

A place of culture
Speech by graduate Bruna Generoso Miralpeix

Good afternoon everyone.

I would like to begin with three lines of verse:

“A poet tells me that life is a metaphor
that is rendered explicit if sought in the essence
of the labyrinth. And which we only learn from others.”

We only learn from others. That is obvious. We learn from our parents, from our grandparents, from animals, from friends, from enemies, from villages, from cities, from teachers, from classmates, from mistakes, from success, from reading, from the nerves that I am experiencing right now while giving this speech... We learn from everything! Or almost everything.

Forgive me if I use too many metaphors, comparisons or rhetorical resources that are out of place in oral language over the next few minutes. I am from the master's degree course in Literary Creation.

Seriously now, it is, in all sincerity, an honour and an enormous challenge for me to represent all the students completing a master's degree or doctorate in 2009 (no small task), and I am absolutely thrilled to be here with you at this celebration, happy to think that we have all moved a rung higher on our ladder of knowledge, having enjoyed the experience of learning and being educated at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, which, as we all know, boasts first-rate academic practices and treats people excellently. So, before I go any further, I would like to thank the lecturers for having helped us to face our professional future with intelligence and a critical mind, two indispensable, fundamental attributes. I would also like to thank all the students here today, for being where we are, on the threshold of a new stage, as well as all our relatives and friends here with us on such a special occasion, for their support during our education and for sharing today's celebration with us.

All the graduates present today are here because we have decided to build upon the knowledge obtained in previous studies. Because we had already learned, but we wanted more, we wanted to go further, to investigate, to discover. In my case, and I will only talk about myself very briefly (it being the case with which I am most familiar), I studied Translation and Interpretation, also here at UPF, and when I finished I decided to take a master's degree. I began looking for master's degree courses. When I came across the master's degree in Literary Creation, I looked no further. It seemed tailor-made for me. Writing is, without a shadow of a doubt, what I like doing best, and this was my chance to learn and enjoy myself at the same time, immersing myself in stories and poems for a year, a period that flew by. What more could I ask for? It was wonderful. I learned a huge amount. I am delighted by the enormous difference between what I wrote before embarking on the master's degree and what I have written since. All this, first and foremost, is thanks to the lecturers, who have used their extensive knowledge and experience to help us tremendously to improve. They have opened our eyes to a wealth of reading material and made us very keen to never forsake literature, to be part of it, to feel that it belongs to us, to enjoy it intensely.

Secondly, it is also thanks to my classmates, all of whom are fantastic. Metaphorically speaking, I feel as if I could spend the rest of my life on this master's degree course. And that is no exaggeration.

To end, I would like to read you a story. One day, in a Literary Writing class, the lecturer Manel Ollé asked us to rewrite Franz Kafka's short story "A Message from the Emperor" to practise aspects of narratology. I am sure that those who studied on the master's degree course with me will remember the exercise. Kafka's story describes the impossibility of getting a message to its intended recipient. This is my version:

The last metaphor

The last poet –so they say– has sent his last metaphor, that of being forgotten forever, directly from the bed where he lies in his death throes, to you, to a fast-moving society, to a life of unhappiness, to an unhealthy craving for designer clothing and IT products. He ordered his last poem to kneel down beside his deathbed and whispered the metaphor in its ear. He thought that the jumble of words in question was so important that he then had the poem break down its meaning at close quarters. Captivated and excited, the last poet immediately confirmed the meaning of the metaphor. And in front of all the rhetorical figures witnessing his death –all the flawed plays on words that failed to achieve the effect sought by the poet have had to be cast aside–, in front of a cluster of metonymies, hyperboles and painstakingly fashioned alliterations, he despatched the poem containing the metaphor. The poem set to work at once. A dodecasyllabic, rhythmic, sonorous verse, raising one word then another, it makes its way through the crowd. If it encounters a puddle it jumps higher than the sun. But there are so many puddles that they soon grow large, becoming lakes, rivers, and then seas and oceans. The poem does not lose heart, however, and it builds a boat that eventually sinks under the weight of the water. The poem knows that it ought to swim past the obstacles in its way, but lacks the conviction to do so, as its subconscious tells it that it will never succeed. Even if it makes it back to land, it will have to pass houses, visit all sorts of offices, dine with politicians, go to *El Corte Inglés*, etc. And afterwards, futilely do and repeat the same thing a thousand times over. Besides, nobody is waiting for the last metaphor of a dead poet. But you, who are searching for your place, will dream of it every nightfall.

On the master's degree course in Literary Creation, and at Pompeu Fabra University in general, poems do reach us, along with stories, literature and culture. It is easy for culture to reach us here, as this is a place of culture, from where I am very proud to have obtained my qualifications and at which I am very happy to have chosen to study.

Congratulations to all my fellow students. Farewell!