



9 | El Repòs square



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The serenity of this quiet corner in Sant Miquel del Fai means the square's name is more than deserved ('repòs' is Catalan for 'rest'). The place invites all those who visit to enjoy a moment of stillness, in the company of Josep Pla, who is remembered with a bronze statue by the artist Tomàs Atienza. The sculpture, seated on a stone bench, reminds us that these landscapes were a source of inspiration for some of Pla's writings. It is difficult not to sit by his side and meditate, reminisce or simply remain captivated.

In 1971, Josep Pla referred to Sant Miquel del Fai in his *Guia de Catalunya* and, with his usual sharp, mocking tone, noted:

In Sant Miquel del Fai there is a building that was a monastery and a waterfall. This feature is formed by the Te-

nes river, which rises in La Collada, near Collsuspina, 935 metres above sea level. Up to the Molí de Llobateres, downstream from Sant Quirze Safaja, it flows through a relatively open valley, but from this point on, it enters a deep gorge, forming one of the most abrupt landscapes in the region, and, after being joined by a tributary, the Rossinyol, ends up cascading down the waterfalls of Sant Miquel del Fai. In the lower part of Catalonia, waterfalls are not found in abundance. However, as we must have everything, Sant Miquel del Fai is responsible for producing the waterfall, which is a very unusual attraction.

The region is unexpected. It is a deep V-shaped incision sunk between vertical walls of a magnificent height. We left the road and, on foot, via a (bad) path, we reached this unforgettable place. An old bridge led us to an open



lookout point in the living rock. From there, we saw the old monastery, which today is a hotel perched on the mountain, some open holes in the rocky wall and, in the background, a very narrow valley, with many swallows flying over it. What we did not see anywhere was the waterfall. Faced with such contrariness, we questioned a local woman, who told me:

—The waterfall exists, but it only works on Sundays. Today is Wednesday. Do you understand? You have come on the wrong day.

I was stunned. I would never have suspected the existence of waterfalls with fixed, intermittent and weekly schedules. The impetuous description of the waterfall made by Victor Balaguer, I think, was very bad.

—So this is a weekly waterfall, like illustrated magazines and football games— I told the woman.

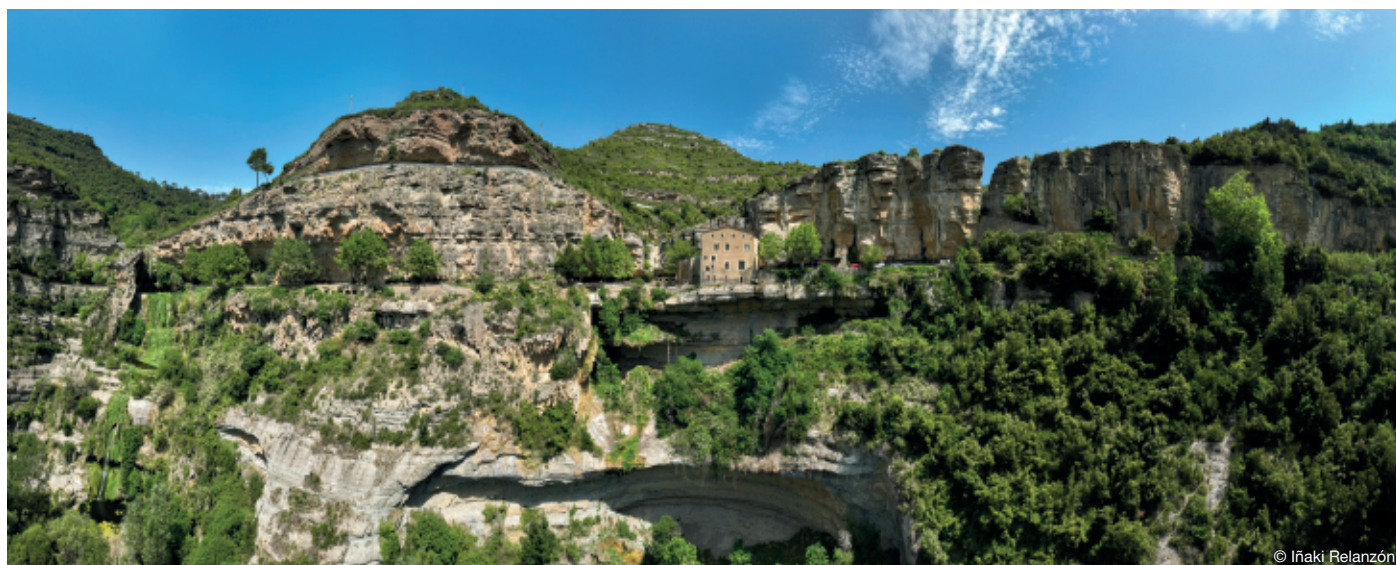
—If you were a teacher and had come with the boys or girls from your school, they would have shown it to you.

They usually do so when children come with their teachers. Otherwise, the waterfall only works on Sundays, when there are people, because it would be a pity if those who come up to see it were left wanting to do so.

—This is therefore a weekly waterfall adjusted by the requirements of pedagogy. Very amusing...

—You seem to be very easily amused—the woman said to me. There is little water here and what little there is we need for irrigation and to generate a bit of electricity. These days you cannot live without electricity. But the fact is that the rain does not come, so there will be no waterfall on Sundays or for school children. If it doesn't rain, there is no waterfall...

And so I could not see the waterfall of Sant Miquel del Fai. It is a geographical feature that is dying.



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