

Grasset, Eloi. *La trama mortal. Pere Gimferrer y la política de la literatura (1962–1985)*. Sevilla: Renacimiento, 2020, 345 pp.

Grasset, Eloi. *Pere Gimferrer*. Translated by Adrian Nathan West. New York: New York Review of Books, NYRB Poets, 2021, 160 pp.

Eloi Grasset's book-length study, *La trama mortal. Pere Gimferrer y la política de la literatura (1962–1985)*, is devoted to a specific period in Pere Gimferrer's life and literary career, before it was soaked up by “academicism” and before he became a public figure of phenomenal dimensions. The book has an excellent title inspired by an Octavio Paz article devoted to Gimferrer's novel *Fortuny* (1983). Starting with the first film reviews that Gimferrer wrote in 1962, Grasset covers all his major interventions and publications, including a (temporary) change of literary language. It concludes with Gimferrer's successful admission as a permanent member of Real Academia Española, when, having just turned 40, he replaced Nobel prize winner Vicente Aleixandre in 1985. The theoretical premises of the book are anchored in Bourdieu's conceptualization of the *champ littéraire* — cultural field, symbolic capital, cultural domination, etc. — and others such as accreditation of legitimacy, redistribution of hierarchies, cultural hegemony. Grasset pays attention to the process of transition to democracy that took place in Spain in a split way: first, the cultural change — which began during the 1960s — and, once the dictator died, the political change to a democracy (still) under construction. The gap between the two processes is one of the most relevant features of the Spanish transition and the *mare dels ous* of so many current problems in Spain.

The book comprises nine chapters with an introduction and an epilogue. Grasset follows almost with a stringent biographical methodology Gimferrer's transformations and upheavals during those crucial years. Of particular interest is the information about his early work as a film critic in *Tarrasa Informació* and *Film Ideal*. Lídia Carol is already at work on an in-depth study of these contributions, but here, we have a first insight into the matter, which could be helpful in the study of recent developments in film studies such as the contribution by Laurent Jullier and Jean-Marc Leveratto, *Cinéphiles et cinéphilies — Une histoire de la qualité cinématographique*. Maybe where Grasset excels is in his ability to summarize complex polemics. In chapter IV (“Noticias desde el futuro. La institucionalización de la ruptura”) and chapter V (“Sobre la imaginación subordinada: cultura y política en Cataluña”) he discusses two influential anthologies of poetry. One that was decisive for the successful advancement of the so-called *Novísimos* group and aesthetics, *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* (1970); another one that tried to prescribe with relative success a social realist aesthetic, coined as *realisme històric*,

promoted by Josep M. Castellet and Joaquim Molas in their controversial *Poesia catalana segle XX* (1963). The first was instrumental in the modernization of Spanish literature; the second, even if it failed as a promoter of changing aesthetics, was nevertheless a crucial revision of the established canon to which other voices such as Gabriel Ferrater were contributing at the time.

One important characteristic of Grasset's approach to Gimferrer's early works is his attention to politics. Following Jacques Rancière he points to the fact that literature makes politics insofar as it is literature and that there is an inescapable link between politics as a collective practice and literature understood as a historically determined regime of writing. Accordingly, the book is not only concerned with Gimferrer, but it includes a general political view of twenty years of Spanish cultural history that is key to understanding some of the stakes that ended up influencing the reconstruction process of democracy in Spain. Grasset shows a remarkable command of theoretical issues related to uses of political theory and a firm grasp of previous scholarship on the books he analyzes. The level of his close readings makes the book groundbreaking and attractive, beyond the fact that analyzing them in his theoretical framework puts the meaning of this canonical author under new light. Chapter VII ("Lenguas sin acomodo"), for example, contains an important deliberation on identity, language, and territory (with the help of George Steiner's extraterritoriality concept): literary language can be understood as an instrument of artistic creation that may or may not coincide with the language of the writer.

Besides some incongruities, Gimferrer is capable of creating a calculated link between identity, mother tongue, and modern literature, which turns his poetry into a useful link with which to establish the correspondence between cultural and national demands that the catalanist discourse considered so necessary to complete its reterritorialization. His vindication of the artists Tapies and Miró is linked to a tenuous "esperit català" that Gimferrer locates in their unprecedented reinterpretation of the avant garde: "las exploraciones dentro del mundo de las tinieblas y lo oculto o indefinible que caracterizan la línea del gran arte catalán" (254).

In one of the book's most controversial chapters, IX "Angustia y valor cultural..." after consideration of a few examples from *Dietari*, Grasset concludes with the considerable stretch that Gimferrer had the intention to intervene in the making of symbols and ideological discourses with which to endow Catalan society with a collective sense of identity: "Proporcionando modelos de conducta y asegurando la pervivencia de la herencia literaria, Gimferrer participaba en el proceso de 'normalización' por el que Convergència i Unió (CiU) apostaba y con el que se buscaba crear la ilusión de una posible autosuficiencia cultural" (282). The author — he is too young — does not take into account the extremely limited

audience of a newspaper such as *El Correo Catalán* in 1980. An interpretation of this kind has given the opportunity to an unfortunate review of the book focusing on this aspect to claim the collaboration of Gimferrer with CiU's cultural politics (did they have any serious policy or proposal? By looking at the series of culture *consellers* one has to wonder which one, if any). Sometimes, one has to wonder where some critics learned to read. Or even if they did learn at all. Grasset's inquiry finishes with *Fortuny* (1983), of which Miquel Batllori's comment encapsulates the fortune and limitations of the novel: "No es tracta d'un llibre de literatura europea, sinó de cultura europea" (287).

Grasset's book title is borrowed from Octavio Paz's review of Gimferrer's *Fortuny* (*El País*, March 12, 1984) and emphasizes the sense that "La trama de las palabras es una trampa mortal en la que caen, atraídos por el deseo y la muerte, todas las figuras que aparecen en el libro de Gimferrer," applying it to Gimferrer's life narration and the sense of his cultural intervention. Gimferrer's own "trama" in the sense of "red" (in English, net) speaks also of the many difficulties to trap the poet in a critical "trama." Because of his knowledge of the subject Grasset owes us some further clarifications. For example, about one of Gimferrer's most opaque (and at the same time clairvoyant) books, *L'agent provocador* (1998). An index of names would have been most welcomed.

In one of his first articles in *Tarrasa Informació* Gimferrer declared his attraction for "lo inhabitual, lo desacostumbrado, lo que se aparta de la común norma y medida" (117). The biographical and critical account by Grasset demonstrates this. Shrewdly he finishes with the entire (one-page) and only autobiography written by Pere Gimferrer: his 1994 "Autoretrat," which contradicts some of the hypothesis in the book: "és clar que un poeta ha de fer sempre, de manera sistemàtica, allò oposat al que hom espera d'ell"; or we could recall what Gimferrer wrote in 1962 in *Tarrasa Informació* about one of his passions: "Nunca será el cine un arte anquilosado con unos clásicos intocables, con una escala incommovible de valores y debemos alegrarnos de que así suceda. Mientras el cine subsista bajo el signo de la contradicción, las mutaciones y el apasionamiento, nos quedará la certeza que sigue siendo, si no la más grande, sí la más viva y actual de todas las disciplinas creadoras" (30).

Grasset's book is an homage to Gimferrer's able construction of an extremely successful literary image. Proof of this is the second book under consideration, an anthology of his poetry published by a powerhouse, *The New York Review of Books* "NYRB/ Poets" series. The bilingual selection (translated by Adrian Nathan West) embraces his entire poetical transformation. Starting with "Inventario" from *Mensaje del Tetrarca* (1963) and extending all the way to *Per riguardo* (2014) or one of his latest poems devoted to his new found love, "Cuca" from *No en mis días* (2016). In just 25 poems extracted from a copious work of more than 22 poetry

books, West manages to provide the English-speaking reader with a comprehensive selection of Gimferrer's work.

West has taken some astringent decisions. He recognizes Gimferrer's "mania for allusion," which suffuses his poems, but has "opted against adding notes to the present volume" (VIII), thus favoring the poet's opinion: "my aspiration is not in the least that the reader understands everything or that he reconstructs the act of writing, but only that the result of it prove stimulating" (VIII). When discussing Gimferrer's choice of language to write his poetry West's optimism ("many authors published in Catalan from the 1940's onward") needs some clarification, because besides censorship when publishing in Spanish, Catalan was banned by a ferocious if inconsistent brutal and nescient regime, a situation that has been only partially corrected since 1975.

West faces two major difficulties (or "treasons") when making choices of this kind: the limited selection, and losing meaning, as happens in any translation. Nonetheless, he recognizes the pleasure he has experienced when translating Gimferrer's poetry: "Pere offers his translator great freedom; you need not worry a word is too colloquial or too abstruse, and even the occasional neologism is fair game" (IX). The translator rightly refers to a "body of text," identifying through the different phases of his poetry "constant emphases — on light, on literature, on longing, on vital abundance and death" (X). This is an excellent personal anthology that is crucial to disseminate this unique author beyond the limited world of Spanish and Catalan literature. The anthology in its essentiality proves one of Gimferrer's assertions: "El poema és, doncs, un objecte ambigu: impersonal i personalíssim alhora, quotidià i insòlit, autònom de sentir i carregat de pensament latent en el seu teixit mateix" (Gimferrer, Pere. *Reflexions sobre la paraula poètica: discurs llegit el dia 25 de maig de 2008 en l'acte de recepció pública de Pere Gimferrer a la Reial Acadèmia de les Bones Lletres de Barcelona; i contestació de l'acadèmic numerari Alberto Blecuà*, Reial Acadèmia de les Bones Lletres de Barcelona, 2008).

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Le n, Ana Mar a. *Modernity for the Masses. Antonio Bonet's Dreams for Buenos Aires*. Lateral exchanges: architecture, urban development, and transnational practices. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2021, 288 pp.

In *Modernity for the Masses*, Ana Mar a Le n takes on the ambitious project of showing the complexities of architectural modernity through the examination of one built and three unbuilt projects by Catalan architect Antoni Bonet Castellana