



Fernàndez, Josep-Anton and Jaume Subirana (eds.), *Funcions del passat en la cultura catalana contemporània: Institucionalització, representacions i identitat*, (Punctum, 2015), 310 pp. ISBN: 978-84-943779-7-6.

Funcions del passat en la cultura catalana contemporània interrogates the ways that the use and revision of the past in Contemporary Catalan cultural production is an essential

component of how various projects of institutionalization and identity representation are both formulated and legitimized. As a theoretical scaffolding, the editors depart from the Bourdieuan premise that the dynamics of any field of cultural production retain the history of that very field, which will always condition the way that agentive positions are assigned and distributed and also subtend the relations between creators, critics, and the public and bear significantly on the construction and circulation of political and economic hierarchies. The editors aggregated a set of essays in the volume that coalesce around three primary dimensions of the Catalan cultural field: institutional creation and renovation; artistic representations of various genres, including literature, televisual production, and audiovisual expression; and, thirdly, identity, especially tensions that

adhere to the disjuncture between individual and collective existence, as well as the discontinuity between public and private life. The volume is fruit of a collaborative research group and the cohesiveness found throughout the essays reflects as much. Centering on cultural production from the second half of the 20th century, *Funcions del passat* approaches the question of the past and the three aforementioned dimensions of emphasis according to two dominant discursive paradigms that each predominate in two successive historical periods of the century: *resistencialisme* and *normalització*. These two paradigms are best engaged with and developed in Josep-Anton Fernández's highly lucid analysis of autobiographical narrative, particularly that of Joan Triadú. Fernández clarifies that '*resistencialisme* and *normalització* are discursive articulations that correspond to attempts to build a hegemony while at the same time repairing the broken fabric of Catalan culture' (260). In an effort to trace the reparation of the ruptures effectuated by cultural trauma, Fernández very effectively deploys the Lacanian concepts of lack and suture.

One of the more remarkable aspects of the text is how the editors manage successfully to cull a set of essays of ample and wide-ranging interest around the common theme of the volume, including studies of public theater, the Olympic Games, the televisual evolution of culinary programming, and the relation between normalization and autobiographical production, historiography, and more. Literary analysis is not given short shrift and includes essays on a range of important writers including Josep Pla, Salvador Espriu, and Mercè Rodoreda. The volume, in other words, will appeal to a broad set of intellectuals interested in Catalan literary, political, cultural, and institutional history. The editors divide the text into three parts. The first, entitled '*Institucionalització: memòria, conflicte, invenció*', includes five

essays that explore the evolving legitimacy of Catalan cultural production in the historical transition from *resistencialisme*, most firmly rooted in the years of dictatorship, to the process of *normalització* that commences with *tardofranquismo* and the transition to democracy. Jaume Subirana begins the volume with an incisive analysis of the establishment of literary organizations in the transition to normalization, including public entities such as the Institució de les Lletres Catalanes and private organizations such as PEN Català. Sharon Feldman's contribution creatively focuses on the concept of normalcy in Catalan theatrical production through the framework of the Broadway musical *Next to Normal*. Feldman's analysis centers on the tension and bipolarity one finds between the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya and the Teatre Lliure. P. Louise Johnson next considers the evolution of Olympist discourses in Catalonia and their progressive Catalanization over the course of the late 1980s and early '90s. Laura Solanilla and F. Xavier Medina follow with an overview of the popularity of culinary textbooks and televisual programming on TV3, covering *els anys de resistencialisme* and eventually arriving at the first two decades of the twenty-first century. All in all, the authors see in culinary programming a marked reflection of changes undergone in the culture writ large over the past several decades. Anna Titus rounds out the first section with a study of the Diccionari biogràfic de dones del territori català, putting forth that the creation of institutional archives both preserves and transmits the past and also makes visible silenced feminine identities.

The second section, 'Representacions: escriptures d'una identitat en trànsit', features five additional essays that show how literature reflects evolving understandings of identity and the function that references to the past have in identity construction. Jordi Larios's expansive and

perspicacious study of the concept of ‘nation’ in the literature of Pla, Espriu, and Foix commences the section. The chapter, focusing predominantly on the former two writers, pinpoints the philosophical and historiographic points of reference that underlie, for example, Pla’s ‘país’ or Espriu’s ‘terra dels pares’. In the second chapter, Mario Santana brilliantly traces the materiality and object-oriented nature of the past in Jaume Cabré’s fiction, particularly in the works *Viatge d’hivern*, *Les veus del Pamano*, and *Jo confesso*. Cristina Badosa Mont follows with a look at the ways writers of Catalunya del Nord orient themselves toward the past, which reiteratively features a complex network of ties to the French State and its history of internal and external colonialism, as well as the region’s historical link to Catalonia, best seen in more recent efforts of writers such as Joan-Lluís Lluís and Joan-Daniel Bezsonoff to make inroads into the Barcelona literary field. Enric Bou’s contribution centers on Josep Pla’s *Viaje en autobús*, asserting that the Empordanese author presents a reactionary view of the past that oscillates between a celebratory and expiatory tone, all the while avoiding mention of the residual marks and ruins of the recently completed Spanish Civil War. Bou suggestively relates Pla’s attraction to ruins and funerary elements of the past to Friedrich Schlegel’s notion of the fragment, which possesses both an autonomous, contained unity but concomitantly reveals its incompleteness by referencing other fragments in the world. For both Pla and Schlegel the fragment is both a structural element of the text and a symptom of a chaotic reality that resists maintaining a sense of the past in its totality. Helena Buffery concludes the second section with a well-researched and provocative comparison of three translations of *La plaça del diamant*, with a concluding meditation on the translation of Najat el Hachmi’s *L’últim patriarca*.

The volume's third and final section, 'Cultures i identitats polítiques: continuïtats, talls i ruptures', focuses on the continuities and discontinuities in Catalan autobiographical, historiographic and political traditions. Andrew Dowling begins the section with an analysis of the political cultures in Catalonia under Francoism. Dowling asserts that by the end of the dictatorship, Catalan political forces resurrected a discourse from the 1930s focused on the nation's relation to the Spanish State that eschewed complete rupture in favor of more autonomous self-government. Joan Fuster Sobrepere's essay analyzes the pass from resistance to normalization through Miquel Barceló, Borja de Riquer, and Enric Ucelay Da Cal's 1982 article 'Mites de la història de Catalunya', whose position was influenced by the weakened and theoretically depleted state of Catalan historiography. The third essay of the section, Josep-Anton Fernández's aforementioned analysis of autobiography, mobilizes the notion of suture through three paradigms in Joan Triadú's work: the metaphor of a broken bridge and the parenthesis, the conflict between continuity and institutional foundation, and the disjuncture between Triadú's two lives as private citizen and public activist. Jordi Amat next follows the intellectual trajectory of Albert Manent and his project of biographical reconstruction in the 1960s of key *noucentiste* figures such as Josep Carner. Jaume Claret concludes the volume with a sketch of the 'caiguda dels 113', a clandestine meeting of the Assemblea de Catalunya whose disruption by Francoist authorities led to the detention of scores of political actors from a range of ideological and partisan positions. Claret argues that the events following the raid had the paradoxical effect of increasing awareness of the Assemblea with the general public, both in Spain and abroad. Furthermore, the event opened a new conflict between Francoist and ecclesiastical authorities, given that the meeting took place in a church.

In summary, *Funcions del passat* accomplishes effectively its Bourdieuan project of showing how the past inscribed within a field of cultural production will continue to condition and provide symbolic capital to the sovereign human agents attempting to create institutional arrangements and perform identity operations. To this reader, some of the most suggestive moments of the text highlight periods when these autonomous efforts to functionalize history are disrupted or shown insufficient, either due to the agency of material objects (Santana), the problematic translatability of traumatic experience (Buffery), or the constitutive lack inscribed within the symbolic order (Fernández), to choose a few suggestive examples. In the end, scholars of Catalan cultural and political history will find in *Funcions del passat* a wealth of carefully curated studies on an impressive range of relevant issues.

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