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Mixed media and collage on paper, 110 x 100 cm

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Contents

Carles Torner

Exile, literature and translation

I am forced to leave behind everything I love. I am so filled with fury and sadness that no tears come and I fain would die. The Pyrenees can now be likened to a great reef on which Catalonia and our lives are foundering.

The words are Pere Calders and describe his journey through a mountain pass to France and exile some seventy years ago as the Spanish Civil War drew to an end. The Republic had finally succumbed to the Fascist onslaught and he joined half a million other refugees fleeing from Franco, among them hundreds of writers, intellectuals and artists seeking shelter in Europe and America.

Various Catalan writers joined other European writers in witnessing the violence. The round tables held at Université de Paris X-Nanterre in February 2009 analysed the treatment meted out to the refugees in the French internment camps of Argelès, St. Cyprien, Barcarès, Agde, Le Vernet, Bram. It was there that most refugees were interned after crossing the border. The writings of Agustí Bartra, Lluís Ferran de Pol, Xavier Benguerel, Pere Vives comprise an intense literature reflecting a wide range of approaches and viewpoints but which to date have found little echo in the European imagination.

Many exiles sailed to the New World. Those who remained in Europe soon found themselves caught up in the Second World War. In Berlin in June 2008, Enzo Traverso, Jean Bollack and various other European specialists reflected on the thought of Walter Benjamin and on the testimonial literature of authors such as Varlam Chalamov, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Robert Antelme, Paul Celan, Primo Levi and Joaquim Amat-Piniella. The last of these suffered the fate of many Spanish Republicans: imprisonment at Mauthausen concentration camp. The experience was reflected in Amat-Piniella's heart-rending novel *K. L. Reich.*

The 1939 Republican exodus was tragic. None of the fugitives could have imagined that their exile would last so long. Letters and narratives from those

years reveal the shock and outrage felt by Catalan exiles at the Western allies' policy of bolstering the Franco regime once Hitler and Mussolini had been defeated. For Catalans, the Fascist repression was made all the harder to bear by the banning of the Catalan language and the way in which Catalan literature was forced underground. Paradoxically, this attempt to wipe out Catalonia's language and culture led to a flowering of Catalan literature in exile. The exhibition *Literatures de l'exili* (The Literatures of Exile) began in Barcelona and toured Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, Mexico City and Santo Domingo before returning to its starting point in time for Saint George's Day 2009. It led to a unique work: *El dia revolt* (A Stormy Day), an extraordinary literary mosaic written by Julià Guillamon and based on the testimony of Catalan exiles and their European and American descendants. Now, over three decades after General Franco's death, they reveal how the Catalan diaspora took the flame of Catalan culture to the furthest-flung corners of the world. The Catalan literature of exile in Europe and the New World is charted by the *Lletra* Internet portal using the mapping facilities provided by Google Earth www.topobiografies.cat.

In this fourth issue of *Transfer,* readers will note the publication's presence on the Internet. The new *Transfer* web site (http://transfer.llull.cat) contains articles from the four issues published to date, their original versions in Catalan and hypertext links to the cultural magazines and journals in which they first appeared. *Transfer* ties the essays to contemporary debates and reveals the richness of Catalan contributions. Many of these debates are held in English. A great deal of resources therefore need to be earmarked for translation if thinkers in other languages and cultures are to enrich these debates with their unique insights. In this respect, English should be seen as an opportunity to foster cross-cultural fertilisation of ideas rather than as an insuperable barrier.

The effort put into translation pays handsome dividends for Catalan literature. The magnificent reception accorded the translation of Joan Sales' *Incerta glòria* (Uncertain Glory) in France (see *Transfer* 3) has led to a new appraisal of the novel in Catalonia, as revealed by the workshops held in Barcelona this past January. The translation of Catalan classics to other languages helps forge a literary canon through dialogue. This point was stressed by Olivier Mongin, Director of *Esprit* magazine, on the day the book was presented in Paris: "*Incerta glòria* is an important novel of the Spanish Civil War. It also falls within a European genre that tackles the heinous crimes of the 20th Century and the untold harm they inflicted on body and spirit. In this context, Sales' work should be read alongside those by Solzhenitsyn and Primo Levi" II

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7 giugno - 22 novembre, 2009

La Comunità Inconfessabile

Un progetto di Valentín Roma con:

Joan Vila-Puig and Elvira Pujol/Sitesize
Daniel G. Andújar/Technologies To The People
Pedro G. Romero/Archivo F.X.

A partire dal libro omonimo di Maurice Blanchot, *La Comunità Inconfessabile* rappresenta una proposta che analizza le forme di intervento sociale adottate da alcune tendenze artistiche che si sviluppano attorno al concetto di tutto ciò che è comune.
Sono stati selezionati tre progetti diversi che saranno parte integrante di questa proposta: Sitesize/Joan Vila-Puig e Elvira Pujol, Technologies To The People/ Daniel G. Andújar e Arxiu F.X./Pedro G. Romero; tutti e tre i progetti partecipano alle comuni strategie di trasversalità e antagonismo, in un territorio difficilmente definibile, situato tra le crepe sia dell'istituzione dell'arte, sia dei modelli di produttività culturale.

7 June - 22 November, 2009

The Unavowable Community

A project by Valentín Roma with:

Joan Vila-Puig e Elvira Pujol/Sitesize
Daniel G. Andújar/Technologies To The People
Pedro G. Romero/Archivo F.X.

Based on the book of the same name by Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* is a proposal that explores the types of social intervention adopted by various artistic practices that are developed around the idea of the communal.
Three different projects have been selected to form part of this project: Sitesize by Joan Vila-Puig and Elvira Pujol, Technologies To The People by Daniel G. Andújar, and Arxiu F.X. by Pedro G. Romero. These projects share communal strategies of transversality and antagonism, in a territory that is difficult to chart, found in the cracks in both the institution of art and models of cultural productivity.

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Ignasi Ribó Labastida

Jean Améry, the dislocated witness

Not without reason, Primo Levi has been said to represent a sort of "perfect witness" of the individual and collective, multi-faceted and complex, traumatic and infernal experience commonly summed up with the name of "Auschwitz"[1].

Indeed, Levi began to write his testimony while he was still in the *Lager* and soon after returning home ´tho se memories were burning up inside (him) to such a point ´[2] that he hurried to complete his book, *Se questo u n uomo* (1958), almost a statement of legal evidence. From then on, practically until his suicide in 1987, Primo Levi never ceased to claim his status as a witness, in opposition to other survivors who had opted, through pain, shame or other more unmentionable reasons, to remain silent[3]. The Italian chemist always defended the therapeutic function of his testimony; it was, he claimed, an ´in terior liberation ´[4]. Above all, however, it was a way ´to explain to the *others*, to share with the *others* ´ an extreme reality, an experience that had been no less real through being so unimaginable. One facet of this desire to speak constitutes a warning: ´This happened, and that means it can happen again, that is the essence of what we have to say ´[5]. It also involves an affirmation of dignity and meaning: Ŕ emembering is a matter of duty for these survivors: they do not want to forget, and above all they do not want the world to forget, because they have understood that their experience was not devoid of significance and that the death camps were not an accident, just some unforeseen chance of History ´[6].

Before these a posteriori justifications, however, already during the period of internment in the camp, the testimony, the will or the hope of bearing witness was for Levi a reason for living, a sort of vaccination against death: é ven in this place one can survive, and therefore one must want to survive, in order to explain it all, to bear witness to it all ´[7]. But this hope is not free of anxiety, as is shown by the dream that Levi narrates in a passage of *Se questo u n uomo*: Ít is an intense, physical, inexpressible pleasure, *to be at home,* among friendly people, and to have so many things to recount. But I cannot

fail to realise that my listeners are not following me, or rather, that they seem absolutely indifferent: they talk confusedly of other things amongst themselves, *as if I weren t there.* My sister looks at me, gets up and goes without saying a word. *A desolate grief* now emerges in me, like certain barely remembered pains from one´s earliest childhood: this is *pain in the pure state*´[8].

It is difficult to know if this dream was actually shared by the other prisoners, as Levi later asserts. But even if it were not, it should still be given fundamental importance, since it enables us to grasp the experience of the testimony from within. Hence, when Levi wonders: ´Why is the pain of every day translated so constantly into our dreams, in the always repeated scene of the story which is told but not listened to?´[9], we should delete this ´our´, introduced rather surreptitiously, and understand that this is in any event the dream of the man who feels the intimate *need,* and thus the *possibility* of bearing witness. It is thus the dream of a ´perfect witness´. This dream, however, does not only potentially contain the future testimony, but also the anxiety which cancels the testimony itself, the abyss gaping open as the utterance itself comes forth, the void inhabited by the voices of all those with no chance to sublimate their impossibility in the dream, those whom we could provisionally and clumsily call ´imperfect witnesses´.

This is where the case of Jean Am´ry, the assumed name of Hans Mayer, proves so very illustrative. Unlike Levi, Am´ry took twenty years to write about his experience as a prisoner at Auschwitz and other Nazi camps. What is more, his book *Jenseits von Schuld und S hne* (1966) is utterly removed from the model of the ´perfect witness´ exemplified by his Italian fellow-prisoner. In fact, it can hardly be considered a ´testimony´ at all, but more of an ´indictment´ whilst at the same time being a ´confession´.

In Am´ry´s *attempt to surmount the insurmountable*, therefore, we find hardly any of the motivations that Levi adduced to justify his testimonial vocation. It is true that Am´ry himself sets his effort in the context of that ´systematic process of winning back dignity´ which had guided his life from the first experience of degradation in 1935[10]. Following Imre Kert´sz, one could doubtlessly interpret his book´s subtitle ´ *Bew ltigungsversuche eines berw ltigten* as ´a defeated man´s attempt to get back on his feet´[11]. Nobody would deny the *therapeutic* function of Am´ry´s work, if only the will to recover balance, the interior liberation that Levi talked about, the catharsis often upheld by Kert´sz. Neither can one deny that the need to warn others is always present in Am´ry´s mind. One can even acknowledge his having a particularly forceful sense of the urgency of this task, which manages to take on, as in Levi´s case, a genuine moral dimension. ´Ultimately´, he writes, ´I still maintain the hope that this work should be in a good cause: for it to concern all those

[1] Agamben, G., *Lo que queda de Auschwitz. El archivo y el testigo. Homo Sacer III,* Pre-Textos, Valencia, 2000, p. 14.
[2] Levi, P., *Si aix s un home,* Edicions 62, Barcelona, 1996, p. 207.
[3] See P. Levi, *Els enfonsats i els salvats,* Edicions 62, Barcelona, 2000, p. 149.
[4] *Ibidem,* p. 14.
[5] *Ibidem,* p. 161.
[6] Levi, P., *Si aix op. cit.,* p. 219.
[7] *Ibidem,* p. 49.
[8] *Ibidem,* p. 72 [my own italics].
[9] *Ibidem,* p. 72.
[10] Am´ry, J., *M s all de la culpa y la expiaci—n. Tentativas de superaci—n de una victima de la violencia,* Pre-Textos, Valencia, 2001, p. 176.
[11] Kert´sz, I. *Un instante de silencio en el pared—n. El holocausto como cultura,* Herder, Barcelona, 1999, p. 78.

who do not relinquish their status of fellow-humans [12]. Beyond Améry's declarations and intentions, however, the truth is that these are not the motivations throbbing through the text, in each one of his essays, in the bitterness and rage of his indictment.

'I never come forward as a judge [13], Levi said, 'you should be the judges [14]. But Améry neither wants nor is able to set himself at that distance in respect of his suffering. He is not simply attesting to his personal experience so that others could be able to judge. *How could the others judge?* How could those who have not lived through what he has lived understand anything about his experience? Hence, Améry does not write to bear witness; so much so that it is very hard to find any details of his stay in Auschwitz in the pages of his book. If he so graphically describes how he was tortured by the Gestapo, it is only because all the meaning the *meaninglessness* of the violence that has driven him to speak lies precisely in the *experience* of torture. Améry, therefore, comes forward to the reader as a *victim of violence*, and from this absolutely subjective and radically untransferable status, he also sets himself up as a witness, as an accuser and, ultimately, as a judge.

> There is no one to explain the finished demolition, the accomplished work, just as there is no one who has come back to explain his own death

The distance separating Jean Améry from Primo Levi, at least from the Levi of *Se questo è un uomo,* appears thus quite clearly. It is not only a difference in standpoint or a simple divergence of characters, as Levi himself seems to hint at in his discussion of one of Améry's essays in *I sommersi e i salvati*[15] (1986). There is actually a profound incomprehension, an almost insurmountable distance between them. Améry cannot understand the perfect witness represented by Levi, the human dignity of someone who relinquishes resentment and legitimate indignation to seek betterment on a higher sphere, in an ethics of justice that can be acceptable for society as a whole. This is why he rather disparagingly referred to him as a 'forgiver'. But neither can Levi manage to understand the rebellion that Améry, as a victim, puts up against the unjust sentence that has been passed on him by society. Hence, Levi can only see in the Austrian's resentment positions of such a severity and intransigency that make him unable to find joy in life [16]. It would nevertheless be wrong to think that this is a form of intellectual incomprehension. It is obvious that both of them were lucid enough to understand, even to penetrate, the other's vital rationality. What they could not do, for all their good will and lucidity, was to *share* the other's life. And the fact is that their experiences were radically different, even while intersecting at the same fatal place and time. Again, we have to avoid the risk of trivialising this

[12] Améry, J., *Más allá op. cit.*, p. 49 (prologue from 1966).
[13] Levi, P., *Entrevistas y conversaciones,* Pen'nsula, Barcelona, 1998, p. 65.
[14] Levi, P., *Si això op. cit.*, p. 209.
[15] The chapter entitled 'L'intel·lectual a Auschwitz' in P. Levi, *Els enfonsats op. cit.*, pp. 127-147.
[16] *Ibidem* p. 136.

difference, either reducing it to the content of the experience after all they did share a very similar fate, and even, as it seems, the same hut in Auschwitz or to the quantity it would be absurd to establish a gradation in suffering. The difference lies in the very foundation of the experience, in the gaping void between living and speaking, in the subjectivity of the testimony.

The fact that Levi's personal evolution, from the almost naive hope of the survivor who wrote *Se questo è un uomo* to the disillusionment exuded by each page of *I sommersi e i salvati*, brought him closer to Jean Améry, to the extent of joining with him in his life's ultimate and definitive declaration, in the decision to kill himself, should not prevent us from grasping the full meaning of this *difference* that we have just pointed out. The last act of Primo Levi's life confirms what we already suspected, that he was not so perfect after all, and this can only serve to reveal even more clearly his dignity, not only as a witness, but as a human being. There is still the need, however, to explore this gap, the displacement of the imperfect witnesses, one of whom decided to go under the assumed name of Jean Améry, but also the non-place of the impossible witnesses, the anonymous *Muselmänner*.

II In his interesting considerations on what he himself calls the "Levi paradox", Giorgio Agamben forgets, even while stressing this in another sphere, the existence of a "grey zone" of the testimony[17]. This could be the reason why the Italian philosopher seems to get entangled in his own conceptual network and ends up encountering another much more dangerous paradox.

The "Levi paradox", according to Agamben, would consist in the fact that the complete witness is also an impossible witness "meaning that the *Muselmann*, as the subject of an *(absolute)* desubjectification, would be prevented from bearing witness to his own experience, and would thus constitute a "lacuna", a non-place, a sort of black hole from which the voice that should pass on to us such an extreme experience cannot emerge[18]. So far, Agamben follows Levi's formulation, which, whilst being paradoxical, does not cease to be *consistently* paradoxical. Levi's conclusion is very clear: "Those of us who were lucky have attempted, with more or less discretion, to explain not only our fate, but that of the others, the submerged"; but it has been a narration "on behalf of another", the story of things seen from close by, not experienced personally. There is no-one to explain the finished demolition, the accomplished work, just as there is no-one who has come back to explain his own death"[19].

The problem comes up when Agamben attempts to develop this paradox applying certain post-structuralist postulates. According to the Italian philosopher, there is not only an equality between complete witness and impossible witness, but any testimony is an impossibility of bearing witness"[20], or to put it more precisely, testimony is always a speaking on behalf of the silent"[21]. Reducing Agamben's paradox to its logical skeleton,

[17] Agamben, G., *Lo que queda.. op. cit.*, p. 157.
[18] Levi, P., *Entrevistas op. cit.*, p. 215.
[19] Levi, P., *Els enfonsats op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.
[20] Agamben, G., *Lo que queda op. cit.*, p. 34.
[21] *Ibidem*, p. 165.

it would look something like this: 1) bearing witness is the speech of a subject; 2) every statement of a subject is an act of desubjectification. As an act of language, therefore, bearing witness is a p´aradoxical act which entails at the same time a subjectification and a desubjectification, and in which the living individual appropriates language only in a complete expropriation, he becomes a speaker only as far as he falls into silence´[22]. Hence, ´the testimony takes place in the non-place of articulation´[23].

This kind of reasoning, however, stretches Levi´s paradox to such an extent as to make it unsustainable. If the survivor was asserting the impossibility of the complete testimony, what the postmodern philosopher is really defending is the impossibility of *any* testimony, if we take testimony to mean an utterance with claims to validity, that is, one which aspires to ´conformity between what is said and the facts´[24]. The testimony is thus limited to the exteriority of the enunciation; it ´does not guarantee the factual truthfulness of a given utterance kept in the archive, but the very impossibility of its continuing to be archived, its exteriority in respect of the archive´[25]. Ultimately, the only thing that the witness can bear witness to is the ´impossibility of bearing witness´. Hence, Auschwitz, ´that which cannot be the object of testimony´, far from ´being irrefutably and absolutely proved´, tumbles down with the rain of cinders that follows the fireworks of a so-called philosophy of language[26].

At the root of all this non-sense lies the dichotomy between p´erfect witness´ and ´complete witness´ established by Agamben ´using Levi, certainly, but taking him where he would never have gone of his own free will. Thus, when the Italian thinker puts forward the thesis that ´the *Shoa* is an event with no testimonies, in the dual sense that it is impossible to bear witness to it, either from the interior b´ecause one cannot bear witness from the interior of death, there is no voice for the extinction of the voice´ and from the exterior, because the outsider is by definition excluded from the event´, he is setting us before a false dilemma, in order to be able to conclude that the very structure of the testimony enables us to overcome this aporia[27]. Actually, as mentioned above, not only does he not manage to overcome it, but he creates another much more serious contradiction. The problem, if it can be put this way, is that ´the *Shoa*´ is not a *single* event. Hypostasising the *Shoa,* as Agamben does so often in his text ´not unlike a powerful strand of Jewish thought,´ only manages to pervert it, to steal it from the hands of the victims and the survivors, to turn it into a monument built to fit society or religion (or philosophy), but in which the victims cannot nor ever will be able to recognise themselves. The *Shoa* is not a *single* event, because the *Shoa* is the sum of the individual events undergone by each of the persons who suffered inside that *univers concentrationnaire* created by the Nazis[28]. No-one therefore can talk *from the inside* of the *Shoa,* not even the *Muselm´anner,* not even the dead. The c´omplete witness´ does not exist. There are indeed, however, individuals who can talk from the interior of their experience. They are the *survivors*. Perhaps they are not p´erfect witnesses´ ´neither was Primo Levi after all. They may even be ´outsiders´ in an existential sense, like Am´ry.

[22] *Ibidem,* p.135.
[23] *Ibidem,* p. 137.
[24] *Ibidem,* p. 165.
[25] *Ibidem,* p. 165.
[26] *Ibidem,* p. 172.
[27] *Ibidem,* p. 35.
[28] According to the formula of D. Rousset, *L´univers concentrationnaire,* Minuit, Paris, 1965.

Selfportrait XLIX (Autoretrat XLIX)
Jaume Plensa (2006)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 41 x 30 cm

But their word will never be exterior, it will never be excluded, because their testimony, the sum of their testimonies, is what constitutes for us the actual *event*.

III Between the high ground of the perfect witness and the voice speaking of its own experience from an unharmed subjectivity and the non-place of the impossible witness that philosophy tries to present as the paradoxical abyss of integrity, an unstable ground opens up, a damp, muddy land, and for this reason more fertile. It is in this grey zone of the testimony that Jean Améry becomes specially relevant.

Améry's particularity, if we can talk about it in these terms, is that he constitutes a case of radical desubjectification, but which does not reach the dehumanised state of the *Muselmann* and thus retains the capacity to stand up as a witness. Améry's stance cannot be that of the observer who, from the high ground afforded him by his secure identity which may be the result of a religious, national or political faith, or simply the firmness of the human ground itself observes the events and takes note of them. Instead, Améry's testimony stems from an experience of self-estrangement taken to the limit of silence itself. As he himself explains in the prologue of his book: I cannot say that in the age of silence, I forgot or repressed the twelve years of German fatality and personal fate. For two decades, I probed constantly into this unforgettable past, but it was too painful for me to talk about it. It was only when I wrote the essay on Auschwitz that I seemed to break a dark taboo; suddenly I was taken up by the desire to explain it all, and that was how this book was born[29].

Between the high ground of the "perfect witness" and the non-place of the "imperfect witness" that philosophy tries to present as the paradoxical abyss of integrity, an unstable ground opens up, a damp, muddy land

Thus, Améry comes forward as a witness exiled from himself, existentially dislodged, literally dislocated. His entire work consists in an attempt to overcome this dislocation, to close this open wound. But it is not just a question of seeking a therapy in writing. In fact, Améry's writing is quite the opposite from what is normally understood as therapeutic writing. It is not a cure, but the illness itself. His book is certainly a testimony, but it is not a testimony that confines itself to explaining a personal experience to others. It is, as mentioned above, an indictment, but also the confession of resentment, of a failure, of an anxiety. There is no doubt that Améry writes to overcome that crisis of trust in the world and in language caused by torture and degradation[30]. But the question which runs through the five intense essays of his book is not *how* to overcome this crisis of confidence. His question is much more simple, but at the same time so fundamental as to rule out any possibility of reply. To overcome: *bewältigen*. It is clear *what* needs to be overcome: aggression, resentment, fear, homesickness, anxiety. But *who*

has to overcome all this? *Ein berw ltigten*, that is, literally, ´one who is overcome´. The question is not thus *how* one who is overcome overcomes, but *from where?*

Before facing this question, however, we should ask ourselves about the nature of this fundamental dislocation: specifically, what is this so-called ´Am´ry wound´? [31] His famous essay on torture, significantly the first that Am´ry wrote of the five that form his book, contains the most accurate, even definitive description: ´w er der Folter erlag, kann nicht mehr heimisch werden in der Welt´ ("Whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home in the world)´ [32].

The first blow from the authority´s fist, in this case from the Gestapo, produces right away the devastating feeling of ´he lplessness´ *(Hilflosigkeit, desemparament)*[33]. The victim realises that nobody will come to help him, that he has not the least possibility of defending himself. And thus he loses *trust in the world*. But it is only with torture ´the most horrible event that a human being can retain within himself ´th at the estrangement process is completed[34]. The transformation of the subject into pure corporality, ´in to a body and nothing else´, together with the experience of one´s own death in pain and of the absolute sovereignty of the other, the torturer, yields the victim to a ´f eeling of amazement and a estrangement from the world that cannot be compensated by any subsequent human communication´[35]. This essential dislocation, the definitive break between the self and the world, which subjects the individual to the determination of anxiety for evermore, has its physical parallel in torture itself. ´T here was a cracking and splintering in my shoulders that my body has not forgotten to this hour. The balls sprang from their sockets. My own body weight caused luxation; I fell into a void and now hung by my dislocated arms which had been torn high from behind and were now twisted over my head. Torture, from Latin *torquere*, to dislocate *(verrenken)*´[36].

Dislocate: to put out of place. In Am´ry´s case this verb is almost a declaration of identity. After a childhood and youth closely linked with the Alpine landscape of the Tyrol and with the *Landschaftsliteratur*[37], the economic crisis put him out of his home and obliged him to lead a miserable life with his mother in Vienna, where he wrote the novel *Die Schiffbr chigen* (The Shipwrecked), the only published part of which is significantly titled ´The Rootless´. The 1935 Nuremberg Laws again put him out of his place and forced him to face up to his ´Jewishness´, a condition which had no positive determination, only the certain threat of degradation and death. This threat became imminent with the 1938 *Anschluss*, which put him out of his country and condemned him to an exile that would be perpetual. With this last dislocation, Hans Maier did not only lose his ´homeland´ *(Heimat)*, but also his mother tongue, which now became the language of the enemy, as well as his own past, the possibility of recovering a collective identity. The process of self-estrangement was almost complete: ´I had become a human being who could no longer say *we* and who therefore said *I* merely out of habit, but without any feeling of full possession

[29] Am´ry, J., *M s all op . cit.*, p. 47.
[30] Prologue by E. Oca´a, *La herida Amry . M s all de la mentalidad expiatoria*. In *ibidem*, p. 34.
[31] *Ibidem*, p. 9-36.
[32] *Ibidem*, p. 107.
[33] *Ibidem*, p. 90.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 83.
[35] *Ibidem*, p. 106.
[36] *Ibidem*, p. 97.
[37] See W.G. Sebald, Ý erlorenes Land. Jean Am´ry und ...sterreich´, in *Unheimliche Heimat. Essays zur sterrischen Literatur*, Fischer, Frankfurt, 1995, pp. 131-144.

of myself´[38]. It is the flesh of this ´homeless man´ *(Heimatlos)* that is defiled by the torturer´s hand, accomplishing the alienation, the physical and moral dislocation. The subject who entered the Auschwitz death camp on 15th January 1944 only aspired to recover balance by ´returning the blow´, cancelling out any cultural and intellectual conscience that might still remain in his memory, cultivating resentment as a form of survival.

Is it plausible that such a man should dream, like Primo Levi, of t́he always repeated scene of the story which is told and not listened to?́ Surely not, since only someone who still feels á́t home [*heimisch*] in the world´, someone who retains trust in others, someone who still wishes t́o be heard ´by the world, can allow oneself to be swayed by this dream. The *dislocated man*, however, could never dream this scene full of hope and horror, with all its anxiety, its ṕ ain in the pure state´. And he could not do so because this is a scene that has already been *lived* by him, a scene that he has overcome in the very overcoming process that has dislocated him, that has overcome him. It is thus a scene that has no meaning anymore. For how could one dream of being as if he *had not been there* when in fact *he is no longer there?* How could one dream of being *at home* when the whole world has ceased to be a possible home, when *being* means inhabiting an open fault, the ground of the wound, of the dislocated identity, the non-place of wandering and permanently missing oneself?

How could one dream of being *at home*, when being means inhabiting an open fault, the ground of the wound, of the dislocated identity, the non-place of wandering and permanently missing oneself?

Certainly, Primo Levi went also through the experience of h́e lplessness´, the loss of trust in the world, the anxiety of the victim confronted with degradation and violence, subject to the absolute sovereignty of the torturers. But he did so from the firm ground of an unharmed identity. He did not have the believer´s faith in God or the Idea, but could rely on his scientific spirit and humanistic values, which were founded on an intact culture and past, on an identity *of his own* which enabled him to overcome the aggression of Auschwitz and become a witness.

Thus, Levi was able to find a haven in Dante, a place in which to take shelter in the middle of the strange and hostile *inferno* of the camp: Í w ould give today´s soup to know how to join up *non ne avevo alcuna* with the end´[39]. Am´ry will in vain seek shelter in *his* culture, which is no longer his but only that of his tormentors. H´lderlin, once so familiar *(heimlich)*, cannot offer him any consolation. His old verses are all mixed up with the

[38] Am´ry, J., *M s all op . cit.*, p. 113.
[39] Levi, P., *Si aix op . cit.*, p. 136.

Self-portrait XXII (Autoretrat XXII), Jaume Plensa (2005)
Mixed media on paper, 41 x 30 cm

voice of the *Kapo* crying Lín ks!´. German, and with it the whole culture that had formed his identity, have literally become *unheimlich* threatening, disquieting, sinister[40]. Am´ry could never have wished to swap his soup for completing H´lderlin´s verses; in any event, he might have agreed to give it up in exchange for forgetting about them. Ín most cases [aesthetic reminiscences] did not offer any consolation, they sometimes came across as suffering or mocking; more often they diluted into a feeling of absolute indifference´[41]. But how can one forget one´s own identity without forgetting oneself at the same time, without automatically becoming a non-person, a *Muselmann?*

But Am´ry, in spite of existentially coming very close to it, at least much closer than Primo Levi, never actually plunged into the state of a *Muselmann.* His testimony reaches us not from an unfathomable *lacuna,* but from the unstable ground of dislocation; not from death, but from the living experience of death. It is therefore not surprising that Levi and Am´ry should also irreconcilably disagree as regards this fundamental experience of the camp. As Levi himself said: ´At this point my experience and that of my memories depart from Am´ry´s. It may be because I was younger, perhaps because I was more ignorant than he, or less secure, or less aware, but I never had almost any time to devote to death; I had other things to think about: finding a bit of bread, getting out of the more extenuating work, puting heels on my boots, stealing a broom, interpreting the signs and the faces around me. Objectives in life are the best defence against death: not only in the *Lager*´[42].

If we might be so bold as to use the vocabulary of that d´isquieting magus from Alemannic regions´[43], we would say that Levi saw the *Lager* in the form of the F´all´, that is, as an á´b sorption in *(Aufgehen bei)* ithe world of its concern´[44]. Levi´s world was thus the significant everydayness of the entities at hand insofar as they were useful, a bit of bread, work, boots, a broom, the signs and faces around him á´s well as the coexistance with the others´ Alberto, Jean, Elias, Henri, Mendi, but also doctor Pannwitz or Kapo Alex. In this f´allen´mode ofgbeing-in-the-world, the experience of death necessarily has to be ín authentic´. But not because Levi was ý´ounger´, m´ore ignorant´, Í´ess secure´or Íe´ss aware´than his Austrian companion, and for this reason lacking tí´me to devote to death´. Rather, the question is that Levi *could not devote himself to death.* And not because he was not able to think about it, but because genuinely devoting oneself to death implies b´eing towards death´, that is, existing in t´he possibility of the absolute impossibility´, to some extent dying *(sterben)*[45]. B´ut the emotional disposition *(Befindlichkeit)* which can hold open the utter and constant threat to itself arising from Dasein´s ownmost individualized being, is anxiety´[46]. Levi, being *absorbed in* the world of the camp, could feel death as an external threat and could experience it in the ín´ authentic´[47] emotionaledisposition of *fear.* To be able to *devote himself* to his own death, however, would have meant being existentially determined by anxiety[48]. But what does Heidegger

[40] See. S. Freud, D´as Unheimliche´in *Gesammelte Werke,* Imago, London, 1947, vol. 12, pp. 227-268.
[41] Am´ry, J., *M s all op . cit.,* p. 63-64.
[42] Levi, P., *Els enfonsats op . cit.,* p. 147.
[43] Am´ry, J., *M s all op . cit.,* p. 47.
[44] Heidegger, M., *Ser y tiempo,* Trotta, Madrid, 2003, p. 198. The translations (into Catalan) are mine from the Spanish translation by Jorge Eduardo Rivera and the original edition.
[45] One must distinguish this from *ableben:* to expire: see M. Heidegger, *Ser op. cit.,* p. 267.
[46] *Ibidem,* p. 285.
[47] Obviously, these terms must be taken in the same a-moral sense that they have in Heidegger.
[48] See J. Am´ry, *M s all op. cit.,* p. 107.

specifically mean by this concept of *anxiety?* Ín anxiety ́, he writes, ó ne feels úyc anny ́ *(unheimlich)*. This term describes, in the first place, the peculiar indefiniteness of the ń othing and nowhere ́in which Dasein finds itself under anxiety. But here ú ncanniness ́ *(Unheimlichkeit)* also means homelessness, ń ot being at-home ́*(Nichtzuhause-sein)* ́[49].

What Levi describes in his dream as a d́ esolate pain ́, ṕ ain in the pure state ́, is thus án xiety: ́the experience of *not-being-at-home*, of the Í am at home ́but á s if I weren t́ ́. But if this *Unheimlichkeit* emerges in his dreams, it is precisely because it is not yet an existential determination. In spite of all, Levi was able to find alternative dwelling places. Even if these ś ubstitutes ́[50] for home were fragile and unstable, even if theytcould not save him from the latent threat of radical helplessness looming up every night in his dream, they did enable him to stand more or less upright in the field of his own subjectivity. These alternative homes may be termed Dante, Alberto, the Italian language, chemistry or humanism; the point is that they are experienced as havens against helplessness and uncanniness, places dwelt in as shelters from anxiety and death. But though they afford him protection, they also prevent him from facing directly the meaninglessness and the ultimate impossibility into which the drowned ones fall. In thistsense, even if thetgarehlessnprotective than faith in God or Father Stalin, these havens are just as blinding, to the extentgthat they prevent him from experiencing the same reality as the individuals dying around him day by day, in the same bunk, at the place of work or in an absurd formation in the snow-coverey yard. From here stems Levi ́s dilemmm, which is not a paradol, but rather the tragic and lucid discovery of a man that time and disenchantment have finally ṕ ut out of place ́.

> It is precisely the possibility of taking refuge in the testimony, of saving himself in order to bear witness, which makes him dumb and unable to bear witness

Thus, when he thought he had finally returned home, Levi discoveres that in fact he had never been so far away. What had given him most shelter while he endured the hell of Auschwitz, but also afterwards, during his long years as a survivor, was doubtlessly the t́e stimony ́. But it is this last haven whichmfalls apart in *I sommersi e i salvati,* when he realises that it is precisely the possibility of taking refuge in the testimony, of saving himself in order to bear witness, which makes him dumb and unable to bear witness. Primo Levi ́s terrible fate was to discover around 1987 that the dream which had tormented him during the long nights at Auschwitz had ended up becoming true, not because he *could not* speak or make himself understood, but because he had not been able to live through his *own* experience and thus could not be its witnest; When he understood that the anxiety of the dream, the anxiety of helplessness *was* helplessness itself, the ḿe aninglessness ́of the world, the radical impossibility of fi nding a home ́,

[49] Heidegger, M., *Ser op . cit.*, p. 210.
[50] Am ́ry, J., *M s all op . cit.*, p. 116.

and therefore that he could only bear witness to the impossibility of bearing witness; the only thing left for him to do was to assume his own anxiety and face the unavoidable possibility of death.

IV It might seem that we have just slipped back into the Agamben paradox. But here is precisely where Jean Améry's testimony takes on all its importance. As mentioned above, he seems to fall somewhere between the perfect witness and the impossible witnesne. It is now time to specify as far as we can the significance of this grey zone of the testimonf, the message of the dislocated witness.

Dislocation, as we have seee, is equivalent to Heidegger's *unhomeliness* or *uncanniness (Unheimlichkeit);* this is at the same time the indeterminacy of the nothing and nowhere and the not-being-at-home and is therefore expressed in the fundamental emotional disposition of *anxiety.*

At this point, we should ask ourselves whether we might not be commiting a manipulation like the one denounced above in the case of Primo Levi? Are we not taking Améry where we ourselves want, in this case into the Heideggerian woodland, a place which could never be particularly pleasant for him, a victim of Nazism? Améry's statements at the end of his book would seem at least to put us on our guard against this sort of interpretations: In short, nothing sets me apart from the people around whom I spend my days other than a fluctuating unrest which I feel more or less intensely at different times. But This ir a *socialü* not a metaphysica,tunrest. I am not distressed either by the being or the n-thingness, either by god or the absence of god, only by society: since it wasssociety, and onlyssociety, which inflicted on me the existential imbalance from which I am still trying to recover. This and only this has stolen trust in the world from me. Metaphysical anxiety is an elegant, high-flying concern. It affects someone who has never had doubts about his identity and nature, someone who has never wondered why he is as heeis, and who knows tha he may go on being asehe is in the future. This anxiety has nothing to do with mine, and it is not this that causes my unhappiness [51].

> Indeed, Améry does express his fear at a possible repetition of history. But what he feels above all is *anxiety*

And yet, as much as Améry may try to distance himself from the disquieting magus from Alemannic regions, for reasons that are in any event quite understandable, he does not cease to confirm Heidegger's insights with his life and his words. It is society, no doubt, that is responsible for Améry's existential dislocation. But *who* or *what* is this society? The economic agents that caused the crisis and turned him into a young, rootless intellectual wandering through the streets of Vienna? The national socialist party which promulgated the Nuremberg laws and threw him out of his own country?

[51] *Ibidem,* p. 193.

The anti-Semites and that part of the Austrian people who received the F´hrer with open arms? Lieutenant Praust, who physically dislocated him in the basement of Fort Breendonk? The SS who transported him to the different concentration camps and under whose authority heehad to live in infrahuman conditions for several years? The *kapos* and other fellow-prisoners with whom he had to struggle day after day in the *Lager*? The German people who not only did not protest at their rulers´ ignominy, but rose up with pride after their nation´s defeat, without having suffered scorn and punishment for their crimes? The government and citizens of the victorious countries, who were not able to do justice when demande, and preferred to seek a shameful reconciliation? *The whole world?*

It is clear that Am´ry´s anxiety does not have *a single* specific cause. If it did, it would not be anxiety, but rather *fear*. Indeed, Am´ry does express his fear at a possible repetition of history. But what he feels above all is *anxiety*. And the object of anxiety is ń othin and nowhere´ because t́hat in the face of which one has anxiety [*das Wovor der Angst*] is being-in-the-world as such´[52]. As Heidegger explains: Ín anxiety what is environmentally ready-to-hand sinks away, and so, in general, do entities within-the-world. The ẃ orld´can offer nothing more and neither can the Dasein-with of Others. Anxiety thus takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the ẃ orld´and the way things have been publicly interpreted. Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about it́s authentic potentiality-for-being-in-the-world. Anxiety individualises Dasein for its ownmost being-in-the-world [É]. Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-being t́h at is, its *being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself´[53]. Beyond the complications of Heidegger´s jargon, what we should understand here is that the existential determination of anxiety constitutes the way of being-in-the-world of the individual who *has lost trust in the world,* that is, of someone for whom the world that he himself opens up with his existence has ceased to be a possible dwelling place. This man is thus condemned to isolation and helplessness, to permanently missing himself, to a freedom which is at the same timesa lack of shelter. Év eryday familiarity collapses. Dasein has been individualized, but individualized as *being-in-the-world*. Being-in enters into the existential ḿo de´of the ń ot-at-home *´(Un-zuhause)*. Nothing else is meant by our talk of ún cannines´*(Unheimlichkeit)*´[54]. Or, to say the same thing in Am´ry´s searing words: Ẃ hoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home in the worle´[55].

Someone who has been d́ islocated´can no longer feel the everyday familiarity that Levi was able to find even in the *Lager*. But for this same reason, because he can no longer be-in-the-world in an immediate and everyday sense, Am´ry remains open to t́he utter and constant threat to [himself] arising from [his] ownmost individualized being, sand therefore finds himself f́ ace to face with the ń othing´of the possible impossibility of his existence´[56], that is, with his *own* death.

[52] Heidegger, M., *Ser op . cit.*, p. 209 [my italics].
[53] *Ibidem*, p. 210.
[54] *Ibidem*, p. 211.
[55] Am´ry, J., *M s all op . cit.*, p. 107.
[56] Heidegger, M., *Ser op . cit.*, p. 285.

But, is it possible to talk of one´s *own* death, *authentic* death, in the context of Auschwitz? Everything would seem to indicate that it is not. As Am´ry himself acknowledges: ´With the shattering of the aesthetic representation of death, the prisoner came up defenceless against his vital hour. If, however, he attempted to re-establish a spiritual and metaphysical attitude, he again ran into the reality of the camp, which frustrated any attempt to do this. What happened in practice? To put it concisely and trivially: just like his comrade with no spiritual training, the intellectual prisoner came up against, not death, but *dying*´[57].

> Death becomes part of everyday life in Auschwitz, it is present in a density previously unknown, it becomes *concentrated*

The distinction established here by Am´ry between death and dying is a direct attempt to question the Heideggerian concept of the *being-for-death.* And yet it only confirms its validity, at least as an unattainable possibility of the human being. Heidegger himself, in a lecture some years after the liberation of Auschwitz, would seem to head this way: Ó o they die? *(sterben).* They expire *(ableben).* They are eliminated. Do they die? They become pieces in a body-making factory. Do they die? They are imperceptibly liquidated in the extermination campsÉ But dying *(sterben)* means enduring death in one´s own being. Being able to die means being capable of enduring this. And we are only capable if our being accepts the being of deathÉ All around us the great misery of countless, terrible, undied deaths *(ungestorbene Tode)* and at the same time *the essence of death is concealed from man*´[58].

It is not, as Agamben thinks, that Auschwitz becomes an inversion of the paradigm of reality, a sort of alternative world where án y distinction between authentic and inauthentic, possible and impossible, radically disappears´[59]. Indeed, death becomes part of everyday life in Auschwitz, it is present in a density previously unknown, it becomes *concentrated.* In this sense, the *Lager* is fundamentally distinct from the outside world, from *our* everyday life, where death itself, dying, happens on a massive and anonymous scale in hospitals and on the roads, in hospices and in apartments, all around *people* expire, they experience an undied death, an inauthentic death. But this death is diluted, concealed, ignored. A man outside the *Lager* can go on maintaining the illusion, the false expectancy of dying his own death. But the truth is that man´s death, as a non-ideological interpretation of *Sein und Zeit* enables us to understand, can only be inauthentic, because authenticity is not an attainable foundation, it is not a home where one can take shelter, it is rather the total absence of home, the abyss of the subject which fails to encounter itself and collapses into nothing. When Adorno claims that ´me n simply burst and that

[57] *Ibidem,* p. 75.

[58] Heidegger, M., *Bremer und Freiburger Votr ge,* Klostermann, Frankfurt, 1994, GA, vol. 79; quoted in G. Agamben; *Lo que queda op. cit.,* p. 76 [my own italics].

[59] Gamben, G., *Lo que queda op. cit.,* p. 78.

is that [60], he is not referring only to death in Auschwitz, but also to death before, during and after Auschwitz, to any man's death, which is *always* an inauthentic death, a bursting.

It is thus not true, therefore, that in the-being-for-death man authentically appropriates the inauthentic nor that in the camp the deported exists *in an everyday and anonymous way* for death (in the sense of dying authentically in an everyday and anonymous way)[61]. Neither is the being-for-death an *appropriation*, which would imply that there is someone, a subject, able to exercise property rights over it; neither is death in Auschwitz *essentially* different from death in the intensive care unit of a modern hospital, for example, where the everyday and anonymous aspect of dying *(ableben)* does not in the least affect the theoretical possibility of living through one's own death *(sterben)*. In this respect, one cannot dismiss Amery's words without trying to understand them: Undoubtedly, fear of death is anywhere the anxiety of dying, and what Franz Borkenau once said is also valid for the camp, that is, that anxiety about death expresses the fear of dying stifled. However, freedom allows us to think about death *without at the same time thinking of anxiety, without feeling anxious about the possibility of dying.* In freedom, death, spiritually-speaking, can at least in theory be disassociated from agony: from a social point of view, by surrounding it with considerations about the surviving family, about the profession left behind; or from a philosophical stance, by recognising a breath of the nothingness of existence. It need hardly be said that an attempt of this sort is futile, the contradiction of death being insoluble. But in any event, the attempt is still something worthwhile in its own right: faced with death, the free man can assume a certain spiritual attitude, because for him it is not absolutely exhausted in the sufferings of agony. The free man can move on as far as the bounds of the intelligible, *because deep inside he still keeps a very small redoubt free of fear.* For the prisoner, on the other hand, death no longer had any goad stinging him into thought. This may explain why the prisoner in the camp and this goes for all of them, intellectuals or not did indeed undergo a tormenting fear of particular forms of dying, but almost never felt genuine anxiety about death [62].

> If the free man can actually conceal his own death from himself, by social or intellectual mechanisms, it is because he is able to find a haven in some "home substitute" that prevents him from having to directly face up to the anxiety of his death

[60] Adorno, T.W., *Minima moralia. Reflexiones desde la vida dañada*, Taurus, Madrid, p. 284.
[61] Gamben, G., *Lo que queda op. cit.*, p. 78.
[62] Amery, J., *Más allá op. cit.*, p. 76 [my own italics].

This paragraph, directed by Améry against the thought of death, particularly in the Heidegger school of thought, is in fact the clearest confirmation of some of the German thinker's speculations. Because, what does it mean that in freedom it is possible to think of death without at the same time thinking of anxiety, without feeling anxious about the possibility of dying, if it is not that in freedom it is possible to experience death *inauthentically?* If the free man *can* actually conceal his own death from himself, by social or intellectual mechanisms, it is because deep inside he still keeps a very small redoubt free of fear, i.e. because he still lives in the world as if it were his own home, or at least because he is able to find a haven in some home substitute that prevents him from having to directly face up to the anxiety of his death. Should we thus conclude that the camp prisoner was *obliged* to live through his own death, as Agamben suggests? If this were the case, how should we explain Améry's final assertion, that the prisoners almost never felt any real anxiety faced with death? In fact, there is no paradox here. If death no longer had any goad stinging (the prisoner) into thought, it is because the thought of death had less room in the camp to prevent the experience of one's own dying. But that does not mean that there was no possibility of avoiding anxiety, just as happens outside the *Lager*. We have already seen that the havens, the false homes, may be of many kinds, from the faith of the believers to the firm ground of an unscathed identity, from the unconsciousness of the *kapo* blinded by his blows to the wish and the hope of bearing witness to the world. All this may be of use for not having to face up to the anxiety of one's own dying. In the *Lager,* therefore, being-for-death is not necessary. But is it *possible?*

It is here that the figure of the *Muselmann* emerges, as a ghost or a spectre[63], as the man who does indeed live through his own death and in living it becomes the non-man, the drowned, the walking corpse, a bundle of physical functions in agony[64]. Agamben rightly points out the central role that the *Muselmann* has to take in any approach to the experience of the *Lager*, but he fumbles when he tries to bring the problem to the field of testimony. The *Muselmann* is *beyond* testimony. We have already seen that he constitutes an impossible witness, comprehensible only in his exteriority and never to be claimed as a voice, whatever the intellectual twists and bends we give to the matter. And yet, as Levi knew, it is vital for us to attempt to approach these men and women, beings who, without constituting complete witnesses, have indeed lived through an experience that has taken them beyond the limits of humanity itself.

> Overcoming, yes. But *from where? Who* is actually wounded when the subject is the wound itself?

The *Muselmann* comes thus forward as a being of a sort that Heidegger could not envisage, but one that his phenomenological analyses could help us to understand better.

[63] Agamben, G., *Lo que queda op. cit.*, p. 84.
[64] Améry, J., *M s all op. cit.*, p. 63.
[65] See M Heidegger, *Ser op. cit.*, 53, pp. 279-286.
[66] *Ibidem*, p. 314 and p. 302.

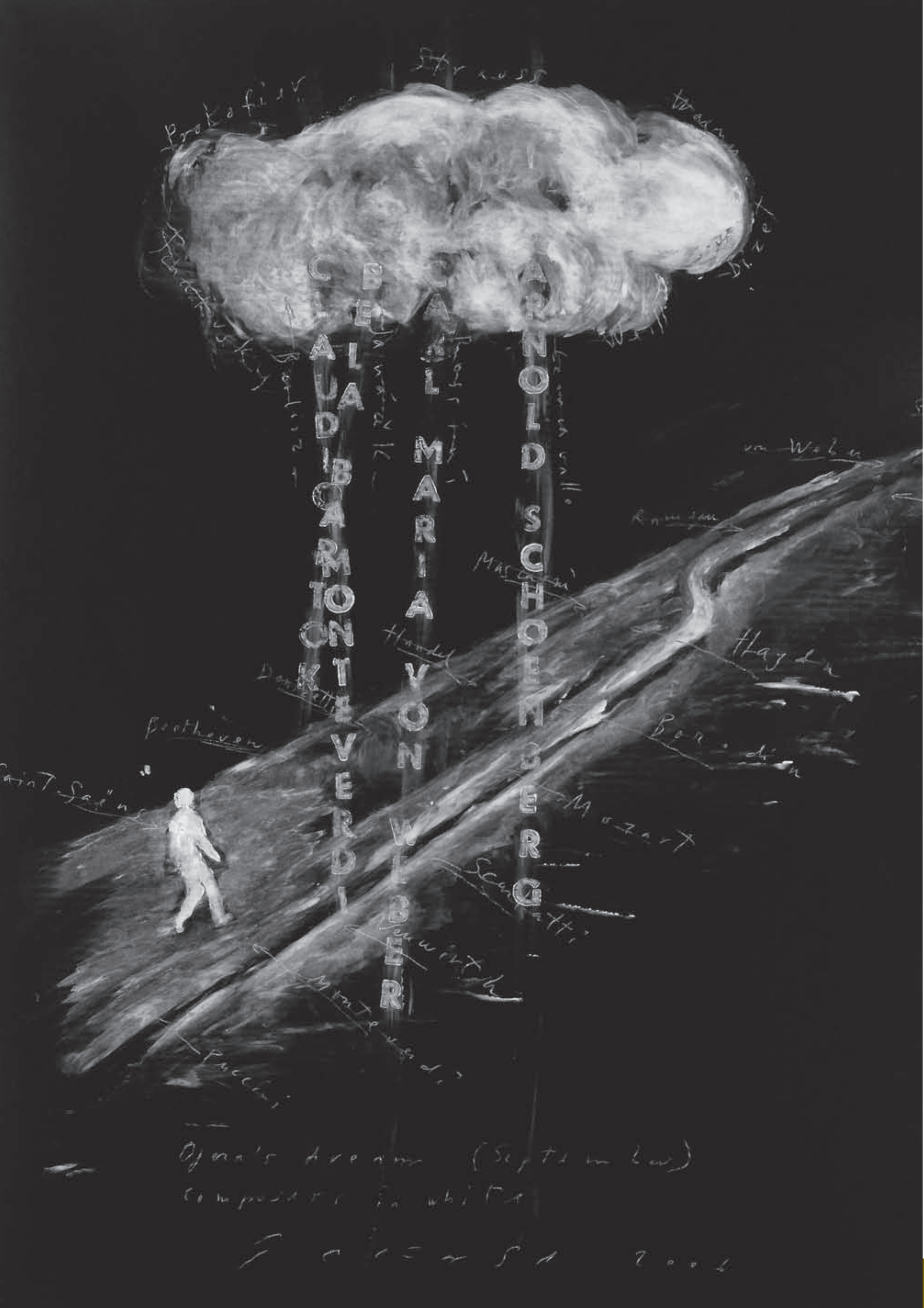
> Dislocation forces him to endlessly seek without finding himself, condemned to eternal wandering

We have to move with great care, however, and always remember that everything that we say about the *Muselmann s* experience is pure speculation. We can never know what the experience of the non-man consists of, in the same way that we shall never know how an animal feels or lives, nor manage to see the light of a black hole. Still, without wishing to go into an in-depth discussion about Heidegger´s existential analytic, we could suggest that the authentic being-towards-death has one of its possible projects, if not the only one, in the *Muselmann*[65]. When he described the ontological structure of this moving towards ´the possibility of the absolute impossibility´ which is the opening of the being-towards-death, Heidegger was clearly thinking of another model, probably the Christian mystic in the Lutheran tradition. Ultimately emptied of their content, the structures of the potentiality-for-being ´the call, conscience, guilt´whic h culminate in resoluteness *(Entschlossenheit),* as a form of existence proper to the Dasein, vouch for a clear theological origin and point towards particular existentiell (ontic) possibilities. If we take the Heideggerian reflection one step further, however, we can consider that the authentic *resoluteness,* the *final* resoluteness ẃ e might venture to say the final r´ esolution´ insofar as it is a p´ rojecting of oneself upon one´s own being-guilty [É] that is to say, as being-the-basis of a nullity *(Nichtigkeit)*´[66], constitutes in fact the ontological description of a perfectly real ontic possibility: *dehumanisation.* The resolute being would thus be the Dasein effectively advancing towards its own death and assuming the nullity of its own existential foundation, plunging therefore into an abyss from which no voice can be uttered, a place from which nothing can emerge, a there *(Da)* where nothing *ex-sists*, that no-one can *a-ssist*.

V The *Muselmann,* then, by being his own death, and so losing his humanity and becoming pure *sistere*, is necessarily a *mute* projection, an ´imp ossible witness´. A further step this way, however, there is the d´ islocated witness´, the being who is not yet his own death, but is indeed *his own wound*; the man who has not lost himself in a final not-being-at-home, but who dwells in an unstable fault, a dislocation that forces him to endlessly seek without finding himself, condemned to eternal wandering in an attempt to flee from exposure; the voice that can still speak and bear witness to his exile, his helplessness, but which can only do so hesitantly, somewhere between the wounded animal´s whimper and the sullen tramp´s mumbling; not the drowned in the lagoon, but the survivor in the mud.

Overcoming, yes. But *from where? Who* is actually wounded when the subject *is* the wound itself? Until we are able to answer this question, we shall never understand the meaning of the testimony that Jean Am´ ry brought to us, with his words, but also with his life, right up to the last leap, the only act that could overcome the swinging of the dislocated body on the hook at Fort Breendonk II

Ignasi Ribó Labastida is a writer.


CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI
BELA BARTOK
CARL MARIA VON WEBER
ARNOLD SCHOENBERG
Beethoven
Mozart
Haydn
Rameau
Handel
Opera's dream (September)
composers in white

Joan Ramon Resina

Post-Hispanism
or the long goodbye of National Philology

TWILIGHT REFLECTION

The reason why there is so much talk about memory these days is that people no longer recall the object of this memory. We find ourselves in a melancholy spiral: we retain our intentional relation towards an object even though we can hardly remember its original function, to say nothing of its features. Religion retains a shadowy memory of a world inhabited by gods; ecology, the memory of a nature found today only in tourist ads or on the labels of organic products; politics preserves in its unconscious the memory of participatory communities on a human scale; urbanism, the memory of the city; culture, of the dignification of customs. Philology, for its part, retains the memory of the link between society and the words that bring it into being.

Joan Maragall´s *Elogi de la paraula* (In Praise of the Word, 1903) is a philological manifesto in the fullest sense of the term. The poet perceives the majesty of the sacred in the lív ing word´, which is language so close to nature that it is just at the point of blending into the landscape or perhaps just emerging from it. For Maragall, poetry relies on the experience of the sublime without losing its familiarity with ordinary speech; it is common speech rediscovered in its primordial context. As an epiphany of the Logos and not the stuff of liturgy, the living word resonates in the vernacular. This

Weber, Jaume Plensa (2006)
Mixed media on paper, 110 x 90 cm

proximity to the pragmatic context demarcates the sphere of meaning and acts as a powerful sounding board for rich yet simple evocations. From so close, there is little or no conscious effort at interpretation, while on the other hand there is an enormous density of emotions. ´A subtle movement of the air´, says Maragall, p´laces before you the immense variety of the world and arouses in you a strong sense of the infinite unknown´(48).

Every region of the planet and every language evokes and shapes a universal truth that can only be accessed by participating ontologically l´o vingly, says Maragall ´in the immediate surroundings. B´e cause every land endows the most substantial words of its people with subtle meaning that cannot be explained by any dictionary or taught by any grammar book´(53). Philology is this loving relationship with the word, or more exactly, with meaning captured *in status nascens*, in the very moment when sound breathes a ´soul´into things (52). For Maragall it is the exact opposite of scientific activity. Therefore, philology of the living word concerns itself neither with classical languages nor with religious or commercial koines, but rather with the whole range of human speech in all its phonetic richness and geographic variation. It calls forth the world in its essential diversity and brings a premonition of things in anticipation of their meaning. Being a poet´s theory, the living word of Maragall relates to what Gumbrecht has called the p´roduction of presence´(XIII-XV).

Maragall has clearly adopted aspects of Herder s philosophy of language. Those same aspects inspired the foundation of modern philology as an integral discipline of the modern university. From Herder modern philology takes the idea that the spirit of a people lives in its language, and that the features of all nations can be studied in their linguistic monuments, collected together as l´ite rature´. The university did not always fulfill the emancipatory force of this idea, which today is assailed on many fronts. But even then, Herder, associating language with the source of popular sovereignty, raised hopes about the end of political subordination of one people to another. Maragall took to heart the principle that for each language there is a corresponding nationality, pushing this idea to the extreme of defining territoriality in linguistic rather than political terms. ´And what other boundaries are needed to direct the governing of nations than the very borders drawn on the earth by the varying sounds of human speech?´(54). N´ation´in its original sense, refers to the emergence of meaning from a place of origin. So too, for Maragall it does not refer to a provisional arrangement of human relations established by the will to power. Such deliberate action expropriates the natural rules of conduct and imposes by force a new interpretive code, which Maragall calls l´e arned languages´.

Elogi de la paraula was written when anxiety over the loss of the Spanish empire spurred the colonisation of the state´s periphery by transferring there the ghost of the Cuban insurrection and the associated repressive measures. In the previous year, the Royal Decree of November 21, 1902, had made Castilian the official language of the state, in a move distinctly intended to halt the revival of Catalan then underway.[1] Maragall´s

[1] On November 30, 1895, Angel Guimer´ delivered the presidential address at Barcelona´s Ateneu in Catalan for the first time, with Maragall acting as secretary. The Spanish nationalist part of the audience reacted tumultuously. Attitudes against Catalan became gradually more abrasive as the language reemerged into public life.

response, as we have seen, was to invoke the cosmic resonance of every language, the subtle meaning that ´the earth´ imparts to words and which the arbitrary exercise of power sweeps away.

> Maragall pitted his essay "In praise of the word" against a philological tradition that suppressed the shimmer of language and erased human contingency

It is important to underline the convivial nature of cultures and languages in Maragall´s thought. His harmonisation of human geography with political geography is undoubtedly idealised. It presupposes not only a utopian overcoming of cultural Darwinism somewhat reminiscent of Kant´s perpetual peace, but also an overly neat and equally ahistorical definition of linguistic borders. However, Maragall´s insistence on poetic revelation as p´roduction of presence´ dispels any suspicion of a metaphysical approach to communication. For Maragall, poetry is not about reconstructing the semantic drift of words away from their lost origins; nor does he seek to recreate tradition through an endless tracking of signs. He calmly accepts that the source of poetry is inaccessible to reason and relishes its t´ransubstantiated´ presence in the existence of beings and languages: B´ecause it is not through same-sounding words that men must become brothers, but rather we are brothers because of the one shared spirit that makes our words sound different in the mysterious variety of the earth´ (53-54). One spirit, perhaps; but Maragall is not seduced by the siren´s song of universality. His attitude to language compares with Nietzsche´s attitude to history; and this similarity cannot be entirely incidental, given the fact that Maragall was the first to write about the German philosopher in Spain.

Nietzsche opposes *wirkliche Historie* to traditional history. The term means r´eal´ or perhaps e´ffective´ history, as Foucault translates it, drawing on the *etymon* of the word, which also produces *Wirkung* (effect). This history rejects an absolute perspective on the past. The romantic sense that the earth breaks up into a diversity of geographic regions, each molding the human spirit differently, finds its Nietzschean equivalent in the historicity and discontinuity of the body. Certainly, Maragall does not take his reading of Nietzsche as far as Foucault, for whom radical historicity demands the rejection of any attitude that leads to the c´onsoling play of recognitions´ (Foucault 153). For Maragall there is a moment of recognition, but it is affective rather than intellectual, and *philological* in the etymological sense of the term. In the realm of poetry, he says, w´e understand each other only through the love of speech´ (53). But although he clings to the consolation of understanding, he also concurs with Foucault that k´nowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting´ (154). The scholastic, the learned, the analytical, in short any use of language driven by pragmatic urgencies or by power forces the subject into a game that is different from the one Maragall sees inscribed in the somatic depth of the voice: ú´nderstanding one another through superficial words learned at a distance from love amounts to understanding without truly understanding each other´ (53).

While Nietzsche challenged a historic tradition that dissolved particularities in an evolutionary continuum and packed facts into laws that were supposed to be unchanging and knowable, Maragall pitted his essay Ín praise of the word´ against a philological tradition that suppressed the shimmer of language and erased human contingency.

Poetic language, which Maragall calls true language in the same sense that Nietzsche calls embodied history r´eal history,´ puts on hold the habituating effect of speech in its pragmatic and socialising function, calling attention to the imbalance between the medium´s restrictions and meaning´s unfathomable scope. ´A subtle movement of air puts before you the immense variety of the world and awakens in you an inkling of the unknown infinite´ (48). For this reason, he says, ´we should speak as though enchanted and awe-struck´ (48). Seen in this light, speaking means suspending the automatism of language and becoming aware of the inspiration that invariably accompanies each act of speech. Speaking, even in the most banal circumstances, is not the conscious laying-out of a meaning contained in pre-articulated thought, but rather the *ad hoc* use of the rules that govern a particular language in a precise pragmatic context.

> What Menéndez Pidal calls "Castile's original character", owes much to the labours of philology: to its devoted tracking down of tradition but also to the normative ethos of the national community as identified by the philologist

Real history, says Foucault, closes the distance that the metaphysical tradition puts between itself and the historical object. While traditional history favors great distances and heights, genuine history turns its gaze on the things closest at hand. Tradition is attracted to the noblest eras, the purest forms, golden ages, abstract ideas, and heroic individuals, which it contemplates from the perspective of frogs. By contrast, effective history takes into account what is most local and immediate: the body and its functions; and it is not afraid to look down at apparently minor things, to discover differences and diversity, respecting the inherent dimensions and intensity of things (155-156). Like Foucault´s version of effective history, Maragall´s poetic language is somatic, an emanation from the earth that rises through the body: Ít´s eems as though the earth uses all its might to make man the highest expression of itself; and that man uses all the power of his being to produce language´ (47). For Maragall, as for Saussure, the linguistic sign is two-faced, but its visible face, the signifier is not virtual and certainly not arbitrary; rather, it is somatic and rooted in the ontology of the speakers.

I have discussed Maragall´s brief poetic manifesto at some length because it contains at least two of the principles that govern the teaching of foreign languages and culture. I am thinking about the reduction of distances and the production of presence, two obviously related concepts. For a long time, one of the reasons for the study of foreign languages has been the reduction of distances between groups of people and the

facilitation of communication among them. This reduction of distance was procured less by teaching a grammar of culture than through the creation of an empathetic context: favoring instruction by native (or ń ear-native)ś speakers; encouraging extracurricular activities that mimic everyday life in the target language; or through controlled immersion during a year of study abroad. In literary studies, the reduction of distance is achieved by renouncing the history of texts and randomly recombining them to suit the agenda of language teaching, which nevertheless threatens to migrate to other departments, in response to the need for professional specialisation. Put another way, the vocational uses of foreign languages encroach on the mother disciplines, which are once more called on to satisfy the professions ́selective need for vocabulary, or what Maragall calls t́he words that fall dead on the surface of things ́(50).

These and other pragmatic approaches to the literary disciplines bring us quite far from Maragall ́s awed speech. And surely we have made little progress in assessing the modulations of human speech caused by accidents of geography (as Maragall would have it) or history (as our postmodern prejudice prefers). But even though today most would reject Maragall ́s metaphysical naturalism, few would openly renounce his romantic esteem of diversity. Free from *our* prejudice, Maragall offers three instances of poetic word in which the speaker underlines speech with a gesture that allows meaning to emerge in relation to the body. In each of these vignettes, language arises as a constituent of a cosmic manifestation at which both speaker and addressee are co-present. ́Aquella canalÉ Lis estelasÉ MiraÉ ́ (T́hat ravineÉ The starsÉ LookÉ)́ (52), words heard at different times and places. Catalonian, Proven ́al, Castilian words. Their diversity, an effect of their being true to place, of remaining local through and through, is what makes them valid examples of t́he living word ́. Shortening distances means ineluctably entering into polyglotism; lengthening them in the name of the universality of an ever smaller set of languages means returning to metaphysics and expropriating meaning.

It is still too early to know whether the crisis of the state that led Maragall to renovate poetic language ín a Rousseauian return to ś incerity ́fin ds a parallel in the much-heralded é nd of the era of nations ́. But it cannot be denied that the symptoms of institutional crisis are already turning up in a wide range of fields, not least in literature. The causes of this crisis are diverse, so it would be presumptuous to blame it on any one in particular. But some facts cannot be ignored. So much energy has gone into destroying the mimetic illusion, into questioning representation, into pointing out the artifice of all experience and the paltriness of all values, that we should not be surprised if the teaching of literature attracts fewer and fewer students or if those it still attracts come for the wrong reasons. But if the priests have lost their faith, what right do they have to demand enthusiasm from the catechumen? Maragall is unequivocal Ý ou found a word that could light up the world, but your little obsession over perfection and grandeur wrapped it in a confused swarm of words without life, which hid that divine light, burying it again in confusion and darkness ́(50-51). His admonition to poets easily applies to those who profess to teach the love of poetic language Ẃ hen will you stop listening to other music and stop speaking with language that is not the living word? Only then will you be listened to in the enchantment of the senses, and your mysterious words will create true life, and you will be phenomenal magicians ́(50).

Maragall´s vision of language went hand-in-hand with the rise of philology. Although his theory of the poetic word was decidedly mystical and had little sympathy for a positivistic methodology, it shared philology´s celebration of the cultural riches of peoples and its desire to bridge the distances among them. Here, though, their ways parted. Maragall lived for the moment in which the word came alive in a sudden illumination, while philology cultivated the appreciation of the literary work through learned mediation. Both can be traced to Herder´s belief in the linguistic dignity of all peoples. But in the course of the 19th century, philology embraced Fichte´s radicalisation of Herder´s idea of language. For Fichte, language was the stronghold of the national spirit, and the arena where that spirit demonstrated its vigor and intrinsic worth competing with others. In Spain this view was upheld by Ram—n Men´ndez Pidal who brought to philology a suprahistorical perspective based on distance and on what Foucault has called án apocalyptic objectivity´ (152). This objectivity presupposes that consciousness maintains its identity over time. More metaphysical than historicist, such a model amounts to a secular version of the immortality of the soul. It inverts the relation between causes and effects, which are shifted to the origin, and also obscures the role of chance in creating a necessity that is nothing more than the vertical perspective of the historian or philologist.

> Philology as it was instituted in Spain by Menéndez Pidal and cultivated by his disciples, is immersed today in the crisis of the humanities

Philology as a discipline evidently owes more to Pidal than to Maragall. It is interesting to note that the two men belonged to the same generation, though their longevity contrasted sharply, as did their life experiences. Maragall (1860-1911) grew up during the bourgeois revolution of 1868 and the federal republic of 1873, while Men´ndez Pidal (1869-1968), who was born after the revolution and was too young to remember the republic, came of age in the politically regressive climate of the restoration. This simple contrast helps us to understand why the two men represent divergent reactions to the same crisis. It is easy to see that the role that fell to Men´ndez Pidal in this crisis called for a rejection of Maragall´s liberal conception of the social role of literature. Maragall´s drama, and that of the entire *modernista* generation, was that a philology that enabled the free study of poetic truth and granted each person the possibility of experiencing his own wonder´, could not prevail over a discipline charged with creating a social identity to match the requirements of centralised institutions. Furthermore, consideration of the earth´s linguistic cragginess and of the potential overlap between linguistic environments and political sovereignties fell outside the purview of a philology underwritten by the state, which since the 18th century had taken hold of the spaces available for the creation and transmission of culture, as Jos´ A. Valero has shown in a magnificent essay.

Personage (Personatge), Jaume Plensa (2008)
Mixed media on paper, 158 x 112 cm

After the failure of absolutism, the state was not interested in literature as an instrument for controlling subjectivity or as an apology for a paternalistic government, which would have been a late correlate of Neo-Aristotelian doctrine (Nerlich 60). Rather, it was attracted to literature´s ability to provide secular legitimation without sacrificing the halo of traditional sovereignty. The Middle Ages were especially interesting as a repository of remote but immanent causes whose myths nourished the modern state and furnished its axiological foundation. Men´ndez Pidal states, ´These ancient stories, however primitive, will always be of interest, above all because their heroes, leaders of peoples, carry inside them the mystery that surrounds the darkened origins of our civilisation, of our way of being´ (*La Epopeya* 244). Philology in service to the state inverted the very terms of the positivism to which it subscribed, starting from the sacred and mysterious to contemplate the present as if it were eternal. An archaic outlook justifies ó ur way of being´ by presenting it as a constant feature of history. Ó ur´way of being, which is unequivocally linked to what Men´ndez Pidal calls Ć astile´s original character´, owes much to the labors of philology: to its devoted tracking down of tradition but also to the normative ethos of the national community as identified by the philologist.

Here again, some dates shed light on the case. Men´ndez Pidal intervened few times in public life, and almost always in moderation. So it stands out that in 1902 he weighed in in the polemic over making Castilian the official language of the state,[2] and that he did so in a belligerent article entitled Ć atalu´a Bilingé ´(Bilingual Catalonia), in which he established the guidelines of his future philological activities. His induction speech for the Royal Academy of the Language (on October 1 of the same year, at age 33) was a declaration of loyalty to a centralised state and an opening volley against Catalonia´s pluralistic conception. This speech set the protocol for other distinguished academics, who at different times in the history of the institution have addressed the learned audience in similar terms. Committed to the imperial worldview, Men´ndez Pidal rejects the notion that Catalonia can ever attain national status. Not only is it unthinkable to recognise Catalonia as a nation, but this political designation, he affirms, is too complex for the Catalan imaginary. The rise of Catalan nationalism is just so much noise, he says, made by t´ho se who still have no understanding of the modern idea of the nation´. Next, the new-fangled academic makes a statement that merits highlighting:

> On the other hand, I feel too small to be part of the nation´s highest literary Centre, which, as the nation´s summit, represents the principle of unity and conservation of one of the most widely disseminated languages in the world, for the good of human progress. (6)

For its newest and youngest member, the Royal Academy was already the centre of the literary institution of the state and the nation´s highest chamber. Literature, therefore, need not negotiate its influence in competition with other discourses. Removed from the civil sphere, where there are no centres, it draws authority from its position at the apex

[2] The royal Decree that made Castilian Spain´s official language was not an empty formulism. It explicitly forbade teaching in Catalan, Euskera and Galician, even for religious education, and it threatened with the loss of teaching credentials any teacher that contravened this ban. The offender would l´ose all the rights recognised by the law´ (Real Decreto, *Gaceta de Madrid*, November 21, 1902; cit. Garc'a Isasti 326, no. 34).

of the nation, where it watches providentially over the national language, on which universal progress is now staked.

Not satisfied with securing the spread of Castilian and its rise to officialdom under the auspices of the Royal Spanish Academy, Menéndez Pidal threw himself into the battle for world hegemony starting in the academic sphere. In 1927 increasing numbers of North American students registered for the summer course for foreigners at the Pidal-led Centro de Estudios Hist–ricos. Menéndez Pidal was no doubt aware that until 1914 German had been the second most commonly spoken language in United States, and that Spanish was benefiting from the animosity toward German that resulted from the war in Europe. Even so, during the inauguration of the course he portrayed Spanish as the underdog by affirming that its growth in US schools had given rise to protests among teachers of other languages (*Curso* 49). He did not attribute increased enrolment to the burgeoning relations between countries in the American hemisphere, but instead to a form of desemantisation which, for lack of a better term, I have called, echoing Gumbrecht, production of presence. For Menéndez Pidal, though, this *presenting* is not about the wonder that all languages evoke by epiphanically encoding the subtlest aspects of a particular culture. Instead, it is about feeling in the very atmosphere of Castile something of the *spirit* [É] that is brought to life in the language (50, italics added), and which is therefore *embodied* in other places, much as Christianity emerged from the spirit of Galilee to spread over the length and breadth of the Roman Empire. For this reason, pilgrimage is made to Castile, to the source of a mystery which is much greater than the mere practical knowledge of the language itself (50).

> Hispanism is in crisis, as is its academic matrix, national philology. Hispanism's shift to a managerial discourse alerts us to another change of historic proportions

Menéndez Pidal does rejoice in the pragmatic reasons buoying Castilian but subordinates them to a spiritual force. He does not so much ask for students as demand initiates. And thus his followers have often taken faith for necessity, a confusion that can be traced to the fatalism of Pidal's doctrine. Time and again the demographic weight of Castilian is held out as an unassailable argument for cultural hegemony. All the same, this illiberal stance is not based on the dictates of the linguistic marketplace. Rather, it expresses an *enthusiasm* that manifests itself in mixture of triumphalism and dissatisfaction, spurring on an insatiable expansion. The numbers do not seem to matter. Menéndez Pidal spoke in Olympic terms of seventy million Spanish speakers; today, numbers as high as four hundred million are flaunted, but even that figure does not soothe the itch to proselytise and conquer. In reality, the marketplace is neither neutral nor objective. It brings into play ruthless competition, unscrupulous advertising, large subsidies and shameless dumping of linguistic products and teaching personnel in areas considered strategically important.

PHILOLOGY S LONG GOOD-BYE

Philology, as it was instituted in Spain by Men´ndez Pidal and cultivated by his disciples, is immersed today in the crisis of the humanities. Even though the state confers an artificial longevity on its practices, the functionarial inertia of this kind of knowledge cannot hide the decline of a discipline that has lost its social function. One might still argue for the need to preserve certain textual techniques, but it is clear that, for different reasons, an entire branch of the university can no longer claim to be serving society. One reason is the law of diminishing returns. The majority of manuscripts of any value have already been edited, in some cases repeatedly; and while each new edition seeks to improve on the previous ones, economic as well as hermeneutic common sense impose limits on the ambition to restore a text to its original meaning. Thus, what is left of the founding spirit of Spanish Philology is the transmission of a few supposedly national values that are mainly expressed in literature. The presence of values tied to the language feeds the belief in a Hispanic identity whose transmission and empowerment falls to Hispanism. In the extreme tautology of this plan, s´cientific activity´ becomes an interminable taxonomy of authors and works, made the objects of r´esearch´, merely by the one simple criterion of being written in Castilian a´n d being, therefore, bearers of what Men´ndez Pidal calls t´he atavistic inspiration of the race´.

After decades of glee at the decline of germane disciplines while Spanish kept on a rising statistical curve, it is now possible to detect a divorce between language and the spirit to which Men´ndez Pidal attributed the very success of the Hispanic expansion. By a ruse of history, Hispanism has run into a potentially fatal crisis, as often happens, at the very moment of its triumph. The moment Castilian becomes an object of practical study almost everywhere, Hispanism loses its reason for being without having gained a firm standing as knowledge within the university. That Almod–var should be the only global Spanish landmark to rival Cervantes in this area (with Garc'a Lorca a distant third) speaks volumes on the issue.

Spanish philologists and North American culturalists experience in very different ways the end of the hegemony of letters. The two groups certainly have different profiles. If the philologists are the institution most protected by its association with the state, the culturalists are the group most exposed to the ravages of competition in the global marketplace of knowledge. Their mutual accusations of incompetence recently filled the pages of the literary journal *Lateral* for several months. However, the tensions between them cannot hide the fact that both groups are subject to the same evolution of their field. Hispanism is living out the general crisis in the humanities through its traditional particularism. Having lost its original mission without even realising it, it suffers a melancholy longing for a goal it never had: a modern Hispanic theory. At the same time, it rejects the currently existing theory as if it were a foreign body, or else becomes its acritical servant. In either case, Hispanism registers its own failure. Like the protagonist of *Talk to Her*, Hispanism maintains an apparently normal relationship with a body of work, setting the texts, massaging them, doting on them, and ´ *in extremis* f´ ertilising them in order to resuscitate them. What is *abnormal* is that all this activity serving a comatose discipline is aimed at producing an illusion of presence for the spirit that once animated the tasks of Spanish philology.

The parallels with the comatose body, which can be transplanted, cross-dressed, and miraculously purified q ualities that fascinate Almod–var s fans ar e not gratuitous, and neither is the fact that the director has assumed iconic stature in Hispanic studies. A body that can be recycled, reformulated, reprogrammed, and retransmitted points, of course, to the problem of the eternity of the material that is , of the *corpus* an d its capacity to transition from dead weight to new life. It is also the problem as philology s tradition, whose tr ansnational sounding board (to use the catchphrase now in vogue) is the phonetic space of Castilian stretching seamlessly from Buenos Aires to Barcelona, and always passing through the old imperial centre of Madrid.

> Beyond Hispanism, beyond the belief in the superior value of dominant languages, there is a virtual academic space where the memory of humanity is affirmed through respect for all languages

Ubi lingua ibi Hispania. Since Nebrija, language and man agement has been the principle on which the essential universality of the Hispanic has been forged. By hewing the cultural law of the state to universal guidelines, Hispanism has naturalised the domination of a culturally complex ecosystem by one successful subculture. To understand its religious resonance, it is useful to invoke Weber s idea of the disenchantment of the world yielding the *depersonalisation* or bureaucratization of magical authority or *charisma*. For a long time the constellation of knowledges organised around philology provided a cultural front to the secularisation of the state, but because culture displaced religion as the primary legitimating agency, religion lived on at the heart of culture s functional or functionarial *raison d tre* . In the case of Spain, this bureaucratised religion is expressed, not coincidentally, in a language that for a long time was referred to as C hristian , and which drew from the religious struggles the passion for unconditional hegemony that Weber calls the search for absolute ends.

ELEPHANTS ALSO DIE

Hispanism is in crisis, as is its academic matrix, national philology. If its appearance marked the collapse of the empire and the culmination of the long transition from the religious legitimation of the state to its cultural legitimation,[3] Hispanism s shift to a managerial discourse alerts us to another change of historic proportions.

[3] It is noteworthy that in the texts of Men ndez Pidal, unlike those of Men ndez Pelayo, there are no manifestations of adherence to a religious creed, nor, for that matter, of the linguistic tolerance evidenced by the historian of Spanish heterodoxy.

In times of crisis, the possibilities of breaking with the principles that organise a discipline tend to multiply. At such times, the increasingly shaky consensus makes it easy to see that practices evolve historically. And it is in the perception of the contingency of practices that lie the roots of the crisis. Of course, it is always possible to change things so that the bottom line remains the same. What else is the tr ansatlantic jargon that is currently in vogue but a recycled or merely rebaptised Hispanism? A true change in perspective implies a change of the phenomenon under study. In turn, the renewal of the object requires an updating of practical approaches and theoretical tools; in other words, a change in cognitive structures. Mere methodological revision is not an adequate response to a discipline s crisis. It is also necessary to acknowledge the radical nature of the crisis and in our case, it is incumbent on us to face up to the possibility that Hispanism no longer has a future in the university.

The question whithe r Hispanism? cannot be answered in advance, but one thing is certain: the rhythm of the transformation cannot be the same everywhere, because institutional conditions and the systems of relevance vary enormously. While the motto in Spanish faculties seems to be all q uiet in the Alcz ar , within departments in the United States, inertia is synonymous with failure and leads quickly to institutional upheaval. In many of these departments, the old combination of practical teaching (language instruction) and reflexive teaching (of culture) has disappeared. In others, cultural instruction is unable to pull its own weight and is kept in tow by language instruction. This represents an inversion of the original relationship. Whereas language used to be studied as a way of gaining access to a literary culture of great historical and philological complexity, literature is now s tudied as a way to extend language learning. What this trend means for Hispanism s aspirations to join the rank of world culture is not hard to forecast. And the solution to the quandary does not appear to lie in an intercontinental feedback system, whereby theory is injected into Spanish philology departments and positivism into North American cultural studies ones. For the near future, it is safe to bet that institutions will continue along divergent paths on either side of the Atlantic.

At present, the most pressing question highlighted by the crisis of Hispanism in the United States is the nagging ethical concern with the marginalisation of cultures and social groups, which emerge not only with the multicultural rage but also in the renewed interest in the historical memory and the appeals for intellectual reparations to all kinds of victimised communities, including those that have been excluded by the discipline. In Spain, the urgency comes from society itself, which insists on putting forward the stubborn reality of the plurality of nations existing under one political umbrella. Spanish philology, to the extent that it hopes to be Spanish in the sense of bonding together the cultures that, for better or worse, coexist within the state cannot remain the monopoly of an oversized particularism. And it is doubtful whether it can continue to be only or mainly philology .

Forging a discipline that is sensitive to the plurality of cultures and languages in Spain and in the poorly-named Hispanic world will require familiarity with the complexity of the field and negotiating discrepancies, contrasting them with all available documents and scholarship without artificially reducing their scope in the name of a generality. This does not imply the appearance of specialists in all of the Iberian cultures and in all the indigenous cultures of Spanish-speaking America. It does imply an attitude of openness to these riches and a favorable approach to their empowerment,

correcting past injustices. It also implies, of course, making this approach concrete in our own practices and not in rhetorical expressions of good will. To pave the way for this new discipline, whatever it is called, there is still an unfinished task: making a reasoned examination of those who feel socially authorised to wield a stamp of approval regarding what is Hispanic ín other words, of Hispanists themselves.

Beyond Hispanism, beyond the belief in the superior value of dominant languages, there is a virtual academic space where the memory of humanity is affirmed through respect for all languages. A space where no language ́s status as d́ ominant ́ is disputed within its own social realm and all are recognised as bearers of knowledge no less necessary than that which is transmitted by languages with a more imperial calling. Today Maragall ́s persuasion can be validated and universality recognised as equilibrium in diversity. This sense of universality, far from what Dal' called t́he immense cannibalisms of history ́ (55), raises prudent hopes for the preservation of the planet. To ensure this goal, though, a critical mass of people must become aware that survival, beyond a certain point, is not the privilege of predators, and that in the order of meaning, as indeed in nature, the complexity of situations guarantees life, while monoculture leads inexorably to barrenness. One need not look far to find examples. The history of Spanish culture offers, in this regard, a lesson worth studying II

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Marta Rovira

The symbolic representation of the Nation's past

INTRODUCTION: THE SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF MEMORY

Our memories, says Halbwachs, always belong to a social space. In this regard, we may think of the individual memory as an illusion[1], as an imaginary line that connects the different groups we belong to. For our memories, also according to the same author, are always to be found in a social space, insofar as we ourselves are social beings.

It is pointless us recalling memories in isolation: the others are there in some way or another.

> But our memories remain collective, and they are recalled for us by others, even if they are of events in which we alone have been involved, and objects that we alone have seen. The fact is that in reality we are never alone.
>
> [Halbwachs, 1968:2]

These social spaces Halbwachs refers to are the social contexts that shape the experience and the memory of individuals. For him, they are the social groups as the basis of memory, not just because they help to establish memories or because they articulate the space and the time of shared experiences, but because moreover, the group as such is the bearer of a way of *feeling* the past. The memory of musicians, the memory of religious groups, the memory of the working classÉ Halb wachs identifies the group as a structure that contains symbolic links (the memory) between individuals, which transcend each one of them, and which can only exist collectively. This is how shared values are established,

a logic that goes beyond rationality and which transmits a lasting view of the past that eventually forms part of the group in a preconscious way.

But for Halbwachs the memory was still that which is made to last by people, and which is different from history in that it goes back no further than one generation. History, on the other hand, traces the path back into the distant past. When he compares memory to history, he attributes the former with a way of learning about the past more deeply rooted in collective consciousnesses, whilst history is understood as a science that interprets the past beyond people´s experiences. We have to understand, then, that Halbwachs saw historical endeavour as a job for specialists, as something set apart from the broad and popular path of social evolution. Had he survived the extermination camp he would have lived through a period, since the Second World War, which has been characterised precisely by historians intervening in the life of society.

The person who has best approached this connection between history and memory, and who has made the relationship between them clear is without doubt Paul Ricoeur (*L Histoire, la mmoi re, l oubli,* Seuil, 2000). Ricoeur distinguishes between the work of historians and the work of the memory. However, these are by no means alien to each other. For Ricoeur, the collective memory constitutes the ground in which historiography is rooted. In other words, memory is history *experienced*. In this sense, Ricoeur sees memory not as something close that does not require written documents in order to be remembered (subject of immediate memory), but as a way of appropriating history, the more distant past.

> If one looks at it not in a linear but in a circular way, memory may appear twice during our analysis: first as a mould of history if one looks at it from the point of view of writing history, then as a channel for the reappropriation of the historical past as it is presented to us by the historical accounts given.
>
> [Ricoeur, 2004:21]

This connection between history and memory does not presuppose an insurmountable epistemological difference, as history contains memory, and memory contains history. And this is the most important thing. The social commitments occurring in the field of memory are not removed from the intervention of academic history. In many ways, the conflicts of memory are also the conflicts of historiography, despite the fact that society reserves different social spaces, and different social roles, for them and that the academic discourse on the past has potentialities of its own, characteristics that distinguish it from the construction of memory made from outside the field of science. But there is a point at which history and memory necessarily come together, where they constitute two aspects of the same phenomenon: the representation and recounting of the past. In this article I refer to this link between history and memory and the representation of the past in the context of the nation, through symbolic action.

[1] Just as Bourdieu was later to put it when talking of the construction of the biography from life histories. Ĺ îllusion biographique´, *Minutes de la recherche,* no. 62/63, june 1986.

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE NATION S PAST

> A common problem indeed runs through the phenomenology of memory, the epistemology of history, the hermeneutics of the historical condition: that of the representation of the past.
>
> [Ricoeur, 2000]

It is in the context of the nation, better than in any other, that we can give expression to this link between collective memory and history. The representation and the recounting of the past is the means by which the nation is *explained* (legitimated) as a collective subject. Although we may consider the awareness of history as a human characteristic, the awareness of distance as regards the past is a characteristic of modern times. And what is more, the development of an established collective memory is a result of the celebration of the nation as a product of enlightened modernity; an establishment that is sustained by way of two very modern artefacts such as chronology (and the ritualisation and symbolisation of this chronology) and the personification of the past (individualisation of historical action).

Some authorities, like Hobsbawm (1988), have wished to see in this process of symbolisation of the national past a contrivance that reveals a supposed unreality of the nation. However, the national memory has the characteristics of any reality constructed socially: it is a shared discourse, a discourse assumed collectively; a reality *based on experience*, containing an aesthetic perception (Gadamer) and a reappropriation of the past (Ricoeur) that we can clearly observe in the use of symbols.

A collective reality that even so does not cease to be the subject of conflicts, of differing interpretations, and that in short contains different levels of significance for the various social agents. There are *national* memories and *nationalist* memories, *official* memories and counter-memories, memories of specific groups and *social subjects*: of women, of workers, of clandestine strugglesÉ In all these memories there is a message that promises a tr uth , namely, a component of *recognition* that, as Ricoeur says, history in itself does not have. We recognise ourselves in the act of remembering because in it we represent our past. It is the w e that endures in this memory beyond the here and now.

> Although being no more, the past is recognised as having been. Of course, one may place in doubt such a pretension to the truth. But we have nothing better than memory to assure ourselves that something is far back in the past before we may declare ourselves as remembering. Such is at once the puzzle and its fragile solution that memory transmits to history, but which it also transmits to the reappropriation of the historical past for the memory because *recognition* becomes a privilege of memory, which history lacks. However, the reappropriation of history for memory is equally lacking.
>
> [Ricoeur, 2006: 22]

This recognition is possible not only because of the content of the story that we are told, and which we adopt, but of the way it tells it. The late 20th century was characterised not just by the growing interest in remembering the recent past (trials, commemorations, anniversaries, museum representations, reproductions), but by the development of formats based increasingly on *experience*; going as far as the dramatisations and guided

tours of today, the latest thing in historical tourism (Lowenthal). Today it is not possible to speak only of a social memory and of a vague memory, implicit in the people´s minds. We have to talk of politics of the memory, a market of the memory, of c´ommemorative bulimia´, as Pierre Nora said. The memory is a form of social action less and less internalised and more and more emphatic.

SYMBOLIC ACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NATION

Symbols are tools for condensing meaning. They contain quite different interpretations, uses and forms. Indeed, all culture is symbolic by definition. However, there are symbolic elements, be they icons or rituals, that are clearly outlined, that correspond to easily identifiable patterns, because they have gone through a process of institutionalization (Berger and Luckmann, 1986). This is the case, for example, of national flags. Michael Billig (1995) correctly points out the existence of *recognised* symbols, which are repeated in an international phenomenon that embraces all nations.

> Each flag, by its conventional rectangular pattern, announces itself to be an element of an established, recognisable series, in which all flags are essentially similar in their conventions of differences.
>
> [Billig, 1995: 86]

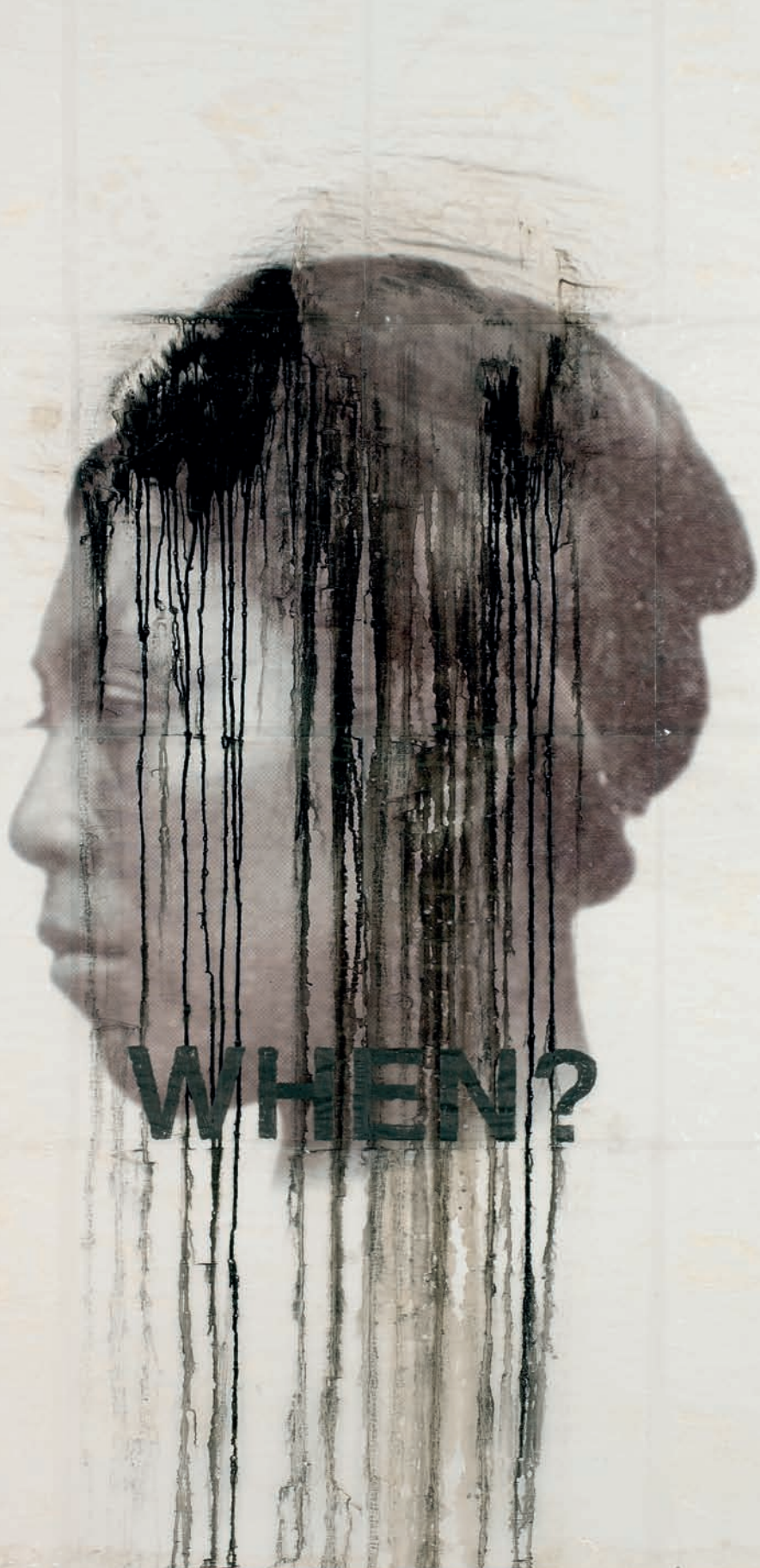
I have already said that the national memory is expressed through symbols. The flag itself contains the national history (t´he four bars)´. But there are symbols that remind, that make memory present. Symbols are therefore the tools for *experiencing* the past. If the nation is a collective link that expresses itself in a sentimental register (one feels identified), a sentimental memory is needed to construct a national identity. And this way of *feeling* the national identity is expressed through adherence to shared symbols, or by way of shared symbolic rituals. Through this sentimental experience of the symbol, people can *recognise* themselves in it, they can *feel* represented by it.

> The name symbol is given to that which has value not just for its content but for its capacity to be shown, i.e., to that which is a document in which the members of a community recognise themselves: whether it appears as a religious symbol or in a profane sense, whether it is a sign, a credential or a redeeming word, the meaning of the symbolon rests in any case on its presence, and it only gains its representative function through the topicality of its shown or spoken self.
>
> [Gadamer, 1977: 110]

As Hans-Georg Gadamer points out, one cannot *experience* the past in just an *objective* way. Positivism (be it Marxist or functionalist) overlooks this essential connection between *being* and *feeling*. Gadamer thus places the reflection in the terrain of the sensitive, the aesthetic, which allows us to expect something from a representation of something that goes beyond our own selves.

next page **Soul / When? (Ànima / Quan?),** Jaume Plensa (2005)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 160 x 112 cm


SOUL


WHEN?

> The allegorical process of interpretation and the symbolic process of knowledge base their necessity on the same foundations: it is only possible to know the divine through feeling.
>
> [III]

Thus, national symbols are shared, not through legal obligation, but through learning based on experience, in the institutionalised social contexts to do so: the school, the family, public rituals like the Diada Nacional, sports competitions or tributes to representatives of culture. Learning the institutionalised symbols means that individuals, in their process of socialisation, unconsciously incorporate the symbolic patterns (Douglas, 1978) of the society in which they grow up. Thus, a child will learn the symbolic force of its country's flag before the entire scope of its meaning; in the same way, it will learn the symbolic force of a punishment long before understanding the reason why it is meted out.

Therefore, symbols are tools of power, of shaping the knowledge and the values that the individual acquires of the world, through verbal and non-verbal forms. We have to speak, therefore, of symbols not as elements found among us waiting for someone to interpret them, but as tools for action, be it educational, economic or political. Symbolic action develops in all areas of our society, with different intentions but with equivalent guidelines. Whereas in education the teacher's or the parents' authority over the child is symbolised, in economic relationships the symbols express and determine social status, as social differences are also symbolically expressed in linguistic registers. So we find that certain prestigious professions develop an entire highly visible and specific range of symbols (doctors, journalists, etc.).

Symbols are tools of power, of shaping the knowledge and the values that the individual acquires of the world, through verbal and non-verbal forms

However, what is peculiar about the field of defining national reality is the globalising (and therefore integrating) wish of symbols to represent the nation. If the nation is the construction of a political whole on the basis of shared cultural traits (Resina, 2006), the symbols through which the nation is represented form a selection taken from the shared history. Potentially, there are numerous cultural expressions that can become national symbols, i.e. institutionalized points of reference. However, only some of the symbolically important elements of this nation are raised to the category of national representations, with the ability to generate consensus and cohesion around them.

A consensus, but one that does not exclude disagreements. The struggle for symbolic representations is the struggle for the imposition of one ideological option over the others. In this struggle for the imposition of the symbols that are considered ideologically more appropriate, the symbols themselves (going back to the idea of *symbolic action*) become tools of political strife. When the definition of the nation is the subject of political strife, there arises a struggle for the symbolic representation of the nation being fought for.

The potential fractures in the symbolic national discourse do not appear only in the different national political options and in the ín ternal ´ power centres in a national identity. In the case of nations not formally recognised, there is a competition established to occupy the *official* ground of the nation, to counteract its symbolic power. There is established, then, a link between symbols and counter-symbols, a competition between forms of national representation that become conflicting. In the case of Catalonia, we can see this play of symbols and counter-symbols in the symbolic conflicts arising in the relationship between the national flags of Spain and Catalonia.

The paradox of the conflict is that it is also expressed in a non-conflictive way. Namely, the simultaneous presence of symbols that represent different national options has become something that Catalan society has accepted as normal. However, those living in this society, even those who have only just arrived, immediately perceive the nationally differing relationship represented by each flag, so that individuals identify themselves ń ationally ´ with one or the other, but rarely with both as *equally* national symbols.

THREE ASPECTS OF SYMBOLIC ACTION

National conflicts are expressed symbolically, just as relationships of power between nations are. In this way, the subordination in terms of political power of Catalan national reference points without doubt weake their institutional scope, their ability to formally become what the whole group represents, which is expressed through rituals shared by all the ideological trends present in society. The globalising effect of national symbols is diminished in this case, and their ability to *represent* goes on to depend in good measure on the means that glue society together on the fringes of institutional political power[2].

The weakness of the institutional aspect of symbols increases the importance of alternative symbols, which do not so much have the function of gluing together, as of compensating and emphasising. That is, they represent not that which ís ´, but that which ć ould be ´, or that which ẃ ould like to be ´. In the national sphere we find, then, different symbolic aspects, which I identify with the following concepts:

á Institutional symbols.
á Militant or protest symbols.
á Symbols for private use or of popular culture (in the sense of ordinary culture).

When institutional points of reference are in a situation of ambiguity and confusion produced by the existence of different competing symbolic systems or mechanisms, symbolic action generates points of reference that combat this confusion. A symbolic action occurs that expresses itself as a counter-power, as a transforming desire or as compensation for what the national institutional points of reference do not contain. We should bear in mind that the symbols in themselves contain different and diverse possible interpretations. Therefore, the use made of a symbol (its presentation) is as important as what it represents.

[2] We have to study the role of association membership in the shaping of national identity, paying attention to its ability to make up for the lack of national institutions and media to support a truly national set of symbols.

Through symbolic points of reference, then, the official definition of reality is debated; for example, the national points of reference of the Catalan Countries counter the national points of reference of Catalonia. However, the official interpretation is also combated through differing interpretations of the symbols; the *senyera* is for some the flag of the ´autonomy´ of Catalonia (which they counter with the starred flag as a symbol of the wish to become an independent nation) and for others a perfectly ´national´ symbol. Thus, militant symbols try to overcome the loss of present points of reference that resolve the consensus concerning the national identity, but they themselves cannot perform this globalising function. They are restricted to the function of emphasising (in this case, a wish for change) and compensating symbolically the lack of institutional presence of certain points of reference, namely, by way of representation and performance in the public sphere (often without much coverage in the mass media).

> In the particular case of symbols as icons of memory, the first consequence of the changes taking place in the social contexts is their constant process of *updating*

Alongside the militant or protest symbols lík e the starred flag, the concept of Catalan Countries, *El Cant dels Maulets*, etc. ´w e find, in another aspect those we call popular symbols or for private use. We could almost talk of private consumption, as these symbols are bought, consumed and expire after a while. This is the case of the Ć atalan donkey´, a marketing product that has become popular in certain parts of Catalonia and has the characteristic of being a *national* point of reference used as each person wishes. It is not an explicitly national symbol, as its potential for institutionalisation is fairly low. However, it implicitly becomes a sign of identity, which corresponds at the same time to market criteria: meeting a need, being attractive, generating a b´ randÉ So at any time it could be replaced by another icon that meets the same requirements. However, the force of the Ć atalan donkey´ as a symbol comes in good measure from the existence of a counter-symbol, the Śp anish bull´. In this case, the antithetical relationship reinforces the functionality of the Ć atalan donkey´. And indeed, it seems that the existence of the two has increased the presence of each among the people, as if it were a competition. On the other hand, as a compensatory symbol for the absence of a Catalan badge on car number plates, it could quite easily be substituted by another.

Perhaps the symbol that most clearly acts as compensation for the lack of institutionalised national points of reference ín this case the lack of a national football team ís Bar´a. In the years since the Francoist repression, Futbol Club Barcelona has become the channel for the expression of Catalan identity through sporting competition. Presently, it is one of the most consolidated symbols of Catalonia, which has gained in force as social changes have made sport more important, and football especially. Bar´a´s capacity for social implication has as much to do with the dynamics of the world football market and its repercussions in the media, as with its importance as a national symbol, which moreover stamps a specific associative culture on the club.

THE CHOICE AND UPDATING OF SYMBOLS

I began this article talking about the collective memory, and how the work of historians offers points of reference for the construction of national symbols, especially through the personalisation of history and chronology as narrative tools par excellence in contemporary historiography. These elements are part of the collective memory through shared symbols and points of reference. However, these symbols belong to the collective memory insofar as the current s´ ocial contexts ´as Maurice Halbwachs said´ sustain their fit in the network of collective references.

Insofar as the social contexts change, the context in which history appears to us is also transformed. Indeed, the highly fluid way in which current cultural production functions also affects historiographical output and the representations of the collective memory. This constant changing of cultural products and formats may suggest that history and memory have ceased to have a *market* these days. Nothing could be further from the truth. We might even say that history is more present than ever in today´s society, thanks to the possibility that exists of ´acting out´ the past. Audiovisual techniques have revolutionised the telling of history aimed at the general public: documentaries, television programmes *(El favorit)*, advertising language (institutional and commercial), the organisation of public eventsÉ Er ic Hobsbawm does not know how right he was when he spoke of the ín vention of tradition´. He was referring obviously to the origins of the nation, but never before have so many new traditions been invented.

In the particular case of symbols as icons of memory, the first consequence of the changes taking place in the social contexts, and which have also to do with the lack of institutionalisation, is their constant process of *updating*. When I say updating I am referring not only to the renewal or transformation of symbols, something inevitable with the passage of time, but also to a change in functional relationships, in which aesthetic and formal language becomes a prime factor for constructing the symbolic points of reference, rather than their ideological content á lan guage that takes the present to the past, rather than the past to the present.

> Audiovisual techniques have revolutionised the telling of history aimed at the general public

The past is no longer the strange country that Lowenthal (1986) discovered, because the characteristics of the heroes seem very similar to those that appear in Hollywood movies, and are represented with wholly contemporary personality traits. The cinema, popular historical magazines (for example, *S piens*), tee-shirts and caps with 1714 on them or other products for popular consumption that we have available transport the reference points of the past using cultural tools that update their format, and, of course, their potential meaning. As an example, we can see how the starred flag has acquired a n aesthetic and youthful aspect that it did not have to begin with. The young people who carry it (more and more each day) do not appreciate at all the ideological differences between the blue-starred flag and the yellow one, rather its aesthetic and militant contrast

with the *senyera*, which has become too institutional and also rather old-fashioned, and, it goes without saying, less flashy.

The force of this trend, as I have said, is due in part to the lack of clear institutionalisation of symbolic national points of reference. And this is what allows these *updated* points of reference easily to become direct replicas or substitutes (in compensation) of the institutional symbols. The need to seek out new symbolic elements is so strong that the public institutions of Catalonia themselves take part in the creation of new symbolic formats, in a sort of construction of para-national reference points (Delgado, 2003). We find examples of this in the attempt to change the design of the municipal badge of Barcelona (which in the end has been impossible for legal reasons), the attempt to drop the traditional floral offering to Rafael Casanova or the increasingly frequent use of *flags* of purely *decorative* colours instead of the traditional use of the *senyera* at the *festes majors* of towns and villages.

> The second consequence of the de-institutionalisation of the symbolic patterns is that the symbolic references cease to be accepted as a collective legacy

The very fluid nature of the culture industry that leads to the constant renewal of the symbolic elements available on the market is a universal fact, but in other nations we will surely find symbolic national points of reference that are completely outside this market, beyond question. We may suppose that the English national points of reference, for example, determine the acceptance of more up-to-date formats in its institutional nature, if they really are *updated* at all.

The second consequence of the de-institutionalisation of the symbolic patterns is that the symbolic references cease to be accepted as a collective legacy, and become a question of personal choice. In the case of Catalan national identity the awareness of an identifying choice is very strong. An awareness that is hard to find in other national contexts, where the people even consider it absurd that someone should ask about the feeling of national identity (apart from the case of immigrant groups and in certain circumstances)[3]. We must also be aware that Catalan sociology formulates questions[4] that are not appropriate in nations institutionally beyond question. This article almost certainly contains examples of them.

CONCLUSION

The reflection I have put forward schematically here would doubtlessly need to be more broadly developed in order to be presented exhaustively, something I hope to do in

[3] Moreover, this awareness makes us more *critical* and lucid citizens with regard to this matter, as it enables us to perceive what in other contexts is taken for granted.

[4] The same research I am doing on the symbols the Catalans identify themselves with, thanks to the support of the CETC, would be pointless in England or the Île de France.

the future in a wider study. In synthetic fashion, I have tried to answer the question of how the nation´s past is represented by symbols in the present. My reflection leads me to conclude an answer based on four ideas concerning this matter:

1. Social contexts make up the collective memory. Symbolic patterns are the institutionalised basis of the representation of this collective memory in the national fact. The institutionalisation of symbolic points of reference is what allows a shared national symbolic context to exist.

2. In the case of nations without a state (or where the state is not formally recognised), institutional weakness prevents the shaping of a symbolic pattern with which to construct a shared collective identity. The symbols may be there, but they will not become undisputed points of reference.

3. The lack of institutionalisation of a national reality does not entail the complete disappearance of symbolic references as such. The political struggle for the imposition of national symbols of one type or another is seen precisely in the abundance of symbols. Moreover, symbolic action encounters a path favourable to the production of symbolic property in the techniques of cultural output and performance of advanced societies.

4. The two most visible consequences of this specific context of symbolic representation of the nation´s past are: a) the updating of symbols as a strategy of change and of ideological competence (as a protest or as a show of force) rather than as a strategy of permanence, and b) the existence of a situation of individual choice of collective points of reference, rather than a socialisation of individuals in the context of a collective cultural legacy. The result is a great deal of national ambiguity ■

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ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND

Josep Lluís Gómez Mompart

From quality journalism to speculative journalism

Between January 2007 and May 2008, due to old age or sickness, among other reasons, quite a few journalists representative of what in the last century was considered quality journalism died: journalism that has not only honoured a profession necessary for the development and consolidation of democracy and freedoms, but which has also contributed, as the brilliant journalist Jean Daniel believes it should, to exposing everything that the authorities virtually always try to hide or, at least, divert attention from. Probably for this reason, this profession is "the best in the world", in the words of Gabriel García Márquez, or "the most interesting", after literature, according to Mario Vargas Llosa.

I would like to remember half a dozen journalists, in some ways paradigmatic, of all those who passed away in those eighteen months. I shall begin with Ryszard Kapuscinski, the Polish reporter who died in Warsaw on January 23rd 2007, aged 75, an exemplary

Face II (Rostre II), Jaume Plensa (2008). Mixed media and collage on paper, 220 x 200 cm

Kapuscinski was fascinated by journalism and by its possibilities of learning about the world, particularly that of the dispossessed

communicator who has bequeathed an entire *philosophy of being* to a group at times rather sceptical and at others cynical: ín order to be a journalist you have to be a good person ́or c ́ynics are no use at this profession ́, he would say repeatedly. Perhaps for this reason, the new mayor of London, Boris Johnson, who was a despicable journalist (a cheat)[1] was able to become a smart politician, just like Berlusconi, who has persecuted the good Italian journalists that have dared to denounce his continual corruption and prevarication.

Kapuscinski was fascinated by journalism and by its possibilities of learning about the world, particularly that of the dispossessed. He, who had begun working in the National News Agency of a Poland with the iron censorship of a totalitarian regime, was able to sidestep it like other good professionals who have to work with self-censorship and/or the heavy pressure of democratic states. After a first period in India and China in the early nineteen fifties, in 1959 he moved to Africa as the agency ́s correspondent, where he stayed until 1981, travelling continually to Asia and Latin America. Up to his death he devoted himself to writing important articles and extraordinary works of journalism in book format, like *The Emperor, Imperium* or *The shadow of the sun*.

On February 4th 2007, one of the most troublesome journalists for Austrian politicians died of a heart attack in Vienna, aged 61: Alfred Worm. In a country governed by spurious alliances, Worm investigated the scandals of corruption and hypocrisy, like for example the exposure in 1980 of the major financial fraud in the construction of the principal AKH hospital in Vienna. His struggle against financial and political corruption was rewarded by recognition as the best journalist of 2006.

New Zealander Kate Webb, a pioneering Vietnam war correspondent, died of cancer on May 14th 2007 in Sydney, at the age of 64. She was very brave as a war reporter and had a special gift for words, as the journalist Peter Arnett, a Pulitzer Prize winner for his reports on Vietnam, remembered. In 1967 she travelled under her own steam to Saigon and after a few months she was hired by the UPI agency as a permanent correspondent for the quality of her work, such as the stories revealing the involvement of South Vietnamese officers in the black market.

Kate Webb was kidnapped and held for 23 days in Cambodia by North Vietnamese troops and was initially given up for dead. Despite thirst, hunger, infections and the terrible interrogations, when freed she declared that she had been treated courteously; she got

[1] Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson (1964). Despite his refined education at Eton and Oxford, in 1987 he was sacked by *The Times* for faking some quotes by his godfather when he was a trainee editor. He then went to the right-wing newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*, where he ended up as a columnist, and in 1999 he left that paper and went off to edit the centre-right magazine *The Spectator*, which he left in 2005 to devote himself to politics, and to appear on humorous television programmes thanks to his razor-sharp tongue.

malaria and risked her life on many occasions. In 2001 she retired as associate manager of AFP in Jakarta, a post she had held since 1985, because she considered herself ´to o old to report from the front line´ ´the only kind of reporting she liked doing. She did not see herself at all as a tough person, but rather vulnerable, and contrary to what people think, she said, being weak had been the key to survival in such difficult circumstances.

The founder of the alternative magazine *Actuel* and the free radio station Radio Nova, Jean-Fran´ois Bizot, born in Paris into an upper middle-class family, died on October 8th 2007, aged 63, from cancer. In 1970, after working on the weekly *L´Express*, along with friends ´ among them the noted French politician Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of M´decins Sans Fronti´res and M´decins du Monde´ he founded the monthly underground magazine *Actuel*, producing long, excellent reports. This magazine, a countercultural icon in France, which at one point was selling 400,000 copies, was intended, in Bizot´s words, ´to surprise, to comprehend, and above all not to preach´ in relation to the new social movements and the alternative groups (of gender, sexual orientation, musicÉ), the ways of life in the communes, black culture in the USA or ecology.

One of the most outstanding critical voices in Italian journalism, Enzo Biagi, who in 2002 when he was dismissed from the RAI became the symbol of Berlusconi´s repression in the media, died on November 6th 2007 in Milan, aged 87. His professionally honest approach brought him problems with several media organizations. After being a member of the Partisan Resistance in the Second World War he began working on the Bologna newspaper *Il Resto del Carlino* and lost his job in 1951 for signing a manifesto against the atomic bomb. In 1960 he was fired from the weekly *Epoca* for severely criticising the government of the ultra right-winger Tambroni, and three years later Saragat, the future president of the Italian Republic, dismissed him as director of the RAI´s television news, accusing him of being a ´c´ ommunist´, although he always defined himself as a´ socialist without a party´. He then worked on the newspapers *La Stampa, La Repubblica, Il Corriere della Sera* and the weekly *Panorama*, but it was during the nineties that some memorable RAI programmes, such as *Il Fatto*, made him very popular with viewers.

Finally, on April 2nd 2008, at the age of 92, Sir Geoffrey Cox died, a renowned journalist ´ he was a reporter on the Spanish Civil War for the liberal anti-Francoist newspaper *News Chronicle*´ who shook up television news with News at Ten on the British channel ITV. Cox, who had been a correspondent in different European countries, became one of the pioneers of television news when, in 1967, he introduced the first half-hour news programme for a mass audience, at ten o´clock at night, a programme that was virtually a national institution for 32 years. By giving pride of place to images live from the scene of the events, instead of the anodyne news bulletins that had been produced up to then, this journalist, born in New Zealand and educated at Oxford, was the forerunner of modern television.

THE END OF THE DOYENS AND THE SUPREMACY OF THE *SHARKS*

Is the death of all these great journalists, and those of many others perhaps less well known, a symptom of the end of an era of the most brilliant and socially most useful journalism? Can quality journalism, which has given democracy and progress so many good things, reproduce itself if the (good) professional masters are dying off?

Even though the new generations of journalists are usually better trained and more prepared (because not only have they studied the subject specifically at university, they have often done an M.A. and speak a couple of foreign languages), they are finding fewer and fewer veterans in newspaper offices of the kind that, besides training them in good journalistic practice, can guide them in critical, rigorous and important journalism, showing themselves to be a model of conduct, with high professional standards and independent, not servile, attitudes towards the public and private powers.

Without doubt, the lack of living doyens close to young journalists is worrying, in a profession increasingly mimetic, less interested in history – often not even their own – and more 'immediatist' and spectacular due to the influence of stories closer to infotainment or tabloidism (journalism, sensationalist or not, that invents stories and lies unscrupulously). Even more so, when the oligo-politicisation of the media and a continual replacement of traditional press bosses by managers and executives of huge multi-media groups prevails: the ownership of journalistic companies belongs less and less to families or entrepreneurs in love with the news business, but has passed into the hands of above all speculative capitalist companies, coming from industries far removed from information. They need to control this information in order to pursue their global business interests, whether weapons, energy, property, transgenic crops or laundering dirty money.

A couple of examples, on either side of the Atlantic, exemplify the repercussions of this new media ecosystem.

In November 2007 the staff of the prestigious German weekly *Der Spiegel* forced Stefan Aust, its editor for thirteen years, to leave. Even though under his editorship the magazine had maintained good results, reinforced its prestige even more and its presence on television and Internet had been consolidated, the journalists of *Der Spiegel*, owners of 50.5% of the shares, dismissed him alleging that they wanted to win back younger readers, through good fresh ideas that they thought Aust was unable to come up with.

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Der Spiegel, founded on January 4th 1947 and which at times has sold over a million copies, has been a landmark of quality and investigative journalism in Germany, with the exposure of political corruption and various scandals, like the case of the illegal financing of parties known as the 'Flick affair'.

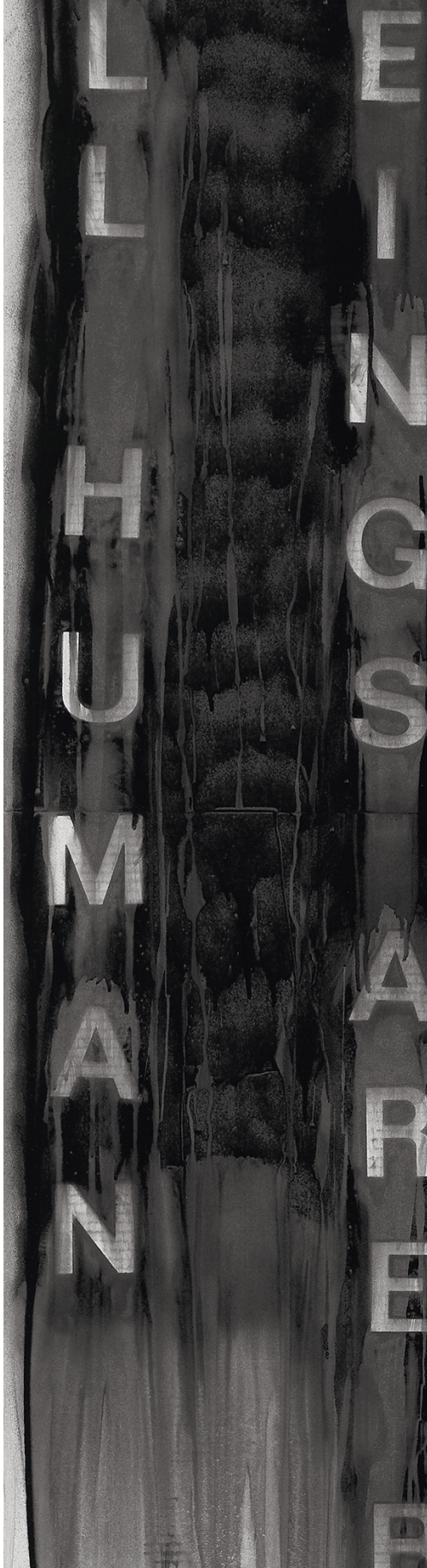
Then there is Marcus Brauchli, editor of the important financial newspaper *The Wall Street Journal*, who was forced to resign in April 2008, four months after the paper was bought by magnate Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch's media giant News Corporation (175 press mastheads) took control of Dow Jones 'the company that publishes the financial newspaper'

for 5.2 billion dollars. The resignation of Brauchli, a man very influential in the American press, given that *The Wall Street Journal* is the second biggest-selling paper in the USA after *USA Today*, came when he had not yet been in the job for a year, having taken over from previous editor Paul Steiger. Both had kept up the journalistic quality and independence, but Rupert Murdoch had already made it known that he wanted to turn *The Wall Street Journal* into a lighter paper with more political information to compete with *The New York Times*, among others. A few months before, the powerful Tribune group p ublishing among many other newspapers *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Los Angeles Times* had been sold to property magnate Sam Zell.

The personalities of some of this century's new press *sharks* recall those of a century ago, like the architect of tabloid journalism William Randolph Hearst, outstandingly portrayed in Orson Welles' superb film *Citizen Kane* (1941). That legend could now compare with the case of Conrad Black, the Canadian magnate who in the nineteen eighties and nineties was admired for controlling, through the Hollinger group, 500 newspaper mastheads from Toronto to Jerusalem. Lord Black, who idolised the former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, was charged and found guilty in July 2007 of three serious counts of fraud, sentenced to 35 years in jail and fined one million dollars, when it was found that he had created a financial scam to illegally get his hands on shareholders' money when newspapers in the group were wound up.

INFORMATION, SPECULATIVE MERCHANDISE

These, like so many other transactions in the media, suggest that for some magnates who no longer have anything of the honourable term p ress barons about them, as they were described in 19th century England in formation, in this information society, is simply raw material for the wholesale business of speculation. If information has become speculative material for many of the media emperors, this would explain the course that much



of journalism has taken, even emblematic names. If this hypothesis, quite plausible, is confirmed, one could talk of *speculative journalism*, just as at other times in the history of journalism expressions have been coined like ínterpretative journalism´, ´sensationalist journalism´, ´quality journalism´ or ´tabloid journalism´.

Here, speculative journalism would be the superior, prophetic phase of the ´tabloid journalism´ new on the scene, but linked to quite prestigious media bodies, paradoxically not populist but relatively elitist, whose nature is above all that of an economic-cum-financial template based on speculation; namely, moving *assets* (news) around without paying too much attention to the significant core of the meaning of the news, understanding it as an intangible asset with exchange value once its useful value has been cancelled out.

It is difficult to think that any of these media *sharks* might care about information in the profound sense that legitimates the job of the journalist. On the contrary, what seems to emerge from their operating methods and their buying and selling strategies ´and consequently, from the repercussions that this maelstrom has for journalism and journalists ´is that the intangible asset which makes exchange possible is the symbolic prestige or the name of the masthead. The gradual denaturalisation of the type of journalism is the way of voiding of meaning and content the reporting that up to then had been done, often justified by new readers, new fashions and new topics. In a word, nearly always lighter, more striking, more fun, more surprising, more colourful, more agileÉ in short, more trivial.

After years of a degree of success ´ though with several crises ´ of the radical left-leaning French newspaper *Libra tion,* launched in 1973 and founded, among others, by Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault, in 2006 the historic editor Serge July handed over to a former reporter on the same paper, Laurent Joffrin. Recapitalisation, with 15 million euro designed to get it out of the latest financial crisis, paradoxically meant opening the door ´in the newspaper born of the events in Paris in May 1968 ´to magnate Edmond de Rothschild. Although this multi-millionaire declared that he would not change the editorial line, he demanded the following: the resignation of the editor, who had been the soul of the paper, responsible for enormous growth during the Mitterand years, and a change of design, full colour and more dynamic. The new design ´which was aimed at making *Libra tion* ´more seductive, clearer, more optimistic, more open and more humble ´including novelties like the so-called Ć ontre-journal ´, which gathers bloggers ´ opinions, or a ´making of ´section explaining the secrets of the day ´s edition, and also the imposition of shorter articles and more pictures.

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER SECTARIANISM PREVAILS

The other strategy that prevails as a marketing formula comes from the logic of the television audiences: give the *public* what a certain majority wants, not very demanding and critical, which seems to want to amuse itself to death (in the words of Neil Postman) or which manifests consumeristic mass hedonism (as Pier Paolo Passolini put it) and which, at times, will read one paper or another, free or paid for, as long as it is not too boring, too complex, too political or too cultural. This transferral of audiovisual fashions to the written press (paper or digital) is based on the fallacy that information has to be

guided according to what the readers want to read, adapting the social reality to a media one that does not clash with the beliefs (strong or stereotyped) of readers of a certain ideology or sensibility. The model of the American Fox TV channel, with its sectarian journalism, would be the best example on the other side of the Atlantic, just as a well-known radio station or a Madrid newspaper would be quite representative in Spain.

In line with this tendency, a couple of monotheistic religions strive and devote lots of money to own or strengthen media organs of an orthodox spiritual observance. This is so with the new Mohamed VI television channel of the Holy Qu´ran, created in June 2006 in Morocco with the aim of training imams in the mosques, as Koranic radio had done previously. As it is with the project to create a worldwide network of Catholic television stations, resulting from the First Catholic Television Stations Conference held in Madrid in October 2006. Six months later it was made known that the Catholic Church was preparing a sort of papal CNN, multi-channel (TV, Internet, mobile telephones) in six languages and aimed at a potential audience of twenty million. It was named H_2O to symbolise ´purification, salvation and vitality´ and presented as being independent of the Vatican, but with ´the demands of Catholics about the information the Church gives to the world´.

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A hundred years after the reactionary campaigns of the ´go od´ Catholic press that, besides persecuting the plural and democratic European press by all means possible (assemblies, conferences, brief treatises, preaching, demonstrations, instructions in the confession boxes, threats of excommunication, etc.), created a powerful media network to counteract it, the Catholic hierarchy is now not only infiltrated in and possesses many media outlets around the world (similar to the Jewish lobbies), it also wants to have its mega-TV channel *urbi et orbe* like the ones some of the evangelical Churches have.

Obviously, in the Muslim world, the possibilities for good journalism are extremely limited, especially in the audiovisual media. And the great hope of a change in the media scene since the end of 1996, when the Al-Jazeera channel went on air, has received all kinds of pressure, from East to West, precisely for presenting the news rigorously[2]. Its independent, plural nature (the channel´s motto is ´Opinion and Counter Opinion´, and its Arab

[2] El-Nawawy, Mohammed and Adel Iskander, *Al-Jazeera, The Story of the Network that is Rattling Governments and Redefining Modern Journalism*, Cambridge, MA, Westview Press, 2003.

journalists share fifteen different nationalities and orientations) has been acknowledged by fifty million viewers in the Arab countries and, since November 15th 2006, by a billion viewers around the world thanks to its English-speaking international channel (AJI).

From time to time Al-Jazeera has been attacked in order to prevent it reporting. Pressure on the Emir of Qatar from the USA and the Arab regimes; the bombing of its studios in Kabul and Iraq, censorship in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, or the expulsion of its correspondents from different Arab capital cities. Channels have also been created to compete with it, like the BBC´s Arab channel, the American Al-Hurra or the Saudi Al-Arabiyya[3]. Since the early months of 2008, Al-Jazeera has been toning down its language and cutting some reports, besides the two habitual news taboos (Qatar and Saudi Arabia), probably as a result of the agreement between the twenty-two Information Ministers of the Arab League which, at a meeting in Cairo in February 2008, took a firm stand against ´certain satellite channels that have strayed from the right path´.

In this state of affairs it seems that power now lies not so much in information as in misinformation, as Jos´ Vidal-Beneyto explained very well a few years ago:

> Communication has become advertising; and political communication, propaganda. To make this conversion, it was necessary for information to become misinformation, i.e., that the knowledge and transmission of real events would not be possible, because the facts available referred to another reality, produced through falsification. Misinforming is not just informing wrongly or manipulating information; it is imposing certain information, making it impossible for any other to exist offering content different to one´s own. It is a process of gradual falsification that results in a radical falsehood[4].

In the public sphere where the media operates and in its repercussions on public opinion it has often been accepted that power lay in information, but, as I have just pointed out, this has not been the case for quite some time. Therefore, the function of journalism is badly damaged, given that, as Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, two renowned American journalists and current events analysts, explain, ´the main purpose of journalism is to give the people the information they need to be free and capable of governing themselves´[5]. Lately this information malady has got worse, because increasingly ´journalism without information´[6] is the norm, as is demonstrated by an excellent study directed by sociologist F´lix Ortega. Although the investigation refers to Spain, there can be no doubt that many of the ideas and the conclusions reached by these media analysts are habitual in world journalism: journalism from which the information ´the description and explanation of facts and events ´virtually disappears, to be replaced by all kinds of rumour, speculation, distortion, invention and concealment at the service of the self-reproduction of the media in order always to trap the receivers and, on occasions, with unspeakable aims.

Moreover, the loss of quality of the press is generalised, even in much of what has been considered as ´quality press´. This was borne out by Alan Rusbridger, editor of the noted British newspaper *The Guardian*: ´The serious newspapers are dumbing down. Today the trend is to produce a sort of journalism that trivialises reality´[7]. Two days before, the same journalist was talking about how front pages were now designed to attract the readers, and he gave two examples from the serious British press: the front page of *The Times* that ´in the edition of September 27th 2007 ´gave two thirds of the space to the football manager Jos´ Mourinho and he assured that this would have been unthinkable twenty years before, and the front page of the prestigious *The Independent* that sought to attract attention with a story on the front page that had nothing to do with that day´s news[8].

> In this state of affairs it seems that power now lies not so much in information as in misinformation

[3] Lamloum, Olfa, *Al-Jazira, espejo rebelde y ambiguo del mundo ´rabe*, Hacer, Barcelona, 2006.
[4] Vidal-Beneyto, Jos´, ´Las armas de falsedad masiva (I)´, *El Pa´s*, 03/04/2004, p. 4.
[5] Kovach, Bill and Tom Rosenstiel, *Los elementos del periodismo*, Santillana, Madrid, 2003, p. 24.
[6] Ortega, F´lix (coord.), *Periodismo sin informaci–n*, Tecnos, Madrid, 2006.
[7] Statements collected in *El Pa´s*, in a report by M.R.S. from Segovia. ´Los peri–dicos miran hacia Internet´, 30/09/2007, p. 43.
[8] Rusbridger, Alan, editor of *The Guardian* interviewed by Walter Oppenheimer, *El Pa´s* ´London correspondent: "Nunca querremos ser triviales´, 28/09/2007, p. 50.

All this is the consequence ´ in the words of Vargas Llosa´ of the process of *tabloidism* and sensationalism of the press today, ´the cancer of the press, mostly in open societies ´[9]. Previously, the Peruvian writer had remarked that one of the threats facing journalism is that it is becoming entertainment, and he added: ´A lot of the media has lightened and dumbed down its content, as the only way of winning over or keeping readers. I think this is very dangerous. If journalism becomes mere entertainment, it abdicates ´[10]. This deterioration, nevertheless, also derives from the conditions journalists have to work under, as Ignacio Sotelo points out: ´the increasingly small editorial offices and the low salaries are reflected in the quality of the press, which, by losing credibility and interest, loses readers ´[11].

THE COLLATERAL DAMAGE OF DEVALUED JOURNALISM

Beyond technological changes, the result of the spread of the digital press via Internet and the proliferation of well-made free newspapers, the depreciation of the financial investment in journalism has for years been bringing about a severe re-structuring of the sector. And the newspaper owners, as if inspired by Robert E. Park´s Ń atural History of the Newspaper ´ (1923), according to which the newspaper, rather than an institution is a living organism fighting to exist, to adapt, which seeks to raise sales figures by attracting attention: doing whatever is necessary in order to survive. In this doing and undoing, however, they forget that the press, information, is not simple merchandise: it is not just a social institution but a public asset necessary for social progress and for democracy. As a result, the bad use of information corrodes civic attitudes and degenerates social life.

In June 2007, the News Corporation group, owned by the Australian magnate Rupert Murdoch, announced the sacking of 90 journalists from his four British newspapers in order to reduce costs. This affected 6.5% of the staff of *The Times, The Sunday Times, The News of the World* and *The Sun,* which together employ almost 1,400 journalists. In February 2008 *The New York Times*, which employs 750 journalists, decided to cut its staff by a hundred, although the publishing company that owns the paper ẃhic h also owns the *Boston Globe* and the *International Herald Tribune* ´mad e after-tax profits of 143 million euro, despite a 4.7% drop in sales of its papers. And in April 2008, the *Le Monde* group announced that 85 out of 320 journalists would be leaving the editorial department of this French paper, which had already made staff cuts three years previously. To fight against this re-structuring, the workers at *Le Monde* went on strike for a few days, which prevented the paper from coming out.

Perhaps the first notable professional opposition to these staff cutbacks on major newspapers in this century, without sufficient justification and hiding behind the crisis, was by Dean Baquet, editor of *The Los Angeles Times*. This respected intelligent journalist,

[9] Vargas Llosa, Mario, Él cuarto poder ´, *El Pa´s*, 04/05/2008, p. 33.
[10] Highlighted in *El Pa´s*, with the sub-heading Ĺ os retos de Vargas Llosa ´, in the report by Lali Cambra, from Cape Town, Ĺa d ifusi–n de peri–dicos en el mundo creci— un 2,3% en 2006 ´, published in the edition of 05/06/2007.
[11] Sotelo, Ignacio, Él desplome del cuarto poder ´, *El Pa´s*, 02/11/2007, p. 10.
[12] Report by Carlos Rajo, from Los Angeles, in *El Pa´s*: Él director de *Los Angeles Times*, despedido por oponerse a un recorte de la plantilla ´, 09/11/2006, p. 40.
[13] Umberto Eco interviewed by Juan Cruz in *El Pa´s Semanal*, no. 1644, photograph by Jordi Soc´as: É l que se sienta totalmente feliz es un cretino ´, 30/03/08, pp. 46 and 47.

the winner of a Pulitzer Prize in his early days as a reporter, was fired in November 2006 as editor of the California paper for standing up to the cutting of a hundred full-time jobs and, moreover, going public with it. The managing director, who supported Baquet, was also fired some days later. Baquet expressed his outspoken views until the very last moment: standing on his desk, he bade farewell to his colleagues with these words: Ý ou have the creativity, the intelligence, the courage and the will to take risks to continue to make the newspaper even better than it is now ´[12].

In open progressive societies, informative-communicative wellbeing is essential for social development and the advance of deliberative democracy

The risks of the drop in informative quality, for some of the principal reasons mentioned, besides information that at times is not information, but misinformation or triviality, implies serious problems that have also made the Italian linguist, literary critic, novelist and essayist Umberto Eco reflect on today´s ín formation and knowledge ´ society:

> The abundance of information about the present does not allow one to reflect on the past. [É] The abundance of information about the present is a loss not a gain. [É] One of today´s problems is the abundance of irrelevant information and the difficulty of selecting it [É] The newspapers have lots of pages, not much information. On the same topic there are four articles possibly saying the sameÉ There exists the abundance of information, but also the abundance of the same information. [É] We turn to Internet to read the most important news. The information in the newspapers will be increasingly irrelevant, amusement rather than information.[13]

In open progressive societies, informative-communicative wellbeing is essential for social development and the advance of deliberative democracy. Just as in the new society ó f globalized economy and worldwide culture ít is absolutely necessary to go for innovation, in the sphere of journalism innovation *has* to mean the quality of the information. In order for this to be qualitatively interesting from a social point of view it has to be useful, relevant (not to be confused with boring), i.e., it has to help to explain our complex world. Moreover, the kind of journalism that seems to be gaining ground is not sufficiently inclined ń otable exceptions aside ´to the quality of the information (the selection of a few crucial issues treated *glocally* [globally and locally at the same time] with revealing pleasantness), but to a saturation of *glamorous* or coarse trivia, kindly inviting us to participate in almost puerile fashion: ć omment on the news ´, ś end an SMS ´, v́ ote for an issue ´, t́e ll us your story Ë All in all it seems that we enjoy playing more, participating to little effect, than demanding useful information that favours individual and collective knowledge, without realising too much that the quality of the information is by now a new public right

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Ramon Folch

Socio-ecology and sustainability

THE FACTS AND REALITY

The experiment is easy and extremely enlightening. It consists in standing anywhere in a square or in a particular building and taking a few photos, in different directions and at different moments; later, repeating the operation from a couple of other positions; and finally, comparing the photos. The place can usually be identified, of course, but all the photos are different, sometimes very different. It is clear that the position and the moment of observation are crucial. Different components appear in each photo and even the common elements are seen differently in them, from another angle, related to other things, re-ordered with respect to other shots likewise shared and similarly re-positioned. The experiment is an anamorphism of perceptive reality. Better still: it is a fragment of reality itself.

´The facts are the facts, but reality is the way we perceive them´. The observation is by Albert Einstein. Reality is the perception of the facts. The facts are retained in the photographic series, but no two photos are alike. How many realities are there in the same photographed square? As many as there are observers and moments. Yet we often confuse the timelessness of static elements with a supposed uniqueness of the photographed object. The confusion leads us to believe that the precise idea of our perception of the facts is identified with

Landscape VI (Paisatge VI), Jaume Plensa (2008). Mixed media and collage on paper, 220 x 200 cm

the univocal description of reality, of a single supposed objective reality. At this point, disagreement among observers is inevitable.

The pigeonholing of knowledge makes the subject more complex. It means that the cameras we use to take the photos with are not the same either. Specialisation is not an aim of science, but a limitation of the scientists. But the specialised scientists ´ namely, the great majority ´p erceive their limited sectorial knowledge as an added value, so much so that they are suspicious of the knowledge of others, which they find biased or insufficient, without realising that this is also the case with them. The scope of knowledge is growing all the time and encyclopaedism has for decades, maybe centuries, been utopian. Utopian, but by no means undesirable. Encyclopaedism continues to be the ideal condition of the expert, but minimal levels of specialisation are the only possible horizon. Specialisation is merely a forced limitation, a limitation that the specialist usually mistakes for solidity.

All in all, these are not epistemologically minor matters. On the contrary, they are primordial, as the socio-scientific discourse is based on inventoried realities. The facts are barely raw material. The true story is constructed with perceived realities, as many as there are observers.

TO LEARN IS TO CHANGE

The fundamentalisms refute this evidence. Or rather: they do not even consider it. Fundamentalisms reiterate the unidirectional observation of certain static facts, always the same ones, an observation that they raise to the condition of sole truth. It is a very poor way of looking, of course. For fundamentalists, reality is something pre-established, often compiled in some scripture more or less revealed of which one only has to be the keeper or, at most, the exegete. Fundamentalists consider very few facts always looked at in the same way. They tautologically visit the same spaces over and again until they make intellectual cacophony their supposed coherence. But they are not coherent, they are redundant.

The fundamentalist does not learn. By definition. To learn means to change. Change is the expression of coherence with an open and receptive attitude. People who do not change do not necessarily show coherence. They often show inability. The inability to learn from mistakes or, simply, from the new provocations of changing reality. An inability that, as it is so profound, is often disguised as virtue, the only way of seeing faults in the ductility of those who learn.

Learning entails changing the sides taken. It is more comfortable to reaffirm oneself in them (in the name of supposed coherence, naturally). Thus, the 19th century idea of the selfish cruel businessman who exploits a good and supportive proletariat continues to provide mental comfort to certain analysts. Things have changed a lot in two hundred years, but perceptions slanted through the filters of prejudice generate dreamlike realities that get in the way of seeing real facts. These days there is greatness and wretchedness in both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, supposing the boundary between them is clear. Through mental inertia, the fundamentalists transfer the historical rejection of bourgeois selfishness to all modern business activity. The truth is that there is now more creativity

and a sense of responsibility among newly created businessmen ḿan y of whom are the grandchildren of proletarians t́han among certain overprotected salary-earning sectors, with untouchable acquired rights and gauzy obligations. But it is the wish of fundamentalism that, if there are social or environmental problems, the traditionally evil sectors are necessarily guilty of them. Needless to say, the fundamentalists on the other side, with the same stubborn attitude, reach opposite and equally simplistic conclusions.

Sustainabilist ideas are born in this perceptive moment, so confusing. Although they stem from different areas of society, they have taken root especially strongly in environmentalist sectors. Sustainabilism is based on the well-known triangle of environment-society-economy, but in the eyes of many it still represents another version of ecologism. This is not true. Indeed, ecological fundamentalism is clashing increasingly violently with sustainabilist holism. Conversely, more advanced and ductile ecologism is these days expressed almost exclusively through sustainabilism. It might be said that ecologism capable of learning considers more and more events in their perceptive template, which distances it from profound ecologism which, according to the expression of its chief ideologue, t́hin ks like a mountain ́. Mountains neither perceive nor think.

> Through mental inertia, the fundamentalists transfer the historical rejection of bourgeois selfishness to all modern business activity

Whether one has arrived at sustainabilism through environmental reflection, through sociological considerations or through economic verifications, global thinking eventually prevails among its followers. This is why sustainabilism, which is holistic, many-sided and globalising, is presented as a new cultural dimension.

THE NEW SUSTAINABILIST CULTURE

The concept ń ew culture ́ has triumphed. In no time we have got used to talking of the new culture of water, the new culture of energy, etc. We ought surely to be calling them new subcultures of the new culture of sustainability. In effect, they are successful sectorial developments, born in the shadow of a powerful trigger, which only become fully meaningful in the framework of a more global context, that of sustainabilist culture.

There have never been as many cultural orders in the history of mankind as now. A cultural order is more or less a template of values that hierarchises objectives and priorities, in such a way that it generates a specific way of understanding life. The concept of sustainability, by incorporating diachrony into synchronic options (the future is managed with the options of the present), shakes up the social and economic order that has been in force for centuries and, therefore, fully deserves the term new culture. These things only happen from time to time.

The new sustainabilist culture is a great upheaval, in effect. It means that our actions have to be compatible with the synchronic management of global space and with the

> The reactionary sector of the ecologist movement, which exists and does not cease to make itself heard, will never be sustainabilist

diachronic management of future reality. Sustainability radically changes the spatial and temporal scale of actions, therefore it internalises consequences hitherto not taken into account. This does not have much to do with supposed balances and harmonies of allegedly wise natures. The reactionary sector of the ecologist movement, which exists and does not cease to make itself heard, will never be sustainabilist. When it says balance, it thinks immobility. Sustainabilism is not founded on Newtonian balance, but on Prigoginian stability. Sustainability is a global culture, of biospheric scope án d therefore internalising and supportive th at champions dissipative structures in an immobile state. Technical terms apart, this means that it assumes responsibilities, takes care of everything and does whatever is necessary thinking of the future.

Trying to understand it with the old tools is pointless. It is precisely for this reason that it is a new culture. We have to educate so that everyone may be aware of it, then. Repeating normal science will not get us very far. It would be like explaining electricity with mechanical concepts. The phenomenon of electricity posed the need for a n ew culture and so the operators of levers, connecting rods and cogwheels could not understand it without first recycling themselves. You do not get as far as computers or television by deepening knowledge of the steam engineÉ

Sustainabilism has to give battle on three conceptual fronts: those of the defenders of the old order, those frightened by the new order, and those indifferent to any order. Together, they are the majority, and therefore we sustainabilists are in the minority. For the time being, of course. The tables will turn sooner or later, I think, because they have no alternative. Because of the facts, I mean. The new preachers of sustainabilism, like all evangelists, seek conversions through grace. I do not believe in that. I believe in disappointment in the face of the useless old paradigm and in the robust proposition. I believe in the exhaustion of oil and in determinist chaos, namely, the pressure of need and the subverting force of trustworthy ideas.

The unbearable nature of the growing unsustainability will soon lead us to look up into the sky. What will there be to see, however? Slogans won t be enough. Purposeful sustainabilist theses will be necessary, capable of designing a new way of being and doing a n ew culture that w orks without differentials and externalisations, that sees in growth a circumstantial ally, bounded in time, and which cares more about making friends than defeating enemies. All this has to be taught, which is much more than simply preaching it.

And, firstly, it has to be studied. Religious beliefs may be the result of timely revelations k nowledge is not. In dreams no equations appear. Sustainabilism stems from the need the failure of old-industrialist developmentalism b ut it prevails from the standpoint of the reasonable proposition. Educating means transmitting wisdom. Nursery schools and the university should get on with it straight away. From ABC to the

doctoral thesis: a long road. And don´t forget that we begin to unlearn as soon as we stop learning. Wisdom and goodness are like lukewarm water: they easily go cold.

THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

Some have got this far starting from socio-ecological considerations. Socio-ecology is more or less a still ethereal branch of ecology that incorporates social and economic considerations to the study of the environmental reality. Or, perhaps, a branch of sociology that takes the systemic naturalistic view for the study of social and economic phenomena. Or neither of the two. It could be considered as a holistic approach to the study of the socio-economic and environmental whole. In other words, a trans-disciplinary discipline ´n ice paradox´ that tries to understand things before wishing to explain them, interested in people´s relationships with the natural surroundings and with one another. It would be one of the thinking arms of sustainabilism.

Though still in an incipient phase of formalisation, socio-ecology is science, not religious belief. It therefore learns, it therefore doubts. Religions limit themselves to teaching, without learning (they already think they have God-given knowledge). Socio-ecology is a possible future science, at least a scientific discipline, the result of the synthesis of knowledge and experiences that, in the light of some basic information provided by the natural sciences, aspires to give meaning and to find explanations for quite a few situations dealt with empirically by the social sciences. The interest of the socio-ecological approach lies in the making of explanations of synthesis, not of mere additive apposition, of the contributions of the various sectorial agents, fragmentary due to their renowned respective methodological shortcomings. Environmental problems are incomprehensible in the light just of ecological science, which has not been conceived to explain the behaviour of the social agents that trigger and fuel these disputes. The ways of economics and sociology, in turn, are scientific, but their working material is made up of conventions with no physical pre-existence and by subjective processes, and therefore unsuited as a safe scientific point of reference. Thus the need to resolve positions and to go for the holistic approach advocated by socio-ecology.

> The interest of the socio-ecological approach lies in the making of explanations of synthesis, not of mere additive apposition of fragments

Algorithmics is often confused with heuristics and the multi-disciplinary with holism. Algorithmics arrives at solutions by applying previously established efficient formulae, algorithms. Thus, for example, we only have to apply the algorithm of the square root to the surface of a square to know exactly and for certain the length of its sides. Technologists are typical algorithmists who base their gradual professional competence on the mastery of a growing number of suitable algorithms. For them, knowing equals having prior knowledge of solutions. Scientific research, conversely, is heuristic, i. e.,

it applies the method of trial, error and correction to make progress in knowledge. It does not apply formulae, but makes tests, from which it concludes provisional algorithms based on which it carries out new tentative trials. Indeed, algorithms come from heuristics (someone established them at some previous moment by way of trial and error and checks), but they are not substitutes for it. Socio-environmental problems can only be tackled reliably by applying the heuristic process and from a holistic point of view. This is what socio-ecology hopes to do.

Whoever casts their eyes towards the ecologists in search of solutions to the problems of the environment will most probably find unsatisfactory answers, then. Ecologists can ẃ e ecologists can, I should say ć ontribute to a large extent to the correct establishment of the diagnoses, but I doubt that our knowledge and skills are any more than purely instrumental, or lie below a generically strategic level, when the time comes for therapeutic design. We are more forensic scientists than orthopaedic surgeons. Because, in the end, ecological problems do not exist: what there are, and there are lots, are socio-environmental problems. This is why socio-ecology makes so much sense. The socio-ecological approach, almost certainly, can contribute to the understanding and overcoming of socio-environmental disputes that, while not being ecological problems as such, usually generate serious dysfunctions in the environment.

The socio-ecological approach clearly shows that socio-environmental problems are quite a lot more than pollution and other similar nuisances that worry the more developed countries. From the opulence in which we live, we Westerners usually have a very slanted perception of global environmental events. Our culture of global economic conquest prevents us from seeing the environment as a whole, a dramatic paradox with serious consequences. However, the irruption of climate change has begun to modify this perception, as for the first time an environmental problem is to all intents and purposes perceived as global. Habitually, though, by getting our little or large environmental inconveniences mixed up with the real problems, we tend to lose sight of the fundamental question: how are environmental resources captured, used and controlled on a world scale and what is the balance of all this in planetary terms? The socio-ecological approach invites the global view and shows, among other things, that the main socio-environmental problem is famine and poverty, the most important and authentic weapon of mass destruction. Socio-ecology shows that globalisation is a characteristic of the biosphere, and that this term cannot be applied, as it usually is, to the global conquest of captive markets. The globalisation of the local economic strategies of some is not the globalisation of the economy, but its chief enemy. If economic activity were really globalised, as the biospheric strategy is, diversity and fairness would follow.

Socio-environmental problems can only be tackled reliably by applying the heuristic process and from a holistic point of view

All this is in line with a process of dialectic tension between thought and action. A tension that comes from way back, associated as it has been to all human activity ever since humans began thinking and acting. Thought is either critical or it is not thought, while action either overcomes the criticism to construct positively or it is not really action. One cannot think without acting, but one cannot act suitably without having thought. The ecologists´ motto of ´thin k globally and act locally´ without doubt shares these principles. Principles that confer on socio-ecology a certain added ideological value.

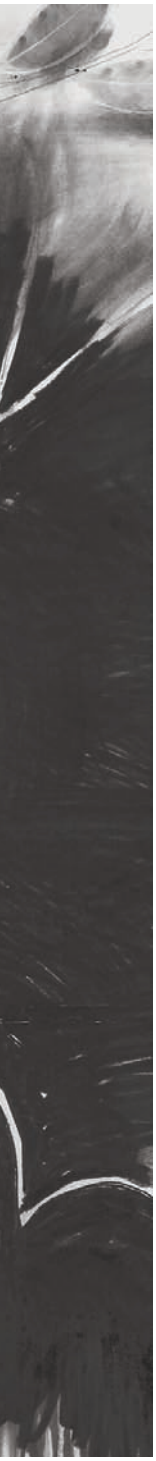
SOCIO-ECOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT

Socio-ecology would therefore be one of the tools of sustainabilist thinking, and ecological knowledge one of the instruments of socio-ecology. Socio-ecology would make it possible to give sustainabilism an environmental project, plus ideas about the environment. The project is an apt techno-scientific invention that marries thought with action. Humanist science understands and explains; the techno-sciences construct new realities from knowledge. The environment is a construct that has to be planned, and this is where ecological fundamentalism gets it wrong, mixing up the environment with the biophysical template, a biophysical template that it dreamt of as intangible without realising that for centuries it has been transformed almost everywhere.

The biophysical template is the bioclimatic, geomorphologic, hydro-geologic and eco-systemic elements. Human activities situated on this biophysical template interact with one another in such a way that they generate effects by addition-juxtaposition, repetition, fragmentation, reversion, interconnection, etc. Therefore, without limiting oneself to it, one should never lose sight of the biophysical template when conceiving the environmental project, because its response is not always the same depending on the pre-existences, the capabilities and the limitations that transformation itself imposes on it. Knowing and acknowledging the possibilities and limitations of the biophysical template as a premise is a prime component for the sustainabilist environmental project.

For centuries, the biophysical template imposed itself on humans. It seemed infinite and all-powerful. Today, in general lines, most templates are subjugated, encrypted beneath much-changed environments, so much so that geographical unevenness is perceived as no more than a constructive nuisance that has to be removed by bridges, tunnels or corrective land lowering. What began as the timid transformation of an immense complex template has become a banal and apparently autonomous activity. Likewise, the economic thinking of the 19th and 20th centuries considered that the biophysical template was beyond economic processes, so much so that some of their productively essential components (water, soil, climate, etc.) were unimportant free assets. However, and today more than ever, these supposedly secondary factors have enormous value (climate change, falling resources, forest fires, floodingÉ).

The result of the interrelationships between the biophysical template and the changes in human activity is the environmental template, and the landscape is one of the chief expressions of these interrelationships. The correct sequence of the process would be: template (pre-human landscape), discreet transformation of the biophysical template into the environmental template or territorial space (humanised landscape), profound



and even harmful transformation of the template into an unstable territory (degraded landscape), prudent commitment to change and management (landscape wisely humanised). We have to think about getting over the penultimate stage, in order to enter the last one decisively.

The permanent dialogue between the biophysical conditioners and the strategies for transformation means that the environmental template is neither permanent nor immutable

The permanent dialogue between the biophysical conditioners and the strategies for transformation mean that the environmental template is neither permanent nor immutable. Changes in the dominant uses of the territory, the juxtaposition of networks, profound environmental (from a water modifications pipeline to the forced regeneration of an aquifer) generate a new environmental template that interacts differently with the new proposals for organisation. The environmental template, therefore, presents variable pre-existences with different levels of consolidation, which generates a complex system, not immutable, with differing degrees of freedom, which has to be learnt about and integrated into the origin of the spatial decisions.

Up to now, and with the odd exception, the environmental template has been a mere consequence. The transformation has been planned, but not the environmental results of the transformation. The environmental template was ís ́the result of transforming the previous template, but by no means an objective to achieve deliberately. Having a particular environmental template, configured this way or that, is not yet an aim of the project. Certain schools propose it and advance in this line of planning the new environmental template along with the constructive projects, but they are still the exception. In any case, the land is the result of transforming the biophysical template. Advanced territories are always highly transformed territories, but this human transformation, no matter how intense it is, cannot overlook the previous reality of the basic template. It is elementary evidence too often overlooked.

Knowing and recognising the possibilities and limitations of the biophysical template is a prime component of the sustainabilist environmental project. The transformations only become a problem when there is no project or when the project is unsuitable. Then the environmental dysfunctions appear: unwanted flooding, loss or contamination of water resources, erosion and soil loss, difficulties for ecological connectivity, atmospheric or water pollution, squandering of renewable or non-renewable resourcesÉ

THE PRESCRIPTION OF OPINION AND CHANGE IN THE MEDIA

The sustainabilist project cannot progress without minimal levels of social agreement; it has to be understood and shared by quite large sectors of the population receiving it. At the present time this requires the active participation of the media. The problem is that the media is motivated by a different logic. Ť he channels transmit images without analysing their causes. War has become a soap opera. [É] It is not the time to stay silent. Subversive work has to be done against the simplification of this audiovisual war machine that bombards us without explaining anything to us, which merely creates emotions, saying that the Israelis are angelic and the Palestinians savage, and vice versa ́. These are the words of the Israeli filmmaker Amos Gitai (*El Peri—dio*, 24/07/06). He is so right. This is not the time to keep quiet or talk rubbish, now that so many with nothing to say fill the emptiness of their ideas with words.

We are living in an age of trivialisation of complex things. Complex issues do not become simple through banal explanations. Simplicity in the face of complexity leads straight to confusion. Banalised complexity becomes mere impoverishing complication. In this way, a way of thinking is installed, schematic and at the same time confused, that does not allow us to understand anything. In fact, this way we do not install a way of thinking, but a way of not thinking. The situation gets even more complicated when confused ideas are accompanied by a lot of deceptively clarifying images, the reason why bad television distorts even more than bad newspaper reporting. Amos Gitai was referring to this: a few tanks, a few explosions, a few dead or wounded and a couple of statements by victims on either side that provide emotion without judgement. That is going nowhere. This is why ś ubversive work ́ has to be done to stand up to agnostic simplicity disguised as informative impartiality (as if impartiality were possible, by the way, or as if impartiality equalled truthÉ).

It is true that a certain society of knowledge is emerging, but it is even more so that a society of ignorance has already emerged. Before, ignorance was administered in silence; now, it is proudly proclaimed. Before, ignorance was assumed in silence, an act of humility that never came out (and which for this reason was socially so important). Now, ignorance is an aggressive cultural form, the culture of ignorance. Legions of ignoramuses socialise their lack of knowledge and contribute to installing a state of general ignorance in which wisdom is a nuisance and humility is frowned upon.

Knowing is hard. Informing with good judgement demands depth and knowledge. In a television news programme a farmer appears, replacing his dry-field crops with solar panels. ´It ś easy and the kilowatts fall off the trees ´, he says hopefully. Not a single comment by the reporter, no questions about the phenomenon. Nobody explains that the photovoltaic kilowatt is heavily subsidised and that herein to a large extent lies the false profit this good fellow will make. No one wonders if that farmer is qualified, just like that, to all at once become an energy operator. What social mutation, for better or for worse, will this territorial transformation bring about that, overnight, goes from the most traditional primary to a post-industrial tertiarised secondary? Nothing, no comment or reflection.

When I mention it, my colleagues in the media look at me gone out; they have already given the news ímp artially ́, they ask me what I ́m talking about. Well I ́m talking about

not confusing news with information and not passing information off as knowledge. Because before the wheat field turned into a solar power station they have given the local news of the day: summer electricity consumption has never been so high, so much so that Catalonia already exceeds 8,000 Mw of instant demand (in Spain it already exceeds 40,000 Mw). A FECSA-ENDESA director declares that this is not good, because later society will not want to assume the obligations inherent in this crazy demand (more generating stations, new lines, transformer stations, etc.). These are sensational declarations, coming from someone who makes his living from selling electricity, but they do not arouse any truly informative reaction. They are placed in the block of news items ímp artially´ that is, without any judgement or perception of their importance án d thus contribute to consolidating an audiovisual press that límit s itself to creating emotions, which bombards us without explaining anything to us´, as Amos Gitai says.

This trivialisation of information is not the preserve of any specific channel or any particular newspaper. It is a general phenomenon that seems to be a sign of the times: large media companies available to all audiences to block up all the minds, incapable of swallowing and processing so much raw data. We must not forget that informing is teaching and that teaching entails selecting. The teacher chooses and establishes a hierarchy, because he knows and, above all, because he knows how to know. We need *ma"tres penser* and, even more, preceptors with judgement. It has to be said, because it is not a time to remain silent. If something can be explained, it has to be explained clearly, which is the opposite of banalisation.

> The situation gets even more complicated when confused ideas are accompanied by a lot of deceptively clarifying images, the reason why bad television distorts even more than bad newspaper reporting

To be precise, complex phenomena can and must be clearly explained, like the issue of energy and its economic and socio-environmental dimension, because complexity is the chief characteristic of the times we are living through. If there really is nothing to say, it is time to talk. It is time to explain complexity simply, so that it does not become simplified complication. If not, we shall only be socialising ignorance.

Indeed, a solid socialisation of ignorance is advancing implacably that could end up plunging us into a state of collective mental mineralisation. On one hand, fewer people know more things, while on the other, more people know less and above all, embrace the culture of ignorance, that complacent state of permissive intellectual anaesthesia that mistakes the abundance of data with the increase of knowledge and opinion with judgement. In a sea of trivial opinions the few reliable criteria are shipwrecked, in a society that legitimises ignorance if it gets big enough audience ratings.

Climate change has arrived in the media, but media change has not yet arrived in society. Information, already profuse and diffuse enough, is even more confused. A particular municipality in Catalonia unveiled a photovoltaic power generating plant at the

beginning of 2007. The media expressed the people´s satisfaction because, at last, the streets were lit at night. The fact is that the good street lighting came from the renewal that had also been made of the lampposts, which, as is well known, work at night and, therefore, with energy not generated by the solar panels. During the day the photovoltaic power plant sends electricity to the grid, energy that is bought at a price three to five times higher than the average price the customers pay (the law stipulates this) by the same company that, at night, lights the town at a normal price. The cost of installing the plant, moreover, was to a large extent subsidised by the Catalan or Spanish government. Thanks to all this, the town council in question will *only* take twenty years to pay for the operation.

> Without media change we won't halt climate change. Sustainabilist ideas, by definition based on the forced rigorous subversion of obsolete paradigms, cannot do much in this context of banality and trivialisation

This brilliant deal for the town council, greeted with enthusiasm by the press, is a socio-economic rip-off. Direct or indirect subsidies of this kind may help a town council, but they are no solution to general problems. I wonder why the press does not clearly expose these things and why it does not explain that, if everyone acted like this council, general public budgets would go broke, prices would go mad, the landscape would be covered in photovoltaic cells and at night we would all be in the dark.

The energy the world consumes is, for the moment, over 85% fossil fuel (coal, oil and gas). It is running out, at least the oil. A considerable part of the remaining 15% is nuclear fission. Nor do we have much uranium. The current climate change, incipient for decades (an illness diagnosed some time ago, but without painful symptoms until now) is caused by the burning of these dwindling fossil fuels. Renewable energies barely supply 10% of the demand, and to think that they will get much beyond covering 20 or 25% of it in the future is very optimistic, unless this demand drops drastically. Nuclear fusion will not arrive for twenty or thirty years, if it arrives at all. This is the panorama. It is not news, but it is information of prime importance.

Prime, indeed. Quantitative growth as a motor of the economy is now an idea of the past and an impossibility in the future. What do we do? Increasing efficiency is as necessary as it is insufficient. It serves to gain time. But, to what use will we put the time gained? To changing, there is no alternative. To conceiving and executing the Post-Industrial Revolution, while with the other hand we try to get by with nuclear fusion. All this is more like news, I find. Above all, though, it is a great concept. It would be fantastic if the press recovered its opinion. Its judgement, rather. If it reduced the news and re-centred the concepts. It would not be erudition, it would be culture.

Water pours out of the tanks, whether they are full or whether there is only a drop left in the bottom. Suddenly they dry up. What news, then! And what an avoidable drama.

This is why I am more worried about media change than climate change. The change in the media that has not quite arrived, I mean. Because without media change we will not halt climate change. Sustainabilist ideas, by definition based on the forced rigorous subversion of obsolete paradigms, cannot do much in this context of banality and trivialisation. I therefore believe that we have to begin to reverse it as soon as possible. It is a cultural necessity. Or social. And if it is socio-cultural, it is also economic.

SUSTAINABILISM AND THE WELFARE STATE

According to a Buddhist maxim, happiness is the absence of desire. The greatest unhappiness of all, then, would be pressing unattainable desire. As I see it, this is very close to the state of anguished dissatisfaction in which modern Western society lives, above all the generations born from the seventies onwards. No one has ever had so much in the history of mankind, and no one has ever considered himself more unfairly treated. I believe that their feeling of frustration is deep and sincere. They have a lot, but they feel that they lack a lot more. Therefore, they feel they do not have enough. Dissatisfaction is the distance between what one has and what one wants to have. It does not depend on what and how much one has, but on what and how much one feels one needs and still does not have. They are the generations subjectively most dissatisfied in history, although, objectively, they possess the most goods and securities. The fact is they have a lot; their perceptive reality is that they do not have what they would like. Once again, reality is not the facts, but the perception.

This feeling of dissatisfaction does not affect just the young. In fact, it has taken hold in almost all age groups in developed societies. Government is therefore becoming increasingly difficult. It is increasingly difficult for social and economic roles to go together. Governments, businesses, schools, NGOs and citizens are undermining each other´s authority instead of making progress in the complementary nature of their respective functions. It all stems from the insatiable wish to have more, incompatible with any reasonable socio-environmental project and with any minimally equitable socio-economic approach on a global scale. Therefore, with gentleness and firmness, the advisability of managing the demand has to be explained.

For decades f orever, actually ´the productive sector and the regulating public bodies have made efforts to guarantee supply. Their concern, in their own interest or in the interests of the group, has been to satisfy the citizens´demand, a demand which, on the other hand, they themselves often stimulated (advertising is no more than a stimulus to demand, as is also the repeated promotion of socio-economic models based on continued quantitative growth). All of them, either exploiting a universe of needs or guaranteeing their own satisfaction, have put all their efforts into producing and supplying, managing the supply in the best possible way.

The gradual scarcity of certain basic resources (fossil fuels, fresh water according to where, coastline, etc.), plus the unmanageable accumulation of waste products (local pollution, excess CO_2, in the atmosphere, etc.) hinders this traditional strategy of expanding supply indefinitely. The management of the supply will have to be substituted by the management of the demand, namely, going from ´ho w much I ask for ´ to

´how much I have´. It is not so difficult to imagine. In fact, everyone practises management of demand in their household economy, adjusted to the availability marked by the salary or the space they have.

In the opulent Western welfare state, management of demand does not have to lead to sizeable restrictions in the meeting of needs. Quite the contrary: it will probably be the only way of guaranteeing them. This apparent paradox is easy to explain: our system of production and consumption is dominated by waste and inefficiency. A very considerable part of the resources consumed do not meet any needs. The lights on in empty rooms or incandescent light bulbs that give more heat than light are examples of this situation. Turning off these unnecessary lights (waste) and replacing the incandescent light bulbs (inefficiency) would lead to satisfying the same needs that are actually satisfied now with a reduction of the resources used. The management of demand has a lot of room for manoeuvre among us then before introducing any limitation in the expectations of service received.

The management of demand will be crucial to the ´new welfare culture´. The new welfare state, which already has what it needs, has to learn to identify what it does not need. The socio-ecological project can help. Only this way will speaking of sustainability make any sense II

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Damià Pons

May 1968 in France:
Just another episode in an intense decade

With the exception of those periods of history in which some event of great tragic magnitude or a profound upheaval of the structures of society took place (for example, the two World Wars in the 20th century or the French or Russian Revolutions), it might not be at all easy to find another decade in history that concentrated as many important events as those to be found in the sixties.

Making no attempt to be exhaustive, let us remember that in Africa during the sixties some twenty-five new countries were created; that the Catholic Church held the Second Vatican Council; that in the USA the coloured population managed to get a series of civil rights legally recognised for itself that had traditionally been denied them; that against the backdrop of a very tense Cold War situation, conflicts between the two sides increased even more in different parts of the world (Cuba, Vietnam, the building of the Berlin Wall); that the attempt to gradually democratise a Communist regime, the Czechoslovakian, ended in the repressive intervention of the Warsaw Pact troops; that in South and Central America there was a radicalisation of positions that oscillated at its most extreme poles between American interventionism and armed revolutionary movements; that in the Middle East the war between Israel and the Arab world again degenerated into a situation of open warfare; that in democratic Western Europe the dictatorships in Spain and Portugal still survived, moreover in a comfortable position of international respectability, and that in Greece the army colonels had the audacity to perpetrate a coup d´´tat; that in Mao´s China the so-called Cultural Revolution took place, which, from a distance and from a contemporary perspective, it was not at all easy to make sense of; that the USSR and the USA embarked, for reasons of military interest and political prestige, upon a technologically spectacular space race, from Gagarin´s first orbit of the planet to Armstrong´s first small step on the moon.

The sixties produced, moreover, a very considerable series of legendary images, profoundly representative of certain attitudes to life or new situations in the spheres of politics, the cinema, music, religion or social customs, quickly becoming omnipresent icons in that society which, with the introduction of television to most homes in the West, for the first time managed to create a referential set of images on a global scale. The faces of John F. Kennedy, Pope John XXIII, Martin Luther King, Che Guevara or Mao Zedong; the images of Marilyn Monroe, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones or James Bond; the scenes of the assassination of Kennedy, or the dead body of Che, or the first man setting foot on the moon, or the naked girl running terrified along a road in Vietnam after being burnt by napalm, or the mini-skirt made popular by Mary Quant, or the appearance of the bikini on Mediterranean beaches, or the increase in the use of trousers in women´s clothingÉ To this whole series of things and events, we could add a great deal more: the appearance of the hippie movement, with their surprising look of loose, flowing flower-patterned clothes and their rejection of the capitalist urban lifestyle; the birth-control pill making its appearance on the market; the major massively-attended gatherings, whether protesting about the Vietnam War or standing up for equal rights for coloured people or going to rock and folk music festivals; the moral legalisation of drug-taking among certain sectors of the young; the performance of the first heart transplant operation; the citizens of Prague defying the Soviet tanksÉ

> The nineteen sixties were certainly intense and turbulent, years of furious historic agitation

Some of the things I have just listed, and which had an obvious impact and influence all over the West, produced toned-down or delayed effects in the Catalan-speaking countries due to the filters that the ideological and moral censors of the Francoist regime had in place with the aim of hampering their reception. Therefore, it was not until the early seventies that most of them actually made an appearance in this country. Also, in our context, of a well-consolidated dictatorship and unqualified national oppression, the priorities for change necessarily had far more specific and basic objectives: on one hand, political democracy; on the other, the legal acknowledgement and social normalisation of the Catalan language, culture and identity. In the sixties there were many initiatives all over the Catalan-speaking Countries ń eedless to say varying according to the territory ́that tr ied above all to make such elementary and undeniably reasonable aspirations come true. Among the most aware and most active university students, in Barcelona, Valencia and Palma, quite different things were perceived as equally desirable, in a synthesis of anti-Francoism, the assertion of identity and participation from a peripheral position in the wave of nonconformity among the young people in the West born after the Second World War: the rejection of the dictatorship and the demand for political freedoms; but also the reading of *Nosaltres els valencians* or *Els mallorquins* and at the same time of the founding or informative texts of the ideologies prohibited by the political system then in power; and participation in the campaigns promoting Catalan and the enthusiastic attendance at *Nova Can*— concerts; and the rejection of the structural authoritarianism that still mostly characterised the family or the schools;

and the sympathy with the struggles of the countries in the so-called Third World against imperialism; and the songs of the Beatles and Joan Baez or Bob Dylan; and the adoption of a deliberately garish outward appearance and the passion for the ń ew cinemas ´ in the art-house cinemas; and the idea of the university and students as a sort of avant-garde that had the historic duty to promote a great liberating catharsisÉ

The nineteen sixties were certainly intense and turbulent, years of furious historic agitation. And yet, we should perhaps ask ourselves whether the events I have just referred to really were the most substantial of the period, those that most deeply affected the profound structure of Western societies. Or whether perhaps the changes that in the long run would be more decisive and long-lasting took place hidden from view, without making a fuss, as if their silent nature did not warrant them being part of the category of protagonists of history. When talking of the sixties, under no circumstances can we ignore that a whole host of events took place that were very decisive, beyond the fact of whether or not they gave rise to powerful media icons. Let us look at a few of them: the sixties generation was the first not to have suffered the Second World War; economic growth made it possible for the part of the population with access to consumer goods to increase considerably; television was beginning to be a fixture in every home, whereby popular mass culture diffused by technology definitively replaced

Exuberance is Beauty (L'exhuberància és bella), Jaume Plensa (2007). Mixed media and collage on paper, 84 x 30 cm

May 1968 was an expression, to a large extent instinctive, of the unease felt by a minority of young Westerners in the face of a political situation and a model of society that they perceived as unsatisfactory

centuries-old traditional culture; the introduction of the welfare state gradually spread to new areas of society; access to university by middle- and working-class young people began to be possible; social and moral customs were gradually freed from all kinds of intransigence, in our case very specially that of National Catholicism; hierarchic and arbitrary authoritarianism lost respectability in the spheres of the family, politics, teaching or personal relationships; women began an irreversible process towards the recognition of their legal, social and job equality; industrial workers were able to become the beneficiaries of mass tourismÉ All in all, and starting especially from this series of economic changes that affected the social structure, the decade gave rise to numerous phenomena that produced many profound changes.

And in this context, what exactly did May 1968 in France represent? Did it by chance include anything specific that we could not find in at least a significant number of other events of the time? Did it have an international influence, for example, greater than the hippie or the pacifist movements or a greater influence on social customs and thinking than those of the new musical trends or the avalanche of mass audiovisual culture that became a feature of most people´s everyday lives? Perhaps the student revolution in Paris was ideologically more consistent than those in California, Mexico or Berlin, Barcelona or Madrid. Or might one think that the reasons for Paris 1968 were fairer and better founded than those for the mobilisations that were reacting above all against the American presence in the Vietnam War or against Franco´s dictatorship? In my opinion, the Paris revolt was more than anything important for being representative of many of the upheavals and the historic expectations that characterised the sixties. In the first place, it was an act of public assertion by part of the young (the university students, petit-bourgeois and more or less enlightened people), which as a whole had just then taken the stage as a visible social sector, by no means insignificant in terms of numbers, something made possible by the first stage of the West´s economic recovery after the Second World War. From then on, it became essential for the agendas of the political parties and the public institutions to consider young people as a group meriting the status of protagonists and as the targets of specific policies. Moreover, May 1968 was an expression, to a large extent instinctive, of the unease felt by a minority of young Westerners in the face of a political situation and a model of society that they perceived as unsatisfactory. The reaction materialised in the adoption of an attitude of rejection towards the liberal democracies, which they judged with the severity only those who have had the historical fortune not to have suffered totalitarian regimes can allow themselves, and also of consumer capitalism.

The response to that situation gave rise in Western Europe to a revolutionary political stance that, with the hindsight of the forty years that have since transpired, was quite inexplicable. That the alternative to liberal society or state socialism could be sought in Maoism or Trotskyism or that the replacements for the official social-democratic or communist parties of Western Europe could be organisations of an assembly-based or cellular nature conceived after an indigestion of Marxist-Leninist literature is something that can only be explained if we take it to be the symptom of a state of profound confusion or of a naivety, both infantile and messianic, when imagining expectations for the future organisation of human societies. All in all it was the expression of an ideological elitism that, based on overwhelming contempt for the true reality of life, believed itself legitimised to subject society to rigid book-like doctrinaire templates. As was to be expected, these ideas produced absolutely no results. Thank goodness. Equally, in the sixties in the West there was another quite visible expression of nonconformity: that of those who rejected the economic model that aspired to continual growth based on the instilling in citizens of the need to over-consume in order for a large quantity of superfluous products to become essential. For them, consumer society became one of the *b tes noires* of the period. Escape from the urban world and compulsively productivist capitalism and the wish to return to more primitive ways of life in contact with nature were the reasons that made many young Europeans and Americans head for the islands of Ibiza and Formentera, Morocco or Nepal. As always, some of those who professed these attitudes were authentic and others less so.

However, in both the case of the doctrinaire revolutionary movement and in that of those who to a certain extent rejected the Western way of life, we are only talking about a tiny minority of young people. And yet, the immense majority, who had certainly not been to university and were only familiar with the versions of ideology that the authorities offered them, would over the years eventually incorporate into their habitual lifestyles some of those attitudes and appearances that had been introduced as acts of dissent by the protagonists of the tumultuous sixties youth revolution. Up to now, the balance made of all this, in films or in fictional and non-fictional literature, by some of the creators who generationally and ideologically identified themselves with May 1968 is neither condescending nor myth-making. This is the case of Olivier Rolin in the novel *Paper Tiger* or of Bernardo Bertolucci in the film *Dreamers*. One of the male characters in the film would be a not very smug example, in some ways a caricature, of that amateur Maoism practised in many cases by those taking part in the Paris revolt.

> The decade gave rise to numerous phenomena that produced many profound changes

If considering that May 1968 in Paris was above all important because it was representative of the moods of the sixties rather than for the specific substance that defined it were a correct assessment, it would be necessary to shed light on the cause that might explain why over the last four decades it has become one of the great historic fetishes of the period, so much so that it has remained permanently alive as the subject of interest in the attention of the Western media and has been the subject of frequent fictional and non-fictional recreations. As I see it, there is a series of reasons that

explain why it has acquired the status of a 20th century myth. Firstly, because it has been considered the chief European contribution to the Western phenomenon of youth revolt, conceived, developed and projected far more by the USA.

Secondly, because Paris has been historically perceived, at least in Western Europe and from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution to the middle of the 20th century, as a privileged stage for the gestation of the ideas, the artistic proposals and the outlooks on life that contributed to shaping the future of the West. Thus, the 1968 revolt was yet another event taking place on a stage on which European public opinion already took it for granted that events of historical importance inevitably developed from time to time. Thirdly, the French cultural and intellectual world saw in the events of the Paris revolt a chance to claw back positions as the centre of the creation of ideas and attitudes perceived as progressive, at a time when the English-speaking world had already well overtaken them in both the sphere of mass culture and in the proposal of new ideas and new social and moral customs. French nationalism, within which evidently the cultural elites also have to be included, found in the mythicisation of its own revolution a resource and a chance to fulfil the need to see itself and show itself once more as a leading player in history.

All in all, what I feel was actually historically important was ś ixties-ism ´ in an overall sense and not Parisian ś ixty-eightism ´ in particular. And today, from the perspective of the forty years that have passed, I think that the balance of the decade is inevitably one of light and shade. With the peculiarity, moreover, that from many of those elements that were objectively positive, in the long run collateral effects have derived that can be seen as negative. One example: the disappearance of the authoritarianism of those considered superior (father, mother, teacher, governor) represented a gain in dignified communal living, but in the long run it has also been seen that it eventually degenerated into an undermining of the very principle of authority, even when exercised with respect and dialogue, so much so that an attitude became socially widespread that refused to acknowledge the right to pre-eminence of those who are wiser or have more experience or more representative legitimacy or greater merits based on work and effort. Another example: relationships between parents and children or between couples are now kinder, emotionally more direct and warmer than fifty years ago. However, over-protective love and the predisposition to satisfy needs in advance has led to many families bringing up children to be comfortable and to believe that a life awaits them in which everything will be gifted without them having to make much effort. This has given rise to weak apathetic personalities, lacking the energy needed to face up to the adversities that in their lives they will undoubtedly encounter. There has also been a loss of the capacity for commitment, and as a result a banalisation, in relationships, in both teenagers and adults. Light and shade, to be sure.

Despite all this, I think the way May 1968 in Paris has been used as a scapegoat in recent years is completely unjustifiable, it being virtually declared directly and exclusively responsible for all the ills that today characterise European society. The case of Nicolas Sarkozy would be the perfect example of this. In his programmatic book *Ensemble*, published a few months before he was elected president of the Republic, he dedicates quite a number of pages to analysing what he calls the responsibility of the May 68 generation. This is neither the time nor the place to analyse his words. Just to state that the list of awful consequences he attributes to May 1968 includes almost all the defects that would supposedly characterise,

from his point of view, present-day France. In actual fact what Sarkozy does is use a strategy quite habitual in politics and the media: to choose one single element and attribute to it all the responsibility for all things considered negative. In this way a complex very heterogeneous situation is reduced to a single factor and therefore a prescription can be found for it that can easily be presented as capable of sorting out the situation that has been diagnosed as inadequate. It is the formula that gives such good returns in politics and the media of proposing simple solutions for very complex problems. One example: claiming that an education system can be improved simply by changing the laws. Furthermore, pointing to one single element as being exclusively responsible for a particular situation has another practical advantage: it means that the overall system within which the elements considered negative arise does not have to be critically analysed. In another area, religion, we can find a parallel example: for fundamentalist Catholics, the Second Vatican Council, due to its more tolerant and liberal concept of religious practice, must have been responsible for the fact that many practising Catholics have stopped going to church.

> And today, from the perspective of the forty years that have passed, I think that the balance of the decade is inevitably one of light and shade

With the decision to attribute the origin of all that is wrong to the generation of 1968, Sarkozy is trying to avoid having to state clearly what degree of responsibility the current social model has in the existence of these alleged collective ills. In short, what he is doing is looking for a scapegoat to enable him not to have to question critically a good number of the structural elements that characterise our political, economic and social system. In truth I feel that in all honestly the explanation for the immense majority of the negative aspects of today´s society cannot be found if the only thing resorted to is the legacy of 68. The consideration of leisure and compulsive consumerism as priorities in our lives; the models of personal triumph projected by the mass media; the overrating of the present, the lack of interest in the past and the lack of care about the future; the comfortable attitudes inevitably created by a welfare state that offers social benefits as if they were an acquired right and not a good that has a cost that the citizens have to assume; the rootless feeling caused in individuals by their adherence to a global society to the point of turning them into extra-terrestrials that no longer feel tied or committed to their closest surroundings; the recalcitrant individualism of believing that one´s own interests are the only thing that really counts; the social apology for materialistic values over and above those that have a non-productive dimension, whether altruistic or artistic-cultural; the impact of immigration on community cohesion, both in the neighbourhood and in schools; the weakening of the links of family and inter-generational solidarityÉ Who could be so bold as to claim that all these phenomena, and so many similar ones, are the result of the evils of 1968? I think the sixties were a period on the whole positive, which in no way represented a break with a previous golden age in which the lost values that we now yearn for were supposedly prevalent, that 1968 was above all a happening that took place on a marvellous

stage in the hands of stage managers that historically have been characterised for having the skill to pass themselves off as designers of the future of the West, and that the sixties and 1968 in particular also produced multiple side-effects that certainly deserve to be valued negatively.

Will power; making an effort; always trying to do one´s best; searching for excellence; making a strong commitment to others; responsibility as a rule in private and public affairs, and active and positive involvement in collective matters. The worst thing that those of us who believe these are socially and humanly desirable and enriching attitudes and values could do is conclude that their absence or even non-existence is merely a consequence of some isolated event and not of a whole series of factors that are quite complex and heterogeneous. Let us not just scratch the surface; let´s also find out what the pernicious effects are that a system produces, that of the West, which on the whole has the undeniable merit of being the one that has produced the most socially satisfactory results in all history. Choosing a particular event as a scapegoat to be held responsible for the negative aspects of a situation by nature very complex is always a sterile path. Simple solutions have never helped to solve complex problems. And much less so if when tackling the analysis of the present we combine the catastrophist diagnoses with nostalgia for a past (I must confess that when I look back at history I find it impossible to place) in which supposedly the good things now lost were present in abundance II

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focus

"A new place for culture in society?"

Eva Comas

A museum piece

The role reserved for the Humanities in the Knowledge Society

I seek, in the reading of books, only to please myself by an honest diversion; or, if I study, tís for no other science than what treats of the knowledge of myself, and instructs me how to die and how to live well.[1]

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE, *Essays* (chapter X, *Of Books*)

In selling the properties of an illegitimate son of the Duke of Alba, King Phillip II of Spain acquired one of the most enigmatic pictures ever painted. It now hangs in the Prado Museum and was painted around 1510 by Hieronymus van Aeken (also known as Hieronymus Bosch). The painting in question is actually a triptych, The Garden of Earthly Delights, comprising three panels each with its own theme. The work is a conundrum that has mystified generations of art scholars from the 16th century to the present.

[1] Translator´s note: Here I unashamedly offer Charles Cotton´s superb translation rather than my own (*Essays of Michel de Montaigne,* Translated by Charles Cotton, edited by William Carew Hazlitt, 1877).

In the Darkness II (En la foscor II), Jaume Plensa (2008)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 110 x 100 cm

The cavorting nudes and animals that Bosch painted in the triptych left the experts speechless and with no option but to take the enigma seriously and put the Flemish artist´s masterpiece in a museum display case. Ironically, this pomp and reverence contrasts starkly with Bosch´s wild fantasies and gift for poking fun at human foibles and weaknesses. Here, Bosch teases the beholder just as Cervantes teased readers with his intricate word play or Shakespeare his audience with Hamlet´s cynical, searing criticism of Court life. Bosch, Cervantes and Shakespeare want to take us in. Their appeal lies in the ambiguity they create and the gratuitous diversion it gives rise to.

In all three cases the works are highly original and hence cannot be pigeonholed in cultural movements of the time or explained away as the fruit of social and historical forces. According to Harold Bloom, this genius is what confers on Shakespeare´s, Cervantes´ and Bosch´s works an aesthetic value that will ensure the survival of Western culture.

Studies on works of art such as *The Garden of Earthly Delights* or works of literature such as *Don Quixote* and *Hamlet* currently come under the head of the Humanities. Various cultural institutions in Spain insistently use the term ´Human ities´ as a badge of quality. Such clamorous defence of the humanities is an unmistakable sign that they are under threat. This article warns that contemporary society tends to see the humanities as mere ornament and as somehow lying outside the realm of ´tr ue knowledge´.

Western Civilisation represents the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of two and a half millennia. It is thus little short of astounding that political institutions have recently chosen to dub our brave new age as ´T he Knowledge Society´. It is as if the preceding twenty-five centuries counted for naught. That some cultural organisations have jumped on this bandwagon is even more disturbing ´the y at least might be expected to know better. The Knowledge Society is a slippery term but it always seems to stress the future and be seen in terms of some great challenge. By contrast, ´T he Humanities´ takes on connotations of the classics and of bringing tradition up to date. That is because the two mask models of knowledge that are not only different but are often at odds with each other. The Knowledge Society is symbolised by quantified, classified information, for which the computer is a good metaphor. The Humanities, on the other hand, are based on relating knowledge and may thus be likened to the model underpinning an encyclopaedia or a library.

The reason for the replacement of the Humanities model by the Knowledge Society one can be found in technological change, which wreaks havoc on epistemology and language. This is so because knowledge is shaped by how it is created, disseminated and kept. For example, the introduction of alphabet-based writing in Ancient Greece led to swift changes in the concept of knowledge. Hitherto, the performance of tragedies and the recital of epic poems dating from the 5th Century were considered highly educational. Yet they came to be thought of as mere entertainment once knowledge began to take new forms. The change wrought in Hellenic society helps us understand the approaching epistemological revolution in our own age. This revolution is a technological one and has largely come about through the Internet.

This article does not seek to deny the great possibilities opened up by technology but rather to ask whether the brave new world of the Knowledge Society contemplates the ambiguities and diversions contained in the works of Shakespeare, Cervantes, and

Bosch ín a word, by the Humanities. Or are we to believe that knowledge is confined to the quantifiable, provable and ú seful?

> The reason for the replacement of the Humanities model by the Knowledge Society one can be found in technological change, which wreaks havoc on epistemology and language

The unwillingness of the apostles of the Knowledge Society to consider the Humanities valid and useful reveals the same kind of scorn Plato poured on the epic and tragic poets of Ancient Greece. Plato not only reviled their morals, he also considered their works imparted no useful knowledge to the *polis* because they were not framed in the language of truth: ´measure, name and weight ´. Fortunately, history proved Plato wrong, as the works of Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Aristotle and Sophocles show. Though Plato considered their works to be misleading and trivial, they are of key importance. They not only define our culture but also constitute some of the most amusing, passionate and enigmatic tales ever told.

THE MODEL OF KNOWLEDGE EMBODIED IN "THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY"

The model proposed by the Knowledge Society is one based on quantifiable, classifiable information that is highly specialised in character and of direct use in changing the world. As we noted earlier, a computer is a good metaphor for this kind of knowledge and to appreciate this, one only has to read *The Universe in a Nutshell,* the latest work by Stephen Hawking. In the last chapter of the book, the world-famous British cosmologist peers into the future of mankind over the next few centuries. One of his predictions is that computers will reach the same complexity as the human brain within twenty years. According to Hawking, Man will have to compete with electronic systems and be forced to enhance his physical and mental abilities if he is to come to grips with an ever more complex world and to face new challenges such as space travel. Man will also have to increase his complexity if biological systems are to stay ahead of electronic ones[2].

Hawking puts forward various way in which Man´s intellect might be enhanced. One suggestion is to have the foetus grow outside the uterus so that the brain´s early development would not be constrained by the width of the birth canal (which sets a practical limit on the unborn child´s skull size). Another possibility would be to increase brain function through neuronal implants. According to Hawking, Ńe uronal implants

[2] Translator´s note: This is my back translation from S. Hawking *L univers en una closca de nou.* Columna, Barcelona, 2002, p.165 (Catalan translation of *The Universe in a Nutshell*). By a rich irony, the vagaries of the Internet and copyright make it easier for one to track down the classics than to unearth the scribblings of the prophets of ´The Knowledge Society´. For good or ill, it seems such recent works lie beyond the é vent horizon ´of ´The Knowledge Society ´ á nyone wishing to read them has no alternative but to do so in a format that dates back to the 15th century and Johannes Gutenberg.

offer greater memory capacity and complete information packets, for example an entire language. Thus the contents of this book could be learnt in a matter of minutes´. Although these forecasts seem like stabs in the dark, they shed light on the model of knowledge adopted by one of the greatest scientists of our age. It is obvious that the model is inspired by the potential of computers and their lightning speed. It is well known that a computer can l´e arn a language´ or the c´ ontents of a book´ in a matter of minutes. However, Hawking conveniently forgets to say what he understands by t´he contents of a book´ because having *The Odyssey* on a brain chip is a far cry from assimilating the work through reading Homer´s epic poem aloud for hours on end. One of the reasons for reading *The Odyssey* is the possibility of sharing Ulysses' feelings and experiences during his epic voyage. The reader may weep with him in the Ph´ acian court as the horrors of The Trojan War are recounted, recoil with him in horror as the Cyclops slaughters his companions, and be awe-struck as he is hidden by Athene's magic arts. Yet what boots it to read *The Odyssey* in a flash if its meaning is lost? Slipping a chip containing the masterpiece into someone´s skull for n´ eural processing´ ignores the Ricoeur school of hermeneutic theory, which argues that a text is uniquely interpreted in the light of a reader´s knowledge, experience and values.

Another of the premises of The Knowledge Society is that information is different from knowledge because it has become a commodity. Manuel Castells reveals this line of thought when he writes: ´The Information Society is characterised by a form of social organisation in which the creation, processing and transmission of information has become one of the wellsprings of productivity and power in the new technological context´[3].

Paraphrasing Castells, The Information Society or Knowledge Society differs from previous societies because whereas technology was hitherto used to produce and distribute products, it is now used to produce and distribute information. This Sociology professor argues that in the new model of society, ´T´ hese technologies act on information in general, not only on information concerning technology, which was the case in previous technology revolutions´. We are therefore dealing with a society in which information technology feeds back into social and technological change.

[3] Castells M., *La era de la informaci—nEconom´a, sociedad i cultura,* Alianza, Madrid, 1997, p. 47.

In the Darkness IV (En la foscor IV), Jaume Plensa (2008)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 110 x 100 cm


AMNESIA
INSOMNIA
DEPRESSION
PHOBIA
HYSTERIA
AUTISM
PANIC
ATTACKS
NARCOLEPSY
MANIA

The Knowledge Society not only conceives of information as a product, it also sees information as a way of transforming the real world. In this respect, one might say the model of a *Knowledge Society* is based on the scientific-technical paradigm of 17th Century Europe´s scientific revolution. According to the philosopher Jos´ Ortega y Gasset, back then scientists began to specialise so that science could advance. However, the author of *La rebeli–n de las masas* argued that this scientific specialisation had flung European civilisation back to the Dark Ages. Gasset stated: ´Today´s man of science is the prototype of mass-man. It is neither coincidence nor the result of individual failings that science turns its followers into mass-men, in other words, into modern savages´[4]. Growing specialisation, according to Gasset, inescapably led to the mechanisation and dismembering of knowledge. Gasset, writing in the nineteen thirties, argued that thought should be all of a piece, even if this meant a certain loss of precision: ´When knowledge was more elemental and natural, it was more likely to be felt and assimilated by the common man, who could revel in it and give it new force. This explains the monstrous paradox of the last few decades in which a giant cultural step forward has spawned a new kind of man, who is much more barbarous than his forebears of centuries past´[5].

> The possibilities of unlimited progress have earned Science immense prestige

However, the increasing compartmentalisation of Science is not the only force shaping the model of scientific and technical knowledge. While the 17th and 18th centuries marked a flowering of scientific knowledge, the 19th century was one of invention. Alfred North said that the idea of invention itself was actually the 19th century´s greatest invention. The union of scientific and technical knowledge thus gave birth to a new paradigm of knowledge. Ortega noted that there was not always a link between technology and science: Ó ur Stone Age forefathers who wrought flint axes knew nothing of Science but that did not stop them from developing their own technology´. This was in stark contrast with our age, in which technology is the fruit of Science: Ó nly the technology of modern Europe is rooted in Science and it is this that holds out the prospect of endless progress´[6].

The possibilities of unlimited progress have earned Science immense prestige. While no one would deny that Science has showered Mankind with great benefits, many have misunderstood it as a magic wand that can cast any spell that takes their fancy. That is why an American author, Neil Postman, called the application of the scientific method to human behaviour an aberration. Postman strongly criticises Daniel Goleman, author of the best-seller *Emotional Intelligence* (sic). Goleman, says Postman, really believes that the application of the principles of the physical and biological sciences to human behaviour would yield experimental results, theories and deep understanding of the human condition and even universal laws on the subject[7].

[4] Ortega y Gasset, J., *La rebeli—nle las masas,* Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1997.
[5] Ortega y Gasset, J., Íe cciones de metaf'sica´, in *Obras completas,* Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1997.
[6] Ortega y Gasset, J., (1993).
[7] Postman, N., *Technopol',* Llibres de l Índex, Barcelona, 1994 (back translation).

THE HUMANITIES MODEL OF KNOWLEDGE

The Humanities´ model of knowledge is based on artistic creation and differs from the scientific-technological model. The latter looks to the future and in so doing, consigns past breakthroughs to the dustbin of history. The Humanities, by contrast, fix their gaze on the past. Cultural tradition is the yardstick of humanistic knowledge, without which it would be impossible to measure or achieve originality. As Harold Bloom put it in his work *The Western Canon,* influences need to be ever stronger if we are to foster originality within the rich framework of the Western literary tradition. This tradition is not a mere legacy but rather the result of endless conflict between the genius of the past and the ambition of the present. The prize is literary survival[8].

The preceding works of the humanist tradition act as models and inspire new creators t́hat is why great writers both embrace the literary tradition and build upon it. Figuratively speaking, Thomas Mann converses with Socrates and Phaedrus in *Death in Venice,* William Shakespeare converses with the authors of the Latin tragedies, the Romantic poets with the troubadours, Larra is read by Cernuda, who in turn is read by Gil de Biedma. That is why Italo Calvino defines the works of these creators as classics, arguing that T́ he classics are books bearing the fingerprints of those who read them before us ´[9].

George Steiner in one of his latest works ´ *Grammars of Creation* defines humanistic knowledge by contrasting it with scientific knowledge. Steiner considers artistic works as analogous to divine creation, the only difference being that God started from scratch. Man has no choice but to work his creations from something that already exists. Even so, it is thus that Man tries to reveal every facet of his nature even though he never quite manages to pull it off. Ó ne might say that the composition and finish of works of art never express the absolute truth, harmony or perfection sought by those who created them. Even the greatest masterpieces can only hint at something greater ´[10]. According to Steiner, unlike Science, Art brings together both what is present and what is absent. According to Steiner, this is so because Art brings together both what is present and what is absent whereas Science excludes everything that is not axiomatic. Art, on the other hand, lies in the twilight zone between what exists and what might have been. This unfinished quality explains why Art is capable of d́ ignifying the useless ´, is capricious and indulges in fun for its own sake. Science and invention differ from art in this respect. For Steiner, ín vention is purposeful and useful, noble and dynamic ´.

The avatars of Science and Art trace different paths through time. Science and the inventions that stem from it take straight paths from an old to a new theory and the theories themselves are established by proofs or refutations. Along the path, each step can only be taken if the one before it has already been trodden ń ew truths supersede the old ones. By contrast, Art ś path through history rules out this notion of progress ´ a work of art neither proves nor refutes its predecessor. Indeed, the relationship between the two is ambiguous and may imply imitation, rejection, variation,

[8] Bloom, H., *El c non occidental,* Columna, Barcelona, 1995 (back translation).
[9] Calvino. I., *Por qu leer los cl sicos,* Tusquets, Barcelona, 1992.
[10] Steiner, G., *Gram ticas de la creaci—n*Siruela, Madrid, 2001 (back translation).

parody, direct or indirect citation. As Steiner put it, truths are the only thing that age. Thus the relationships of Art and of Science to history and progress differ greatly and this arises from the different ways in which each field treats time. While Science follows a Platonic clock which mathematically strikes the same time for everyone, Art´s clock is an anarchic one in which emotions mark the hour. Thus each artist creates his own time in striving towards something of timeless value. As Steiner says, the root of art lies in the artist´s desire to break the laws of time and to create something that transcends his life. Steiner argues that this makes artistic creation more important for Man than Science.

THE SEED OF WESTERN EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONFRONTATION

The current attempt to sideline past knowledge in embracing new knowledge has historical precedents. As we noted earlier, in the *Book 10 of The Republic,* Plato proposes removing poems for teaching purposes from the *polis*, in other words, censorship. However, these passages also reveal an epistemological clash. Plato´s ranges his philosophical discourse based on ´name, weight and measure´ against the mythic narrative of Homer and Hesiod. Plato considers reason should occupy the sphere of human experience ´something that today would be pigeonholed under ´storytelling´. His approach, which sets logical discourse against myth, was to return with a vengeance in the 17th and 18th centuries. During the Enlightenment, it was seriously proposed that cold reason be applied to every aspect of human experience and that superstition, myths and religious beliefs be abolished. The current clash between the model of knowledge based on scientific rationalism and one based on Art is thus nothing new.

Thinkers proclaim and university students learn that the rationalist ambitions of the Enlightenment have failed us. Yet all academic studies nowadays are sifted using Plato's rigorously rationalist ´name, weight and measure´ approach no matter what field they concern. Harold Bloom and George Steiner compelling denunciation of the over-scientific approach being adopted in the Humanities has had little effect. The reason for the current crisis, according to Ferran S´ez Mateu, is the way in which myth has been rationalised and reason mythicised: ´The conceptual threshold between *The Illiad* and Plato's *Dialogues* does not lie in the fact that the former was ´irrational´ and the latter ´rational´ but rather that the place occupied by the rational and irrational is radically different in the two works. In our striving to preserve the foundational story in Western Culture (the step from myth to *logos*), we have tended to forget that establishing the boundaries of rationality depends on applying reason to fields where it can yield useful results´[11]. However, if one reads *Book* 10 of *The Republic* carefully, one will find the germ of our modern epistemological disarray, namely the desire to sweep away mythic and narrative knowledge to allow logic-based knowledge to seep into

> As Steiner says, the root of art lies in the artist's desire to break the laws of time and to create something that transcends his life

every nook and cranny of human existence.

> For Plato, the truth became forever wedded with the written word and divorced from the senses

Interestingly, Erik A. Havelock[12] argues that the reason for the clash between argumentative, scientific discourse and narrative discourse in Plato´s work is a technological one. There was a profound change in communication technology in the 8th Century that was spearheaded by Hellenic civilisation. The Greeks perfected a new writing system. Hitherto, their alphabet-based system had not gone beyond syllabic representation. The new writing system was a giant leap forward because it also rendered pure consonants. The centuries between Homer and Aristotle saw the gradual extension of the writing system and, although literacy was far from universal, Ancient Greece became the first alphabet-based civilisation.

The invention had more implications for knowledge than one might think. Havelock argues the way we use our senses and think are closely linked. The step from the oral tradition (where hearing and voice play the leading roles) to writing (where sight is of paramount importance) changed the relationship between the senses and hence the nature of consciousness itself. This in turn led to a crisis in knowledge of the real world.

In the era preceding the introduction of writing, Greek institutions from the family to government, legitimised themselves through the spoken word. This language was a special one that aimed to maintain stability and perpetuate customs, morals, practical knowledge and legends. The spoken language was highly ritualised and had to be memorised in the cadences found in epic and tragic poetry.

Havelock notes that poetry performed two roles in Ancient Greece. One was ceremonial, linked to feasts and holy days, the other was as the sole repository of the knowledge of Hellenic civilisation. Homer´s and Hesiod´s epics not only set out rules of behaviour but also contained lessons on things such as how to build a ship. For Havelock, the poets not only conserved the past and chronicled their times, they also epitomised the oral tradition.

In epic and tragic poetry, tradition is not taught through ideas and concepts but rather through learning works by heart and scene-setting. The language used was that of narrative discourse, replete with verbs of action, of augury, of great deeds, of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The words employed dealt with tangible things, not abstract ideas. Havelock argues that the oral tradition did not set out the nature of things but rather who did what to whom[13].

Havelock says that the advent of writing was important in this context, producing an epistemological sea change. Writing meant that knowledge did not need to placed in a setting so that it could be memorised. As a result, the language characterising narrative discourse began to give way to a different kind of language altogether, with copular verbs, predicates, subordinate clauses. This in turn gave rise to logic, given that one could

[11] Havelock, E., *Prefacio a Plat—n*Visor, Madrid, 1994 (back translation).
[12] Havelock, E., *La musa aprende a escribir,* Pa'dos, Barcelona, 1996 (back translation).
[13] Postman, N., *Divertim-nos fins a morir,* Llibres de l Índex, Barcelona, 1990, p. 33 (back translation).

reflect upon written language. Alphabetic writing meant the discourse could be separated from the speaker and one could grasp concepts such as *thought-object*. According to Havelock, writing brought a revolution because the oral tradition in Greece could never have given rise to the notion of thought-object.

Although Plato did not know it, he represented Greece´s new written culture. Plato founded a new epistemology and rejected the old means of relating Man and the world and which made no distinction between subject and object. In memorising and listening to epic poems, the Ancient Greeks could not help identifying with and acting like their protagonists. Plato, by contrast, demanded one distance what was said from who said it, and object from knowledge.

> This article exhorts humanistic knowledge as a living thing fostering dialogue

Plato´s writing undoubtedly changed the meaning of t´r uth´ and r´ eality´. In the oral tradition that gave rise to the Homeric poems, truth was linked to the sensuality of the spoken word. In tragic plays, the truth was linked to the senses of sight and smell, allowing onlookers to understand the characters´ actions. However, when these words were written down and sundered from the sights and smells of live performance, it was harder to grasp their true meaning. For Plato, the truth became forever wedded with the written word and divorced from the senses.

´The concept of truth´, says Neil Postman ís intimately linked to prejudices concerning forms of expression. The truth is never naked. It has to be properly attired if it is to be accepted´[14] Plato believes he has stripped away the robes of poetical works to reveal the unadorned ideas beneath. Yet Plato does realise that he merely clads them in a new robe t´r uth´s pun from name, measure and weight.

Plato hit the mark when he saw the robe worn by Homeric t´r uth´ (which was shaped by narrative discourse, the oral tradition, and identification with the characters) as the key to the spectator´s understanding. However, he was wrong on two scores: 1) in considering narrative discourse as a mere shell devoid of truth; 2) in believing that his concept of truth walked stark naked. Plato´s truth was dressed in the robes of argument and philosophy thatwere only to be had in a civilisation that had mastered writing.

AGAINST MUSEISTIC KNOWLEDGE

The tools with which Men communicate are of key importance in creating knowledge. When there is a major shift in technology there are always those who are keen to throw the baby out with the bathwater and have us believe that all past knowledge is valueless. This goes for Plato in the ancient world and for the modern apostles of the *Knowledge Society*. In our hyper-sensitive Western Culture, the prophets of the *Information Society*

[14] S´ez Mateu, F. *Dislocaciones,* Ediciones 314, Valencia, 1999.
[15] Bloom, H., *Com llegir i per qu,* Barcelona: Empr´ ies, 2000, p. 15 (back translation).
[16] Olivia, S., *Introducci— &hakespeare,* Barcelona: Empr´ ies, 2000, p. 147.

do not openly repudiate the classics but rather treat them as if they were museum pieces to be gawped at but of no relevance to the present. For them, the classics might just as well be so many stuffed Dodos in a display case.

This article exhorts humanistic knowledge as a living thing fostering dialogue. Shakespeare, Cervantes and Hieronymus Bosch are geniuses who playfully entertain and hoodwink us at every turn. That is why Michel de Montaigne invites us to read the classics because they are the most entertaining works ever written. Given that the media are awash with mediocrity and vulgarity, Harold Bloom provides another compelling reason to drink at the spring of humanistic knowledge: Ḿ aybe there is no one way of reading well but read we must. Ẃ e have a vast amount of information at our disposal but where shall we find wisdom? ´[15].

At the end of the day, the humanities shall never be lost for, as Salvador Oliva says in his book *Introducci— &Shakespeare,* Man needs Art: Íf pure reason could wholly embody and explain the great literary works of history, they would have vanished long ago. They exist precisely because much of what they contain escapes rational explanation ´[16]

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Salvador Giner

The fate of popular culture today

Culture is the medium through which we live out our lives, our work and come to terms with our hopes and fears. Whether we realise it or not, culture is the sieve through which every grain of our lives passes. We may be unaware of this because the notion of culture is such a recent one. Before the modern age, people were immersed in their own language, religion, beliefs and customs, which they saw as inseparable aspects of human existence. They did not see them as culture, in the current sense. They did no see themselves as possessing a given culture, though they often sensed that other peoples, tribes or nations were different, and saw life differently.

The advent of the modern world ushered in gradual changes whereby life became increasingly compartmentalised, with the gulf between each component part becoming ever wider. That is why we can now distinguish at least three spheres: authority and power (politics); work and property (economics); and knowledge, values and beliefs (culture). Further categories emerged as distinctions were made between: religion; science; arts and literature; sport.

This fragmentation continues apace. The old distinction drawn between ´high culture´ and ´popular culture´ (the former confined to the ruling classes, the latter the province of humbler folk) has been succeeded by a dizzying plethora of new categories: science, music, humanities, the media. The term ´National Culture´ or ´Folk Culture´ was coined when *Romanticism* was in vogue. Ethnologists often studied the culture of tiny tribes and anthropologists and others wrote erudite papers on humankind´s various cultures. Philosophers and sociologists drew up theories by the score and ideologists often exploited their findings for their own nefarious ends. In 1960, Andr´ Malraux, a writer who was a confirmed Gaullist, was made France´s Minister of Culture.

The appointment was greeted with surprise and ridicule and was widely seen as yet another symptom of the country´s incurable Jacobinism. Some suggested that the term Ḿ inister of Culture ´was an oxymoron. Today, a Ḿ inister of Culture ´is a commonplace and does not give rise to scathing comments. Furthermore, the popularisation of the scholarly concept of *culture* as a result of the dissemination of sociological and anthropological textbooks has yielded unexpected results. Several decades ago, the media began to chatter about cultures in the context of a given social sphere even though these were often aspects of a broader culture and hence really sub-cultures. They no longer spoke of the popular culture of, say, the Sicilians, the Bavarians or gypsies but of d́ rug culture ´, d́ elinquent culture ´and so on. This inflation and proliferation of concepts and terminology hardly helps clarify ideas but there is no sign of the media relenting in their zest for new buzz words and for sowing confusion.

Even so, we can take solace in the fact that things were a great deal more confusing in the wake of the industrial revolution. With the disappearance of the old rural world and the growth of cities to house a burgeoning working class, popular culture seemed doomed. Yet the discovery of working-class culture in all its diverse forms was to redefine popular culture in Europe. Miners ´choirs, soldiers ´marches and the folklore of the sprawling industrial townships were just part of the remarkable richness of this new culture. The discovery of jazz, surely one of the most extraordinary creations of American culture, broadened the scope of working-class culture even further. Jazz appealed to *the humiliated and offended*, as Dostoyevsky would have put it ´ negroes, slaves, the illiterate. *Low culture* thus became *another culture*. The old distinction between ´high ´and ´low ´culture was thus rendered meaningless at one fell stroke. Even the later distinction between so-called *highbrow* and *lowbrow* cultures, somehow ´improved ´by the notion *middlebrow culture* has now fallen into disrepute. On the other hand, during a certain period, the concept of a working class culture and the lives of the downtrodden in industrial society were shamelessly idealised. The other side of the coin was the vilification of middle-class culture by self-proclaimed advocates of ´progressive ideas ´ ´ who all happened to be drawn from the ranks of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes.

Working-class culture was discovered and then consolidated. Catalonia epitomised this process, with its anarchist trade unionism, naturism, vegetarianism, pacificism, choral societies, Esperanto societies and League of Nations clubs. Works such as Narc's Oller's *Escanyapobres* and ḿile Zola's *Germinal* recall the dignity of the victims of industrial capitalism and their ability to create culture and enjoy it with as much (if not more) refinement as their masters. However, theatrical works such as Seraf' Pitarra's were aimed at the working class. They showed the wealthy a more authentic world whose cultural richness rivalled their own.

This late 19th century current of modern popular culture was not to last long. The advent of the media at the end of the Great War heralded a sea change. The propaganda of totalitarian systems with all their contrived symbolism soon destroyed any vestige of popular culture and led to the brutal anti-cultures of Fascism and Stalinism. Until recently, China was the last redoubt of *Social Realism*. This totalitarian propaganda was to prove even more lethal to genuine popular culture than capitalism.

The growth of capitalism, especially in Europe and the United States during the same period, turned culture into a consumer item to the point where some commentators

Anyone seriously wishing to defend popular culture cannot shut his eyes to the appalling vulgarity with which media entertainment companies approach the subject

warned that the death of popular culture (then seen as tr aditional culture) was nigh. In the decades following the Second World War, there was a flood of literature whose leitmotif was that popular culture was as dead as the Dodo. Left-wing observers saw the cultural industry engendered by capitalism as alienating the masses. Conservatives threw up their hands in horror at the vulgarity of the lower classes and the consumate ease with which they could be manipulated. Ironically, the two extremes amounted to the same thing condemnation of and contempt for the proles culture. Some lamented the death of popular (i.e. working-class) culture and its new-found riches. This was the end of spontaneous, genuine popular culture and the new media had delivered the death blow.

TV flooded the air waves with poor quality entertainment and advertising grew by leaps and bounds, deepening old prejudices. The criticism was less strident than in the past but it still masked contempt for popular culture and a failure to recognise the forms it took.

Some manifestations of popular culture in Catalonia, such as the *sardana* (a folk dance) and *castellers* (human towers) have been blown out of all proportion by the media and politicians. Other forms (*Havaneras* [sea-shanties]), bands, theatre groups, and the scouting movement are more genuinely rooted in Catalan society and have successfully resisted media and political manipulation. The so-called theme parks are mere business stratagems to dish up entertainment for the mass-tourism industry. Television s awful soap operas, its constant plugging of sponsored sport such as Formula 1 races, its appeal to the lowest tribal instincts in its football coverage are highly lucrative strategies but their impact means that popular culture can no longer be thought of in the same terms as in bygone times. Furthermore, anyone seriously wishing to defend popular culture cannot shut his eyes to the appalling vulgarity with which media entertainment companies approach the subject.

Whatever reservations one may have, it is a fallacy to argue that popular culture does not exist or that it cannot be expressed in a fitting fashion. In this context, I should like to make the following observations:

1. Despite all predictions, high c ulture is enjoyed by more people than ever before. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that such enjoyment is not necessarily the same as popular culture (although there are notable

exceptions f or example, the huge popularity of opera in Italy). Mozart's *divertimenti,* which were composed for aristocratic audiences, are now listened with rapt attention by thousands o r even millions if we include mp3 players and the like. The same can be said of outstanding films and plays, while the sales of great works of literature have gone from strength to strength. Even so, one should look further than consumption. The number of people belonging to choirs, youth orchestras, dance groups, poetry appreciation circles, and writers of newspaper and magazine articles, radio and TV scripts has risen steadily. It might be argued that this growth does not affect popular culture but rather extends the reach of high culture. However, as we shall see, this is not the case.

2. This polarised view is based on the erroneous notion that a certain kind of popular culture is both expanding and becoming vulgarised in the process. What can be said is that the cultural diversification of society is evident and shows the simplistic idea of the general massification of human society is false. The proliferation of hiking clubs, amateur theatre, rock groups and associations shows the reverse is true. Among other things, Tarrega s Street Theatre Festival is a celebration of popular culture a t least for the town residents, who justly consider it a prelude to the local f te (which is another feature of Catalan popular culture). No doubt many theatre groups draw their inspiration from Tarrega s festival.

3. One should recognise the alacrity with which companies try to c olonise popular culture. Firms' desire to advertise their products and event organisers' work hand in hand. The organisers want money and the companies want publicity. It would

Anonymous XII (Anònim XII), Jaume Plensa (2003)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 200 x 90 cm

Declaring popular culture dead is thus premature to say the least

be wrong to write off a popular festival like the one held in Barcelona´s Grć ia district just because it draws ever more tourists. Even so, the Grć ia f´te and Pamplona's internationally famous San Ferm'n festival may be threatened by their very success. Another festival endangered for the same reason is Andalusia´s Roc'o pilgrimage. While some manifestations of popular culture die out, that does not mean popular culture as such is doomed to vanish.

4. New non-traditional forms of popular culture are often worthy of interest. The field is a tricky one, given the faddiness of the contemporary world. Many refrain from critisising them for fear of appearing hopelessly reactionary. This goes for public entities too lo cal councils, ministries of culture, private foundations, guilds, which all let themselves be hoodwinked by mediocrity passed off as p opular culture´. Many believe this is the case with youth bands. Even so, it better to take the risk than to stifle such activities.

Acknowledging complexities and ambivalences helps one grasp the nature of popular culture in Catalonia and other European countries. Declaring popular culture dead is thus premature to say the least. Neither can one say that such culture is spurious just because it is shaped by commercial and political interests. The use of bread and circuses (Juvenal's *panem et circenses*) to keep the plebs happy is nothing new. The Spanish Inquisition never interfered

Continents XII (Continents XII), **Continents XV (Continents XV),**
Jaume Plensa (2004)
Mixed media and collage on paper
240 x 110 cm

with the Easter processions in Castile and Andalusia and the Church backed them from the outset. Despite what lofty critics to the left and right of the political spectrum might say, cultural industries and modern capitalism have not invented the problem but rather have merely exacerbated it.

New forms of expression, ranging from graffiti on railway carriages to the design of Internet games, reveal the surprising turns popular culture can take. These new, unconventional forms of culture may surprise and repel burghers brought up on plainer fare. Given enough time and repetitions, anything can become accepted as traditional popular culture. That is why one should not rule out anything. If it is popular, is it art? Does the whole thing need a little more time for the powers that be to consider it respectable? We could always ban graffiti artists on the grounds that their work is counter-cultural, but the pretext is a weak one é specially when town councils commission works from leading artists, some of whom are internationally famous for their daubings. When their works surprise nobody, we are a long way down the road to public acceptance. Many critics argue that graffiti cheers up the concrete jungle of modern cities. They say it is just another form of pop art and causes no offence.

Plebeian art is just as vulnerable to commercial pressures as any other. Pseudo-intellectuals are quick to attribute it with qualities it often does not possess. It is one thing to exalt the artistic merit íf any ó f a graffiti-smeared wall. It is quite another thing to compare these daubings to the Paleolithic paintings in the Altamira caves. Some think the childish impulse to hob-nob with the bourgeoisie was a purely Dadaist vice but it seems more prevalent than we care to think.

The fact that any artistic expression with counter-cultural pretensions may fall prey to commercial pressures or be manipulated by the media does not invalidate it as either art or culture. In these shifting sands, it behoves culture policy-makers, critics and other shapers of public opinion to tread with the greatest care.

New forms of expression, ranging from graffiti on railway carriages to the design of Internet games, reveal the surprising turns popular culture can take. These new, unconventional forms of culture may surprise and repel burghers brought up on plainer fare

Traditional popular culture thrives in Catalonia, with its f´tes, rituals, religious and heathen festivals, pantomime, passion plays. This is all the more remarkable when one considers what it has to contend with: industrialisation; media meddling; mass tourism; political interference; commercial pressures. These have all played a part in redefining and reshaping popular culture but they have not destroyed it either in Catalonia or elsewhere. In this respect, we Catalans are not as singular as we like to think.

Contrary to a commonly-held belief, one cannot distinguish between more tr aditional and ad vanced nations in this regard. The strength of popular culture is as strong in Sweden, England, Switzerland and Germany as it is in Andalusia or Sicily. Furthermore, the cultural issues facing those lands differ little from those confronting Catalonia. While the multicultural mixing found in the Antilles, Central America, India, London, Berlin and Barcelona no doubt differs from place to place, there are common threads. Perhaps one can even speak of me lting pot cultures. The new immigrant cultures T urks in Berlin, North Africans in France, Chicanos in California ar e worthy of more attention and less paternalism. The important thing is to let them flower.

The only thing that makes a difference is when the native popular culture lacks proper defences. In this respect, Catalonia's culture and language are special cases. However, this concerns wider issues falling outside the scope of this short article. Suffice it to say that in a global, media-dominated world, the Catalan tongue is often pushed to the fringes in its homeland. The prevailing multicultural ethos often gives rise to a farcical state of affairs whereby the cultural and linguistic rights of immigrant communities are zealously defended but those of Catalan natives conveniently ignored. Universalist principles are all well and good but they should be applied universally. After all, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

One cannot over-emphasise the importance of this issue. Put bluntly, the belittling of Catalan popular culture in certain circles in pursuit of an elusive, fatally flawed cosmopolitan vision is nothing short of unforgivable. The irony is that those who so blithely ignore Catalan popular culture are swift to proclaim themselves democratic, progressive and privy to truths denied to their fellow-mortals. For them, Catalonia's culture is somehow reactionary, a hangover from a dark and best-forgotten past. They are simply unable to grasp the complexity and ambiguity of life itself and hence the richness and diversity that lies at the heart of any popular culture. That is why Catalans often use satire in defending the country's language, rights and customs against Spain's instinctive loathing for everything beyond its ken.

We trust that every citizen and culture policymaker grasps the bleak future facing Catalonia if we do nothing. Let us recall that Catalonia's identity is grounded on two elements the Catalan language and the country's splendid popular culture. We cannot afford to lose either or both[1] II

[1] Some of the ideas in this brief essay are to found in greater depth in my books *Comuni—domini, innovaci—: Per una teoria de la cultura* (Laia, 1985), *La cultura catalana: El sagrat I el prof* (Edicons 62, 1996) and *La societat catalana* (Generalitat de Catalunya, 1998), among other works.

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Xavier Fina

Economics and culture

From oxymoron to pleonasm

There are many ways of analysing the links between culture and economics and they are often used to base contradictory arguments. This is so because linking two fields gives rise to multiple meanings and creates confusion. The main theme of this article is the way culture is exploited for its economic value. This can only be properly understood in a broader context and a brief survey of the relationship between culture and economy is provided for this purpose. The article ends with a reflection on contemporary ideas that go beyond cultural exploitation and arise from the fusion of economics and culture.

This article does not adopt a chronological approach to the subject but rather analyses the relationship between culture and economics in terms of the kinds of discourses used to explain it. My interest lies in identifying the discourses employed at a given point in time rather than attempting to pin down when they emerged or which ones held sway.

The terms in which my reflection is framed are set out below.

First, a concept of culture that embraces everything is just as sterile and simplistic as one based on a rigid, fixed taxonomy. Culture is linked to meaning, identity and is replete with symbolism. It is a dynamic, historic phenomenon that admits hierarchies. In fact, cultural policies merely express these historical, hierarchical strands. The fields covered by cultural policy are neither the product of a neutral, self-evident definition of culture nor of meaningless convention. Rather, they attempt to provide meaning and carve out a symbolic realm whose bounds are chosen, not imposed. That said, the choice is shaped

by symbolic meanings and thus debates on what does or does not constitute culture are sterile and of purely semantic interest. That said, pragmatic debates on the values underlying cultural policies are worthwhile. One such debate concerns the ends of cultural policies and the answers should shed a great deal of light on them. Skating over the underlying debate concerning the choices made in drawing up a cultural policy does not prevent ideologically-inspired choices being made. Accordingly, one should see such policies for what they are c´ hoices, not self-evident needs or absolute truths.

Culture is seen as the apotheosis of the human spirit and thus the application of economics to the cultural field is seen as an attack on artistic purity

That is why I have chosen a pragmatic definition of culture that does not imply uncritical acceptance of the uses to which culture may be put. The intention lying behind these uses needs to be flushed into the open and ẃhe re necessary c´ riticised.

Second, although culture is a complex, multi-faceted concept, it needs to be rigorously defined. Failure to do so makes it all too easy to twist the concept to fit a given argument. Complexity can all too easily be used hide inconsistent, tendentious, tailor-made definitions to serve given arguments. This is why many apparently open, neutral definitions of culture lead ineluctably to prioritised, hierarchical options.[1]

MUTUAL IGNORANCE

As David Throsby[2] notes, to some extent economy and culture share a common interest in value creation. Even so, the concept of value employed by cultural theorists bears no resemblance to the notion of value used by economists. In the past, culture and economics were two fields that were as alike as chalk and cheese. The former represented the intangible world while the latter focused on the tangible, observable one. The notion of ´cultural value´ in cultural discourse, although borrowed from economics, is used in a metaphorical sense.

From this perspective, the relationship between the two fields not only reveals mutual ignorance but also a certain distrust. Culture is seen as the apotheosis of the human spirit and thus the application of economics to the cultural field is seen an attack on artistic purity. Artists do not generally think about money and economists do not generally think

[1] To give a simple example, if our definition of culture includes advertising, one cannot deploy an argument that does not include advertising in the strategy for drawing up a cultural strategy and then throw in or take out advertising from the discourse to serve one's arguments. To do so is both inconsistent and manifestly unreasonable.

[2] Throsby, David, *Economia y cultura,* Cambridge University Press, Madrid, 2001.

about art. This helps explain the gulf between the two spheres and why there is still much mutual ignorance and disdain. The glorification of the artist gives ample scope for this kind of discourse, even though it is now an outdated one. That said, ideas are also subject to the dictates of fashion and as we shall see, management excesses mean that a few romantics do not go amiss.

However, this mutual ignorance is not complete. Some leading 20th century economists wrote on the links between the two fields[3]. Furthermore, the leading lights of the Frankfurt School now criticise the increase merchandising and vulgarisation of culture spawned by the growth of cultural industries.

CULTURE DISCOVERS ECONOMICS

There came a moment when culture d́ iscovered ´economics, which though useful in improving management, nevertheless seems to throw up insuperable obstacles to cultural endeavour. Economics ´insistence on profitability, consumers, markets, efficiency and prices seems an anathema to everything culture represents. Yet cultural sectors, for all their singular features, share one thing in common with other human activities: the need to be managed in some form and to ś ell ´their products.

This has given rise to a new discipline Ć ultural Economics ´who se meaning and value no one seems willing to discuss. Its founding fathers B́aumo l and Bowen ´a nalyse the economic behaviour of the performing arts. Since their seminal work, a host of studies analyses and approaches to this new field have seen the light of day and have been accompanied by the tools and conceptual baggage used by economists to discern alternatives and maximise returns.

Comparative analyses, analysis of trends, cultural marketing, reflection on pricing policy, strategic plans, evaluation, efficacy, efficiency are just a few of the approaches now being applied to culture as to so many other fields.

Economics is used by culture and naturally enough this has an impact on the way, the latter is organised, provides goods, sells itself and establishes canons and hierarchies. Even so, these transformations are not structural ones. Culture largely maintains its independence and resorts to purely cultural arguments to justify its existence. Culture needs to be economically viable but that is not its main purpose. So far, economics has treated the subject of cultural returns with kid gloves. The argument is that economic value and cultural value are not necessarily at odds and that it is desirable to strike a balance between the two in drawing up analytical criteria. In other words, economic failure does not necessarily imply cultural quality. By the same token, economic success does not necessarily imply cultural rubbish. Obviously, one can find those who adopt purely economic or cultural perspectives yet I do not consider that the application of economics torpedoes culture ś *raison d tre* or criteria regarding value. If there is a crisis in the culture industry, it is because the winds of recession are blasting through the wider world. In such dire straits, it would be unwise to spurn the salvation offered by economics.

■ [3] John Maynard Keynes and John Kenneth Galbraith, to give the two most important examples.

ECONOMICS DISCOVERS CULTURE

Perhaps it is more accurate to say that culture let itself be discovered by economics. The moment was marked by studies on the economic impact of culture and by the deployment of economic arguments to justify cultural spending (consider slogans such as Ć ulture creates jobs ´ and Ć ulture is not a cost, it is an investment) ´ . The event that exemplifies this approach was the International Conference held by the World Bank in 1999 and titled Ć ulture Counts ´. The fact that this body dedicated a conference to the subject says a lot about culture ś economic importance.

In this context, it is worthwhile to note the fierce one-upmanship among nations as to who can boast the largest share of GDP arising from culture. The temptation to show one is better endowed than the next fellow seems to hold an irresistible fascination for all ages. Yet the comparison is clouded by the lack of reliable official statistics. The result is an endless welter of studies calculating the share of culture-generated GDP using different methodologies and which often do not even covering the same areas. The favourite wheeze for boosting the figure is to adopt an ever-broader and more complex definition of culture. Placing limits on what constitutes culture is seen as elitist, reductionist and unscientific. By contrast, widening the scope of culture is seen as open-minded, progressive and, best of all, it gives politicians the answers they want to hear. Ministerial concerns should not muddy appraisal of culture ś contribution to GDP. Here, one should note that culture ś contribution to GDP has become the key argument for greater investment in ć ulture ´ (taken in its broadest sense). Naturally, I am not questioning the need to spend on culture, increase the budgets of culture ministries and so forth. Rather, I merely wish to point out the inconsistency of using broad-brush concepts of culture to support public spending on a relatively narrow range of cultural activities. That is because there is a key issue lurking behind such weak arguments for greater spending, namely the exploitation of culture.

> I am not questioning the need to spend on culture, increase the budgets of culture ministries and so forth

There can be no doubt that culture has positive externalities Ǵugge nheim museums being a case in point. However these externalities are precisely that and are not the kernel of what is being offered. When the focus is on externalities rather than content, utter chaos ensues Ḃar celona ś shamelessly over-hyped *2004 Universal Forum of Cultures* being a prime example. Not surprisingly, the few who supported the forum at the time have distanced themselves from it since. Accordingly, my first criticism of the economic exploitation of culture is of a practical nature á c ultural project or policy makes no sense from a cultural perspective if it can only be justified in terms of economic impact. Barcelona ś Ḟ orum ´ shows what happens if this lesson is ignored.

The first cultural impact studies covering direct, indirect and induced impacts are beginning to appear. The last category ín duced impacts ́is a catch-all category, making it particularly hard to establish cause and effect. In such cases, one can

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understand why researchers tend to overstate their results. This brings me to a second criticism, namely the confusion between causal and casual phenomena. A blatant example of this are debates on cultural tourism. Even though ever greater care is taken before reaching conclusions, the need to satisfy clients means studies are still being churned out that do not take multi-causal factors into account in explaining why a given number of tourists choose a particular destination.

Without going into arguments defending the importance of cultural economics or the range of a country´s cultural offerings, what interests me is why recourse is made to such arguments. The phenomenon is part of a wider trend towards seeking exogenous arguments to explain the importance of the cultural sector and public spending on it.

Deployment of such economic arguments began in the nineteen nineties. It is no coincidence that they came into vogue after Lyotard´s paper ´The Post-Modern Condition´[4]. The so-called ´crisis of modernity´ (although crisis is its natural state) makes one wonder whether cultural policies have any real meaning. As a result, enlightened projects whose purpose is to unleash the power of reason and knowledge are called into question because one of the main arguments for fostering cultural policies is knocked away[5].

As a result, the two models traditionally adopted by cultural policies (democratisation of culture and cultural democracy) are in crisis. Yet those who blithely discredit these models both skate over the issues and ignore the consequences.

I have already mentioned the popular alternative to this approach, namely that culture and cultural policies remain meaningful because they play a key role in economic development. Yet I believe that we should continue to exhort the meaning of culture and cultural policies regardless of their externalities. The emancipating power of reason and knowledge can make us happier´s something that few theoreticians of culture and cultural policies set any store by. Fostering creativeness, identity and social cohesion are also excellent reasons for pursuing a cultural policy. Such policies are necessarily ´un finished´ and the odd failure in carrying them out does not justify abandoning their guiding principles.

Accordingly, culture´s recourse to economics is the result of a structural crisis. However, such an approach poses at least three problems: 1) a practical one (without cultural meaning, there can be no economic value); 2) a technical one (disentangling cause and effect from casual relationships); 3) theoretical-political (the need to defend culture´s intrinsic values.

[4] Translator's note: Jean Fran´ois Lyotard´s word was actually published in French in 1979 under the title *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir* by Les Editions de Minuit, however it appears to have taken almost a decade for Spanish translations to be brought out (assuming Internet is a reliable guide here).

[5] The other prop (which may yet give way) concerns identity, whose origins lie in the romantic conception of the nation.

Make us Mad (Torni'ns bojos), Jaume Plensa (2001)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 160 x 113 cm

Despite the foregoing, discourse on the exploitation of culture have become more sophisticated and we now find ourselves in a baffling twilight zone that lies between the spheres of economics and culture. This strange new region can be looked at in two ways.

THE CONFUSION CREATED BY MINGLING ECONOMICS AND CULTURE. IS ECONOMICS CULTURE OR IS CULTURE ECONOMICS?

The relationship between economics and culture, initially cold and aloof, has become a great deal warmer and closer. Indeed, one might even say that economics and culture are now locked in a hot embrace. This has been accompanied by a convergence of views. Discourses on the impact of culture on the economy have gone as far as to identify economic development with cultural development. However, this fusion should be closely scrutinised, not least because it is based on a value judgment regarding what culture is and the role it ought to play in society. In other words, it is ideologically inspired.

The prevailing paradigm makes culture and economics overlap and even coincide. Such a stance makes it hard to achieve a degree of cultural autonomy. This is all the more galling given that the paradigm masks mutually contradictory perspectives.

On the one hand, some defend a cultural reading of the world (and hence of economics), arguing that intangibles (essentially cultural in nature) drive the economy now and will do so even more in the future. Then there are those who play with the ambiguity of concepts like c´reativity´ and ín novation´ to putting cultural development at the core of economic development´ something that goes much further than lauding culture´s economic externalities.

> The relationship between economics and culture should be looked at afresh and in the light of four key values: freedom, equality, wealth, sustainability

This perspective ´whic h apparently gives culture a major role and satisfies cravings for centralised cultural policies´ is far from neutral. It implies renouncing genuine discourse because it shifts the frame of reference. Discussion of cultural matters is periodically hij acked´ by the mercantalists, who argue it is time to face r´eality´ (a stance that sounds objective but which in fact is just as ideologically biased as any other). Furthermore, analyses of these r´ealities´ tend to justify cultural policies rather than propose unbiased research. Hence the tendency of lumping together all sectors with some creative input under the head of c´ulture´, including: new technology; design; advertising; haute cuisine and so on. Yet what field of Man´s activity does not include a dose of creativity? This jamboree bag approach to cultural policy means the sectors that hitherto made up the core of cultural offerings are now given short shrift. Those who fail to redress such neglect are either unaware of its consequences or have an ideological axe to grind.

Richard Florida's writings exemplify such an approach. Using the concept of ć reative classes ́, he lumps together all cultural and other spheres that have some link to creativity and which embrace most of the professions. According to Florida, a city with a high density of such activities becomes more tolerant and diverse and all of these factors boost its economic development. He then defines indicators that positively correlate creativity, tolerance, diversity and economic development. Whether or not there is any merit in the idea, one should note the difficulty of establishing a causal relationship between things that occur at around the same time. Does greater tolerance spur greater economic development or is it the other way round?

Reading these theories from a post-Marxist, post Frankfurt School perspective makes one wonder whether such discourses are not just another expression of the victory of the market. They coincide in mingling economics and culture but miss the point ít is not economics that has taken on a cultural tint but rather culture that has become mercantile. Jameson would have us believe there is nothing beyond the market. He might just as well have said that those who believe otherwise are deluding themselves.

To end, I should like to propose that the relationship between economics and culture be looked at afresh and in the light of four key values: freedom, equality, wealth, sustainability. Fleshing out these values will occupy many minds. It is to be hoped they will approach the task unshackled by ideological preconceptions and self-interest II

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notes & comments

transfer 04
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Joan Francesc Mira

Catalanism: a place in Europe?

If there is one thing that cultural and political Catalanism cannot be accused of, it is that it has been short on Europeanism. It might be said that, cast in terms of a certain innocence, a little too much has been made of this European passion that has been a continually active and present factor in the history of thought and attitudes that, in our country, might be labelled as nationalist.

When all is said and done, our ń ationalism ´has always been somewhat peculiar: we haven ́t believed too much that we are an exceptional country or people, called by destiny, by history or by Providence to play exemplary leading roles, to spread light and reason throughout the universe, to bear the Christian faith across the seas or to build empires. Ours is the nationalism of a fairly modest country and we do not even feel deeply and metaphysically that we are victims of some universal injustice, like the Serbs and the Poles. As for imperialisms of differing magnitudes, it is now even quite amusing to read Prat de la Riba who, inflamed by the ideas doing the rounds at the beginning of the 20th century, preached a curious ímp erial destiny ´for Catalonia: a destiny, and this is why it is even more diverting when seen with hindsight, that was necessarily linked with intervention in Spanish affairs and the slightly fantastic image of Ǵr eater Catalonia ´. The fact is that a nation of relatively modest dimensions only very seldom seeks for itself ó r has the chance to aspire to ´ active and positive centre-stage roles and to spread a model of its own, so as to influence in any decisive way the course of world events. There are a few cases, but very few. There are also negative starring roles of course b́ ecause of some exemplariness in misfortune ´ but they do not tend to be the result of aspiration or of any project but rather of some fatal error.

In any case, this has not been our history: our history, since a time we might call immemorial, from the different Ramon Berenguers if one likes, has been in its

most positive sense an attempt to find a comfortable position, a place of its own within a broader framework. In the most negative sense, this has brought a tendency to submission and dissolution within this framework. For many centuries Catalonia has been ín side ´some or other political structure ẃhe ther it be the Crown of Aragon or the Spanish monarchy ´man y centuries of adjusting to others (are we an ád justing people ´by nature?) comfortably or uncomfortably, and this marks the political behaviour, ideologies and even feelings of identity, which are in good measure tied to our perception of the place we occupy in the world. Perhaps this history is not alien to the *European* and Europeanist vocation of contemporary Catalan nationalism: finding a place *for oneself* in Europe was án d is ś imply finding a niche within a comfortable space. It is being, comfortably and without any risk, something other than Catalans. It is as if being *only* Catalans (in the same way that a Russian is only a Russian, a Pole a Pole, a German a German) was not or has not historically been a sufficient and secure enough and complete enough definition *vis- -vis* the rest of the peoples of the world.

There is another explanation, though, and this is complementary and necessary: frequently the fact or desire to *be Europeans* is something we have seen as our way, or the only way of *not being Spanish*, of not being defined as Spanish or of not recognising ourselves, wholly or partially, within the Spanish identity. Each nationalism unfailingly concocts its own ń ational ideology ´, a set of interpretations, judgements, prejudices and attitudes. And part of our íd eology ´ assumes and holds ẃith mo re or less objective grounding, which is another question ´that the Spanish are not as European as the ŕ eal ´Europeans and, whatever the case, they are not as European as ẃ e ´are. Maybe it is that the Spanish people themselves have sought another perception (there is also a Spanish national ideology, needless to say, and a particularly potent one), by dint of insisting on their specificity and their difference. There is a Spain of El Cid, of the *conquistadores*, of bull-fighters, and of militant Spanish-Andalusian-ism, which is very difficult to fit with what we generally perceive as standard Éur opeanism ´. *Spain is different* was an official slogan and we could all see in *what ways* it was different and from whom. In ideological terms, it appears in the pride in Unamuno ś words, Ĺ et them (the foreigners) invent!: ´le t them invent the different kinds of ẃir eless devices ´, let them bother themselves Éur opeans and Americans ´with mate rial well-being, industry and commerce, because our speciality, the Spanish one, is mysticism and great spiritual endeavours. It is not surprising that the more contemplative form of Catalanism, from the 19th century movement of the Ŕ enaixen ´a ´[rebirth, revival] through to this Year of the Lord of 2007, should have largely consisted of permanent reaction against this Śp anish model ´(grotesque, maybe, but effective and real) of *such a different* identity: so different from Europe, above all. It is not surprising that asserting the ń ormal ´Europeanness of Catalans should have been a forceful way of simultaneously asserting the Catalan specificity *vis- -vis* the Spanish one. From this standpoint, Spain was d́ ifferent ´from Europe and Catalonia was not: the conclusion is very clear.

Bartók, Jaume Plensa (2007)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 34 x 25 cm

Our Europeanism, therefore, and even a certain Éur opean fascination ´ is neither wholly disinterested nor wholly idealist: it is also a way of taking a distance from a domain of identity and belonging that has little appeal for us, that is uncomfortable and maybe not very p´ restigious ´, to seek a foothold in another sphere that we feel is more ó urs ´ and more endowed with positive connotations. How many times have we not been attracted by íf I remember the words (of Espriu) correctly ´that ´n orth / where they say the people are clean / and noble, refined, rich, alert, / and happy and free?́ How many times have we not felt distant from ´that s outh ´ where the people were more likely to be dirty, neither free nor alert and only happy when they were going to a bullfight or singing flamenco? Each people needs to feel some kind of superiority over another and if Spanish superiority was based on its imperial glories, *hispanidad* and Quixote, ours consisted in being more European than them. It continues to be most pleasurable to think that Barcelona is more Éur opean ´ than other great cities we know of, and obviously more so than Madrid; or that Catalonia is ´the most European zone of Spain ´, which even the Spanish á´s is well known ´gr udgingly recognise. Or used to recognise. In any case, these classical comparisons, which are so partial and so fruitful in terms of self-satisfaction, most likely had some objective basis a hundred, or fifty, or thirty years ago. Today, if they are still tepidly ventured, they have much less foundation, which notably devalues their effectiveness. Here, I should like to indulge in an incidental reflection: part of Valencian anti-Catalanism has sprung from deeply anti-modern and anti-European ideological sources, combined with an all-too-typical inferiority c´ omplex ´ *vis- -vis* a Catalonia blurrily perceived, though not accepted, as ´m ore important ´ and more potent in being more modern and less typically Spanish.

Forgive the slightly ironic tone of these observations: I believe they were necessary. Europe ´th e fact of wanting to be normal, run-of-the-mill Europeans ´ has also become our way of wanting to run away from Spain, and even wanting to flee it *ab initio temporis*: is it not true that ´w e ´ are children of Charlemagne ´lik e the French, Germans and northern Italians ´an d ´the y ´ are not? Isn ´t it true that, because of Spain-Castile, we have spent centuries á´t le ast since Philip II onwards ´c ulturally, politically and economically outside our space of origin, and that it is now time for us to return there in our own right? I could go on asking such questions, swinging between irony and rhetoric, but they would add little to the central idea I wish to highlight: that Europeanism is part of the Catalan national ideology, as a defining element ´ ´w e have always been Europeans ´b ut also as a result of reaction and distancing.

We are more European than the Spanish. Another, more doubtful, factor is whether this perception or attitude has some demonstrated effectiveness, because Éur ope ´, not the imagined ideal Europe as a space in which the Catalans belong, but the real institutional and political Europe, bears very little relation with our fantasies.

First of all, needless to say, this Europe, or more precisely the European Union, has been constructed and is still being constructed as a supranational state, a space made up of nations and not one that annuls nations. Ĺ Éurope des

patries´ (Europe of nations) ás de Gaulle said and as everyone thinks´ the Europe of traders and the Europe of Brussels institutions is unlikely to become the Éu rope of peoples´ if we understand p´ eoples´ as realities that are independent of already-constituted states. Europeanism is a value and a project that has to be worked through to its democratic consequences; it is a project that rises above the old closed-off states in conflict; it is the foundation of a desirable common European identity (which will take a long time to come, if it ever does, since it is the equivalent of a single national-style space of identity), but institutionally and ideologically, doctrinally and functionally, it does not propose recognising and embracing, as such, peoples without a state: Basques, Scots, Flemish, Bretons, Catalans, et cetera, are still ín ternal affairs´ of their respective states and not a European affair. And it is completely illusory to think that Éur ope of the Regions´ is the substitute or equivalent of such recognition.

Hence, and as a first application or conclusion, we might say that the Europeanist intensity of the European Union´s peoples without a state án d here the case of the Catalans would be paradigmatic´ should not make them imagine that É urope´, as a s´ uperior´ organisation, is the solution to their old conflicts with their respective states. For the cultural and political nationalisms of these c´ ountries without a state´, it would be a mistake for them to become part of and to be confused with more or less institutionalised r´ egional´ structures and not to present themselves precisely as defenders of nations with the corresponding rights (not recognised, but rights). Organic or political relationships, for example, between Catalonia and Piedmont or Baden-W´ rtenberg could be useful or interesting in some regards, but not institutionally, and hence v´ isibly, conceptually and nationally ´the y are different from those that Extremadura might have: they are accepted only as region-to-region initiatives. And Catalonia, as is evident, agrees to participate in them only as a Spanish region. There should perhaps exist a joint pressure ás sociation´ s´ erious, at the highest possible level and maximum visibility ó f European Union nations without a state (something not easy to achieve, especially because of the political heterogeneity of the different n´ ationalisms´ to be found therein: some, like the best-known and shrillest in Flanders, quite unpresentable), but such an ás sociation´ does not exist, nobody expects to have one and the result is that, right now, these nations are as good as invisible in European terms. The n´ ationalities question´ should be raised *within* the European Union but the n´ ationalisms´ Ć atalan included´ only raise it within the respective states. In this situation, making one´s own p´ lace in Europe´ visible is rigorously impossible, at least in political and institutional terms.

There is, however, a second matter. In the process of the institutional construction of the European Union and the ceding or delegation of sovereignty of the member states, the classical independence and sovereignty (real and symbolic) of the selfsame states is founded ever less in the traditional attributes of states, for example political-policing borders, customs, currency and finances, absolutely autonomous foreign relations and national armies. Nonetheless, there is a set of characteristics and fields of

political action that are maintained as specific of states and in first place among these are the fields of culture, education and language, the mass media and its spaces and the specific symbolic complex (from sports to known public personalities, from national festivals to the moral community and interests). These traits and fields of ideological-political action will possibly have an increasing relative importance: it is in particular in the domains of culture, education and communication that each EU member state will seek to preserve and project its national specificity and in which the usual historic state nationalism will be fully functioning. States can or will be able to renounce many things, but they will never renounce and, on the contrary, will preserve, reinforce and project their cultural and, if such is the case, linguistic specificity. This is precisely because they know that it is right here where the reality, perception, and projection of one's own distinctive identity are at stake. To repeat the famous words, It's *not* the economy, stupid!

Hence, the second conclusion or application: it is also in these domains where peoples without a state (their social, cultural and political movements, their institutions of self-government, their civic entities, their intellectuals and their opinion leaders, their mass media, etc.) need to carry out a more intense and, if possible, more effective ideological action of promotion and self-defence (with due assignation of sufficient resources, for example, in the knowledge that the most substantial part of the existence and recognition of a nation is at stake here). Embracing as its own the cultural, educational and linguistic framework of the state is for the nation without a state accepting its own non-existence, or partial, subaltern and subordinated existence which, at the end of the day, is heading for extinction. Language, culture, communication, symbolic definition in one's own terms are the fields in which the continuity (which amounts to saying conscious visibility, within and without) of the national space itself is played out. The whole effort in this terrain has to be at least as determined and clear and complex-free as that of the states. If Catalonia has to be, or can be, or wants to be a nation of Europe, it must present itself as such a nation, as a whole, not as a part, because if political independence right now is not, or does not seem probable, cultural and symbolic independence is absolutely essential. Being is being perceived and being perceived in Europe as a nation has to be the result of being presented and projected as such: as a nation-whole, not as part of the Spanish nation. The plain truth is that the Catalan institutions that should be doing this are not doing so (except for the odd and partial instance like a book fair). They are not doing it seriously and methodically, neither before, nor now, nor in immediate plans for the future. It is clear that if they do not do it with their own country in mind beyond the field of rhetoric the y will hardly be able to do it *vis--vis* Europe. In Europe, then, Catalonia is just another region of Spain (a peculiar region, perhaps, for the better informed, but not much more than that) and there seems to be no serious, consistent and efficient project for changing this image and this definition and this place on the map. If there is, I have not seen it yet II

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Vicenç Pagès Jordà

At the bottom of the pond

Josep M. de Sagarra's Vida Privada *(Private Life) is the work of a great portraitist*

Like Balzac, Josep Maria de Sagarra (1894-1961) is a force of nature. He is particularly well known as a poet and playwright, while his prose work consists of a considerable number of journalistic pieces, memoirs and three novels: *Paulina Buxareu* (1919), *All i salobre* (Garlic and Salt, 1928) and *Vida privada* (1932).

Together, these three works form a small Sagarra-style human comedy: the first depicts the summer daydream of the petit-bourgeoisie of Barcelona, the second the moral squalor of life at sea, and the third the decadence of the aristocracy and upper class.

Vida privada is, from its opening pages, the book of a great portraitist. The work begins with Frederic de Lloberola waking up in the room of his former lover after having met up with her again the previous night. The reader is immediately treated to the first of a long series of dazzling descriptions:

> The four chairs were overflowing with her things; the small dressing table was wilting under its burden of little flasks, powders, tweezers and scissors, while the open wardrobe was a sort of booth of lugubrious pomp with the dresses and coats on their hangers, vivid in colours and appliqu´s, looking like scrawny princesses from some fairground stall, all of them decapitated and with hooks stuck into their tracheas. On top of the wardrobe, empty, dust-caked hat boxes slumbered in the company of a stuffed dog. The dog had ended up in the hands of a

ham-fisted taxidermist, who had done a deplorable job with the stuffing, leaving all the stitches of his suturing visible among the belly pelt, which had been visited by moths. Its mistress had bedecked its neck with a bit of an old-fashioned garter on which three tiny satin roses, like three drops of blood, strove to keep body and soul together.

Sagarra then proceeds to describe the smell in the room. Next come Frederic´s thoughts about the scene where he runs into his old lover again, laced with descriptions of his friends, acquaintances and manners and mores. Twenty pages on, Frederic de Lloberola is still stretched out on the bed, in the thick of an irresolvable moral conflict. Now, he takes the reader through his reflections and feelings until linking up with the family. The narrator then goes on to introduce the reader into a complicated mesh of historical, religious and economic issues. Frederic´s brother, Guillem, moves to the foreground of the following scene, an erotic encounter adjusted to the going rate, and the book revolves around this.

Immobilised scenes

The 19th century realist novel is based on a succession of scenes with a counterpoint of summaries that make them comprehensible and perhaps necessary. In this type of novel, the descriptions of places and characters, along with biographical syntheses, have the function of furnishing the minimal information that gets the scenes underway, which is the author´s concern and, in particular, it is these scenes that beguile the reader. Josep Maria de Sagarra, however, does the opposite.
The few scenes he offers wind down until, once immobilised, they are submitted to painstaking dissection. One can see that where Sagarra most enjoys himself is in description and pr´cis. Throughout the book, new characters keep appearing, presented very much at his leisure and very often having no function in the plot. More than a succession of characters in fluid interaction, *Vida privada*, consists of a string of personalities squeezed into impermeable compartments that are moved *en masse* while the remaining characters are held in suspense.
The reader leaves the book with the sensation that the individuals are not as important as the portrait of society and, in particular, the transformations to which the Barcelona elite is subjected between the First World War and the proclamation of the Republic. More precisely, the main theme of the book might well be the abyss that yawns between private vices and public virtues, in the extraordinary verbal pyrotechnics that contrast with the invisible detritus doggedly accumulating in the bottom of the pond.

At the end of this edition, Xavier Pla gives an account of the reactions to the book when it was first published. He notes, on the one hand, the moral reproaches, which now seem ridiculous and, on the other, the attribution of intentions that also seems out of place today. In all, the more literary reviews have aged better. Dom´nech Gans´ was not far off the track when he wrote that the book had no unity, and neither was Guillem D'az-Plaja when he noted that ´the re is more light-handed charm than architecture´. In fact, Sagarra himself had warned that there was no coherence of plot in the book and that it was a hybrid product, somewhere between a novel and a report.

Digressions and pontification

All this is to say that *Vida privada* is a good book but not a good novel. Rather

than following in the wake of Stendhal or Dickens, it evokes Enlightenment experiments, those books of Diderot or Sterne, so full of more-or-less ironic disquisitions, excursuses and pontificating, which are more concerned with establishing complicity between author and reader than with any arduous construction of a credible world. Rather than being an artisan who yields to the tyranny of verisimilitude, Sagarra is swept away by his own creative passion. As if he lacked faith in his abilities as a novelist, Sagarra concocts a plot that is the quintessential scandal: here one finds the *mn age trois*, a murder in a brothel, blackmail, suicide, abortion, interracial and class-crossing love affairs, prostitutes, transvestites and anything that might bother the society of the nineteen thirties, with the additional twist of the *roman cl* . Seventy-five years on, however, these elements are not as convincing as the power of the style, and Sagarra´s ability to fashion sentences that entrance and move the reader. Yet the characters move in fits and starts, like automata. Apart from Bobby, Sagarra presents them condescendingly, with cold, surgical cruelty. Most of them are hypocrites, self-centred and inept. Rarely do they cross the threshold of pamphleteering caricatures. In this vein, here is one memorable description:

There was a tall man, with thinning white hair, high-coloured, worn-looking, vulgar, a cross between a police inspector and a seven-and-a-half player, with something of the clergyman and the tiger-tamer. This man was general Primo de Rivera.

Besides his pen-portraits, Sagarra excels in his description of places, from the drawing rooms of aristocrats at the top end of town, to modest little flats in the Eixample neighbourhood through to cabarets and the sordid bars in the low-life Raval district. We might do well to close this account of the book with another vintage quote:

The stairwell reeked of chicken wings, cheap cigars and rubbish bins, this special stench of some houses in Barcelona´s Eixample area that everyone puts up with and no one knows where it´s coming from, which the tenants note five or six times a day, while the concierge complains to the administrator, but nothing is ever done. To the natural stink on the stairs is added the smell of grievance, ill-humour, rancour and aimless protest. Sometimes the rankness comes from the washing trough; sometimes it´s the piss of that German who sells drugs and special belts, so the smell of the German´s piss mingles with the squalid salt cod that they´re boiling up at the concierge´s; then the stairwell produces a chemical reaction that makes one think of the beards of knights going off to the Holy Land, or the nightdress of the concubine of some old king of Castile. Sometimes the stench wafts from the souls of the ladies in the first-floor flat, completely dead and giving off the gamey reek of a dead animal that not even the crows want to know about II

Vicenç Pagès Jordà is a writer.

transfer

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JOSEP MARIA MUÑOZ

Conversation with the architect Oriol Bohigas

Of all the Catalan architects, **ORIOL BOHIGAS** (Barcelona, 1925) is the one who has been most in the public limelight over the past fifty years. On the basis of his essential realism and a reforming stance in design, he has been one of the great path-breakers of architectural modernity in Catalonia. Since 1961, Josep M. Martorell and David MacKay have been his inseparable partners in the MBM office. His intellectual inquietudes led him to a pioneering vindication of modernist and rationalist architecture. Since their earliest beginnings in the sixties, he has been associated with Catalanism-inspired cultural projects and was a conspicuous member of the group known as gauche divine. In the democratic period, he hasbeen the Barcelona City Council delegate for urban planning (when Narcís Serra was Mayor, from 1980 to 1984) and Councillor responsible for Culture (with Pasqual Maragall as Mayor, from 1991 to 1994). As the man who inspired municipal town planning policy, he was artificer of the "reconstruction of Barcelona" and designer of the Olympic Village.
He has published two books of memoirs, two collections of journalistic articles, along with several books on architecture and urban planning. He has received numerous prizes and awards in recognition of his work.

It is difficult to embark on an interview with someone of 82 with a trajectory such as yours, but if I had to single out one particular item of your extensive career, I would say it is your dual, successive and extraordinary condition as urban planning delegate and Councillor responsible for Culture in the Barcelona City Council.

Yes, there are two different fields but with points of relationship.

What led you there?

I think there are many kinds of architects. Yet there has always been a group of us who are motivated by certain intellectual pretensions. This means that there was a time when you could participate in the urban planning definition of Barcelona and another where you could be active in the field of culture. When I was named delegate for urban planning I could see quite clearly that there were many variants involved, from the purely technical and social aspects to the clearly cultural and intellectual ones. It therefore situated me close to culture management. This was time when the Museums Plan was being worked on and many of the problems with that were connected with urban planning. The location of entities that are as potent as museums tend to be doesn t only change the city s urban layout but the cultural aims of society as a whole. Hence, urban planning had a predominant role in collective urban culture. I hadn t given any thought to going in as

Councillor for Culture until Pasqual Maragall asked me to do it. In fact I didn´t really hesitate because I thought it was an interesting line of work in which to try my hand and then it turned out to be very difficult. While we managed to achieve a lot of things in urban planning, creating models and ways of working that have been useful later and if it might be said that, one way or another, we contributed towards the transformation of Barcelona, I think that my time in culture was only useful in making a very critical analysis of the situation at the time. As for positive results, I didn´t achieve any, and this was so much the case that I left after having produced a little book that I called *Gr cies i desgr cies culturals de Barcelona* (Cultural Graces and Disgraces of Barcelona, 1993). The basic problem was that, with the Council´s budgets for culture, there was no way we were going to finish any museum or start any collection, or resolve the problems of music teaching, or the issues connected with the social vision of culture. I also realised that the position of delegate for urban planning was in some way easier than that of councillor of culture because, in urban planning, there´s a touch of technical and professional solvency that lets you pass over a lot of obstacles if you´ve got relatively clear ideas about how to make a city. Culture, however, is such a diffuse thing requiring intervention in the form of top-level decisions and ´ let there be no mistake about this ´ I realised that the top-level decisions weren´t being taken in the City Council but in carrer Nicaragua[1], and I wasn´t a party card-holder and so I wasn´t there where the budget was being brewed. If you can´t participate in the management and conceptual justification of a budget then it´s very difficult to work seriously.

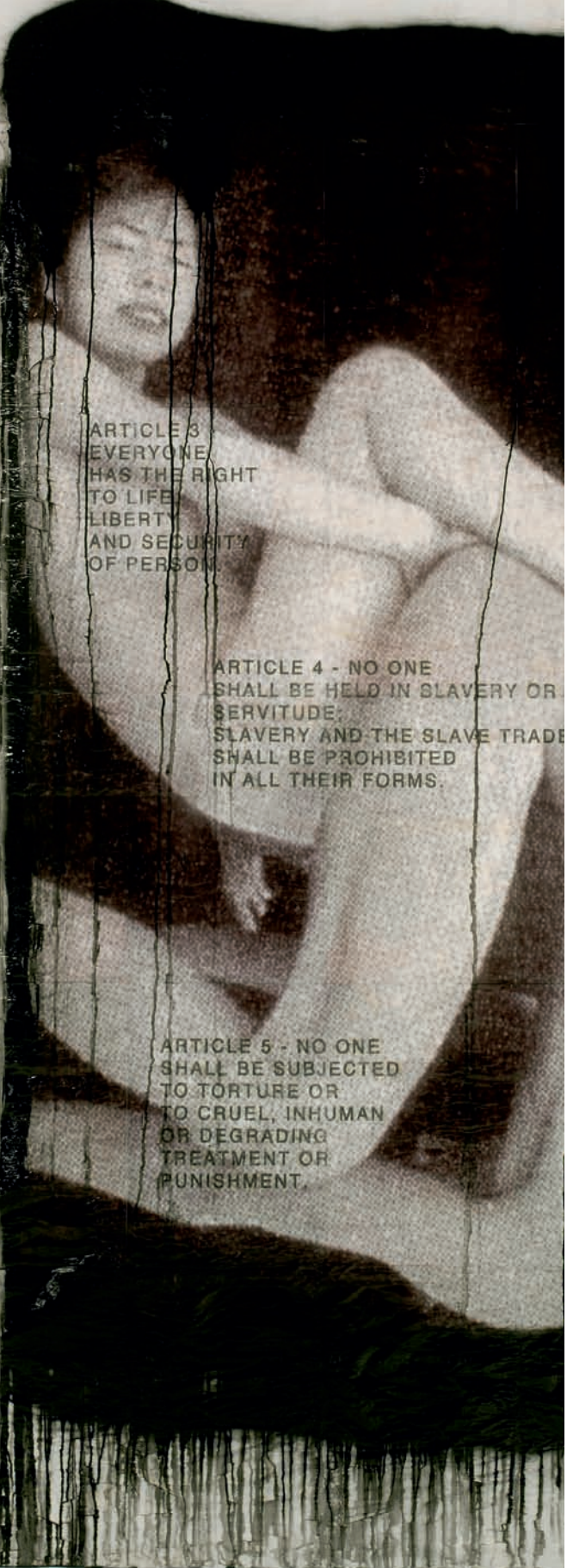
We ll come back to that later but now I d like to go back to the start. You were born in 1925 and still recall the schooling of the Republican years.

It´s true. I´ve got fantastic memories of my schooling in the Republican years. It´s surprising to think not only about the cultural and educational work that was done in the Republic but also during the Civil War, when a lot of positive things were done in education. Despite the bombing attacks, despite the fact that a lot of teachers had gone off to the front, the quality of education kept increasing. It was a tremendous job they didÉ

Your father was a journalist who, as a young man, had written in left-wing publications and later worked in the administration of municipal cultural institutions. What is there of him in you?

Although they are distant, I have extraordinary memories of my father, of his cultural commitment, his educational commitment, his honesty as a public servant, and so on. My father, as a result of his journalistic work, was very keen on the history of Barcelona. He had a substantial library, much of it specialising in different aspects of the history of Barcelona. This enthusiasm for Barcelona, which came through to me when I was still a small boy rummaging around in my father´s books, helped me to understand or to participate in an understanding of what the city was, of what the phenomenon of c´ity´ was.

[1] This is the headquarters, at number 75-77, of the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (Socialist Party of Catalonia), which is affiliated with the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers´ Party). [Translator´s note].



My parents, then, were the ones that steered me towards the intellectual bent I´d on´t know what to call it without seeming pretentious´m y mother in music and my father in history. They were painful years in which intellectual pretensions were on a very tight rein and even domestic calm was too. Everyone was talking about the war but, for us, the post-war years were even worse. My father was purged and penalised for two years without work or salary. For him, being jobless was very difficult both economically and socially. When the situation settled down a bit and there was relative normality under the Franco dictatorship, he died.

When you enrolled in the School of Architecture were you interested in linking up with pre-war architectural culture?

At the time, they took a dim view of Modernism and modern rationalist architecture at the School of Architecture. The teachers were bearers of residues of Noucentisme[2] and, more importantly of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, pitted against the modernism of Dom´nech i Montaner, Gaud' and even Jujol himself. Again, there was animosity towards contemporary architecture to such a degree that it seems that, when they reopened the School after Franco came to power, they threw out all the library books that dealt with contemporary architecture.

The Silk Road XIII (La Ruta de la Seda, XIII)
Jaume Plensa (2006)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 238 x 112 cm

So, these are two enthusiasms that constituted our subversive stance within the School. When I was still a student there, I wrote an article about GATCPAC[3], which wasn´t published because the censor banned it. This only egged us on to study it more, and study with revolutionary zeal ´ a very home-grounded revolution ´ because it was based on the intellectual fact that was the renovation of modern architecture, which we knew was happening all around the world at the time but we didn´t know, even though we suspected it, that it had to take these paths. The first time we had any contact with international architecture was on the end-of-degree trip, in 1951, around Italy. It was a most diverting trip because we went back to visiting the great renaissance, baroque and classical monuments while also discovering the contemporary architecture that was making great strides in Italy with architects like Terragni and others that came from the modern movement. We had the good luck that, just when we had finished our degree, we found a simple, clear and evident aim, that of recovering contemporary architecture, which was by then being done the world over.

In your twofold activity as architect and intellectual, there is a moment where they come together in the early sixties when you began to get involved in publications that Catalan culture was then producing, for example the review *Serra dÔr* and the publishing house Edicions 62.

In the fifties there was a relatively major change in Spain (though, in fact, it was only a gloss on the bad general situation): the borders were opened up, there was more contact with other countries and the system of isolation of the Franco dictatorship was considerably eased. However, it was in the nineteen sixties, when this change took on greater proportions and when a lot of things were going on in Catalonia, that I feel I was involved in one way or another. One of these events was the student revolution, which I was part of (I wasn´t teaching in the School till 1964). The other was the creation of *Serra d Or* and Edicions 62. It started out as something that seemed unimportant and then it turned out to be very important, not so much for the production itself but for what it generated around it. I remember that one day two lads came knocking at my door, half timid and half aggressive, to say that they were about to produce the review *Serra d Or*. They wanted to have a section on architecture, so I started to write under the heading of Ď esign, Architecture and Urban Planning ´, in an attempt to make a single concept out of the three disciplines, on the basis of that thesis of functionalism that says that designing an object is the same as designing a city. It was a series that offered news of what was starting to happen here and what was being done abroad, in matters that were closest to what was of interest here. In 1963, I published my first book with Edicions 62, *Barcelona, entre el Pla Cerd i el barraquisme* (Barcelona, between the Cerd Ṕl an and Slum Construction), which is a history of the architecture of Barcelona on the basis of positive and regressive episodes, divided into two parts: the neoclassical and conservative standpoints and

■ [2] The early-20th century, urban-based Catalan cultural movement that arose mainly in reaction to Modernism, in both art and ideology. [Translator´s note].

[3] Group of Catalan Architects and Technicians for the Improvement of Contemporary Architecture, part of the Spanish group formed during the Second Republic to promote rationalist ideology in architecture. [Translator´s note].

the revolutionary visions of Modernism and rationalism. It was at this time that my university adventure also began, as an assistant lecturer. I taught for a year and a half until the Caputxinada[4] (March 1966), which resulted in my being expelled from the university. I was then out of the university for a long time but still keeping open a number of lateral contacts there. Finally, in 1971, they called for applications for the chair and, despite my objections about having been expelled, I applied and was unanimously appointed. That was shortly after the Montserrat lock-in (december 1970) and, just after coming out of that, full of anti-Franco euphoria, I had to take up the chair. They wanted me to sign a document stating my support for the principles of the [National, Falangist] Movement and I refused. After a three-month battle, they stripped me of the chair and I didn´t get it back until 1975. It´s a complex story but one that is in keeping with the state of affairs then.

This decisive period of the sixties also had a frivolous side: the *gauche divine*[5], the nights at the Bocaccio

I think the *gauche divine* is one of the nicest and most effective things that happened to us because there was a shift towards changing customs and going beyond the hypocrisies of the time. The people of the *gauche divine* had some very serious features. I find the name quite diverting and accurate, yet it only seems to highlight the frivolous and slightly ridiculous aspects of the situation. A lot of demonstrations in support of the unions and workers´ rights started with these people. The famous Montserrat lock-in came out of the Bocaccio! Moreover, they were all very hard-working. There were architects that generated a new vision of the profession, some excellent poets, and publishers who brought about a total transformation of the publishing industry. Hence, the practical results, from both revolutionary and professional-excellence points of view, were very positive. This also coincided with a slight economic improvement. We bought our first [SEAT] 600s and, of course there´s a big lifestyle difference between a 600 and the train.

From the start, the focus of your concerns was the city of Barcelona. What was the city like then?

You don´t remember the things from your youth as being as bad as you have later found out they were. You see it afterwards, when you analyse and remember things that you didn´t think were so bad then because you´d got used to them. Barcelona had two great contradictory problems: it was a dead city and yet it was all too alive at the same time. Too alive and too dead, along with the huge error and dreadfully wrong myth of the

[4] On 11 march, some 500 students and teachers from the university faculties and schools of Barcelona, along with invited intellectuals, staged a lock-in at the Capuchin monastery in Sarrià, where they constituted the Democratic Students Union of the University of Barcelona. Known as the Caputxinada, this was a major event in the democratic opposition to the Franco regime. [Translator´s note].

[5] The name of the group of upper-middle class friends (architects, models, publishers, writers, etc.) who met to talk about love, sex, politics and freedom, especially in the bar of the Bocaccio discothèque, was coined by the journalist and playwright Joan de Sagarra who, writing about the launch of the publishing house Editorial Tusquets, rather than listing all the sufficiently well-known names of those present, preferred to merely comment, 'The whole Gauche Divine was there'. [Translator´s note].

Mayor, Porcioles. What was disgusting was the apparent pseudo-patriotic Barcelona-ism of Porcioles´world: the Great Barcelona, the creation of the housing estates that were presented as a big social reform for immigrant workers, while in reality it meant the destruction of the urban planning panorama of the whole metropolitan area. Within this general death, there was a wish to revive the city in the wrong way, with very serious mistakes. Porcioles did two things that have been irreparable in urban planning terms: first, the creation of residential nuclei outside the urban areas, cancers that have still not been remedied, despite some efforts; and, second, the destruction of one of Barcelona´s most beautiful skylines, that of the Eixample neighbourhood. They added two extra storeys to those buildings, an attic and then another one above that. The Barcelona of the oldest part of the Eixample district, around the passeig de Gr´cia and the Rambla de Catalunya, which had a unity in its architecture, was destroyed thanks to crudely constructed additions of different heights that were spawned by pure speculation. The destruction of the character of the central neighbourhood of Barcelona and the creation of residential nuclei that never became neighbourhoods, because they never set out to be that from the start, are two things that greatly mark the sixties.

Reconstruction is the most outstanding aspect of the democratic urban planning model we wanted to create

You have always moved between architecture and urban planning.

I started out being more interested in urban planning than in architecture although, eventually, in the exercise of my profession I was more inclined to architecture, especially at the beginning, but this changed after 1992 because, thanks to Barcelona´s successes in urban planning, the biggest jobs we have are in urban planning. This went against the grain because what still interests me and amuses me is common-or-garden architecture. It´s curious, then, that in my career there´s been a first approximation to architecture through urbanism, then a professional period clearly concerned with architecture pure and simple and, finally, an increasing engagement with urbanism in recent years.

In 1980, with the return of democracy to the councils, you were named delegate for urban planning. This is the epoch of the re construcci de Barcelona (reconstruction of Barcelona), which is the title of a book you published in 1984. What characterised the urban planning policy of the new democratic council?

Reconstruction is the most outstanding aspect of the democratic urban planning model we wanted to create. The first thing we agreed on was that we would not take what might have seemed the most obvious step, which was to abolish the general plan and do it again because that would have drawn us into a discussion lasting ten years. What was required was to fix things that already existed. This is why we speak about the r´econstruction´of Barcelona, by which I mean remaking the city and making the part that had not been made. It was a way of offering an immediate service to the population. This is why specific projects were more important than the general

plan, not only in improving conditions of life but also in spilling over into the surroundings in the positive sense. I´m talking about squares but also of sports centres, schools and cultural institutions. This worked and it´s true that the most important aspect of Barcelona´s attempt at an urban planning model is that of reconstruction as opposed to expansion, and assessment of projects had to be on the basis of considering the city as public space since private space would benefit from improvements in public space.

In general, we performed very well, did a good job and so there was a certain pride in being an architect, and in the public recognition that things were being done well

In those years people went so far as to talk about a c ity of architects , in which one imagines your group had a lot of influence, and a mayor who played the P rince . What is true in this journalistic image?

The princely denomination is an exaggeration. It happened to be a time in which architects were made responsible for certain kinds of tasks. Precisely because, in economic terms, it wasn´t a very euphoric period we architects had to take on public positions, public spaces and public buildings and this generated some enthusiasm. I´d say that, in general, we performed very well, did a good job and so there was a certain pride in being an architect, and in the public recognition that things were being done well. The politicians saw that that they needed to use this professional quality of architects, which had not happened to such an extent previously. Nowadays, there is so much diversification in such assignments that the politicians are not so interested in playing around with the specific quality of works but rather with notions like efficiency and engineering. One of the things we did in those years was to try to get the engineers working at the orders of architects, which we achieved very effectively. Now, however, the reverse is happening: engineers and functionaries are having a lot more say, but without the slightest trace of the intellectual aura or sense of triumph that we architects had in former times. What existed then was a very significant degree of understanding between politicians and architects.

In 1986, at this time of understanding between architects and politicians, Barcelona was chosen as the venue for the 1992 Olympic Games, and this brought about a change of scale in urban planning intervention.

While the exercise of reconstructing the city was happening piecemeal, and long before there was any certainty that we would be hosting the Olympic Games, the four Olympic areas were agreed upon as early as 1984. The idea was that it was necessary to use the same method as other urban projects but on a different scale, and that we shouldn´t waste time on excessively broad-sweeping views of the territory. It was agreed that it was all to be done within Barcelona, and that we should make

the most of the occasion to resolve some of the more difficult and conflictive situations. At the time, there was some dispute over where to locate the Olympic Village. I and the people in my department insisted that it had to be constructed in the most complicated part of the city, a space occupied by obsolete half-closed factories that was also Barcelona´s most important access point to the sea. Some politicians said it would be too expensive, that it wouldn´t work and that they´d prefer to construct some apartment blocks in the Vall´s region because it would be quicker and there wouldn´t be any problems of cost or territory. However, we had Maragall´s support and that of a sector among the politicians who were convinced that if we didn´t take this opportunity to carry out this operation in the worst zone of Barcelona, the part that needed the most major reforms, it would never happen. It was a chance to erase a totally lost industrial area where the city´s effluents ran in open drains, and where there were the negative memories of the Camp de la Bota[6], etcetera. It was a magnificent site for a new seaside neighbourhood. This went ahead because it was an application of the new system of reconstructing the city.

■ [6] Between 1939 and 1952, the Franco regime executed 1,704 people Camp de la Bota. [Translator´s note].

The Silk Road XX (La Ruta de la Seda XX)
Jaume Plensa (2006)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 238 x 112 cm

From a sensibility that in those years was surely not so evident, today s work in Poblenou is seen as excessive perhaps in the sense that it has left little trace of the industrial past of the city.

I think that, in relative terms, the Olympic Village area was relatively built up but we believed (and I still do) that it should not be conserved because, while the whole theory of reconstructing Barcelona was based on maintaining the existing milieus and respect for historic architecture, it was only up to a certain point. I think that Catalonia and Spain in general have repeated the errors of Italy, where a policy of indiscriminate conservation (and of things that are old rather than ancient) has brought about collapse in the city. In Catalonia we need to move beyond this falsely progressive volition to hang on to the old because maintaining the old has never been progressive.

In the planning of the Olympic Village, you reintroduce your old concerns about the housing block or i sland .

I always think back to an article I wrote about the Ṕ oble Espanyol ´[7] on Montjíc which suggested, very early on (I think it was written in 1959), that we should see the Poble Espanyol as something more than a horrible stage set, asking why there are some streets in it that appeal to us so much. It ś because they maintain two basic ideas: the street and housing built around the closed block. This housing block and the street have to constitute the matrix of the habitable city once again. This is what we did with the Olympic Village. I think this is its most valuable aspect, thanks to which people can go from the Cerd-´ designed Eixample district to the Olympic Village without problems of continuity, even though the population of the latter is much lower and the zone has been less inhabited in historical terms. The other thing that we were very keen to do in the Olympic Village was to produce an urban project in which the form and characteristics of each block of houses would be determined and whole thing would be handed over to thirty architects to work on and this is what gave it, as I understand it, this feel of a traditionally-constructed city.

In 2004, you published a book with a great title: *Contra la incontinn̂ cia urbana. Reconsiderci ̂ moral de lâ rquitectura i la ciutat* (Against Urban Incontinence. A Moral Reconsideration of Architecture and the City). What do you say in it?

This book was written with the idea of summarising everything I ́ve championed and defended over the years: at bottom, it ś the same idea of reconstructing the city. What does a city have to be in order to be a city? Sometimes I think of Eugeni d Óŕs, when he said, talking about ´post-historic objects ´, that objects that can ́t change, can ́t evolve and that, if they do change, they are no longer those object. One example is the bicycle: if you change something of it, it ceases to be a bicycle because its totality is essentially a bicycle. This can be applied to the city, which is a post-historic phenomenon: if something changes it stops being a city. There are these out-of-control Asian cities that are more than human agglomerations, but a real city is based on a street, a square, housing built around

■ [7] El Poble Espanyol was built for the Barcelona International Exhibition in 1929. It is a real ́ deal-model ´ village with a surface area of 49,000 m2 and the main characteristics of towns and villages in Spain, in which 117 buildings, streets and squares are reproduced to scale. [Translator ś note].

a block, a representative building, continuity of public space, design, cohesion. The worst thing that can happen to a city is incontinence, overflowing, escaping from its strict setting to become a non-city. The architecture being done nowadays all over the world is typical of urban incontinence, where the building flies in the face of the urban structure in order to be ´ as advertising´ more representative or more contradictory.

The last few years have heightened this view of Barcelona as an incontinent city. Would you agree?

It´s very difficult for me to pass judgement on what´s happening. What´s clear is that what we call Barcelona today is no longer strictly what we used to call the Ɓar celona model´ in the eighties and nineties. I think it lacks a project of urban space, as a priority. It can´t be compared with the project of the Olympic Village and the Forum, which is not to criticise, although these are obviously two very different ways of understanding the city. If you compare it with Diagonal Mar, the difference is even more acute because the Olympic Village was a project of the public administration with the idea of giving continuity to urban space, while Diagonal Mar is an attempt to isolate, psychologically or visually, as the case may be, a neighbourhood that has no relationship with its setting and that was designed in keeping with the interests of a promoter, who also intervened. It is a space without urban reference.

Some time ago, there was an exhibition about you in the Virreina Palace in which were exhibited *inter alia* several of your ties, and socks too, no doubt. Might one say that there is a Bohigas style?

I always wear loud socks and ties, but rather than having a style, it´s a matter taking a small swipe and making a comment. I´d say I´m an exception in this regard because architects, both the ones from my generation and the younger ones, get around dressed in black. This uniformity annoys me. Moreover, old people look awful dressed in black. The only way to disguise old age is to wear light colours as in the English bourgeois tradition. In this sense, maybe it´s true that I constitute a kind of sideswipe against the general scene of architects because the only one who wears light colours is me.

You just used the word s ideswipe . The Bohigas style has been declamatory too, wouldn t you say? Do you enjoy being controversial?

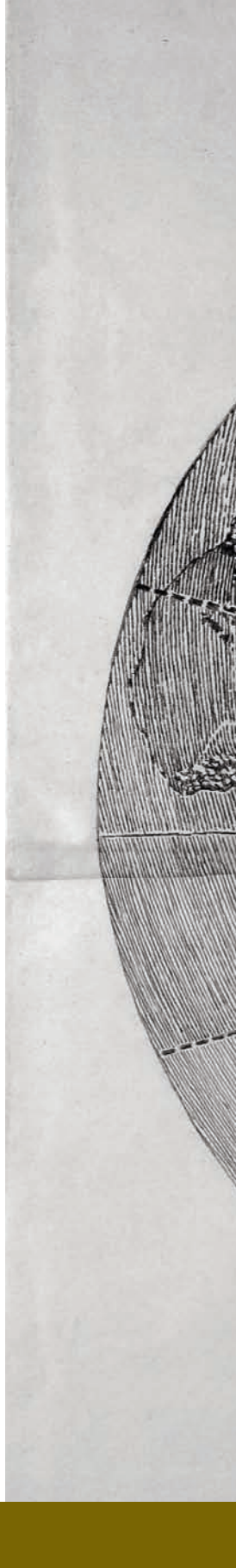
I haven´t particularly set out to be controversial. I love conversing and exchanging views and, if you like that, there are times when, perforce, you have to overemphasise your statements a bit and, if you do this with friends, you know they have to be able to interpret you properly. So, sometimes, one goes over the top with them. Yet I´m not looking for arguments. What happens is that I haven´t ever been very dependent on structures that are superior to my own and I´ve always been able to say what I´ve wanted because I´ve always been willing to step down from commissions I´ve had. By chance, rather than by merit, I haven´t had to dissimulate things too much. I only recall losing my temper on a few occasions. I´m not the type to get angry II

Josep Maria Muñoz is a historian and director of the journal *L'Avenç*.

CRISTINA JUNYENT

Jaume Terradas: a biography of the world

An interview



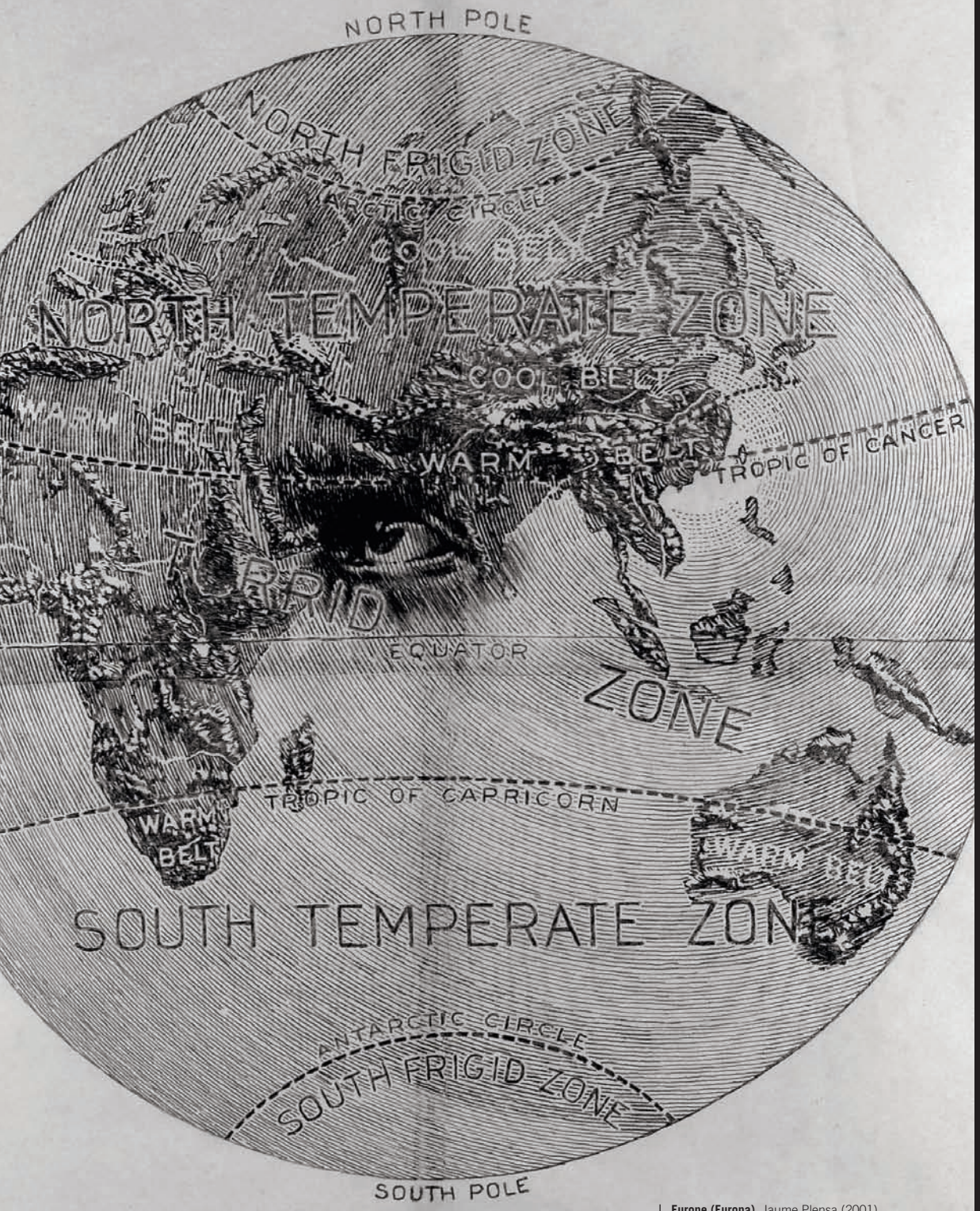
JAUME TERRADAS was born in Barcelona in 1943. He is Emeritus Professor of Ecology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Need and imagination led him to propose the creation of the Centre de Recerca Ecològica i Aplicacions Forestals (CREAF, Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications), and he is now an honorary member of its board of trustees. In 2005, he published *Biografia del món. De l'origen de la vida al col·lapse ecològic* (Biography of the World: From the Origins of Life to Ecological Collapse), which was awarded the Serra d'Or Critic's Prize in 2007, one of the oldest, uninterruptedly-awarded prizes for works in Catalan.

What led you to write *Biografia del m^n?*

In *Biografia del m—n*I put a lot of energy into trying to highlight two ideas. One was to give an idea of evolution that ś a bit different from the usual fare. The second was to reflect upon the model of social growth and solutions that are being proposed on the basis of very high energy consumption.

What criteria besides genetic ones should be kept in mind when it comes to understanding the development of life on earth?

Genetic changes such as mutations could be called qualitative but there are also quantitative ones, for example the sum of the actions of organisms. Symbiosis, for instance, enables a new, more complex organism to have properties it didn t́ have before the organisms that comprise it came together. The origin of multicellular organisms is hard to imagine if it isn t́ understood that they were already in symbiosis with microbial organisms. There are not only mutations of a genome but also more complicated mechanisms, qualitative actions that are connected with the constant relationship between



Europe (Europa), Jaume Plensa (2001)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 196 x 122 cm

Darwin was a genius because he laid the foundations for the modern conception of life

organisms and their environment. Many organisms have learnt to use not only the basic resources but also to transform and use the environment, making nests, delimiting territories to be defended, and so on.

Organisms capable of organising their environment?

Margalef said that some organisms have become engineers, which is to say they've been able to organise the environment in their own favour. An anthill or termite mound is an example of environmental design because both keep the temperature stable. Most of the activities of relationship between organisms and territory tend to stabilise conditions.

It s what humans do.

If we look at evolution as a process by means of which organisms (some more than others) keep gaining control over the environment in which they live, then we can understand better that humans are not such an extraordinary exception. Human beings have developed mental and social capacities that are quite superior to those of other organisms but they are not radically different. There is continuity between what some species do and what humans or societies do.

So we humans aren t the only transformers?

The first bacteria to discover photosynthesis began to produce oxygen and to intoxicate other bacteria. And themselves. Some of them must have escaped intoxication because they adapted to the new conditions, even though the atmospheric change they brought about was very drastic. Hence, man is not the first organism that altered the planet's functioning in any far-reaching sense.

However, we have culture.

Culture is a very important qualitative change but not so important as to make us forget about where we come from and what we depend on. Our brain is made up of bits and pieces and added over the brains of other organisms; in fact, we share some functional aspects with the brains of reptiles.

So we re not the centre of the universe. What shall we do about the creationists?

I think that the debate between the creationists and the evolutionists revolves too much around Darwin. Darwin was a genius because he laid the foundations for the modern conception of life. However, if we confront people who talk about mutations and genetics with those who talk about God, they are rather too far apart. I believe we should explain evolution in terms that are accessible to the public in general.

I´m very worried that almost 60% of the Americans believe that Earth has been in existence for no longer than 10,000 years. The population keeps thinking in these creationist terms.

But these groups are engaged in a massive attack on the teaching of evolution in schools, alleging that there is an alternative theory.

It is difficult to understand that we have appeared, step by step, out of a process of mutation because it´s not entirely true. Evolution has been making jumps in some cases. Which is to say it´s been acquiring packages and mechanisms all at once, for example symbiosis, as we were saying: none of us can live without bacteria. These kinds of examples help people to understand that evolution is indeed possible and, in particular, over the 4,500 million years of the history of the Earth. There is no dissent among scientists on these basic facts.

Though there are people who are yet to be convinced.

We haven´t convinced them because it´s hard to understand and maybe we haven´t explained it well. We´ve based it too much on selection and mutations, the most microscopic part of the process. It should be explained in a more general way: geological phenomena, atmospheric change, symbiosis, integration; the fabrication of tools, as in the case of chimpanzeesÉ People with religious beliefs don´t have to see them as altered by the fact of understanding evolution in the way that scientists understand it.

Now the theory of intelligent design is gaining ground.

Yes, because creationism has fallen out of favour. However, this is no more than a repetition of 17th and 18th century theories that asserted that the design of the world was so perfect that it could only be explained by the existence of God. The present-day pope upholds these ideas, which are completely without any scientific grounding. If man had been intentionally designed, he would certainly have been able to function better. He could have been designed to be happy, but instead we have children being born with malformations or having cancer when they are still foetusesÉ We are not perfectly designed but are the result of an evolutionary process.

If man had been intentionally designed, he would certainly have been able to function better

The second idea you wanted to convey is the part humans play in environmental problems.

I think that environmental problems are on the rise in the capitalist model of society, which is now practically the only model in the world. It is one in which the economy requires constant growth, which means transformation of the environment.

Can we avoid collapse brought about by climate change, for example?

The challenge of climate change is an economic one and our economy won´t be able to manage it. If the temperatures start to climb all of a sudden and things can´t be cultivated in the countries where they were once cultivated, and there can´t be tourism in countries where tourists used to go, the economic system could fail. And our societies could suffer.

There are a lot of countries that are very significant in demographic terms, and yet they don t do anything to change this.

I think they´ll end up doing something in the United States. It will be more complicated for other countries to comply. The Chinese, the Indians and the Brazilians say, ´It´s true that there´s too much CO_2 in the atmosphere and that this is a problem but you´re the ones who put it there. We´ve hardly put any there yet and now it´s our turn to get rich too´. And they´re right. If, of the six thousand million inhabitants of the Earth, three thousand million lived in the same way as the one thousand million rich people A mericans and Europeans liv e, we´d certainly have very serious problems. For the whole world to live as we live, or as Americans in New York live, is unsustainable.

And there s more and more of us.

Human demography grew spectacularly as soon as we stopped being hunters and gatherers and leading the languid life of lions. By accumulating food stocks thanks to agriculture and animal husbandry, the population burgeoned. And it shot up again 200 years ago when a new supply of resources was discovered. Having a lot of energy for producing the resources that are needed makes it possible to maintain a lot more people. If the resources fail there´ll be a demographic downturn. Fewer babies will be born and the old people won´t get to be so old. There´ll be a regression.

Does your theory compare humans with a colony of flies?

I think we´re like flies that have found some manure in the middle of a field. There´s demographic growth and lots of hustle and bustle all around it. But when´s it going to run out? Technology tries to ensure that it won´t run out, but this is a siren song. If we find a cheap, indefinite energy supply we can do what we want, we won´t have food problems and we´ll all be richer but we´ll certainly bring the whole show down because we have endless capacity for transformation. As Buckminster Fuller said, ´The most important thing about Spaceship Earth [is that] an instruction book didn´t come with it´. We need to be aware that we live in a limited space with limited resources. We´re in a spaceship with no operating manual and we´re taking on more and more fuel. It´s not that I´m fatalistic but I do think it´s a risk that´s serious enough to be borne in mind.

How might all this end up?

If we´re not able to rectify the model of open society with freedom of movement for people, freedom of ideas, and freedom for science and technology, then it might happen

that, as a result of major disasters, a fundamentalist alternative might be imposed. To put it in science-fiction terms, when there are major environmental catastrophes, fundamentalism might appear in the form of a society that could make a religion out of its relationship with the environment. And it might give rise to kinds of behaviour that restrict freedom to notable extremes, and that block technological development because it´s deemed to be dangerous.

These are the three key words: *mitigation*, *vulnerabilities*, and *adaptation* [...] Future schemes will need to orient us towards a spirit of change in society

What can be done to avoid this?

Right now, the official responses are trying to mitigate climate change, accepting the Kyoto Protocol, cutting back energy expenditure and greenhouse gas emissionsÉ Analysis should also be made of our vulnerable points and programmes of adaptation need to be developed. These are the three key words: *mitigation*, *vulnerabilities*, and *adaptation*. Five years ago, it was being proposed that we should take the path of sustainable development but this utopian position lí b erty, equality, fraternity and sustainability ´ has had its day. Future schemes will therefore need to orient us towards a spirit of change in society.

What is the reason for this change of viewpoint that incorporates action into sustainability?

It´s the result of two reports. First is the report of Nicholas Stern (commissioned by Tony Blair) and it says some very radical things such as if we spend 1% of the world´s GNP to struggle against climate change we can get around it but, if we don´t do so, the change could cost between 5% and 20% of the GNP. This figure alarmed the administrations because neither Stern nor Blair can be suspected of being ecologist sympathisers. Then again there´s the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), which is clearly optimistic.

Why?

According to the IPCC, by the end of the century we need to stabilise atmospheric CO_2 at 550 ppm. Yet students of the carbon balance say that it´s totally unfeasible to stabilise it even at 650 ppm, and we´ll be going up to 700 ppm or more. In this case, temperatures will be going up still higher than what was envisaged. The [Spanish] Minister for the Environment, Cristina Narbona has said that, by the end of the century, the temperature in the hinterland of the Iberian Peninsula will be in the order of six or seven degrees higher than at present. If we add to this increased evapotranspiration (water losses) and less rainfall (it´s estimated that in the centre and south of the Iberian Peninsula the rainfall will be only 35% or 40% of the present rate) we´ll be faced with something very like a desert. It´s impossible to maintain a city like

The great energy resource is saving energy, and it's very difficult to envisage a purely technological solution. We need changes in the model of society, the system of consumption, growth… it has to be gentler and qualitative, not so quantitative

Madrid (with 5 million inhabitants) in the midst of a plateau that´s practically desert, unless it´s with an enormous quantity of energy, like Kuwait.

With all these costs there s the additional one of the rise in sea level.

The IPCC is short of the mark on this point too. The scientists on the panel are now saying that their models haven´t taken into account the speed of glacier meltdown as they´re not sure how to go about it. Other scientists who´ve tried have obtained values for a rise in sea level of around a metre and a half instead of somewhere between a hand-span and a hand-span and a half, as the IPCC asserts. Then we´ll find ourselves without any beaches, and cities and whole countries are going to have a lot of problems. If the sea level rises a metre and a half, island countries like the Nile Delta and Bangladesh could disappear. In the Nile Delta six million people will have to be moved and, in Bangladesh, between twelve and fifteen million. Where will they all go?

Most big cities are on the coast, so what could happen?

In the rich countries, there´s a possibility of constructing barriers on the local scale but, when it´s a whole coast, barriers aren´t a viable option. Two centuries ago, in the London area, the island tipped at the same time as the sea level rose. The result was that the sea level went up by more than a meter and now 550,000 people are living below sea level.

We have a hundred years to spend money on different kinds of defence.

The rich cities can protect themselves a little by opening up wetlands in their environs so that the water has somewhere to spread, and by not occupying marshlands, which is what they did in New Orleans, where the catastrophe was a result of occupying and constructing the new city on vulnerable land.

Is it necessary to find out what the vulnerable points are so we can adapt to them?

In the 18th and 19th centuries in Barcelona, there were often catastrophic floods. The river waters had always risen but the flooding increased in direct proportion to how much the territory had been made impermeable. This went on until the floods became catastrophic. Then they took some measures of adaptation, with sewers and systems for drawing off the water, with the result that, even though there were still a

lot of sudden influxes of water after torrential rain, the catastrophic effects were less frequent.

What about situations that bring about a change of mentality in people?

Nowadays there´s a bit of a scare in the administration but very little is being done so far. Administrative organisms are being created but, in the administration as a whole, these transversal issues are tucked away into specialised offices that have no real power or ability to have any effect on economic, territorial, industrialÉ policy. So, some things have shifted but they are still a long way from constituting any kind of real impetus that might change the present dynamics.

What is needed to change these dynamics?

Really distressing things will need to happen. For example, during the heat wave in France in 2003, the temperature was 10° higher than average. Thirty thousand more people died that what was anticipated in statistical terms. Many of the dead lived in cities where the temperatures went up even more because of the heat-island effect. Three thousand people died in Paris in one night alone. The German bombers never managed to kill so many people in a single night.

There s already a scarcity of fresh water.

There´s less of it and it´s evaporating faster. Summers will be harsher and the quality of the water will deteriorate, which could give rise to catastrophic situations like epidemics, especially in Third World countries. In the world today, there are about 2,000 million people who don´t have a guaranteed supply of safe water. If the situation gets any worse it could unleash a humanitarian crisis that might lead to conflict.

Is it possible that environmental problems will end when the oil runs out?

Some people say we´re very close to peak oil ´whe n demand starts to exceed the rate of extraction. Demand in countries like China or India has rocketed and it will be very difficult to find oil resources to keep up with it. Even if the melting ice in the Arctic region makes it possible to reach unexplored zones, it still seems it would be difficult to meet the demand. Other sources of energy can be sought, for example biofuels, but they aren´t any better than oil in essence. The problem remains the same: we go on burning, we keep on sending CO_2 into the atmosphere, and cultivating plants for fuel also requires energy for large-scale agriculture, watering, fertiliser, and so on. It´s not a satisfactory solution. The great energy resource is saving energy, and it´s very difficult to envisage a purely technological solution. We need changes in the model of society, the system of consumption, growthÉ it has to be gentler and qualitative, not so quantitative.

Do you think there could be a change of values?

This looks complicated because people don´t change their values unless they are faced with a situation that really obliges them to. Environmental education won´t bring this

about. It can make a small contribution, especially when addressed to key targets in society: politicians, the mass media and businesspeople, for example, but it won t change the substantial issues. However, if reinforcement comes from outside, there could be a change, which is what happened with tobacco. With tobacco, there s been a social revolution that has been imposed because people s perceptions have changed, partly because of the anti-cancer campaigns. If people are afraid of other things too, maybe they ll change their values too and social controls might be imposed so that certain things can t be done. Perhaps when it s understood that people are dying because of heat or polluted water, there ll be some reaction. For example, if an industrialist dumps effluent into a river, it will be much more frowned upon, much more punishable than it presently is.

Territory isn t being put to good use.

Territory is an asset that should be used with good sense, but all too often excessive haste doesn t permit this. In China, for instance, the environmental situation is a total disaster. In order to develop the country, they opted for growth at any price. Now there are tremendous dust storms because of deforestation, horrific floodsÉ and they re paying a very high price for this bad use of their territory. Something similar has happened with the Aral Sea in the Ukraine, where the water dried up because of a state project. This is why governments, when they have a lot of power, are very dangerous; but it s also dangerous when they leave all the power in the hands of private parties. Private groups do the kind of things we have seen happening here. The urban developers complain because there are so many restrictions when construction generates wealth and pushes up the GNP. Maybe growth will be maintained, but who pays the costs of water purifying, supplies of drinkable water, air conditioning and sewers? It doesn t come from the pockets of the gentlemen who build the houses but it s society that has to pay the price. This has already happened in the Costa Brava and the Balearic Islands.

Is it irreversible?

In all very complex processes, the processes of destruction can be sudden, a threshold is crossed and the system collapses. Again, the building up of these systems is always slow because regulatory mechanisms need to be constructed. We don t have much idea of how complex systems function and it s almost impossible to predict the result of a particular impact on the system, and hence we need to be prudent, but we re not II

Cristina Junyent is a member of the Science in Society Foundation.

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reviews

Reviews

Globalisation, interculturalism and multilingualism

Joan Melià

Isidor Marí, *Mundialitzaci—interculturalitat i multiling isme* (Globalisation, Interculturalism and Multilingualism), Lleonard Muntaner, Palma, 2006, 220 pp.

This book by Isidor Mar' has a feature that has been characteristic of the best work in Catalan sociolinguistics for some time now. I refer to the convergence of two different but desirably complementary strands. The first is an interest in questions pertaining to the Catalan linguistic community and the second projects these issues and situates them in an international framework so that they can help us both to understand the particular fact and to enrich knowledge in general.

It is not surprising that the situation of the Catalan community should be of interest, not only in the field of Catalan sociolinguistics but also in the international domain. Not only is this a singular community with regard to the limited recognition it is accorded within the Spanish State and European Community frameworks but, given its considerable demographic presence and its cultural production, it also displays the majority of factors that have a bearing on the process of linguistic substitution and, more recently, on elements that tend to be part and parcel of the socio-political processes in the recovery of the social use of a language. At the same time, however, and despite the fact that the Catalan-language territory is a continuous space (discounting the sea that breaks it up), fragmentation into administrative divisions (state and regional) obstructs cohesion and recognition of linguistic unity and explains the different stages in processes of substitution / official usage of Catalan today, ranging from places where it is the only official language through to others where it does not enjoy any kind of recognition at all. Moreover, in the particular case of the Balearic Islands, there is an additional interest because, in the second half of the 20th century, they underwent considerable demographic expansion álm ost exclusively based on alloglot immigration ́whic h has doubled the population, redrawn territorial distribution and brought about thoroughgoing changes in economic activity, which is now almost totally based on tourism. There are two further factors that complicate matters even more, with regard, for example, to Catalonia: the questions of the unity and name of the language and that of territorial fragmentation f our islands ´ which involves division and gives rise to doubts in feelings of belonging. This complex situation, which makes the Catalan case an ideal one for testing linguistic planning proposals and for predicting what might happen in the near future in many other places, explains, among other reasons, the constant topicality of the linguistic question (in the press, political debates and so on), the abundant sociolinguistic production that has taken place in the linguistic domain as a whole, and the interest in the situation among international authors and associated circles.

As I have already noted, Isidor Mar' ́s book is a particularly good exponent of this diversity of approaches to the question. On the one hand is its familiarity with international sociolinguistic production, especially in matters that are of most concern from the Catalan point of view. On the other hand is its description and analysis of the Catalan situation in general (with special emphasis on the Balearic Islands, in this case).

Furthermore, as one can amply confirm in the Prologue by Dami ́P ons, this book offers the viewpoint of a writer who, apart from his many other activities, embodies all the profiles that, in one way or another, are related with sociolinguistic concerns or analysis: university research and teaching, political and technical management in the domain of sociolinguistic assessment and planning (of both corpus and use) and social promotion and awareness-raising. This, then, is an excellent combination of qualities for furnishing us with an account of the situation that is drawn from complementary points of view.

Isidor Mar', who has a large body of written work and considerable experience of participation in international forums in the field, collects in this book several papers that have appeared in a range of publications (reviews, contributions to collective works), along with lectures he has given at seminars and congresses. There are twenty-five chapters in total, consisting of material that, while it cannot be considered totally new in its parts, might convey this impression to a good number of potential readers when taken as a whole.

Mundialitzaci—interculturalitat i multiling isme offers a perfect combination of analysis and reflection ín which the author frequently establishes close links between the local situation and the more determinant contributions of management and thought in the international sphere ́with d etailed proposals for action, both general and specific, with regard to issues that are of greatest priority in present-day society and efforts to reconcile individual linguistic rights with the collective rights of traditional linguistic communities. Mar' ́s extensive knowledge of the situation in the international sphere of the issues that concern him, and his experience at the head of numerous initiatives guarantee the soundness and interest of his contributions.

All the texts that appear in this volume are recent. With the exception of one that dates from 1997, the others were written after 2000 and, to be more specific, most are situated between 2004 and 2006. This is therefore a work of evident topicality.

The themes Mar' deals with are diverse but all of them, as the title of his book indicates, revolve around three phenomena that are so tightly interwoven that it is difficult to approach them separately: globalisation, interculturalism and multilingualism. As one might expect, the boundaries between the different articles are diffuse and permeable. However, in an attempt to classify them on the basis of the central theme of each one, we might say that some deal with interculturalism and reception of immigrants (Ún projecte intercultural compartible per tothom ́ [An Intercultural Project for All to Share], 2005; Ď e l ́acolliment ling ́s tic a la interculturalitat ́ [From Linguistic Reception to Interculturalism], 2005; Ĺ ́acolliment ling ́s tic de la immigraci—÷Bones prć tiques [Linguistic Reception of Immigrants: Good Practice], 2004; Éd ucaci—i ciutadania intercultural: El paper de la societat ́ [Education and Intercultural Citizenship: The Role of Society], 2004), some with planning and regulation of linguistic diversity in different settings (Ĺe s actuacions de la UNESCO envers la diversitat ling ́s tica: una perspective catalana ́ [UNESCO Activities Concerning Linguistic Diversity: A Catalan Perspective],

2006; Q uin model de pluralisme cultural per al segle XXI? ´ [What Model of Cultural Pluralism for the 21st Century?], 2003; C ap a una declaraci—universal de drets ling'´s tics ´ [Towards a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights], 2001; El multiling ´isme de les empreses en el mercat mundial: l´estrat ´gia brit ´nica com a exemple ´ [The Multilingualism of Companies in the World Market: The British Strategy as an Example], 2006; D rets ling'´s tics i mundialitzaci—÷La diversitat ling ´'stica, una dimension negligida de la diversitat cultural ´ [Linguistic Rights and Globalisation: Linguistic Diversity, a Neglected Dimension of Cultural Diversity], 2006), some with multilingualism in the European Union (El mu ltiling ´isme a la Uni—Europea: tend ´ncies recents ´ [Multilingualism in the European Union: Recent Trends], 2006), some with the need to intervene in order to modify sociolinguistic realities (D el debat a l´acci—col·lectiva ´ [From Debate to Collective Action], 2003), some with the position of the Spanish State with regard to linguistic plurality (C inc questions entorn del plurilingí´s me estatal ´ [Five Questions about Plurilingualism at the State Level], 2004); La in venci—de la cultura nacional espanyola ´ [The Invention of a National Spanish Culture], 1997), while still others discuss the case of linguistic substitution in the Balearic Islands (La b alearitzaci—ling'´s tica: una destrucci—coherent ´ [Linguistic Balearicisation: Destruction that Makes Sense], 2004).

As is easy to deduce from these titles, the book is about a subject with increasingly universal implications and multiple local versions: multilingual immigration, unification of markets, the powerful impact of the mass media, state hostility to any languages spoken in only part of its territory, the permeability of the frontiers of linguistic communities, the need for linguistic planning, regulation of linguistic rights in large organisations (public or private), and the need for social commitment in the process of introducing a language as official. All of these issues affect a considerable part of present-day linguistic communities in different ways. An outstanding example is the situation of the Catalan community throughout its territory and, in particular, in the Balearic Islands, a reality that Mar' knows in great depth and that, as I have noted above, is useful as an outstanding illustration that can help to foster understanding of many other realities around the world.

One should also say that, although this book is comprised of different articles about closely related themes, it has very little redundant material, unlike what sometimes happens in this kind of collection of different writings. In addition, the diversity of the concerns that have generated these pieces means that, formally speaking, informative intentions prevail in some chapters while, in others, the format is more academic without, however, any undermining of clarity and rigour in either case.

In societies that are caught up in a permanent oscillation between advance and regression in the field of linguistic substitution/official usage, public discussion frequently polarises, on the one hand around people who either reject substitution or want to pretend there are no problems with it and, on the other, people who declare that the end of the language is imminent or unavoidable. However, the reality is too complex to be presented in such simplistic terms, either in evaluating it or in seeking the necessary solutions. It is simply not possible to find easy solutions or interpretations that can be summarised in a single sentence. Between these hypothetical extremes, there is the reality, both convulsive and full of contradictions, in permanent evolution. Then again, there are major contributions

that have been made towards understanding this complex reality, for example the writings of Isidor Mar', which are solidly situated between the all-is-lost and the all-is-fine camps, offering solutions that would make maintaining linguistic diversity possible. As Mar' points out, although there is no é asy way to put these principles into practice ´, there is a ḿo del that can guide us towards an ecological and sustainable linguistic diversity all around the world ´II

II On dreams and nightmares

Enric Sòria

Ferran Sáez Mateu, 2008, *Els bons salvatges* (The Good Savages). Edicions 62, Barcelona, 188 pp.

From time to time, the Catalan-language publishing world comes up with a pleasant surprise and this is precisely what has happened for me with the book by Ferran Sé z Mateu I am presently talking about. Interestingly enough, the title has appeared in a Grup 62 collection called L´Àrquer which has hitherto been notable for its unawareness in programming. There is no doubt about it t́he spirit blows where it will, as they say.

Ferran Sé z is a teacher, originally from Lleida, who has been able to conserve the good humour of those parts. He is an attentive observer of everyday matters, discrete conservative and a subtle, very well-informed music lover. In brief, he is a highly civilised person. His books oscillate between anthropology, political criticism and analysis of social mentalities and are written in clear, very lively prose that makes for good reading. In one of his essays, *Dislocacions* (Dislocations), which was published in Valencia, he has shown an abundance of these qualities. In *Els bons salvatges*, he has taken on a great theme because he uses this protean myth as the key for understanding a mentality that has had tragic consequences throughout the 20th century and that, in its different modes, is still very widespread.

The ǵo od savage ´, as we know, is the human being who is not yet corrupted by the artifice of social norms and who lives in the pure innocence of the original state. This myth (with evident precedents), invented in the 16th century to criticise the errors of society at the time, which were accentuated still more when compared with an idyllic model, became the cornerstone of the main projects of social emancipation after Rousseau, something that is striking in Marx ś manuscripts but also in the brutal de-civilising project of Pol Pot, or in the Aryan fantasy of the Nazis. For Ferran S ´ez, then, the ǵo od savage ´ is no marginal figure, but the founding subject of a good part of the influential ideologies of the 20th (and also 19th) century. This is an imaginary subject that becomes the basis for theorising a future society that would redeem human nature from its downfall ẃhe ther it be private property, the State, or soothing Christianity,

or whatever. Sé z points out two of the most paradoxical aspects of the project: substituting a real subject (the exploited proletariat of the 19th century or the Germans impoverished by the Versailles Treaty) by a chimerical counterpart and then trying to bring about an anthropological revolution in order to construct a new man who will be none other than primitive man. The first paradox implies that the real subjects of social change, specific people with specific problems and desires, are of no use in manufacturing utopias; ideological phantoms work a lot better (and it follows from this that real people, alienated or impure, can only be the victims of such transpositions because becoming a myth is not within the reach of everybody and this is why the twentieth-century utopias were so lethal). The second reveals, in all its stupefying folly, a theory that identifies the future (normative) of humanity with its origins (imaginary).

Ferran Sé z is an impressionist writer: he accumulates anecdotes, digressions and perspectives m oving from the calvary of the inhabitants of East Europe to the tragedy of counter-culture junkies by way of the illusions of trendy good-guyism to the extent of losing track of his line of argument although without ever breaking it. Starting out from one point, he conveys the impression that, rather than going more deeply into the theme, he is moving around it. However, this structure enables him to tackle the matter from many angles, and to see the deep relationship among apparently dissimilar phenomena p ulling them together through meaning an d tracing a highly revealing map. In fact what Sé z is demonstrating here, using the figure of the good savage, is the best possible indicator of a theme which is still more vast and ominous: the influence of naturalism in the mentalities of recent centuries, where naturalism is understood as the way of thinking that sees the state of nature as the lost ideal of humanity, while civilisation is only its perversion and the source of all evils. That this primordial state of nature can be understood as an Arcadian paradise or as the setting for the Darwinian struggle for survival is not as important (though the consequences vary greatly) as the notion that all human civilisation all w e have done and all that makes us is nothing more than an imposture that must be destroyed so that we can go back to who we are in the pure state. Whether it is in the haven of Paradise or the Golden Age, the naturalist utopia is one of the most persistent temptations of European civilisation and its potential for devastation is incommensurable. Ferran Sé z s book rightly warns of the danger of this multiform fantasy. As he very rightly stresses (because there will always be somebody who understands everything in reverse), forsaking one s faith in this utopia does not mean ceasing to seek a better society. It simply means no longer basing such projects in Fata Morgana notions that can only lead to all-too-real disasters

II Genealogy of the neocons

Gustau Muñoz

Joan Vergés Gifra (ed.), *Cons i neocons: el rerefons filos fic* (Cons and Neocons: The Philosophical Background), Documenta Universitària, Girona, 2007, 204 pp.

We need books like this one. In the present state of Catalan culture, competent approximations to problems of general interest, along with appropriate doses of complexity, rigour and erudition are absolutely necessary. Maybe the number of readers will, in principle, be limited. Maybe the media response will be paltry. Yet without such contributions, without the urge to nourish its more elevated component, the appeal of the culture that uses the Catalan language as its vehicle of expression will be drastically diminished.

Here we have a first-rate contribution dealing with a matter of general interest, which is the historical background, in the domain of ideas, of the phenomenon of the neocons or, in other words, of the intellectuals who have organised the ideology and certain policies in the milieu of the American right, from Reagan through to Bush. This has not just been a matter of ń eoliberalism ´, in the sense of the deregulating logic and oversimplification of the supply-side economics, liberalisation and flexibilisation of all markets. It has been rather more than this: an activist focus on international policy, a rehabilitation of ṕ atriotism ´ understood as unilateralism combined with populist discourse, and an instrumental approach to the religious phenomenon, setting up a marked distancing from the inherent secularisation of western societies.

The neoconservative phenomenon is ably set out in the introduction by Joan Verg ´s. The present-day impasse is also well described. It is correct to see part of the neocon attraction as resulting from the fact that the Rawlsian (and I would add Habermasian) paradigm has worn thin. Again, there is an emergence of elements that alter the scene, a ć hange of philosophical taste ´ that rehabilitates previous thinkers and issues such as the essence of politics, power, war, chaos, authoritarianism, religions, political theology, and so on. Also true is the statement that, t́he question of justice is moving into a second-level order ´.

However, the neocon phase may be coming to an end because of the inadequacy of unilateralism and Manichaean discourse in a far more complex world in which the maelstrom of conflicting interests and situations cannot be reduced to a binary logic (as a Schmittian interpretation would require) of friends and enemies. We are no longer in the world of revolution and counterrevolution, no longer in the world of the Cold War (free world versus communism), nor even in the world of the Axis of Evil ranged against some fuzzy notion of the Axis of Good. Climate change, the depletion of energy resources, the new economic geography of the world are throwing up highly ambiguous horizons. The self-affirming and simplifying recipes adopted by George W. Bush and chorus leaders like J. M. Aznar are going nowhere, and this is increasingly being understood.

However, this book, more than anything else, is a set of very tightly-argued contributions on the great references of contemporary conservative thought:

Michael Oakeshott (J. Verg´s), Ernst Jn´ ger (R. Alcoberro), Carl Schmitt (J. Olesti), Leo Strauss (J. M. Ruiz Simon), Alexandre Koj´ve (J. M. Esquirol), the s´econd´ Fukuyama (J. M. Terricabras), larded with transversal contributions by Miguel Herrero de Mi´–n, J. M. Bermudo and Toni Negri. It is not the least of the volume´s virtues to see such figures as different as Toni Negri and Miguel Herrero coming together in its pages!

The historical reconstructions are in general impeccable and dense with ideas as well as references to their particular settings. Some contributions, for example that of Ruiz Simon, are memorable. This book is an excellent package of material for acquiring a little more understanding of the philosophical background of the neoconservatives and for finding better answers to enigmas such as the power of attraction g´o ing beyond the right in all its variants ´o f these sophisticated but profoundly reactionary thinkers, steeped in culture, at times visionary and, in some cases, plain sinister. We are talking about supreme ambiguity, a source of confusions and of theoretical weakness that needs to be laid bare ||

|| Sound after Bach.
A Reflection on Contemporary Europe Based on the Music of J. S. Bach

Joaquim Rabaseda

El silenci abans de Bach

Director: Pere Portabella

Scriptwriters: Pere Portabella, Carles Santos, Xavier Albertí

Actors: Àlex Brendemühl, Feodor Atkine, Christian Brembeck, Daniel Ligorio, Georg C. Biller, Thomanerchor Leipzig, Antonio Serrano, Ferrán Ruiz, Georgina Cardona, Franz Schuchart, Jaume Melendres, Christian Atanasiu, Johanes Zametzer, Lucien Dekoster, Lina Lambert, Jordi Llordella, Thomas Sauerteig, Daniela Wick, Alvar Triay, Fanny Silvestre, Mariona Solanas, Jens Wittwer, Bert Kripstädt, Gertrud Kossler, Beatriz Ferrer-Salat.

Production: Films 59

Year: 2007

Seventeen years after his last film, Pere Portabella has recently premiered a new work on contemporary Europe starting out from the music of Bach. *El silenci abans de Bach* (Silence before Bach) is experimental cinema, basically poetic, in which narrative and fiction are subordinated to a sonorous evocation of scenes from everyday life. Bach and some of his compositions are the elements that explicitly run through all the sequences with a sensibility that is manifestly attuned to the crafts and activities associated with music: the student, the teacher, the performer, the composer, the tuner, the copyist, the bookseller, the salesperson, the carrier, the tourist guide and the equestrienne. Although there are only two points at which the images are concerned to offer direct representation of the eighteenth-century composer, Bach´s leading role is constant. The cantor at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig is present, too, in Mendelssohn´s passionate gaze when he discovers the treasure of a bloodstained score that the butcher had used for wrapping up meat, it is there in the mathematical perfection with which three cars seem to align themselves by chance when overtaking on a motorway, and it is there in the steady, serene strength of the hand that delicately stretches a string until it is in tune. The film is not

a more-or-less faithful biopic or cinematographic rendering of one of history´s outstanding biographies. It is a rich, beautiful polyhedron that brings together and adds the pieces of a necessarily fragmented and apparently disconnected reality.

Portabella, who worked with Carles Santos and Xavier Albert' on the script, invents a refreshing series of occasions with which to inform us of the composer´s life: the recorded lesson on a tourist boat in Dresden that describes the insomnia of Count Hermann Carl von Kayserlingk and the commissioning of *The Goldberg Variations*; the well-documented and performed spiel of a guide who recites Bach´s chronology and production for visitors to Leipzig; the girl who sings the myth about the legendary discovery and historic recovery of the *St. Matthew Passion*. However, this use of audiovisual languages goes far beyond being a sage demonstration of mechanisms: the aquatic lesson also describes the wartime wounds of the Goldberg landscape; the guide´s sentences masterfully elaborate the step from direct to indirect style in the stories of the past; the song links up, without intermediaries, with the ballad and other forms of oral narrative. In other words the avant-garde experimentation of this film owes nothing to arrogant stylisation, it does not pursue abstract and essential purity and neither does it overlook the assimilation of its messages. Highly conceptual, *El silenci abans de Bach* seeks simple and comprehensible elements in order to reach the viewer, to move him or her intimately and to convey something of complex roots.

The first images show an empty space: the walls of a museum gallery stripped of exhibits, panels, sofas, guards. White on white, aseptic as an operating theatre, this artistic space has no art. It is mute and silent. Then an old pianola appears, robotised on wheels and dancing around as it performs the initial aria of *The Goldberg Variations*. The notes sound old, as if from a gramophone. The movement of the keys played automatically by the instrument itself, heightens the phantasmagoria of the atmosphere. The music seems dehumanised, free of performers who might corrupt it, eternal for all its mechanical precariousness. The solitude of the player piano has something that appeals and yet at the same time frightens: the reduction of Bach to the movement of a machine. This example of taxidermy suggests that the music is not just music, that this ingenuous and dangerously extremist conception is now fossilised, as is this sonorous monster that doles out sadness and abandonment with the attractions of an automaton. From here onwards, the film focuses on the humanity of the music in its gestures, memories and experiences and in its functions, discourses and silences.

Portabella has stated in interviews that music should be understood amidst sounds. The soundtrack stresses this dialogue and gives priority to the fundamental role of sound, especially urban sound, of the motor rumbling in the depths of a truck, the rhythmic beat of the noise of a tram, the mobile phone that interrupts the study of a bassoonist who is sheltering from a storm in a motel, the shrill chatter of a market, and the steps and words that are lost in the dense acoustics of a motorway bar; but also less up-to-date sounds, that of bed linen hung out in a shelter partly open to the sky, the stops of an organ that Bach unhurriedly leaves spick and span after he has finished playing, the cloth that rubs over and cleans a black tombstone, the steps and words that disappear into the empty resonance of a light-flooded church. Sound does not compete with music but cohabits with it. The racket of the cutlery that Anna Magdalena drops when she leaves a score on the table humanises the prelude of *The Well-Tempered Clavichord* which is being played

Bulimia (Bulímia), Jaume Plensa (2008)
Mixed media and collage on paper, 50 x 33 cm

by Johann Sebastian. Portabella seems to be saying that, for many years now, it has not been possible to love music and be an enemy of sound.

This agreeable cohabitation with sound, however, has no continuity with the contrast between music and the range of discourses that envelop it. Bach´s mystical and naturalist arguments have the air of a truth surpassed; aesthetic divagations on the relativism of taste spring from the lips of a romantic butcher; modern reflection on Auschwitz and the pain of music is written on the pages of the antiquarian. It is no paradox that the clich´ of high and popular culture in the Nordic countries and the uncivilised nature of the south is repeated by a Spanish truck driver who speaks good German and plays chamber music with the members of his family. The selfsame truck driver has decorated his truck with gaudily-dressed baroque and Andalusian virgins. Hence his observations rightfully marry up with the humble and sincere character of certain traditional devotions. Far from dogmatism and impermeable certainties, which are closer to kitsch, the discourses on music in *El silenci abans de Bach* discover and celebrate the flimsy segmentation of knowledge.

One has the feeling that, after Bach, Europe has been sailing on historic rivers of great volume, that it is criss-crossed with urban public transport, articulated by arteries of motorways, and that the silence of contemporary culture follows a moment of far-reaching superficialities and enfeebled antagonisms that enable it to confront the future with calm energy and optimism l´ik e the group of boys and girls who, silently head for the Barcelona metro station after having played together the prelude to *Cello Suite no.1*. It is an excellent metaphor: beneath our cities, flush with the surface, robust young knowledge is swiftly moving, the sap that will make the aging tree come into bud again II

Jaume Plensa: Landscapes of the soul

Pilar Parcerisas

Jaume Plensa is a sculptor whose work mirrors the human condition. His commissions for public spaces worldwide show us his concept of sculpture as a laboratory of ideas built upon the principle of energy moving the universe.

The material and the word are the two vectors converging in this space of volumetric reification that is sculpture and which Plensa has extended to the domains of the stage and poetry.

At the beginning of his career, in the early nineteen eighties, his sculpture was anthropomorphic, with expressionist volumes in wrought or cast iron, transporting us to human landscapes of totemic and primitive echoes. These were years when, after the avalanche of conceptualism, art was immersed in the visceral neo-expressionism which flooded Europe with new figurative trends.

But Jaume Plensa's sculpture would quickly acquire cleaner forms. Architectures, walls, spheres, geometric shapes and new materials began to appear, stripping down organic and material corpus to bring new dimensions: the literary and the scientific. Then there came the architecture, wall, or the *Bedrooms* or *Waiting-rooms,* translucent dwellings confirming Plensa's sculptures as corporeal receptacles. They are sculptural habitats marking the presence of the absent human body, or a being's loneliness, a condition that is increasingly present in his work. A poem by Jaume Plensa indicates this change: "Every human being is a 'place'. Each woman, man, child, old person is a living space itself that moves and grows; a 'place' in time, in geography, in size and colour".

These boxes of individual architecture, cells where thought and solitude can live, act as a turning point in his career, as a step towards using matter as a sounding board able to transmit an idea, a thought. As Carsten Ahrens reminds us, in Plensa "sculpture is the presence of ideas in real space [...] the material relevance of thought".

Plensa has a need to create bodies, questioning human existence. He often draws parallels between the human body and a geographical space and this is where the letter, the word gives conceptual corpus to these seated characters, shaping with the body and the word, a "place". Resonant volumes, organic boxes where words create thought.

The word is an inexhaustible source for Jaume Plensa. Borrowed from biblical texts, from Dante's *Divine Comedy,* the works of Shakespeare or William Blake's *Proverbs of Hell,* it also shines light and concept on his public projects.

His sculpture has increasingly dematerialised, reaching a point where more intangible aspects are valued. After using iron, bronze, aluminium, plastic, alabaster, fibre-glass or glass, he has reached a more intangible level, with the use of light and sound, increasingly present in public art works. Light as a sculptural element is inherent in his *Blake in Gateshead* (Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. Gateshead, 1996) and *Bridge of Light* (Jerusalem, 1998). The immateriality of sound is present in the alabaster cells of *Love Sounds* (1998) or the exhibition of gongs by Kestner Gesellschaft (1999) in Hanover. The incorporation of optical and acoustic effects by using Internet has opened his work up to human communication, a topic resumed in *The Crown Fountain in Chicago* (2004).

One of his latest public works stresses the dematerialisation of his sculpture *Breathing* (2005), BBC Broadcasting House in London, an inverted fibre-glass cone projecting a kilometre-long beam of light into the night sky, paying tribute to journalists killed in action.

The arrival of globalization, with geographical awareness of a simultaneously multiple and diverse world, has recently led Plensa to develop the issue of claiming human rights globally, denouncing oppression, inequality and injustice. These works, which belong to the series *In the Darkness,* denounce the vulnerability of human beings, the degradation of the human condition today. These are the images you can find in the fourth issue of the journal *Transfer,* the very copy you are holding in your hands. Plensa expresses himself through images of various figures, men and women of the world, taken from different ethnic groups, or simply naked figures on which he prints articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The nakedness of the figures shows the deprivation of those stripped of their rights. A Sioux Indian in front of the word *Soul*, while "woman" is associated with our society's disorders: depression, anorexia, bulimia, hysteria, amnesia, insomnia; a society of desire and disease that has become global and plural, in which the human condition is affronted and insulted by an oppressive society, exploitative of minorities. These are human landscapes; landscapes of the soul the artist wishes to convey to society in order to reach a pool of collective awareness. This is human geography, drawn by Plensa on the background of a photographic record, a stage that is manipulated and broken up to become more ghostly, clearly demonstrating the awareness of otherness: there is another human condition on the other side of the mirror.

If the word has been one of the most effective instruments in expanding the scope of Jaume Plensa's sculpture, the stage-set has been another area where he has made more direct contact with the public. In 1996 he began to collaborate with the theatre group Fura dels Baus with the opera *Atlàntida* by Manuel de Falla, which has been consolidated over eleven years with important works like: *The Martyrdom of Saint Sébastien* (1997) by Claude Debussy; *The Damnation of Faust* (1999) by Hector Berlioz; *The Magic Flute* (2003) by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; *Bluebeard's Castle* by Béla Bartók and *Diary of One How Disappeared* by Leos Janácek in 2007. The stage is a platform which embraces all the elements of the work of art as a whole (architecture, materials, light, sound and human energy) in a perfect marriage between the material and the intangible

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