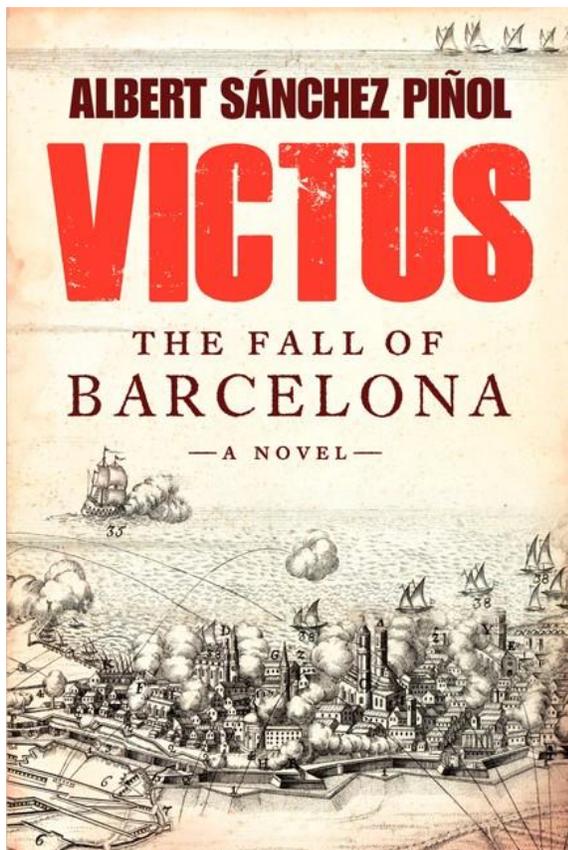


REVIEW : VICTUS - THE FALL OF BARCELONA BY ALBERT SANCHEZ PINOL

• Monday, 22 September 2014



It is not often that you encounter a book that you feel will be read with same fervour 100 years on but Albert Sanchez Pinol's fourth novel, an ambitious historical epic novel "Victus: The Fall of Barcelona" instantly feels like you are reading a classic novel. It's hard to pinpoint why. There's a lot going against it. It is absolutely huge so it'll take a significant amount of your time once you start. It is magnificent in scope and details, and deals with a historical event which at the moment will be interesting to few. However, this historical footnote is becoming increasingly relevant now as it will undoubtedly be in the future because described fall of Barcelona directly lead to fall of Catalonia, an event which today still resonates heavily in Spain. Just this year the Catalan government has announced its intention to hold a referendum on possible independence from Spain in 2014. When you combine that with the fact that in his native Spain, Albert Sanchez Pinol has often been compared to other greats such as Roberto Bolaño and Carlos Ruiz Zafon, it's easy to understand my feelings about it.

Victus is narrated by Martí Zuviría, an 98 old man who best knows what happened in that fateful conflict. He was actually the person who betrayed Barcelona and played crucial part in Catalan annexation to Spain on September 11, 1714. Destinies of Martí, Barcelona and Catalonia have always been intertwined together and Pinol decides to reflect all three sides of the story

against each other. Martí's humble beginnings lie in early 1700s when he was a cherished military engineer fighting in wars against France. Martí is presented as the worst kind of engineer becoming politician. He's frighteningly able, technical and ambitious but lacking in morals. It's as if he seems people and political landscape as mere cogs in machinations of life. A problem to be solved. As he increasingly rises in powers Martí is elevated through ranks and soon finds himself in the position to change the course of history. And this he does but now with the death knocking on the door he still going back to those few days wondering what actually happened and why?



Victus is hailed by publishers as an instant classic and as you know by now I would tend to agree. It's a staggering historical novel dealing with a topical issue and a turning point in Catalan and Spanish history. Written by one of the most important contemporary Catalan authors, it's an achievement of well researched historical fiction. Anyone brave enough to tackle it will end up inspired and all the cleverer for it. You'll finally understand the passion and the reasoning behind the Catalan struggle for independence whose flames exactly 300 years since Barcelona fell have never been burning stronger.

Review copy provided by HarperCollins.

Order *Victus - The Fall of Barcelona* by Albert Sanchez Pinol [here](#):