papers privats* (Private Papers; 1969), his two first books, now recovered in this volume, and ends with the penultimate title, *L'art de la fuga* (The Art of Fugue), published in 2002. In between, the route covers *Amic de plor* (Weeping's Friend; 1969) and *El verd jardí* (The Green Garden; 1972), two books that situate the poet within the coordinates given him in life: the personal and the historical, taking a position within his poetic inheritance. We then find *Les ciutats* (Cities; 1976), a book that registers a reflection on the city as synecdoche and index of a European identity, and *Desdesig* (Undesire), also from 1976, which includes *Un passeig pels bulevards ardents* (A Walk Down Burning Boulevards), from 1974. The latter is a long and powerful narrative poem of postmodernity: a voyage through desolate landscapes where the self's identity and the contemporary artist's mission are debated among injustice and chaos, liberty and terror. After *Desdesig*, a lyric cry with metaphysical roots, come *Terra natal* (Land of My Birth; 1978) and *Àlbum de família* (Family Album; 1980), two books of reflection about the historical and personal circumstances that construct an already divided and problematic conscience. This reflection is followed by *Enigma* (Enigma; 1985). In the collection we are following, *Formes de l'ombra. Poesia 1966-2002*, *Enigma* is preceded by the book *Lírica lleugera* (Light Lyric), which in fact has a much later date of publication (2000). This light lyric contains various poems of various time periods and various circumstances, song lyrics, and some satiric invectives full of humor and witty formal talent. *Enigma* (1985) includes, besides many poems of varied theme and execution, two extensive poems of high reflexive tension, a profoundly liturgical "Requiem" and "Triomf de la vida" (Triumph of Life), which develops into a Darwinian description of the process of life leading to the human animal. *Enigma* is an important book within the evolution of Comadira's poetry, because it represents both a synthesis of his most characteristic features and a marker of change heading towards his later books, which will be more hermetic in their figurative conception and more expressionist in their invention of themes and motifs. Indeed, the books that follow, *En quarantena* (In Quarantine; 1990), *Usdefruit* (Usufruit; 1995), and the aforementioned *Lírica lleugera* (2000) and *L'art de la fuga* (2002), reveal a lyric voice already pure in its formal investigation and with an absolute dominion of different

levels of reflection and speaking, of poetic discourse. Lastly, outside of the collected works, on January 22, 2007, the day of his birthday, Comadira published *Llast*, a work that gathers in its poems a surprising thematic and reflective flexibility, and a fabric where grammatical and logical precision are put to the service of poetic language in order to achieve that inspired synthesis of emotion and spirit, thought and culture, in the most profound sense of the word.

In the realm of literature Comadira also composed plays that have already been published and performed, such as *La vida perdurable* (Everlasting Life; 1992), *L'hora dels adéus* (The Hour of Farewells; 1995) or *El dia dels morts* (All Souls' Day; 1997). Comadira's drama is principally textual and the action is developed through language. Comadira is also a recognized translator, primarily of poetry, but also of theater. The dramatic works that have been performed, though they are unpublished, include his translations of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Candide*, a musical with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and Richard Wilbur and music by Leonard Bernstein, Molière's *Tartuffe*, *Orgia* by Pier Paolo Pasolini and *El silenci del mar* (The Silence of the Sea) by Vercors (2008). His latest translations, both published and performed, are: *Les tres germanes* (The Three Sisters) by Chekhov (2005) and *Els gegants de la muntanya* (The Mountain Giants) by Luigi Pirandello (1999). He has translated from Latin, *Himnes cristians llatins antics* (Ancient Christian Latin Hymns; 1988), and from English, but his primary focus in this field has been Italian translation. Besides the novels *L'airone* (The Heron), by Giorgio Bassani, and *Fratelli d'Italia* (Italian Brothers), by Alberto Arbasino, both in Spanish, he has focused on Italian poetry. His *Antologia de la poesia italiana* (Anthology of Italian Poetry) in two volumes (1985 and 1990), which covers Francis of Assisi to Pier Paolo Pasolini, vouches for his extensive knowledge of this poetic tradition. His dedication to Italian poetry culminates in the well-received translation of the *Canti* (Songs) of Giacomo Leopardi (2004).

As an essayist, in addition to his weekly column in the *Quadern* of the newspaper *El País*, his articles on questions of art, literature, or poetic thought reveal an original writer, informed and precise in his contributions, and with a noteworthy capacity to present his arguments in a lively and convincing manner. These are the qualities found in his books of prose and essay, such as *Girona, matèria i memòria* (Girona: Material and Memory; 1989), *Fórmules magistrals* (Masterly Formulas; 1997), *Sense escut* (With No Shield; 1998), *L'ànima dels poetes* (The Soul of Poets; 2002), and *Camins d'Itàlia* (Paths of Italy; 2005). On the other hand, also within the field of reflective essay, Comadira—who holds a degree in art history—is devoted to the analysis of European plastic arts and architecture of the first half of the twentieth century, and is a specialist in the Catalan *noucentista* movement. In this field, his study on one of the fundamental Catalan architects of this period, *Rafael Masó, arquitecte noucentista* (Rafael Masó, Architect of Noucentisme; 1996/2007), and also his last work of aesthetic and cultural essays on the movement, *Forma i prejudici. Papers sobre el Noucentisme* (Form and Prejudice: Papers on Noucentisme; 2006), are significant. D. O.

