

JOAN PERUCHO

Barcelona · 7.11.1920 - 28.10.2003

Joan Perucho was an innovator in our literature.

Story teller, columnist, poet. Not many people know that he is one of the few Spanish writers cited in *The western canon* by Harold Bloom; someone who, together with Álvaro Cunqueiro, is today, perhaps, attracting a resurgence in reappraisal; that is, published more, quoted more, becoming better known.

He explored unthinkable themes in a country where, at that time, **Lovecraft** was unknown and few could have placed **Borges or Calvino**. - His discovery of Lovecraft was a decisive moment for him.

Perucho moved away from everything, or nearly everything, which was of his generation. He transcended the rigidity of Francoism. He searched out the imaginary, the fantastic, he mixed genres and themes, he invented impossible worlds and destroyed those which, at that time, reigned through unbreakable rules of literature - literature which, of course, had to be social or costumbrist in content.

He admired **Yeats**, the poet who, according to him, had captured invisible realities better than anyone.

Above all, he was a strong advocate for poetry of mystery which evoked shivers. "Mystery keeps man in search of the impossible truth." And if mystery is poetry, then so is literature of the fantastic. "It seems to me that what is at the heart of all mythical literature is purely and simply the recognition and acceptance of poetry and the marvel that it is, set against the excessive rationality of life".

Joan Perucho was born in Barcelona in 1920. He obtained his law degree and soon afterwards began to practise law. Apart from theatre, he has worked in all literary genres, poetry, poetic prose, the short story, the novel, journalistic articles, as an art critic, travel books and memoirs.

He has defined himself as "a man of letters" rather than as a novelist. His work has a special imaginative character, its myths placing it in the sphere of fantastic literature, while his perspective is agnostic and ironic. In both his narrative work and journalistic articles he often builds on a fictional basis, revealing himself as an erudite writer frequently addressing a cultured audience, with multiple references to art, far-flung places, gastronomy, perfumes . . .

He first became known with a collection of poems **Sota la sang** (Under the Blood) (1947) and in 1956 his first story in the fantastic vein, **Amb tècnica de Lovecraft** (With Lovecraft's Technique)

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appeared, this being followed, in 1957, by his first novel **Llibre de Cavalleries** (The Book of Chivalry). In the 1980s a successful new edition of his novel **Les històries naturals** (Natural History) (1960) led to its translation into a number of languages, while he also published two new novels, **Les aventures del cavaller Kosmas** (The Adventures of the Knight Kosmas) (1981) and **Pamela** (1983). He has a valuable and singular library containing first editions and collectors' items.

He has received the **National Critics' prize** (1981), the **Catalan National Prize for Literature** (1996), the **Creu de Sant Jordi** (2001) and the **Premio Nacional de las Letras** (2002). He is a member and **Honorary Member of the Associació d'Escriptors en Llengua Catalana** (Association of Catalan Language Writers).

Joan Perucho died in 2003 in Barcelona.

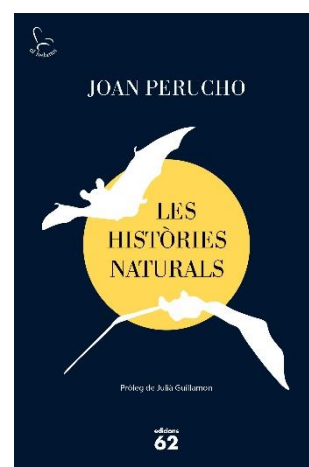
LES HISTORIES NATURALS

NATURAL HISTORY

Destino, Barcelona, 1960 (Catalan)

220 pp – Genre: Novel

Catalan: Edicions 62 (Planeta)/ Spain: Edhasa (World) */ USA: Alfred A. Knopf * / UK: Secker & Warburg */ Germany: Carl Hanser*/ Denmark: Klim*/ France: Presses de la Cité */ The Netherlands: Bert Bakker *
Italy: Rizzoli */ Portugal: Teorema*/Greece: Kastaniotis *
Turkey: Can Yayinlari/ Bulgaria: Vesela Lutzkanova/
China: The Writers Publishing House *
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A vampire and the rational man who pursues him are at the whirling center of this eerie, elegant novel set in the Spain of the 1830s - a Spain convulsed by the Carlist civil wars. A young aristocrat of Barcelona, Antoni de Montpalau, a passionate believer in science, progress, and the rights of man, is summoned to the aid of a village beset by some inexplicable evil. Relying on scientific logic, Antoni deduces the existence of a vampire - the first ever to appear in Spain - and sets forth to test his theory, following a scent of cruelty and disaster across the land. His quarry - his foe - is indeed a creature of darkness, an undead nobleman of the thirteenth century known as the Dip. This strange and macabre presence stalks Antoni in turn, assuming various shapes and guises: a bee, a goat, a brutal guerrilla leader known as the Owl ... until the moment when hunter and hunted must meet ... the moment when, it seems, Antoni must both win and lose.

Combining myth, history, and his own exuberant imagination, **Joan Perucho** has fashioned a singular tale of shadow and light, poetic adventure, and political struggle – a stunning philosophical thriller.

"Comparisons with Borges are easy to draw - the razor-sharp intellect toying with the fantastical." – Observer

"Will intrigue those readers who willingly follow Italo Calvino into the implausible, and will appeal to the devotees of fantastical Latin American writing. They will be mystified, thrilled, intellectually ensnared, and left impatiently anticipating the next translation." – Preview

"The book is beautifully written and constantly echoes that other vicious Civil War when ranco tried his best to destroy Catalan culture. It is one of one of the most entertaining novels of the year." - Paul Pickering, London Evening Standard

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LLIBRE DE CAVALLERIES

CHIVALRIC ROMANCE

Ancora, Barcelona, 1957
156 pp – Genre: Novel

Catalan: Grup62 (Planeta)/ Spain: Editorial Planeta */ Germany: Carl Hanser */ The Netherlands: Bert Bakker */ Italy: Biblioteca del Vascello */ China: The Writers Publishing House *

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Llibre de cavalleries chronicles the adventures of Tomás Safont. When we first meet Tomàs, he is a bored, idle landowner who nonetheless feels that he was born for lofty deeds.

Summering in a hotel on the Riviera, he spends his evenings with Eveline Nikopoulos, a femme fatale as rich and jaded as he, while the sweetly innocent chambermaid Rosaura pines for him in secret. Tomàs's sense of destiny is soon confirmed, for the King of Aragon sends him on a series of missions at once in the Middle Ages and in our own time.

Tomàs's exploits first take him through the Egyptian desert and the grimly legalistic land of Ulm to Ethiopia, ruled by the legendary priest-emperor Prester John. There he receives a present for his lord: a relic of Saint Euphrigis (in fact, her entire right arm!).

Tomàs's next goal is the Middle East where, outwitting both the savage nekhé tribesmen and the modern British agent Jimmy Oliphant, he gathers samples of the fabled "fiery water", also known as petroleum. Tomàs's galley, complete with sweating slaves, then sets sail for Cyprus. Together with the valiant knight but mediocre poet Don Blasco d'Alama, he dethrones Paleologus Dimas, despot of Akanthou.

After returning the money he had stolen from the Great Catalan Company -- Aragon's main fighting force in fourteenth-century Greece and Asia Minor -- Dimas and his wife (the flirtatious Eveline, now known as Maria Manzoukos) are sent into exile.

Finally, our hero and his friends crown Princess Blanca of Amfissa (whom we met earlier as Rosaura) Queen of Lesser Armenia. Tomàs is rewarded for his travails with her hand in marriage and a chance to remain in an era that suits his met earlier as swashbuckling temperament more than the present. This reward is "arranged" by Monsieur Dupont, a key figure in the novel who, like Tomàs and Blanca, exists simultaneously in our century and as a medieval personage of great importance -- in this case, a chancellor. In addition, Monsieur Dupont acts as a kind of alter ego for the author, poring over old manuscripts in order to learn what Tomàs should do next.

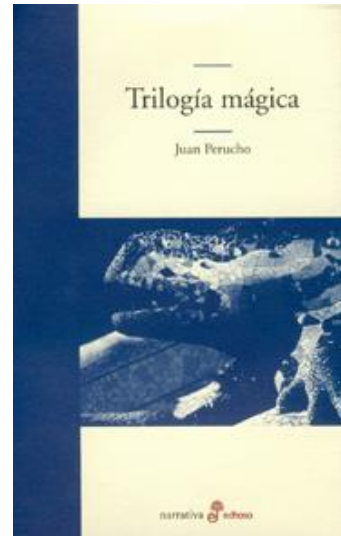
Myth, history, and **Perucho's** exuberantly poetic fantasies constantly color each other. For example, Amfissa is a real Greek town and Lesser Armenia was a real kingdom, but Saint Euphrigis and the nekhé are the author's inventions. These buoyantly imaginative shifts of perspective -- once the reader gets into the swing of them -- are part of the book's fascination and draw us into **Perucho's** vision of an entire past, present, and literary tradition.

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TRILOGIA MÁGICA MAGIC TRILOGY

(includes: *Botánica oculta*, *Historias secretas de balnearios* and *Bestiario fantástico* - “Arcane Botany”, “Secret Stories of Spas” and “Fantastic Bestiary”-)

Edhasa. Barcelona, 2004
Genre: novels



“(…) *Trilogía mágica* is the sum of *Botánica oculta*, *Historias secretas de balnearios* and *Bestiario antástico* (“Arcane Botany”, “Secret Stories of Spas” and “Fantastic Bestiary”), three works that were published decades apart but that show a clear unity of form and spirit.

The intention in these three pieces – one that becomes all the more apparent in reading them one after the other – is to describe a whole world of hidden realities lurking behind the glassy facets of iction. **Perucho** is first and foremost a cultivated man, and his sure command of language and history enable him to lay bare the incongruities of the material universe with consummate skill. The pell cast by these tales thus proves inescapable. If suffices to plunge into the waters of Archipenko or to delve into the life of the Calligrapher to realise that Perucho goes the whole way: in this jungle where literary memory and poetic desire dwell together, there is no resource that cannot be brought to germination by intelligence and humour.

Perucho’s prose (that realm of ellipsis lauded by **Harold Bloom**, who thought it a model for the literature of the future) is strewn with verses of his own and echoes of classical poetry, showing that creation knows no bounds and that if there is such a thing as lofty science-fiction, then this is it. For **Perucho** is indeed, as Carlos Pujol wrote, the mischievous wizard steeped in knowledge, knowledge that he transfigures into an intelligent smile.” – *Victor Andresco, El País/Babelia (2004)*

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PAMELA

Planeta, Barcelona, 1983
174 pp – Genre: Novel



Catalan: Edicions 62/ Spain: Editorial Planeta (World) */ France: Editions Jacqueline Chambon */ China: The Writers Publishing House *

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Within **Joan Perucho's** novels, **Pamela** stands out for the originality of its structure, the ambition of its historical reconstruction, its display of humour and subordination of a rare erudition to an overflowing imagination.

After becoming member of a Masonic lodge and becoming a satanist, Pamela Andrews, the main character in Richardson's famous novel, made a pact with the devil that kept her eternally young, and through her irresistible beauty and skill in the erotic arts she managed to seduce any man she wished. During the War of Independence she lived in Spain, spying in the service of Lord Holland, and her manoeuvres and intrigues to gain influence in the Cádiz Parliament are recounted in her letters to the English politician.

Pamela's letters and her exploits in Madrid, Lisbon, Cádiz, Palma de Mallorca and other places are interwoven with a story set in the period of the Restoration, when Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo happens to chance upon that correspondence, and a young disciple of his, son-in-law of Milá y Fontanals, becomes passionately interested in the matter, with consequences at once exciting and astonishing.

With this plot as the starting point, **Joan Perucho** gives free rein to fantasy and humour in a historical novel recounted simultaneously in two different periods, bringing into play a whole number of thought-provoking characters from 19th century Spain, from Juan Valera and doctor Thebussem through to the irascible book-lover Gallardo, and including Goya, Monturiol and Giner de los Ríos, without forgetting literary figures such as Galdós's Torquemada, and throwing in some purely imaginative figures such as the ferocious "monster of Bodegones".

In short, we have the entire poetic world of **Joan Perucho** in a highly original mix of truth and fiction handled in a refinedly amusing manner.

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Awards

2002 Nacional de las Letras (Ministry of Education and Culture) for his entire oeuvre

1996 Rosalía de Castro en lengua castellana (Pen Club Galicia)

1996 Nacional de la Crítica de poesía en catalán - Asociación Española de Críticos Literarios for *El jardins botànics*

1995 Premis Nacionals de Literatura de la Generalitat de Catalunya (Generalitat de Catalunya) for his works published in 1994: *Un silenci olvidado* · *Los jardines de la melancolía* · *Lalección de las cosas* · *El barón de Maldà* · *Las bestias del infierno*

1984 Cavall Verd - Associació d'Escriptors en Llengua Catalana (AELC) for *Quadern d'Albinyana*

1982 Joan Crexells - Ateneu Barcelonès for *Les aventures del cavaller Kosmas*

1981 Ramón Llull de las Letras Catalanas - Editorial Planeta for *Les aventures del cavaller Kosmas*

1957 Josep Yxart for *Cita de narradors*

1953 Ciutat de Barcelona de Poesia por *El mèdium*

2002 La Medalla d'Or al Mérito Cultural, Científico y Artístico del Ayuntamiento de Barcelona

2001 Creu de Sant Jordi de la Generalitat de Catalunya

1992 Escriitor del mes (abril 1992) por la Institució de les Lletres Catalanes
Doctor Honoris Causa por la Universidad de Tarragona

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