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17th January, 2003

Dear Núria,

Your book, not mine!
I'd meant to write much earlier about your novel, which I enjoyed immensely, but most of last year went in writing a *Companion to Catalan Literature*, which is due out in April. This meant an immense amount of reading and re-reading which left me time for little else. To be honest, I found some of it quite difficult going, more because of the deficiencies of my Catalan than of any faults in the book. (You have a huge vocabulary, as well as an extraordinary imagination.) I have the impression that it's a very *slow* book, but that it builds up very satisfactorily as it goes along. (This isn't meant as a criticism: it would be hard to think of a slower novel than *Tristram Shandy*, and yet it's a masterpiece.) Looking back on it, I feel the best parts are those to do with personal relationships, and some of these are very funny indeed. Also, just as in your previous novel you seemed to know a lot about medical things, so in this one, your knowledge of music is excellent, and it's this which makes Kesler such a convincing character. I could go on, but I hope this is sufficient to show how much I liked it, and I certainly intend to read it a second time. *of L*

Life here goes on much as usual. As you'll have seen from the above, I'm still very busy one way or another, but it's all very interesting. My main diversion these days is music: I'm quite a good amateur pianist -- have even played in a few concerts -- and about two and a half years ago I went back to having a teacher whom I go to most weeks -- a very good pianist himself who at one time studied with Horowitz. I find playing the piano a wonderful kind of therapy; whatever problems you have, concentration makes them all disappear for the time being.

That's all for the moment, since I must get back to my work. I don't suppose there's any chance that you'll be coming to London again in the near future, but if there is, please let me know. In the meantime,

All good wishes,

As ever,

Arthur

Arthur Terry