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Presentation

Resistance and normalization: uses of the past and cultural discourses in contemporary Catalonia

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The six articles comprising this *Digithum* dossier are revised versions of talks given at the international seminar *Resistencialisme i normalització: usos del passat i discursos culturals en la Catalunya contemporània* (Resistance and normalization: uses of the past and cultural discourses in contemporary Catalonia). That seminar, held in Barcelona on 13 and 14 December 2012, was the first in an annual series forming a part of the research project "Funcions del passat en la cultura catalana contemporània: institucionalització, representacions i identitat" (Functions of the past in contemporary Catalan culture: institutionalization, representations and identity) (FFI2011-24751), which will culminate in 2014 with an international congress. The project is associated with the research group on Language, Culture and Identity in the Global Age (Indenti.Cat) at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Open University of Catalonia, UOC).

The aim of our project is to study the uses of the past in the discourses and representations of the two main paradigms of Catalan culture in the second half of the 20th century (in the context of the late Franco regime, the restoration of constitutional rule in Spain, and the recuperation of Catalonia's self-government institutions): the cultural resistance movement (*resistencialisme*) and normalization. The project focuses on the cultural output

and activity of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, as well as on certain forms of cultural production in subsequent decades. We examine the meaning given to the past in the cultural discourses and representations of the resistance movement, and how it was significantly transformed, or focused on different historical periods, when the constellation of cultural and political discourses of what would become normalization was being configured. Our hypothesis is that this evolution in the discursive uses of the past is an essential factor in the formulation of the different efforts to institutionalize Catalan culture, and that it helps to explain the differences in the discourses on Catalan identity that were current during the period under study. This interdisciplinary research project (which encompasses cultural history, literature studies and cultural studies) has three main objectives: to examine the use of the past in both public and private institutionalization processes of the 1960s; to examine references to the past in literary and audiovisual discourses in the period being studied; and to see how discourses on Catalan identity invoke the past in the autobiographical material of the movement's leading figures.

Within this general framework, the content of the seminar on "Resistance and normalization: uses of the past and cultural discourses in contemporary Catalonia" and the articles included in



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this dossier have a twofold objective: first, to provide, by means of joint work and discussion of case studies, a working definition of the concepts of “resistance” and “normalization” as the main paradigms of contemporary Catalan culture; and, second, to present the results of the group’s first year of research with a view to defining its future working lines and considerations.

In keeping with these objectives, the article by the historian Jordi Amat, “L’Ametlla 1966: Josep Benet’s cultural offensive”, draws on previously unpublished archival material and the Catalan nationalist agenda proposed by Josep Benet in 1966 to outline some of the dominant debates in the Catalan culture of resistance and amongst the leaders thereof and to formulate hypotheses regarding the process whereby progressive nationalism came to hold the dominant position within the anti-Franco Catalan cultural system.

The next three articles deal with the relationship between literature, memory and the past. In “Josep Pla: space, time and memory”, Cristina Badosa (University of Perpignan) examines how Pla, in his changing discourses on Barcelona’s *modernista* architecture, used aesthetic approaches and cultural material to construct a collective memory from the city’s *modernista* heritage. According to Badosa, Pla interpreted the aesthetic and political values of *modernisme* in the service of an ideology that was not related to them. In “Industries of false memoirs: Representing Salvador Orlan”, Louise Johnson (University of Sheffield) examines the construction of false and true memories in the case of Llorenç Villalonga, his alter ego Salvador Orlan, and the rewriting thereof by the likewise writer Miquel López Crespí. She likewise analyses the debate over Villalonga’s political stances and his relevance in the Catalan literary panorama of the post-war period. In this case, the past becomes a source of self-justification, recrimination, reconstruction, and accusation within the framework of the discussion of what is and is not legitimate in a culture of resistance. Finally, in “Time and memory: Camí de sirga and *Les veus del*

Pamano” Enric Bou (Ca’Foscari University, Venice) looks at two landmark books from the normalization period published more than twenty years apart and reflects on how literature can recover historical memories that have been suppressed and do so differently from conventional history. This only became possible after the transition from resistance to normalization was completed, in the ensuing context of growing acceptance of pluralism within the different frameworks of Catalan culture.

The last two articles focus on cultural practices at the peak of the normalization period. In “Archaeologies of the national: Albert Boadella and *El Nacional* revisited”, Helena Buffery (University College, Cork) uses the production *El Nacional* by the theatre company Els Joglars to explore how resistance is approached (and how it evolves) from the perspective of the independent theatre tradition, only in a new context, namely, that of the creation of the Catalan National Theatre (Teatre Nacional), which she presents as paradigmatic of the policy of institutional normalization. Buffery argues that Boadella’s position of resistance towards anything Catalan subverts the aesthetic and ethical suppositions of the independent theatre of the early Joglars. Finally, the article by Anna Titus (UOC), “The influence of contemporary art on the modern notion of archive”, examines the work *Arxiu d’arxius* (Archive of archives) by the visual artist Montserrat Soto to show how art can be used to spotlight and reorganize archives, recovering memories that have been forgotten or suppressed because they belonged to groups considered irrelevant by the authorities and thus condemned to silence.

The materials and reflections gathered in this dossier aim to offer, through a series of case studies, an overview of the persistent use of the past in the construction of a culture and, specifically, of the discursive transformations that have taken place in relation to this past in the case of Catalan culture in the period we are studying.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

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