

Who's Who

CATALAN WRITING

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EMILI TEIXIDOR

Works in Catalan, awards and translations

1933 Born in Roda de Ter

1967 *El soldat plantat* (The Abandoned Soldier), young-adults' novel.

1967 *Les rates malaltes* (The Sick Rats), young-adults' novel, Joaquim Ruyra Award.

1969 *Didac, Berta i la màquina de lligar boira* (Didac, Berta and the Machine to Tie up Fog), children's novel. Translated into Spanish.

1977 *Sempre em dic Pere* (My Name is always Peter), children's novel. 1997: translated into Spanish.

1979 *Sic transit Glòria Swanson*, short stories, Premi de la Crítica Serra d'Or (The Serra d'Or Critics' Award), 1983: translated into Spanish.

- *L'ocell de foc* (The Firebird), young-adults' novel. 1993: translated into Spanish.

1980 *El Príncep Ali* (Prince Ali), young-adults' novel, Premi de Literatura de la Generalitat de Catalunya (The Generalitat of Catalonia's Literary Award), 1997: translated into Spanish.

1983 *Frederic, Frederic, Frederic*, young-adults' novel. 1991: translated into Spanish.

1986 First volume in the series of stories about Ranquet, *En Ranquet i el tresor* (Ranquet and the Treasure), children's novel. 1987: translated into Spanish; 1991: translated into French, finalist in the Europe Award in Poitiers; 1989: Mention of Honour in the Pier Paolo Vergiero Award from the University of Padua.

- *Cada tigre té una jungla* (Every Tiger has a jungle), children's novel. 1989: translated into Spanish.

1988 The first volume of the series of cases investigated by Inspector Garrofa, *El crim de la Hipotenusa* (The Crime of the Hypotenuse), children's novel. 1989: translated into Spanish; 1995: translated into Italian.

- *Retrat d'un assassí d'ocells* (Portrait of a Bird Killer), novel. 1989: translated into Spanish.

1990 Premi Atlàntida de la Nit de l'Edició (Publisher's Night Atlantis Award) for the best presenter or director of an audiovisual programme in Catalan for *Mil paraules* (A Thousand Words) from 1990 to 1994.

1992 *Les Ales de la Nit* (The Wings of Night), young-adults' novel. Translated into Portuguese.

- Creu de Sant Jordi (Cross of Saint George Award) by the Catalan Government.

1994 *Cor de roure* (Heart of Oak), young-adults' novel, Premi de la Crítica Serra d'Or (The Serra d'Or Critics' Award), 1995: translated into Spanish.

1996 *L'amiga més amiga de la formiga Piga* (Piga the Ant's Very Best Friend), the first volume in this series of children's stories. Spanish Ministry of Culture Award, honours diploma, awarded the gold medal and international selection by the IBBY.

- Selected by the Spanish IBBY as candidate for the International Andersen Award.

2000 *El llibre de les mosques* (The Book of Flies), novel, Premi Sant Jordi (Saint George's Award).

2001 *Amics de mort* (Deadly Friends), young-adults' novel. 2003: translated into Spanish.

2003 *Pa negre* (Black Bread), novel, Premis de la crítica Joan Crexells, Lletra d'Or, Maria Àngels Anglada i Nacional de Literatura (The Joan Crexells Critics' Award, The Gold Letter, The Maria Àngels Anglada and The National Literature Awards). 2004: translated into Spanish; 2008: translated into Greek.

- *En Ring 1-2-3 i el món nou* (Ring 1-2-3 and the New World), first volume of this series of children's stories, Apelles Mestres Award. Translated into Spanish.

- *La rosa, la roca i el llop* (The Rose, the Rock and the Wolf), young-adults' novel.

2005 *Quina gana que tinc!* (How Hungry I Am!), children's story. 2007: translated into Spanish.

- The Germán Sánchez Ruipérez Foundation Award for the best newspaper article on reading.

2006 *Laura Sants*, novel.

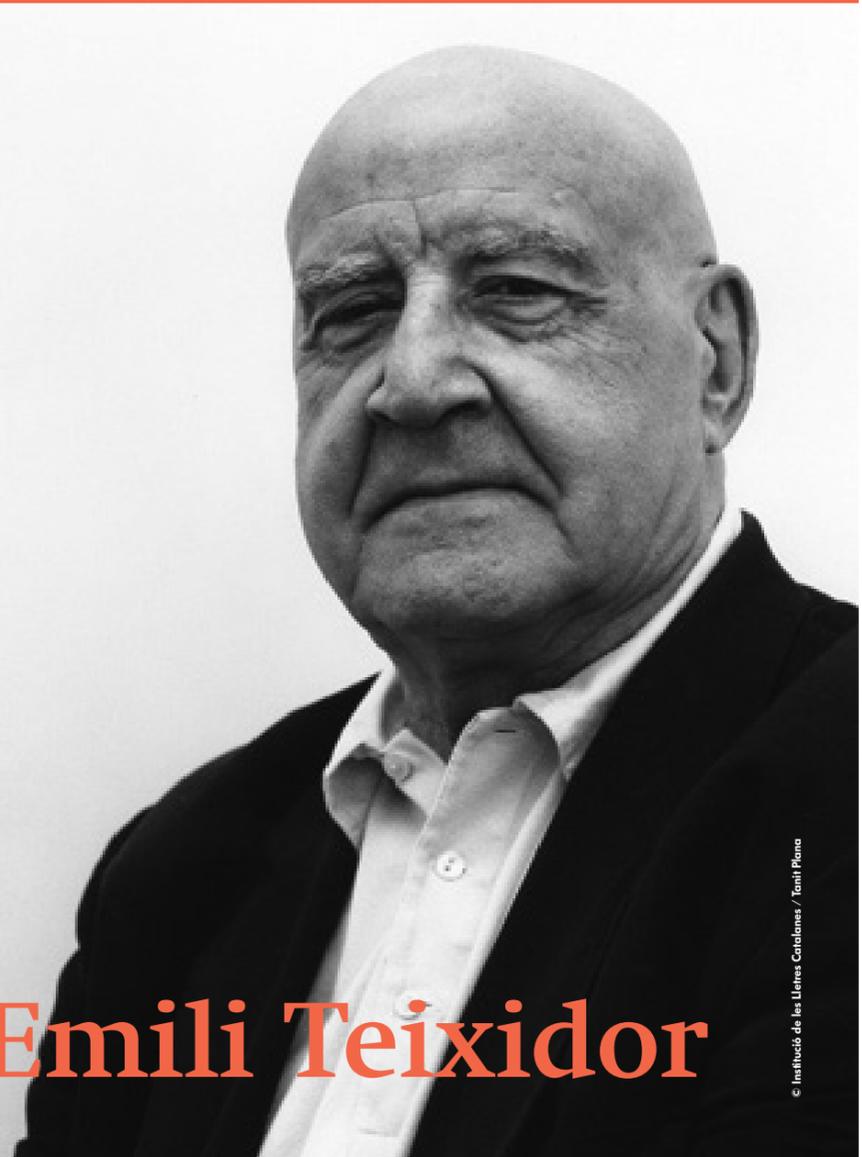
- Premi Trajectòria (The Career Award) from the Catalan Book Week.

2007 *La lectura i la vida* (Reading and Life), essay. Translated into Spanish.

2010 *Els convidats* (The Guests), novel.

2011 Premi dels escriptors catalans (The Catalan Writers' Award) for the entirety of his works.

More information about the author:
<http://www.lletra.net/en/author/emili-teixidor>



Emili Teixidor

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Emili Teixidor. The Conquest of Freedom

The name of Emili Teixidor has become inseparable from *Pa negre* (Black Bread), a novel which, after having enjoyed enormous success among readers and critics, was adapted for the cinema by Agustí Villaronga. The film has received the highest awards in Catalonia and in Spain, being chosen by the latter as nominee for the foreign language film Oscar. It would be easy to talk only of this piece of work which, for the time being, crowns a narrative cycle about the retrieval of childhood memories during the period following the Spanish civil war. However, it does far more justice to the writer and his person to offer a much wider profile of the work produced by one of the most exceptional values in Catalan literature in the last fifty years.

Emili Teixidor (Roda de Ter, 1933) trained as a teacher; studied law, the arts and journalism. In the 1960s, he took part in the founding of the school Patmos, closely associated to movements for pedagogic renewal. Among his first publications is *Quinze són quinze* (Fifteen is Fifteen), a book for school readers which became a landmark shared by a generation in the difficult years of general Franco's fascist dictatorship. Along with writers such as Josep Vallverdú, Sebastià Sorribas or Oriol Vergés, he began writing for children and youngsters. Thus was born a literary vocation combined with didactic experience, and committed to Catalan cultural regeneration movements against francoism. During the 1970s he lived in Paris and studied cinema; in 1976 the first volume of *Encyclopédie Alpha du cinéma* (The Alpha Encyclopaedia of Cinema) appeared published in instalments, Teixidor being one of the authors. He directed Ultramar one of the publishing collections belonging to Salvat, the Spanish branch of the multinational Hachette, and brings out a book of stories *Sic transit Glòria Swanson*, his debut in narrative for adults. He participates in projects for cinema and radio -he is the author of the script for the full length film *El vicari d'Olot* (The Vicar from Olot) directed

by Ventura Pons, and also of the radio documentaries on García Lorca, for which he receives the Ondas award in 1998, and Martí i Pol. During the 1990s, his presence in the media increases, especially in the press and on radio and television, where he presents the literary programme *Mil paraules* (A Thousand Words). At the turn of the century he is acknowledged as an expert in stimulating reading.

It should be said of Emili Teixidor that he feels a passion for stories that instruct. Stories that instruct in the art of reading and in humanity. That teach the child to become a young reader, that entertain adolescents initiating them in the mysteries of identity, that moves adults with the confrontation of a moral landscape that cannot but affect them. In this sense, there is subtle connecting thread that runs through his narrative work as a whole, whether it be addressed to children, youngsters of adults, and which bears a close relationship to the theory put forward in his essays on the formation of readers and their progress towards maturity in their capacity for reading.

Stories for the youngest readers, up to six-year-olds, usually present strange situations in everyday surroundings which the protagonist, and the readers along with him, must go through and which to a certain extent instruct them. By way of an example, in *Quina gana que tinc!* (How Hungry I Am!), the protagonist has to use his resources after finding himself accidentally alone in the house with an empty refrigerator and no money to go shopping with.

Teixidor works through literary genres and themes rooted in the most solid cultural tradition, and he does so with efficiency and practicality. Thus, in the stories of the ant, Piga, we find the heritage of fables revisited with humour and well-able to attract readers of up to six. The genre of detective novels, in the cases of Inspector Garrofa: *El crim de la Hipotenusa* (The Crime of the Hypotenuse), *El crim de la tangent* (The Crime of the Tangent), *El crim del triangle equilàter* (The Crime of the Equilateral Triangle), for eleven-year-olds on. Worth a mention of its own is History, as a creative source to construct adventure stories of undisguisedly instructive nature but at the same time, far from moralising, stories such as *L'Ocell de Foc* (The

Firebird) or *Cor de Roure* (Heart of Oak) for example, aimed at readers of twelve and fourteen on respectively.

The choice of subjects that generate public controversy is recurrent, like the question of ecology in *Sempre em dic Pere* (My Name is Always Peter), of speculation in *Amics de mort* (Deadly Friends), of immigration in *El príncep Ali* (Prince Ali), or of biomedical research in *Les rates malaltes* (The Sick Rats). These subject components are always combined with a plot of adventure and initiation that invite the readers to form their own socially critical opinion, with respect to differences and against mechanisms of power, all of which revolve around a constant element, the construction of one's self-identity. *Laura Sants*, a novel for adults, offers a sort of synthesis, full of irony, of the questions posed in his children's and youngsters' books -now the subjects are corruption and the media-, from literary tradition of the author's native region and of the literary world which he explores in his narrative for adults.

What does this literary world consist of? There is absolute predominance of the landscape of childhood within the historical context of the post-war period, used as the moral backdrop of destruction and at the same time as the means of self-development. With the stories *Sic transit Glòria Swanson* as a starting point and especially from the *Retrat d'un assassí d'ocells* (The Portrait of a Bird Killer) onwards, Emili Teixidor turns to life in the region of Osona in the 1940s over and over again. In 2010, after *El llibre de les mosques* (The Book of Flies) and *Pa negre* (Black Bread), he once more explored this same universe in *Els convidats* (The Guests), a novel with a variety of narrative voices that gives a detailed account of how, after the war, totalitarianism infiltrates the citizens' conscience and how these people try their hardest to survive by creating small unpretentious relative spaces of freedom. The arid aftermath of the war in rural Catalonia is an allegory of an inherited moral desert, but also, if you wish, against all odds, of hope. The sort of hope which I cannot fail to see in Emili Teixidor's vivaciously expressive language.

ORIOI IZQUIERDO

Works reviewed

Retrat d'un assassí d'ocells (The Portrait of a Bird Killer), 1998

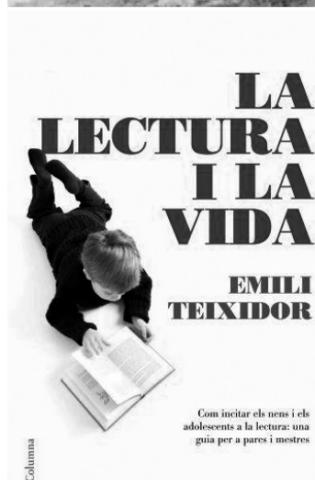
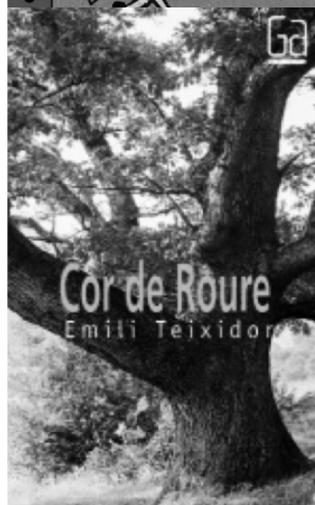
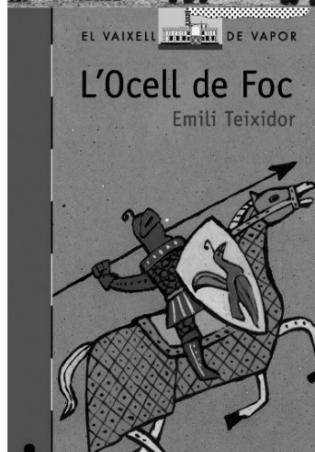
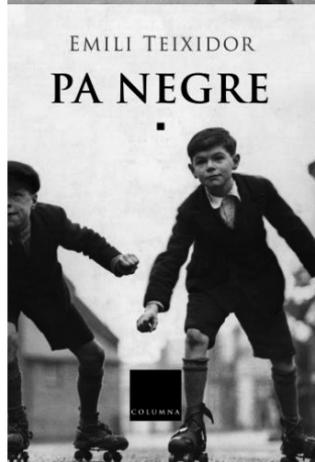
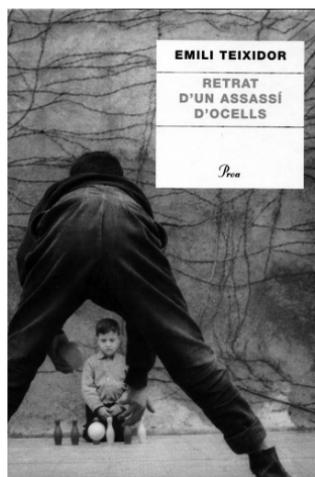
Two bodies in the forest, a hand buried among the flowers and the legend of a man barbarously mutilated are the framework of Emili Teixidor's first novel, a heart moving remembrance of an enigmatic paradise recalled from childhood. The narrator embarks, in the same way as someone who undertakes a police investigation, on the adventure of reconstructing lost time from childhood and youth without letting himself be dragged down by nostalgia. He adopts the stance of a detective returning to the scene of a crime and doing his best to fit the evidence together so as to make sense. After all, isn't that how we build up our own story, starting from the rubble in our memory, the significance of which often escapes us? Evocation leads the narrator to discover up to what point he has been the innocent, involuntary witness to the crudest fight for power, whereby at the end of his research, when meaning has been totally discovered, he finds himself pushed towards the despair of absurdity and guilt. An outstanding feature of *Retrat d'un assassí d'ocells* (Portrait of a Bird Killer) is the wealth of expression and the kaleidoscope of characters that bring to life a definite time and space, the region of Osona after the Spanish civil war, with a mythical tone belonging to great works of universal literature. By means of this book, which develops subjects, characters and situations appearing in the stories *Sic transit Glòria Swanson* (this is his first novel not intended for children or young-adults), Teixidor is revealed to be an ambitious, powerful novelist, a must.

Pa negre (Black Bread), 2003

Pa negre (Black Bread) is set in the harsh nineteen forties of post-war Spain, in a misty atmosphere and in the tone of an industrial and rural drama. A drama which intertwines personal memories, history and terrible legends collected from here and there. Emili Teixidor chooses to adopt Andreu's point of view as narrator, an innocent, unconscious narrator, who lives practically on his own, his father is in prison and his mother at work in the factory from dawn to dusk. The boy is trying to find a place of refuge in the world that surrounds him and in which he has had the dubious luck of having been fostered by the Manubens family, the owners of the factory. Through Andreu, he constructs a mythical territory that is not only the geographical area of Osona, but above all the moral space of a child who is on the threshold of the adult world, the moral space of an adolescent, the space of initiation in life, in its secrets and its mysteries, the space of renunciation and betrayal. It is clear from the first page the essential, basic role that language plays in the development of the protagonist during his process of moral growth. By means of a veritable torrent of words, Teixidor recreates the inevitably happy world of childhood. Happy, but at the same time composed of a dark, brutal, and at times sordid sadness. Such is the discovery of reality, which means injustice, the bitter truth. *Pa negre* (Black Bread) is an outstanding novel, an exercise in creating a world on the basis of the recreation of memories and language, without concessions, but also without stridency, profoundly generous to the readers.

L'Ocell de Foc (The Firebird), 1969

L'Ocell de Foc (The Firebird) travels along the roads of Provence, guiding the Cec de Cabrera (the Blind man from Cabrera) at the head of a troop of actors. We are in the times of the childhood of King James I and the crusade against the Cathars, when Europe was a perilous crossing of paths and of languages in the throes of liberty. Our protagonist, an apprentice troubadour, discovers the profession of knights, the monastic life, the mysteries of wizards and highwaymen, and behind the enigma of self identity, his true destiny. Teixidor has an outstanding skill at combining a tale of adventures in the best tradition of



young people's novels with a historical introduction to the world of feudalism, and through the ups and downs of the minstrels and troubadours, a short initiation into poetry. The Germán Sánchez Ruipérez Foundation included this novel, recommended for twelve-year-old readers on, in their selection of a hundred books from the 20th century.

Cor de Roure (Heart of Oak), 1994

Cor de Roure is the name of warrior during the Guerra dels Matiners (the War of the Early Risers) which rallied over a hundred and fifty men to fight for Charles VI against his cousin, Queen Isabel II. Set at the end of the 19th century, within the context of the Carlist Wars, the novel relives the tensions between traditionalists and liberals which configured modern Spain, the clash between popular superstition and the enlightened belief in science, the unstoppable social transformation brought about by the industrial revolution experienced in the Ter and Llobregat basins. A historical novel knowledgeably documented, it is intended for readers between fourteen and sixteen as a story of adventure and intrigue in which two adolescents, a boy and a girl, Tinoc and Viana, find friendship, love and self identity in the midst of an extremely complex situation. In this way they will be initiated in the secrets of life, along with the reader.

La lectura y la vida (Reading and Life), 2007

A book that gathers ten essays, articles and lectures under the sub-title of *Com incitar els nens i els adolescents a la lectura: una guia per a pares i mestres* (How to Entice Children and Adolescents into Reading: A Guide for Parents and Teachers). Teixidor's pedagogic experience and his knowledge as an accomplished narrator used to talking to children and adolescents about his books are the basis of this collection of reflexions giving clues on teaching to read and stimulating the desire to do so. Teixidor shows an elevated practical sense, with a display of advice and strategies that are worth copying, aimed at the professionals of reading initiation, at schools and libraries and also at families. Along similar lines to those of Lewis, Steiner or Bloom, the author reminds us that books, in as far as they are word depots, are the memory of the world, the threshold of dialogue with the dead and with imaginary reality. And he proves it, passionately, from the firm conviction that literary reading is a gift which helps us add value to life.

Les històries de la formiga Piga (The Stories of Piga the Ant), 1996 - 2010

Emili Teixidor has written a variety of children's novels, such as those featuring Ranquet, the stories of Ring 1-2-3 illustrated by Philip Stanton, or the cases of Inspector Garrofa. Perhaps the most famous of all are the series of children's stories portrayed by a friendly ant and her adventures which instruct the youngest readers in values such as friendship, solidarity or amusement, which is not only characteristic of cicadas. There have been eight books up until now, all with playful titles: *L'amiga més amiga de la formiga Piga* (Piga the Ant's Very Best Friend), *La formiga Piga es deslloriga* (Piga the Ant Dislocates Herself), *Petits contes d'intriga de la formiga Piga* (Short Tales of Intrigue about Piga the Ant), *La volta al món de la formiga Piga* (Around the World with Piga the Ant), *Els secrets de la vida de la formiga Piga* (The Secrets of the Life of Piga the Ant), *La formiga Piga lliga* (Piga the Ant Flirts), *La botiga de la Formiga Piga* (Piga the Ant's Shop), *La formiga Piga s'enfonsa en la història* (Piga the Ant Sinks into History), all of them have been translated into Spanish. In 1996 the stories of Piga the Ant earned Teixidor the Spanish Ministry of Culture Award and international recognition by the IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People).