

# TOMÀS GARCÉS

TOMÀS GARCÉS WORKS SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THE FIELDS OF POETIC CREATION, DIARISTIC PROSE, LITERARY CRITICISM AND TRANSLATION. AS CAN BE SEEN, HE IS THE TYPICAL “TOTAL” WRITER TO WHICH THE TWENTIETH CENTURY HAS ACCUSTOMED US.

ÀLEX SUSANNA AUTHOR

## “LIKE THE DELICATE FOOTPRINT”

*Like the delicate footprint of a bird upon the snow,  
the melting imprint,  
like the almond blossom, short-termed life  
swept away by a gust of wind.*

*The name the lover set upon the bark,  
upon the abraded bark,  
is a forgotten sign that no one will read.  
It comes undone like life.*

*Fleeting imprint of the bird upon the snow!  
The sun rises that will delete it.  
On the shore, the wave—lead foot, weightless wing—  
inters sands with sand.*

## “AGRIGENTO FAIR”

*At Agrigento fair  
you didn't want to stop.  
Where the cotton candy  
from fairs of long ago?  
Round and round the green wheel went,  
the flying horses whirled.  
At Agrigento fair  
you didn't want to stop.*

*Yet I was there and now am back  
with a sterling silver comb.  
Slowly comb your hair,  
comb your hair with no regret.*

*From hair of snow and moonlight  
dreams will still come forth.*

## COM LA FINA PETJADA

*Com la fina petjada de l'ocell a la neu,  
fonedissa petjada,  
com la flor d'ametller, la vida breu  
se l'enduu la ventada.*

*Aquell nom que l'amant a l'escorça lliurà,  
a l'escorça ferida,  
és un signe oblidat que ningú llegirà.  
Es desfà com la vida.*

*Fugissera petjada de l'ocell a la neu!  
Surt el sol que l'esborra.  
A la platja, l'onada—peu de plom, ala lleu—  
colga sorres amb sorra.*

## LA FIRA D'AGRIGENTO

*A la fira d'Agrigento  
no volies aturar-te.  
¿On era el cotó de sucre  
d'aquelles fires llunyanes?  
Girava la roda verda,  
cavalls de cartó giraven.  
A la fira d'Agrigento  
no volies aturar-te.*

*Però jo hi era, i en torno  
amb una pinta de plata.  
Pentina't a poc a poc,  
pentina't sense enyorança.*

*Dels cabells de neu i lluna  
sortiran somnis encara.*

Translation: D. Sam Abrams



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**T**omàs Garcés (b. Barcelona, 1901) is, alongside Marià Manent, the *doyen* of modern Catalan poets. He works *simultaneously* in the fields of poetic creation, diaristic prose, literary criticism and translation. As can be seen, he is the typical "total" writer to which the twentieth century has accustomed us.

Nevertheless, as in the case of Manent, the start of this varied literary activity is to be found in poetry. Tomàs Garcés has produced one of the most outstanding works of Catalan poetry this century: a total of eleven books, recently published in a single volume called *Poesia Completa* (1922-1985), whose development is extremely interesting. Garcés, at the same time as Juan Ramon Jiménez and Federico García Lorca in the rest of Spain, made his debut with a book, *Vint cançons* (1922), that became a real best-seller in its time (three editions were published in less than a year). The book was the poetic equivalent of what the great Frederic Mompou, or Stravinsky before him, were doing in music. He revived traditional forms and gave them a freshness that

made them totally modern. However, after this book, his work began to evolve towards more personal lyrical forms, through which he achieved something quite extraordinary: a blend of poetry, music and painting, that is to say, a poem that at the same time shows conceptual, melodic and plastic qualities.

As the critic Jaume Bofill i Ferro said, "it is as if the three art forms had fused and had, as a result, produced a new value which, depending on the angle from which we view it, reveals the reflection of one or other of those elements". In this context, amongst his collections of poems, one could perhaps mention *El senyal* (1935), *Viatge d'octubre* (1955) and *Escrit a terra* (1985).

If Marià Manent has been the ambassador of Anglo-Saxon poetry in Catalonia, Tomàs Garcés has done the same for Italian poetry. A personal friend of Montale, Saba and Ungaretti, he translated their work (along with that of Cardarelli and Quasimodo) and thus contributed to the diffusion of the Italian poetry of this century, at the same time as these poets helped

him to discover the very personal tone mentioned above.

Alongside his work in poetry and translation, Garcés has never ceased to produce interesting literary criticism, but it is in his diaries that, more than anything, he has recently achieved a remarkable success. His book *El temps que fuig 1933-1983* (1984) received the three most important awards of Catalan culture (the *Generalitat de Catalunya* prose award, the *Ciutat de Barcelona* prose award and the *Crítica Serra d'Or* award), and at the same time became one of the most popular books amongst the general public. *El temps que fuig*, a book whose translation would delight any European reader, reflects, concisely and sensitively, the wide range of interests that go to make up the author's literary personality. Alongside gripping transcriptions of dreams, one finds interesting reflections on historical events, numerous notes on a wide range of books, discourses on poetry, descriptions of landscapes, meetings with writers and artists, journeys, etc., all in a prose which, in Josep Pla's opinion, is a model of fluidity, clarity and precision. ●