

 **CATALAN REVIEW**  
Catalan Review

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Catalan Review is the premier international scholarly journal devoted to all aspects of Catalan culture. By Catalan culture is understood all manifestations of intellectual and artistic life produced in the Catalan language or in the geographical areas where Catalan is spoken. Catalan Review has been in publication since 1986.

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Catalan Review és la primera revista internacional dedicada a tots els aspectes de la cultura catalana. Per la cultura catalana s'entén totes les manifestacions de la vida intel·lectual i artística produïda en llengua catalana o en les zones geogràfiques on es parla català. Catalan Review es publica des de 1986.

## **Poetical Translations:**

*Translated by Montserrat Abelló revised by Elizabeth Russell*

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## POETICAL TRANSLATIONS



**M**ontserrat Abelló was born in Tarragona. She has a degree in English from the University of Barcelona, and is a poet and translator. After the Spanish Civil War she lived two years in exile and then in Chile. She has lived in Barcelona since 1960.

## VIDA DIÀRIA (1963)

Les mans són una cosa,  
jo en sóc una altra.  
Elles tenen llur vida  
—abasten coses, teixeixen,  
saluden viatges i retorns.

Però jo sóc al cim de l'arbre  
i conto els núvols de la tarda,  
el vol dels ocells,  
les estrelles.

Què passa?

M'ha caigut el didal,  
l'agulla;  
el llarg fil  
s'ha trencat.  
Les mans plegades  
ara dormen  
sobre la terra fosca.

From: «VIDA DIÀRIA» Everyday Life (1963)

My hands are one thing.  
I am another.  
They have their own life  
—they reach out for things, knit,  
hail journeys and homecomings.  
But I am high up in a tree,  
counting afternoon clouds,  
the flight of birds,  
the stars.

What has happened?

My thimble has fallen.,  
my needle;  
the long thread is broken  
now my hands sleep  
folded  
on the dark earth.

## VIDA DIÀRIA (1963)

Sóc com una ombra  
perduda en la nit.  
Estimo el raig de sol,  
l'oreig del mar,  
la rialla fresca,  
el dolç somriure,  
la mà forta.

Aquesta tarda d'estiu,  
plena de llums rosades,  
blaves, verdes,  
massa cruets.  
Però caldrà que em posi,  
com cada tarda,  
a repassar la roba,  
ficar les mans dins l'aigua bruta,  
i destriar entranyes innocents.  
Cosir botons,  
empènyer la planxa.

Només de tard en tard,  
puc agafar la ploma.

Em dolc del pit  
i de l'esquena,  
però diré que aquesta tarda  
és rosa i blava,  
única, molt tendra,  
inoblidable.  
Perquè l'he viscuda  
i és meva.

I això que estic cansada!

From: «VIDA DIÁRIA» Everyday Life (1963)

I am like a shadow  
lost in the night  
I love sun rays,  
breeze from the sea,  
fresh laughter,  
a vigorous hand.

This summer afternoon  
full of pink, green,  
blue hues,  
too raw.  
But like every afternoon  
I will have to sit  
and mend clothes,  
plunge my hands into dirty water  
and clean innocent entrails.  
Sew on buttons,  
push an iron.

Only from time to time  
can I pick up my pen.

I complain of pains  
in my back and chest  
but I must say this afternoon  
is pink and blue  
unique, most tender,  
unforgettable.  
Because I have lived through it  
and it is mine.

And in spite of being tired!



## PARAULES NO DITES (1981)

Aturar-se al bell  
mig d'una frase tot just  
començada. Aturar-se  
irada perquè no es troba  
la manera de prosseguir  
Tot i que el dia és ple a  
vessar de fets i la  
boca atapeïda de paraules;  
còdols petits, arrodonits,  
en el fons d'una riera,  
on un sol, massa intens,  
ha eixugat la deu d'aigua.

From: «PARAULES NO DITES» Unuttered Words (1981)

To stop right in  
the middle of a sentence just  
begun. To stop  
angrily because you cannot find  
the way to proceed.  
Even though the day is full  
to the brim with facts and  
the mouth clogged with words;  
small rounded pebbles,  
in the bed of a stream  
where a too hot sun  
has dried up all its sources.

## PARAULES NO DITES (1981)

Obscur moment de decisió,  
de lluita, quan la voluntat  
es concentra, petita, densa  
de cremants preguntes.  
I cruix contra obligats  
costums i lleis inveterades,  
dins la gola eixuta.  
I l'acció ja ens és  
l'únic camí.

From: «PARAULES NO DITES» Unuttered Words (1981)

The dark moment of decision,  
of a fight, when the will  
is concentrated, small, dense  
with burning questions.  
Creaking against imposed  
customs and inveterate laws.  
And we chew words  
within dry throats.  
And action becomes  
the only way.

## PARAULES NO DITES (1981)

Les paraules  
se m'entortolliguen  
a les mans. Em costa  
de desprendre-me'n.  
Se m'amoroseixen  
entre els dits, i  
es tornen dolces.  
Hi servo la tebior  
de moltes mans, de  
cossos; la tremolor  
de llavis entreoberts  
i el tacte de la pell,  
espessa de desig,  
suavitat  
de parpelles closes,  
trèmules  
damunt d'ulls que endevino  
plens de guspies.

Sóc amb vosaltres  
a través de la pell  
d'aquest cos que estimo.

From: «PARAULES NO DITES» Unuttered Words (1981)

Words become tangled  
in my hands. It is hard  
for me to let them go.  
They soften lovingly  
between my fingers  
and sweeten.

They carry the warmth  
of many hands, of  
bodies, the trembling  
of half-open lips  
and the touch of skin,  
thick with desire,  
gentleness  
of closed eyelids  
tremulous  
on eyes I guess  
are gleaming.

I am with you  
through the skin  
of this body I love.

## EL BLAT DEL TEMPS (1986)

Visc i torno  
a reviure  
cada poema,  
cada paraula.  
Estimo tant  
la vida  
que la faig meva  
moltes vegades.

From: «EL BLAT DEL TEMPS» The wheat of time (Columna 1986)

I live and live  
again  
each poem,  
each word.  
I love life  
so much  
that I make it mine  
over and over.



## EL BLAT DEL TEMPS (1986)

He vist la mort  
per dintre. Duia  
un infant als braços.  
No tenia peus, no caminava.

From: «EL BLAT DEL TEMPS» The wheat of time (1986)

I have seen Death  
from within. It carried  
a child in its arms.  
It had no feet, it did not walk.

## EL BLAT DEL TEMPS (1986)

Dins la llavor, latent,  
el crit que es desarrela  
i aquell neguit amb què  
es desengruna tota espera.

El boll del blat  
enterboleix els ulls  
i fa que tota esperança  
sembli vana; però  
ens erigim en somnis,  
en esfinxs.  
Granítiques, dures, entossudides  
en les nostres quimeres,  
amb una espurna viva encara;  
altrament ja no seríem  
sinó una pedra en el temps.

From: «EL BLAT DEL TEMPS» The wheat of time (1986)

Inside the seed, latent,  
a cry unrooting itself  
and that restlessness in which  
all awaitings crumble.

The husk of wheat  
blurs our eyes  
and makes every hope  
seem vain; but  
we arise in dreams  
in sphinxes.  
Granite-like, hard, stubborn  
in our chimera,  
with a spark still alive;  
otherwise we would be  
but a stone in time.

## FOC A LES MANS (1990)

I dins meu una veu em diu:  
vine amb mi a contemplar  
com són les paraules per dintre,  
a sentir el pols de les coses.

I llavors penses en aquells  
que estimes i amb qui has  
conviscut al llarg dels anys  
i encara no coneixes,

—mirades que fugen  
pensaments tancats, potser  
només desclosos en moments  
fugaços o en la intensitat  
del desig.

Però mai a dins,  
sempre a la vora del torrent  
de silencis o de paraules;  
sempre a punt i amatent,  
però sense saber, sense saber.

From: «FOC A LES MANS» Fire in my hands (1990)

And within me a voice says  
come with me to contemplate  
what words are like inside  
to feel the pulse of things.

And then you think of those  
you love and with whom you have  
lived through the years  
and still do not know.

—looks that run away  
sealed thoughts, perhaps  
only revealed in fugacious  
moments or in the intensity  
of desire.

But never within,  
forever at the edge of the torrent  
of silences or of words  
forever alert and ready  
but not knowing, not knowing.

## FOC A LES MANS (1990)

Dins el mirall,  
vagues, incertes ombres  
desdibuixen el cos  
en fugaços oblits.  
No hi ha res que anunciï  
cap nova deu. Ni tampoc madurem  
com la fruita ni el blat.  
Verds i durs serem  
dallats pel temps.

Pàgina sobre pàgina les veus.  
Les parets blanques ens miren.  
Contemplem cossos nus,  
rèpliques amargues  
d'altres cossos més bells.

Queda el neguit sota  
l'aixella i el guspireig  
viu d'uns ulls.

From: «FOC A LES MANS» Fire in my hands (1990)

Inside the mirror  
vague uncertain shadows  
blurr the body  
in fleeting oblivion.  
There is nothing to announce  
any new fountains, Nor do we  
ripen like fruit or wheat.  
Green and hard we shall be  
mown by Time.

Page upon page of voices.  
White walls watch us.  
We gaze at naked bodies  
bitter copies  
of other ones much lovelier.

We are left with that restlessness  
in the armpit, and a sharp  
glitter of eyes.



## FOC A LES MANS (1990)

Tenyeix de blau el temps:  
transfigura el somni,  
transgredeix els mots.

Fes que els seus colors esclatin  
al raig de la font.  
Que l'aigua humitegi els ulls.

Que la seva frescor gelada  
temperi el foc d'aquestes mans  
que cremen.

Fes teu aquest desig.  
I endinsa't al cor  
de les paraules.

From: «FOC A LES MANS» Fire in my hands (1990)

Colour Time in blue,  
transfigure dreams,  
transgress words.

Make their colours clash  
at the fountain edge  
let its water moisten your eyes.

May its icy freshness  
temper the fire of your burning  
hands.

Make yours this wish  
and delve deep into  
the heart of words.

*Translated by* MONTSERRAT ABELLÓ  
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