

## MORE ABOUT JEAN-MARIE BLAS DE ROBLÈS



**Jean-Marie BLAS DE ROBLÈS**

> *LA MONTAGNE DE MINUIT*

(THE MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN)

August 2010, 180 pages

SAMPLE TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

Shortlisted for the Grand Prix du Roman de l'Académie française

***In La Montagne de minuit, Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès takes us to Lhasa for a fascinating exploration of knowledge and illusions.***

At the heart of this novel is a most unusual character: Bastien, the caretaker of a Jesuit school and secret admirer of all things Tibetan and Lamaism. For obscure reasons, those around him give him a wide berth so the old man leads a more solitary life than a Buddhist monk. The adventure begins in Lyons when the wise old man meets Rose, who has just moved in with her young son, Paul. Charmed by the strangeness of this character, Rose becomes fond of him to the extent of permitting him to undertake the journey of a lifetime... Twenty years later, Paul, Rose's son, decides to write a book on what he witnessed then, during a journey that deeply affected his mother...

This latest novel from Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès interchanges narratives and epochs, covering the tracks as it takes us all the way to Tibet. We read the manuscripts Paul sends his mother and her comments as she corrects misconceptions and gives her son the explanations he needs... Another fascinating read in store from the author of *Là où les tigres sont chez eux* (Prix Médicis 2008).

### **RIGHTS SOLD IN:**

**Czech Republic** (Host), **Germany** (Fischer), **Italy** (Frassinelli), **The Netherlands** (De Ailantus), **Romania** (Trei), **Taiwan** (Morning Star)

### **CURRENTLY BEING ASSESSED FOR TRANSLATION IN:**

**Brazil, Croatia, Greece, Spain, UK/USA**

## **LA MONTAGNE DE MINUIT**

Jean-Marie BLAS DE ROBLÈS

### **– PRESS –**

*In a subtle play of narration on three different levels (...) the author issues a challenge: "It is up to literature to invent reality", he tells us. The real guiding thread of this story is Blas de Roblès' pen, precise and evocative in the extreme. The author gives the reader time to stop and admire the landscapes; we can read a story about inhumanity and declare it to be sublime.*

Mohammed Aïssaoui, LE FIGARO LITTÉRAIRE

*Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès (...) has brought us a sober novel, rich and transparent.*

Olivier Maison, MARIANNE

*With a sprightly pen, lithe and enchanting in its descriptions, this short novel from Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès, that begins with a nursery rhyme, like the music of childhood, concludes unexpectedly with a vibrant plea for literature's crucial responsibility towards Histoire.*

David Fontaine, LE CANARD ENCHAÎNÉ

*In a few pages, Blas de Roblès succeeds in opening so many doors in his reader's mind that his novel, overflowing its context and circumstances, becomes a wondrous matter for reflection and instruction.*

Benjamin Fau, LE MONDE

*La Montagne de minuit is a book that intrigues, seduces and enchants. We find the very best of the author: his immense culture, distilled in small doses; his interest for History, here put to the test of truth; his taste for pure Romanesque (in Tibet, coincidences don't happen, only necessary meetings) and the creativity of his writing.*

Lucie Cauwe, LE SOIR



**Jean-Marie BLAS DE ROBLÈS**

**> LÀ OÙ LES TIGRES SONT CHEZ EUX**  
**(WHERE TIGERS ARE AT HOME)**

*August 2008, 784 pages*

SAMPLE TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

**120 000 copies sold**

Prix Médicis 2008

FNAC 2008 Prize (novel category)

***Erudition, style and a captivating narrative hold the reader spellbound until the last page.***

The fruit of ten years of research, this ambitious novel is both a monument of erudition and a subtle cocktail of characters, all of them pursuing knowledge that eludes them. Only the author's perfect control and superb narrative talent could have made this 800-page novel a success.

Eléazard von Wogau is an obscure writer and press correspondent living in the ghost city of Alcântara, lost in the wild northern regions of Brazil. He is also an expert on the 17<sup>th</sup> century German encyclopaedist, Athanase Kircher. One day, a fascinating biography of Kircher, seemingly written by a German Jesuit called Caspar Schott, falls into his hands. Considered to be one of the greatest minds of the Roman Baroque period, Kircher was a renowned geometer, inventor, linguist, volcanologist, collector of hieroglyphs and astronomer. Eléazard's journey into that biography intertwines with the intriguing destinies of the book's other characters: Elaine, Eléazard's ex-wife, on a jungle expedition in search of precious fossils; Moéma, his drug-dependant daughter; the diabolical governor of Maranao; and Nelson, a child from the favelas determined to avenge his father's death...

**RIGHTS ALREADY SOLD IN 15 COUNTRIES!**

**Brazil** (Record), **Croatia** (Fraktura), **Czech Republic** (Host), **Egypt** (GEBO), **Germany** (Fischer), **Greece** (Polis), **Italy** (Frassinelli), **South Korea** (The Open Books), **The Netherlands** (De Ailantus), **Poland** (Sonia Draga), **Romania** (Trei), **Spain** (Duomo), **Ukraine** (Folio), **UK**, (Dedalus), **USA** (The Other Press).

## LÀ OÙ LES TIGRES SONT CHEZ EUX

Jean-Marie BLAS DE ROBLÈS

### – PRESS –

*'This novel (...) delights and fascinates. Here, erudition serves a universal saga. Umberto Eco revisited by Indiana Jones, edited by Malcolm Lowry, with a zest of African Queen and Lévi-Strauss with the Nambikwara. But these 'Tropiques' are not at all sad!'*

LE FIGARO LITTÉRAIRE

*'A baroque novel blending all kinds of knowledge, whose last sentence proves that the author does not disdain life's pleasures: They were playing the latest rage in sambas: Brigitte Bardot Bardoo...'*

LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR

*'One is (...) stunned by the stylistic and Romanesque momentum of these 800 pages of Là où les tigres sont chez eux'*

LE JOURNAL DU DIMANCHE

*'After Les Bienveillantes, publishers are no longer afraid of big books. In deepest Brazilian Nordeste, a German press correspondent receives a manuscript: the biography of a famous Jesuit of the Baroque period in Rome. He decides to find out more about the mysterious Athanase Kircher.'*

LE FIGARO

*'Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès toys with illustrious references and mocks magical realism, to produce a book full of gall and impudence. Là où les tigres sont chez eux is erudite, boisterous derision; highly ambitious, a fun-loving palimpsest.'*

MARIANNE

*'Written with astounding virtuosity (...) this Bergsonian play on mosaics is nevertheless impassioned and droll, especially when the author allows himself a few erudite digressions à la Umberto Eco. But the general profusion never takes away from comprehension; that's what's so captivating about this formidable narrative.'*

L'EXPRESS

*'In the words of Jacques Griffault: The stories intertwine perfectly in a Brazil that's as frightening as it is seductive. Exquisite writing serves a subtle construction.'*

LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR

## THE AUTHOR

In a way, Jean-Marie Blas was born elsewhere. He is a timeless writer, an atypical man of today. Considering the whole world and all the ages, the Mediterranean Sea would be his centre. He was born in Sidi-Bel-Abbes and discovered very early on a taste for departures. Indeed, his family went to live in France, first in Camargue then in Normandy, later in the Vosges and finally in the Var which he left rapidly to go to Paris. There, he studied philosophy at the Sorbonne and history at the College de France. Despite his great studies, he still found enough time to sail on the Mediterranean sea. After graduating, Jean-Marie Blas de Robles went to Brazil as a teacher and the headmaster of the Maison de la Culture Française at Fortaleza University.



At that time, in 1982, he published his first book, an anthology of short stories mixing fantasy with the mystical style, *La Mémoire du riz* which received the Nouvelle Academie Francaise Prize. It is a book already full of the sublime érudition of the author, his fascination for the mystery of the world; in this book appears the character of Eleazard. This character appears again in *Là où les tigres sont chez eux*, published in 2008. At the age of 27, Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès is referred to in the magazine *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* as one of the “great Gnostics of our literature” while *The Figaro* considers him as “a new king of the night” heir to André Pieyre de Mandiargues.

He was then transferred to China, at Tien-Tsin University, where he was the first to teach Sartre and Roland Barthes as there, the Cultural Revolution was just ending. He has been a Member of the Archaeological French mission in Libya since 1986; every summer, he goes to the submarine digs in Apollonia of Cyrenaique, in Leptis Magna and in Sabrathe in Tripolitaine. He was then transferred to the Palerme University. He took this opportunity to visit Tibet on his way back to Europe on the Tran-Siberian Railway. The same year, his first novel *L'Impudeur des choses* was published in which he describes wonderfully the monstrous beauty of the world. In 1989, he published his second novel, *Le Rituel des dunes*, still haunted by the anamorphose of the world.

Jean-Marie Roblès (his actual name; he borrowed his pseudonym from the original editor of Don Quixote, by Cervantès), was finally transferred to the Taipei French Alliance, in Taiwan. There, he started the long writing procès of his third novel. His Great Work had started. He gave up teaching, travelled much, fed his mind with the planet (Peru, Yemen, Indonesia...). He published essays and poetry in literary journals.

*Méduse en son miroir* was published in 2008 by Mare Nostrum; and still in 2008, more particularly, he published *Là où les tigres sont chez eux*. He had spent a decade writing it, and almost the same period of time to find an editor. It is a very unusual novel, and the size of the book made it especially original; his first editor asked him to make it 400 pages shorter, which he refused and every publisher made the same request. Finally, Zulma accepted to publish this almost 800-page long novel, it was scholarly and very complete. This book is a novel of adventure, a philosophical novel about escaping from disenchantment, from the tyranny of numbers, the refusal of mathematical modernity, a novel about the quest for the origins which recreates the swirls of the race of the world, which tangles the dances of the centuries, mixes times, men, places... an ode to creative madness. It may have been a crazy bet, but Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès and the Zulma book house were right, in advance of their time. As soon as it was published, the book was rewarded with the Fnac Prize, followed by the Jean Giono Prize and the Medicis Prize. The book was even present in the very last list of the Prix Goncourt Prize.

Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès is now in charge of the editing of the *Aouras* journal, which is devoted to archaeological digs in the area of ancient Aures. He has created the Archeologies series for the Edisud house which he now runs and in which he published several popularization works.