

My profession, however, is being Joan Fuster

Antoni Furió*
Universitat de València

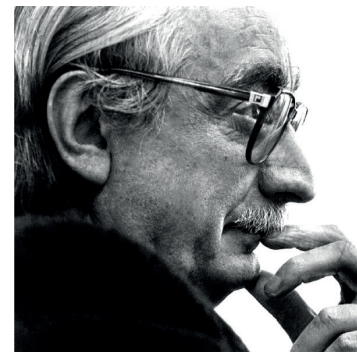
Received 9 October 2022 · Accepted 9 February 2023

ABSTRACT

This article sets out to examine the figure, work and literary and political significance of Joan Fuster on the centennial of his birth and 30 years after his death. Joan Fuster, the most important essayist in Catalan in the twentieth century, cut from the same cloth as Eugeni d'Ors and Josep Pla, is a polyhedric personality with many faces: man of letters, civil intellectual, poet, scholar, literary critic, historian of literature and culture, translator, editor, newspaper columnist, thinker, civic referent, cultural and political activist, father of the Catalan Lands... This article makes a brief survey of his literary and public career as a writer, from the biographical and historical circumstances of his entrée into Catalan literature and culture to the continued relevance of his literary output and political proposals.

KEYWORDS: Joan Fuster, essay, Catalan literature, Sueca, centennial

Many of you may have identified the phrase I borrowed as the title of my lecture (28th September 2022, Institut d'Estudis Catalans). It is half of an aphorism contained in *Consells, proverbis i insolències*, one of Joan Fuster's most emblematic books, published in 1968, which says in its entirety: 'Some people are lawyers or teachers, or politicians, or bishops, or poets or farmers. My profession, however, is being Joan Fuster.'¹ What exactly is the profession of being Joan Fuster? Who was Joan Fuster, who was born on 23 November, 1922, 100 years ago, and for whom the Institut d'Estudis Catalans and the Institució de les Lletres Catalanes have organised this academic conference we are holding today? I could have actually begun with another quip which is intentionally similar: 'You know the celebrated Greek aphorism: Joan Fuster is the measure of all things'.² Once again, I ask who was Joan Fuster, the figure that has summoned us here today and the author of these two clear statements of his own individuality? A glance at the programme of today's conference and the many pages that have been written and published about him and his work confirm that he was a multifaceted personality who wore many hats, which scholars and critics compare and even contrast with each other, convinced that their choice is the right one and that the other dimensions are not only minor and supplementary—what Fuster had to do because no one else could—but hindered or prevented him from giving



100
Joan
Fuster

FIGURE 1. Official logo commemorating the centennial of the birth of Joan Fuster. Ministry of Culture of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

more in that particular field, be it literature, scholarship, thinking or politics.

Fuster was a man of letters, an author, poet, essayist, scholar, literary critic, historian of literature and culture, translator, editor, opinion columnist, thinker, civic referent, cultural and political activist, father of the nation, member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans... On the com-

* **Contact address:** Antoni Furió. Departament d'Història Medieval i Ciències i Tècniques Històriques, Universitat de València.
E-mail: antoni.furio@uv.es

memoration of his centennial—but also for some time now, especially since his death 30 years ago—some people have been foregrounding the idea that the political dimension of his work has eclipsed—and damaged—the strictly literary dimension and hindered the reception of his literary works. They claim that Fuster the politician—or even worse, the activist—disfigured and even diminished Fuster the writer, a writer who has been totally overstated not so much for his literary stature but for his political projection, because of his status as a father of the nation. Last year, in the book *Dioses de época* published by Destino, Valentí Puig held no punches as he expressed his disdain: ‘Joan Fuster is one of the most overrated figures in Catalan culture, in no small part because he had been an apostle of pan-Catalanism’.³ And he is not the only one who believes or says this. Some are convinced that Fuster’s unearned fame is due to non-literary reasons and that his excellence as a writer should not be sought in his literature or even his thinking. Javier de Lucas, a professor of the philosophy of law and political philosophy at the Universitat de València and PSOE Senator in Madrid, still rankled by the title that Joan Fuster put on his 1975 book *Contra Unamuno y los demás*,⁴ wrote in *La Vanguardia* early this year a preventive article against the expected adulatory excesses of Fuster Year—I say preventive because the article appeared in the first week of January 2022, when the year had not even begun yet: ‘Fuster lacks philosophical stature’.⁵ At best, Fuster might be on par with Josep Pla or Eugeni d’Ors, but he was ‘light years’ from Unamuno, not to mention all the other thinkers with whom he has been compared, from Bertrand Russell to Albert Camus and Jürgen Habermas. It seems to me that the only one who ventured in this direction, half-joking, half-serious, was Montserrat Roig, a close friend of Fuster’s, who presented him as ‘a village Diderot’ in a report in *Destino* magazine in 1972.⁶ There is no crime in that definition, nor any intention to hyperbolically compare him to the French *philosophe*. But despite the differences between the two, the parallelism was apt. And similarly, I believe that the other comparisons worked, too, not so much in equalling authors who are very different in stature and projection, but rather in highlighting their role as civil intellectuals who participated in the public debate. And this cannot be denied him, despite the fact that Fuster ‘lacks philosophical stature’.

‘Philosophical thinking’, continued a crotchety, scornful De Lucas, ‘is something very different from journalist acuity and even essay-writing skill’, and consequently, there should be no doubt as to the inferiority of the ‘type of scepticism and—shall we say—sort of Mediterranean epicureanism in Fuster, compared to a body of thinking [Unamuno’s] which plumbed Kierkegaard’s exigent existential anguish’. He heaps derision upon derision to prepare for and lay fertile ground for the final apotheosis, which is direct and brutal: ‘And if one tries to bring up yardsticks of philosophical depth, let us set frivolities aside: there is no possible comparison [with Unamuno],

among other reasons because I believe that Fuster did not aspire to the philosophical undertaking (and would have been unable to)’.⁷ I do not know whether he would have been able to—a conjecture or value judgement which exposes De Lucas’ dislike of him—but I do know that he did not try to. And in any case, it is worth noting that two doctoral theses have been written on Fuster’s relationship with philosophy: one by Antoni Riera on *La raó moral de Joan Fuster* published in 1993,⁸ and one by Júlia Blasco, which was never actually read, although the recordings used for the study were published in 2012 with the title of *Joan Fuster: converses filosòfiques*.⁹

The detonator of this malevolence was probably the book I mentioned above, which includes the article ‘El caso de don Miguel’ (‘don Miguel’ referring to Unamuno), a half-page newspaper text initially published in *La Vanguardia* in 1971.¹⁰ If one were determined to compare Fuster and Unamuno, it would have been preferable to also bear in mind the other texts that the former, the writer from Sueca, devoted to the latter, the rector of the Universidad de Salamanca, not always in an ironic vein, especially, ‘Maragall i Unamuno, cara a cara’ published in *Pont Blau* in 1953¹¹ and later included in the book *Les originalitats* in 1955.¹² In any case, it is true that Joan Fuster’s critical and enlightened rationalism was unlike the agonised, irrational, premodern philosophy of ‘don Miguel’. I do not believe that anyone would jump the very first day of the Unamuno centennial to issue warnings about the risk of sanctifying the Spanish writer and philosopher, or to announce that his work and his intellectual stature are overstated. No one would have understood that, among other reasons because Unamuno is now history, pure archaeology (and if not, even worse), beyond good and evil. Yet Fuster remains alive, and this is why he is blamed for his own sins and those committed after him, even the Procés.

This allows some people to tiptoe past the political facet of the writer and his work and only claim his literary quality, supposedly toned down by his political workings, while it allows others to question even his literary virtues, which are far below where they think they should be, more for their political signification than for their merits in the field of literature and culture, especially compared to writers and thinkers from Spanish culture, for example. Why compare Fuster with Unamuno, or with whomever, other than with the intention to belittle the former and the language and culture he represents? It is obvious, though not always acknowledged, that behind this kind of attack and biased comparison is also a clear and indubitable political intentionality. In one case, the goal is to conceal the writer’s political ideas, especially his position on the national question and the shared future of the Catalan Lands, not to mention the very notion of the Catalan Lands, which would have harmed not only the reception of his literary output but also his own literary work. And the other seeks to challenge Catalan literature and culture by challenging Fuster himself: if Fuster, the most impor-

tant Catalan essayist of the twentieth century, does not make the grade as a writer (and even less as a thinker), then Catalan literature and culture do not make the grade as either literature or culture. They are a domestic literature and culture, meant for the home, typical of subaltern cultures and appropriate for innocuous festive celebrations (like the Jocs Florals, Fuster Year or all the ‘Years’ that Catalan institutions wanted to devote to a given writer), but in no way are they Literature and Culture proper, which, in Valencia, Madrid, Seville and Barcelona, are only those expressed in Spanish.

Joan Fuster—and I am beginning to answer the questions I asked at the start of my speech—is first and foremost a writer. But he is a writer in Catalan—although, due to the sociopolitical conditions of his day, much of his work, especially that published in newspapers, originally appeared in Spanish¹³—and that, his status as a writer in Catalan, gave him a political connotation from the very start. First, because he wrote in a banned language, and when the ban was loosened Catalan continued to be bedevilled by the Franco dictatorship and later, during democracy, by the constant Francoist leftovers in the deep state structures—the *deep state*. Secondly, because Catalan does not have a state behind it—not even a federal state or one that recognizes itself as plurinational—to defend it from this structural harassment and the attacks it constantly endures, which are accelerating its extinction. For a writer in Catalan, going from literature to politics had to be, and still is today, a ‘natural’, instinctive and logical step if one is aware of the extra-literary problems that threatened and continue to threaten the viability of his or her language as a vehicle of culture and literary expression, and even its very survival and that of the culture and society expressed through it.¹⁴ The political dimension of the oeuvre of Joan Fuster lies precisely in safeguarding and bolstering the usefulness of Catalan as a literary vehicle and working towards the survival and continuity of Catalan culture—the culture that is expressed in Catalan, and therefore Valencian as well—at a time of accelerated economic, social, political and cultural changes, as in the second half of the twentieth century.

He was a writer, yes. He was a great essayist, of a kind with Eugeni d’Ors and Josep Pla, whom he admired so much, and who so heavily influenced him in both form—intelligent prose, accurate adjectives—and intention: modernity, the desire to modernise, pro-European, of the country and its culture. Joan Fuster is a giant in the literature of ideas, in the intelligent observation of the political and social reality—and the culture—of his time, and of the critical thinking of the twentieth century, and he still casts a long shadow well into the twenty-first century. As Gustau Muñoz says in an article published this year in *L’Espill*, the journal that Fuster himself founded and Gustau and I currently co-direct, Fuster’s oeuvre is an ocean of suggestions, of brilliant, incisive pages. And they have withstood the test of time admirably: ‘Hundreds of his pages, literally, still hold up and still prompt reflection, smiles, the



FIGURE 2. Joan Fuster i Ortells (Sueca, 1922–1992) was one of the most important Valencian writers and intellectuals in the twentieth century. © Espai Joan Fuster

spark needed to activate neurons, the pleasure of intelligence...’¹⁵

Joan Fuster is also a great European and universal writer in the humanistic tradition spanning from Erasmus to Michel de Montaigne, to the members of the French Enlightenment, Voltaire and Diderot, and to Bertrand Russell, Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre in the twentieth century. He was a heterodox, a dissident, just like many of the writers he studied, and for many generations of Valencians he was also a *maître-à-penser*, an intellectual committed to the problems of his time and his country.

Where did this towering writer appear—and what causes explain his appearance?—, who in 1968, when he was just 45 years old, published the first volume of his Complete Works in the ‘Clàssics catalans del segle XX’ (Catalan Classics from the Twentieth Century) collection. He himself justified it, not without apprehension and relatively smug modesty, in his introduction to the book:

One of the worst things that could happen to me in this life—this literary life, I mean—was to see myself described as ‘classic’. The epithet felt agonising: it is slightly lifeless, pedantic and perhaps even a bit libellous. And yet here I am. The label is merely a commercial ruse, of course. The editors think that a collection of Complete Works will be sold more easily if the official title ‘classics’ is pasted onto authors who have been lucky or naive enough to sign a contract. They may be wrong. In any event, we poor wordsmiths who limit ourselves to dealing with the consequences of the manoeuvre do not deserve to be accused of petulance. And, in fact, the risk of petulance would be minimal: the name ‘classic’ applied to us is corrected by two quite explicit extenuating circumstances: ‘Catalan’ and ‘from the Twentieth Century’. I suspect that a ‘Catalan Classic from the Twentieth Century’ must be a rather moderate dose of ‘classic’. So, let’s just let it go.¹⁶

For many, even for those who knew him well, Fuster is a unique case that is difficult to explain. Back when he

published his first article in 1944 at the age of 22, a critical assessment entitled ‘Vint-i-cinc anys de poesia valenciana’,¹⁷ he disconcerted the older literary generation who had survived the war and defeat with his mastery of the language and his exigent prose, to such an extent that Carles Salvador wondered whether his name was not a pseudonym: ‘Joan Fuster, a Valencian critic and poet whom we personally do not know, is already a mature writer, and given the way the stars in our literary firmament appear, we even suspect that J. Fuster is not a given name but the vulgarity of a pseudonym’.¹⁸ ‘Given the way the stars in our literary firmament appear’: that is, very seldom and rarely, not suddenly and abruptly. There was just a handful of writers in Catalan in the defeated, dreary Valencia just after the Civil War, and they did not even know each other. And the appearance of each new writer was hailed as a miracle.

In turn, the journalist and politician Vicent Ventura, a close friend of Fuster’s, described him as a genetic fluke.¹⁹ I do not deny mutations, genetic accidents. We wouldn’t be where we are without them. We might still be living in trees or trying to walk upright on the savanna. But in my opinion, the causes—both biological or biographical and cultural, historical—are others: Sueca, his father and books. In the town of Sueca, where Joan Fuster was born in 1922, 100 years ago, Spanish was only spoken by the judge of first instance, the civil guard contingent, the nuns in the old-people’s home and the schoolteachers at school, but not on the street. It was a highly socially polarised locality, where the majority were agricultural day-labourers or immigrants,²⁰ among them Fuster’s family,²¹ attracted by the possibilities of work in rice farming. But the writer’s father, Joan Baptista Fuster Seguí, deserted the countryside, studied arts and crafts and, unlike the day-labourers, who were all anarchists, became a Carlist. He turned right-wing and Carlist, like the majority of the wealthy landowners in town, who in 1899 purchased for Sueca the title of City from the Queen Regent Maria Cristina of Austria. This would have major consequences for his son. He was able to frequent the Carlist social club, which had a busy schedule of recreational and social activities, as well as cultural events, with poetry readings, concerts and regular plays, many of them in the vernacular. He was also able to socialise and befriend the sons of the wealthy, of the large agricultural landowners. And most importantly, he was able to study at the same school as them, the Centro Politécnico, because his father was a drawing teacher there.²²

It is worth noting that there were two parallel literary traditions in Sueca. One was more cultivated and refined, Catholic and conservative, expressed in a Catalan that was faultless but archaic and far from the language spoken on the streets. The other was more popular and festive, republican and intentionally peppered with Spanish words to accentuate the comic effect. Fuster’s first contact with Catalan as a literary and cultural language must have been at the Carlist social club in the second half of the

1920s and early 1930s. With the Republic, political convictions turned radical, and the conservative traditionalism of the Carlist parents was no longer either sufficient or attractive for the children. Of the two sons of the Carlist leader in Sueca, one, Josep Garcia Messeguer, became the founder of the Falange in Sueca, while the other, Ramon Garcia Messeguer, founded the Communist Party there. The elder one, Josep, wrote an *auto sacramental* entitled *Magdala*,²³ inspired by Mary Magdalene, in a Catalan that was stuff and likely difficult for the audience to understand, with music by Marià Martí; it premiered at the Saló Joventut Tradicionalista in Sueca on 23 March 1935. And I’m certain that before he was assassinated in December 1936 at the age of 36, he had influenced the young Joan Fuster, who could not have been more than 12 or 13 years old. I can deduce this because in September 1939, five months after the war finished, Joan Fuster and his friend Fermí Cortés, aged 16 and 15, respectively, asked to join Lo Rat Penat—the institution that embodied the most traditional and folkloric Valencianism, founded in 1878—in Valencia. It was impossible for them to have become Valencianists in those five months, and the atmosphere had not been propitious for conservative Valencianism for the three previous years, that is, during the war, and with his father in a concentration camp. These two young Valencianists’ awakening to the language and culture of the Valencians must have come much earlier, before the war. In fact, verses in Catalan praising General Franco that Fermí Cortés wrote in 1938 still survive.²⁴ Writing verses was a hobby that the two friends shared, having been born and educated in a conservative, right-wing environment. The difference is that from the very start, Fuster and Cortés wrote theirs in Catalan, in a proper Catalan that Pompeu Fabra would have endorsed.

I have spoken about Sueca, Fuster’s father and his social and cultural milieu. The third factor that explains Fuster is books, reading. Another of the writer’s aphorisms also contained in *Consells, proverbis i insolències* is: ‘Books do not replace life, but life doesn’t replace books’. The writer in Valencian became a Valencianist and Catalanist by reading the writers from the Region of Valencia and Catalonia and discovering the territorial reach of the language and the extraordinary quality of its poets and storytellers. He also discovered the foundations of national revival in books like *Concepte doctrinal del valencianisme* by Joaquim Reig²⁵ and *El País Valencià* by Felip Mateu i Llopis²⁶. Mateu i Llopis was a conservative Valencianist from prior to the war who had joined the corps of archivists, librarians and archaeologists; in the 1930s, he ran the Numismatic section of the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid and served as the director of the Museu Arqueològic and the Biblioteca Provincial in Tarragona, and he was appointed director of the Biblioteca Central, that is, the former Biblioteca de Catalunya, in this very same building where we are now, whose name the Francoists changed because of how subversive they found the name of Catalonia.

Fuster was educated in this conservative, Catholic environment whose undisputed figure after the war was Xavier Casp, a regular participant in the Jocs Florals and other literary events in the Catalan language. However, his contact with republican and leftist writers in the post-war period, such as the aforementioned Carles Salvador, and especially with Catalans in exile in the Americas, led Fuster to evolve towards increasingly liberal, progressive positions.²⁷ Unlike in Catalonia, conservative, folkloric Valencianism took no issue with the regime, which used it politically. In fact, the daughter of General Aranda, the military officer who occupied Valencia in 1939, and the daughter of General Franco, Carmencita, were the doyens (*regines*, queens) of the Jocs Florals put on by Lo Rat Penat in the early 1940s.²⁸ Fuster could not have identified with this worn-out, innocuous Valencianism when modernism was elsewhere, in Spanish literature, especially in the generation of 1927, but also in Catalan literature, both at home and in exile. It took little time for him to break off ties with Xavier Casp, who bitterly accused him of preferring those who cried out ‘Visca Macià i mori Cambó!’ (Long live Macià, death to Cambó!), in allusion to the Republican exiles.²⁹ But the process was already underway and could not be stopped. In 1950, at the age of 32, Fuster published the article ‘València en la integració de Catalunya’ in *La Nostra Revista*,³⁰ made in Mexico, which condensed the essence of his political thinking: Catalonia’s incompleteness without the Region of Valencia and the Balearic Islands, and the integration of all three countries into a single nation.

The exiles, especially Vicenç Riera Llorca, organised Fuster’s first journey to Barcelona with the pretext of launching a slender volume on *La poesia catalana fins a la Renaixença*, published in Mexico in 1954.³¹ There he was also to read his poems and give a talk, but the primary purpose of the journey was to make contacts with the writers and intellectuals of Catalonia, who were surprised by the power of that new voice from the south.³² The rest is well known and impossible to summarise in just a few lines. They include the positive effect he had among the elderly, including Carles Riba, Clementina Arderiu, Josep M. López Picó and Rafael Tasis, and the youngest, including Albert Manent, Maurici Serrahima, Joan Oliver and Joan Triadú; his relationship with publishers, like Francesc de Borja Moll in Mallorca and Josep Maria de Casacuberta and Josep Maria Cruzet in Barcelona; with Oriol Folch and Joaquim Maluquer, with Josep Pla and Jaume Vicens Vives, with Max Cahner and Josep Maria Castellet; his first books and awards; *Nosaltres els valencians* and *El País Valencià*; the Catalan Lands; his ideological evolution towards a humanistic liberalism and a Gramscian Marxism; his desertion of lawyerdom, which he barely exercised; and his professionalisation as a writer, collaborating first with the newspapers of Valencia, and when they closed their doors on him, with those of Barcelona: *El Correo Catalán* put out by the cottoners’ lobby, *Tele-eXprés* and especially *La Vanguardia*; literary criti-



FIGURE 3. Joan Fuster after being attacked on 11 September 1981 with two explosive artefacts placed on the windows of his home on Carrer de Sant Josep in Sueca (Valencia). © Espai Joan Fuster

cism in *Destino* and other publications; articles in *Serra d’Or*; AC’s first publishing venture;³³ his participation on the juries of almost all the literary awards; literary controversies, such as the one surrounding *La Plaça del Diamant*, which Pla, who had not read it, did not like because it had been submitted with the title *La Colometa* (*The Little Dove*), not suitable for a serious book; the Honorary Prize of Catalan Letters; honorary doctoral degrees; the Octubre Prizes; the bomb attempts which almost cost him his life in 1978 and 1981;³⁴ the gatherings at the bullring in Valencia; his being hired at the Universitat de València; his doctoral thesis and chair; disappointment and self-imposed silence; death... ‘And dying must be stopping writing’, another of his aphorisms. And another one: ‘My posterity will be of paper’.³⁵

The sheer volume of works published by Joan Fuster is immense: 70 books, 4,000 newspaper articles, hundreds of contributions to journals and other publications, prologues to others’ books, texts in painters’ catalogues and singers’ records...³⁶ and thousands of letters. The Catalan work alone, volumes four and five of which appeared this year, will fill seven volumes, each more than 1,000 pages long.³⁷ And this is only Fuster in Catalan, because there is still everything that has not yet been translated

and is only available today in periodicals libraries. Fuster Year would have been a good occasion to starting compiling, translating and publishing them, but the authorities seem to have their sights set elsewhere, towards another type of celebration, a more fleeting kind: academic conferences, a lecture series, some round tables. Regarding his correspondence, 19 volumes have been published so far, the last two of which compile the letters he exchanged with the inner circle, the hard core of Edicions 62: Josep M. Castellet, Eulàlia Duran, Teresa Lloret and Francesc Vallverdú.³⁸ And then there are translations to other languages: Galician, Spanish, English, French, Italian, German and Russian.³⁹ The translations do not necessarily ensure a good reception, but they do make it possible. Fuster is a European writer who challenges Europeans, the same way he challenges Valencians and Catalans.

I have little time left, but I still want to share two more ideas, even if briefly, before finishing. One is the comparison with Jaume Vicens Vives, the historian and intellectual referent of successive generations of Catalan politicians and businessmen, who died in 1960 at the age of 50. The influence of Vicens Vives' *Notícia de Catalunya* on Fuster's *Nosaltres els valencians* is clear and acknowledged, as is the fact that the latter bears the title that the former was supposed to have, but which the circumstances at the time, 1954, advised replacing with a more innocuous one. In this and other books, Vicens Vives was primarily addressing the captains of industry and politics who would one day spearhead the fate of Catalonia when the transition to democracy took place. His political thinking and especially his idea on Catalonia's fit within Spain, the idea that it should be Spain's engine, its locomotive, but not from the machine room or the economy but through leadership and politics, has permeated the mainstream majority of Catalanism, from *Convergència i Unió* to the *Partit Socialista*, from Jordi Pujol and Miquel Roca to Raimon Obiols, Narcís Serra and Pasqual Maragall, until well into the twenty-first century, until it was contested and replaced with the pro-independence movement and the '*procés*' (thwarted independence process). Fuster, in contrast, was unable to address the same audience, and his book was meant primarily for young university students, intellectuals and politicians who would also one day lead the country. They are two contemporary projects seeking political modernisation and progress, but with different nuances, territorial scope and readers.⁴⁰

And now for the other final idea. In an autobiographical report that Fuster sent to Josep Pla so he could write the *Homenot*—a volume in the biographical series published under this title—, which he had dedicated to him and published in 1962, the writer concluded his text with these words: 'I'm a hard worker—I don't want anyone to deny me this virtue—and the only thing I regret is that by force I need to earn a living writing, which now leaves me little time to read. Reading is the only thing that I have al-

ways found fun. And I don't want to die without having left functioning and "in shape" several teams of intellectuals and non-intellectuals in the Region of Valencia capable of shaking up—or at least trying to—this society in perpetual digestive somnolence...'⁴¹ In a letter written that same year, Fuster showed himself to be exultant: 'At first I said that there were promising young people. They are university students who work hard and do things that seem impossible in Valencia in 1962. Seen from afar, the Universitat de València has never given the impression of being as "Catalanised" as it is today. There are months in the academic year when almost half the para-academic events—lectures, colloquiums—are in Catalan, due not so much to the triad of local professors but to the pressure from a small group of students... These youths write verses, obviously, but they do more than just write verses. I have a lot of confidence in them. But no one can predict what will become of them in the future.'⁴²

The future is already past today, and in 1992, shortly before dying, in one of those 'unfinished conversations' with Toni Mollà published posthumously, Fuster expressed a great deal of disappointment: 'There has never been a generation here with so much intellectual potential... With this generation I'm talking about, the country could have been quite substantial. What the hell happened to make it fail to gel the way some of us hoped it would? Honestly, I don't know. Some took refuge in their specialisation or in politics, like Ardit and Cucó, who are historians; others, like Marquès, have to write doggerel for the newspapers—I assume out of economic need. And on it goes. If you look at it from afar, they were an impressive group. But when something like this happens in a specific society, if there are no platforms that bring them together, people become dispersed, which has always happened in Valencia since the late sixteenth century or even before. The city of Valencia does not feed its intellectuals.'⁴³

Of course, contrary to what was claimed a few years ago, history has not ended, and there is still room for hope in both the Region of Valencia and the Catalan Lands. Fuster's basic, essential idea—once, again, another aphorism: 'Do not have more convictions than those that are decidedly essential'—remains alive and well, and relevant: the idea that if it is not shared, there will be no future for anyone separately, not even for Catalonia, at least in national terms. As I said before, Fuster is an immense writer, and this is his main faculty, but it is not surprising that, just like more than 70 years ago when he first embarked on his literary journey, and even today for Valencian and Catalan writers in general, writing in either language is a political act.⁴⁴ Nor that literature, especially good literature, the most exigent kind, ends up leading to politics one way or another. Joan Fuster's oeuvre, which the centennial of his birth encourages us to discover or reread, serenely and without prejudices, is good proof of this.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- [1] Joan FUSTER. *Consells, proverbis i insolències*. Editorial A.C., Barcelona 1968.
- [2] *Ibid.*
- [3] Valentí PUIG. *Dioses de época*. Destino, Barcelona 2021.
- [4] Joan FUSTER. *Contra Unamuno y los demás*. Península, Barcelona 1975.
- [5] Javier DE LUCAS, 'Pro Fuster, "malgré" cierto fusterianisme', *La Vanguardia*, 4 January 2022.
- [6] Montserrat ROIG, 'Joan Fuster: ¿un Diderot de pueblo? 1. La medida del hombre,' *Destino*, no. 1815 (15 July 1972), pp. 22-23; and 'Joan Fuster: ¿un Diderot de pueblo? 2. El hombre intelectual, medida de todas las cosas', *Destino*, no. 1816 (22 July 1972), pp. 22-23, later compiled in *Retrats paral·lels 3*. PAM, Barcelona 1978, pp. 147-155.
- [7] DE LUCAS, 'Pro Fuster...' At the end of Fuster Year, professor De Lucas has returned to the charge with a new diatribe against the writer, whom he reproaches for 'his meanly contemptuous (probably self-conscious) attitude towards the rector of Salamanca, whom he never understood, because Unamuno's philosophical profundity was far removed from the enlightened journalism that characterised the writer from Sueca. Unamuno will remain one of the greats in the universal history of philosophy and thought, something to which—in my opinion—Joan Fuster cannot even aspire.' Post published by Javier de Lucas on his Facebook and Twitter accounts on 31 December 2022.
- [8] Antoni RIERA, *La raó moral de Joan Fuster*. Curial, Barcelona 1993.
- [9] Júlia BLASCO ESTELLÉS, *Joan Fuster: converses filosòfiques*. Tres i Quatre, Valencia 2002.
- [10] Joan FUSTER, "'El caso de don Miguel', *La Vanguardia*, 21 May 1971, compiled in *Contra Unamuno y los demás*, *cit.*
- [11] Joan FUSTER, 'Maragall i Unamuno, cara a cara', *Pont Blau*, 8 (April 1953), pp. 112-115, and 9 (May-June 1953), pp. 143-146.
- [12] Joan FUSTER, 'Maragall i Unamuno, cara a cara', in *Les originalitats*. Barcelona, Barcino, 1956, pp. 41-63.
- [13] Incomprehensibly, the project to translate Joan Fuster's complete works into Catalan has been described as 'imbecility' by the Valencian commissioner of Fuster Year ('It is an imbecility to translate his entire output, because translating Joan Fuster from Spanish into Catalan is impossible, not the other way round', Joan Carles MARTÍ, 'Entrevista a Francesc Pérez Moragón', *Levante*, 20 November 2022), against the wishes of the writer himself, who entrusted the operation to his heir, the writer Josep Palàcios, in a testamentary disposition, and also counter to what has been done for Josep Pla, for example. Most of the written output of both Fuster and Pla originally appeared in Spanish, and without the task of translating and editing Pla's work promoted by Josep Vergés, the director of Destino publishing house, we would not now have the monumental work (47 volumes published between 1966 and 1992) that confirms the writer from Palafrugell as an immense Catalan author, and in Catalan.
- [14] See an early testimony of Fuster's attitude to it in Antoni FURIÓ, 'De la literatura i la cultura a la política', *L'Espill*, 67 (2021), pp. 21-32.
- [15] Gustau MUÑOZ, 'Llegir Fuster al segle XXI', *L'Espill*, 67 (2021), pp. 33-46. This text, along with others that the author has devoted to the writer from Sueca, is compiled in Gustau MUÑOZ, *Profeta de la raó. Sobre Joan Fuster*. Afers, Catarroja-Barcelona, 2023.
- [16] Joan FUSTER, 'Introducció', *Obres Completes/1*. Edicions 62, Barcelona 1968, pp. 7-20 (p. 7).
- [17] Joan FUSTER, 'Vint-i-cinc anys de poesia valenciana (1920-1944)', *Almanaque de Las Provincias para 1945*. Las Provincias, Valencia 1944, pp. 393-396.
- [18] Carles SALVADOR, 'Un nuevo poeta', *Las Provincias*, 10 May 1947.
- [19] The expression 'genetic accident' regarding Fuster was first attributed to Vicent Ventura by Josep Iborra, as Ventura himself recounted in a public speech in which he, in turn, attributed it to Fuster himself, who apparently used it in one of his *Final Judgements* to refer to the importance of biological chance in the creation of people's uniqueness, their own way of seeing the world, which is their own and different to others'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InzIkcAktF0>
- [20] Salvador VENDRELL and Salvador CARBONELL, 'Dades per a l'estudi de l'estructura social i econòmica de Sueca (1922)', *Quaderns de cultura de Sueca*, I (1980), pp. 93-106.
- [21] Antoni FURIÓ, *Àlbum Fuster*. Edicions Alfons el Magnànim, Valencia 1994.
- [22] *Ibid.*
- [23] Josep GARCIA MESEGUER, *Magdala. Auto sacramental en dos actos y seis cuadros*. Sueca 1935.
- [24] Personal archive of Fermí Cortés.
- [25] Joaquim REIG, *Concepte doctrinal del valencianisme*. L'Estel, Valencia 1932.
- [26] Felip MATEU I LLOPIS, *El País Valencià*. L'Estel, Valencia 1933.
- [27] J. Àngel CANO MATEU, 'Les relacions literàries i culturals entre Carles Salvador i Joan Fuster: la correspondència inèdita', in Manuel PÉREZ SILDANYA and Rafael ROCA, eds., *Actes del Dissetè Col·loqui Internacional de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes*. Associació Internacional de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes i Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Valencia-Barcelona, 2017, pp. 249-259. Joaquim ESPINÓS, 'L'epistolari de Joan Fuster amb l'exili americà', in Carles CORTÉS et al., eds., *Epístola i literatura. Epistolaris: la carta, estratègies literàries*. Denes, Valencia, 2005, pp. 205-216.
- [28] Santi CORTÉS, *València sota el règim franquista (1939-1951): instrumentalització, repressió i resistència cultural*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat-Institut de Filologia Valenciana, Barcelona-Valencia 1995.
- [29] Joan FUSTER, *Correspondència. 9 i 10. Xavier Casp, Miquel Adlert, Santiago Bru i Vidal*, edited by Josep Ballster. Tres i Quatre, Valencia 2006-2008.

- [30] Joan FUSTER, 'València en la integració de Catalunya', *La Nostra Revista*, 52-53 (April-May 1950), pp. 136-137.
- [31] Joan FUSTER, *La poesia catalana fins a la Renaixença*. Edicions catalanes de Mèxic, Mexico 1954.
- [32] Joan Fuster's first journey to Barcelona can be traced through his correspondence, in particular the letters he exchanged with Vicenç RIERA LLORCA: *Correspondència de Joan Fuster. 15 i 16. Vicenç Riera Llorca*. Tres i Quatre, Valencia 2021.
- [33] Regarding this publisher, which takes its name from the initials of its owner Armand Carabén, although it is also said to mean 'Aportació Catalana', see the recent study by Teresa MUÑOZ LLORET, 'A.C., una aventura editorial de Joan Fuster', in Ferran CARBÓ, Antoni FURIÓ and Tobias GRIMALTOS, eds., *Una posteritat de paper. Simposi internacional Joan Fuster (Centenari del naixement, 1922-2022)*. Publicacions de la Universitat de València, Valencia 2022, pp. 321-348.
- [34] Francesc BAYARRI, *Matar Joan Fuster (i altres històries)*. Companyia Austrohongaresa de Vapors, Almàssera, 2018 (new edition in 2022).
- [35] Aphorisms compiled in the book *Consells, proverbis i insolències*. Editorial A.C., Barcelona 1968.
- [36] Antoni FURIÓ, 'La producció bibliogràfica de Joan Fuster', in Josep Iborra, ed., *Homenatge a Joan Fuster*. Generalitat Valenciana, Conselleria de Cultura / Consell Valencià de Cultura, Valencia 1994, pp. 365-379; Josep BALLESTER and Antoni FURIÓ, *Joan Fuster 1922-1992: 10 anys després. Breu antologia i bibliografia sobre l'autor valencià*. Institució de les Lletres Catalanes, Barcelona 2002.
- [37] Joan FUSTER, *Obra Completa*, edited by Antoni FURIÓ and Josep PALÀCIOS, I. *Poesia, aforismes, diari, vinyetes i dibuixos*. Edicions 62-Universitat de València, Barcelona 2002; II-III. *Assaig, 1 i 2*. Edicions 62-Universitat de València, Barcelona 2012; IV-V. *Llengua i literatura, 1. Dels orígens a la Renaixença i 2. Època contemporània*. Edicions 62-Universitat de València-Institució Alfons el Magnànim, Barcelona 2022. Volumes VI and VII currently under preparation and are slated to be issued in 2024.
- [38] Joan Fuster, *Correspondència. 18 i 19. L'entorn d'Edicions 62, 1ª part (Josep M. Castellet i Francesc Vallverdú), 2ª part (Eulàlia Duran i Teresa Lloret)*, edited by Teresa MUÑOZ LLORET. Tres i Quatre, Valencia 2022.
- [39] Translations of Joan Fuster's works include *Dictionary for the Idle* by Dominic KEOWN. Sheffield Academic Press-CEIC Alfons el Vell, Sheffield 1992 (reissued in 2006 by Five Leaves Publications, Nottingham); *Dizionario per gli oziosi* by Donatella Siviero. Tullio Prionti, Naples 1994; *Giudizi finali* by Giuseppe Faggin. Mobydick, Faenza 2006; and *Dictionnaire à l'usage des oisifs* by Jean Marie Barberà. Anacharsis, Toulouse 2014; and the following were translated in 2022, the year of his centennial: *Nacionalismo, liberalismo e outros temas* by Xesús González Gómez. Laivento, Santiago de Compostela 2022; *Final Judgements* by Mary Ann Newman. Fum d'Estampa Press-AVL, London 2022; and *Sagitario* by Maria Rosich. Rayo Verde, Barcelona 2022. The translations into German and Russian are currently under preparation.
- [40] Antoni FURIÓ, 'Nosaltres, els valencians i Notícia de Catalunya, Fuster i Vicens Vives, cara a cara,' *Serra d'Or*, 626 (2012), pp. 22-25.
- [41] 'Informe autobiogràfic de Fuster a Josep Pla', in Joan Fuster, *Correspondència. 1. Carner, Manent, Riba, Pla, Espriu, Villalonga*, edited by Francesc PÉREZ MORAGON. Tres i Quatre, Valencia 1997, pp. 270-277.
- [42] Letter from Joan Fuster to Josep Pla, in Joan Fuster, *Correspondència. 1, cited*, pp. 117-126 (p. 123).
- [43] Toni MOLLÀ, *Joan Fuster. Converses inacabades*. Tàndem, Valencia 1992, pp. 35-36.
- [44] Writing in either language is a political act in itself. See Antoni Furió, 'L'escriptor, fins i tot quan no fa "política", fa política', in *Joan Fuster: Història i Memòria*, edited by Josep L. MARTÍN BERBOIS and Antoni MARTÍ MONTERDE, Memorial Democràtic de la Generalitat de Catalunya, Barcelona, 2023.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Antoni Furió is a professor of mediaeval history at the Universitat de València and member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. He has published a biographical approach of Joan Fuster (*Àlbum Fuster*, Valencia, IVEI-Edicions Alfons el Magnànim, 1994); is the co-editor with Josep Palàcios of the *Obra Completa* of Joan Fuster, five volumes of which have already been issued (Barcelona, Edicions 62, 2002-2022); is the director of the writer's *Correspondència*, 20 volumes of which have already appeared (Valencia, Tres i Quatre, 1997-2023); and with Gustau Muñoz co-directs *L'Espill*, the culture and thinking journal that Joan Fuster founded in 1979, which began a second period of publication in 1999.