



LARIOS, Jordi, *El cop de la destreal*, Jardins de Samarcanda 41, Vic, 2006, pp.86, ISBN: 84-9766-030-7.

This dainty volume includes 56 short poems grouped into three collections and is unified, as stated by Jordi Larios in the opening poem by the American George Oppen (1908-1984), by the desire to capture words one by one as if they were not enemies but ‘Ghosts / Which have run mad /In the subways’ and carefully restore them ‘to meaning / And to sense’ (9).

The first collection, “Imprevisible escuma” (4 poems), acts as an introduction to poetic creation, and is developed around the poet’s everyday life and the often paradoxical nature of the connections he makes between the practical and the poetic, as masterfully evidenced in the poem “Propietat privada” (p.16), probably the most powerful in the volume.

The second collection, “El cop de la destreal” (27 poems), inverts the relationship between science and life, the pragmatic and the real, and looks at time as something that emerges from man’s toil or, as expressed in the poem by Philip Larkin used as its motto, as “the echo of an axe / Within a wood” (19). The sound of the axe as a time piece is not only present in the poem dedicated to Alan Yates (38), but also characterizes the poems of this collection which use much alliteration, parallelism and rhythmic and thematic repetitions (21, 22, 27, 34, 43, 47, etc.) building up to a level of perseverance that embodies a slow but unwavering progression towards Truth. This desire to understand Truth is nonetheless combined with the use of paradox, as recommended by Oscar Wilde (23). Thus, the poems unfold in sudden, sharp snaps, following a relentless tempo, and at each blow of the axe there is a catharsis —a smile. They are somewhat contemplative poems, steeped in the Welsh landscape (24, 25, 33, 35, etc.) but also deeply personal (29, 31, 32, etc.) and socially concerned (26 or 37). This is a cunning collection with a surprise on every page and a transcultural edge, for Larios offers a personal, cultural stance (42 and 50) that combines very closely with the physical geography of

the poet (51-52), as seen especially in “Punts cardinals” (40), “Assaig de càntic en el temple” (41) and “Cruïlla” (45). Here resides the originality and Anglo-Catalan appeal of Larios’ poems for, when a Catalan who believes in the power of words has lived in Britain for quite some time, he or she will inevitably fall prey to some English words which are so specific, so perfectly suited to what they describe, that they open up a whole new world to us. As Carner said: “qualsevol paraula pot ser màgica, és a dir, capaç de reparèixer a la nostra consciència, incorporada a un vers, tot fent-nos la impressió que hem recollit aquest ritme, dotat d’un sentit, d’una mena de no-res, d’un lloc inconegut, però exterior” (57). *

Indeed, the third collection in this book, “Teoria de l’ham poètic” (25 poems), is named after Josep Carner’s text and is totally faithful to the Catalan master’s definition of the poetic moment which, according to him “es tracta de l’aparició sobtada, inexplicable, del “vers donat” en l’esperit del poeta quan ell no té idea, i molt menys propòsit, d’una represa de tasca” (54-55). Here Larios opens with his own version of the theory which he articulates in the eponymous poem but in the shape of a short dialogue between inspiration and the poet, who defends the value of the word given to him in a conversation or newspaper article (59). He then addresses a whole series of concepts and ideas by making use of rhyme, which he describes as “La llibertat del poeta” (61), and proceeds with a series of sharp and witty couplets of which those about on the *culé* the postgraduate student and on Josep Pla are the most cunningly humorous. In all, *El cop de la destràl* is a friendly, upbeat and inspired volume, not only heavily influenced by literature (Rochenfoucault, Larkin, Wilde, Oppen, Auden, Carner, ...) but especially by the life of a Catalan poet living in Wales who acts as the filter of inspiration from a random world.

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(*) Josep Carner, *Teoria de l’ham poètic*, a cura d’Albert Manent, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1970, pp. 50-59