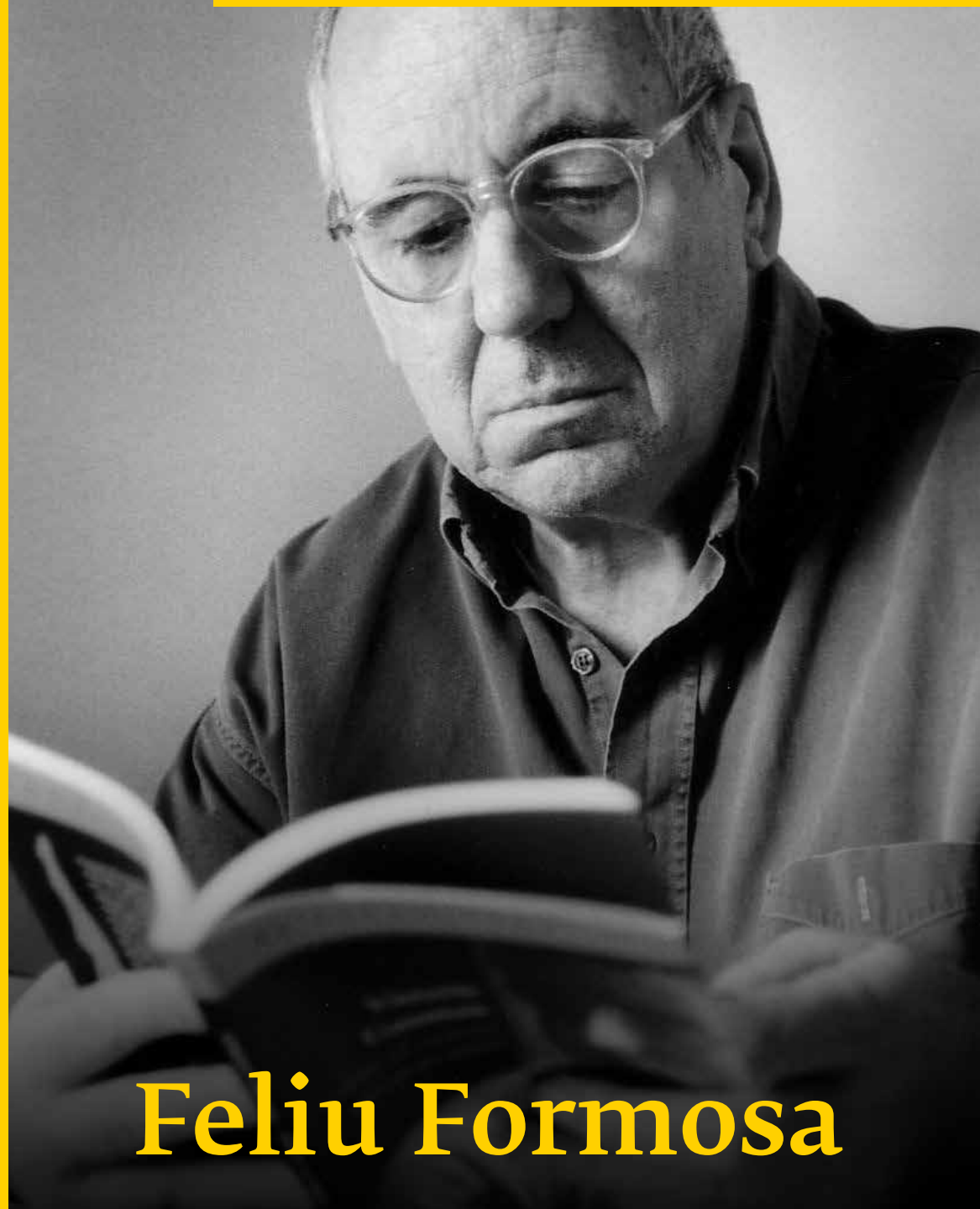


## A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FELIU FORMOSA

- 1966 *A la paret, escrit amb guix: Poesia alemanya de combat* (Written on the Wall with Chalk: German Combat Poetry) [with Artur Quintana]. Barcelona: Proa [translated poetry]
- 1968 *L'encens i la carn* (Incense and Flesh). Barcelona: Edicions 62 [drama]
- 1970 *Cel·la 44* (Cell 44). Palma de Mallorca: Daedalus [drama], *Per una acció teatral* (Towards a Dramatic Action). Barcelona: Edicions 62 [essay]
- 1973 *Albes breus a les mans* (Short Daybreaks in My Hands). Barcelona: Proa [poetry], *Llibre de les meditacions* (Book of Meditations). Barcelona: Edicions 62 [poetry]
- 1974 *Bertolt Brecht, Les elegies de Buckow i altres poemes* (The Buckow Elegies and Other Poems). Barcelona: Edicions 62 [translated poetry]
- 1975 *Raval*. Barcelona: Edicions 62 [poetry]
- 1976 *Cançoner* (Songbook). Barcelona: Vosgos [poetry]
- 1977 *François Villon, Balades* (Ballads). Barcelona: Vosgos [translated poetry]
- 1978 *Georg Trakl, Helian i altres poemes* (Helian and Other Poems). Barcelona: Edicions 62 [translated poetry], *Llibre dels viatges* (Book of Travels). Barcelona: Proa [poetry]
- 1979 *El present vulnerable* (The Vulnerable Present). Barcelona: Laia [diary]
- 1980 *Si tot és dintre: Originals i traduccions* (If Everything Is Within: Originals and Translations). Barcelona: Grijalbo [collected poetry, includes translated poetry]
- 1984 *Poesia alemanya: Antologia del segle XVI al XIX* (German Poetry: Anthology of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries). Barcelona: Edicions 62 [translated poetry]
- 1986 *Semblança* (Sketch). Barcelona: El Mall [poetry]
- 1987 *Amb efecte* (With Effect) [with Joan Casas]. Barcelona: Empúries [poetry]
- 1989 *Pols al retrovisor* (Dust on the Rear-view Mirror) [with Joan Casas]. València: Eliseu Climent-3i4 [poetry]
- 1990 *Georg Trakl, Obra poètica* (Poetic Works). Barcelona: Empúries [translated poetry]
- 1991 *La campana de vidre* (The Glass Bell). Barcelona: Cafè Central [poetry]
- 1992 *Impasse*. Barcelona: Eumo - Cafè Central [poetry], *Per Puck* (For Puck). Barcelona: Columna [poetry]
- 1994 *Al llarg de tota una impaciència* (Through a Whole Impatience). Barcelona: Edicions 62 [poetry]
- 1996 *Les nits del llamp* (The Nights of the Lightning). Barcelona: La Magrana [children's story]
- 1998 *Bertolt Brecht, Poemes i cançons* (Poems and Songs). Barcelona: Edicions 62-Empúries [translated poetry], *El miracle de la vaca cega* (The Miracle of the Blind Cow). Lleida: Pagès [drama]
- 2000 *Immediacions* (Immediacies). Barcelona: Edicions 62 - Empúries [poetry]
- 2001 *Cap claredat no dorm* (No Brightness Sleeps). Lleida: Pagès [poetry]
- 2004 *Darrere el vidre. Poesia 1972-2002* (Behind the Glass: Poetry 1972-2002). Barcelona: Edicions 62-Empúries [poetry]
- 2005 *A contratemps* (Off Beat). Catarroja: Perifèric [diary], *Bellvitge*. Barcelona: Cruïlla [children's poetry], *El somriure de l'atzar: Diaris II* (The Smile of Fate: Diaries II). Catarroja: Perifèric [diary]
- 2006 *Centre de brevetat* (Center of Brevity). Barcelona: Meteora [poetry]
- 2009 *La pedra insòlita* (The Unexpected Stone) [with Sandra Morena i Anna Vila]. Barcelona: Meteora [poetry]

# Who's Who

CATALAN WRITING



## Feliu Formosa

It has been said more than once that as a poet, Feliu Formosa (1934) was an outsider, and he has affirmed that he saw himself in this way. This is not a surprise: his work has been at the margin of the central currents of Catalan poetry during his time. Early on, Formosa did not submit to the realist demands of the fellow writers of his generation, and later he was not tempted by the formalist obsessions that were in vogue among the younger groups. But his poetry has ended up being, after all, an inexcusable point of reference for readers of poetry. This is not because, at some point, Formosa figured out the formula for success that would enable him to write more poems catering to the taste of a more or less wide audience. On the contrary: it is precisely because he has been faithful to his radical project of making poetry an ever-renewed area of experience that he has coherently and unceasingly maintained a creative path based on adventure and rigor.

This alone would already make him an exemplary poet. But what's more, it is the case that the successive stages of his adventures have been captured in some two dozen books, all very different but of an unusually sustained interest and quality. And, to drive it all home, the coherence of the whole has become even more evident on the two occasions that Formosa has gathered his poetic production together: in 1980 in the volume *Si tot és dintre* (If Everything is Within), and in 2003 in the collection *Darrere el vidre* (Behind the Glass). In both cases, applying a strict eye, the author has taken advantage of the opportunity to polish or refine some lines and even take out a certain number of poems. Formosa's poetic quest is the daughter of self-rigor.

The first of these two volumes of collected poetry, *Si tot és dintre*, gathered on one hand Formosa's original poems and on the other those translated by him (Villon, Trakl, and Brecht). This was not padding or a whim. Formosa has always been a translator, and a prolific one; it is natural that, in the field of poetry, this facet deserves to be considered a creative work. Why, then, were the verse translations left out of *Darrere el vidre*? Probably because they had grown so much (with a second volume of Brecht, all of the poetry of Trakl and an anthology of German poetry from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries) that adding them to the original work would have

been impossible. Now: the same rigor that has led Formosa to revise his poems has also caused him, when the re-editions have allowed it, to correct his translations, above all with attention to the changes that have occurred over the course of the last decades in the language model ruling Catalan literature. Formosa has always been very attentive to this question. His work as a translator, then, has also been exemplary in its linguistic aspects.

In fact, if we go over the list of all of Formosa's translations, we would immediately notice two characteristics that make him stand out as a writer. One, his Germanophilia. Once he had graduated from university, in the late 1950s, Formosa lived for some time in Germany, and since then has become the great introducer of German literature to Catalan culture, in the fields of essay, poetry and fiction. Secondly, we would also notice that he has translated a very considerable number of dramatic works or those related to the world of theater. For Formosa has always been, essentially, a man of the theater. He has been an actor and recitationist, adaptor and director, playwright and professor of dramatic arts, and has written various essays about the theater. His role in bringing the principal contributions of European drama to Catalonia in the 60s and 70s is fundamental. His commitment to theater is also exemplary.

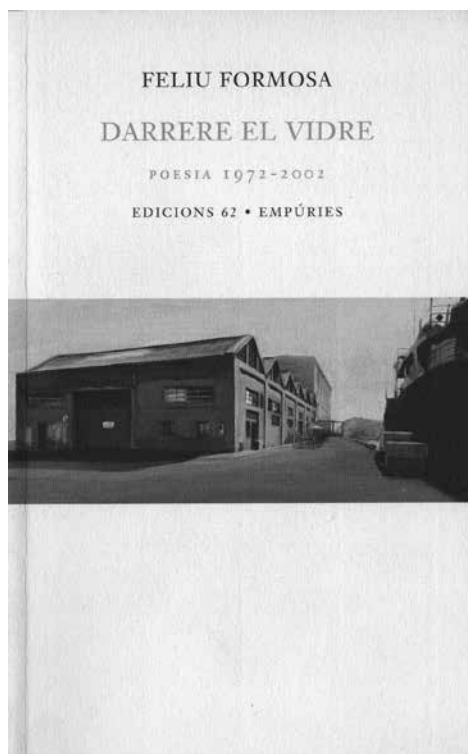
Between poet, translator, and man of theater there is, of course, no boundary. All of Feliu Formosa's work responds to the same project of relation with the world of culture: a coherent project, always undertaken out of the radicalism and integrity that define him. This is manifest in an especially clear way in the other essential aspect of his literary production: his diaries, born of the most rotund honesty. Already from the first release, the extraordinary *El present vulnerable* (The Vulnerable Present, 1979), his readers have been able, without any need to know him personally, to be familiar with the kind of man who is behind the poet, translator and playwright. Or to put it in another way: the type of person that he is, all at once, the poet and translator and playwright Feliu Formosa. One of the good ones.

## Works reviewed



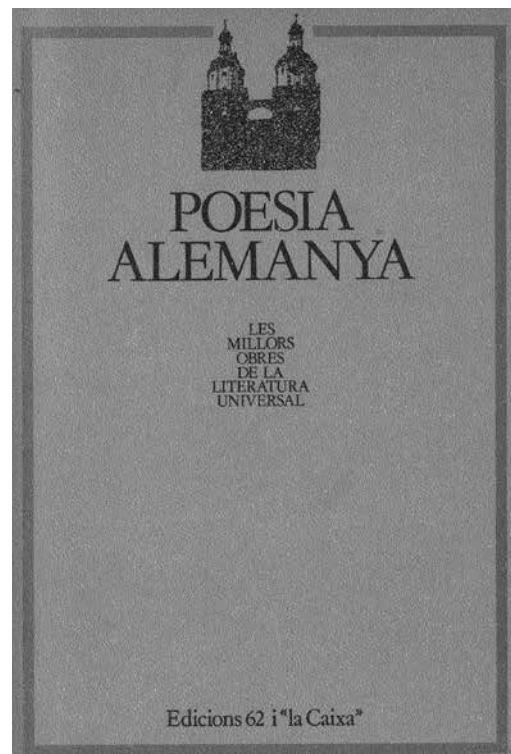
**El present vulnerable: Diaris I (1973-1978)**  
(The Vulnerable Present: Diaries I)  
Barcelona: Laia, 1979.

The first series of diaries published by Feliu Formosa encompasses five years of his life, from August 1973 to November 1978. The writing of these diaries began when the author was about to turn 38 and ended just after turning 40. Although the subtitle of the volume indicates that it is just the first of a series, it has taken more than twenty-five years to pass for Formosa to publish more sections of his diaries, in two volumes that appeared in 2005: *A contratemps* (Off Beat, which collects the diaries of 1995 and 1997) and *El somriure de l'atzar* (The Smile of Fate, which collects the diaries of 1999 and 2001). The Formosa that we meet again in these last two volumes, then, is already a man past his sixtieth birthday, far distanced from the one he showed us in *El present vulnerable*, which remains today one of the indispensable contributions of contemporary Catalan literature to the genre. It is such, ultimately, for the rigor with which Formosa testifies to the shaping of his intimate reality as a person and, inseparably, as man of culture. The notes collected in *El present vulnerable* reach across a very wide spectrum: moments captured in the precise description of a place or environment, events of daily life centered on relationships with those closest to him (family, friends, work colleagues or fellow militants), analysis of his own work (as poet, translator, and man of theater), reports on readings, sociological reflections (on language, politics, the course of history), and even stories, poems, and transcriptions of dreams. Formosa's merit as a writer lies above all in the human quality shining through his clean prose. For the most varied elements are articulated for the reader, in the complex portrait, changing but coherent to the extreme, of a man of deep personal reserves and an incisive intelligence. *El present vulnerable* is also very recommended reading for introducing oneself to Formosa's poetic work, and tangentially, as an intriguing witness to certain aspects of the historical period that the diaries encompass. Reading the second chapter, "Diari sense dates" (Undated Diary), is particularly impressive, in that it reflects the upheavals caused by the death of the author's first wife, Maria Plans. This event is also the origin of one of Formosa's best poetry collections: *Cançoner* (Songbook, 1976).



**Darrere el vidre: Poesia 1972-2002**  
(Behind the Glass: Poetry 1972-2002)  
Barcelona: Edicions 62-Empúries, 2004.

Formosa's latest collected poetry gathers eleven books of original verse published between 1973 (*Albes breus a les mans* [Short Daybreak in the Hands]) and 2001 (*Cap claredat no dorm* [No Brightness Sleeps]). The only exclusion is the sequence of ten poems "Amb tots els tons del dolor i de l'atzar" (With All the Tones of Pain and Fate) that closed the first part (*Poesia 1972-1980* [Poetry 1972-1980]) of the previous volume of Formosa's collected poetry, *Si tot és dintre: Originals i traduccions* (If Everything is Within: Originals and Translations, 1980). With this exception and that of a few other eliminated poems, the reader of *Darrere el vidre* can follow the complete poetic trajectory of thirty years. Perhaps the most apparent peculiarity of this trajectory is that practically every book represents a point of inflection in it, if not a new beginning. Formosa's poetic voice is characterized by a tone that is often elegiac but never strident, always appropriate for introspective reflection, and for attention to the precise shaping of images and thoughts. This voice evolves and incorporates new accents and areas of interest in the degree to which the poet's gaze, over the years, moves from zones of the light of reason to zones of the shadow of the unconscious or to the impact produced by these shadowy zones when manifest in music, painting, or the (lyric or dramatic) verse of others. However, at root, the quality of his voice does not change, and in the reader's eyes this reinforces the unity of Formosa's poetic project. On the other hand, formal solutions and thematic architecture do change in each book; for the reader, it is proof of the authenticity and rigor with which the poet confronts his task, avoiding the comfort of mechanical resources. Sometimes, these renewals seem to respond to the fact that Formosa continues to dialogue with new branches of the tradition that characterizes him: a tradition of affinities that incorporates certain Catalan poets, such as Ferrater, Bartra and Vinyoli, but also Trakl, Brecht and Celan, and Salinas, and Shakespeare as a backdrop. Within this evolution, which produces very different books but books that always sustain the same quality, it is possible to point out several highlights. There are three, at least, beyond doubt. The first would be *Cançoner* (Songbook, 1976), where the poet confronts his pain and disorientation from the death of his beloved wife. The second, *Semblança* (Sketch, 1986), enters into the amorous experience. And in the third, *Al llarg de tota una impaciència* (Through a Whole Impatience, 1994), poetic expression is reduced to its essence in order to give maximum power to the impact of each image and each poem.



**Poesia alemanya: Antologia del segle XVI al XIX**  
(German Poetry: Anthology of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)  
Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1984.

Feliu Formosa's dedication to translation and poetry has come to fruition throughout many years, in a series of poetic renderings of a great quality and enormous interest. Some of these translations—for example, the *Balades* of François Villon and many of Brecht's poems—are related to the theater, Formosa's other great passion, because these are adaptations that were born to be put on the stage before becoming a book. In addition, the collection of poetic translations created by Formosa since at least 1966 clearly points to another essential component of his task as a writer: his Germanophilia. Because, besides the case of Villon, the other poets he has translated are all German, with special attention to Bertolt Brecht and Georg Trakl. The poet has produced two anthologies of Brecht: *Les elegies de Buckow i altres poemes* (The Buckow Elegies and Other Poems, 1974), and *Poemes i cançons* (Poems and Songs, 1998). After the taste of Trakl comprised by *Helian i altres poemes* (Helian and Other Poems, 1978), Formosa produced the complete poetic works in 1990. The selection of these two authors is not by chance, because his interest in both of them, as different as they are, is also reflected in Formosa's original poetry: they are two poles of attraction that leave the most manifest imprint. Paradoxically, one might note that Formosa's task to incorporate the Germanic poetic tradition in Catalan culture culminates with a work done to order and not by free choice: the anthology *Poesia alemanya* (German Poetry). This is a complete panorama of literature in verse from the beginning of the German literary language, in the sixteenth century, to the end of the nineteenth century: 178 poems by 55 different authors, from Martin Luther to Hugo von Hoffmannstahl. Formosa is able, for one, to masterfully defeat the conditions imposed by the criteria of indispensable representativeness in the whole anthology (which required him to translate poems that he surely would not have chosen if he had been able to select in an arbitrary way). He also amply overcomes the inherent difficulty of the fact of a lone poet presenting so many different poetic voices from very different eras. Formosa meets this challenge by putting into play all of the resources of his profession, and realizes each poem in Catalan as a successful piece, as much for the form, always quite strict, as for the respect given to the content and expressive texture of the original. A transcendental gain for Catalan readers of poetry.

