

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE (1833-2005)

Contemporary Catalan literature is usually considered to have begun with the 19th century *Renaixença*, or 'resurgence'; more specifically, it is commonly held to have begun with the 1833 publication of the ode *La Pàtria* (*The Fatherland*) by Bonaventura-C. Aribau (1798-1862). Along with mediaeval literature, contemporary literature is the most interesting period in the history of Catalan letters and without a doubt the most accessible to the modern reader, not only chronologically but also linguistically. This literature encompasses all the variety of any current corpus of literature: all the literary genres (poetry, narrative, theatre, essay); the differing degrees of quality and success; a variety of movements and styles; and different social, geographic, age and gender backgrounds. In this respect, on the occasion of the Guadalajara Book Fair (2004) in Mexico, where Catalan culture was the special guest, the prestigious critic and publisher Josep Maria Castellet stated in an interview that "nowadays Catalan literature has certain authors [...] that are on par with any other literature, including French, English or Spanish. This implies, at the same time, that there are quite a few authors that have been translated into other languages, and it is clear that the foreign publishers only choose based on criteria of quality. We have thus reached a level of normality."³⁰

³⁰ We provide a selection of 25 authors and 34 literary works in Catalan from all ages published by the Madrid newspaper *El País* (*Babelia*, 7-11-2004), one of the most influential in Spain, on the occasion of the Guadalajara Fair under the title "Basic Readings in Catalan Literature". Many of the titles have been translated into English, sometimes in more than one version, or into other languages too; moreover, other translations exist in English for a number of unmentioned books by the same authors. When this is the case, the title of the English translation we give here is followed by the year of publication. The selection proposed was the following: Ramon Llull (also known in English as Raymond Lully, or Lull, 1232-1316): *Llibre d'amic e amat* (*The Book of the Lover and the Beloved*, 1923, 1995); Ausiàs March (or Marc; 1400-1459): *Poesies* (*Poems*;

As mentioned before, in the Catalan-speaking lands, Romanticism was the backbone of this process of “rebirth”, which was translated into a renewed interest in the Catalan language and its literary output from the Golden Age, as well as in a parallel mythologisation of the past, especially the Middle Ages. The intermediate period was, in contrast, regarded as obscure and relatively unattractive. The *renaixencistes* called it the “*Decadència*” (‘Decline’), thus positioning themselves as the restorers and thus saviours making the 19th century “*risorgimento*” possible.

As we have seen, certain extremes in this movement are worth pointing out. For example, it should be noted that despite the importance his famous ode was given after the fact, Aribau neither composed nor wrote virtually anything else in Catalan, rather he was a prominent publisher of Spanish literature in Madrid. What is more, in terms of the Valencia *Renaixença*, it should be said that at least at first, it arose independently of the first *Renaixença* in Catalonia and Majorca, which were closely related (Bonaventura-C. Aribau, Joaquim Rubió i Ors, Marià Aguiló). The first relevant manifestation of the movement appeared in *Lo Gaiter del Llobregat* (1841; *The Piper of the Llobregat River*), by Joaquim Rubió i Ors (1818-1899), which was a collection of his poems published between 1839 and 1841 in the newspaper *Diario de Barcelona*. Two poetry anthologies, *Los trovadors nous* (1858; *The New Trouba-*

English anthologies: 1986, 1992, 2006); Joanot Martorell (1410/11-1465): *Tirant lo Blanc* (*Tirant lo Blanc* 1984, *Tirant lo Blanc [complete]* 1993 [1974]; Jacint (also *Jacinto*, or *Cinto*) Verdaguer (1845-1902): *L’Atlàntida* (*Atlantis*; ‘Cant IV’ = ‘Canto IV’, 1917), *Canigó* (*Canigó*, 2000), *En defensa pròpia* (*In Self Defence*); Àngel Guimerà (1845-1922): *Terra Baixa* (*Marta of the Lowlands*, 1914), *Maria Rosa*, *La filla del mar* (*Daughter of the Sea*); Joaquim Ruyra (1858-1939): *Marines i boscatges* (*Seaboards and Woodlands*); Joan Maragall (1860-1911): *Visions i cants* (*Visions and Songs*), *Nausica* (Engl. anthol.: 1964, 1983); Víctor Català (*nom de plume* of Caterina Albert, 1869-1966): *Solitud* (*Solitude*, 1992); Eugeni d’Ors (1881-1954): *Glosari* (*Glossary*); Josep Carner (1884-1970): *Poesia* (*Poetry*) (including part of *Els fruits saborosos* [*The Tasty Fruits*], *Arbres* [*Trees*] and *Nabi* [*Nabi*, 2001; Engl. anthol.: 1962]); Carles Riba (1893-1959): *Elegies de Bierville* (*Bierville Elegies*, 1995); J. V. Foix (1893-1987): *Sol, i de dol* (*Alone, and in Mourning*), *Les irrealms omegues* (*The Unreal Omegas*; Engl. anthol.: 1998); Josep M. de Sagarra (1894-1961): *Memòries* (*Memoirs*); Josep Pla (1897-1981): *El quadern gris* (*The Grey Notebook*); Llorenç Villalonga (1897-1980): *Bearn o la sala de les nines* (*The Dolls’ Room*, 1988); Pere Quart (*nom de plume* of Joan Oliver, 1899-1986): *Les decapitacions* (*The Decapitations*), *Vacances pagades* (*Paid Vacations*); Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1982): *La plaça del Diamant* (*The Pigeon Girl* 1967, *The Time of the Doves* 1980); Joan Sales (1912-1994): *Incerta glòria* (*Uncertain Glory*, 2002); Pere Calders (1912-1984): *Cròniques de la veritat oculta* (*Chronicles of the Hidden Truth*); Salvador Espriu (1913-1985): *Cementiri de Sinera* (*Sinera Cemetery*, 1988), *La pell de brau* (*The Bull-hide*, 1977, 1987; Engl. anthol. 1989, 1997); Joaquim Amat-Piniella (1913-1974): *K. L. Reich*; Joan Vinyoli (1914-1984): *Domini màgic* (*Magical Dominion*), *Passeig d’aniversari* (*Birthday Stroll*); Joan Perucho (1920-2000): *Les històries naturals* (*Natural History*, 1989); Joan Fuster (1922-1992): *Diccionari per a ociosos* (*Dictionary for the Idle*, 1992), *Nosaltres els valencians* (*We, the Valencians*); and Gabriel Ferrater (1922-1972): *Les dones i els dies* (*Women and Days*, 2004). Additionally, see pages 188-189 for a further selection (the ten most relevant 20th century authors) suggested by members of the Society of Writers in the Catalan Language in 2000.



A 500 peseta note (worth €3) issued in 1971. The obverse displays a portrait of the young poet and priest Jacint (nicknamed *mossèn* ['Father'] *Cinto*) Verdaguer (1842-1902), the outstanding figure of the literary movement known as the *Renaixença* ('resurgence', 'rebirth'). The reverse side shows the Canigó mountain (in French, *Canigou*) in the Pyrenees, seen from the French-Catalan village of Vernet (officially, *Vernet-les-Bains*). The name of the mountain is the title of Verdaguer's epic poem (1886; English translation: *Canigó*, 2000).



Poster for the film *Marta of the Lowlands* (1913), a cinematographic version in English of the play *Terra Baixa* (1897; *Lowlands*) by Àngel Guimerà. Along with the poetry of Jacint Verdaguer and the novels by Narcís Oller, Guimerà's plays, which are still staged today, placed 19th century Catalan literature on par with its contemporary European literatures.

dours) and *Los trovadors moderns* (1859; *The Modern Troubadours*) by Antoni de Bofarull (1821-1892), laid the foundations of the Floral Games (*Jocs Florals*). This literary and social event, reinstated in imitation of homonymous mediaeval events, primarily consisted of, as mentioned in previous chapters, a yearly poetry contest in which all the prominent poets of the day participated. The resounding success of the Floral Games in Barcelona led similar events to be held in the rest of the Catalan-speaking countries, such as the Floral Games put on by *Lo Rat-Penat* ('The Bat');

Valencia, starting in 1879, although these bilingual, in both Catalan and Spanish) or those by the *Companyia Literària de la Ginesta d'Or* ('Literary Company of the Golden Broom'; French Catalonia, starting in 1924, in both Catalan and French).

Three key authors in the *Renaixença* made it possible for Catalan literature to be on par with its contemporary literatures around Europe as of the last quarter of the 19th century: Verdaguer, Guimerà and Oller. The quality of the works vying in the Floral Games steadily rose, and in 1877 the young priest Jacint (*Cinto*) Verdaguer won the prize for his epic poem, *L'Atlàntida* (*Atlantis*; Engl. transl. of 'Canto IV': 1917). Verdaguer (1845-1902) is the most important author of the 19th century, and his role in Catalan letters has been compared to that of the figure of Ramon Llull in the 13th century due to the revival brought about by the advent of his poetic language. Towards around 1890, he entered a tumultuous stage in his life, leading him to a dramatic confrontation with his protector (the Marquis of Comillas, at that time the wealthiest man in Spain), and his own bishop, deeds which caused major upheaval in Catalan society of the time. While in *L'Atlàntida* he achieved widespread success in Catalonia and unprecedented international recognition (it has been translated into twelve languages and was set to music by Manuel de Falla), in his second epic poem Verdaguer evokes a mythological, ideal place called *Canigó* (1886; *Canigó*, 2000), named after a mountain in the Northern (French) Pyrenees (called *Canigou* in French), enabling him to evoke the origins of a real country – Catalonia. What is more, Verdaguer also wrote other books of poems on religious, popular, mystical and patriotic themes, and he is also widely heralded as a first-rate prose writer. His outstanding works include travel accounts such as *Dietari d'un pelegrí a Terra Santa* (1889; *Diary of a Pilgrim to the Holy Land*) and his journalistic articles, like the dramatic series "*En defensa propia*" (1895-1987; "In Self Defence").

Àngel Guimerà (1845-1924), on the other hand, is regarded as the venerable reviver of Catalan theatre. Prior to him, noteworthy dramatists included Josep Robrenyo (1783-1838) and Frederic Soler (1839-1895), better known by his pseudonym Serafí Pitarra, who after rebellious and bohemian works written in his youth, was to end up as the dramatist *par excellence* of the Barcelona bourgeoisie. In terms of Guimerà, who was born on the Canary Islands and whose mother tongue was Spanish, his work was marked by the stigma of being an illegitimate child as well as a romantic disillusionment in his youth. He also wrote poetry and was one of the founders of the *La Renaixença*, first a magazine (1871-1881) and later a newspaper (1881-1905). His earliest plays, such as *Mar i Cel* (1888; *Sea and Sky*), still betray a Romantic influence which would gradually veer towards a greater emphasis on realism, such as in his landmark trilogy: *Maria Rosa* (1894), *Terra Baixa* (1897; *Marta of the Lowlands*, 1914) and *La filla del mar* (1900; *Daughter of the Sea*). The strength of these works is still appreciated by modern-day audiences, and their outstanding success when first published and performed can be seen in their numerous translations to other western lan-

guages. What is more, his most popular work, *Terra Baixa*, was adapted to musicals (such as the opera *Tiefland*, in German, with music by Eugen d'Albert) and film (1907; *Marta of the Lowlands*, England, 1913; *Tiefland* by Leni Riefenstahl, Germany, 1940/44-1954); *Tierra Baja* by M. Zacarías, Mexico, 1950).

In terms of novels, it should be mentioned that this was the last literary genre to join the *Renaixença*. Among a variety of reasons put forth to explain this delay, prominent are the facts that the earliest Romantic Catalan novelists wrote in Spanish instead of in Catalan; that the contemporaneous works of authors such as Walter Scott, Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas were first translated into Spanish; and – no less importantly – that publishers and potential authors were reluctant to take the “novel” step (not to mention economic and critical risk) of publishing a novel in Catalan, a genre that had gone virtually uncultivated since the end of the Middle Ages. The first forays into novel-writing during the *Renaixença* were *L'orfeneta de Menargues* (1862; *The Little Orphan Girl of Menargues*) by Antoni de Bofarull, and *Julita* (1874) by Martí Genís i Aguilar (1847-1932). However, more than the Romantic model, the impetus behind the Catalan novel ended up coming from Realism and novels of local customs and manners. The former trend was manifested first in the coarse *ruralism* of authors such as Marià Vayreda (1853-1903) with *La Punyalada* (1893; *The Stab*); the latter with the works of Emili Vilanova (1840-1905). However, these and other authors foreshadow the appearance of Narcís Oller (1864-1930) and his six novels and six books of short stories, a corpus that marked the introduction of the narrative genre into Catalan within the hegemonic currents that modernity then represented in Europe. Oller's career spanned from epigones of a somewhat Romantic tone, to forays into the realms of Realism and Naturalism, closing with the beginnings of *Modernisme* in the transition from the 19th to 20th century. His first novel, *La Papallona* (1882; *The Butterfly*), a rather melodramatic story of seduction and abandonment, was translated into several different languages, with the French version begin deemed worthy of a prologue by Émile Zola. *L'escanyapobres* (1884; *The Usurer*), closer in style to Naturalism, touches on the classic theme of greed. One year later, he published *Vilaniu*, a portrait of a disturbing and suffocating life of a provincial city. Nonetheless, the major novel of Barcelona in the 1880s – and the first to mythologise this city – was *La febre d'or* (1890 and 1892; *Gold Fever*), a total novel in which Oller portrays the rise and fall of a Barcelona family, parallel to the rise and subsequent crash in the stock market, as well as the growth and spectacular transformation of Barcelona in preparation for the 1888 Universal Exposition. *La bogeria* (1899; *The Madness*) touches on determinism, a central theme of naturalists, through the history of a madman. And finally, with *Pilar Prim* (1906) he inclines more towards the psychological novel.

In the Land of Valencia, Teodor Llorente and Vicent W. Querol, without a doubt the best 19th century Valencian poets, spearheaded the bourgeois and conservative

Valencian *Renaixença*, which would ended imposing itself on the popular and progressive sector of Carmel Navarro, better known under the pseudonym of Constantí Llombart. Llorente (1836-1911) was the most influential literary personality of the 19th century in the Valencian Country. Ideologically, he attempted to keep cultural Valencianism outside the political realm, and especially to distance it from Catalan regionalism-nationalism. Despite the fact that he acknowledged the unity of Catalan, he constantly referred to it as the mythical “*llemosí*” (‘speech of Lemoges’; for an explanation and the connotations of this term, see page 107.) Under the influence of European Romanticism, he wrote poetry evoking landscapes and events, such as *Llibret de versos* (1885; *Little Book of Verses*) and *Cartes de Soldat* (1897; *Soldier’s Letters*), amongst others. Like Llorente, Vicent W. Querol (1837-1889) was influenced by the Majorcan Marià Aguiló and was the author of *Rimes catalanes* (1877; *Catalan Rhymes*, which as mentioned above was reissued in 1891 under the abbreviated title of *Rimes [Rhymes]*), a modification of obvious significance. Constantí Llombart (1848-1893), on the other hand, a writer with a republican and federalist ideology, was also a cultural activist and founder of the cultural society called *Lo Rat-Penat* (‘The Bat’) of Valencia, which once outside his stewardship veered towards Llorente’s brand of conservatism. Defender of the common language of the Land of Valencia, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, Llombart wrote poetry, theatre and *Los fills de la morta viva* (1879-1885; *Children of the Living Dead*, in reference to Valencian Catalan), a biographical essay on Valencian writers from the 18th and 19th century.

Unlike the Land of Valencia, on Majorca and the other islands, the “Catalanness” of their language was overall not a cause of controversy amongst writers, and the relationship with their colleagues in Catalonia had been fluid since the beginning of the *Renaixença*. The ideals of this movement were swiftly embraced by poets such as Marià Aguiló, Tomàs Forteza and Josep-Lluís Pons i Gallarza. Belonging to the stigmatised minority *xueta* (probably from the Majorcan words for ‘little Jew’ and ‘bacon’, referring to Majorcans reputed to have Jewish blood), Marià Aguiló (1825-1897) stood out as a scholar (folklorist, philologist and bibliophile) and poet. His studies and profound knowledge of the Catalan language blossomed in one of the earliest dictionaries of Catalan on historical principles. As a Romantic poet, he wrote especially on issues such as the fatherland, love and death. Through his influence, his cousin Tomàs Forteza (1838-1898), a *xueta* too, but a fervent Roman Catholic, also came to write poetry in Catalan. Lluís Pons i Gallarza (1823-1894) was a Catalan by birth who spent almost half his life in Majorca, and his poetic oeuvre is renowned for his Romantic rendering of the classical subject of the *Beatus ille*.

As for Northern Catalonia and Alghero, their literary *Renaixença* ended up gelling as of 1880, largely as a result of the prior vigorous *Renaixença* in the Principality of Catalonia. Though late, this awakening contributed to shaping a certain local tradition: Northern Catalonia produced such prominent poets as Antoni Jofre (1801-

1864), Josep Bonafont (1854-1935) and Justí Pepratx (1821-1901), although the most popular poet from Northern Catalonia was undoubtedly Albert Saisset (who wrote under the popular pseudonym of *Un Tal* ('So-and-So'; 1842-1894), quite a distance from the *Renaixença* thesis and author of well-known humorous poems. In Alghero, noteworthy figures include the pedagogues and poets Josep Frank (1830-1900) and Joan Palomba (1876-1953), founder along with others of "La Palmavera" in 1906, an explicitly Catalanist group whose members had direct relations with Catalonia, and thanks to which the continuity of literature in Catalan in this Italian city on Sardinia was upheld.

Turning now to the 20th century, with all its historical avatars, it can be claimed that as a whole it represented the consolidation and diversification of Catalan literature in all the Catalan-speaking territories, often alongside the contemporary trends in world literature. Many of its writers have been published beyond the borders of Catalan through translations into a variety of languages, and some have been (and are) even suggested as recipients of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Certain foreign writers have even adopted Catalan as one of their literary languages, as happened with the Czech columnist and novelist Monika Zgustová, the English narrator and scriptwriter Matthew Tree or the American critic and columnist Sam Abrams. In the same sense, a number of writers whose first language was Spanish have also occasionally written in Catalan, such as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán or Eduardo Mendoza. One can get an inkling of the scope and variety of Catalan-language literature and 20th century writers (up to 1975) in the almost 2,300 pages contained in four thick volumes of the eleven making up the *Història de la literatura catalana (History of Catalan Literature)*, the standard general history of Catalan literature edited by A. Comas, M. de Riquer and J. Molas; or in a good part of the 3,100 bio-bibliographic or conceptual articles in the recent *Nou diccionari 62 de la literatura catalana* (2000; *New 62 Dictionary of Catalan Literature*), edited by E. Bou, which closes with authors born before 1950. (Other merely quantitative indicators, such as the *Qui és qui* ['Who's Who'] database of the Institute of Catalan Letters [*Institució de les Lletres Catalanes*, or ILC] registered 1,526 living writers in Catalan as of 16-3-2006; and the web of the Society of Writers in the Catalan Language [*Associació d'Escriptors en Llengua Catalana*, or AELC] claimed to have over 900 members in all the Catalan-speaking territories as of March 2006.)

Here we can only make a brief survey of the main literary movements and the most prominent authors of the 20th century, and for reasons of perspective, especially those who are no longer with us. A survey or inventory by the Catalan-language newspaper *El Punt* (2000) to members of the aforementioned Society of Writers resulted in a tally of the ten most important deceased authors, which included Pere Calders,

Josep Carner, Salvador Espriu, J.V. Foix, Joan Fuster, Josep Pla, Carles Riba, Mercè Rodoreda, Josep-Maria de Sagarra and Llorenç Villalonga. But an only slightly less restrictive criterion would have allowed great figures such as Joan Maragall and Caterina Albert (who can only count as 19th century writers if the definitions are particularly rigorous) to be included, as well as others we will briefly deal with below.

Between 1892 and 1911, approximately, *belles lettres* and the arts in Catalonia joined the broad cultural movement characterised by its zeal to break with the past and become up-to-date — *Modernisme* ('Modernism'). Some of the modernist writers and artists (who might include the famous architect Antoni Gaudí, better known abroad by his name in Spanish, *Antonio*) suggested regenerating the country by opening up to Europe, while others favoured decadent positions or currents such as *l'art pour l'art* ('Art for Art's sake'). Taken as a whole, this movement, which can be related to similar developments such as *Art Nouveau*, *Modern Style*, *Jugendstil* and *Sezession*, attempted for the first time to establish a *national* culture in the strong sense of the word, thus distinguishing it considerably from its contemporary *Modernismo* in Spanish literature. The modernist artists, with their more rebellious stances, ended up being swept away by the bourgeois, writers of "order" from the *Noucentisme* movement (roughly translatable as 'Twentieth century-ism') a classically-leaning movement that appeared in around 1906 and which, from the death of the poet Joan Maragall (1911) until the *coup d'état* by General Primo de Rivera in 1923, became the predominant cultural and aesthetic ideology in the most active circles of the Barcelona elite.

Joan Maragall (1860-1911) personifies *Modernisme* in poetry. His oeuvre, which is diverse and at times even contradictory, represents the critical voice of the bourgeoisie to which he belonged, and it includes the influence of Goethe and Nietzsche in his earliest books, as well as mystical lyricism, spanning a conciliatory pro-Spanish vision to clearly Catalanist attitudes. He is the author of some of the most iconic poems in Catalan literature, such as the popular *Vaca cega* (1895; *The Blind Cow*, translated into Spanish by his friend the philosopher and writer Miguel de Unamuno), *El comte Arnau* (1906-1911; *Count Arnold*), and *Cant espiritual* (1909-1910; *Spiritual Canto*) [Maragall English anthologies: 1964, 1983]. In narrative, Caterina Albert stands out (1869-1966), best known by her *nom de plume* of Víctor Català. She was the author of *Solitud* (1905; *Solitude*, 1992), the most universal novel of Catalan *Modernisme*, translated into seven languages, and one of the best Catalan novels of all times. Albert was one of the first women to courageously document the inner tension of women subjected to male domination. In *Solitud*, she narrates the inner turmoil of the main character, a young married woman who has to live in isolation in the mountains with her indolent husband. Other prominent Modernist writers were Santiago Rusiñol (1869-1931), a bohemian artist and author of the satirical novel *L'auca del senyor Esteve* (1907; *Mister Esteve's Couplets*); Joaquim Ruyra (1858-1939), who wrote three books of short stories on seafaring and coastal life between 1903 and

1928, including *Marines i boscatges* (1903; *Seaboards and Woodlands*), reviewed and subsequently enlarged in *Pinya de Rosa* (1920; *Rose-knot*, with the novel *El rem de trenta-quatre* [*The Long Oar*, 1994]); and Raimon Casellas (1855-1910), author of the renowned *Els sots feréstecs* (1901; *The Wild Hollows*), a novel about rural conflicts.

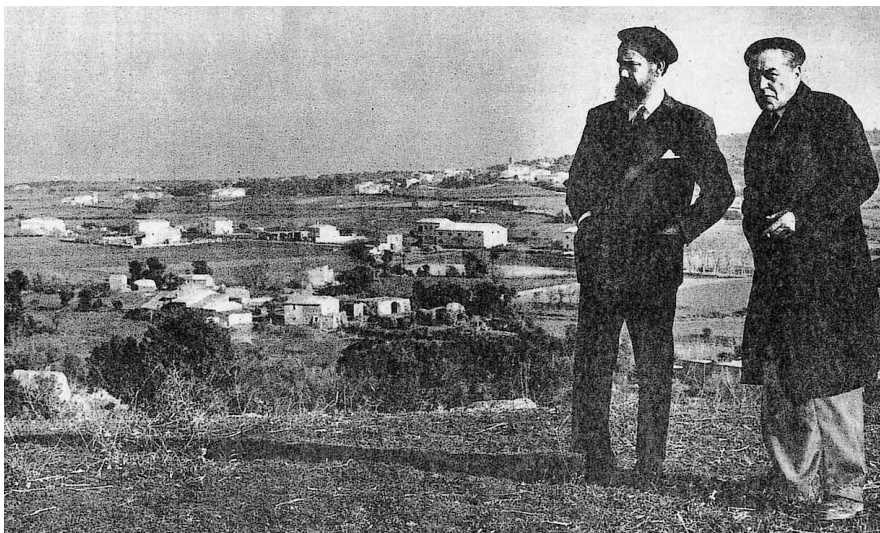
Noucentisme crystallised as of 1906, especially around the figure of Eugeni d'Ors (1881-1954), its maximum ideologue and propagandist (*Glosari* [1906-1921]; *Glossary*: essay-style articles that were published daily in the catalanist, conservative newspaper *La Veu de Catalunya* [*The Voice of Catalonia*]), who nonetheless ended up emigrating to Madrid. The same year, the appearance of the poetry collections *Els fruits saborosos* (*The Tasty Fruits*) by Josep Carner (1884-1970) and *La muntanya d'ametistes* (*The Amethyst Mountain*) by Guerau de Liost (pseudonym of Jaume Bofill, 1878-1933) heralded poetry's adherence to *Noucentisme*. Carner, who has been consecrated with the epithet "prince of poets", also published collections of ironic poetry, such as *La paraula en el vent* (*The Word on the Wind*) and *Auques i ventalls* (*Couplets and Fans*), both in 1914. Later, as a member of the diplomatic corps, he published *El cor quiet* (1925; *The Still Heart*), which was a foretaste of *Nabí*, his most mature work, published when he was in exile (1941; *Nabi*, 2001) [Carner English anthology: 1962].

The Majorcan generation after the *Renaixença*, clustered around the poets Costa i Llobera and Alcover, tends to be classified within what is usually called the Majorcan School. Parallel to *Noucentisme* in Catalonia, this "school" shared multiple aspects with the former movement in addition to its chronology, including aesthetic formalism, a certain Mediterranean-style classicism and the cultivation of landscape poetry. Miquel Costa i Llobera (1854-1922), a priest from a wealthy rural background, poet and translator, is primarily known for the sixteen odes in his successful *Horacianes* (1906; *Horatians*) and for his famous poem "El Pi de Formentor" (1875; 'The Pinetree of Formentor'). Joan Alcover (1854-1926), a lawyer, had several moments of approximation to and then withdrawing from linguistic and literary Catalanism, and he served as a bridge for the young Josep Carner. *Cap al tard* (1909: *Towards Evening*) contains his most celebrated poems, among them "La Balanguera" (from the name of a female folk character), based on a popular Majorcan song, which has become the official anthem of the island of Majorca — but as a patriotic song has had other uses in the Catalan-speaking lands as a whole, especially when more explicit anthems were forbidden. Joan Alcover should not be confused with Antoni M. Alcover (1862-1932), the Majorcan priest who was a linguist and folklorist. Antoni M. Alcover's work as folklorist is perhaps his most renowned activity in Majorca today: with the pseudonym of Jordi des Racó he published several series of Majorcan traditional tales such as *Aplec de rondalles mallorquines* (1896; *Folk Tales of Mallorca*, 1999). Alcover is especially well remembered today for the planning and direction of his *opera magna*: the 10-volume *Diccionari català-valencià-balear* (1926-62), regard-

ed as one of the most significant lexicographical monuments in all Romance languages.

For its part, the European avant-garde was primarily reflected in two Catalan poets: Salvat-Papasseit and Foix. The poetry of Joan Salvat-Papasseit (1894-1924), son of a modest family and frail in health, shifted between a spontaneous archaism tinged with futurism, and touched on the topic of love on the brink of death [English anthology: 1982]. The works of J.V. Foix (1893-1987) synthesised both the practices rooted in Paris movements as well as the influence of the Occitan troubadours, along with *dolce stil nuovo* and the Catalan classics. His poetry collections *Gertrudis* (1927), *KRTU* (1932) and especially *Sol, i de dol* (1947; *Alone, and in Mourning*) and *Les irrealms omegas* (1948; *The Unreal Omegas*) are his most celebrated works [English anthologies: 1987, 1998, 1999].

Other authors who began their careers in the 1920s were the prose writer Josep Pla, the poet Carles Riba and the dramatist, novelist and poet Josep-Maria de Sagarra. Many consider Josep Pla (1897-1981) to be the patriarch of contemporary Catalan prose. Connoisseur and admirer of the works of Montaigne and Voltaire, he was the author of a prolific literary output (his complete works fill almost sixty volumes) with a sceptical and mocking tone. He cultivated an array of literary genres, includ-



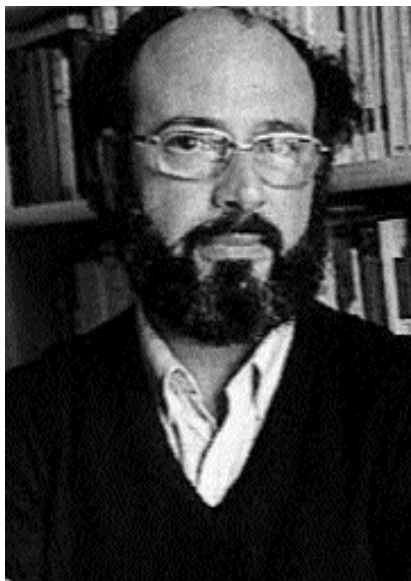
Josep Pla (1897-1981) on the right, next to future Nobel Prize winner for literature, the bearded Camilo José Cela, contemplating the Ampurdan Plain (NE Catalonia). Pla is heralded as the patriarch of contemporary Catalan prose. Author of a refined sense of irony, clearly indebted to Montaigne and Voltaire, his complete works fill almost sixty volumes of journalistic articles, memoirs, travel accounts, and other writings.

ing journalism, travel accounts, memorialism (*El quadern gris*; *The Grey Notebook*), biography (*Homenots*; *Well-built Men*), and so forth [available in English: *Gibraltar* 1955, *Seeing Catalonia* 1983]. About Josep-Maria de Sagarra (1894-1961) it can be said that while still alive he became a popular myth. From the pre-war era, two plays of customs and manners stand out which are still successfully staged: *L'hostal de la Glòria* (*Gloria's Hostel*) and *El cafè de la Marina* (*The Coast Café*), as well as the novel *Vida privada* (1932; *Private Life*), an ironic vision of patrician Barcelona in the 1920s. From the post-war period, he translated into Catalan Dante's *Divine Comedy* and twenty-eight works by Shakespeare. From the poetry oeuvre of Carles Riba (1893-1959), a university professor of Greek and careful reader of Hölderlin, Mallarmé and Valéry, one of his most prominent works is *Elegies de Bierville* (1942; *Bierville Elegies*, 1995). Composed in the hardship of exile and employing a lofty metaphysical tone, they are regarded as one of the highest points in Catalan poetry of all ages. In addition to composing other poetry collections, such as *Salvatge cor* (1952; *Wild Heart*), he also translated many Greek and Latin classics into Catalan (the *Odyssey*, Virgil's eclogues, Aeschylus, Sophocles and others), as well as two books from the Bible, and modern writers such as Poe, Rilke and Kavafis [Riba English anthologies 1964, 1970]. Carles Soldevila (1892-1967), from an educated middle-class background, wrote an extensive range of work in a variety of genres and tones. His best-known novel is *Fanny* (1929), the story of a girl from a good family whose fall from grace sees her ending up as a dancer in a musichall. In spite of formal innovations such as its Joycean inner monologue, its spectacular success pertains far more to its sexual daring and the consequent controversy that this caused. His comedy *Civilitzats, tanmateix!* (1921; [*Civilised All the Same!*]), the story of a love triangle on a desert island, was particularly successful in Barcelona. It was an even greater hit in France in a plagiarised version by a future *académicien* – and later taken up by Hollywood as *The Little Hut* (1957), starring Ava Gardner and David Niven. Finally, the Majorcan poet Bartomeu Rosselló-Pòrcel (1913-1938), a close friend of the poet Salvador Espriu, died at a tender age. Nonetheless, his brief oeuvre has bequeathed to us one of the most breathtaking lyrical voices of the 20th century.

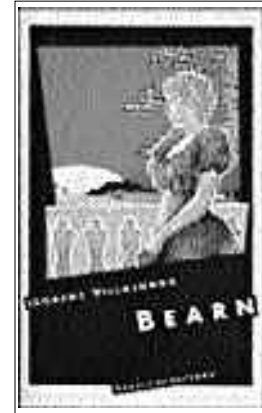
Without a doubt, the most popular author during the Franco era was the aforementioned Salvador Espriu (1913-1985), whose name was put forward several times as a candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature. An author who cultivated a variety of genres, including theatre (such as *Primera història d'Esther* [1948; *The Story of Esther*, 1989]), his works broadly reflected the Mediterranean world, especially that of the Greeks and Jews. Prior to the Spanish Civil War, he had gained fame as a narrator (*Laia*, 1932). In the post-war period, he made a clear civic commitment in favour of reconciliation amongst Spaniards and peaceful coexistence amongst the different peoples and languages of Spain (his most popular book of poems, along these lines, was *La pell del brau* (1960; *The Bull-hide*, 1978 and 1988, in reference to the popular

nickname for Spain). In a parallel fashion, he pursued his literary examination of the subject of death, the common thread of his works as a whole, in other poetry collections such as *Cementiri de Sinera* (1946; *Sinera Cemetery*, 1988) and *Setmana Santa* (1971; *Holy Week*) [selected poetry in English: 1975, 1989, 1997].

The most noteworthy deceased prose writers of the 20th century include Llorenç Villalonga, Mercè Rodoreda and Joan Sales, as well as the novelist and short-story writer Jesús Moncada; although the latter died in 2005, he published almost his entire oeuvre in the previous century. Likewise, special mention should be made of the narrator Pere Calders and the essayist Joan Fuster. The first four are hailed as the authors of four of the most important and universal Catalan novels of the 20th century (the fifth of which being *Solitud* [1905; *Solitude*, 1992] by Caterina Albert, discussed above) and as such, have been broadly disseminated around the world through translation. In 1961, Llorenç Villalonga (1897-1980), a psychiatrist from Palma, Majorca, published *Bearn o la sala de les nines* (*The Dolls' Room*, 1988), his most important novel, in which he uses an elegiac tone to tell of the decline of the family and world of a rural, cultivated Majorcan aristocrat. This novel has often been likened to *The Leopard* by the Italian prince Tomasi di Lampedusa, although it was written before. The other great novel that contributed to marking a decisive turning point in 20th century Catalan narrative was *La plaça del Diamant* (1962; *The Pigeon Girl* 1967, *The Times of the Doves* 1980) by the Barcelona author Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1982), who published five other novels in addition to this [also in English: *Two Tales* 1983, *My Christina and Other Stories* 1984, *Camelia Street* 1993, *Broken Mirror* 2006]. Colombian Nobel Literature Prize laureate Gabriel García Márquez, captivated by *The Pigeon Girl* or *The Times of the Doves*, claimed that it was the “loveliest novel published in Spain since the Civil War”. Related to the narrative of



The Aragonese-Catalan writer, Jesús Moncada (1941-2005) is considered one of the great prose writers of the Catalan language. Taken as a whole, his fiction work – the short stories and novels – is recognised as being one of the 20th century's most solid. Most especially, *Camí de sirga* (1988: *The Towpath*, 1994) is among the half dozen novels in the 20th century that are most admired both by public and critics alike. His early death was one of the greatest losses to Catalan literature in recent years.



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Covers from two translations of the novel *La plaça del Diamant* (1962; *The Pigeon Girl* 1967, *The Time of the Doves*, 1980) by Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1982). Influenced by the works of Proust, Woolf, Joyce and Freud, the narrative by this Barcelona writer marked a clear landmark in the 20th century Catalan novel. Together with the novels of Rodoreda, *Bearn* o *la sala de les nines* by Llorenç Villalonga (1897-1980) contributed to the revival of this genre within 20th century Catalan literature. *The Doll's Room* has been often likened to Lampedusa's *Leopard* because of its subject, setting and tone although Villalonga's novel was written before.

Proust, Woolf and Joyce, and influenced by Freud's theories, the main character in this novel is a young woman from a working-class Barcelona neighbourhood who narrates in first person, employing a poetic, emotional tone, her private and collective experiences from before, during and after the Spanish Civil War. Another writer whose work is of considerable stature is Pere Calders (1912-1994). With writing published as far back as before the Spanish Civil War, and as one of the representatives of the generation of writers living in exile in Latin America, he did not become popular until the late 1970s. His best-known works, tinged with irony and fantasy, include short stories like *Cròniques de la veritat oculta* (1954; *Chronicles of the Hidden Truth*) and the novel *Ronda naval sota la boira* (1966; *Naval Patrol under the Mist*), probably his most successful work in prose, although he is the author of other novels as well [Calders Narrative titles in English: *Brush* 1982, *The Virgin of the Railway and other stories* 1991]. He is also regarded as the literary mentor of the then-young Jesús Moncada (Mequinensa, Aragon Strip, 1941-Barcelona 2005). Though he died prematurely, Moncada translated Verne and Dumas into Catalan, but was mainly the author of half a dozen unforgettable books published between 1985 and 2004. His novels and short stories show an attempt to preserve the memory of his birthplace, Mequinensa, and its people between the late 19th century and 1971, the year when the town was submerged under the waters of the Ebro river when it was turned into a reservoir. With his usual style somewhere between ironic and lifelike, yet with an elegiac tone and undercurrent, that

sepia world on the verge of disappearing is embodied most successfully in *Camí de sirga* (1988; *The Towpath*, 1994). Translated into around fifteen different languages, the novel elevates both Mequinensa and its varied human microcosm to the level of myth, and it makes this book one of the most unanimously celebrated Catalan novels in the last quarter of the 20th century. In the case of Joan Sales (Barcelona, 1912-1983), he was known more for being Villalonga and Rodoreda's editor than for his own brief oeuvre or his translations into Catalan (of Dostoyevski, Kazantzakis and Mauriac). Regarded as a "Catholic novelist" along the lines of Green or Böll, his most celebrated book was the war novel *Incerta glòria* (1956; *Uncertain Glory* 2002). According to the renowned critic and writer, Valentí Puig, this is "one of the greatest novels in Catalan literature". The title, taken from a line by Shakespeare ("The uncertain glory of an April day", from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*) refers to the calm enthusiasm with which the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic was greeted on an April day in 1931 – just as the inadvertent countdown to a fratricidal conflagration commenced. As a (Communist) officer in the Army of the Republic, Sales was stationed on the front in Aragon, which he made use of to set his novel, and where he witnessed the successive slaughter of young soldiers. Forced into exile in France and Mexico, and turning once again to the Catholic faith of his childhood, he composed this complex, well-rounded war novel. It has been pointed out that his four main characters, reflecting very different individualities, all seem like flesh-and-blood characters as opposed to predictable stock heroes. Despite the obvious quality of the novel (including its "heterodox" model of language), ideological rather than literary reasons (a moral vision of the Civil War that was unacceptable to both winners and losers) condemned both novelist and novel to virtual ostracism.

Joan Fuster (1922-1992) was the greatest cultivator of the genre of essay. A Valencian, he has been considered one of the best European essayists; his *Diccionari per a ociosos* (1964; *Dictionary for the Idle*, 1992), inspired by Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, is regarded as one of his best works. Like the latter, his articles touch on a wide variety of subjects from a humanistic perspective shaded with caustic humour and irony. A writer of articles, scholar of the history of Catalan language and literature, literary critic and poet, he was, however, primarily known as one of the principal ideologues of the Catalan Countries, as well as for being the catalyst during the cultural – and partly political – renaissance of *el País Valencià* (the Valencian Country) during the Franco dictatorship. In this realm, his best known essay (which did not escape bitter controversy at the time) is *Nosaltres els valencians* (1960; *We, the Valencians*), with a historical subject matter and a vindictive tone.

Other deceased authors not included in the aforementioned survey, but who undoubtedly also deserve being mentioned are: Marià Manent (1898-1988), perhaps better known for his work as a critic and his translations into Catalan (including works by Keats, Pasternak, Andersen, Blake, Coleridge and Kipling) than for his brief yet



The publication of the novel *La Pell Freda* (2002: *Cold Skin*, 2005) by Albert Sánchez Piñol, represented a remarkable moment for Catalan literature. This “blend of Conrad and Lovecraft” was the first Catalan novel to hit the international best-seller lists and has translation copyrights reserved for some twenty languages.

elegant poetic oeuvre [Manent English anthologies: 1984, 1988]; Vicent Andrés Estellés (1924-1993), according to Joan Fuster the best Valencian poet since Ausias March and author of realistic and coarse poetry centring on love, sex and death, though also on civic commitment [Andrés Estellés English anthology: 1992]; Joan Brossa (1919-1998), a nonconformist poet who rejected the conventional divisions between literary (or artistic) genres, and who produced a varied oeuvre that would most certain fall under the label of “total art” [Brossa English anthology: 1973, 1992, 2000]; and Gabriel Ferrater (1922-1972) who, remote from the prevailing social realism of his time, was the author of a poetic oeuvre in the English tradition, articulated around moral experience and reflection.

The last third of the 20th century witnessed the passing of other no less interesting authors who as a whole contributed to overcoming the wasteland of the cultural and linguistic desert that the Franco dictatorship attempted to impose. Amongst the poets, we should briefly mention Clementina Arderiu (1889-1976), Pere Quart (*nom de plume* of Joan Oliver, 1899-1986), Agustí Bartra (1908-1982), Joan Vinyoli (1914-1984), Blai Bonet (1926-1997) and Miquel Bauçà (1952-2005). Nowadays somewhat forgotten, Manuel de Pedrolo (1918-1990) was one of the most honoured poets writ-

ers in Catalan literature; he likewise touched all the literary genres (including translations of Faulkner, Dos Passos, Kerouac, Miller, Sartre, Robbe-Grillet and others into Catalan), but the enormous popularity he enjoyed in life came mainly from his extensive narrative oeuvre, especially from his science fiction novel *Mecanoscrit del segon origen* (1974; *Typescript of the Second Origin*), a true best-seller for years on end (more than one million copies sold), especially amongst young readers. The successful narrator and journalist Montserrat Roig (1946-1991) devoted her works to her commitment to Catalan culture, the political left and feminism. Mercè Rodoreda considered her one of her “epigones”. She stands out as a novelist for her novel *El temps de les cireres* (1977; *The Cherry Season*), part of a tetralogy, which focuses on the history of the main character as a woman in the upper-class neighbourhoods of Barcelona at the end of the Franco dictatorship. Her journalistic output includes the renowned, well-documented research report *Els catalans als camps Nazis* (1977; *Catalans in the Nazi Concentration Camps*) and *L'agulla daurada* (1985; *The Golden Needle*), the result of an enamoured stint in Saint Petersburg during the late Soviet era. Her attitudes towards life largely coincided with those of another writer, Maria-Mercè Marçal (1952-1998), an impassioned poet and activist, who also died prematurely. Joan Perucho (Barcelona 1920-Barcelona, 2003) was included by Harold Bloom in his highly restricted “Catalan canon” (2002). A rural judge until retirement, and a highly respected art critic and journalist, he stands out for his narrative of the wondrous (such as *Històries naturals* [1960; *Natural History*, 1989]) and *Les aventures del cavaller Kosmas* [1981; *The Adventures of the Knight Kosmas*]). The death of Miquel Martí i Pol (Roda de Ter, Barcelona, 1929-Vic, Barcelona, 2003) represented the disappearance of the most widely read Catalan poet in recent years. Born into a working-class family in inland Catalonia, his physical and speech abilities were affected by illness when he was 41. His poetry swings between historical realism and reflections on death. He also translated Saint-Exupéry, Beauvoir, Barthes and Zola, amongst others. Martí i Pol’s popularity during his lifetime is solely comparable to that enjoyed in his day by Salvador Espriu, with whom he shares the honour of being put forth as a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature [available in English: *Vacation Notebook* 1995 = *Quadern de vacances* 1976].

To close this chapter, given the lack of proper historical perspective, we will limit ourselves to citing some of the living authors who are generally most widely hailed and accepted by current critics and the reading public. In the field of narrative, important writers include Quim Monzó (Barcelona, 1952), a short-story writer and journalist, probably the best contemporary narrator, one who is revitalising the genre and with the most far-reaching influence, and one of the two or three current writers who are most popular and enjoy the widest international reach. Baltasar Porcel (Andratx, Majorca, 1937), Isabel Clara Simó (Alcoi, Alicante, 1943), Carme Riera (Palma, Majorca, 1948) and Miquel de Palol (Barcelona, 1953) are four novelists with a solid body of work, as is Fer-

ran Torrent (Sedaví, Valencia, 1951), author of successful noir novels featuring the city of Valencia as the backdrop [available in English: *Porcel's Horses into the night* 1995 = *Cavalls cap a la fosca* 1975, *Springs and Autumns* 2000 = *Primaveres i tardors* 1986; Simó's *A Corpse of One's One* 1993 = *Una ombra fosca com un núvol de tempesta* 1993, *Julia* 1998 = *Júlia* 1983; Riera's *Mirror Images* 1993 = *Joc de miralls* 1989].

Similarly, the narrative and novelistic oeuvre of Sergi Pàmies (Paris, 1960), son of the *engagée* writer Teresa Pàmies (Balaguer, Lérida, 1919: *Testament a Praga* [1970; *Testament in Prague*]), are bound together to Monzó's by the common thread of irony that has been roundly described as "devastating". Josep Lozano (Alginet, Valencia, 1948) and Joan-F. Mira (Valencia, 1939) are two prominent Valencian prose writers. The latter, a Valencian intellectual and translator (the *Divine Comedy* [2000], the New Testament [2004]), has also published several novels (*Borja Papa [Pope Borgia]*, 1997, *Purgatori* [2003; *Purgatory*]) and a variety of essays. The former is the author of *Crim de Germania* (1980; *Guild Crime*), a historical novel set in the Valencian civil war in the early 16th century that became a veritable best-seller in the Land of Valencia with more than 200,000 copies sold. A surprising – and noteworthy – case is that of Albert Sánchez Piñol (Barcelona, 1965), whose first novel, *La pell freda* (2002; *Cold Skin*, 2005), "a blend of Conrad and Lovecraft," has rights reserved in more than twenty languages and was the first novel in Catalan to hit the international best-seller lists. Other novelists and narrators worth watching include Emili Teixidor (Roda de Ter, Barcelona, 1933), Julià de Jòdar (Badalona, Barcelona, 1942), Biel Mesquida (Castellón de la Plana, 1947), Miquel de Palol (Barcelona, 1953) and Maria Mercè Roca (Gerona, 1958).

Children's and young people's narrative in Catalan has been consolidated as one of the most dynamic in Europe. Indeed, 30% of the books published in Catalan are aimed at the children and young readers' markets, although many of them are international best-sellers, especially English books such as the Harry Potter series, or works in French such as Tintin and Asterix. Authors of this genre in Catalan include Josep-Maria Folch i Torres (1880-1950), the first to professionalise Catalan literature for children as a writer and editor of the successful children's magazine *En Patufet* (1904-38; *The Wee Guy*) and the author of an extremely popular Christmas play entitled *Els Pastorets* (1916; *The Little Shepherds*) as well as of *Les aventures extarordinàries d'en Massagran* (1911; *The Extraordinary Adventures of Abitbignow*); and also the narrators and illustrators Lola Anglada (1894-1984), Mercè Company (Barcelona, 1947) and Roser Capdevila (Barcelona, 1939), the latter two being the creators of the popular series *Les Tres Bessones* ("The Triplets"), which has been translated into more than thirty languages. Other venerable authors in this genre are Josep Vallverdú (Lérida, 1923), Joaquim Carbó (Caldes de Malavella, Barcelona, 1932), Gabriel Janer Manila (Algaia, Majorca, 1940) and Miquel Desclot (*nom de plume* of Miquel Muñoz, Barcelona, 1952). A remarkable case is that of the humoristic *El zoo d'en Pitus* (1996; *Pitus' Zoo*) by Sebastià Sorribas (Barcelona, 1928), with more than 300,000 copies sold.

In poetry, we cite only a few mature authors, such as Josep Palau i Fabre (Barcelona, 1917), Jordi Sarsanedas (Barcelona, 1924), Màrius Sampere (Barcelona, 1928), Feliu Formosa (Sabadell, Barcelona, 1934), Joan Margarit (Sanaüja, Lérida, 1928), Salvador Oliva (Banyoles, Gerona, 1942), Narcís Comadira (Gerona, 1942) and Marta Pessarrodona (Terrassa [Tarrasa], Barcelona, 1941).

As for theatre, it might be more difficult to choose specific authors worth mentioning, not because there are few but because a little perspective is perhaps more necessary in this genre given the fact that classical works from the 19th and 20th centuries are still being staged to enormous popular success. Nonetheless the importance – even on an international scale – of renowned dramatic authors made popular in part because of their television scripts, such as Josep-M. Benet i Jornet (Barcelona, 1940) and Sergi Belbel (Terrassa, Barcelona, 1963), is worth mentioning, as is an important set of senior dramatists such as Ricard Salvat [1934-] and his influential Adrià Gual Dramatic Art School [1960-75], Iago Pericot [1929-], Jordi Teixidor [1939-], Benet i Jornet, the brothers Rodolf [1948-] and Josep-Lluís [1954-] Sirera..., who are on the basis of many other (as Belbel, Jordi Galceran [1964-], Jordi Sánchez, Joel Joan, Josep-Pere Peyró...). Finally, Galceran's *El mètode Grönholm* (2003; *The Grönholm Method*), has been hailed as a “social phenomenon”, a success seen in more than fifteen countries by a quarter million spectators. [Some English translations of Catalan theatre include the collective selections within *Contemporary Catalan Theatre*: translated excerpts of Teixidor's *El retaule del flautista*, R. Sirera's *Verí del teatre* [= *The Audition*], Belbel's *En companyia d'abisme*, and Benet's *Nau*; as well as those in *Modern Catalan Plays* (2000; complete versions of Brossa's *The Quarrelsome Party*, R. Sirera's *The Audition*, Benet's *Desire*, and Belbel's *Fourplay*). Other individual translations are Benet's *Legacy* (2000), and Belbel's *Caresses* (1999) and *Blood* (2004).]

No less interesting, though less widely known, are other writers from Northern Catalonia (Josep-Sebastià Pons [Illa (officially, *Ille*) 1880-1962], Gumersind Gomila [Port-Mahon, Minorca, 1906-Perpignan, 1970], Pere-Jordi Cerdà [pseudonym of Antoni Cayrol, 1920], Joan-Lluís Lluís [Perpignan, 1963], Daniel Bezsonoff [Perpignan, 1963]); from Andorra (Antoni Morell [Barcelona, 1941]); from Alghero (Rafael Sari [1904-1978] and Francesc Manunta [1928-1995]); from Ibiza (Marià Villangómez [1913-2002]); and from the Catalan-speaking part of Aragon (Santiago Vidiella [Calaceit (in Spanish, *Calaceite*), Teruel, 1860-1929] and Desideri Lombarte [Pena-roja (*Peñarroya*), Teruel, 1937-1989]). Finally, just as in other countries, we should also point out the usually short-lived success of what are known as “media authors”, usually more renowned for their participation in successful radio or television programmes.