



"Too Many Debts to Flowers"

Iolanda Batallé Prats

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An intimate and honest account of a desperate search for the meaning of life.

A woman in crisis drives to the mountains in the hope that she can recover by writing in solitude. However, she does not foresee that wounded people recognise and help each other, and she is taken in by a family who have survived a very difficult experience.

The need to listen and explain, the importance of saying things, empathy, tenderness and shared grief will lead the author, in conversation after conversation, to reconstruct a family story that is a desperate love song to life in the high hills.

A novel about mountains, loneliness and effort, about writing, about the simple power of sincerity and empathy, about how we heal each other with words, silences and presence.

Iolanda Batallé's *Insights*:



Empathy. Confession. Orality

The novel is structured in chapters where, one by one, the characters speak directly to the reader. In a succession of confessions, each character makes an effort of sincerity and lucidity to understand his own life, his mistakes and wounds, to try to find a simple way to be happy.

The text, therefore, has a powerful oral quality. Its literary strategy is to ensure that it is read as if listening to a friend. It is thus a very empathetic text that in just a few pages connects emotionally with the reader.

Family history. Tragedy. Catharsis

The plot of the novel is simple. A writer flees to the mountains to try to write and what she finds is the trail of a family tragedy, the story of a death, the death of a woman, the story of a victim. The stories that need to be explained are the ones that are hard to explain, and this story is not easy to explain. Each character explains it as he or she can, indirectly, telling memories that, when relived, take on a new and powerful meaning. Chapter by chapter we approach a moment of catharsis: the moment when what needed to be said can finally be said.

The high valleys of the Pyrenees. The landscape. Mountains and flowers.

I have written the stories of lives linked to the mountains: mountains that are both condemnation and salvation. Any family that continues to live in the Pyrenees has had to pay a price. Living in the mountains hurts, in some cases it kills, but it also saves, cleanses and liberates.



Every winter the mountains threaten us and every spring the flowers remind us that we cannot give up, that we have too many debts, that we have to go on living. On each page I have wanted to show, in one way or another, this gratitude for life.

What made you write "Too many debts with flowers"?

I started writing the book when I closed my stage as director of the Institut Ram3n Lull. Being the first woman director of the Lull was a privilege and an exciting experience.

At the end of this intense period I left Barcelona and returned to the Pyrenees, where I have family ties, where I was baptised, where I grew up. I went back to the mountains and spent time remembering people and places. One of these places that I had discovered a few years before is what I call in the book 'the High Valleys'. I had known for ten years that I wanted to write a book about these High Valleys. The story of a family.

I came back. I spent some time there and realised how unfairly we city people look at the mountains. We look at it as if everything we find there has always been there. And it is not like that: a cleared path, a house that has not lost its roof, a cultivated field... behind all this there are lives, there are generations of families. I wanted to explain all this. I wanted to vindicate the human cost of transforming the landscape, humanising it, making it habitable. This is the story I am telling. The story of mountains and people.

What else is 'Too Much Debt to Flowers' about?

The price of being a woman in a rural society. My homage to 'Solitut' and 'Pedra de Tartera'. V3ctor Catal3 and Maria Barbal*. And it is also a tribute to Ant3nia Vicens with the title of the book.

This book is on the price of being a woman in any society. On the price paid by women writers such as Virginia Woolf, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Alfonsina Storni and so many others since Sappho, for writing and for existing. The book also talks about them.

The book talks about how we are a link. And about the importance of saying things. Of how silence does not protect us. Of the price we pay to do things our way.

Of the survival or death of peoples in remote places.

Of the transformation of the Pyrenees.

Of the struggle to bring a dead village back to life.

Of the emotional wounds

Of family tragedies that are hard to explain.

Of the healing power of words and literature.

Of the ability to share and understand the pain of others.

Of the meaning and strength of the family.

Of the always strange way we have of celebrating life.



After almost ten years of silence, Iolanda Batallé returns to bookshops with *"Too many debts with flowers"*. Although she has never stopped writing during this period, she has been directing the Institut Ramon Llull (Catalan Culture Institute) and later took charge of the *Ona* bookshop,

turning it into a powerful cultural centre for literature in Catalan. She also published a non-fiction book *"Dare to do Things your Way"* about the importance of doing things your way when you are a woman in a managerial position.

Her literary career began with *"The Memory of the Ants"* and was followed by *"The Exact Limits of our Bodies"* - both novels will be republished soon.

With *"ll Do Anything you want"* she won the prestigious Prudenci Bertrana Award and has recently been translated into English.



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