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

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Editorial

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Issue 15 (2013) of our journal brings together a collection of articles under the title “Resistance and Normalization: Uses of the Past and Cultural Discourses in Contemporary Catalonia”. The articles were first presented at the international seminar of the same name held on the UOC campus on 13 and 14 December 2012 as part of a project developed by the UOC’s Language, Culture and Identity in the Global Age (Identi.Cat) research group. The articles in this issue of Digithum represent Identi.Cat’s first year of activity. They advance our understanding of the concepts of resistance and normalization – the main paradigms of contemporary Catalan culture – and contribute to mapping future pathways for joint research.

The UOC’s Arts and Humanities Department and the journal’s Editorial Board want to reiterate our desire to continue improving formal aspects, procedures and content so as to better position and promote Digithum. This desire is shared with all the other e-journals overseen by the Publications Committee of the UOC’s Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation.

Looking back for a moment, when this journal project was made possible by the efforts of a handful of lecturers in the Arts and Humanities Department 15 years ago, we chose a title, Digithum, to which we soon after added an explanatory sub-heading, The Humanities in the Digital Age. Not only have these proven to be opportune, they even seem to have been the harbinger of a digital future, given how culture and the humanities, in particular, have been increasingly digitized in the intervening period. In our increasingly digital age, more and more aspects of our academic activities are being digitized, leaving increasingly fewer areas untouched by the new technologies. That is why, while keeping in mind our commitment to the legacy and practice of the humanities, we also want to take on the ongoing challenge of building a digital humanities, which, in the case of Digithum, simply means remaining faithful to our initial premise. Digital humanities refers to the growing presence of digital tools in the research, teaching and communication activities associated with the different disciplines of the humanities, but it also refers to reflection and critical analysis regarding digitization itself.

Digithum continues to be committed to remaining open to the scientific community and to discussion and debate of the subjects and academic practices. Our efforts are invested in improving and retaining the journal’s individuality and in carefully evaluating and selecting content while simultaneously remaining focused on the challenge of holding true to the pioneering direction adopted by Digithum. Moreover, our determination continues unabated to
take this e-journal forward which, as well as being one of the first chronologically, can also be considered one of the first in other senses of the word. *Digithum*: at the renewed service of humanities in the digital age – digital humanities.
The six articles comprising this *Digitum* 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...
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 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 Crespi. 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.
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Dossier “Resistance and normalization: uses of the past and cultural discourses in contemporary Catalonia”

L’Ametlla 1966: Josep Benet’s cultural offensive*

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Abstract
By 1966 the anti-Franco activist Josep Benet had drawn up an ambitious programme for Catalan nationalization that would use culture as a pivot. Drawing on unpublished archival material, this article traces the origins of this programme of opposition to Franco’s regime and contextualizes it in the framework of the institutions and debates of the 1960s, while formulating a discussion regarding the process through which progressive nationalism became hegemonistic in Catalonia.

Keywords
anti-Francoism, culture, intellectuals, opposition

L’Ametlla 1966: el programa d’ofensiva cultural de Josep Benet

Resum
L’any 1966 l’activista antifranquista Josep Benet va acabar de formular un ambiciós programa de catalanització per mitjà de la cultura que es concretava en un seguit d’accions i projectes. A partir de material d’arxiu inèdit, aquest article reconstrueix quina va ser la gènesi d’aquest programa d’oposició, el contextualitza en el marc de les institucions i els debats intel·lectuals de la dècada dels seixanta i formula hipòtesis sobre el procés mitjançant el qual el nacionalisme progressista va aconseguir l’hegemonia del sistema cultural català.

Paraules clau
antifranquisme, cultura, intel·lectuals, oposició

* This article is 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) funded by the Ministry of the Economy and Competitiveness.
On 8 January 1966 Josep Benet read a paper regarding the cultural survival and redreçament (‘recovery’) of Catalan to a semi-clandestine meeting of intellectuals and bourgeoisie who had come together in the home of Félix Millet in the town of L’Ametlla del Vallès (Benet, 1980). Thus was launched the first of the Jornades (conferences) regarding current problems of Catalan culture. The talks and resulting debates represented a key episode in the early stages of the hegemony of progressive nationalism. The purpose of this article is to analyse Benet’s programme – not an easy task, as no account exists of this intellectual aspect of Catalonia in the 1960s. We consequently have no map of an exciting period when, despite the widely shared primary goal of defeating Franco’s dictatorship, tensions developed that – even as they made the hegemony of progressive nationalism possible – led to a deep schism in Catalan nationalism.

Cultural identity and political identity

In mid-1959 Benet began contributing his “Notes and Comments” column to Germinàbit. Benet had been secretary, since the late 1940s, for this publication of former Montserrat Abbey pupils, which Max Cahner and Ramon Bastardas eventually subsumed into the Serra d’Or journal. In his column Benet discussed cultural issues, gradually fashioning, in small doses, a draft Catalan nationalism programme that would use culture as a pivot. He chose to use the word redreçament (‘recovery’) because, at that point in the mid-1950s, his programme was aimed at driving the para-political movement fostered by the historian Jaume Vicens i Vives. It is likely that, as Benet outlined his programme, he discussed it with Vicens i Vives, as the historian had strengthened Benet’s own conviction that history should be an instrument of civil cohesion. Benet felt that his ideas could best be given expression through a new entity called Òmnium Cultural, recently founded to protect and promote Catalan culture.

Not long after, in late November 1961, Benet wrote to the Òmnium Cultural founders congratulating them on their initiative and taking the opportunity to make some suggestions – above all, that Òmnium Cultural should equip itself with an advisory council. Just a couple of days later, Omnium Cultural directors decided to create an advisory committee. Benet had recommended that this body should include people who, “given their activities, had useful experience and knowledge” of the reality and needs of Catalan culture; he referred, in particular, to “people who, despite having limited resources, had made important contributions to Catalan culture.” Benet particularly had in mind Jordi Carbonell and Joan Triadú – but was also probably thinking of himself. The advisory committee’s role, according to Benet, would be to “draw up a general plan of activities in line with the economic possibilities of Òmnium Cultural and the current situation of the country.” Such a plan should avoid improvisation and would establish priorities. Benet – himself not one to improvise – recommended a plan that included making Catalan language and culture known abroad, encouraging research into social and political history and fostering the writing of memoirs and of children’s literature. Some such ideas had already been given voice in the “Notes and Comments” column, but, for one reason or another, had failed to make an impact. In December 1961, the first issue of a magazine for children, Cavall Fort, was published and, in October 1962, a subcommittee on the teaching of the Catalan language was created within Òmnium Cultural, to be coordinated by Joan Triadú.

What at first had been little more than a handful of notes followed by a brief proposal had, by January 1966, developed into an ambitious cultural intervention programme. This maturation process cannot be understood without considering a series of related events that, between 1961 and 1965, generally intensified opposition to Franco and meanwhile garnered considerable prestige for Benet. A first step in Benet’s programme was to found a publishing house dedicated to essays; Benet attempted to do this in early 1960 with Jordi Pujol. As a result of Pujol’s arrest, however, the project had to be temporarily shelved – just when Benet had commissioned a book on Valencia from Joan Fuster (and it seems that Benet and Pujol also had the idea to commission one on immigration from Francesc Candel). A year later, Benet invited Cahner and Bastardes to take on the publishing house project, which would start with the publication of essays by Catalan authors and translations from the French Que Sais-Je? popular science collection. In the summer of 1961 Cahner went to Fuster’s home town of Sueca in Valencia with the contract for Nosaltres, els valencians. On 12 May 1962 the first Edicions 62 book was printed, assigned to a collection called Llibres a l’Abast.

1. Unpublished documents cited in this manuscript were consulted in Josep Benet’s personal archive. All translations, except where otherwise indicated, are the author’s.
arrive in bookstores on St. George's Day (Catalonia's national holiday) in 1964. It was the first bestseller of a publishing house that deliberately aligned itself with the reconciliatory process that was being grafted onto Catalan nationalism (Amat, 2012).

For Benet, 1963 was a memorable year. The date of 22 April is recorded in the first edition of his remarkable book, Maragall i la Setmana Tràgica. Only two days previously, the communist Julian Grimau had been executed, possibly in revenge for Jordi Conill's implication in an attempt on Franco's life: futile now for Benet to go up to Montserrat Abbey with his colleague Josep Solé Barberà and ask Abbot Escarré to intercede for Grimau. And only eleven days previously, in Rome, Pope John XXIII had published the encyclical Pacem in Terris, one of the most important texts in contemporary Catholicism. Commenting on this encyclical at a conference on 28 February 1964, Benet – for the first time perhaps – produced his main theoretical contribution to understanding Catalonia under Franco in terms of cultural genocide. After years of sailing against the tide, the winds now blew in his favour. In 1963 the Pòrtic publishing house was founded with the aim of filling one of the gaps Benet had pointed out to the founders of Òmnium Cultural: the promotion and publication of memoirs. Its first publication was Memòries polítiques by Claudi Ametlla, the veteran journalist who formed the core of a pluralistic political group. Ametlla had been designated by José María Gil-Robles to draw up a list of Catalans to be invited to the ‘Contubernio de Munich’, an anti-Francoist meeting to be held in Munich (June 1962). Benet was chosen to go, but could not attend; in his stead went Rafael Tasis, the Catalan nationalist destined to play a key role there. The publication of Ametlla’s Memòries polítiques was the excuse to pay this author a tribute at the end of May 1963; Benet attended an act during which Tasis read a letter from Abbot Escarré that was strongly applauded.

On 20 May 1963 a campaign in favour of Catalan officially began that took advantage of a legal loophole; it consisted of repeatedly sending petitions to the vice-president of the government demanding “full use of certain basic rights without which we feel that not only the existence but also expansion of Catalan is threatened.” This broadly supported petition featured the signature of Benet, that of Millet – who was to become the 1st president of the new publishing house –, that of Claudi Ametlla, the Catalan nationalist destined to play a key role there. The publication of Ametlla’s Memòries polítiques was the excuse to pay this author a tribute at the end of May 1963; Benet attended an act during which Tasis read a letter from Abbot Escarré that was strongly applauded.

History, the loaded weapon of the future

These and other repressive acts could not contain the deeply felt sentiments inspiring opposition in Catalan society. As Maurici Serrahima noted in his diary, “if we hold firm, we have our base, which is now strong” (Serrahima, 2005). The grassroots strengthening of Catalan nationalism was well underway; it eventually found institutional expression in the Assembly of Catalonia, an anti-Francoist platform founded in 1971. Catalan nationalism, understood in a broad sense, had put down deep roots.

Since dynamics of this nature is very difficult to conceive of in terms of mere resistance, I tend to understand the period less in terms of resistance and more in terms of opposition or of transition towards normalization. Around 1963 no one doubted that Catalan culture was surviving. The challenge of resistance was to resist the attempted genocide. And the flame of continuity was still alive: “Those who in 1939 augured the death of Catalan culture must now confess that they were thoroughly mistaken,” said Benet in L’Ametlla in 1966 (Benet, 1981). The launch of a new Renaixença brought the era of resistance to a close. The time had come for opposition – active and Catalan-inspired.
the war attended by a select group of survivors who would be capable of reflecting in depth on the remote and current causes of Catalonia’s troubles – a constant in its history – to see whether, given time and the necessary resources, they could keep the flame burning and, from their experience and the lessons learned from the tragedy, to prepare some kind of ideological and practical compendium that could serve as a standard and guide for future generations of Catalans. Someday maybe I will relate what Francesc Cambó and I were preparing in this regard.

This thinking was remembered with nostalgia by Gaziel in his prologue to Quina mena de gent som. Cambó had been keen on the idea of founding a Spanish-American institute of higher learning with headquarters in Paris or Brussels, as told to Gaziel in Montreux; a report describing how to create such an institute included a section on rethinking the history of modern Catalonia. The project, however, was aborted on the outbreak of the First World War.

The relationship between Benet and Gaziel was meaningful yet tragically brief, as Gaziel died on 12 April 1964. Before he died he asked Benet to be the editor of his unpublished work. Benet, perhaps, was the first reader of Quina mena de gent som and, before anyone else, would be aware of the Gaziel-Cambó project. I am of the opinion that Gaziel was influential in Benet acquiring the conviction that Catalan nationalism was linked to Catalan ability to rewrite history. This conviction would lead Benet to include, in his programme, the idea of creating an institute dedicated to the study of the history of Catalonia and embracing the causes, development and consequences of the Civil War. The Benet archives contain a document dated November 1964 titled “Notes on the project to create an international foundation of the history of the war in Spain (1936-1939).” Benet commented as follows: “Now that 25 years have passed since the war it is possible to study it objectively and calmly.” From the perspective of the two opposing sides, the design was aseptic; Benet’s desire for objectivity, I suspect, was an attempt to combat the “25 Years of Peace”, a campaign (probably the regime’s most important propaganda effort to date) orchestrated by the Minister for Information and Tourism, Manuel Fraga Iribarne. Military victory was increasingly being viewed as the crude source of the legitimacy of the dictatorship; it was therefore necessary to represent the instauration and continuance of the dictatorship as necessary to achieve peace.

Like Benet, Fraga was aware of the importance of promulgating a particular interpretation of the Civil War. The official account was, in fact, increasingly being undermined by a small Parisian publishing house, Ruedo Ibérico, founded by a group of second-generation exiles. Ruedo Ibérico was an example that Benet mentioned in L’Ametlla as a possible model for a Catalan publishing house. Launched in December 1961 with the publication of the translation of the Spanish Civil War, in 1963 it published Herbert Southworth’s The Myth of Franco’s Crusade, also in translation to Spanish. The impact of the latter was so devastating that Fraga, to counteract it, created the Special Section for Civil War Studies under Ricardo de la Cierva (Southworth 2000; Forment, 2000). Benet, on reading Thomas’ book, lamented the fact that the references failed to cite a single work written in Catalan or that analysed the war in Catalonia. Study of the latter, therefore, would be the aim of his planned institute: a book on Catalonia in relation to the Spanish Civil War. This work, “as much needed as it is demanded”, would endeavour to explain Catalonia’s role in this war and the consequences to both Catalonia and the world. It would also ensure the continuity of the Vicens i Vives school of history. It is not unlikely that, in the figure of the director of the institute, Benet profiled a post that would suit him down to the ground.

Around late October or early November 1964 Benet went to Paris to observe something of the functioning of foundations dedicated to the study of the First and Second World Wars and the Resistance. He very likely visited the historian Ernest Labrousse, director of Pierre Vilar’s thesis La Catalogue dans l’Espagne moderne of 1962, of which Edicions 62 had commissioned a translation. It is also likely that he was aware that Òmnium Cultural had opened an office in Paris. A letter, meanwhile, provides concrete evidence that he approached an anti-Franco think-tank: the Centre for Studies and Documentation headed by Julián Gorkin (Amat, 2010).

A Catalanist think-tank

The Centre for Studies and Documentation grew out of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an international body secretly managed by US intelligence, based in Paris and with committees around the world. The activity of the Spanish committee was twofold. It supported both the Paris centre and an active cell in Madrid that brought together liberal intellectuals in drawing up anti-Francoist ideology. Headed by Dionisio Ridruejo, the Madrid cell had a full-time secretary and a Catalan delegation composed of Josep Maria Castellet, Llorenç Gomis and Marià Manent. To avoid legal problems, in 1965 it was established as the advisory board for the publishers Seminarios y Ediciones SA. With these present examples, Benet was inspired to further develop his programme, definitively given shape in L’Ametlla.

One of the Spanish committee’s responsibilities was to distribute research grants. Beneficiaries included Joaquim Molas and Rafael Tasis; Benet was also awarded a grant in April 1964 so that he could continue researching the labour movement in Catalonia. All members of the committee were, in fact, gifted copies of Maragall i la Setmana Tràgica. At Spanish committee meetings, Benet reinforced his profile as an intellectual. A month after Benet’s trip to Paris, the first of the Catalonia-Spain encounters...
guidance or management, or, at the very least, would develop Benet's programme. In October 1965 Benet drew up a report regarding the creation of a ‘promotion department’ – the name was not important, but its content most certainly was. The report described possible activities, the most ambitious of which was to establish an institute of modern history for Catalonia. Another was to launch a campaign to promote the Catalan language that would include actions such as addressing a letter to bishops gathered for Vatican II, requesting a manifesto of support from Madrid intellectuals, publishing a book entitled Què és Catalunya? inspired by the Que Sais-Je? collection and engaging the Congress for Cultural Freedom in protecting the Catalan lanaguage. Yet another idea was to organize an international Catalan language week in some location abroad.

Yet another initiative would be the creation of a Catalan publishing house abroad – as the Catalan equivalent to Ruedo Ibérico. One of its first publications would be a volume of patriotic poetry, published to bring younger generations of Catalans into contact with ‘civil poetry’. “This volume should be published” wrote Benet, “to show the new Catalan generations that this kind of poetry exists in Catalan and is not, as it might seem to be, exclusive to Spanish.” The first Paris publication by Ediciones Catalanes, in 1969, was Poesia catalana de la guerra d’Espanya (1936-39) i de la resistència, by Stephen Cartwright, pseudonym of Joaquim Molas.

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**Conclusion**

Two months after the Jornades, Benet, at the request of Pujol and Millet, left his desk at Serrahima law firm to devote himself full-time to implementing his programme, his salary to be paid clandestinely by Òmnium Cultural and Banca Catalana. Over the short or long term, all the programme’s goals would be achieved, even though Benet felt, at an intermediate stage, that he had failed – and that Pujol was to blame. I cannot ascertain to what extent precisely they agreed to cooperate. Pujol wanted Benet to support him in his efforts to carve out a centre ground for Catalan nationalism to be led by Pujol – as Benet’s cultural policies could be useful to Pujol. Benet, however, prioritized implementation of his own programme, since, in mobilizing culture in strengthening Catalan nationalism, he would ultimately become the visible face of redreçament. Such misunderstandings between Benet and Pujol deepened a schism that marked Catalan cultural life during the period when it approached normalization.

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RECOMMENDED CITATION


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

Josep Pla: space, time and memory*

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Abstract
This article examines how the writer and journalist Josep Pla contributed to opinion formation regarding architectural modernisme, an important part of Catalan cultural and urban heritage. The fact that Pla’s aesthetic proposals varied from one period to another demonstrates how culture is manipulated by politics and the media so as to impose principles that have little to do with initial ideological and aesthetic values.

Keywords
Josep Pla, modernisme, Catalan literature

Josep Pla, els espais i els temps de la memòria

Resum
Aquest article analitza com l’escriptor i periodista Josep Pla va contribuir a crear un estat d’opinió sobre una part important del nostre patrimoni cultural i urbà, com és el modernisme arquitectònic. Els seus plantejaments estètics van variar d’un període a l’altre, amb la qual cosa es demostra que la cultura pot ser objecte de manipulació per part de la política i dels mitjans de comunicació per a imposar principis que tenen poc a veure amb els seus valors estètics i ideològics iniciaus.

Paraules clau
Josep Pla, modernisme, literatura catalana

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The recovery of space and memory form the body of the work of Josep Pla. This article, however, will limit itself to a consideration of Pla’s views on the modernisme movement. Over the years, but especially in recent months, the press has reported on the fragility of Catalonia’s modernista architectural heritage, not only an essential part of its identity and recent history, but also a main tourist attraction. One such article, by Ramon Suñé, was titled “Contempt for modernisme. Another story of heritage destroyed: neighbours denounce the looting of Casa Burés” (La Vanguardia, 8 December 2012). ¹ Yet other press reports referred to the remodelling and rebuilding of Adolf Ruiz i Casamitjana’s Rotonda (1906-1918). It was, however, Lluís Permanyer’s TV3 documentary – Catalan Modernism, a History of Destruction (28 November 2012) which demonstrated in how little regard modernista architecture was held by the noucentisme movement led by Eugeni d’Ors until the 1960s. Over several decades, illustrious intellectuals and poets – Carles Riba, J.V. Foix, Salvador Espriu, Augustí Calvet – but most particularly Josep Pla, from 1940 until his death in 1984, coincided in discrediting modernisme; in doing so they reflected a widespread view held by intellectuals and society after the Civil War. One only needs to remember the sorry state of most of the buildings today considered to be jewels of modernisme.²

This article will focus on several articles and manuscripts by Josep Pla, who, in 1940, launched a literary career via the rediscovery of Catalonia through the Spanish language, commencing with anthropology articles and essays on the Empordà region that went beyond localism in order to integrate this part of Catalonia into a broader Mediterranean civilization that holds classical Greece as a particular reference.³ Pla was also beginning to displace Catalan nationalism with a growing pride in Barcelona.

Leaving aside his interest in space, Pla also retrieved certain artistic personalities from memory, particularly Santiago Rusiñol, Joaquim Mir and Manolo Hugué, using them to depict Catalan history and culture at the turn of the century. He also contributed generously to Destíno magazine with articles on Josep Llimona, Rafael Benet, Ramon Casas, Josep Maria Prim and Francesc Gimeno.⁴ His observations regarding the figures who shaped his understanding of life was shared with readers through an intelligent, ironic and sentimental narrative voice that dared to openly express opinions regarding officially sanctioned personalities. This subjective sincerity led him to develop a complicity with readers that enabled him to share less mythical and more human insights into the people who were responsible for building a Catalan cultural and scientific tradition. Years later, his interest in leaving a record of contemporary artists and intellectuals was embodied in a desire to more broadly preserve memory and heritage for future generations – a desire reflected in one prologue after another until his death. Looking at the writings of the period immediately following the Civil War, we can see how Pla endorsed the values of the preceding noucentista generation regarding the most exiguous representatives of the modernista generation. Lluís Permanyer alluded to this, in his documentary, as the reaction of a son who felt he had to kill the father. Pla expanded on his thinking in this regard in the 1967 Homenots essay dedicated to the architect Antoni Gaudí.⁵

Prior to the Homenot essay Pla had only made a few references to Gaudí; these were usually in relation to another artist — as in biographies of Manolo Hugué, Santiago Rusiñol and Joaquim Mir⁶ — or in not entirely flattering references to Gaudí’s work, for instance, referring to its incoherence: “The Sagrada Familia seems to me to have a cold in summer.” (Cartes de Illuny).⁷ Not until 1956 and Barcelona (papers d’un estudiant)⁸ would Pla devote an entire chapter to the Sagrada Familia, placing Eugeni d’Ors, however, in the role of detractor:

For the noucentistes, the problem was resolved by Eugeni d’Ors in the Glosari [his daily column in La Veu de Catalunya]

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¹ All translations, except where otherwise indicated, are the author’s.
² Permanyer explains how the Palau de la Música was the target of much criticism and pejorative names (some called it the “Palau de la Quincalleria Catalana”, in a reference to tinkets or baubles, for Carles Riba it was a “great iron egg” and for Salvador Espriu, it was in “deliriously poor taste”). This was the case even before the Civil War. J. V. Foix, for instance, published an article in the 1920s in La Cònsola that criticized modernista houses in the Exemple and the Palau de la Música. And Mirador published a devastating article in the 1930s titled “Can the Palau de la Música Catalana be redeemed?”
³ This initiative started with the first of three guides. Guia de la Costa Brava, followed up a decade later by guides with a more pan-Catalan perspective, such as Guia de Mallorca, Menorca e Ibiza, and Cataluña in 1961. Other intervening publications were Viaje en autobús (1942), Las ciudades del mar (1942), Cadaqués (1947) and Viaje a pie (1949).
⁴ A key aspect was eviction and memory, as recorded in prose written towards the end of 1921 and early 1922, Six years later, in 1928, Pla redefined his thinking, resulting in the structure that would bring to his overly fragmented work with some degree of unity. The project remained uncompleted, however, as Pla was distracted by the wave of political activity inspired by the weakening of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera.
⁸ Published in Volume V of the Obres completes (Editorial Selecta), p. 102-103, and reproduced in Volume 3 of Obra completa (Edicions Destino), under the title “Barcelona, una discussió entranyable” in “Primera volada” of 1972.
in establishing a distinction between human life and cosmic life, between the world of nature and the world of culture, between romanticism and classicism. As implied by these elements, architecture is an art contrary to nature, an art of arbitrariness, a typical construction of culture and of human life, that is, styles. Nature does not produce styles: nature is mountains, seas, forests, the unformed, chaos. Only the cultivated person, domesticated by authority, produces styles. Architecture cannot be art imitating nature, architecture cannot be naturalistic. Breaking the European architectural tradition, Gaudí wanted architecture to return to nature.9

Pla’s description of the temple of the Sagrada Familia exemplifies the theory that stigmatized the major modernista works:

In the moonlight, whether you look at it from afar or close up, the temple is unique. But maybe when the view is from close up—when one feels the details collapse on one and feels pure geology within—that one realizes its spirit. The architect [Gaudí] liked to subdue the nature of things and include them in the Sagrada Familia. This leads me to imagine how the mass might be displaced from where it naturally belongs, in the air, down to the seabed and underwater light. This would be, perhaps, its most natural and most logical environment. The building itself would gradually become layered with mineral deposits and that murky coldness that characterizes underwater light would have transmitted its fuzzy vagueness, along with twists, protuberances, caverns, crevices, caves, all that unformed world of cosmic life would take shape, a vast throbbing animal-and-plant biology, tingling primitively above and around the shapeless mass, as soft forms, flickering shapes, spikes, viscosities, the sleepwalking of reptiles. The towers, the flying buttresses, the abutments—these would quake and quiver like pulp and their temperature would be that of primeval pulsation.10

Pla justified comments of this kind not as his own criticism, but as echoing both the thinking of young people and the culture of the time. Yet it was Pla himself who was responsible for such descriptions circulating in articles and in the press. Indeed, this was a frequently used device of his, as in the Homenot article on Joaquim Ruyra. Inventions from start to finish, based on alleged and generally non-existent testimonies or, in the case of Ruyra, gossip. This was also the case for his opinions on the Sagrada Familia, which convey the vox populii and the views of his generation, for which he stood up as a spokesperson:

The issue of the Sagrada Familia is not one of taste, even though taste, since it is linked with reactions of the skin, is a matter of depth. The issue is one of principles and the youth of my time perceived Gaudí’s work as I have just described. That was how we perceived the cathedral; this did not mean that we were critical, as our critical faculties were, in fact, extremely poor. We could not imagine it as other than submerged, crawling with crustaceans, molluscs and limpets (as appropriate as mushrooms to the taste of the architect), protozoa, algae and all things slimy from the seabed, no more than we could imagine the front of the Pedrera without imagining a fish tank and corridors and rooms with twisted walls as a suitable medium for fish to swim in.11

Lluís Domènech i Montaner’s Palau de la Música received a similar, if not more scathing, treatment. In January 1942, an article by Pla was published in Destino (featured in the Lluís Permanyer documentary) that practically proposed demolishing the concert hall. This article was duly reproduced in Catalan in the same book as the article on the Sagrada Familia. Thus it was that Gaudí’s church and Domènech i Montaner’s concert hall were discredited time again and again—in 1956, 1966 and in subsequent editions of Pla’s publications.12 As was usual in his articles and more critical and combative prose, Pla began advising against demolition mainly for economic reasons, to then follow up with a subjective description of the accumulation of features (out of place, naturally, in a concert hall), duly described with a series of increasingly emphatic adjectives:

The presence of those horses, those figures, those flowers incrusted in the ceiling of pressed bricks, those hideous lights, the excess of detail that makes the theatre an outpouring of gratuitous objects, intricate and useless—all this has led me to deprive myself of countless concerts, of listening to music that I would have greatly liked to know and deeply feel—because music never fatigues.

Pla ultimately recognized this experience as derived from the most absolute subjectivity and particularism, raised to the level of facts and, therefore, to the level of reality, thanks to publication (and hence objectification) in a public medium. Destino was targeted
to members of the middle classes and bourgeoisie who identified with the views and thoughts of Pla and of many other Destinista contributors in the 1940s and later with Pla’s Obra completa.

The above description continued with a detailed description of the acoustic inconveniences and concluded with a broad commentary on modernista art, Domènech i Montaner and the shift in his own experience from subjectivity to generalization:

If [Domènech i Montaner] had lived in an epoch of good taste, with his personality he would have done things, possibly mediocre but nevertheless valued. This would not be a trivial achievement. He lived, however, in the era of modernisme, of the ‘modern style’, of the hideous ‘liberty’ style, of the absolute triumph of the anarchy of bourgeois taste in this country, and he did not have the strength to let it go.” [*in English in the original]

Pla put principles before taste in evaluating modernista architecture. These were principles that formed the core of his political and philosophical thinking, namely, the preservation of tradition against the disorder and anarchy that would inevitably lead to revolution. Noucentisme could be identified with order and tradition, whereas modernisme represented all that was diverse, strange and monstrous. If, as pointed out by Pierre Bourdieu, art and artistic consumption have a social function in terms of legitimating social differences, Pla, like his friends, his contemporaries and his readers, could easily coincide in sharing the aesthetic taste of Eugeni d’Ors.

Pla also tied aesthetics to a political idea. In an article on architecture in the Dictionnaire critique of the journal Documents, Georges Bataille wrote that architecture is not what in a building is related to construction, but is, rather, the space of representation; it represents something other than the construction. Rather than define the term ‘architecture’, he described its expansion, that is, the mastery or shaping of the social field, imposed as an organizing fulcrum. For him, the origin of architecture was as an image of social order which, with the intention of ensuring order, imposes order, to the extent that, instead of expressing the essence of society, it chokes it. Thus, architecture both evades death and hides death and the monument and the pyramid fill in the void left by death. Death is heterogeneous to homologies; it cannot be assimilated. Modernista architecture, however, is different because it wants to bring uniformed and chaotic nature into the urban world; unlike noucentisme, it is ‘anti-monumental’.

Between 1939 and 1941, Pla wrote Rusiñol y su tiempo, inspired and edited by his friend Albert Puig Palau, avid collector and passionate enthusiast of modernisme. By the time subsequent editions of the book appeared (in Catalan in 1955 and 1970), two key works on modernisme had been published: Modernismo y modernistas by Josep F. Ráfols (1949) and El arte modernista catalán by Alexandre Cirici i Pellicer (1951). These publications, however, left Pla indifferent. His prologues therefore continued to reiterate that Rusiñol was anything but a modernista, despite having been its soul, and also his definition of modernisme as “truly European gibberish” – represented in Barcelona by “the lilies and lotuses in the hall of the Palau de la Música, with the long planks of reinforced concrete ladies decorating ugly balconies.”

His description of Bohemian life also remain consistently the same, other than when he accentuated its more ridiculous aspects.

Between 1941 and 1944 Pla wrote a second book in Spanish on the subject of Joaquim Mir, El pintor Joaquín Mir, published this time by Edicions Destino. In this publication he expounded a theory of art as applied to Mir and his contemporaries (and already expounded in regard to realism in articles published in 1928 in La Veu de Catalunya). Pla, in drawing a distinction between different trends in modernista painting, took up an old theory about the concept of ‘beauty’, as defined by Milà i Fontanals from readings of Thomas Aquinas’ writings on what is good and what is beautiful (bonum and pulchrum). Pla enriched this theory with cutting-edge contributions to a lecture by Salvador Dalí in Sala Parés, after the opening of the Tercer Saló de Tardor. Dalí argued – and Pla agreed with him – that an aesthetic principle of contemporary creative art was to directly capture reality through intuition, instinct, and the unconscious. This proposal

16. And like Eusebi Arnau’s sculptures in Casa Lleó Morera, brutally destroyed in 1943. The head of one of these nymphs found its way into the hands of Salvador Dalí who, even as a young man and against the general trend, defended modernisme as representing heterogeneity.
A few years later, in 1977, was Prosopat i rauxa de Catalunya


Another example is Pla’s description of L’Avenç magazine, which he never linked with modernisme. In the first volume of his biography of Francesc Cambó, also published in 1928, Pla recognized the merit of L’Avenç on three fronts: for having launched spelling reform; as a catalyst for political ideas; and for its openness to a wide range of intellectual trends and developments in Catalonia and Europe. The corresponding article was published unamended in the volume dedicated to Francesc Cambó in Obra completa in 1973.


21. As I explain in Josep Pla, biografia del solitari, the later volumes published in Obra completa (Edicions Destino) include prologues signed, as usual, “J. P.”, but written by Josep Vergés. These volumes consisted of a miscellany of essays and articles by a Pla who was now old and tired. These volumes detract from the overall complete works of Pla.


The opinions and definitions of Pla regarding taste, often poorly developed, responded to their time, especially during the Franco dictatorship, when Pla was legitimated on the basis of a brilliant literary past. Indeed, society legitimated him through the prestigious journal Destino. Catalan society was in full reconstruction of its identity and took full advantage of the few avenues admitted by a vigilant and efficient censorship. For nearly four decades, Pla wrote for and from a window that embraced the middle classes and the bourgeoisie and was fully in tune with their tastes. It was probably for this reason that his discourse excluded nuances; furthermore, in opposition to Kantian aesthetics (which, according to Bourdieu, made disinterestedness the sole guarantor of the aesthetic quality of contemplation), he adapted to a majority, ‘popular’ taste, based on moral and ethical principles, and – in the case of Catalan society – on reason, order and seny (“good sense”). After the trauma of the Civil War, noucentisme and the preservation of tradition received greater support than modernisme, as the latter was identified with the chaos of nature and anarchy. Ideology thus participated in the construction of an incomplete and uncritical identity by a large segment of society. Fortunately, power relations and ideology did not lead to stagnation, but admitted a paradigm shift.

As for Josep Pla, we will always have his texts of 1928, when Catalan society experienced a new explosive period of creativity coinciding with the end of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. During this period, Pla’s thoughts on art and creativity broke new ground regarding the distinction between legitimate culture and popular culture; they also adhered to avant-garde principles that placed intuition, instinct and the unconscious at the heart of the creative act.
Josep Pla: space, time and memory

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Industries of false memoirs:
Representing Salvador Orlan*

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Abstract
Miquel López Crespí’s proposed trilogy of novelized memoirs of Llorenç Villalonga (1897-1980), as narrated by Villalonga’s own alter ego, Salvador Orlan, raises questions about the motivation for and place of such pseudo-memorialistic literature, both in the local Mallorcan context and in the testimonial space more generally. The second of two volumes so far published, Les vertaderes memòries de Salvador Orlan (2012), draws on previous auto- and pseudo-autobiographical writing by Villalonga to present an exculpatory and at times petulant first-person narrative whose stylistic flaws alone seem unlikely to endear the subject to the reader. This essay explores why Villalonga, through his own tradition of mystification, might seem to lend himself to re-writing but not to empathy, and suggests that positioning him as a whipping boy/victim who has still to make reparation for his Civil War allegiance is both ethically problematic and pragmatically futile. It concludes that this contribution to the culture of historical memory responds as much to the market as it does to political exigency or a need to remember.

Keywords
Miquel López Crespí, Llorenç Villalonga, Salvador Orlan, Mallorca, Spanish Civil War, memory, xuetes

Indústries de memòries falses: Representant Salvador Orlan

Resum
La trilogia de memòries de Llorenç Villalonga (1897-1980) proposada per Miquel López Crespí, narrades per l’alter ego de Villalonga, Salvador Orlan, planteja preguntes sobre la motivació i el lloc d’aquesta literatura pseudomemorialística, tant en el context local de Mallorca com en l’espai testimonial de manera més general. El segon dels dos volums publicats fins ara, Les verterdes memòries de Salvador Orlan (2012), fa servir escrits autobiogràfics i pseudobiogràfics de Villalonga per a presentar una narrativa en primera persona exculpatòria i a vegades malhumorada els defectes estilístics de la qual ja fan poc probable que el subjecte es pugui guanyar...

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In “Memory and modernity in democratic Spain: The difficulty of coming to terms with the Spanish Civil War” (2007), Jo Labanyi refers to a “memory boom” in testimonial creative production from the 1990s onwards. In 2008 she observes that the two-hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the War of Independence against the Napoleonic invasion becomes the renewed focus for publications, while “the flood of novels set in and after the civil war […] seems to have abated” (Labanyi, 2008, p. 119). This “tells us much about how memory has become an industry generating public interest for economic ends”, with Labanyi further noting that “prolonged media debate […] risks reaching saturation point” (ibid.). We should nevertheless bear in mind that Carmen Martín Gaite was already bemoaning the “phone book” quality of “the then-current plethora of Spanish testimonials” as early as 1978 (Lipman Brown, 1987, p. 163).

It is important to remember that public consciousness is not saturated. Jacques Terrasa, for example, identifies an almost generalized amnesia in Mallorca at the turn of the century, resulting from an inclement political climate and the rise of tourism (Terrasa, 2007, pp. 281-2). Terrasa’s perception of ‘amnesia’ is certainly questionable if we understand it in broad terms as referring to popular, insular memory and to cultural production which has not enjoyed a significant international or even national profile. This raises the question of dissemination and marketability of ‘memory’, which must, however, remain outside the scope of this essay.2

Terrasa’s study of two exceptions to his perceived generalized forgetting — Agustí Villaronga’s adaptation of Blai Bonet’s El mar (1958/1999) and Antoni Maria Thomàs and Pere Salom’s documentary Nosaltres els vencuts (2003) — merely underlines the apparent disconnect between the reality of experiential lives, the want of truth and closure and a memory boom in literature, culture and scholarship that readily follows market imperatives.

Within this boom, it seems valid to speak of an ‘industry’ of effort, a diligence to look back, articulate suffering, re-contextualize and give voice to others’ experiences, with the concomitant difficulties that speaking for others entails, which is a case in point for us here.3 An alternative interpretation of ‘industry’ in the context both of memory and memorialization is offered by Llorenç Buades Castell, Mallorcan activist for the political party Esquerra Alternativa i Anticapitalista de les Illes: Buades holds a disloyal Catalan cultural establishment responsible for what he perceives to have been the cultural rehabilitation of Mallorcan novelist Llorenç Villalonga (1897-1980), who joined Falange at the outbreak of the Civil War. He suggests that Villalonga has been recycled for democracy through the creation of “una memòria biogràfica molt més falsa que la del Villalonga/Salvador Orlan” (Buades undated [a]).4 In other words, there exists an industry of “desmemòria”, according to Buades, in relation to Villalonga’s wartime activities. This extends to the novelist’s attitudes and beliefs in general, which Miquel López Crespí adjudges to have remained unaltered over time: “[N]o […] podem trobar la més petita reflexió sobre el significat de la sagnant repressió en què va participar, malgrat ni que fos indirectament, a través dels seus articles de suport al feixisme” (López Crespí, 2012c).5 For Buades, López Crespí’s appropriation of the voice of Salvador Orlan — the fragmentary subject of Llorenç Villalonga’s 1967 Falses memòries de Salvador Orlan — first in the novelized biography Una arcàdia feliç (2010) and then in Les vertadores memòries de Salvador Orlan (2012), is an urgent and necessary corrective to an industry of unremembering.a

In his prologue to Villalonga’s Diario de guerra (1997), José Carlos Llop suggests that Villalonga falls short of being “un joseantoniano puro y duro, quiero decir, como Ridruejo, el bonvivant Foxá, Pemán, Sánchez-Mazas u otros de la primera hornada”
(Llop, 1999, p. 14). Indeed, while more detached observers might concede Llop’s sympathy for the novelist on account of the “el fácil y repetido sambenito de una larga descalificación personal” (ibid., p. 13), his more flamboyant defences can look like demagogy: “[c]uando oigo o leo que Llorenç Villalonga fue falangista y anticatalanista, me pregunto cuántos años va a tardar en descubrirse que también fue Jack El Destripador” (Llop, 2010). Diario de guerra itself suggests that Villalonga has a degree of affinity with Rafael Sánchez Mazas, one of comparatively few Nationalist perpetrators to have been explored in fiction at the time (2007) when Labanyi remarks of Spanish novel and film that “[t]here has to date been no attempt to gather testimonies of perpetrators — whether Nationalist or Republican” (Labanyi, 2007, p. 104). Fully immersed in this very Mallorcan “discursive civil war” (Balfour, 2008, p. 179), Buades advocates revision of a ‘revisionist’ tendency that is still very much active. To this end, López Crespi constitutes “un dels pocs que és on era, al seu lloc de la barricada, amb la ploma abans i l’ordinador ara, capaç de defensar la memòria històrica des del punt de vista dels de baix” (Buades, undated [b]). Labanyi for her part explains how she has become “increasingly uncomfortable at the number of studies of representations of the civil war and its repressive aftermath that engage in textual analysis with little or no mention of the public debates inflecting the texts’ production and reception” (Labanyi, op. cit., p. 120). This is manifestly a way of moving the debate on historical memory forward, and in the dialogue — explicit and otherwise — between Llop, Buades, López Crespi and distinguished historian Josep Massot i Muntaner, there is emotion, scorn and hostility, but textual analysis must play its part too. For interwoven in Les vertaderes memòries de Salvador Orlan, there is a second, less explicit but just as pressing historical memory, older than the War of Independence: the fate of the Mallorcan xuètes in 1691 at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition, cruelly anticipated in Llop’s application of the now conventional idiom llevar el sambenito to a writer whose treatment of xuètes and Jews alike remains tremendously problematic. We return to this below.

II

Les vertaderes memòries is the second of López Crespi’s proposed trilogy of fictional biographies of Villalonga. The first, Una arcadia felic, does not form part of this discussion but is stylistically similar; and the third is still in preparation at the time of writing. In Cultura i antifranquisme, López Crespi refers to Villalonga as a ferocious enemy of Catalunya (López Crespi, 2000), a designation amply supported by Villalonga’s journalism and his biographers and also in numerous studies, notably those of Massot i Muntaner. Why, however, might López Crespi choose to talk about Salvador Orlan, rather than the character Llorenç Villalonga, especially given the precedent of his blog series “Les falses memòries de Felipe González”? This appears to be a simple distancing mechanism or buffer in the context of the violence about to be visited on Villalonga, but it is also a knowing and ironic engagement with the writer’s characteristic, shifting play with autobiographical literature (literatura del jo) as examined by Patrícia Alberola, Raül-David Martínez Gili and Victor Simbor, amongst others. Less generously, the dominant, excusatory tone adopted by the first-person narrator, and the reiterative, humourless exposition affect readability and seem indulgent to the point of voyeurism on the part of the author.

In the context of Labanyi’s questioning “of what should be done with Nationalist memories of suffering” (Labanyi, op. cit., p. 111) and of López Crespi’s contributions to this field, I would like to explore the former’s contention that “it is only by capturing the resistances to narrativization that representations of the past can convey something of the emotional charge which that past continues to hold today for those for whom it remains unfinished business” (ibid., p. 107). And as political and judicial moves to acknowledge crimes against humanity in a Spanish frame begin to gain traction (the xuètes and the Aviazione Legionaria Baleares, below), what might the implications be for literature that seeks to address the lacunae and ‘masks’ of Nationalist, perpetrator memory?

5. “he was an out-and-out Falangist, I mean like Ridruejo, the bonvivant Foxá, Pemán, Sánchez-Mazas and others who were there at the very beginning” (Author’s translation).
6. “facile and often evoked sambenito [burden, shame] of long-standing discredit” (Author’s translation).
7. “When I hear or read that Villalonga was a Falangist and anti-Catalanist, I ask myself how long it will be before he is also revealed to have been Jack the Ripper” (Author’s translation). Llop subsequently accuses Josep Massot i Muntaner of creating a long trail of anti-Villalonga disciples (Llop, 2012). Llop’s own literary and memorialistic relationship with Llorenç Villalonga is seductive and complex, but outside the scope of this essay.
9. See Balfour (op. cit.) for a discussion of a more operadional understanding of the term.
10. “is one of the few who is still where he used to be, manning the barricades, with his pen before and now his PC, ready to defend historical memory from the point of view of the oppressed” (Author’s translation).
11. Xueta is a term used to refer to a descendant of a converted Jew in Mallorca, and specifically to those who can trace their lineage to the ‘new Christians’ who were sentenced by the Mallorcan Inquisition in 1691. I use it here in this sense. Note, however, that in contemporary texts (e.g. Francisco Garau, La fe triunfante, 1691), xueta referred despectively to the converted Jews themselves, and it has retained a similarly negative charge in some discourses to this day.

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Les vertaderes memòries de Salvador Orlan confronts the deliberate mystification of Villalonga’s 1967 Falses memòries de Salvador Orlan, which is referred to as a “novel·la” (novel) on the title page. The cover artwork for the former (Figure 1) enters fully into dialogue, intentionally or otherwise, with Villalonga’s writing about the war: the screaming, open-mouthed figure is taken from the far right of Picasso’s Guernica, positioned here as if reacting to an approaching curtain of bombs not present graphically in Picasso’s work. The arm with fist clenched in defiance at the bottom of the frame apparently belongs to a prostrate, second figure (rather than heft from the body as in the original) and no longer clasps the hilt of a broken sword, but performs the iconographic closed-fist gesture of resistance. Although the narrative that emerges can be read in this conventional sense, it also bears crucially on a major lacuna of both texts: the Italian bombing of mainland Spain from Mallorca.

Villalonga’s ‘suffering’ is articulated by López Crespí as a form of cowardice engendered by a fear of reprisals for his propagandistic Radio Mallorca broadcasts and press articles in the service of the Falange. It is perhaps given a veneer of humanity by two episodes in particular: in the first, Salvador Orlan tries to evade Serrano Súñer’s request that he compose a pamphlet contesting Georges Bernanos’ Les grands cimetières sous la lune (1938), which had depicted Francoist brutalities. In the second, providing something of a conscience-laden vertebrating thread in a rambling narrative, we learn of his sense of impotence over the execution by firing squad in February 1937 of Emili Darder, doctor, civic reformer and last Republican mayor of Palma (López Crespí, 2012a, p. 205). But evidence of suffering beyond a suggestion of personal guilt or regret is more difficult to sustain in the monologue and, in López Crespí’s rendering, can border on petulance: “Passats els anys encara m’ataquen; continua, més viva que mai, la llegenda negra en contra meva. Jo no vaig ser cap assassí” (ibid., p. 117).13

In Salvador Orlan’s enraged reaction to the Catalan Generalitat’s wartime relationship with Mallorca in the form of the planes sent to bomb the island, we encounter an ironizing of Orlan’s position — although not of the atrocities of war — through the hugely resonant visual borrowings from Guernica. Orlan asks:

Què pot saber un historiador que no hagi viscut els fets que patirem, el que significava viure sota l’amença constant de possibles invasions organizades des de Barcelona, València i Menorca? I la por que sentiem quan ens comunicaren que, a mitjan agost, els rojos ja eren a Portocristo, avançant cap a Manacor? A tot això cal afegir els constants bombardejaments de l’aviació. No hi havia dia que no arribassin avions per llançar bombes damunt Palma. Malgrat que fossin bombes petites si les comparrem amb les de la Segona Guerra Mundial, sentiem que podíem morir de la forma més estúpida: anant a comprar el diari al quiosc, passejant per la ciutat… (ibid., pp. 59-60)14

In Les vertaderes memòries as in the Diario de guerra, the threat of bombs alternates with mention of Juan March’s financing of military aid from Italy, but both Villalonga qua Orlan (in Falses

13. “After all these years, they still attack me; the black stain against my name is darker than ever. I am no murderer” (Author’s translation).
14. “What can a historian who has not lived through the events we suffered possibly know what it meant to live under the constant threat of invasions organized from Barcelona, Valencia and Menorca? And the fear we experienced in the middle of August when they told us that the reds were in Portocristo, advancing towards Manacor? A tot això cal afegir els constants bombardejaments de l’aviació. No hi havia dia que no arribassin avions per llançar bombes damunt Palma. Malgrat que fossin bombes petites si les comparrem amb les de la Segona Guerra Mundial, sentiem que podíem morir de la forma més estúpida: anant a comprar el diari al quiosc, passejant per la ciutat…” (Author’s translation).
memòries) and López Crespi’s Orlan eschew any mention of the Aviazione Legionaria’s bombing raids on Barcelona and other mainland centres from the Son Bonet airfield on the island between 1937 and 1939. Instead, and perhaps more in tune with Villalonga’s heroic vitalism, Orlan comments repeatedly and with a strange fascination on the so-called ‘Dragons of Death’ under the command of the Fascist, self-titled ‘Count’ Rossi (otherwise known as Arconovaldo Bonacorsi, a “homicidal manic” according to Preston, 2012, p. 216). Rossi had attempted to influence if not take over command of the Nationalist forces on his arrival from Italy, and was responsible for a campaign of brutal repression on the island following the flight of Captain Bayo’s Republican militia in 1936 (see Massot i Muntaner, 1988, chapter 2). In Falses memòries de Salvador Orlan, recollection of the war is brief and dismissed as little more than an annoyance, the marked use below of the dialectal article, the “article salat”,15 signalling (at a safe temporal distance) a certain domestication and belittling of the marauding Republican planes (see also Villalonga, 1997, p. 38):

La temptativa d’invasió de l’illa per les forces del capità Bayo havia resultat tan contraproduent com allò d’enviar-nos cada dia “s’avió” a bombardejar-nos. [A] l’illa – a part dels avions, o de “s’avió”, que seguia molestant un poc – es podia gaudir d’una pau i una tranquil·litat paradisíques si un s’abstreia de tot. (Villalonga, 1967, pp. 159-60)16

The mobilization of Picasso’s Guernica in the service of resistance both to “desmemòria” from within Mallorcan and other circles and to what has been for some the unwarranted exculpation of Villalonga, draws its intensity from the defiant, clenched fist and establishes a continuity with present, unfinished business. (Buades and to what has been for some the unwarranted exculpation of Villalonga, draws its intensity from the defiant, clenched fist and establishes a continuity with present, unfinished business. (Buades

notes the sharing of blame here, an allusion perhaps to Sales’ recently adopted Catholic faith and the importance of confession as a sacrament. Having established a strategic complicity with his editor/publisher, Villalonga affirms that “a mi no em doldrà que em discutesquin” (ibid., p. 10)18 before affirming his gratitude to Sales for raising his profile as a writer in Barcelona. In contrast to the apparent openness of these sentiments, López Crespi’s much reduced Salvador Orlan exclains:

M’adon que mai no podré dissipular la meva participació en els fets de la guerra. Els papers no menteixen. El que vaig escriure, el que vaig fer roman intacte, indeleble en la memòria de moltíssima gent. Ni jo mateix, amb totes les trampes d’escriptor que he emprat, no ho podré amagar. No cap investigador amic, d’aquells que, com pertoca, expliquen que el que fa un autor no té gens d’importància, que sola-

ment s’ha de valorar l’obra literària al marge de qualsevol plantejament ètic i polític, no ho podran dissimilar. És una tasca impossible cremar els diaris on vaig col·laborar. Inútil tot el que he fet per esborrar el passat. (López Crespi, op. cit., pp. 90-91)19

The archly performative dimension of Les vertadores memòries is most evident here, in a metafictional key. Very literal resistances, temporarily surmounted, to this particular narrativization of the past emerge following the work’s publication: M.A. Antich reports in the Última Hora news website that “[a] la trilogía sólo le falta encontrar una editorial para la última novela, ya que la época fa-

langista de Llorenç Villalonga ‘no es un tema que guste demasiado’ y puede ‘complicarse’ encontrar una buena editorial” (Antich, 2012). López Crespi clarifies that it has not been his intention to judge the writer, but simply “meter[se] en su piel” (put myself in his place). In El Mundo newspaper, Laura Jurado observes that the work is not “un ajuste de cuentas con la Historia”20 (Jurado, 2012), while in an interview with Sebastià Bennasar for L’Espiral, the culture supplement of the Diari de Balears (Bennasar, 2012), López Crespi acknowledges that “de vegades ens hem quedat massa enlluernat per la història oficial que diu o apunta que el seu falangisme és ocasional i de circumstàncies i que no ens hi
hem de fixar gaire”. The writer’s aims seem irreconcilable, and perhaps opportunistic: “putting myself in his place” implies a quest for understanding and empathy with the subject, whereas the dissatisfaction with official history does indeed indicate a desire to settle accounts or revise a received version of events.

III

On 5 May 2011, Francesc Antich, at the time President of the Govern Balear, welcomed a group of Israeli rabbis to Palma, together with leaders of Shavei Israel and other Jewish cultural organizations, to celebrate an act of historical reparation to the xuetes who were sentenced to death by the Mallorcan Inquisition and burnt at the stake in 1691 (the subject of Carme Riera’s 1994 novel Dins el darrer blau). Albert Moragues, the Govern’s point of contact for the Jewish delegation, explained that although the government should not be asking for forgiveness for acts where no responsibility is implied, it did have an obligation to repair the social injustice which had left the matter of the converted Jews forgotten in a drawer (Llull, 2011); he clarified: “Perquè no s’està parlant només de morts, sinó ‘de 300 anys de discriminacions’”.

Riera’s novel created polemic, which revealed the extent of the theme’s taboo status on the island, whereas the fate of the xuetes becomes intimately linked to Salvador Orlan’s awareness of his own vulnerability. Blackened oil paintings hang in the “golfes” (attic) where the young Orlan is confined as a punishment by his father; they depict religious processions “amb penitents emmaníllets i amb sambenets que eren portats al fogueró” (López Crespí, op. cit., p. 184).

Orlan waits, frightened, the trope of haunting bringing together the attics of the house in the fictional Fontno-llama de Bellver where the young Orlan is confined as a punishment by his father; they depict religious processions “amb penitents emmaníllets i amb sambenets que eren portats al fogueró” (López Crespí, op. cit., p. 184).

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On the death of Xavier Villalonga (1931) and his scornful rejection of the Inquisition’s officers.

The explicit connection established here between two different circumstances of violent repression (in 1691 and 1936) is further underlined by the description of the searches and interrogations after the Republican defeat, the reliance on second- or third-hand information (gossip) and fabricated evidence to establish disloyal or treacherous intent that mirrors very closely the modus operandi of the Inquisition’s officers.

Through the horrific evocation of the iron mask, López Crespi illuminates a collective history, but also the reality of the persecution that followed for the xueta descendants of the dead. The section is positioned early in the novel, before Orlan envisions his own execution and before he strains to make out the darkened depictions of processions of penitents, whose “gramalletes” or “sambenets” would be displayed publicly in the cloister of the Church of Sant Domènec in Palma until well into the nineteenth century. The masks haunt Orlan whose own caricature of Aina Cohen in Mort de dama (1931) and his scornful rejection of the Jewish/xueta narrative of victimhood might be added as an indicative element of the persecutory discourse against the xuetes.

In López Crespi’s re-imaging of Villalonga’s past through the unstable ‘other’ ego of Salvador Orlan, Villalonga’s myriad masking techniques are shown to have failed utterly to save him from lasting and public examination — by the protagonist’s admission in the diegesis, but more so by the fact of the book’s publication itself — and the work thus provides its own justification. But does Les vertaderes memòries really address what Buades considers to be the deficit of memory surrounding Villalonga, perhaps in opening up a space for discourse that is not wholly or simply condemnatory? I would argue rather that the repetition of this basic narrative of victimization might be seen as parasitic on the literature of memory as far as it seeks to refashion Orlan, since the

21. “Sometimes we have been too dazzled by the official version of history that states or indicates that his adherence to Falange is opportunistic and circumspect, and that we should not pay too much attention to it” (Author’s translation).

22. “Because we’re not just talking about deaths, but ‘300 years of discrimination’” (Author’s translation).

23. “with shackled penitents wearing sambenets who were led to the bonfire” (Author’s translation).

24. “You could hear their terrible cries as they were consumed by the flames. But no-one was ever able to see the face of the person who could be their father, brother or neighbour. Those burned alive had no eyes, no lips, no recognizable features. They were monsters” (Author’s translation).

25. “It’s as just as it. I don’t want to imagine what could have happened if the Falangists had found them during the war, when Bellver castle was full of Republican prisoners” (Author’s translations).

26. Mort de dama was published under the pseudonym “Dhey”.

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thematic and metatextual haunting of the protagonist is unproductive and the legacy of Villalonga is unchanged. At the same

time, the re-articulation of masking mechanisms in Les vertaderes memòries, their distillation and embodiment in the memory of

the physical iron mask, can be understood as a (rather banal) injunction to confront issues of memory rather than allow their sidelong from official, revised or rehabilitated histories. However, such a reading seems eclipsed by Francesc Antich’s apology and also by

the decision of the Provincial Court of Barcelona, on 23 January 2013, to sanction the investigation of twenty-one Italian aviators of the Aviazione Legionaria expeditionary force believed to have flown from Son Bonet to saturation-bomb Barcelona in 1938.

Where might memory literature situate itself as such small but significant developments enable a more inclusive version of history to be told? López Crespi presents us with a false apologia narrated in the first person by a fictional subject who stands metaphorically for a real person (who, as the writing subject, created Orlan as his alter ego). An apologia, moreover, which is composed by a writer whose political affiliations are diametrically opposed to his subject’s, is both ethically suspect and aesthetically problematic (in its execution). López Crespi, consistent with his confused aims, both speaks for/as Villalonga/Orlan with poetic but not political authority and, within the larger discursive space of twenty-first century Mallorca, he explicitly situates his ‘true memoirs’ as a challenge to received history—or History, as Jurrado tellingly writes in her article in El Mundo (Jurrado, 2012). Whether countering an industry of cultural rehabilitation (Buades, op. cit.) or contributing more broadly to the culture of historical memory, Les vertaderes memòries poses questions about the motivation of a writing subject who is determined to have the last word: even though López Crespi engages with a politically divisive figure to speak for him, “political effectivity” (Alcoff’s term) is not a possible outcome. Representing Salvador Orlan is thus less about a perverse demasking of Llorenç Villalonga than it is about perpetuating a fictional construct which benefits few, artistically or otherwise.

References


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Time and memory: Camí de sirga and Les veus del Pamano

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Abstract
In this article, I will examine how historical memory is recovered and, in particular, how the issue of time is dealt with. I will explore how literary language, with its ability to penetrate and create contaminated situations, is the most suitable vehicle for presenting historical memory in a less ideological and emotional way and how it offers a means of reconstructing, filling in or setting straight the records provided in official accounts. Finally, I will argue that literature can be used to recover or recreate these official accounts and, in so doing, to give voice to previously suppressed memories, figures and realities.

Keywords
historical memory, time, Catalan novel, Jesús Moncada, Jaume Cabré

Temps i memòria: Camí de sirga i Les veus del Pamano

Resum
En aquest article vull identificar la manera com la memòria històrica és recuperada i en particular de quina manera es juga amb el problema del temps. El que vull examinar és de quina manera el llenguatge literari, amb la seva habilitat de penetrar i crear situacions de contaminació, és el més adequat per a presentar de manera menys ideològica i emocional la memòria històrica com una manera de reconstruir, completar o corregir allò que han explicat les històries oficials. La literatura és capaç de recuperar o recrear el que ha estat explicat en les històries oficials i d’aquesta manera aconsegueix de donar veu a memòries, personatges i realitats que han estat suprimits.

Paraules clau
memòria històrica, temps, novel·la catalana, Jesús Moncada, Jaume Cabré

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Writers have a special responsibility to safeguard and transmit memory. In the case of communities mistreated by history, this responsibility is even greater. A good example is the writer Irene Némirovsky’s *Suite française*, which narrates an alternative version of a complex episode in recent French history that few have been able to clearly explain: the widespread collaborationism with the German occupiers during World War II. Historians have reconstructed history and memory, but it is art – literature and film – that has excelled in the task of conserving and recreating (allowing us to relive) crucial moments from our collective (forgotten or expunged) memory.

In Spain, the use of memory has been explicitly politicized. Unlike in countries such as South Africa or Argentina, after the strong repression of the Franco dictatorship, the issue was not addressed; instead, the new authorities embraced a policy of amnesia and disremembering (Resina, 2003). Spain is a completely different territory, in which concepts such as reconciliation, memory and oblivion, in the senses used by Ricoeur, are rare. Efforts to recover memory in the country have arisen in part as a reaction to the distortions of Francoist historiography and the collective amnesia considered an acceptable norm during the democratic transition that followed the dictatorship. Recent studies have highlighted the challenges of recovering the country’s past due to problems of representation, the elusive nature of the “truth”, and the inevitably political (and subjective) nature of reconstructions (Aguilar Fernández, 2008; Colmeiro, 2005; Ferrán, 2007; Glenn, 2008; Santana, 2011).

In this article, I will examine how historical memory is recovered and, in particular, how the issue of time is dealt with. I will explore how literary language, with its ability to penetrate and create contaminated situations, is the most suitable vehicle for presenting historical memory in a less ideological and emotional way and how it offers a means of reconstructing, filling in or setting straight the records provided in official accounts. My thesis is that literature can be used to recover or recreate these official accounts and, in so doing, to give voice to previously suppressed memories, figures and realities.

Hayden White has written about Michel de Certeau’s notion of fiction as the “repressed other” of historical discourse. Under this theory, historical discourse depends exclusively on “the true”, whereas fictional discourse is interested in “the real”, which it pursues in the realm of “the possible or imaginable” (White, 2005, p. 147). In White’s words, “The real would consist of everything that can be truthfully said about its actually plus everything that can be truthfully said about what it could possibly be.” (Ibid.) He goes on to explain, “[De Certeau] asserts that the return of the repressed other (fiction) in history creates the simulacrum (the novel) that history refuses to be” (Ibid.). As Hertzberger (1995) has noted, fiction approaches history by “scumbling” it, and this scumbling is one of the defining features of narratives seeking to recover historical memory.1

### Reliving time

The novel *Camí de sirga* by Jesús Moncada, originally published in 1988 and translated by Judith Willis in 1994 as *The Towpath,*2 recreates episodes from the history of a town that was cut off by land for centuries, but connected to the outside world, the sea and civilization by the River Ebro. While the episodes Moncada recreates are drawn from a fictional history, they describe a real town, Mequinensa, that was swallowed up by the river’s waters in 1971, a casualty of the Franco regime’s reservoir building policy. As noted by Pere Calders, a colleague of Moncada’s at the publishing house Montaner y Simón, the town’s destruction was a pivotal event in Moncada’s life and work (Calders, 1981, p. 5).

Moncada’s novel narrates the loss and destruction of a space that was, at once, private (personal) and collective. In the complex process of recovery, he manipulates time, devising a new way of including it in the narrative. Thus, the memories of some characters seep into those of others, reflecting the weight of collective memory. Indeed, the novel is permeated by a sense of destruction. It can be found on nearly every page. It is particularly palpable, for instance, in the novel’s first and final pages. While it is this personal use that Moncada makes of time that makes the story he is telling credible, this credibility is also heightened by the story’s unity in time. Moncada recreates a sort of mythical time, which was cut short in 1971 by the disappearance of the original Mequinensa. In so doing, he both reconstructs the collective memory and manages to create a different sense of time in which the past and present are interwoven.

Novels in general are drawn to death and dying worlds. In this novel, that attraction is particularly strong: the gutted town reveals its inhabitants’ most intimate secrets based on the half-demolished or already levelled houses. The chapters are structured around the evocation of specific objects, streets or characters in the present of 1971, the year the town was destroyed, which then serve as a springboard for a series of memories and open the door to analepses or flashbacks.

The first chapter begins with a detailed description of the first demolitions of houses in the town. Here, it is worth noting the careful attention paid to place names and local nomenclature.

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1. In Hertzberger’s words, “scumbling is both a creative device and a critical perspective: it overextends the folds of one thing (fiction) into those of another (history) without eliminating entirely the discreteness of each” (Hertzberger, 1995, p. 6).
2. All translations from the novel *Camí de sirga* appearing in this article are Willis’s. All other translations, including those of excerpts from *Les veus del Pamano*, are the author’s own.
Likewise, attention should be called to the dust cloud, associated with the “long agony” that will be one of the narration’s *leitmotifs*, and the contrast between the pure weather (the “bright spring morning air”) and the pessimism implied by the agony, din and collapse of the first home. Moncada became interested in this issue shortly before the destruction began, well before he began writing the novel. A collection of photographs that he took of the town has been conserved that focuses on its homes and details of the buildings. None features a human figure. It is precisely this human element that he would include in the novel. Thus, immediately after this description, in the same paragraph, we first hear the voice of the chronicler-narrator. From the moment it appears, this voice underscores the difficulty of accepting the information that has reached the chronicler by way of collective memory as fact:

Years later, when the tragedy that began that day in 1970 had become a dim memory, time shrouded in cobwebs of mist, an *anonymous chronicle* collated a *number of moving personal accounts* of the event. The first in chronological order – though not the most poignant – related how the clock on the belfry had stopped the previous evening against a louring backdrop of purple and sickly yellow storm-clouds streaked with black. *For the chronicler* this was a clear omen of what was to pass on the morrow, a sign that *the past was gone for good*. Another lurid account which described the night that followed this uncertain dusk was full of suspense: it spoke of the eerie silence in the empty streets, a silence that was mirrored indoors as the townspeople prayed that dawn should not break. The most vivid of all these recollections, however, was of the sinister bang on Horseshoe Hill at eleven o’clock the next morning; according to the chronicle, the townsfolk were profoundly shaken by the *onset of the disaster*.

These accounts were certainly all very impressive. But this wasn’t the only factor they had in common; there was something else, something of maybe no significance, and yet it helps explain what happened that ill-starred day. *They were also all, without exception, completely false.* (Moncada, 1994, p. 3)\(^3\)\(^4\)

The state of the sky is clearly reflected in the villagers’ mood. Both seem to suggest premonitions of death and destruction: the “onset of the disaster”, followed by the final twist regarding the falsity of the information. From the very start, the reliability of the information to be presented is cast in doubt. The chronicler-narrator is thus tasked with reconstructing the false accounts, adding, perhaps, another layer of falsehood:

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4. In the quotations of the novel, the emphasis mine (note of the author).

The townfolk deceived themselves when they persisted in seeing 12 April 1970 as a key date in their collective drama; similarly, they were wrong to feel guilty about not witnessing the event at first hand. Knocking down No. 20, Horseshoe Hill, which was the start of the whole town being demolished […] was merely the opening scene in the final act of a long nightmare. By the time the bulldozers tugged at the steel cables attached to the columns and the building came down amid clouds of dust, the destruction of the town had been going on for more than thirteen years. *(Ibid, p. 6).*

As Kathryn Crameri has written, Moncada shows how the people of close-knit communities construct distorted versions of events based on rumours and gossip, consensually creating narratives whose details may not be strictly accurate. Moncada recognizes the manipulation in how communities’ stories are remembered. He deliberately emphasizes the unreliability and untruth of many of the myths of Mequinensa (Crameri, 2003, pp. 353 and 357). One of his most frequent devices is to interweave time and characters by mixing up the characters’ memories. Hence, the evocation of the battle of Tetouan in the memory of someone who was not there:

Battle commenced beneath Nelson’s nostalgia-soaked eyes: cannons roared, guns cracked, bullets whistled, sabres, bayonets and daggers flashed. *Headlong gallops, terrifying charges, fights to the death, cries of victory and groans of agony were heard one after the other among the chairs, tables and cast-iron columns of the Quayside Café*. A furious Moor who had come from Heaven knows where, possibly from the tall shelves where the cobwebby bottles of spirits stood, his djellabah stained in fresh-spilt blood, ran over the counter towards Nelson. The old sailor saw him draw close with a fearsome scowl on his face and raising his scimitar…. *Somebody opened the café door; the glaring sunlight landed on the Moroccan, who crumbled and was scattered like dust*. The acrid smell of burnt gunpowder was the aroma of coffee once more, the cannon-balls were reduced to footballs from the Sunday league, and the light over the billiard table resigned itself to playing its usual role again after illuminating for a short while the battlefield of Tetouan in Morocco in 1860. *(Ibid., p. 22)*

According to Crameri, this excerpt “is a good example of a technique used frequently by Moncada: a chance remark, event, sound or sight sends a character off … into a vivid reminiscence of the past—so vivid in fact that both the reader and the character are transported back into another time” (Crameri, 2003, p. 358).
I would add that this memory proffered by a character who could not possibly have experienced the event, who had not even been born when it happened, is ultimately more believable than the event itself. In part this is because it is a story that has been told hundreds of times in conversations at the local bar. However, it should be noted – and this is what makes this excerpt truly extraordinary and sets it apart from a simple evocation (a “vivid reminiscence of the past” in Crameri’s words) – that the scene from the past actually plays out again at the bar: “Headlong gallops, terrifying charges, fights to the death, cries of victory and groans of agony were heard one after the other among the chairs, tables and cast-iron columns of the Quayside Café”. When the bar door is opened, “sunlight landed on the Moroccan, who crumbled and was scattered like dust”. The smell of gunpowder recedes and is opened, “sunlight landed on the Moroccan, who crumbled and was scattered like dust”. The smell of gunpowder recedes and becomes, once again, the aroma of coffee; the cannon balls shrink into footballs; the harsh sun softens into the light hanging over the billiards table. It is an extraordinary transformation of the bar, and a mix of past and present.

In the final pages of Camí de sirga, Moncada tells of the disappearance of Mequinensa, threatened by the waters of the River Ebro. He does so by reproducing the funeral procession for Carlota de Torres, which he links to the demolished buildings and shuttered bars. The town’s imminent total destruction is suggested by the replacement of human life with encroaching nature. What Moncada does in this novel is akin to what Marianne Hirsch has called “postmemory”. According to Hirsch, “[P]ostmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. [...] Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by [...] stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events...” (Hirsch, 1997, p. 22). Moncada uses postmemory in two ways: as the narrator and by imposing it on his characters.

In another example, Moncada blurs the boundaries between two times in a single location. One character is literally placed inside the memory of another for an event that happened in another time. The action takes place in the same place, but separated by several decades:

As he walked up Sun Alley, old Nelson didn’t realize that he was cutting across Carmela’s memories, focused on the exact spot where, in 1925, the Civil Guards had just charged at the rioting strikers. Had the gust of bitter memory taken hold of you, had it made him relive that moment, the old fellow would have instinctively moved his head as he had done, just in time to dodge the rifle butt which merely brushed against his left thigh. Instantly recovering his youthful energy, he would have punched the figure who had him pinned against a wall; the Civil Guard would have fallen like a stone, and a second later the flash of a gun would have through the darkness above the shouts and scuffles of the writhing mass. (Moncada, 1994, p. 88)

The narrator resorts to a species of film screening, projecting Carmela’s memories, and thus creates a plausible situation, that of old Nelson reliving the confrontation with the law enforcement agents, that superimposes the past on the present.

### Mixing time

Jaume Cabré’s novel Les veus del Pamano (2004) is also structured around an ensemble cast, such that the reader perceives reality through the eyes and accounts of multiple characters. This approach has been used in other contemporary novels that deal with complex realities like the Spanish Civil War and post-war period in order to offer highly critical views of that time and of Franco’s dictatorship. Multiple perspectives are a natural and ideal tool to depict a world that has been turned upside down and offers few alternatives beyond repression and suffering, keeping your head down and toeing the line, which was the reality of the early years of theFranco regime. According to Glenn, the novel is enriched by the author’s “sensitive treatment of the theme of the recovery of historical memory” and “the dialogic nature of his text” (Glenn, 2008, p. 51). She has likewise underscored Cabré’s innovative use of time: “Cabré employs a variety of temporal and spatial planes, analepses and prolepses, shifting points of view and levels of discourse, and fragmentation in his presentation of multiple stories that are entangled like a handful of cherries” (Ibid., p. 52). Indeed, it is one of the devices used in Les veus del Pamano to offer a “dark panorama of self-serving and cynical behaviour, moral degradation, corruption, and hypocrisy” (Ibid., p. 54).

The mixing of time is, thus, essential to the novel. In fact, it is one of the most effective literary techniques used by Cabré, as it allows him to place characters who may not even be aware of each other’s existence on the same level, thereby creating a mirror effect that allows them to share a single problem, gesture or feeling. This is similar to the technique used by Moncada, but Cabré adds another layer of sophistication. For Moncada, the goal was simply to relive the past, to offer a declaration of continuity between past and present. By the same token, however, it was also a way of showing that this past was over, that it had ended with the arrival of the destructive present, the narrator’s present, the present in which the old town of Mequinensa is destroyed. In contrast, in Cabré’s novel, the technique is used to subtly connect the past to the present and to re-read it, shining a light on its shortcomings. It is a way of establishing a moral connection between characters who are facing similar problems, who have to make difficult decisions, who have suffered betrayals or are forced to lead a double life. It is also a way of depicting the immorality of the present. While the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship...
have ended, many of the morally questionable attitudes of those times live on in the present.

One of the main characters, Tina Bros, is critical to the recovery of memory. It is a dangerous and discomforting activity for her in a place like Spain, and she is ultimately killed. First, however, she discovers a box of notebooks written by Oriol Fontelles for the daughter he never met. The notebooks refute the official version of his life accepted as fact in the town of Torena, according to which Oriol was a staunch fascist (as the inscription on his 1944 tombstone reads), and reconstruct his collaboration with the Maquis. The character of Tina offers a window onto the use of memory and the mixing of time. At one point, while reading the words of Oriol, who was also a painter, she comes across a self-portrait. She reads about Oriol’s true beliefs, which he had kept secret from his wife and which were one of the reasons she left him. The narrator shuttles us back and forth between two times, that of the writing of the notebooks in the early 1940s and that in which Tina is reading, showing us her feelings, which are a speculative reflection of Oriol’s own. Thus, two different times are merged across a gap of sixty years:

Perhaps I can help you remember me a bit this way, Daughter. Tina copied it out exactly as Oriol had written it. The rest of the page, following that sentence, was taken up by a drawing of a man who probably had light eyes, with a young, proper, bland face and soft, undistinguished features. She studied it for a long time, struggling to imagine Oriol depicting his own sadness before a dirty mirror. For it was precisely that, a portrait of his pain, when Rosa left, disappointed and upset, and he, finding himself an unexpected hero, had no way of telling her I am no longer a coward, Rosa. (Cabré, 2004, p. 38)

At the end of this paragraph, Tina’s reading in the present day of 2002 gives voice in the past to Oriol, who is once again able to speak directly to his wife, Rosa.

A second example takes us to the River Pamano. Again, two moments in time, decades apart, are mixed with no prior warning for the reader. A relatively routine school activity being carried out in the present – a joint experiment with the school in a neighbouring town to prove that the water flows downriver to the sea – is intercut with a previous time when the Civil Guard discovered a planned attack by the Maquis. The teacher has called the sea – is intercut with a previous time when the Civil Guard carried out in the present – a joint experiment with the school in warning for the reader. A relatively routine school activity being

They did it with an ice pick, the long-handled type, because it had floated close enough to the bank, as if it had not entirely understood what its destiny was supposed to have been.

They laid the body down face up, to see if they recognized him, and exchanged glances.

“I don’t know who that is. He’s not from around here.”

“He’s definitely dead.”

“We’ll have to notify the Civil Guard.”

“That will bring trouble. They’ll want to know...” (Ibid., pp. 269-270)

As the reader can see, the bottle from the experiment is replaced with the body of a dead Maqui found by farmers. They return the corpse to the river to float onward to the Civil Guard, who discover a message revealing the plans:

The Civil Guard patrol did find Morrot’s body, they did take it out of the water, they did search it and they found a metal box, which they opened right there, eager to score points with their superiors. They unfolded the paper, and the shorter one nervously read it aloud, so that everyone – stones, pebbles, barbels and trout, Morrot and his patrol partner – could hear:

“Hello, fellow second-graders from the Ribera de Montardit school. This message proves that if we were to follow the river downstream, we would eventually reach the sea. On a map, we saw that we would have to pass through many towns like yours, as well as some dams, before joining the River Segre near Camarasa and, after, the River Ebro near Mequinensa. Then, straight to the sea. After the Easter holidays, we will make a three-day trip to the Ebro Delta. And you?” (Ibid., p. 270)

We never learn what the message hidden in the metal box said. Instead, we read the message written by the school children. The suspense built up around the message is broken, and we return to the school children’s experiment.

Moncada reconstructs the erased and vanished memory of a town that lies underwater. Like Cabré, he aims to vindicate a forgotten, poorly told past. Cabré wants to set the record straight and complete it, rejecting the distorted texts of the official accounts. He takes a monologic view and rounds it out with past realities that have long been silenced and that restore the memory of the vanquished. By blurring the boundaries of time, both authors offer a different sense of history. Both return to a specific past, to reconstructed and invented spaces. And they make us think in terms of time, with its essential continuity, a time in which the present is incorporated into a moment from the past. They do it using devices that are not available to historians, as a way of underscoring the continuity between the past and the present, which can be traced back to a past that is always with us, the discovery of an inconvenient truth. In this sense, both books call to mind Santana’s words: “More than memorializing history, more
than erecting monuments to preserve the memory of the past, the aim (...) is to reflectively historify memory” (Santana, 2011, p. 58).

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This article explores the dynamics of resistance and normalization in contemporary Catalan culture through a case study of the recent revival of a devised performance by Els Joglars. The play in question, *El Nacional*, was first performed in 1993 as a response to the changing landscape of contemporary theatrical production, shaped by increasing political intervention in the cultural field. In particular, it presented a challenge to the monumental vision of a Teatre Nacional de Catalunya through continuing commitment to an alternative Catalan national theatre based on the creative exploration of identity in performance. Revived as part of Els Joglars’ celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of their foundation, *El Nacional* has been explicitly presented as a prescient exploration of the conditions and need for a culture of resistance, capable of standing against the normalizing tendencies of political and economic power. However, both the discourses of the national in which the play has been reinserted and the particularly overt archaeological focus with which it has been re-enacted, replace the more translational aesthetics (and ethics) that were the hallmark of Els Joglars’ devised practice with a performance style more committed to repetition and re-inscription, resulting in the reproduction and fetishization of stereotypes of Catalan difference.

**Keywords**
Catalan theatre, national identity, performance, theatre history, resistance, embodiment
Catalunya a través del compromís permanent amb un teatre nacional català alternatiu fonamentat en l’exploració creativa de la identitat en la representació teatral. El Nacional, que ha tornat als escenaris com a part de la celebració del cinquantè aniversari de la fundació d’Els Joglars, s’ha presentat explicitament com una clarivident exploració de les condicions i la necessitat d’una cultura de la resistència, capaç de mantenir-se ferma davant de la tendència normalitzadora del poder polític i econòmic. No obstant això, tant el discurs sobre allò nacional en què s’ha inserit l’obra com l’enfocament arqueològic, particularment evident, d’aquesta nova versió substitueixen l’estètica (i l’ètica) més translacional que va ser el segell distintiu de les creacions col·lectives pròpies del Joglars per un tipus de representació més compromesa amb la repetició i la reinscripció, que dóna com a resultat la reproducció i la fetitxització dels estereotips del fet diferencial català.

**Paraules clau**
teatre català, identitat nacional, representació teatral, història del teatre, resistència, materialització

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**The return of the national**

This article constitutes a return in a number of different senses, in that I first began thinking of Els Joglars’ El Nacional many years ago in the context of work I was beginning to put together on Catalan national theatre, after long years excavating the ways in which twentieth-century Catalan theatrical discourse was shaped and inflected through the translation and reception of Shakespeare.1 The work I was doing eventually materialized in an issue of Romance Quarterly on Catalan spaces, where I used the debates on the construction of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya to reflect on the relationship between theatre space and cultural identity in Catalonia (Buffery, 2006). Reference there to El Nacional was framed mainly by consideration of Josep Maria Flotats’ idealized representation of “Teatre de dins i símbol arquitectònic exterior”, in which there was overt recognition of theatre’s status as an architectural monument within the urban environment and of the different layers of operation of urban space. Reflecting on the importance of theatre space in the projection of the Catalan capital and of Catalonia as a whole, I drew attention like others (Feldman, 1998; Orozco, 2006) to the opposition between this monument and non-architecturally based theatres, between what Boadella himself christened the Catalan Valley of the Fallen (Delgado, 2012: 180) and his own projection of the Catalan performance groups as an alternative Catalan national theatre. If I return to El Nacional here and now, it is because it has come back to me in the manner of one of those fleeting flashbacks, glimpses of half-formulated recognition or moments of alarmed déjà vu experienced in encounters with other writings, performances by Els Joglars and perhaps, above all, in the spectacle of Boadella himself as he parades his own idiosyncratic views about Spanish and Catalan national identities. My return to El Nacional thus responds to three main frames:

1. Resistance and normalization: Els Joglars famously emerged from the cultures of resistance of the 1960s and 1970s and, as is endlessly repeated in theatre histories, constitutes one of the few independent theatre groups who survived on its own terms, continuing to provide a critical voice throughout the period of ‘normalization’. El Nacional is, of course, neither the only nor the most famous of their works to have enacted a criticism of the perceived obligation of Catalan cultural production during the 1980s and 1990s to simply represent a vision of the contemporary Catalan community envisioned by the political classes, but it is perhaps the one that engages most overtly in archaeological endeavours around discourses of the national and around the relationship between theatre and community.

2. Archaeologies of the national: If El Nacional is invoked here to remember the relationship between resistance and normalization that characterized the Catalan cultural field of the 1980s and 1990s, it is also a play that, rather fortuitously, has once again entered into and is playing with the national consciousness (past and present). This is because the company that came to stand for the Catalan community’s resistance to Franco has survived so successfully that it recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. And what was the play chosen to celebrate the monument? It was, of course, El Nacional, revived and re-enacted from the archive, drawing on the same costumes, sets and many of the same actors – Ramon Fontseré, Begoña Alberdi, Jesús Agelet, Pilar Saénz and Minnie Marx – in the kind of supremely archaeological endeavour that I am palely imitating here, in my own attempts to draw on documentary traces of fleeting instances of performance to reconstruct and address their relationship with aesthetic, social and political context.

3. The past in performance: Most interesting and urgent of all for me, though, is the need to grapple with performance’s relationship to the past, with how analysis of the repetition and re-enactment of El Nacional helps me to apprehend the uses of history in contemporary Catalan culture and to appreciate the cultural encounters produced by theatre as it travels to different geographical and linguistic contexts. If elsewhere I have applied translational approaches to Els Joglars’ Trilogia Catalana in order to discuss the construction of identity in translation (Buffery, 2013), here I wish to begin to explore...

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**Boadella, Els Joglars, resistance and normalization**

Albert Boadella, through his work with Els Joglars, is one of the most consistently experimental and original theatre practitioners to have emerged in the Spanish state (see Breden, 2009; Feldman, 2009, 2011, amongst others). Whilst the creative process followed by Els Joglars has always been a collective one, many of the textual versions of their productions are published under Boadella’s name, indicating his influence and auteurship within the group. He is overtly critical of the conformism of much of contemporary theatre and of the conservative complicity of Catalan culture since the 1990s. More recently he has been outspoken about the dangers of Catalan separatism, challenging what he perceives as the subordination of the Spanish language and Spanish speakers to Catalan, as well as political moves towards further independence in Catalonia. For him, Els Joglars “tried to become antibodies for the disagreeable virus of nationalism” (Boadella, 2007, p. 303).

The company’s ‘resistance’ credentials are linked to their origins in the non-textual forms of the Independent Theatre of the 1960s, drawing both on international performance currents and providing an outlet for cultural protest against the dictatorship that could bypass the censor. Alongside other performance groups such as El Tricicle and Comediantes, they came to embody the resistance of the Catalan community; however, unlike the latter, they maintained their political radicalism beyond the 1970s, continuing to produce critiques of official culture since then. Their continued radicalism has mainly been attributed to the persecution of the company after the production of *La Torna*, which satirized the military, in 1977. However, as explored by Feldman (2009; 2011), it was also fed by the waning of critical and audience responses to their work on their return to Catalonia from exile in the 1980s and by their choice of self-exile in constructing a creative space beyond the centralizing forces of a capital city in the throes of the Barcelona model. Feldman celebrates the exilic quality of Els Joglars’ work as something that allows them to combine a nostalgic desire for the homeland with a more critical vision: “convierte en un problema sin resolver la cuestión de la identidad cultural. A través de sus viajes y trayectos nómadas logran que sus obras continúen vibrando con intensidad” (Feldman, 2011, p. 11).

First performed in the Teatre Municipal de Girona in 1993 then touring across the Spanish state, *El Nacional* was devised explicitly to contest the operation and effects of cultural policy at that time, both at national and regional levels. Set in a dilapidated former musical theatre, the play turned this setting into a sacred space, with the formerly opulent carpets that provided bourgeois theatre-goers with the trappings of luxury now surrounded by candles that transformed the stage into a space of ritual transition. The theatre’s remaining occupants include the former usher Don Josep, an Andalusian cleaning lady with a double personality, who often slips into the persona of opera singer Castadiva, and Don Josep’s side-kick Paganini, who procures the actors needed to revive this theatre’s fortunes. An assortment of homeless beggars, buskers, pimps, pickpockets and prostitutes are rounded up and made to ‘perform’ *Rigoletto* in return for a theatre roof over their heads. Just as they are living in the theatre, so Don Josep teaches them a mode of performance that is not about imitating life but intended to be more far-reaching transformative: one that shuns the – for Don Josep – unforgivable crimes of contemporary dramatic theatre, one capable of fooling even the flies. Thus, the play both displays and confronts different methods of performance, playing with them, and even satirizes Boadella’s own methods of improvisation and devised drama. Yet the space they create is shown to be marginal and fragile, threatened by health inspectors, press reporters, architects and bulldozers who come to condemn these theatre squatters (and are themselves condemned to death and dispatched with gusto, one by one).

The play’s focus on a marginal space, occupied by social outsiders and faced with erasure to make way for new spatial uses, both provides commentary on the side-effects of public redevelopment of existing cultural spaces and explores the very ontology of cultural practice; the opulence of the opera house is stripped back to consider the relationship between art and life, whether in the Andalusian cleaning lady’s transitions into her other role as opera singer, or in mirroring the ‘real’ death of the architect on stage in the mimicry of the actors. The play emerged from a context of widespread debate — in the cultural world around the politics of cultural funding, and in the theatre around the tendency to focus on highly visible big-budget spectacles based in capital cities rather than spreading the funding across different geographical locations and social strata (Orozco, 2006; 2007). At a local level, the play responded to the immediate context of the Generalitat project to create a Catalan national theatre. However, whereas the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya emerged from government identification of the need for visual display, an ideology reflected in the ‘transparent’ glass structure of the building designed by Ricard Bofill, Boadella and Els Joglars’ ‘national’ theatre presented an inverted mirror to the national, with a dark, degraded, ruined space occupied by tramps, streetworkers, pickpockets and the former usher of an operatic theatre, whose mistrust of official ‘actors’ underpins the critique displayed by this play:

1. “it leaves the question of cultural identity unresolved. Their nomadic wanderings and travels mean their works continue to vibrate with intensity.”
Archaeologies of the national: Albert Boadella and El Nacional revisited

Don Josep: Vinga! Practiquem un acte ecològic! Que vagin passant sobre l’altar del sacrifici! Assessors culturals!... Artistes, funcionaris!... Consellers de cultural!... Jurats de premis nacionals de teatre, crítics, directors de teatres nacional, assessors teatrals, tècnics de cultura, representants artístics, artistes de vanguardia, periodistes mercenaris...

[...]

... subsecretaris, catedràtics, programadors, fundacions artístiques, genis contemporanis, guardonats de les arts, traficants de subvencions, models, dissenyadors, arquitectes, publicistes, urbanistes, ministres de cultura! Ballarins de flamenco! ... Esnobs, públic elitista, intel·lectuals nacionalistes, artistes oficials...² (Boadella, 2002, pp. 570-1)

This scene is considered by Corral (2011) to be the most powerful in the play, because of its heightened synthesis of language, music and bodily gestures. In it Don Josep’s translation of the Vendetta aria from Rigoletto evolves into a hypnotic attack on the different individuals and organisms “que han colaborado de forma determinante en reducir el teatro a una simple imitación sin ningún compromiso social”³ (Corral, 2011, p. 5), accompanied by the stylized movements of the hunch-backed Finito, the music of the band of indigent buskers and the bel canto of Castadiva. All of these characters variously stand for Rigoletto in the final scene of the play.

Archaeologies of the national

What kind of mirrors does the play present today? Why the archaeological endeavour for 2011-2012? In the press dossier and almost all subsequent reviews, Els Joglars’ choice of El Nacional is presented very overtly in terms of the continuing relevance of Boadella’s theatrical manifesto, espousing a shift away from the focus on theatrical monuments, prizes and the responsibility to represent the community, towards a more critical, processual practice, towards the creation of a space where culture is constructed by bodies in the here and now, in which identity is in flux and community is negotiated. Boadella himself presents the play as a very prescient one of more relevance today, in the midst of the economic crisis which Spain is currently suffering, at the tail end of Europe’s ‘PIIGS’:

En estos tiempos de inflación artística los grandes coliseos de la ópera compiten empleando complejas y costosas estructuras para sobrevivir como nuevo parque temático musical... La gran complejidad burocrática y laboral que se ha organizado... ha propiciado el intervencionismo tutor de los Estados con su nuevo modelo de nacionalización de la cultura elitista. Un modelo de muy difícil sostenimiento dadas las actuales circunstancias.⁴ (Boadella, in Els Joglars 2011a, p. 1)

In the press releases, trailers, dossiers and interviews that were produced to advertise the play, which are then just repeated ad infinitum in theatre ‘reviews’ (Els Joglars, 2011b), the double function of revisiting the past is very clearly marked out. Once again, it is to denote the deleterious effects of public funding of the arts, which leads to the generation of empty spectacles and the management of cultural heritage for ends that have more to do with political display than with aesthetic, cultural or social value. On the one hand, Boadella draws attention to the changes made to the new version of El Nacional:

Yo no puedo copiarme a mí mismo 18 años después. He respetado la estructura de la obra y he aumentado las cosas que me parecen los valores esenciales de esta compañía... He aumentado la música porque cuento con dos grandes figuras del canto... Y el texto está muy cambiado. Es mucho mejor que la anterior porque los actores tienen 18 años más de experiencia⁵ (Boadella, 2011).

On the other hand, the advertising of the play relies heavily on documentary traces of the 1993-1994 ‘original’: the same actors, costumes and set, to photographs, reviews and video clips which are juxtaposed with footage of the rehearsals for the 2011 version. Added to this is the even greater focus on the (admittedly self-proclaimed) role of ‘independent’ artistic communities like Els Joglars, who, in this play, come to stand very clearly once more

². Don Josep, come on! Let’s practise an ecological act! Queue them up for the sacrificial altar! Cultural advisors!... Artists, civil servants!... Culture ministers!... Jury members for national theatre awards, critics, national theatre directors, theatre advisors, cultural technicians, agents, leading artists, mercenary journalists... […]

³. “that have played a vital role in reducing theatre to a simple imitation without any kind of social commitment”.

⁴. At these times of artistic inflation the great operatic coliseums compete by using complex and costly structures to survive as new musical theme parks.... The great bureaucratic and employment complexity that has been organized... has led to tutored interventionism from States with their new model for nationalization of elitist culture – a model that is very difficult to sustain given the current circumstances.

⁵. I can’t copy myself 18 years on. I have respected the structure of the work and expanded the things that I feel to be essential values for this company. I have increased the music because I have two great singers.... And the text is very different. It is much better than it was because the actors have 18 more years of experience.
for a culture of resistance at the very limits of cultural survival. Just as Rigoletto represents the essence of theatre for Don Josep, so his endeavour is mirrored in Boadella’s own aspirations as transmitted to the press: “Busca una vuelta a los orígenes del teatro del arte, un renacer de ese oficio de bufones, juglares y payasos, muy alejados de los actores histrónicos e intelectuales que degeneraron la profesión hasta convertirla en un arte para funcionarios” (Boadella, as cited in Fernández, 2011). The indigenes occupying the theatre – and Els Joglars, in their repetition of their role – come to stand for the squatters standing against the bulldozers, against police violence, press complicity and the cynicism of the professional classes, who are prepared to tear down public space rather than see it recycled and reused from a counter-hegemonic perspective. In relation to the discourses of 2011-2012, then, Els Joglars are no longer standing for an alternative Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, but for an alternative embodiment of the ‘national’, one that stands for the hungry, battered, marginalized national body of the people and that in some ways justifies the use of monstrous violence in order to stand against the forces of hegemony. The main difference here is that this Teatre Nacional is now Teatro Nacional, that is, it no longer includes Catalonia; the play now exists in a Spanish version — not as the Catalan/bilingual version that emerged out of the original improvisations — and thus arguably draws primarily on the Spanish text published in 1999. Furthermore, the play is not to be performed in Catalonia. Why not? According to Boadella, not through any fault of Els Joglars, but because Catalonia no longer wants them, due to Catalan media censorship of their satirical, counter-cultural work. Quotations in the press include: “Podríamos haber sido la gran compañía del oficialismo catalán pero nos pusimos a la contra y lo pagamos” (Lorenci, 2011); “Si no te quieren, dejas de querer”, in alusión a la marginación considerado traidores a la causa” (Agencia EFE, 2011). That of actuar en Cataluña. Simplemente, no nos quieren, nos han considerado traidores a la causa” (Agencia EFE, 2011). That such claims form such a central part of the advertising of the play and are repeated in so many press releases and reviews is not accidental, for what we see is a construction of the national that excludes Catalonia — indeed, that is built on anti-Catalanism, on the same association between the causes of the crisis and Catalan profiliﬁcay, nationalism and betrayal that underpins the coetaneous discourse of the Spanish government and the press. Furthermore such a ‘differential’ construction of the national is further conﬁrmed by the other intertexts brought into play in presenting El Nacional: reference to Boadella’s own stance on Catalonia, his involvement with the political party called Ciutadans de Catalunya and even his love of that other alternative national spectacle, the fiesta nacional, that is, bullfighting (see, for instance, A. D., 2011)

The past in performance: Rigoletto as effigy

In many ways, then, the intertextual link drawn between Els Joglars and Rigoletto could not be more apposite. Here we have an appeal to the marginal, outsider jester central to the company’s vision of performance history and its role as uncomfortable commentator on the discourses of power. Yet the appeal to Rigoletto, in particular, is a rather problematic one, for the central character of the jester is ultimately a grotesque ﬁgure whose performances are also about maintaining and reafﬁrming political power and, in fact, result in the death of what he most loves. The question of how Rigoletto is re-enacted and repeated in these endless performative repetitions is one that I would like to end by discussing brieﬂy drawing on Joseph Roach’s concept of the ‘effigy’ (1996, p. 33-41). However, we could of course quite easily – if somewhat naughtily – choose to see Boadella himself as the hunchbacked Rigoletto who, from the perspective of a Spanish national frame, represents the necessary underpinning and restoration of hegemony, even if he carries the monstrous hump of being a Catalan (a hump which he is able, like Finito in the play, to put on and take off as he pleases), and even if, from the perspective of the Catalan national frame, he represents the betrayal of the Catalan community (the stabbing of the possibility of a hybrid Andalusian/Catalan opera singer) — precisely because the Catalan hump is one that is detachable and expendable.

The different archaeologies of the national re-staged here leave us to grapple with what they actually stand for and what they tell us about the function of the past in the here and now. On the one hand, they are compelling allegorically because of the way in which they oppose the construction of an architectural theatre as a place of memory, standing for a ﬁxed relationship between a community and its past, with a more ephemeral site of memory constructed by the interaction between the different bodies that come together in a particular context of situation. They indicate the importance of attending to the histories of bodies in performance and of looking closely at how the functions of the past in contemporary discourses are inscribed and reproduced.
in the bodies of performers. And thus they compel us to turn to Roach’s exploration of the ways in which performance engages with the past through embodiment in order either to maintain continuity or differentiate.

Roach develops the concept of the effigy in *Cities of the Dead* (1996) in order to examine how culture is reproduced through the process of surrogation, drawing on a wide range of theories from performance ethnography to Derridean deconstruction. He explores the function of effigies in Circum-Atlantic encounters through performance, centring on the particular urban vortices of behaviour of London and New Orleans, which bring different languages, cultures, communities and bodies into contact. His work adds to recent work on linguistically-divided geographies as translation zones (Apter, 2006; Simon, 2011), the tools with which to analyse documentary traces of the performance of identity. If performance is seen as a process that always contains excess, difference and supplement, through the links it sets up with the bodily, with the environment in which it takes place, it becomes necessary not only to take account of the multiple media through which it communicates but also the performativity of the actors who, by stepping into a role, repeat and restore behaviour whilst at the same time inventing and re-creating it. Applied to *El Nacional* we have already glimpsed the different ways in which Els Joglars’ bodies reproduce and are criss-crossed by cultural discourses to produce a vision of identities that are performative, drawing heightened attention to the experience of being in the here and now, as located political actors in public space.

But there is more to it, for the repetition of *El Nacional* in fact moves away somewhat from Els Joglars’ devised processual practice of 1993 to one that is as much about reconstructing a monument, based on a text fixed in Spanish (Boadella, 1999). It thus reminds of how the attention to bodies in performance needs also to engage with many different layers of documentary traces, to explore more carefully the languages and discourses from which they emerge and with which they enter into dialogue, attending to them as bodies in translation and also as bodies that relate in myriad ways to the authorities of text, language and history.

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http://digithum.uoc.edu Archaeologies of the national: Albert Boadella and El Nacional revisited


The influence of contemporary art on the modern notion of archive*

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Abstract
In this article, I argue that contemporary art has played an essential role both in the transformation of contemporary archives and within the framework of the archival turn (for example, anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler discusses the archival turn in the context of colonial studies, and authors such as Terry Cook and Eric Ketelaar use the term in the field of archival science). More specifically, I will explore this influence from the viewpoint of different artistic movements before concluding with visual art and a case study of the installation Arxiu d’arxius (Archive of archives, 1998-2006), a personal archive by the Catalan artist Montserrat Soto. The aim is to analyse how art has both changed how documents are created and displayed and provided new ways of organizing information and transmitting cultural memory, especially with regard to documenting aspects of history associated with pain, oppression and war (generally drawing on oral memory) and with certain groups (women, slaves and minority indigenous communities) that have been excluded from the documentary repositories of traditional archives, whether due to institutional neglect or because they were inevitably silenced and censored.

To this end, I will first offer a brief overview of the origin and evolution of the concept of archive up to the present day, highlighting the main transformations it has undergone. I will then argue that contemporary art has engaged intensively with the idea of document storage and memory. Finally, building on these premises, I will analyse the three archives included in Arxiu d’arxius that are based on oral memory: the archive of mass graves from the Spanish Civil War; the archive of American slavery; and the archive of the Aboriginal Australian community.

Keywords
archival turn, oral memory, archives of war and oppression, Montserrat Soto, contemporary art

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Resum
En aquest article argumento com l’art contemporani ha tingut un paper essencial en les transformacions de l’arxiu en la societat actual i en el marc del gir arxivístic (per exemple Ann Laura Stoler utilitza el terme des de l’antropologia en el context dels estudis colonials i autors com Terry Cook o Eric Ketelaar ho fan en el camp de l’arxivística). Més específicament, em proposo explorar aquesa influència des de diferents moviments artístics fins a arribar a l’art visual amb l’estudi de cas Arxiu d’arxius, de l’artista catalana Montserrat Soto. L’objectiu és analitzar com l’art modifica la manera de produir i visualitzat els documents i al mateix temps aporta noves maneres d’organitzar la informació i de transmetre la memòria cultural, especialment quan es tracta de documentar aspectes de la història que tenen a veure amb el dolor, l’opressió i la guerra (generalment relacionats amb la memòria oral), o bé quan es tracta de documentar determinats col·lectius (dones, esclaus o comunitats indígenes minoritàries) que no han format part dels repositoris documentals dels arxius tradicionals, sigui perquè han estat menystinguts pels poders institucionals o bé perquè han estat inevitabledament condemnats al silenci i a la censura.

En primer lloc, exposo molt esquemàticament l’origen del concepte d’arxiu fins avui, per tal d’observar les seves transformacions. En segon lloc, argumento com des de l’art contemporani s’ha treballat intensament amb la idea d’emmagatzematge de documents i de memòria. Finalment, analitzo sota les premisses exposades anteriorment, l’obra Arxiu d’arxius (1998-2006): es tracta d’un arxiu personal que ha fet l’artista Montserrat Soto, en què s’han creat tres arxius vinculats a les fonts de memòria oral: l’arxiu de les fosses comunes de la Guerra Civil espanyola, l’arxiu dels esclaus d’Amèrica i l’arxiu dels aborígens australians.

Paraules clau
arxivístic, memòria oral, arxius de guerra i opressió, Montserrat Soto, art contemporani

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Ceux qui, à un titre ou à un autre, connaissent l’horreur du passé ont le devoir d’élèver leur voix contre une horreur autre, mais bien présente, se déroulant à quelques centaines de kilomètres, voire quelques dizaines de mètres de chez eux. Loin de rester prisonniers du passé, nous l’aurons mis au service du présent, comme la mémoire –et l’oubli –doivent se mettre au service de la justice.

(Tzvetan Todorov, Les abus de la mémoire)

The changes in how information is documented and archived today are largely related to the new context of the information and knowledge society. Recent times have witnessed profound changes in how we manage information and acquire knowledge, and this has led to a new social way of archiving culture.

The importance that new information society narratives have taken on has sparked an interdisciplinary debate that radically breaks with the classical definitions of archive and document championed in the field of archival studies. The Catalan artist Montserrat Soto (1961) has worked in the context of these paradigm shifts in both the concept of archive and new emerging archival cultures, using video and photography in her installations.

Thus, technological advances, the development of new hardware and software, and social movements both recent (eg hackers, open culture) and not so recent (eg post-colonialism, feminisms, sexual liberation, etc.) have all helped to enable a new way of understanding both archives and documents and the traditional definitions thereof. The polysemic nature of the archive stems from its dual meaning of both origin or beginning and the actual building in which the superior magistrates once lived. The distinction between this physical space (the building where the documents of power are kept) and the sources of memory is critical in the work Arxiu d’arxius (Archive of archives), which Soto completed over the course of eight years, between 1998 and 2006.

Today, new ways of creating documents and archiving information have emerged involving interfaces that make it possible to display a wide variety of documents and formats. The influence of contemporary art on archives can be felt not only in how traditional archives are conceptualized and represented, but also in the transition involved in moving from an administrative and bureaucratic understanding of archives to a creative one that suggests new ways of organizing, representing and displaying information. Moreover, within this process, the concept of information itself has been modified: whereas it once adhered to a centralist and Euro-centric view, it now encompasses – and concerns itself with – the peripheries (that is, everything that has been excluded from the archive for different reasons: situations of war, censorship, dictatorships, or the documentation of subordinate identities, among others).

If we trace the term back to its Greek origin, we can see how the archive was both the home of the powerful (commandment)
and the origin and beginning (commencement) (Derrida, 1995). In subsequent Western thought, archives have often been associated with the logos. This tandem between the principle and the word has led to an association of ideas among terms that designate different things. It has also led to a specific way of transmitting memory and knowledge, generally by means of the written word. It was this fact that inspired Soto’s search to establish classifications within different types of memory. That, in turn, allowed her to link memory to absence, presence and the image.

The French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard has proposed, as a counterpoint to the archive, the family space of the domus: where emotions, feelings and issues of a more private nature take place. Thus, the limits between the archive, which occupies a central position, and its periphery, between the public sphere (official documents in the archive) and the private one (documents ignored or censored by the authorities), are clearly defined.

This distinction, as discussed below, is relevant to the archives that Soto has created, especially with regard to her conceptualization of those sources of memory (generated in this hidden space beyond the glare of the public light) that have been neglected by political and/or cultural institutions. She thus calls the archives of oral memory that she has created Secrets, and they bear a certain relationship to the space of private memory (to personal accounts and to the memories of family members killed in a war), which, in turn, is inextricably linked to the space of emotions and attachments.

Very briefly, the modern archive evolved as something impenetrable, a form of control, an arsenal for the authorities. It was an archive shrouded in secrecy and inaccessibility that used powerful sorting systems to organize information based on ideas of rationality and progress. Indeed, it was not until the year 1860 that governments chose to open their archives to historians and researchers. This decision gave rise to the figure of the archivist (information professional). At the time, archives were still strongly bureaucratic in nature.

The nineteenth century was also critical to the formulation of two fundamental rules of archival science: the principle of provenance and respect for origin. When jointly applied, these principles ensure that the original order of documents is reproduced in accordance with a relationship of dependence and interrelationship between groups of documents that is faithful to their natural order or origin. In 1950, the International Council on Archives (ICA) was created with the support of UNESCO, among other things, to raise awareness of the role of archives in the construction of cultural memory and of their contribution to the conservation of world heritage. However, it was not until 2003 that UNESCO explicitly recognized, in a convention, the need to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in order to ensure respect for the cultural heritage of communities, groups and individuals.

This article aims to provide neither a detailed history of archives nor a timeline of archival theory, despite the importance of such basic historical knowledge to understanding the evolution of archives in recent times. Likewise, I will not attempt to analyse the importance that archives have had as objects of representation and conceptualization from a contemporary art perspective. Instead, the aim of this article is to examine the influence that contemporary art has had on changes in archives, specifically in situations of oppression and war in which personal accounts and records have not been documented. To achieve this, I will focus on the concepts introduced in the preceding section: the idea of storage and physical space and the concept of the sources of memory.

Generally speaking, contemporary art has had a significant influence on the transformation of modern archives and their transition towards a new way of creating and displaying documents. Avant-garde movements can be described as pushing the limits of language: first, they have contributed to modifying the idea of the modern archive, how it is represented and conceptualized; second, they have done this based on the ideas of temporality, memory, and language. The Surrealist movement was a direct critique of the principles of provenance and original order inherent in the traditional understanding of archives (Spieker, 2008). It modified the image-text relationship, as well as the temporality between objects and elements. In contrast, Dadaism worked with the concepts of division and fragmentation based on an archaeology and reconstruction of the past, shattering the ideas of order, control, and power implicit in the archival principles of precedence and the natural order of documents (Spieker, 2008). In Dadaism, the idea of decontextualization was reinforced through the introduction of collage and the recycling of assorted materials to create different types of documents. Finally, performance art or happenings – introduced the concepts of performance, immediacy and performativity to archives, endowing them with a strong subjective bent and a political positioning (Hart & Phelan, 1996). In the cultural context, performance art has strongly influenced the changes in the notions of archive and document, making it possible to establish connections between the rights of a given culture and its intangible cultural heritage and linking ritual and technology (Taylor, 2003). At the same time, it broke with disciplines and critiques institutional hierarchization, advocating instead different uses of language, a shift from object to action, and the idea of process (eg Gertz: culture as “an acted document”).

1. See recent publications on the topic, such as the book by Anna Maria Guasch Arte y archivo 1920-2010.
From a different analytical perspective, document storage has been a recurring idea in the work of many artists (Guasch, 2011). In his work 612 Time Capsules, Andy Warhol filled cardboard boxes with a wide variety of mundane personal items. The boxes were then sealed and dated to create a registry. Warhol used them to build a monumental archive that was at once private and social and that bore witness to his everyday personal and professional life.

Whereas Warhol explored the idea of the archive in relation to time, in the 1990s, the artist Candida Höfer used photography to represent archival imagery in relation to space. Her photographs depict institutional buildings as emblematic apparatuses of power (e.g., Dublin Library, the Rijksmuseum archive). These works contrast with those of Martha Rosler, in which small symbolic details are used to underscore the connection between archives and daily life, linking the public and private spheres (Spieker, 2008).

In analysing archives, it is important to note the work of artists who have, even if involuntarily, helped to shape the distinction between collection (the storage of documents) and archive (the organization of documents). This distinction is critical to archival theory and its implementation in classification systems and documentary languages (which are absent from the idea of a collection of objects). In this regard, attention might be called to the work of the French artist Christian Boltanski (1944), who has sought to highlight the relationship between archives and memory. To do this, he explores the limits of documents, integrating the personal items of anonymous and absent owners. He thus replaces the vocabulary of documentary signs with symbolic language. In Archives de l’année 1987 du journal “El caso”, he gathers photographs of murderers, victims and missing persons from the archives of the newspaper “El Caso” in a single place. In both Le réserve des suisses morts (1995) and his installations on holocaust victims, he has moreover explored the ideas of archive and memory in relation to the construction of identity, absence and death (Boltanski, 2006).

Finally, in the field of audiovisual documentaries, again in the context of the archival turn, scholars have pointed to the importance of Claude Lanzmann’s film Shoah (1986), both for its narration of the holocaust’s past by means of personal testimonies and for calling attention to the absence of archives in the reconstruction of certain traumatic past events (this impossible archaeology has also been called the anti-archive) (Friedman, 2007).

In the Catalan context, the contemporary artist Montserrat Soto reflects on the emergence of new archival cultures in her work Arxiu d’arxius (1998-2006), a large private archive of photographs and videos compiled over the course of eight years. In it, she explores the possible types of memory, starting with the notion of the archive as a transmitter of codes that is used not only to convey but also receive information: “We sought out the original sources and reinterpreted them, as an inspiration for understanding the new concepts of memory currently being developed with new technologies” (Soto, 2007, p. 6).

In this article, I will focus exclusively on the treatment of oral memory, specifically, on the three archives that Soto created under the title “Secrets”. “Secret 1” (The mass graves of the Spanish Civil War) is a video installation showing a mass grave being opened in Villamayor de los Montes (Burgos) in June 2003. The audio track reproduces the voices of the family members and children of one of the men who disappeared. In the video, his son offers a biography that was recorded one year after the grave was opened and the family recovered the body of the murdered father. His siblings’ voices and the dialogues were recorded as the family recovered its lost memory. The bodies were exhumed by a team of 46 archaeologists, sociologists and anthropologists. Soto was able to film the process, and it is shown together with the narrated testimonies.

The second part of the exhibit is “Secret 2”, a video installation about slavery in the United States that gives a visual language to the original voices of the people interviewed. The drive to record the voices of former slaves began in 1929 as a private initiative. It culminated in an archive created by the US government under Franklin Delano Roosevelt between 1936 and 1938. Today, the archive is kept at the Library of Congress in Washington. Soto’s archive draws on the project Born in Slavery, which aimed to prevent the stories of the last American slaves from being lost forever. Soto documents the accounts of the former slaves based on typed letters, such as the one below:

“Yassum, I kin tell you things about slavery times dat would make yo’ blood bile, but dey’s too turrible. I jus’ tries to forgit.

“I could tell you ‘bout bein’ run myself wid dem nigger dogs, but I ain’t gwint to do it (...) I ain’t never tol’ nobody all dis an’ ain’t gwine tell you no mo’. Amy Chapman” (in Soto, 2007)

Finally, the third part of the exhibit is “Secret 3”, an archive about the Aboriginal Australian community. Also an audiovisual document, it includes the reading at the 2011 Barcelona Poetry Festival by the Aboriginal poet Lionel G. Fogarty, born on the Cherbourg Aboriginal Reserve (Australia). In this case, the oral memory consists of, first, the transmission of the community’s historical past through the sharing of dreams – the community lacked a written language – in the immediate present, and, second, the oppression of the Aborigines forced to live under harsh...
government control on a reservation. Because the Aborigines were nearly wiped out, many of their languages have been lost (whereas in 1788 there were some 700 tribes speaking 250 languages, by 2000, only 20 to 25 languages were actively being taught to children) (Soto, 2007).

The oral memory in Arxiu d’arxius is an oppressed, forgotten and damaged memory. Indeed, for Soto, when oral memory is sealed in a documentary archive, it loses its inherent spontaneity, freshness and creativity. However, such archiving makes it possible to record things that would otherwise soon be lost. Thus, the family and domestic sphere (the domus) – eg people’s private lives and the memory of a loved one kidnapped and killed by the pro-Franco forces during the war – enable the construction of an archive that takes into account all that which previously existed only at the margins, hidden and forgotten, thereby allowing us to record information from history (or from a history) that was otherwise doomed to fade away forever, to be censored during the dictatorship with the ensuing repercussions. Ingeniousness, fear and self-censorship also play an important role in the perception and experience of war. The transitions have led people to believe that the dictatorship (in the case of the first archive) and the slave system (in the case of the second) were lesser evils (Soto, 2007). Thus, orality cannot be pursued in periods of oppression and trauma. Instead, it is reserved and stored. In the case of the archive of the Aboriginal Australians, oral memory was recovered through the community’s own transmissions, which were not broken by the pain it endured. However, the community itself was repressed, invaded and all but annihilated (its rights were not recognized until 1976) (Soto, 2007).

In archives of situations of oppression and war, oral memory is not recorded until years after the events occur. Fear, threats and oppression cause people to turn to orality to safeguard their memories against oblivion (Soto, 2007). In Spain, the process of reconstructing memory began quite late due to the fear during the war and post-war period and the need to overcome the horror itself. As a result, much information has been lost: graves are now being reopened, and the written documentation of the military tribunals and firing squads is being reviewed (Soto, 2006). The self-amnesty granted in the decree of 23 September 1939 declared that the murders committed between 14 April and 18 July 1936 by members of the National Movement were not crimes. Moreover, the political transition to a parliamentary monarchy legitimated by the 1978 constitution cemented silence as the price for basic freedoms (Soto, 2007).

In this case study, I used the analytical framework of philosophical postmodernism as applied to information science, drawing on Ketelaar’s work on archives in the post-custodial era and the new documentary formats resulting therefrom to narrow the focus of this theoretical substrate to archives. Additionally, I built on the phenomenon of the archival turn and Stoler’s contributions in the field of postcolonial studies to offer a perspective that is at once anthropological and epistemological, focusing on people and oral accounts as sources of knowledge and memory. This anthropological and epistemological approach to reviewing archives makes it possible to document these identities, so often rendered invisible, and to analyse them as a source of memory.

To address the relationship between oral sources of memory and archives, I focused on research on oral memory as intangible heritage (Solanilla, 2009). This line of research makes it possible to establish links between oral memory and new technologies. At the same time, it highlights the relationship between personal memories and the Internet and memorial websites. Recording oral memory is a particularly complex task with traditional archives (both conceptually and formally), but it is increasingly common in the new social forms of archiving information. This brings questions of truthfulness versus falsification and the univocity of the original document and primary sources of history into play.

The archives mentioned here use new technologies and heterogeneous documentary formats (video, audio, analogue photography, digital images, projected text, printed documents, catalogues, installations, art exhibits). They thus represent a different understanding of the archival document from that of modern archives. Everything confined to the margins under the modern concept of archive (eg gender, colonialism, ethnicity) is here part of the cultural memory of communities and individuals.

In this article, I have focused on the work Arxiu d’arxius by the Catalan artist Montserrat Soto, which both explores the double meaning of archive as both a physical space for storage and a source of memory and presents the archive as a selective agent that determines what should be remembered and preserved. It is an archive made with audio media (the sound of water, the voices of the witnesses, the poetry reading), text (the police records from the Central Prison in Burgos, the typed letters of former American slaves, printed verses of poetry), and visual media (images of the first-person accounts, the film of the archaeological exhumation of the mass grave, images from the Barcelona Poetry Festival, photographs of the former slaves). New technologies are then used to integrate this wide range of formats into a coherent whole. Finally, the archive is displayed as an audiovisual installation both at museums and art centres (physical spaces) and online (virtual space).

Derrida’s Archive Fever (1994) triggered a proliferation of publications on the subject of archives in a wide variety of fields, in which both anthropology and contemporary art featured heavily. The analysis of the contribution of art to the phenomenon of the archival turn highlights the changes in how archives are conceptualized, as well as the emerging archival cultures referred to here.

Doubts remain regarding how we have archived and preserved the memory of our time. What have we archived? And why did
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we choose what we did? Nevertheless, in the words of Soto, “one person’s memory allows us all to remember” (Soto, 2007, p. 5).

References


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The influence of contemporary art on the modern notion of archive

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