

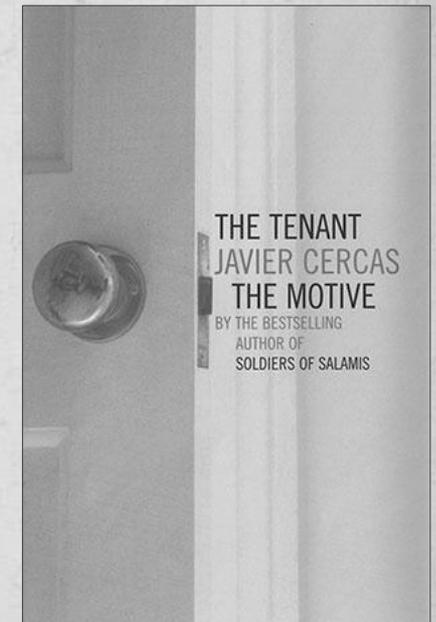
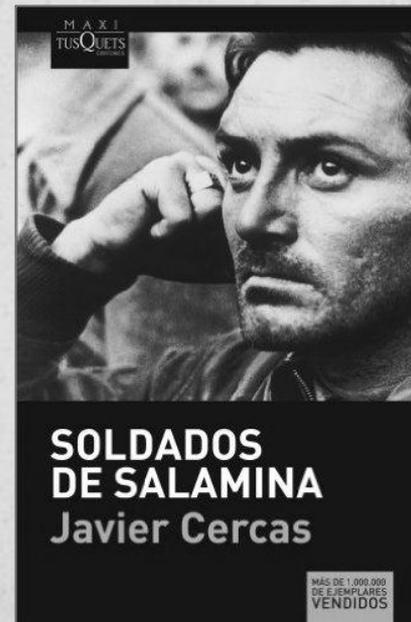
# Javier Cercas

Writer



# Biography

Javier Cercas was born in Ibahernando (Caceres) in 1962. At the age of four he moved with his family to Girona, which became his adopted city. He has a PhD in Hispanic Philology, he worked for two years at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the United States, and was professor at the University of Girona between 1989 and 2005. His first work of literature was the book of short stories "The Motive", published in 1987. His third novel, "Soldiers of Salamis" established him with the critics and public. The novel has received numerous Spanish and international awards and was made into a film by David Trueba. He is a regular contributor to the newspaper "El País" and has compiled his articles into a book "Una buena temporada". In 2009 he published "Anatomy of a Moment". The novel is a chronicle of the coup attempt on 23 February 1981, and won the National Narrative Literature Award. In 2015 he received the international prize "Ceppo" for his novel "El impostor".



# About the novel

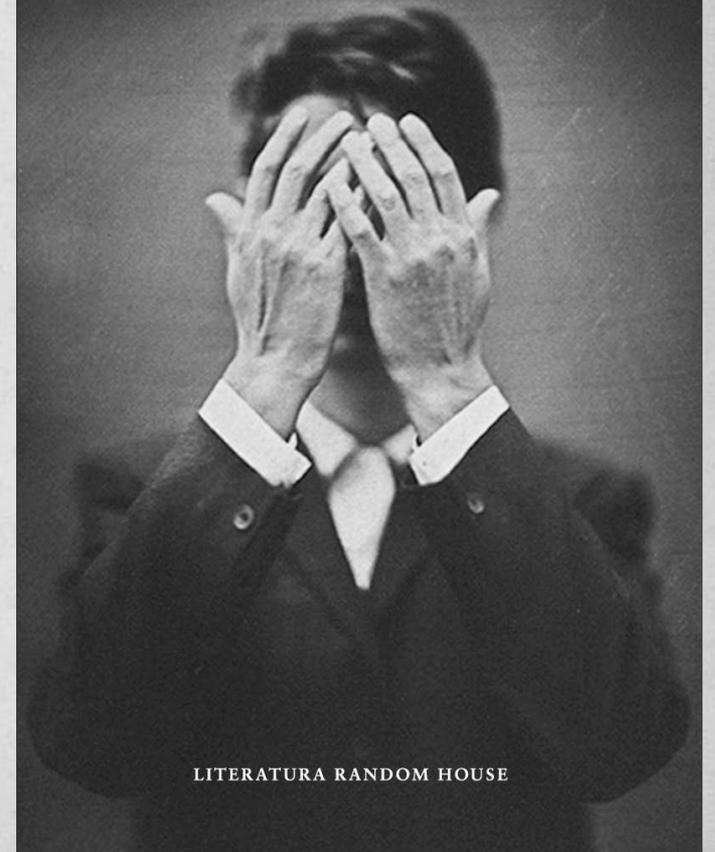
This novel, as the title implies, is about an impostor, in this case about the very real Enric Marco. However, as this is a novel, it is about other things, including the moral, social and even philosophical implications of Marco's actions. In particular, Javier Cercas examines every moral, philosophical, historical, psychological and social conundrum you can possibly think of associated with this case. He examines Marco's story in considerable detail and gives long explanations of why he thinks Marco is lying (and, where relevant, why and where he is not lying), backed by the facts he (or someone else) has dug up, and analogies. It has taken up a significant part of his life during a fairly long period. The result, there is no doubt in my mind, is a brilliant work, which will help keep Javier Cercas at the forefront of contemporary Spanish novelists.

# El Impostor

## Plot

Enric Marco is the main character. He claimed to have fled Spain during the Spanish Civil War and gone to France. There he had been arrested by the Gestapo and sent off to the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp and then to the Flossenbürg concentration camp, where he had spent the rest of the war. On return to Spain, he had belonged to the Amical de Mauthausen, an organisation concerned with Spanish survivors of German concentration camps, and had been chair of the organisation for three years. He had put considerable efforts into protecting and promoting the right of Spanish concentration survivors and had been recognised for this effort. Just prior to the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Matthausen, an obscure Spanish historian, Benito Bermejo, revealed that Marco had never been in a concentration camp. He had been a Francoist, had gone to Germany as a volunteer worker and had been imprisoned in an ordinary prison in Kiel for unspecified misdemeanours and then sent back to Spain. Marco, by now in his eighties, admitted what he had done.

**JAVIER CERCAS**  
**El impostor**



# Critical commentary

by Benedetta Centovalli

Catalan writer Javier Cercas wins the “Premio Ceppo Straordinario Internazionale Narrativa Non Fiction” with the novel “The Impostor” (El Impostor) because he questions us about where the abuse of reality and testimonial value risk to nullify the work of Story in a tricky mixture of reality and fiction. The great imposture narrated in the novel, elected among the best books of 2015, is the one of Eric Marco, who created for himself a noble biography as a survivor from nazists “concentration camps”, as a “resistant”, releasing interviews, writing books of memories, intervening in the Parliament standing before the most powerful authorities in his country, talking in schools to hundreds of students, all of this with the awareness that none of the events correspond to his biographical truth. As Mario Vargas Llosa (winner of the Premio Ceppo Internazionale 2009) wrote, Marco did of his life a great epic novel of contemporaneity, comprehending some of the most deplorable aspects of our time, as the use of memory of the witness against the story and truth of the facts.



Individual memory and collective story were blended on purpose by the great impostor, creating a mixture worth of the best fiction tagged with the subheading ‘A true story’. But ‘The impostor’ is also a work in (which) Cercas sums up his narrator’s experience; hiding behind ‘the great impostor Marco’, he, Cercas, author of novels that combine reality and fantasy, as an impostor himself, confronts with the great paradigm of memory and narration’s mechanisms. If reality destroys, but fiction preserves, what majestic and perturbable lie is literature, that nourish itself with a reality based only on an imposture?



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