



Life Embitters

Josep Pla

Peter Bush, Translator

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Josep Pla (1897-1981), one of the most influential and controversial Catalan authors of the twentieth century, has a sensibility he declared to have been “notoriously influenced” by his admiration for the Dutch genre painters. In *Life Embitters*, Pla details the foibles, frailties, and eccentricities of his characters in vibrant, earthy prose tempered by a biting sense of humor.

A great “noticer” of people and places, Pla appears to have been blessed with the heightened sensitivity and multisensory processing abilities of those with synesthesia, and his abundant literary gifts allowed him to record in his narratives what he saw, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled with startling clarity and sharpness. His description of the Portuguese language as “darkly hued ... a velvety, shadowy language with damp, mossy vowels” that are “dark green, deep and gentle on the ear, with sensuous, unctuous, sinuous inflections” is delicious.

He spent time with local fishermen, farmers, and villagers, coming to know just how they engaged their world, but he was also a friend of painter Salvador Dalí, as well as a trickster who once obliged the prince and princess of Spain, now King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofía, to drink the sour local homemade wine that was more like vinegar.

Josep Pla was a political and cultural journalist, biographer, travel writer, memoirist, essayist, novelist, and “foodie” whose collected works include thirty-eight volumes.

Peter Bush studied Spanish literature at Cambridge and Oxford Universities and directs the MA program in the theory and practice of translation at Middlesex University.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Summer 2015)

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