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Journalism in Catalonia During Francoism

This essay analyzes how Catalan journalism shaped Catalan history and smoothed the transition from Franco's dictatorship to democracy. It also explores a literary parallel which influenced the history of nineteenth century Catalonia, using E. J. Hobsbawm's theory for building a nation, which includes several steps: classic principles of history, land, religion, law and language, dependence to a state, and capacity for conquest. For the following study, journalism will be understood as the literary corpus written by some collaborators for periodical publications of the time: *Serra d'Or* (1959-), *Destino* (1945-80) and *Cuadernos para el diálogo* (1963-78).

The fight for Catalonia's freedom in the twentieth century may be considered a modified continuation of the re-building process of the nineteenth century Catalan nation,¹ taking into account a commonly understood parenthesis: Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975). During the nineteenth century, in Catalonia, fighting for Catalan language and culture was synonymous with fighting for freedom and for the Catalan nation against the absolutist governments of Joseph I and Ferdinand VII and against Napoleon. This analogy could be applied again during Franco's dictatorship. In both centuries, literary contests played a remarkable role in the Catalans' fight for freedom. The future can be shaped if we consider the possibility of literary ideas intervening in history. This intervention seems to have smoothed the transition from Franco's dictatorship to democracy. The publications *Serra d'Or*, *Destino* and *Cuadernos para el diálogo* were representative of Catalonia, its ideals, and attempts at reconciliation. It may sound confusing to state that *Cuadernos para el diálogo*, a journal from Madrid, contributed to

Catalonia's shaping, but the dictator unified fighters for freedom under his domain. As a result, a number of Madrid's citizens decided to support Catalonia. A similar situation happened when Napoleon proposed that Catalonia become a French Republic, and the Catalans instead decided to fight with the rest of Spain against the emperor. In both situations, fighting against absolutism gave unity to citizens living in different parts of the Iberian Peninsula. The above publications, among others (*Presència, Orifloma*), became part of the Catalan discourse of resistance, mainly published in Castilian.

As Michel Foucault proposes, sometimes discourse is associated with repression, inverting the normal association of silence with repression. The Catalan press of the twentieth century had only two parallels at that time, the Italian press under Mussolini and the Portuguese under Salazar (Viladot 9). Censorship had been very strict until the sixties. Because of censor, there was silence: "Pero no el silencio como lo expresa Martín Santos en su bella novela [*Tiempo de Silencio*], sino el silencio de boca apretada, de dientes rechinantes (*Cuadernos* 1970, Ex.28, M. A. Campmany)." (Not silence expressed in Martín Santos' beautiful novel but the silence of compressed mouth, of clenched teeth).² This type of silence prevailed during more than a quarter of a century after the Spanish Civil War. How did some journals contribute to the construction of Catalonia's autonomy in 1979, the creation of *Avui* in 1976, the first Catalan newspaper since 1939, and the use of Catalan in schools? How did the discourse of resistance lead to these achievements?

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Catalan writers hurried to create a literary corpus in order to help establish a Catalan nation. In twenty-nine years the first goal was achieved and an epic, *L'Atlantida* (1877) by J. Verdaguer, a universally recognized novel: *La febre d'or* (1882)

by N. Oller and an essay: *La nacionalitat catalana* (1906) by E. Prat de la Riba were written. Only five years separated the epic and the novel. The three literary genres corresponded with J. Hobsbawm's necessary steps in the foundation of any nation. The Verdaguarian epic stated the Catalan classic principles of history, land, religion, law and language, with *La febre d'or*, Catalonia's dependence to a state was expressed, as was the capacity for conquest. E. Prat de la Riba's essay "*La nacionalitat catalana*" clearly formulates, unlike Verdaguer or Oller, the ideal of the Catalan nation. The Catalan nation begins as a tenuous reality with "*la Mancomunitat*" and its cultural reform created by Prat de la Riba; it later progresses with Francesc Macià, as president of a very brief Catalan Republic (1931), to Catalan autonomy (1931).

In J. M. Casasús' opinion, E. Prat de la Riba's essays were mostly in the line of political journalism (Casasús 114-118). Most journalism in Catalonia either became openly political or was a pretext with a political objective. Journalism also became very important after Francoism's victory as a substitute for the nonexistent media in the Catalan language. Despite Catalonia's "ghetto" character imposed by centralization, with no Catalan allowed in schools, universities, or administration, the press was finding strategies to maintain Catalan spirit.

Although Catalan was used in the family, books, and songs, revindication of Catalan autonomy was the main goal existing behind most of the texts in the periodical publications mentioned. In moments of transition or political crisis, people who are not professional journalists write for journals (Casasús 118). Catalan writers were no exception. Most of the articles they wrote described and created the process of developing a future based on freedom. Their journal articles intertwined the different literary genres. In contrast to this nineteenth

century nation building, in the second half of the twentieth century, implementation of political reforms seems to be the predominant aim of the essays in journalism. Writers were reviewing the classical principles as the first step to gain acceptance of Catalan autonomy.

Catalan historians searched for their roots in the nineteenth century, at the beginning of the "*Renaixença*," and in the twentieth century at the beginning of the "*Re-Renaixença*." Also Ferran Oldevila, Ramon d'Abadal (1888-1970) and Jaume Vicens Vives (1910-1960) made Catalan history available to a large number of readers. "*Ir a lo nuevo*," (Go Towards the New) an article on Vicens Vives by Jordi Maragall, explains: "*no se puede ir hacia adelante sin ir hacia atrás*." (Moving forward is not possible without going back) (*Destino* 1970 I). Going back into history provides a perspective for leading a nation into the future. Therefore it is necessary to explore Catalonia's relationship to its land, legend, religion, law and language.

Land was represented in histories of Catalan castles and monasteries. One of the most significant pieces of Catalan land is the Catalan mountain: Montserrat or "*Serra d'Or*." "*Serra d'Or*" has a great deal of tenderness and symbolism in its name. In 1881, to celebrate the Abbey of Montserrat's millennium, J. Verdaguer (1845-1902) composed several religious poems compiled in the book *Patria*. It was then when thousands assembled in the monastery and mountain listened to the hymn "*Virolai*," sung to the Montserrat Virgin. Language, tradition, land, religion--all gathered in a song where Montserrat is the "*serra d'or*." Montserrat became a symbol for Catalonia and a nationalist center again during Franco's dictatorship. In its effort to maintain Catalan thought and culture, l'Abadia de Montserrat, since 1959, has published the magazine *Serra d'or*, which has had extensive coverage of Catalan land,

history, religion, law and, needless to say, language and literature. These classical principles for a nation's existence needed to be reviewed and adapted to the new democratic Catalonia of the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Emphasis on religion was shown in many texts. *"Un segle i mig d'església catalana"* (A century and a half of the Catalan Church) by Albert Manent, emphasized the lack of Catalan bishops during Franco's Dictatorship (*Serra d'Or* 1970 IV). Catholicism was the only religion accepted by the dictator. However, the Catalan Catholic Church remained in conflict, subjected to victory and failure at the same time:

La situación nacida en 1939 contiene para la Iglesia catalana elementos paradójicos: de un lado, está el fin de la persecución religiosa y de la clandestinidad; del otro, el truncamiento de sus formas genuinas. (*Cuadernos* 1970 nºEx, Carreras 20).

The situation born in 1939 has for the Catalan Church paradoxical elements: on one hand, it is the end of religious persecution and clandestinity; on the other hand it is also the truncation of genuine forms.³

Either from exile, like Carles Cardó, or from within Catalonia's land (Josep Dalmau, Lluís Xirinachs), Catalan Catholic priests continued their fight for nationhood. Josep Dalmau comments on the book *Secularització i Cristianisme* (1968-69). Its author, Xirinachs, a Catholic priest, became a fighter for Catalonia's independence from the state. *"Aquest home és perillós. Sort que no el deixaran ensenyar a la Universitat"* (This man is dangerous. It is lucky he will not be allowed to teach at the University) said Dalmau, quoting a friend of his who had just read Xirinachs's unconventional book (*Serra d'Or* 1969). Under Franco, controlling

teaching at the University was considered important in order to control a belligerent part of the population: university students. This was one area where Franco mercilessly applied his totalitarian laws; therefore it was important to try to change these laws.

In 1969, by Francesc González Ledesma was published to popularize the Catalan legal system. There was also in process in Madrid a new law for education reform. Meantime, “*los sin lengua*,” those Catalans without language, without a voice, wanted rights (T.Moix *Cuadernos* 1970 nºEx: 31) and, with others “*sin lengua*,” other cultural and linguistic minorities, tried to influence legislative change. They expressed their demands in order to get freedom of speech and of association, basic civil rights. This idea was even supported by Menéndez Pidal, who believed in changing the General Law of Education in order to get Catalan taught in schools. He was quoted by Joaquim Ventalló, in *Destino* 1970: “Es un absurdo pedagógico la exclusión del catalán como instrumento de enseñanza, hay que enseñar a los chiquillos catalánes en catalán, así como en lengua castellana a los chiquillos castellanos.” (“It is a pedagogical absurdity to exclude Catalan as a teaching instrument; Catalan children have to be taught in Catalan, in the same way that Spanish has to be used to teach Spanish children”). It was not by chance that an article on the history of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona was published in *Serra d’Or*: “La Universitat Autònoma” was a place to practice self-government. Eduard Valentí Fiol, who wrote the article, offered a model for the new Catalan university. Valentí remembered professors who were very active in the political field, and also mentioned Joaquim Xirau at the “*La Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres*” who represented the liaison with the Castillian or Madrileñan tradition. This confluence, in Valentí’s opinion, is very significant because Catalanism as a progressive movement can only

succeed with a progressive community in Madrid, in spite of this not having been the case during the *Mancomunitat*. The article continues with the changes which occurred at the "*Universitat Autònoma*," based on the relationship between the University and the political system on which the University depended.

El fenòmen, de tota manera, transcendia la Universitat. Es sabuda la importància que tenen els grups intel·lectuals en les situacions "d'esquerra" a Espanya. Per alguna cosa hom ha parlat d'una 'República de professors.' Molts dels membres més actius de la nova Universitat actuaven en política i ocupaven càrrecs importants en el govern de la Generalitat o de la República (*Serra d'Or* 1970: 630).

This phenomenon, in any case, transcended the University. The importance that intellectual groups have in leftist situations in Spain is well known. For some reason, one has talked about a Professors' Republic. Many among the most active members of the new University acted politically, and occupied important government posts in the "*Generalitat*" or the Republic.

The two major conflicts that the University faced were the concept of autonomy and the existence of "two cultures": Catalan and Castillian. It was decided that there would be one bilingual university, where both languages had the same legal status. Valentí states that:

La Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona ha estat l'intent més racional i prometedor d'integrar sense sotrac els dos móns de Catalunya i Espanya i per tant de resoldre el "problema catalán."

The University Autònoma of Barcelona has been the most rational and promising attempt to integrate without trouble the two worlds of Catalonia and Spain, and therefore to solve the Catalan problem.

There were people in favor and against it in Madrid and in Barcelona. Several professors from Madrid, Dámaso Alonso, Pedro Salinas, and Rafael Lapesa among others were hired to teach at the University. The major problem came from Madrid. The success of the "*Universitat Autònoma*" depended on the acceptance of the usage of Catalan. Américo Castro from Madrid believed that the university was moving away from the rest of Spain. Several Spanish intellectuals recognized "Catalan culture" at the historical level but continued considering Catalonia from the perspective of being conquered by the "other" culture and were therefore in favor of two universities. Dámaso Alonso, then a visiting professor in Barcelona, objected vehemently to an official memorandum written in Catalan, but he was the first to promote Salvador Espriu and Rosselló Porcel because of their interest in "l'Escola de Praga" and the new linguistics. In October 1934, in *El Sol*, Américo Castro published his ideas:

Aunque a muchos les parezca extraño, la cuestión universitaria no se afrontará debidamente en Barcelona mientras el estado no posea en Cataluña una representación permanente no sujeta al vaivén de la política y dotada tanto de prestigio como de serena energía. Para España la más importante embajada sería la de Barcelona (más que la de París) y tras ella, las de Baleares, Canarias, Galicia, Valencia y Vasconia. Embajadas interiores, sí, con entendimiento, oídos y ojos muy despiertos, con sensibilidad

para notar las fallas y miserias que a diario descubren los órganos y funciones del Estado.

Even though it seems strange, the university question will not be dealt with appropriately in Barcelona while the State does not possess in Catalonia a permanent representation not subject to the whims of politics and endowed with much prestige and energy. For Spain, the most important embassy would be that of Barcelona (more than the one in Paris) followed by those of the Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Galicia, Valencia and Vasconia. Interior embassies, yes, with understanding, ears and eyes very awake, with sensitivity to notice the shortcomings and miseries that are daily discovered in the organs and functions of the State.

The proposal of national embassies was seen not as "*convivencia*" among cultures but as the hegemony by one culture over the other.

Opinions from Madrid's well-known professors and other intellectuals were, as indicated above, very important for the realization of Catalan projects. In February of 1970, *Serra d'Or* published a round table discussion with José Luis Aranguren, Pedro Laín Entralgo and Joaquín Ruíz Jiménez, conducted by Baltasar Porcel in spring of 1969. Laín was one of the Spaniards who initially knew little about Catalonia and saw Catalan autonomy as "*una ferida feta a la pàtria espanyola*, ("a wound done to the Spanish fatherland") or "*como un desmembramiento de la patria*" (like a dismemberment of the fatherland). His attitude had changed and he became supportive:

L'Estatut com a forma de convivència de la cultura i de la vida catalanes amb la resta de formes de vida de la Península -no fóra excessiu, avui, fet amb un mínim de bona voluntat pels homes

de cada banda. El català a la Universitat, el règim jurídic i la llengua en l'Administració i la Justícia em semblen avui metes indispensables.

The "Estatut," as a way of coexistence of the Catalan culture and life with the other Peninsular ways of life, would not be excessive today if done with a bit of good will by men of both sides. Catalan at the university, the legislative system and the language in the Administration and Justice seem today indispensable goals.

Aranguren reinforced the opinion on totalitarianism that existed after Franco's victory and regime; totalitarianism is incompatible with any other opinion, no matter how inconsequential. The regime of 1939 was constitutionally anti-Catalan. Catalans accepted Spanish centralism in order to do business or to achieve individual prosperity. Ruiz Jiménez, as a minister from 1950 to 1956, suggested poetry symposiums where Catalan and Castillian poets could meet. During his ministry a position was created in the University of Madrid to teach Catalan literature.

The right to have Catalan as the language of Catalonia had to be achieved in order to acquire freedom. In Aranguren's view, in order to have Catalan as the official language, intellectuals and non-intellectuals should compromise. Achieving the recognition of Catalonia would not be a disintegration but a creative contribution to Spain. Ruiz Jiménez in *Cuadernos para el diálogo*, asked for the equalization of Catalan with Spanish. Hopefully it would happen in an official way, which would mean that Catalan would take priority over Castillian in Catalonia. According to Aranguren, Catalonia should not be bilingual. It must be monolingual and have Catalan as its mother tongue. At the same time,

Catalans could be open to different European languages. He had the vision of the European Community and saw the importance of Catalan, Basque, and Galician nationalism as steps towards this achievement. Aranguren felt that Catalans had to project themselves outside Catalonia.

It is necessary to clarify that there were not many intellectuals and politicians in Madrid who understood Catalan aspirations. Laín regretted that while Catalan intellectuals were familiar with Antonio Machado, Unamuno, Valle Inclán, and Azorín, Castillian intellectuals hardly knew the names of Verdaguer or Maragall. Educating Castillians in Catalan culture would undermine imperialism from Madrid. Cultural activities provided intellectuals, professors especially, with power over students. Catalan poets, "*cantautors*," and the pages of *Serra d'Or* and *Destino* provided many ideas about how the new Catalonia should be; while maintaining at the same time a subterranean consciousness, designing their goal and keeping people focused on it. This process, was summarized in "*Un acte solidari RAIMON A MADRID*" which began like this:

"La nit/la nit es llarga/la nit" Amb la seva veu feta crit de lluita i d'esperança, Raimon inicià el seu recital el 5 de febrer passat, la seva actuació al Pavelló Esportiu del Real Madrid, escenari insòlit d'un esdeveniment que de vell antuvi desbordà tots els pronòstics i se'ns confirmà com una demostració clara dels afanys del poble madrileny, que hi fou representat per més de sis mil persones (...) trencà amb una perllongada nit de gairebé vuit anys de constants prohibicions governatives que li havien fet impossible de repetir l'experiència del 18 de maig de 1968, data de la seva memorable presentació a la Facultat de Ciències

Polítiques i Econòmiques de Madrid (Garcia-Soler, *Serra d'Or* 1976).

“The night/the night is long/the night” with his voice crying about battle and hope, Raimon began his concert last February fifth, in the Sports Pavilion of the Real Madrid, an unusual place for an event that overcame all predictions and established itself as a clear demonstration of the toil of the people of Madrid, who were represented by more of six thousand people...He broke with a prolonged night those nearly eight years of constant government prohibitions which had made it impossible to repeat the experience of the 18th of May, 1968, the date of Raimon’s memorable presentation at the “Facultat de Ciències Polítiques i Econòmiques” in Madrid.

The article deserves attention for its description of the songs filled with hope and freedom imbuing the people who sang with Raimon and waved Catalan flags in a common voice for freedom. The concert expressed the rejection of an antidemocratic world: “No/ jo dic no,/ diguem no:/ Nosaltres no som d’eixe mon.” (No/I say no/ we say no:/ We are not of this world). Because poetry is considered a paradise of language by Paul Valery, and its language of ambiguity facilitates metaphor, poetry can be a way of studying a historical process (Miralles, *Cuadernos* nº Extra 70: 32). Raimon’s song hoped to conquer a lost paradise in the near future.

The process of realization of this dream starting with Raimon’s concert continued when ten days later, the new king of Spain, in his visit to Barcelona spoke in Catalan:

Catalunya pot aportar a aquesta gran tasca comuna una contribució essencial i que no té preu. L'afecció dels catalans a la llibertat es llegendària, i sovint ha estat fins i tot heroica. El català és amic de les coses concretes i, per això, és també realista, ordenat i treballador. En aquesta terra floreix l'esperit de solidaritat la cooperació, l'obertura i la comprensió envers els altres hi són fàcils. Per això, tant de bo que el vostre exemple i la vostra voluntat decidida facin que aqueixes virtuts catalanes influeixin benèficament en molts d'altres espanyols. Encara més: el sentir familiar que els catalans mantenen amb tanta fermesa pot ésser un espill perquè Espanya s'hi emmiralli. I la dona catalana, exemple de finor, de cultura i d'espiritualitat, serà qui millor guardi tots els valors eterns que aquesta terra enclou (*Serra d'Or* 1976).

Catalonia can make to the great common task an essential priceless contribution. The Catalan love for freedom is legendary, and often even heroic. The Catalan is a friend of concrete things and, also a realistic, ordered, and hard worker. In this land flowers the spirit of solidarity: cooperation, openness and the understanding of others. Therefore, hopefully, your example and your will make these Catalan virtues influential in many other Spaniards. Even more: the sense of family that the Catalans maintain with such firmness can be a mirror in which Spain can find its reflection. And the Catalan woman, example of refinement, culture and spirituality, will be the best guardian of all the eternal riches that this land holds.

What was accomplished? Eventually the Catalan press launched a Catalan newspaper *Avui* on Sant Jordi's day, April 23, 1976. In 1979 Catalan autonomy was achieved. A Catalan TV channel (TV3) and a "Congrés de Cultura Catalana" were created, and Catalan was taught in schools.

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NOTES

¹ Catalonia with Francesc Macià as its leader became a republic on April 14th 1931, the same day Madrid proclaimed the Second Spanish Republic. Although Catalonia was not accepted as an independent republic by Madrid, Catalan Institutions were respected.

² My translation of María Aurelia Capmany.

³ Genuine forms here refers to Catalan.

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