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Literary news about Josep Pla in Lletra, the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) virtual space for Catalan literature

< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/josep-pla> >

Josep Pla



Josep Pla

Cristina Badosa

Josep Pla was born in Palafrugell in 1897, the son of a family of small landowners. The opus of Pla is immense, and is all in prose. Pla is one of the greatest writers in the

Catalan language. Influenced by the work of Montaigne, Pascal, Leopardi, and Stendhal, Pla offers in his own a brilliant testimony of his time. Pla was at heart an extremely lucid journalist who had travelled far and often. For him, travelling was not an exercise in tourism, but a discovery of life - a discovery that he subsequently transformed into literature. A declared anti-romantic, Pla shuns affected and artificial language. More than a novelist, he is a great raconteur who uses precise and incisive words. The work of Pla is also the major ally of the writer himself in the projection of a fictional persona, the selfsame Josep Pla.

The literary dimension of Josep Pla should be assessed on the basis of two qualities that have been essential in the modernisation of the Catalan language and in popularising the historical and cultural traditions of the country. His style combines touches of vernacular, expressive simplicity and creativity in his metaphors and similes. As a result, he has contributed towards the standardisation of Catalan literary language, going beyond the Modernist and noucentista styles to create a form of writing that is at once creative and close to the everyday idiom, thus facilitating continuity after the period of cultural repression during the Franco dictatorship. Again, his - very personal - recovery of collective memory has enabled divulgation of Catalonia's immediate past in an attractive, humorous and also ironic fashion.

Josep Pla's literary contribution has, nonetheless, undergone a process of creation and consolidation that is closely linked with his own autobiographical and political circumstances. In 1921, after a report he wrote about Madrid, he revealed the essential points of a project that he would not fulfil until after the Civil War. His intention of bringing together all his work in a vast publication of memoirs attained some structural dimension after the publication in 1925 of *Coses vistes* (Things Seen). However, it was not until 1928, after a frustrated attempt at a novel, *Relacions* (Relations), which was finally resolved in the form of a collection of stories, that Pla set about organising his disperse body of work into the memoirs of a narrative "I" that pulled together the different genres he had cultivated until then: travel writing, portraits, stories, and notes on gastronomy and customs.

Yet, his initial wish remained reduced to a simple outline of intentions when his political activity obliged him to abandon the project once again. The end of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship awoke in him a sense of political responsibility, and he contributed towards stirring up the debate through the press. From his party, the Lliga Regionalista, and from increasingly radical positions, Pla managed to influence public opinion with his constant criticisms of the Republic and leftists, which happened to coincide with the destabilising aims of the right-wing Catholic organisation CEDA [Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas - Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right -translator]. The Civil War saw him engaged in espionage, working for Franco. It was not until after the Civil War that Pla returned again to the task of constructing the massive memoirs of his time and country, which would start taking shape with the first edition of the *Obra completa* (Complete Works). His

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construction of the narrative "I" would give a universal dimension, quality and structural backbone to the testimony, which, as he had imagined in 1921, would enable him to bring together an oeuvre that was too disperse. In this sense, *El quadern gris* (The Grey Notebook) is the nucleus of this huge and diverse mosaic, and one of the most universal works of Catalan narrative prose.

The Creation of a Journalistic and Literary Style (1920-1925)

The Years of Apprenticeship (1917-1920) Josep Pla was born in Palafrugell, an industrial, agricultural and seaside town of the Baix Empordà region, on 8 March 1897 or, in other words, around the turn of the century. These circumstances explain in part the content of an oeuvre that is disperse and rich in genres and that the author justifies by way of the need to conserve the collective memory of a country, the Empordà region and Catalonia, along with customs that, beginning with the Civil War, underwent radical changes. Again, his initial hesitation and the subsequent rejection of his novel have as their backdrop the crisis of genre that appeared after the First World War. In the 1920s Pla experienced the whole process in Paris where the newspaper *La Publicidad* had sent him as its correspondent. The recovery of Dostoyevsky's model of the antihero by writers such as Andre Gide, was also attempted by Pla in his early attempts to construct a character that would enable him to present his critical and sceptical conception of humanity, while avoiding personal commitment.

The final character was the result of a combination in which he opted for the condition of the professional writer, whom he defines as the "rellogat" (subtenant), the aforementioned antihero, and his own personality, and the blend would eventually become confused with Pla the writer and Pla the man. This narrative voice, often standing out as a true protagonist, for example in *El quadern gris*, is the thread of the whole oeuvre of the *Obra completa* and also of the majority of articles that, even today, are still scattered throughout a number of different publications. The narrator often turns out to be the protagonist of the early books that herald the coming enormous work of memoirs, books in which the story is predominant, for example *Coses vistes* (1920-1925) (ed. 1925), *Llanterna màgica* (Magic Lantern, 1926) and *Relacions* (1927), but which also feature the outlines of the essential genres in his work such as biography, the anthropological essay and writings on local customs, and descriptions of landscape.

Newspaper Correspondent in Paris, Italy, Germany and England (1920-1927) The writings in most of these books had been commissioned by the press. Josep Pla's stylistic flair, the dynamism of his prose, his use of the anecdote, the constant dialogue with the reader to keep his or her attention, and his sense of humour, are techniques he learned in his work as a journalist. Pla's literary career needs to be understood in the context of journalistic professionalisation and the immediate result is its effect of a renovation in prose, in turning away from the stiffness of noucentisme, from ruralism and modernist meanderings.

Pla worked for the most prestigious newspapers of Catalonia and Spain. He began his journalistic and literary career in *La Publicidad*, which would shortly afterwards change its name to the Catalan *La Publicitat*. He did his journalistic training as this newspaper's correspondent in Paris, Italy, Berlin and London. He experienced the artistic and literary renewal of a Paris that was still recovering from the First World War, was a privileged witness of Mussolini's March on Rome, and also suffered the effects of the devaluation of the German mark during the Weimar Republic and the restrictions imposed in London in 1926, during the first general strike in history.

Political and Journalistic Vocation (1927-1939)

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The Political Turnaround: from Acció Catalana to the Lliga Regionalista On his return to Catalonia, Pla supported the movement to give new life to the Catalan spirit, which was proposed by both right and left. The series of articles entitled *Viatge per Catalunya* (Journey Through Catalonia) in Antoni Rovira i Virgili's *La Nau* should be assessed in the context of Joan Estelrich's *La Catalunya endins* (Inside Catalonia) or, in other words, of the Catalonia of the regions that enriched Barcelona Catalanism. Pla also wrote for the weekly *L'Opinió*, which was liberal-leaning at first, but then moved left as it radicalised. Pla left as soon as the tone became doctrinal when Joan Lluhí became director. In the spring of 1928, Pla did a political about-turn that led to heated controversy and accusations of opportunism. He justified his move saying it was necessary to adapt in order to engage in more feasible politics.

His joining the Lliga Regionalista, while working for *La Veu de Catalunya* and publishing a biography of Francesc Cambó, meant that of one of the most intelligent and attractive pens in Catalan letters had joined forces with conservative nationalist politics. From the literary point of view, his engagement with politics meant his temporary distancing from the project of writing his sweeping memoirs just when it was beginning to take shape with the publication of two books, *Vida de Manolo* (Life of Manolo) and *Cartes de lluny* (Letters from Afar), and also the publication of the series of his articles in *Viatge per Catalunya*.

In the Service of Francesc Cambó: the Republic and the Civil War His work as a correspondent in Madrid and his day-to-day monitoring of parliamentary activity led him into an increasing commitment to the Lliga Regionalista and Francesc Cambó. Pla became the most effective propagator of the new pro-Iberian ideology that took over from Prat de la Riba's particularism and that had no place in Cambó's new interventionist politics. Pla's criticisms of Republican politics became increasingly radical over time, bringing him close to the positions of Gil Robles' CEDA, a political ally of the Lliga, especially after the events of October 1934 [a general strike in Spain, an insurrection by Asturian miners, which was brutally put down, and the declaration of the independence of Catalonia by the Catalan president Lluís Companys, after which the independence movement was also suppressed by Spanish troops]. The period of the Republic was not very productive for Pla in literary terms, although he did publish some books of collected articles that had appeared in *La Publicitat* and *La Veu de Catalunya*, for example *Cartes meridionals* (Southern Letters, 1929), *Madrid: Un dietari* (Madrid, a Diary, 1930), *Madrid (L'adveniment de la República)* (Madrid [the Advent of the Republic], 1933) and *Viatge a Catalunya* (Journey to Catalonia, 1934).

General Franco's uprising against the Republic completely changed the political scene. Josep Pla, like many men of the Lliga, had to go into exile from Republican Catalonia to escape the threat of some anarchist squads. This was the start of a period, about which he remained silent, of anti-Republic propaganda and collaboration with the information services, financed by Francesc Cambó and organised by Josep Bertran i Musitu in the south of France (SIFNE), which supplied the Franco government in Burgos with reports of movements of maritime transport in relation with the Republic.

A Literary Programme after the War: Recovering Memory (1939-1981)

Editions of the *Obres Completes* On returning to Catalonia in January 1939, Pla was director of *La Vanguardia Española* for some weeks, after which he returned to the Empordà when Juan Ignacio Luca de Tena and Ramon Serrano Súñer appointed Luis Martínez de Galinsoga in his place. After a period of not working as a journalist, Pla began to write for the weekly review *Destino*, and continued to do so for more than thirty-five years (until 1975). His column under the heading "Calendario sin

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fechas" (Calendar without Dates) became the weekly's star attraction and contributed to awakening and maintaining interest in the political and cultural realities of Catalonia and Europe. After his father's death in 1944, Pla settled in the family farmhouse at Llofriu where he was finally able to achieve a sense of the whole in his writing. The start of publication of his work in Catalan by [Editorial Selecta](#) in 1949 was a chance to do justice to its diversity and length. The first publication of his complete works began in 1956 and this would have its definitive version, according to Pla, ten years later in the Edicions Destino edition. It was in these years, too, that he started travelling again, in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, South America, trips that provided the material for his great reports that were published in the review *Destino*.

The first volume of the definitive edition of the complete works, *El quadern gris* brought him recognition as the greatest prose writer in contemporary Catalan literature. The 1918 version had helped him to discover his narrative voice. The central themes of his diary are the landscape and his obsession about writing, filtered through recognition of his own personality. The book ends with the professional baptism of the narrator. Writing about the process of apprenticeship is the main thread of the work, the synthesis that permits him to bring together the gigantic tableau of everyday life and of the geography of the Baix Empordà. He had begun enthusiastically, with a great desire to be a writer and ended with the accomplishing of this ambition on the basis of a perspective he had gained after more than forty-five years of journalistic and literary professionalism. The mature Pla had recognised himself in the youthful character, the literary antihero that had been the product of the First World War. If scepticism about the human species had made him shy away from intimist literature, his sensibility to the landscape and social changes established him as an amanuensis of different Catalan personalities and as one of Catalonia's best landscape writers. Josep Pla died early in the morning of 23 April 1981 and was buried in the Llofriu cemetery.

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A selection of texts

Text



WEB: Itinerari literari pel Baix Empordà, amb textos de l'autor

<http://www.mapaliterari.cat/mapa/guia/9/josep/ruta-josep-pla>



WEB: bloQG - El blog del 'Quadern gris'

Cada dia que Josep Pla fa una anotació en *El quadern gris*, en la mateixa data i amb 90 anys de diferència, el text es publica en aquest blog. És una iniciativa de Xarxa de Mots i la Fundació Josep Pla.

http://elquaderngris.cat/blog/?page_id=12



WEB: Antologia de Josep Pla

Inclou nombrosos retrats d'escriptors coetanis de Pla.

<http://lletres.net/pla/plaindex.html>



WEB: De Josep Pla a Gabriel Ferrater

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< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/josep-pla> >

Una carta de Pla a Ferrater del 14 d'abril de 1961.

<http://www.lletres.net/pla/plafer.html>



WEB: Dos textos i més

Transcripció de fragments d'algunes de les obres de Pla i links d'interès sobre l'escriptor, a Eixample Web.

<http://eixampliada.com/ew/tx-plaam.html>



WEB: Apunts sobre llengua

Text de Josep Pla sobre la llengua catalana. A *Free Catalonia*

<http://ghostchild.org/index.php?showforum=15>



WEB: Pla a EPdLP

Nota biogràfica en castellà amb dos fragments de la seva obra a El Poder de la Palabra.

<http://www.epdlp.com/escritor.php?id=2149>



WEB: Josep Pla Anthology

Includes numerous portraits by writer-contemporaries of Pla.

<http://lletres.net/pla/plaindex.html>



WEB: From Josep Pla to Gabriel Ferrater

A letter from Pla to Ferrater dated 14 April 1961.

<http://www.lletres.net/pla/plafer.html>

Other



TXT: Carta de Josep Pla a Isidor Macabich

Carta de Josep Pla a Isidor Macabich (1948)

http://lletra.uoc.edu/anterior/noms/jpla/html_especials/jplacartaimacabich.html



TXT: Letter by Josep Pla to Isidor Macabich

Letter by Josep Pla to Isidor Macabich (1948)

http://lletra.uoc.edu/anterior/noms/jpla/html_especials/jplacartaimacabich.html

Bio-bibliography

Biography



WEB: A la Hiperenciclopèdia

http://www.enciclopedia.cat/fitxa_v2.jsp?NDCHEC=0051268



WEB: A la Viquipèdia

Extensa biografia, obra i enllaços sobre l'autor al web de l'enciclopèdia lliure.

http://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josep_Pla_i_Casadevall

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VIDEO: "Josep Pla: una ombra en el paisatge"

Documental sobre la vida i obra de l'escriptor al programa *El meu avi* de Televisió de Catalunya.
http://www.edu3.cat/Edu3tv/Fitxa?p_id=9132



WEB: The author in the Catalan Encyclopaedia

<http://www.grec.cat/cgibin/hecangcl2.pgm?&USUARI=&SESSIO=&NDCHEC=0051268&PGMORI=E>



WEB: In Wikipedia

Biography, analysis of Pla's work and links in the free encyclopaedia.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josep_Pla



VIDEO: "Josep Pla: una ombra en el paisatge" [Josep Pla: a Shadow in the Landscape]

Documentary on Pla's life and work in the programme *El meu avi* [My Grandfather] on Televisió de Catalunya.
http://www.edu3.cat/Edu3tv/Fitxa?p_id=9132

Bibliography



WEB: Què hi ha a la Biblioteca de Catalunya

http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*cat/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Pla+Josep+1897&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques universitàries catalanes (CCUC)

http://ccuc.cbuc.cat/search*cat/a?SEARCH=Pla+Josep+1897&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=23



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques públiques

<http://argus.biblioteques.gencat.cat/iii/encore/search/C|SPla+Josep+1897|Orightresult|U1?lang=cat&suite=pearl>



WEB: Per comprar-ne llibres

<http://www.llibres.cat/ca/detall-autor/pla-i-casadevall-josep>



WEB: Articles sobre l'autor (Traces)

http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=ca&p=Pla%2C+Josep&f=keyword&action_search=Cerca&c=Traces+%3A+base+de+dades+de+llengua+i+literatura+catalanes&sf=&so=d&rm=&rg=10&sc=1&of=hb



WEB: Works in the Biblioteca de Catalunya

http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*eng/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Pla+Josep+1897&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D



WEB: The author in The European Library

<http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/search/%28%22creator%22+all+%22pla+josep%22%29.query>

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WEB: The author in the Congress Library (US)

<http://catalog.loc.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&PAGE=First>



WEB: The author in the COPAC Catalogue (UK)

<http://copac.ac.uk/search?&au=Josep+Pla>

Comments on the author

Criticism



WEB: Fundació Josep Pla

Informació sobre l'entitat palafrugellenca amb documentació, exposicions, serveis, rutes i activitats sobre Pla.

<http://fundaciojoseppla.cat/>



WEB: Any Pla 1997

Pàgina del centenari del naixement de Josep Pla. Web educatiu.

<http://pie.xtec.es/recursos/socials/anypla/>



WEB: Pàgina de l'AELC

Biografia, publicacions, comentaris.

<http://www.escriptors.com/autors/plaj/>



WEB: L'autor al Corpus Literari Ciutat de Barcelona

Biografia, enllaços i transcripció d'articles sobre Pla.

http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=2241



WEB: L'autor a LLetres de Batalles

Biografia de Josep Pla i fragments de la seva obra en aquest web sobre literatura catalana i guerra civil.

<http://www.edu365.com/eso/muds/catala/lletresbatalles/index.htm>



WEB: Josep Pla, una figura carismàtica i polièdrica

Pàgina educativa dedicada al centenari del naixement de Josep Pla. Per Xavier Cambray.

<http://www.pangea.org/~geus/pla.htm>



WEB: Josep Pla on the Lletra website in Catalan

Including more resources and reading suggestions.

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/noms/jpla/index.html>



WEB: Josep Pla Foundation

Information about this Palafrugell institution with documentation, exhibitions, services, routes and activities dealing with Pla.

<http://fundaciojoseppla.net/>

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WEB: Website of the AELC

Biography, publications, comments.
<http://www.escriptors.com/autors/plaj/>



WEB: Josep Pla in the City of Barcelona Literary Corpus

Biography, links and transcription of articles on this author.
http://www.ducros.biz/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=2241



WEB: Josep Pla, a Polyfaceted, Charismatic Figure

Educational page devoted to the centenary of Josep Pla's birth. By Xavier Cambray.
<http://www.pangea.org/~geus/pla.htm>

Miscellaneous



WEB: Fundació Pla a Palafrugell

Informació sobre la Fundació Josep Pla al web Espais escrits de la Xarxa del Patrimoni Literari Català.

<http://www.espaisescrits.cat/home.php?op=6&module=escriptors&ides=7&idioma=cat>



WEB: Josep Pla i Palafrugell

Descripció de la ruta literària dedicada a l'autor (Vilaweb Lletres).

http://www.vilaweb.cat/www/noticia?p_idcmp=3616431



PDF: Cruzet, editor de Pla

Carme Arnau escriu a l'*Avui* (03/06/04) sobre la correspondència entre Pla i Cruzet en l'edició de Maria J. Gallofré.

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av02630.pdf>



WEB: Sobre Verdaguer

El "Florilegi crític" sobre Jacint Verdaguer aplegat per la Biblioteca de Catalunya inclou un text de Josep Pla.

http://www.gencat.net/bc/expo_verdaguer/index.html



WEB: Sortides i itineraris

Sortides i itineraris didàctics sobre Josep Pla.

<http://www.xtec.es/recursos/socials/anypla/itineraria.htm>



WEB: Biblioteca Josep Pla (UdG)

Informació molt completa, amb enllaços i accés a catàlegs des d'aquesta pàgina de la Universitat de Girona.

http://biblioteca.udg.es/fons_especials/pla/index.asp



WEB: "Auca de Josep Pla"

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Auca escrita per Joan Vilamala i il·lustrada per Arnau Torrediflot i els alumnes de l'IES Pius Font i Quer, de Manresa, al web La paret de les auques. Amb suggeriments de treball.
<http://www.auques.cat/tot.php?auca=pla>



WEB: "Pla i Barcelona: ànsia, badoqueria i crítica"

Text de Marina Gustà a *MM. Quadern Central*, núm. 38, sobre Josep Pla i la seva relació amb la ciutat comtal. Amb citacions de l'escriptor.

http://www.publicacions.bcn.es/bmm/2541/38ct_qc.htm



WEB: Pla Foundation in Palafrugell

Information about the Josep Pla Foundation at the website "Espais escrits. Xarxa del Patrimoni Literari Català" [Written Spaces. The Catalan Literary Heritage Network].

<http://www.espaisescrits.cat/home.php?op=6&module=escriptors&ides=7&idioma=eng>



PDF: Cruzet, Pla's Publisher

An article by Carme Arnau in *Avui* (03/06/04) about Pla and Cruzet.

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av02630.pdf>



WEB: Josep Pla Library (Universitat de Girona)

This website of the Universitat de Girona offers very thoroughgoing information with links and access to catalogues.

http://biblioteca.udg.es/fons_especials/pla/index.asp

Comments



WEB: Quadern de notes vistes

Una altra iniciativa de Xarxa de Mots (bloQG) que recull fragments de l'obra de l'autor.

<http://qnv.elquadernggris.cat/>



WEB: Gabriel Ferrater parla de Pla

Comentari sobre la «Carta a un neòfit castellà sobre literatura catalana» de Pla.

<http://www.lletres.net/pla/ferlit.html>



WEB: "El profeta de la dieta mediterránea"

Un article de Manuel Vázquez Montalbán aparegut a "El País Semanal".

<http://vespito.net/mvm/pla.html>



WEB: Gabriel Ferrater speaks of Pla

Comment about of Pla's

«Carta a un neòfit castellà sobre literatura catalana» [Letter to a Castilian Neophyte about Catalan Literature].

<http://www.lletres.net/pla/ferlit.html>



WEB: "El profeta de la dieta mediterránea"

An article by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán published in "El País Semanal".

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