New Catalan Fiction 2015-2016
Foreword

This is an outstanding moment for Catalan literature. An exceptionally fine tradition, the seductiveness of modernity and a curiosity about other literatures are all to be found amongst its current strengths, which are further bolstered by a well-established and vibrant publishing industry and the efficient work of literary agents.

One of the goals of the Institut Ramon Llull, as the public institution responsible for the dissemination of Catalan language and culture abroad, is to support authors, translators, publishers and literary agents with the aim of ensuring that Catalan literature is translated, published and read abroad.

This booklet is intended to arouse the curiosity of publishers and open the doors to Catalan literature for readers in other languages. The booklets we produce periodically include selections from new contemporary publications in fiction. We encourage readers in many countries to take this opportunity to enjoy our literature.
Sometimes we can reveal our most intimate selves best to those we’ve just met

Over the course of the final week of the year, in a small bar named after the Polish town of Katowice but located in Ushuaia, Argentina, a handful of characters tell their stories around the same table. What has brought them there, to the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, the very end of the world? Coming from various parts of Europe and Latin America, the reasons they give for seeking out that extreme landscape are varied and sometimes shocking, ranging from the bourgeois to the haunted and war-torn, and not all of them are telling the truth.

That includes our inscrutable, erudite narrator who seems to be searching in the others’ stories for the key to his own, as he explores the parallels between emotional and intellectual journeys and actual physical ones. His engrossing account reveals our storytelling as a pursuit of identity, and the fabled ends of the earth a powerful place to confront our demons. Before the year draws to a close the lives of these strangers will be bound together by the answers they may or may not have found at the frozen tip of the known world.

“The door was open, it was always open, but no one left, everyone stayed to say how they didn’t like Christmas, that they were sick of family gatherings, that they couldn’t stand their in-laws, parents, brothers and sisters, kids, wives, husbands, uncles, nieces and nephews, friends, year after year. It was all pushing me onto the road, but I had to go somewhere far, somewhere really way out on the margins.”

Joan Benesiu is a pseudonym used by Josep Martínez Sanchis, whose first novel was awarded the City of Xàtiva Prize in 2007. He is also a philosophy teacher in a high school in southern Valencia, where he has programmed a film club for the past nine years. Ice Giants is the winner of the 2015 Catalan Booksellers Prize.

Selected Works

NOVEL

Intercanvi [Exchange] (Bromera, 2007)
Jaume Cabré

Uncertainties
Incerteses

An inspiring ode to writing and reading, and rewriting and rereading

Internationally bestselling author Jaume Cabré takes a break between novels to write about his craft and sources of inspiration. Almost as a winding, digressive footnote to Confessions, these ten short essays reflect on his creativity and how he goes about creating the worlds within his novels and reinventing himself stylistically through rewriting that "searches for another door through which to enter, or perhaps a window."

Cabré also discusses his view that reading and writing are two sides of the same coin, sharing some recommendations and advice on how to approach classics and the importance of poetry as "the need for the bare, unvarnished word, which is very difficult to achieve." In the companionable style of a fireside chat, Cabré conveys his passion for reading and his respect for the creative impulse in its many forms while revealing for his many fans insights into his own, all-consuming process of constructing his intricate novels.

Jaume Cabré’s work has earned a place on bestseller lists in Germany, France, Italy, Poland and The Netherlands. His many awards include the National Literature Prize.

“... when I read a classic for the first time, I hear the echo of many generations of readers, whose readings contaminate my subconscious, which awakens as I read and conveys the feeling that I’m not reading alone, but in good company.”

Selected Works

NOVEL
Senyoria [Proa, 1991] [His Excellency]
L’ombra de l’euunc [Proa, 1996] [The Eunuch’s Shadow]
Viatge d’hivern [Proa, 2000] [A Winter’s Journey]
Les veus del Pamano [Proa, 2004] [Voices from the River]
Jo confesso [Proa, 2011] [Confessions]

NON-FICTION
Llibre de preludis [Edicions 62, 1985] [Book of Preludes]
Les incerteses [Proa, 2015] [Uncertainties]

Latest Works in Translation

ENGLISH Confessions [Jo confesso], tr. M. F. Lethem.
Arcadia books, 2014
Winter Journey [Viatge d’hivern], tr. P. Lunn.
Swan Isle Press, 2009

FRENCH Confiteor [Jo confesso], tr. E. Raillard. Ed.
Actes Sud, 2013
Les voix du Pamano [Les veus del Pamano], tr.
B. Lesfargues. Éditions Christian Bourgois, 2009

ITALIAN Io confesso [Jo confesso], tr. S. Ciminelli. Ed.
Rizzoli, 2012

SPANISH Las incertidumbres [Les incerteses], tr. R.
Vela. Destino, 2015
Yo confieso [Jo confesso], tr. C. Cardeñoso.
Destino, 2011

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Cristina Mora Literary & Film Agency
Cristina Mora
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The fantastical and the everyday converge in these five interconnected stories. Each one explains the birth (and often death) of a peculiar, different child: Miss Clock lives out her whole life over four seasons; Caterina comes into the world on a tidal wave and finds her true place among the whales; Roc Mortson is born with a pig’s trotter in the place of one of his hands; the undertaker’s son mysteriously emerges from below ground; and Mrs. Petarol finds a boy made of ice in her kitchen.

Set in an unspecified Gothic period, these dark tales create an atmosphere that’s both bucolic and disturbing at the same time. Colom’s well-crafted, lyrical prose looks unflinchingly and tenderly at our longing to be parents, at our cruelty and our blinding love, at our ability (and inability) to rise to the occasion, at our obsessions and our nightmares. Above all, these enigmatic yet satisfying tales remind us of the richness that those who are different bring to our world.

“Standing inside the pit, he pulled his elbows back to scoop out the last shovelful, but before the metal struck the earth, a tiny hand made its way through the remains of the bones. Unable to take in what he was seeing, the gravedigger dropped the shovel and dug his hands into the dirt. He soon touched a tender body and, to his amazement, as if harvesting an onion, he pulled a baby out of the bowels of the grave.”

Teresa Colom is an Andorran poet whose volumes of poems have won her the 2001 Miquel Martí i Pol Prize and an 2009 FNAC Talent award. She frequently performs her verse and, in 2010, she debuted 32 vidres, a poetic/theatrical stage production. This is her first book of prose.

Selected Works

POETRY
La temperatura d’uns llavis [The Temperature of Lips] (Ed. del Diari d’Andorra, 2002)
Elegies del final conegut [Elegies for the Anticipated End] [Abadia Editors, 2005]
On tot és vidre [Where All Is Glass] [Pagès, 2009]
La meva mare es preguntava per la mort [My Mother Asked After Death] [Pagès, 2012]

Latest Works in Translation

ITALIANO Trentaquattro poeti catalani per il XXI secolo [Antological], tr. E. Coco. Raffaelli Editore, 2014

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Celos said they she knew gypsies who’d done it, who’d played Indians in the films shot here. I mean there. We crossed that desert, that Far West from the double features of our youth. We found a piece of wood that read gold mine. So, turns out the Indians weren’t Indians, they were travelers. Just like us. They must all be gone and buried by now.”

Ramon Erra is the author of eight books. His first novel won him the QWERTY Prize and the Salambó. His most recent story collection was the winner of the prestigious 2011 Mercè Rodoreda Prize and this novel was awarded the Marian Vayreda Prize by the city of Olot.

Selected Works

NOVEL
La florblianca de l’estramoni [White Thorn-apple Blossom] (La Magrana, 2001)
A Bòsnia ens trobarem [We’ll Meet in Bosnia] (Emboscall, 2004)
Pòlvora del quatre de juliol [Gunpowder on the Fourth of July] (Galerada, 2007)
Desfent el nus del mocador [Untying the Knot in the Handkerchief] (La Magrana, 2008)
La vida per rail [Life on the Rails] (Proa, 2012)

Latest Works in Translation

SPANISH Voces [Veus], tr. A. Carreras, T. Juste. Anagrama, 2010

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They say you can never go home again, but what if the road is your home?

Ramonet is a middle-aged gypsy feeling the pull of springtime in his blood. When his beloved teenage daughter comes to him with the words no father wants to hear: that she has something to tell him and that she knows he’s going to kill her... he comes up with a solution to her problem that is also an answer to his wanderlust. With the ostensible goal of driving from southern France to Zaragoza for an abortion while conveniently dodging issues of lost honor, he decides to buy a tumbledown truck and resume the traditional nomadic life of his clan, the Manouche, also known as the “children of the wind.”

On the road with his wife, children and sister, “Ram” finds that being a child of the wind in the twenty-first century has its challenges. Age-old prejudices still remain, as do the ghosts of childhood traumas, while the wild game has dried up and daughters are harder to keep in the fold. Erra tells this tale in a conversational, melodic style that floats like the scent of barbeque on a spring breeze. The very language itself—a colorful vernacular—is an ode to a vanishing culture that, try as Ram might, seems to be slipping through his fingers.
“He predicted the stench would stick in his nostrils and never leave him. He also predicted that the diabolically vivid image of those squirming worms, interweaving as they ate the rotten rat, drunk on its pong, would insert itself in his nightmares, inextricably. Who does something like this to a regional president?”

Any relationship between this thriller and the corrupt-to-the-core political situation in Majorca is purely coincidental

When Majorcan regional president José Antonio Bergas receives a rotting rat corpse in a little leaden coffin—the first in a series—he’s forced to question who is sending them, and why. Does it have to do with the favors the recession has made so hard for him to repay? Is this a message from his fellow party members ousted for corruption? Is it revenge for something in his past? Naturally, his first instinct is not to call the police. Mateu Llodrà is a jaded bon vivant who wants to ease into enjoying retirement from the local newspaper, but the enthusiasm of a young, female reporter gets him involved in the investigation of this case. And in today’s Majorca—like Sicily, but without the corpses—the list of possible suspects is a long one. And then a few corpses show up.

Guillem Frontera is a journalist, editor and writer with more than a dozen titles published—beginning as a poet and now best known as a novelist—, all with Majorca as backdrop and inspiration. His work has been awarded two Ciutat de Palma Prizes, the Joan Alcover Poetry Prize, the 2009 Serra d’Or, and the 2007 Mercè Rodoreda, among others.
“And later, from my room upstairs, with the window open onto the muggy night, I saw heads circulating and motorcycles stopping and cigarette smoke beneath the street lights. In the sky hung a close, cumbersome moon, that looked as if it could fall. And to calm my anxiety I told myself not to worry, that for them it was normal, that tomorrow everybody would wake up the same as every other day, some would head to work and others would stay at home, but nobody was going to remember tonight and you won’t have missed out on a thing.”

Maria Guasch

The Scent of Chlorine On the Skin

Olor de clor sota la roba

Júlia is a quiet, observant, only child, and her eleventh summer is stretching out in front of her. As usual, she follows her 14-year-old cousin Silvia’s lead, although there are times when the world Silvia’s created with her summering friend David inevitably excludes Júlia. When her parents announce that they are going on vacation alone and she’ll be staying with her aunt and uncle, under the same roof as Silvia and David, it seems this summer will be different than all the others.

In a languid, sensuous first-person narrative, Guasch sensitively captures the ambient sounds and scents of small town life, which in turn delicately reveal the inner life—particularly the longing, and the fear of missing out—of a girl on the cusp of adolescence.

Maria Guasch holds a degree in Audiovisual Communications, and works as a researcher and script-writer for audiovisual aspects of museum exhibitions. Her first novel was published in 2013. Olor de clor sota la roba, her second published novel, recently won her an FNAC New Talent award.

Selected Works

NOVEL

La neu fosa [Melted Snow] (El Toll, 2013)
Olor de clor sota la roba [The Scent Of Chlorine On The Skin] (RBA La Magrana, 2014)

Rights

RBA La Magrana
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When she signed on the dotted line, he thought he had the upper hand...

When, in 1989, a lawyer comes to an agreement with Francesca Puigmajor, an almost eighty-year-old woman, it seems he’s struck a good deal: he will pay her a certain sum each month for the rest of her life, in exchange for her spacious apartment in Barcelona’s Eixample district when she dies. Of course, he is playing the odds, with no way of knowing how many years Francesca has left in her... Fast forward to 2015, when Francesca is pushing 105, and the lawyer has been pushing up daisies for a decade already. Spain is still in the throes of its worst recession ever and his family can’t keep up the payments. In their desperation they begin to search for alternate ways to collect. What they don’t know is that this little old lady has a surprising history.

A dark and original story that weaves together Francesca’s past and Spain’s precarious present, taking on some very serious topics with the blackest of humor. Llort’s clipped, precise style will leave readers smiling guiltily as it depicts the extremes some people will go to in order to get their hands on a good piece of real estate.

“He’d been watching her for a few days, but she never emerged from her den. If she were a turtle he would have placed some tomato slices in front of her shell, to see if she’d lower her guard and stick her head out. Turtles live forever too, and they’re wrinkled, just like that old lady.”

Llort has been a journalist at the same newspaper, *Avui*, for almost three decades. He has written seven novels, as well as children’s books and television scripts.

**Selected Works**

*Trenta-dos morts i un home cansat* [Thirty-two Corpses And One Tired Man] (Plaza & Janés, 2004)
*La imperfecció de les bombolles* [The Imperfection of Bubbles] (Arola Editors, 2009)
*Si quan et donen per mort, un dia tornes* [Coming Back After They’ve Given You Up for Dead] (La Magrana, 2012)
Ten beguiling tales of waveri-
ing lives in today’s Barce-
lo

A recent graduate in Art History takes a retail job and becomes captivated by a customer who brings her hot chocolate every day; a dog groomer struggles with popping the question to his girlfriend; a mystery writer’s resentment of his longtime translator leads to new inspiration; a middle-aged couple stalks Peter Stamm on their Swiss vacation. These are among the stories in this absorbing collection filled with precarious situations that are always on the cusp of exploding, or imploding; peopled with passive, irresolute characters; and liberally sprinkled with the cultural references typical of today’s overeducated, underemployed thirty-somethings.

Glimpses of contemporary quotidian life in Barcelona, particularly of a generation adrift on an apparently calm sea but with no port in sight, and facing the deaths of their parents and grandparents, whose legacy is unclear. Nopca’s prose is precise and his pacing is masterful. These tender, droll stories draw us into their world, as they reflect the absurdity of our day-to-day modernity with empathy.

“He drifted off and dreamed he was cleaning mussels in a restaurant kitchen in New Orleans. He found a pearl inside one of them and slipped it into his shirt pocket before any of his coworkers realized. Then he faked a migraine so the supervisor would let him go home. On the way he pawned the pearl at a shop where he’d done business before, then called Àngels to invite her out for dinner and reserved a table at a nice restaurant on the banks of the Mississippi. Some lobster over rice would help them forget all the problems they’d been having lately.”

Jordi Nopca is a journalist, writer and translator. In 2013 he was awarded the Pere Rodeja Memorial Prize for his wide-reaching and innovative literary journalism. This collection of stories won him the 2014 Documenta Prize.

Selected Works

NOVEL
El talent [Talent] (Labreu Edicions, 2012)
Puja a casa [Come On Up] (L’Altra editorial, 2015)

Latest Works in Translation
SPANISH Vente a casa [Puja a casa], tr. J. Nopca. Libros del Asteroide, 2015
Valentí Puig

Life is Strange
La vida és estranya

His mother’s dying words—“life is strange”—lead an aristocrat to write his autobiography

Oleguer de Regós is the last member of a noble lineage that has been in decline since the 17th century. He lives like a hermit in an apartment in Barcelona, a city he no longer recognizes, and spends his weekends in the small town of Tossals where he grew up. At sixty years old, he begins to write his memoirs, recalling his mischievous gang of childhood buddies, the women in his life, including a prostitute who loved him dearly, and, most of all, his heroic ancestor, a general in the Carlist Wars. Regós spends his days at the library working on what he claims will be his great work: a “definitive study of the laws of history.” The library was founded during the transition to democracy by his friend, the arts patron Befás, who is now imprisoned for corruption.

Regós sets out to document his life “of inaction” as a defense against those who call him a failure. He can be insightful and even cruel about the faults of society and others, yet ironically his capacity for self-reflection leaves much to be desired. The result is a novel loaded with stimulating ideas and provocative views, in which the unreliable first-person narrative is used to great comic effect.

“You see how asymmetrical and unshapely life is! That’s why I only strive to understand history. After all, if all memoir is fiction and all fiction is memoir, what’s left of truth?”

Valentí Puig began publishing in the eighties and has more than thirty books to his name, including poetry, novels, and essays. Among his awards are the 1998 Josep Pla, the 1987 Ramon Llull and the 2007 Sant Joan.

Selected Works

POETRY
Altes Valls [High Valleys] (Proa, 2010)

NON-FICTION
L’home de l’abric [The Man in the Overcoat] (Destino, 1998)
L’os de Cuvier [Cuvier’s Bone] (Destino, 2004)

NOVEL
La gran rutina [The Grand Routine] (Edicions 62, 2006)
Barcelona cau [The Fall of Barcelona] (Proa, 2012)
La vida és estranya [Life is Strange] (Proa, 2015)

Latest Works in Translation

SPANISH
Barcelona cae [Barcelona cau], tr. V. Puig. Editorial Pre-textos, 2014
Ratas en el jardín [Rates al jardi], tr. V. Puig. Libros del Asteroide, 2012

Rights
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An examination of the new frontiers, and the new stories, created by globalization

The towpaths on the borderlands where Catalonia meets Aragon are no longer walked by horses but by immigrants looking for work. Over the course of a decade, Francesc Serés also walked, and drove, all around his native region, trying to understand the changes and searching for his/our place in this ever-changing human landscape marked by successive waves of laborers from Morocco, Algeria, Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, and their makeshift lodgings. He takes on the role of a literary, fake anthropologist—one who pretends to smoke because offering cigarettes opens up conversations, and narrative is his key to comprehension.

As a narrator, interlocutor, and character in these stories, Serés displays his signature style, steady and earnest and unswayed by trends, to build a solid portrait of his work in the field, in a collection that is the fruit of both ten years of conversations, and a lifetime of reading and observation.

Francesc Serés’s prolific output includes a trilogy of plays based on classic Catalan authors. He has won the National Literature Prize and the City of Barcelona Prize.

“Everyone stares at me, the Senegalese, the Malians, the Guineans, and, of course, the local farmers. I’m a stranger, sometimes you only have to shift a few millimeters from the center to end up at the opposite pole. No one will take my photo, there’s nothing to see here. I can’t resort to descriptions of the beautiful landscape.”

Selected Works

NOVEL
*Els vents de la terra* [The Earth’s Womb] (Columna, 2000)
*Una llengua de plom* [A Lead Language] (Quaderns Crema, 2002)
*De fems i de marbres* [On Manure and Marble] (Quaderns Crema, 2003).

NON-FICTION
*Contes russos* [Russian Stories] (Quaderns Crema, 2009)
*Mossegar la poma* [Biting The Apple] (Quaderns Crema, 2012)
*La pell de la frontera* [Traversing The Border] (Quaderns Crema, 2014)

Latest Works in Translation


FRENCH  *La force de gravité* [La força de la gravetat]. Trad. F. M. Durazzo. Éditions Fédérop, 2011
*Contes russos* [Contes russos]. Trad. L. Gallardo. Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, 2012

ITALIAN  *La forza di gravità* [La força de la gravetat]. Trad. G. Cremonesi i F. Garigali. Gran Via Edizioni, 2011

SPANISH  *Cuentos rusos* [Contes russos]. Trad. F. Serés. Mondadori, 2011

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Grants
Literature and the Humanities

Translation Grants
Grants for the translation of Catalan fiction, non-fiction and scholarly works into other languages, to assist publishers of those works in covering translation costs.
Recipients: Publishers.

Grants for the Promotion of Catalan Fiction, Non-fiction and Scholarly Works
Grants for activities promoting Catalan fiction, non-fiction and scholarly works abroad, including: participation in international literary festivals; literary activities within the framework of cultural events; presentations and promotional plans for new works in translation; monographic pieces in cultural journals; and providing information on authors.
Recipients: Institutions, Publishers, Literary Agencies.

Residence Programs for Literary Translators
Grants for translators with commissioned translations in progress of Catalan literary works, for working stays in Catalonia lasting between two and six weeks.
Recipients: Translators.

Grants for the Publication of Children’s and Youth Literature
Grants for the publication abroad of works illustrated by Catalan artists.
Recipients: Publishers.
The IRL attends the following book fairs: Frankfurt, Göteborg, London, Paris, Roma and Bologna, providing information about its services.


English translations of works by the selected authors are available upon request.

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The Institut Ramon Llull is a public institution established by the Government of Catalonia in 2002 with the aim of promoting the Catalan language and culture through encouraging artistic and cultural exchanges, and providing support for the study of Catalan language and culture at university level.