Albert Forns

Granollers, 1982. Writer and journalist

I have never put limits on fiction. And surprisingly so, because even though we may have overcome all the ‘isms’, the genres still remain very static. It’s worthwhile to smash it all up. The parts clearly identified as new journalism coexist with fragments of a diary, parts that seem dramaturgy, strait-laced fiction… This way of constructing relates to the times we live in: it’s an eclectic time period, where one has no time to process all that you get, it’s a cultural mix. […] The novel [Albert Serra (la novel·la, no el cineasta) -[Albert Serra (the Novel, not the Film Maker)] is constructed with a hyper-textual read. The main character does the same as you would while surfing the net. Going from one place to another.


The way my novels are constructed is chaotic. I started to write principally about subjects that interest me, in parallel, until a day comes along, looking hard at the files, when I said: “Now I get it, the book is about this!” From that moment, the squaring of the circle commences, meaning trying to adapt the texts that I had done –notes and comments about the Montauk of Max Frisch, chronicles of my trips to Walmart, or reflections regarding the fact of writing in the case of Jambalaya– so that everything unfolded makes sense and builds a legible and coherent story. So, if someone revises the hundred different versions that a novel can register in my hard disc they’d see diverse writing processes in a separate form, with quite different documents of subjects that grow, and then several attempts to link them while I try and find contact points between the plots, organizing and reorganizing time and again all the parts. For me, writing a novel is like doing a puzzle, and doing it in the dark, because the final image isn’t seen until you’ve finished.

Rewriting is constant during the process of winding up a novel, and upon finishing I make at least 3
complete text revisions, line by line, word by word, in order to firm it up, tune the language and increase cohesion among the parts.


When I think of literature this always comes to mind. What to do, invent or not? Build a story where I invent all, or take advantage of real things? My method is not only journalistic, there’s a will to move beyond pure reality, wanting to create literature and explain new things. I use myself as a character and therefore start off from an autobiographical basis. I haven’t resolved the question, but both Albert Serra (la novel·la, no el cineasta) as well as Jambalaya have inclined me towards the same strategy: using myself as a character and not invent everything from zero; still I believe that in Jambalaya there’s quite a bit more fiction present. […]

I do my own approach to writing, and concretely because I deal with serious subjects from time to time, and downplay, flip around or access them tangentially. My inner self is an exaggerated and over-acted ‘alter ego’. What people find amusing are reflections that I can make with total peace of mind. I seek to speak of the absurd and depict the incongruous, things we all do but in which we haven’t ceased. […]

What I like to do is the portrayal of two approaches in learning to write: those that say it’s a gift, and you’ve got it or not, as Albee states, and the schools that might not be able to teach you this gift, but nevertheless do provide a service. The fact that writing schools make you write makes one a better writer. Signing up won’t assure you as a bestseller, or even be able to complete a novel, not even possessing talent; but solely the fact of forced reflection of what you do is merit enough. One of the problems of writers is that they speak little of what we do while we do it and sometimes end up in a blind alley. In schools, you discuss literature and subject it to debate. My own writing school was L’Horiginal. There I learned what was good and what was not based on conversations that made me take sides. To speak of literature and reflect on it aloud is almost as interesting and advantageous as the moments you spend in from of the pages. What you write and how you will write it is a previous reflection. Conversing about writing is just as important as having read it.

Jordi Nopca. "No m’interessa la invenció des de zero: ni escriure-la ni llegir-la", interview in Ara (01/04/2016)

What the critics say...

A narrative sleight of hand. Albert Serra (la novel·la, no el cineasta) is a work full of patches. This is a patchwork narrative that in only one text recasts, in a balanced and efficient manner, different genres: fiction, essay, poetic theory, digression, interview… Through a spiral structure a reiteration of themes is centered: personal identity, the striving for artistic influence, creativity, trickery, originality, the concept of author… […]

Albert Forns’ novel is a look set against another look. It’s a book strewn with fragments borrowed from
other authors and, therefore, thanks to the interpretive act of writing, outlines an unruly, personalized and original creative process that is singularly his own. Personal identity is not tackled with a focal existentialism nor epistemology. […] Beyond the virtuosity, this novel underlines our condition of shadows of humans. Through others and their voices, we build our own voice.


To say that Forns employs self-fiction is to come up melancholically short. That’s why there will always be someone, with the impatience of a cocaine-addicted chef, who will want to add other kinky ingredients that seek to emphasize the texture, flavor and nutritional value of his novels. It must be said that it’ll be a sterile exercise, given that the first perception upon reading Forns is that he’s read more than you and, the harder you try, any attempt to define him better than he defines himself will turn out as frustrating as the shadow of Luck Luke trying to out-quick draw the ex-smoker cowboy. Just to be clear: Jambalaya plays out in an inbred backdrop that underlines the meta literary character of the tale and the cynical gratitude of those who once have seen themselves favored by a scholarship to create. Literature about those literary, and within this category, literature about those literary with problems to figure out what the hell they have to write in order to keep being (or seeming to be) literary.


The author

Life

WEB: In Literature Across Frontiers
Information about the author, selected as one of the Ten New Voices from Europe.
http://www.lit-across-frontiers.org/profiles/albert-forms/

WEB: In Wikipedia
Biography, works and awards in the free encyclopaedia.

Works and translations

WEB: Albert Forns’ translated works
In the TRAC database, from Institut Ramon Llull.

WEB: Works in the Biblioteca de Catalunya
http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*eng/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Forns%20C%3B%20Albert&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D

WEB: The author in The European Library
http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/tel4/search?query=advanced%28%28CREATOR%2CAlbert+Forn
WEB: The author in the Congress Library (US)
https://lletra.uoc.eduhttps://catalog.loc.gov/vwebv/search?searchArg=Albert+Forns&searchCode=GKEY%5E*&searchType=0&recCount=25

WEB: The author in the COPAC Catalogue (UK)
http://copac.jisc.ac.uk/search/?&author=Albert+Forns

WEB: Albert Forns in WorldCat
Bibliographical information in the union catalog from the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC).
http://www.worldcat.org/search?q=%22albert+forns%22&qt=results_page

A selection of texts

Text

WEB: 7 poems from Ultracolors
Translated into English by Gustavia Yvonne Kendall. Forns was one of the selected writers in the project New Voices from Europe by Literary Europe’s Live.
http://www.lit-across-frontiers.org/albert-forns-ultracolors/

Reviews and interviews

Reviews

WEB: Albert Forns' website
Biography of the author and information about his works. In Catalan, Spanish and English.
https://lletra.uoc.eduwww.albertforns.cat/home

WEB: About Jambalaya
Information about the novel in Anagrama’s website.

Interviews

WEB: Q&A with writer Albert Forns
An interview with Deborah Kalb (15/10/2013).

The author 2.0

In the social network

WEB: In Twitter
Tweets by senyorforns
https://lletra.uoc.eduhttps://twitter.com/senyorforns