

CATALONIA

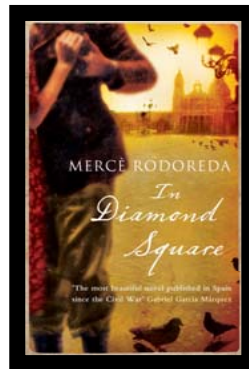
A Place of Literature

UK 2013

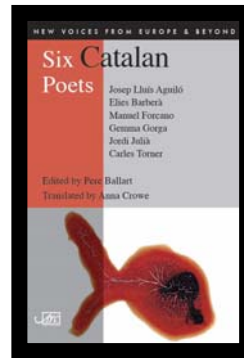
Bitter Lemon Press



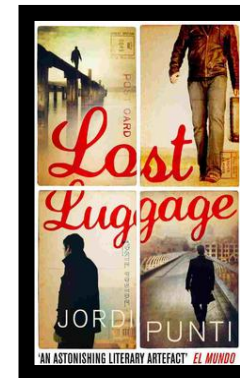
Little Brown & co



Arc Publications



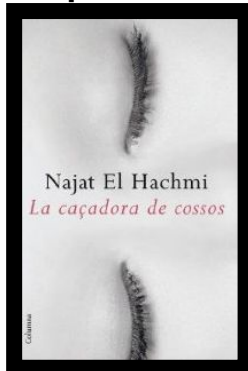
Short Books



MacLehose Press



Serpent's Tail



MacLehose Press



NYRB



Dedalus



Pushkin Press



Catalonia is *certainly* a
place of literature

Colum McCann

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Introduction

Rodoreda, Sales & Pla Three Literary Constellations



Three major works of 20th-century European literature are the novels *La plaça del Diamant* (*In Diamond Square*, Virago Press) by Mercè Rodoreda, *Incerta Glòria* (*Uncertain Glory*, MacLehose Press) by Joan Sales, and *El quadern gris* (*The Grey Notebook*, New York Review of Books) by Josep Pla. The three works have been translated into English by Peter Bush and are the main titles in a series of ten Catalan contemporary literary works to be published in the UK in 2013.

The year 2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of *La plaça del Diamant* by Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1983) and the centennial of the birth of author/publisher Joan Sales (1912-1983). These two talented writers from Barcelona—both committed to the Catalan cause—were passionately dedicated to literature.

Their mutual admiration and deep respect for each other gave rise to a long-lasting friendship. In 1962, when Sales published Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*, the most widely-translated Catalan literary work, Gallimard published the French translation of Joan Sales' *Incerta glòria*, the work of a lifetime. Both authors were profoundly influenced by the Spanish Civil War and by their experiences in exile.

Josep Pla was a privileged witness to the years leading up to the outbreak of World War II – Paris after the Great War; Italy and the March on Rome; Germany during the Weimar Republic, the depreciation of the mark and Hitler's rise to power; the General Strike in London; the Republic in Madrid. This allowed him to write about the events in Europe from two complementary perspectives.

This is a unique moment for Catalan literature both in the UK and the rest of the English-speaking world. The publication of these three masterworks is complemented by an excellent sampling of contemporary Catalan literature. Novels: *Lost Luggage* by Jordi Puntí (Short Books), *The Body Hunter* by Najat El Hachmi (Serpent's Tail); Noir fiction: *The Sound of One Hand Killing* by Teresa Solana (Bitter Lemon Press), *The Bad Woman* by Marc Pastor (Pushkin Press); Classics: *Dark Vales* by Raimon Casellas (Dedalus); Short Stories: *Russian Stories* by Francesc Serés (MacLehose Press); and Poetry: *Six Catalan Poets* (Arc Publications).

The Sound of One Hand Killing Teresa Solana

Barcelona 'Noir'



Bitter Lemon Press
February

Translated by Peter Bush

Twin detectives Borja and Eduard are hired to infiltrate a fraudulent alternative therapy centre. The plot thickens when the homeopathic doctor who runs the business turns up murdered. At first, all clues point to a disgruntled client, but she's not the only suspect. Meanwhile, Borja's shady dealings keep getting him in trouble. This time an antiques smuggling scheme lands the brothers right in the middle of an international espionage ring and the murder of a CIA agent.

In this, the third in her satirical series of books, Catalan 'noir' novelist Teresa Solana mercilessly punctures the pretensions of New Age quacks who promote pseudo-science and pseudo-spirituality. At

the same time, Solana draws compassionate portraits of characters trying to live 'ordinary' lives in circumstances that have ceased to be normal, yet still cope with such every day issues as adultery, menopause and simply making it to the end of the month.

'Perfect summer reading-indeed thoroughly enjoyable any time...' *Crime Time*

Teresa Solana (Barcelona-1962)

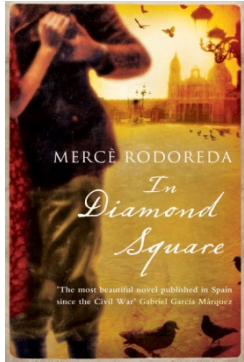
A philosopher by training and an enthusiast of the Classical world. She directed the National Translation Centre in Spain for seven years and now devotes her time to writing her own novels and translating them into Spanish. This is her third novel to appear in English (Bitter Lemon Press) after *A Not So Perfect Crime* (2008) and *A Shortcut to Paradise* (2011). Her works have been translated into several languages.



'Solana's stylish and witty debut makes entertaining reading.' *The Telegraph*

In Diamond Square Mercè Rodoreda

A Literary Jewel



Little Brown & co.
March

Translated by Peter Bush

In Diamond Square, Rodoreda's most widely-known novel, translated into twenty-eight languages, is one of the most prolific writers in 20th-century Catalan literature and an integral part of contemporary Europe's cultural heritage.

It is a complex and somewhat ambiguous novel offering multiple interpretations; it is both a vivid document of the period in which it is set and a dense poetic work with believable characters playing out their lives in a realistic context. Through her own very evocative voice, Colometa, the heroine of this classic Catalan novel, draws us into the life of one of the most colourful

neighbourhoods of Barcelona from the 1920s through the end of the Spanish Civil War.

"In Diamond Square is the most beautiful novel published in post-Civil War Spain"
- Gabriel García Márquez

Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1983)
Born in Barcelona, she also lived in other European cities, primarily Paris and Geneva, and witnessed, first-hand, two significant events in 20th-century history: the Spanish Civil War, in Catalonia, and the Second World War, in France. Both experiences—the first resulting in a long period of exile and the second leaving a lasting mark in her life—brought added depth and maturity to her work.



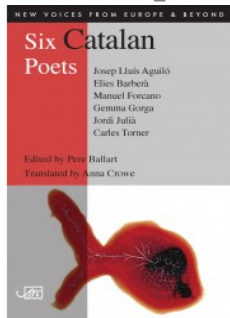
"She created a moving and universal literary landscape, inspiring us, the readers, to explore and foster freedom within ourselves, neither fearing defeat nor the shackles of tradition". –

Mercè Ibarz, *Mercè Rodoreda. Un retrat/A Portrait-*

Six Catalan Poets Edited by Pere Ballart

Josep Lluís Aguiló, Elies Barberà, Manuel Forcano,
Gemma Gorga, Jordi Julià and Carles Torner

Contemporary Catalan Poetry



Arc Publications
March

Translated by Anna Crowe

The Arc Publications' bilingual anthology series aims «to keep abreast of the latest in international contemporary poetry.» The most recent work in that series, *Six Catalan Poets*, edited by Pere Ballart, reflects the variety and vitality of Catalan poetry today. The anthology includes the works of six poets: **Josep Lluís Aguiló, Elies Barberà, Manuel Forcano, Gemma Gorga, Jordi Julià and Carles Torner.** These five men and one woman were born between 1963 and 1972, four in Catalonia, one in Valencia and one in Mallorca. They all belong to the same generation that spent their early years during the final period of the

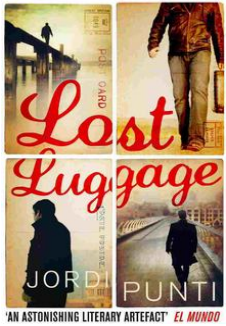
Franco dictatorship and were then shaped by the following transition to democracy.

The poems selected highlight the multiple voices in Catalan poetry responding to the conflicts and challenges of post-modern society and to the compatibility between preserving one's cultural identity and living in a global world. This is what makes *Six Catalan Poets* so all-embracing and polyphonic: poems in which politics and history coexist with intimate love; cultural references with popular icons; metrical strictness with formal indulgence; the praise of homeland with the excitement of travel; and experimentation with the expressive and evocative capacity of words.

Pere Ballart (Barcelona, 1964) is a professor of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. He is the author of many award-winning essays, of which the most outstanding—*Eironeia* (1994), a global study of the nature of literary irony; *El contorn del poema* (1998); *El riure de la màscara* (2007); *Obra vista* (2009); and *La veu cantant* (2011)—focus on the role of lyric poetry in modern and contemporary literature. He also works as a literary critic for newspapers including *El País* and *Avui*.

Lost Luggage Jordi Puntí

A Great Contemporary Fable



Short Books
March

Translated by Julie Wark

Lost Luggage weaves a seemingly impossible story which becomes quite believable, and creates parallel landscapes that ultimately converge—one set in the present and the other dating from 1940s to recent times—in which four half-brothers, Christophe, Christopher, Chirstof and Cristòf, each unaware of the others' existence, go in search of a father who abandoned them. This leads to the piecing together of the father's life story that included years under the Franco dictatorship, orphanages, whorehouses, landladies and single mothers, and many shattered souls just trying to make their way in post-war Europe.

The story leads us to four cities—Paris, London, Frankfurt and Barcelona—four mothers, four Christophers, and a runaway father whose character gradually emerges from this complicated scenario and the mystery of the lost luggage.

“*Maletes perdudes* is an astonishing literary artifact: a good plot, a consistent vision of the world and a rigorously constructed work with rich and natural language. Marvelous.”

El Mundo

Jordi Puntí (Barcelona, 1958) Writer, translator and a regular contributor to the Spanish & Catalan press. He has translated works by Paul Auster, Amélie Nothomb and Daniel Pennac, among others, and has received public and critical acclaim for his own work.



- This author's first novel, to be translated into fourteen languages including German (KI& WI), French (Lattès) and Chinese (Shanghai 99) is clear confirmation that Puntí is one of the most promising new voices of contemporary Catalan Literature.

Russian Stories Francesc Serés

A Name To Remember



MacLehose Press
September

Translated by Peter Bush

A supposed anthology of twenty-one short stories, written by five fictitious writers who depict Russian history over the past century-and-a-half: post World War II years, perestroika, communism and the Cold War. The book has been published in French (Actes Sud/Jacqueline Chambon), Spanish (Mondadori) and Italian (Ugo Guanda).

Serés invents five Russian writers from the 19th and 20th centuries in a book full of intertextuality and daily life: *Russian Stories* has all of Serés' usual ingredients in addition to a challenging exercise in style, replete with allusions to Russian literature.

One example is the short story *The Horseriders* by Yosif Bergchenko (1891–1942), which springs from Franz Kafka's *The Wish to be a Red Indian*. We also find a new take on a Salinger story, one based on Gogol's *Dead Souls* and another suggestive of Jane Austen.

“His beautiful command of prose evokes, simply and delicately, subtle melancholy.”

El País

These twenty-one tales, by the five heteronyms created by Serés, are set in different literary traditions and revisit classic themes of universal literature, allowing the author to explore new paths in short-story writing. His creativity and mastery of the genre guarantee original and brilliant results.

Francesc Serés (Saidí, Aragon, 1972) Author of three novels, two books of short stories, a volume of chronicles and three plays, he is also a regular contributor to the Spanish and Catalan press.



His work has been translated into English, French, Italian, German and Spanish.

The Body Hunter Najat El Hachmi

A Feast for The Senses



Serpent's Tail
August

Translated by Peter Bush

A woman hunts for bodies and collects all different types from a broad range of sources, because she finds that to be fulfilling and freeing. But something is not right; she isn't happy. The protagonist of this novel is, in fact, a woman who goes after others in order to run away from herself, and it is only when she meets a man who simply observes and listens to her that she begins to understand what is truly happening. Gradually she sheds her obsession with hunting others and comes to discover her very own body: desired and desiring, loved and loving. It is then that she learns that hers is a story of unbounded love.

With the strength, sensuality and freshness she demonstrated in her first novel *The Last Patriarch*, Najat El Hachmi presents us with a magnificent feast for the senses and confirms herself as one of the most interesting and original voice of her generation.

“The text, in its unhampered exploration of socially turbid sexuality, is incredibly bold and skillfully written.”

El País

Najat El Hachmi Buhhu was born in Morocco and has lived in Vic since she was eight years old. She has a degree in Arab Studies from the University of Barcelona. Her previous novel has been translated into English (The Serpent's Tail), French (Actes Sud), German (Wagenbach), Romanian (Curtea Veche), Turkish (Sel Yayinlari), Italian (Newton Compton), Portuguese (Planeta Manuscrit), Dutch (Orlando) and Spanish (Planeta).



Uncertain Glory Joan Sales

The Great Spanish Civil War Novel



MacLehose Press
September

“O! how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day!”
William Shakespeare

Translated by Peter Bush

According to Juan Goytisolo, who recommended the novel *Uncertain Glory* for publication at Gallimard (1962), this work is the great novel of the Spanish Civil War not only for its careful, complex structure but also for its unique approach. Written from the viewpoint of the losing side, the novel contains no political message nor does it exalt any political party. It has withstood the test of time because of its sheer power and can be read today with the same intensity that went into its writing.

Sales’s masterpiece is a meditation on the universal themes of love, death and heroism. The

novel, set in the Spanish Civil War, is divided into four parts and is told from the perspective of the Republicans, or the losers. Joan Sales added material to later editions, thus explaining why the French translation (1962) is longer than the original Catalan version.

“*Uncertain Glory* is the best novel written in the Iberian Peninsula in the 20th century.”

Juan Goytisolo

The French edition was highly acclaimed by critics, who compared Sales to renowned authors such as **Dostoyevsky, Georges Berbanos, Graham Greene** and others. The fourth and final edition of the novel was published in 1971, but the last part, “Últimes Notícies” (Latest News), was also expanded and later became an independent section now titled *El vent de la nit* (Night Wind).

Joan Sales (Barcelona, 1912-1983) was a writer and publisher. He fought on the Madrid and Aragon fronts in the Spanish Civil War and went into exile in France in 1939. He moved to Mexico in 1942 and returned to Catalonia in 1948, when he became a publisher. His collection of poems *Viatge d'un moribund* (*A Dying Man's Journey*) was published in 1952, followed by his most famous novel *Incerta glòria*.



The Grey Notebook Josep Pla

A Must Read



New York Review of Books
November

Translated by Peter Bush

Josep Pla, one of the greatest writers in the Catalan language, published *El quadern gris* in 1966. It is a diary begun in 1918 that enabled him to discover his narrative voice, and completed in 1965 when he was a well-established writer. Josep Pla imbues the landscape and his surroundings with profound meaning that goes beyond mere description. He does not simply seek the most fitting adjective to reflect what he observes but rather searches for the seed of the emotion that it inspires in him. The cultural, political, aesthetic and moral reflections that result from observing his immediate surroundings stem from a need to discover the secret they conceal, the significance of

a fleeting yet striking impression, and the meaning behind scenes from everyday life.

“Pla’s work speaks to those who appreciate his travels on foot because there is something to be admired about writers like him, and Rimbaud and Robert Walser, for example, who wore out their shoes in the process”. -Antonio Tabucchi

Pla’s opus, solely comprising prose works, is immense. Influenced by Montaigne, Pascal, Leopardi, and Stendhal, Pla offers his own brilliant testimony of his time. He was an extremely insightful journalist who traveled widely and frequently. Traveling was not an exercise in tourism for him, but rather a discovery of life, and one that he subsequently transformed into literature. A self-declared “anti-romantic,” Pla shunned affected, artificial language. Beyond being a novelist, he was a skillful and articulate storyteller. Pla’s work is his own greatest ally.

Josep Pla (Palafrugell, 1897-1981) He began a degree in Medicine but shortly afterwards switched to Law. Soon after finishing his studies, he began writing for newspapers. In 1920 he went to Paris as the correspondent for the *La Publicidad* newspaper, and also traveled to England, Italy, Sweden, Greece, Germany and Russia.



Dark Vales Raimon Casellas

A *Fin de Siècle* Classic



Dedalus
November

Translated by Alan Yates
and Eva Bosch

A classic of *fin de siècle* Catalan literature, translated for the first time into English. The novel is a finely wrought parable, full of symbolic suggestiveness, which addresses seismic shifts in the relationship between the individual and society. Written in a period of intellectual and social ferment, the author's focus was determined by his reflections on the transformative power of art in relation to the real world of his day, expressed in this work in terms of eternal conflicts between Good and Evil, Life and Death, the Spirit and the Flesh.

A priest, banished for doctrinal heresy to an isolated, backward mountain parish, strives to achieve personal redemption by bringing salvation to his virtually sub-human flock. The local whore stirs up their passions, embodying all the forces against which the priest's reforming efforts are directed, and ambiguity surrounds the shocking denouement of that conflict. The novelist's suicide in 1910 was probably related to tensions and anxieties communicated in this text.

Very much a product of its epoch, *Dark Vales* expresses deep anxieties in the modern mind, and the work's symbolism is readily translated into terms which are directly relevant to strong tensions in our own, post-industrial, mass society.

Despite its highly stylised character the novel has a solid base in the social reality of rural Catalonia in the late nineteenth century.

Raimon Casellas (Barcelona, 1855-Sant Joan de les Abadesses, 1910) was a novelist, essayist, and controversial art critic as well as art collector. He also wrote short narrative, with titles such as *Les multitudes* (1906) and *Llibre d'històries* (1909).



Barcelona Shadows Marc Pastor

A Gothic-style Serial Killer from Barcelona



Pushkin Press
November

Translated by Mara Lethem

Barcelona Shadows [*La mala dona*] is a novel based upon the recreation of real events that took place in Barcelona at the start of the 20th century in the *Barri Xino*, a tough red-light district in the city at that time.

The reader gets a glimpse of dark and seedy corners of the neighbourhood through a fictional police investigation carried out by Inspectors Corvo and Malsano, in their pursuit of Enriqueta Martí, one of the most fearsome criminals in the city. Known as the 'Vampiress of Ponent Street,' she abducts small children to either sell them to paedophiles or kill them, drink their blood and use

their remains to make ointments for the rich.

The novel combines intrigue, terror and police investigation from a unique perspective and creates a gothic atmosphere reminiscent of works by Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle.

Death is the omniscient narrative voice in this work that is part historical novel and part detective story. Well researched and carefully constructed, it displays great narrative agility combined with a strong cinematographic touch.

Marc Pastor (Barcelona, 1977) holds a degree in Criminology and Criminal Policy, works for the Catalan police force's scientific squad and is the author of three novels. *La mala dona* has been translated into French (Actes Sud/ Jacqueline Chambon), German (Lübbe), Italian (Neri Pozza) and Spanish (RBA).



Few peoples are as
devoted to the best of
their imaginative
literature as are the
Catalans

Harold Bloom

The translation of the above-featured books received support from the Institut Ramon Llull.

The **Institut Ramon Llull** (IRL) is a public entity funded by the Catalan Government with the primary aim of promoting the Catalan Language and Culture abroad. The IRL's programmes are coordinated and carried out by three departments: Performing and Visual Arts; Literature and the Humanities; and Language and Universities. In addition to its Barcelona headquarters, the IRL has four offices abroad in the cities of London, New York, Paris and Berlin.

The **Literature and the Humanities Department** promotes the translation and presentation abroad of Catalan literature through various channels. This includes providing support to translators, publishers, non-profit organisations, literary agencies and writers. It also informs and advises foreign publishers on available funding. The IRL attends the following Book Fairs: Frankfurt, Göteborg, London, Paris and Turin, where it provides information regarding its services.

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