



A Literary Map of Barcelona

Map 10

Area 3:

Two reflections of the city

Literary Tour

Tour duration: 1h15

How to get there: FCCC (Pàdua), Bus V15, H6

- 1 **Mercè Rodoreda's apartment**
- 2 **Turó de Monterols**
- 3 **The House of José Agustín Goytisolo**
- 4 **The Birth House of Mercè Rodoreda**
- 5 **The Farríols House**
- 6 **Casa Sagnier**
- 7 **The House of the Roses and Valencian dressmakers**
- 8 **Passatge de Sant Felip**
- 9 **Cristal City Bar-Bookshop**
- 10 **Escola Poeta Foix / FGC Train Station**
- 11 **Joan Maragall Monument**
- 12 **The Joan Maragall House-Museum and Archives**
- 13 **Fundació Felícia Fuster**
- 14 **The House of Mercè Rodoreda**
- 15 **The House of Josep Pla**
- 16 **Escola Nostra Sra. de Lourdes School**
- 17 **Shop on Rambla del Prat**
- 18 **Mercat de la Libertat / Plaça de la Libertat**

1.

Mercè Rodoreda's apartment

Carrer de Balmes, 343 / corner of Carrer de Corint

In 1968, Mercè Rodoreda (1908–1983), Catalan novelist and writer, bought a modern apartment on the first floor of number 343 Carrer de Balmes, overlooking Carrer d'Atenes. She chose a newly constructed building situated opposite the house where she was born in 1908, later demolished in 1964. The writer preferred the view of the few remaining trees in the old Casa Brusi woods (now Turó de Monterols), rather than the desolate view of the Duplex Garage roof occupying the place where her family home had been.

“When I was a young girl, the back of our house overlooked the stream of Sant Gervasi de Cassoles, where the present-day street called Carrer de Balmes is situated. Across the stream was the abandoned park of the Marquis of Can Brusi.”
(Foreword to *A Broken Mirror*.)

2.

Turó de Monterols

Setting of the novel *A Broken Mirror* by Mercè Rodoreda

The Turó de Monterols is what remains of the large park or woods belonging to the land Casa Brusi used to be, the family who founded the “Diari de Barcelona” newspaper widely known as “El Brusi.” The Parc de Can Brusi was used as the model for the large garden at the Valldaura family house, who are the main characters in *A Broken Mirror* (1974).

“From the dining room, you could gaze out at the leafy park, where countless nightingales would come to nest on summer nights. The park stretched from Plaça Molina to the Ateneu in Sant Gervasi, where Ronda del General Mitre is now situated. In the evening, you could hear the calls of the peacocks. This idealised park is called the Parc de la Torre dels Valldaura. It is the mother of all gardens.”
(Foreword to *A Broken Mirror*.)

3.

The House of José Agustín Goytisolo

Balmes, 349

Between 1955 and 1961, the poet and his wife lived in a small flat in this building. It was also where his daughter Julia was born in 1956, to whom his famous novel *Palabras para Julia* was dedicated.

ONE DAY YOU WERE SINGING

“Our house was small. Our house. And dark. But your light shone. Many books; few dishes; white clothes. And one day you were singing a lullaby. And you seemed almost bewitched. You made our house feel more bright and spacious.”
(José Agustín Goytisolo, *Poesía completa*.)

4.

The Birth House of Mercè Rodoreda

Carrer de Manuel Angelón, 8

Today there is just a garage and a plaque marking Casal Gurguí, the place where the writer Mercè Rodoreda i Gurguí was born and lived. It was a detached home with a front and back garden belonging to her grandfather, Pere Gurguí. Abandoned and in disrepair, the house was demolished in 1964.

For the writer, the house and the garden became a lost paradise and the legendary setting for her literary work. Her first novel, *Aloma*, was written in this house and the setting for the novel includes a similar small villa and the surrounding Sant Gervasi neighbourhood. At the Casal Gurguí they kept pigeons which later served as inspiration for the author for her novel *In Diamond Square*; while in *Camellia Street*, Cecília, the main character, grows up in a house with a garden with a pigeon coop that is a place of refuge for her, in the same way the pigeon coop at the author's home had been for her.

It was from this house that Mercè Rodoreda left for exile on the morning of January 21st, 1939.

“I am a child of Sant Gervasi de Cassoles, a short, narrow street that in the rain ran from Pàdua to the gully in Sant Gervasi that was then called Sant Anton, later París and even later Manuel Angelón, which is still its name today.”
(Mercè Rodoreda, *In Diamond Square*.)

“I remember the feeling of being at home and, leaning over the rail on the roof terrace, I would see the blue jacaranda flowers falling on the lawn and the hydrangeas. I'll never be able to explain it.”
(Mercè Rodoreda, *Imatges d'infantesa, Narrativa completa II*.)

5.

The Farríols House

Carrer de Manuel Angelón, 26

In front of the Casal Gurguí at number 26 Carrer de Manuel Angelón, lay the back garden of a splendid house belonging to Eusebi Farríols, a naval captain, the main entrance of which was on Carrer de Rios Rosas. From the garden and its fountain, to the coloured windows of the gallery, the rooms and furniture, the Farríols House was to become the model on which the author based Salvador Valldaura's house in her novel *A Broken Mirror*, while certain decorative elements such as the locust painting that appeared in her novel *The Diamond Square*. She even used the same surname, Farríols, for the character Eladi Farríols in *A Broken Mirror*.

“That winter, Salvador Valldaura died of an attack of apoplexy. Eladi felt it deeply. Sofia was saddened to the point of falling ill. She wanted to observe full mourning; they would wait two years before the wedding. Early during that period Eladi Farríols would fall in love with a cabaret singer from the Paral·lel.”
(Mercè Rodoreda, *A Broken Mirror*.)

“I sat my kids in front of the locusts [painting] and told them to take a good look while I closeted myself in the kitchen with Mrs Enriqueta.”
(Mercè Rodoreda, *In Diamond Square*.)

6.

Casa Sagnier

Carrer Brusi, 51 / Civic Centre Casa Sagnier, Enric Sagnier Gardens / Portraying the Valldaura house and park

Casa Sagnier gives us a good idea of the type of stately homes and grand gardens that existed in Sant Gervasi, which would be similar to the imaginary house and park belonging to the Valldaura family described by Mercè Rodoreda in her novel *A Broken Mirror*. This is a splendid house designed in 1900 by architect Enric Sagnier as a summer villa for his family. The gardens, which used to be much larger in those days, even had a small steam train running through them. The Casa Sagnier currently houses the civic centre belonging to the Barcelona City Council.

“There were the lords... so many of them in their stately homes with immaculately kept gardens. It was a bed of roses and trees...”
(Mercè Rodoreda, *Imatges d'infantesa*.)

“At the foot of the wrought-iron fence, a wide driveway, lined with chestnut trees, led to the house; at the end of the driveway, four stories high, with two towers and all the roofs tiled in green ceramic, covered by a creeper with leaves turning red, the house showed its outline against an autumn sky.”
(Mercè Rodoreda, *A Broken Mirror*.)

7.

The House of the Roses and Valencian dressmakers

Carrer Francolí on the corner of carrer de la Gleva.

Here there used to be a dressmaker's house where Mercè Rodoreda's mother would get her dresses made. Both mother and daughter loved to dress up in elegant dresses and jewellery, although they could not afford too much luxury. There was a beautiful cream rose bush climbing up the house, portrayed in *A Broken Mirror*. In her book, they are the roses that grow near the washhouse that the character Teresa Valldaura also wears roses on her chest. In *Aloma* she also wears roses on her chest just like Mercè Rodoreda and her mother liked to do.

“My mother would have her dresses made by dressmakers from Valencia. They had good taste, and they could sew like angels. The eldest of the three was called Amanda, so our family called them the Amandas. They lived in a small house on Carrer de Francolí, on the corner of Carrer de la Gleva. The stairway up to the rooftop terrace overlooking Carrer de la Gleva had an arbour formed by an ancient rosebush with flesh-coloured flowers. I guess they must be the roses from the rosebushes planted next to the washhouse belonging to the Valldauras in *A Broken Mirror*.”
(Mercè Rodoreda, *Imatges d'infantesa*.)

“‘Before you leave I'll pick a few roses for you.’ She led her friend towards the washhouse; its walls were covered with blooming rosebushes.”
(Mercè Rodoreda, *A Broken Mirror*.)

8.

Passatge de Sant Felip

Construction of this passageway began in 1877, and it featured English style houses with gardens. Full of charm, it has been preserved as evidence of how the neighbourhood used to be at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, during the lifetime of writer Mercè Rodoreda. The writer from the Empordà, Josep Pla (1897–1981) gives us an insight into the neighbourhood's transformation.

“To create Carrer de Balmes, some adorable little houses had to be knocked down. Where these one- and two-storey houses with their tiny gardens once stood, awful eight- and nine-storey buildings will soon take their place. We're starting to see them already. In a few years' time, these magical pink and white stones of Sant Gervasi, where mythology's most bourgeois and rational forms seem almost mandatory, will be but the shadow of a dream.”
(Josep Pla, *Barcelona, una discussió entraynable*.)

9.

Cristal City Bar-Bookshop

Carrer de Balmes, 294

The Cristal City Bar was located on number 94 of Carrer de Balmes, and was an unusual type of venue in the 1960s and 70s that functioned as a bar and bookshop at the same time. The walls were replete with bookshelves and all the new releases were on show behind the bar. Cristal City was a peaceful place that was famous for its regular meetings and literary talks where renowned writers would gather, such as José Agustín Goytisolo, Gabriel Ferrater, Jaime Gil de Biedma, Carlos Barral (who lived very near Carrer de Sant Elies), and Juan Marsé, among others.

The Cristal City was also frequented by Teresa and Pijoaparte, main characters in the novel *Last Evenings with Teresa* by Juan Marsé.

THE CITY

“So many streets I've used as a detour to avoid the places where people know me. So many voices that have called me by name. So many rooms that have given me memories. So many windows from which I've looked out at seemingly interminable sunshine [and rain showers]. So many women whom I've observed. So many children who I've only known things that I know, and that I don't want [to tell them].”
(Gabriel Ferrater, *Les dones i els dies*.)

“They finished their night out at the Cristal City Bar among quiet, respectable courting couples who have to be home by nine in the evening. They made out in the privacy of the mezzanine, which was inaccessible to wild and crazy Murcians and touchy-feely couples.”
(Juan Marsé, *Últimas tardes con Teresa*.)

10.

Escola Poeta Foix School / FGC Train Station

Carrer de Balmes, 298 / Plaça Molina

Mercè Rodoreda once described what the old route from her home to Sarrià train station used to be like during a Spanish television programme, but it was never aired, so it remained unpublished. In her novel *Camellia Street*, one of the characters is Mrs. Riús who owned a large house with a garden. To give us an idea of what these houses looked like, we can see one that still remains and has been converted to a school, the Escola Poeta Foix, on number 298 Carrer de Balmes, very close to Plaça Molina.

“There's the memory of the narrow little path to the Sarrià train station, which on one side marked the boundary of the park belonging to the Marquis of Can Brusi, and on the other, the boundary of the well-kept aristocratic garden of the Riús household, with its large palm trees and flower beds, the gardener's house, and beside it, the coach house, the black carriage and the barking horses. And in the corner, taking shelter from the cold, were some magnificent camellias.”
(Mercè Rodoreda, quoted by Carme Arnau, *El paradís perdut from Mercè Rodoreda*.)

11.

Joan Maragall Monument

Plaça Molina

On the side facing the sea of Plaça Molina square, stands a bust monument of Joan Maragall, the work of his son, Ernest Maragall i Noble, including a reproduction of the poet's signature.

It was unveiled in 2010 during the commemorative events of "The Year of Maragall" that celebrated the 150 years since his birth.

NEW ODE TO BARCELONA

(excerpt)

"Where are you going, Barcelona, Catalan spirit that has overcome the hills and leapt the enclosure and is forging ahead with your scattered houses, as though intoxicated by such immense freedom? [...]

I love you just as you are, evil city: what you exhale is like an evil eye: for you are vain and boastful and treacherous and [vulgar,

you make us hang our head in shame Barcelona! Ours, ours, in spite of your sins! Our Barcelona! The great enchantress!"

(Joan Maragall, *Poesia completa*.)

12.

Joan Maragall House-Museum and Archive

Carrer d'Alfons XII, 79

Residence of the poet and writer Joan Maragall (1860–1911). Containing furniture, photographs, works of art, and objects belonging to the poet and his family, this museum gives us a glimpse into the personal life of one of the most prominent figures of Catalan Modernism.

Guided visits and other activities organised here can be found at <http://www.joanmaragall.cat/>

The building also houses the Joan Maragall Archives, affiliated with the Biblioteca de Catalunya library, which contains the personal library of the poet and includes a significant documentary collection on the life and work of Maragall and Modernism as a whole.

EXCELSIOR

"Be careful, spirit, be careful; to never lose your north. To never leave tranquil the smooth waters of any port.

Turn, turn your eyes skyward, don't look to the ruined shore; turn your face into the wind, ever seaward, evermore.

Always keep your sails aloft, from the sky to the sparkling sea, always surrounded by vast waters that churn endlessly.

Flee the ignoble land, flee the wretched horizons; moving onwards out to sea, to waters far more noble.

Leave the land, leave the shore, you must sail on, your voyage will go on and on, evermore."

(Joan Maragall, *Poesia completa*.)

13.

Fundació Felícia Fuster

Carrer de Camps i Fabrès, 3-11, baixos 3a

Felícia Fuster was a poet and visual artist, born in 1921 in Barcelona, in the district of La Barceloneta. The Foundation bearing her name is a private non-profit entity, and was created by the poet and artist with the help of various figures from the country's literary and artistic world. The Foundation has two objectives: to promote Felícia Fuster's art and poetry, and to help stimulate artistic creation, promote the Catalan language abroad, and help those without funds to access higher education with the help of their financial aid.

<http://fundacioffuster.org/en/>

"Complete loneliness —A woman's breast— A cloud graces you."

(Felícia Fuster, *Postals no escrites, Obra poètica*.)

14.

The House of Mercè Rodoreda

Carrer de Saragossa, 16

Virtually opposite the Villa Urània (the former house of astronomer Josep Comas i Solà), there was a house with a garden that Joan Gurgui, uncle and husband of Mercè Rodoreda, refurbished following his return from Argentina, when the family had arranged the marriage to his niece Mercè. In 1927, Joan and Mercè, who were still single at the time, went to live there with her parents, Andreu and Montserrat. The couple married in 1928, on Mercè's 20th birthday. This house, which she had never liked, was her home for 10 years and was the birthplace of her son.

It was in this house on Carrer de Saragossa, in the middle of the Spanish Civil War, shortly after the disappearance of Andreu Nin (leader of the POUM party), on June 16th, 1937, that Mercè Rodoreda and her husband split up for good. There is not much information about the sentimental relationship between Mercè Rodoreda and Andreu Nin.

"Look, Armanda, how many cakes are left: eat some before you go to bed so that their sweetness brings you dreams of love. Don't let it die, Armanda. Don't ever let it die."

(Mercè Rodoreda, *A Broken Mirror*.)

15.

The House of Josep Pla

Carrer dels Madrazo on the corner of Carrer de Lincoln

On Carrer del Madrazo, on the corner with Carrer de Lincoln, there used to be a house where Josep Pla lived in the year 1929. The house was governed by Adi Enberg's mother. Enberg was born in the neighbourhood, in a house on Carrer de Sanjoanistes, and was Josep Pla's partner for years.

Josep Pla

(1897-1981), Catalan writer.

"Then, having adopted a very nomadic lifestyle, I lived in Sant Gervasi and Sarrià. In Sant Gervasi, I lived on Carrer de Madrazo and Carrer de Tavern [...]

As I took an evening stroll through Sant Gervasi, I walked through the upper part of Via Augusta and saw how opening up the avenue had eaten into part of the garden belonging to the house on Carrer de Madrazo. The garden had been amputated, and the house looked like a boxer dog with its tail docked. It's a house without a tail."

(Josep Pla, *Barcelona, una discussió entranyable*.)

16.

Escola Nostra Sra. de Lourdes School

Via Augusta, 73-75

Mercè Rodoreda was a student at this school between the years 1914–1916.

"For a time, I attended Nostra Senyora de Lourdes school, which was run by nuns. Later, my mother decided it took her too long to pick me up and she moved me to a school on Carrer de Pàdua, on the corner with Carrer de Vallirana.

[...] There was an hour's playtime. In the summer, we would go out into the large garden, which had a grotto in one corner devoted to Our Lady of Lourdes, close to the Sarrià railway line, which at the time was an uncovered, below-ground line."

(Mercè Rodoreda, *Imatges d'infantesa*.)

Now that we are right on the boundary between the districts of Sant Gervasi and Gràcia, we can take advantage of this to go into Gràcia and see a couple of the settings from *In Diamond Square*, Mercè Rodoreda's most famous novel.

17.

A shop on La Rambla del Prat (Setting for *In Diamond Square*)

Rambla del Prat, on the corner of Carrer de Berga.

The shop on Rambla del Prat, on the corner of Carrer de Berga, was the old grocery shop owned by Mercè Rodoreda's parents, while in her novel *In Diamond Square* it became the shop and house where Colometa lived with her second husband Antoni, the grocer.

"We went along Prat to the High Street. He stopped by the entrance to a grocery store that was full of sacks, put his hand in a sack of birdseed and said, 'what lovely seed...'"

"Apart from two bedrooms looking over the street to the market, it was a simple house full of shadows. It was like this: a passage ran from the curtain with the Japanese lady to the other end of the house where there was a sitting room with a settee and armchairs with covers and a console table. On the left of the passage, two doors, next to each other, led into two bedrooms with windows over the street to the market. [...] And next to the first floor's garden fence, a small barred gate that would only half shut and led to the street down to the market."

(Mercè Rodoreda, *In Diamond Square*.)

18.

Mercat de la Llibertat / Plaça de la Llibertat (Setting for *In Diamond Square*)

The Mercat de la Llibertat market is "the shopping square" where Colometa, the main character in *In Diamond Square*, regularly goes to do her food shopping.

"A smell of meat, fish, flowers and vegetables wafted on the air and, even if I'd been blind, I would have immediately guessed I was getting close to the market. I left my street and crossed the High Street, with the yellow trams going up and down, ringing their bells. [...] And I walked, noting the smells of the market square and the shouts of the market, until I was caught up in the surging tide of women with their baskets."

(Mercè Rodoreda, *In Diamond Square*.)

Plaça de la Llibertat
The contrast between Gràcia and Sant Gervasi

Josep Pla gives us an overview of the differences that have characterised (and today continue to characterise) these two neighbourhoods: Sant Gervasi and Gràcia, two reflections of the city of Barcelona portrayed in the writers' work.

Josep Pla

(1897-1981), Catalan writer.

"Sant Gervasi and Gràcia were two very different neighbourhoods. Gràcia was lively, with the deafening noise of children filling the streets in the afternoons. Sant Gervasi, on the other hand, was more peaceful and laid-back. Gràcia's shop windows were bright; Sant Gervasi's, dreary. [...]

Though Gràcia and Sant Gervasi both used to be towns in their own right, they could not have been more different. Gràcia was renowned for its ancient liberal tradition and the role it played in the struggles for freedom. That attitude remains today in the neighbourhood's liberal middle classes, which I find admirable. Sant Gervasi, on the other hand, was a neighbourhood of the old and frail, of the discreet, the pious and the reserved. The town initially attracted those looking for a summer residence, and then low-income pensioners began to move in. As their pensions would tend to evaporate remarkably quickly, Sant Gervasi was never interested in commotions, tomfoolery or indulgence. Peace and quiet, peace and quiet, always peace and quiet. It is no surprise that Joan Maragall — the most intelligent, down-to-earth conservative this country has ever produced — lived in Sant Gervasi and fell in love with the neighbourhood."

(Josep Pla, *Barcelona, una discussió entranyable*.)

A Literary Map of Barcelona

Map 10

Barcelona Ciutat de la Literatura UNESCO

bcnliteratura

@bcnliteratura

bcnliteratura

barcelona.cat/ciutatdelaliteratura