

# ON POETRY

We are in the midst of the “Year of Maragall 2010-2011” ([www.joanmaragall.cat/en/](http://www.joanmaragall.cat/en/)), celebrating the 150th anniversary of his birth and the 100 years since the death of Joan Maragall (1860-1911), one of the key figures in modern Catalan literature.

Here we offer you the English version, by Mary Ann Newman, of one of his most well known poems, “Oda a Espanya” (1898).

## ODE TO SPAIN

Listen, Spain, to the voice of a son  
who speaks to you, not in Castilian,  
but in the language given him  
by a harsh land:  
in this language too few have talked to you;  
in the other too many.

They have made too much of Saguntum  
and of dying for the homeland:  
of your glories, and your memories,  
memories and glories only of the dead:  
you have lived a sad life.

I want to speak to you—in a different way.  
To what end useless bloodshed?  
Coursing through the veins—blood equals life.  
Life for the living and for those yet to live.  
Once spilt, it is death.

You dwelt too long on honor  
And too little on life:  
Tragic, you led your children to the grave,  
sated on deadly honors,  
your feasts were funerals,  
oh, unhappy Spain!

I have seen the laden ships depart  
bearing the sons you swept to their death:  
smiling, they parted toward their fate;  
as you sang – by the shore  
like a madwoman.  
Where are your ships now? Where are your sons?  
Ask the West Wind and the brave wave:  
You lost everything – you have no one.  
Spain, Espanya, come to your senses,  
release your motherly sob!

Save yourself, be saved, from so much pain;  
tears can make you lively, lush, and joyful;  
think of all the life that still surrounds you:  
lift up your head,  
and smile at the seven colors of the clouds.

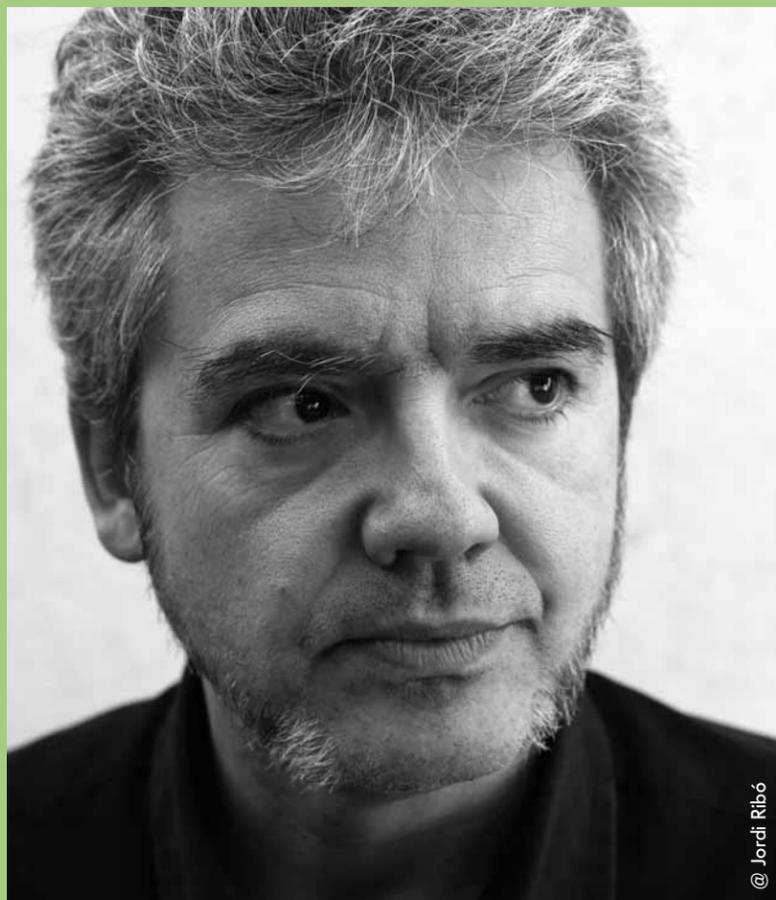
Where are you, Spain? I search for you in vain.  
Can you not hear my deafening voice resound?  
Can you not grasp this tongue that speaks to you midst  
danger?  
Have you unlearned the language of your brood?  
Farewell, *Espanya!*

Joan MARAGALL

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# WORK IN PROGRESS

**Màrius Serra** (Barcelona, 1963). Is a writer, journalist, translator and enigmatist. He is the author of seven novels, amongst which *Mon oncle* (My uncle), which received the *Fundació Enciclopèdia Catalana Prose prize in 1994* and *Ablanatanalba* (1999) as well as books of short stories such as *Amnèsia* (Amnesia), 1988 and *La vida normal* (Normal Life), which was awarded the *City of Barcelona Catalan Literature prize*. His essay *Verbàlia* was awarded the *Critica Serra d'Or prize in 2001*. More recently, in 2006, his novel *Farsa* (Farse) won the *Ramon Llull prize*. His most recent work is *Quiet*, (QUIET) 2008.



@ Jordi Ribó

## **Pau Guerra** (\*NT)

by Màrius Serra

A mobile phone story in 36 episodes.

### **01**

You receive a text message. An unusual offer: “Are you interested in a story by instalments?” You are on the point of deleting it when you read that it promises you heaven and earth: “Do you want a love story? Then you will live it. Do you want to live a story of hate? Then you will also live it. You think that you hate perhaps, as little or as much as you love, but you are intrigued to find out that you can obtain the first chapter for free if you solve a simple riddle. A hook used by someone from marketing. This or else you have to pay a micro-payment. You concentrate on the riddle: “It starts with a bad mood and ends in an extended feud”.

### **02**

You have spent the morning working in the garden and it's now time to go and have lunch. As ever you eat a set price menu, glued to the news on the television. The hubbub in the dining room makes it difficult to follow the simulacrum of the day's news improvised by the newsreader. The owner has stepped out of the kitchen for a moment and is talking to the people at the table beside you. “It's how all wars start”, you hear her say, without knowing what she is talking about. What “begins with a bad mood and ends in an extended feud” could be war. You send “war” by SMS.

### **03**

The reply is immediate. Correct. They congratulate you for your perspicacity and invite you to read the first chapter of the story “Pau Guerra”. You haven't quite digested this message when you receive another, with the promised episode. While drinking a carajillo you read that Pau Guerra is a gardener, like you, and this amuses you. You have never read any other story where the protagonist was a gardener, as if your trade was damned, suitable only for secondary roles in detective stories. The other strange coincidence in the story is that Pau has also recently had an argument with a neighbour.

### **04**

You find the riddle that would allow you to read the second chapter too enigmatic: “When you pronounce my name I will disappear”. You are tempted to pay the micro-payment, but you call a truce for the afternoon. You have only a bit of pruning left to complete three days work: and pocket the cash. It's not worth hanging about. You plug in the MP3 headphones and move your shears to the ska beat. When three hours later the lady of the house signs the cheque you even have the cheek to ask her if she knows the solution to a riddle. She knows it. It's a classic she says. So much so it appears in an Oscar winning film: “Life Is Beautiful”.

### **05**

You text the solution from the van: “silence”. The reply is automatic. Correct and as such you receive free of charge the second chapter of the story. You'll read it as soon as you have parked the car and gone in the front door. Your neighbourhood parking is becoming increasingly difficult, but you've got your little tricks and always save a place with your motorbike, by parking it parallel to the kerb, almost in front of your house. So you just have to get down, move the motorbike and leave the van in your reserved place. You do it with the mobile phone in your hand, but at home they are waiting with news that forces you to postpone any reading.

### **06**

The ADSL isn't working. The landline works, your father informs you, but the ADSL has suddenly packed up. You disconnect the router and reconnect it, test all the cables and cross your fingers. Nothing. You have to do one of those things that most exasperates you: call 150 at British Telecom, be patient and go through all the formalities of the procedure that will end up repairing the breakdown by remote control. But no. You pick up the phone knowing that it won't be that simple. You feel powerless. Your father, always so insensitive has just finished you off. At supper he spits out that maybe the neighbour has done something against you.

1 NT Pau Guerra is a fairly common name in Catalan, but here Serra is playing on the pun of War and Peace as Pau apart from being a boy's name, the equivalent of Paul, also means peace in Catalan and guerra means war.