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Vernacular resistance: Catalan, Basque, and Galician opposition to Francoist monolingualism

Christian Claesson

In July of 1936, the conservative wing of the Spanish army initiated a coup d'état against the Republic and its democratically elected government. It was supposed to be a swift takeover of power but quickly evolved into a gruesome civil war with international implications, where the rebels enjoyed the military support of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and the Republic had the backing of international brigades of anti-Fascists and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union. After three years of conflict, half a million people had lost their lives, millions were forced into exile, and the democratic government was replaced by a military dictatorship, forged into the image of the man who assumed the military leadership in the beginning months of the war: General Francisco Franco. One of the first measures of the Franco regime was to take control over language. By January of 1937, in the beginning of the war, a Delegation for Press and Propaganda was created, following the model of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The delegation took to redefining the ideological charge of language: the Civil War was thus called a *crusade*, the coup d'état became *the uprising*, Franco, *el Caudillo* or *Generalísimo*, the insurgents, *the Movement*, and the enemies of Franco—including conservatives serving under the Republic and its democratically elected government—simply dismissed as *Communists, reds* or *barbaric hordes*. The insurgents called themselves *nacionales*, in order to enforce the idea that the Republic was in fact was being ruled by foreign and separatist forces. In Francoist discourse, words like *class*, *cohabitation*, *spirit*, *nation*, *Fatherland*, *destiny*, *history*, *liberty*, *sacrifice*, *work*, *will*, *faith*, *justice*, *progress*, and *unity* were all ideologically redefined to serve the purposes of the new regime (Veres 2010). At the Madrid book fair in

May of 1939, a month after the end of the war, a massive book burning was organized in order to erase the ideological trace that recalled the losing side (Sinova 1989: 38).

However, it was not only the semantics of language that underwent strict government control but also *which* language was to be used under the new regime. During the years of the Republic (1931–36), Catalan and Basque had been granted semi-official status in the respective regions, for example, as languages of instruction in the school system (Herreras 2010), but when Franco came to power, the use of any language other than Castilian was severely repressed. In the first years after the war, all public use of Catalan, Basque and Galician was prohibited, including in schools, social and cultural associations, printed material (books, magazines, and newspapers), religious ceremonies, and radio broadcasts. Mass book burnings were organized, non-Spanish first names were prohibited or had to be "translated," and tombstone inscriptions and funeral markers had to be removed. Priests were even chastised for pronouncing Latin with a non-Castilian accent (Conversi 1997: 81, 113; Solé i Sabaté and Villarroya 1995: 45). Thus, while the vernacular languages had had a short-lived spring in the 1930s, now the so-called imperial language had to be employed: per official decree, noticeboards urging citizens to speak *el idioma del imperio* were hung in public places throughout Catalonia (Conversi 1997: 110; Sueiro Seoane 2009: 182). In this New Spain, vernacular languages had to be eradicated in order to ensure the unity of the nation.

The aim of this chapter is to study how the different language communities resisted the prohibition, censorship, and asphyxiation of vernacular cultures during the almost four decades of Franco dictatorship, from 1939 to 1975. Even though the language communities were under duress throughout Franco's reign, the situation changed greatly during the years of the dictatorship, from violent repression in the beginning to a more permissive attitude in the end. As I will show in this chapter, the protection of the regional languages inscribed in the Constitution of 1978, written during the transition, existed even in the last years of the dictatorship—in fact, in some ways the Constitution shows less consideration for the regional languages than the dictatorship, at least during its final years. Through a comparative study of the Catalan, Basque, and Galician language communities, I will examine how the different strategies of resistance reflected the varying contexts of the different vernacular cultures and how these strategies changed according to the shifts of language policy within the Franco regime.

The language situation in Spain

In order to understand the language situation of Spain in the 1930s, and by extension even today, it is illuminating to contrast its linguistic and political development with that of comparable countries. By the end of the eighteenth century, around one fifth of the population in France spoke and understood standard French, while as little as 2.5 percent of the Italian population spoke Tuscan, which later became standard Italian, by the time of the unification (Beecroft 2015: 207 n. 20).[1] In contrast, in the same period more than 80 percent of the population of Spain knew and used Castilian (Moreno Fernández 2005: 173).[2] In spite of this uneven relationship, while French became the sole official language of France and Italian the national language of Italy,[3] Castilian has never enjoyed the same unquestioned superiority in Spain, and the question of the linguistic minorities has been central to Spanish politics from at least 1898—when the last Spanish overseas colonies were lost—until today.

Why, then, has this development been so different in Spain in comparison to the other two large, Romance-language countries? José Álvarez Junco (2001: 549–65) points out three fundamental areas in the nineteenth century where Spain failed to follow France in order to carry out a national integration: education, military service, and national symbols. Due to lack of funding and political will, the Spanish state did not make a decisive effort to create a system of public schools where a Spanish sense of national identity could be created; instead, it let the religious private schools dominate. These religious schools were more interested in propagating the doctrine of Catholicism than that of the newly founded nation—Spain's first Constitution is from 1812—and often taught pupils in the vernacular languages where those had a stronger popular presence. Catalans, Basques, and Galicians never went to national schools and had no need to communicate with Spaniards from other parts of the country; thus, they only expressed themselves in their own languages and rarely in Castilian. Equally important was the lack of a universal military service. This service, so important

[1] Beecroft also states (2015: 207) that the number of Castilian speakers in Spain roughly equaled that of Tuscan speakers in Italy by the time of the French Revolution, which, following the number from Moreno Fernández above, would be very far removed from the truth.

[2] It should be added that the language diversity of those countries is, even today, much higher than in Spain: there are twenty-four autochthonous languages in France and as many as thirty-four in Italy.

[3] French was declared the official language of France by the time of the Revolution, while Tuscan was declared Italy's national language with the unification in 1870; however, in practice, the regional languages retained a strong position in non-official contexts well into the twentieth century.

in the transformation of the citizens of France from "peasants into Frenchmen," as Eugen Weber (1976) puts it, suffered not only from a lack of funding but also from a lack of political will. As the case of France shows, a universal military service may break the regional isolation of young men by forcing them to live in other parts of the country and speak the common language, while subjecting them to nationalist indoctrination. However, in Spain, military service was quite easily eschewed by the upper classes, which made service and sacrifice a question of social status rather than nationality. As for the lack of powerful and common national symbols—flags, anthems, commemorative ceremonies, monuments, street names, and other symbols and rites created to give an illusion of the national collective's glorious past—this, too, was a result of failing political will. The Spanish state, where conservatives were more loyal to Church and Crown than to the Nation, was too divided to implement a full-scale national project in the nineteenth century.

At the turn of the twentieth century, in 1898, Spain entered an unprecedented national crisis. The loss of the American colonies between 1810 and 1824 put an end to the once-grand Spanish Empire, but those overseas territories were perceived as belonging to the Crown rather than to the people. However, when Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines were lost as a result of the swift and devastating Spanish–American War, "this was perceived as a national disaster, affecting all citizens" (Labanyi 2013: 27). It was only at this time "that one can really talk of Spain as a nation-state in the full modern sense of the term: that is, as a national collective whose members feel a sense of shared values" (27). At the same time, the cultural movements of the non-Castilian language collectives had adopted decisively political ambitions, ranging from regional autonomy to full-fledged independence from what was seen as a moribund and obsolete state. In the first decades of the century, while the Spanish-speaking intelligentsia searched for the country's soul in Castile—the region that was once at the center of military and cultural dominion of the peninsula, as well as of the imperial enterprise in the New World—peripheral national collectives, especially Catalans and Basques, sought to enhance as much as possible their autonomy and eschew centralist power. There was a wide range of political experiments during the years of the Second Republic, between 1931 and 1936, but the statutes of autonomy for Catalonia and the Basque Country were definitely among the most daring. The consequences of these experiments during the Civil War and the ensuing dictatorship would be severe and reach all the way to the transition to democracy and current-day politics.

Francoist monolingualism in practice

The Franco regime may have been one of the longest dictatorships in Western Europe in the twentieth century, but under its unified and totalitarian façade it underwent constant changes and reshufflings, due to internal divisions and political changes in the outside world. The dominant Francoist slogan, coined during the heyday of the Republic by JONS leader Onésimo Redondo, was *Una, grande y libre*. Besides referencing the Holy Trinity and contemporary Fascist slogans, it summarized the Francoist idea of Spain quite well. *Una* referred to what was seen as the indivisible unity of the country, in contrast to the regional autonomies of Catalonia and the Basque Country during the Republic; *grande* pointed to the former grandeur of the Spanish overseas empire, spreading the Spanish language and the Catholic faith all over the American continent; and *libre* reinforced that the country was free from foreign intervention, especially Communists, Jews, and, somewhat peculiarly, Freemasons. Since the interest of this volume is on the vernacular as a concept, it is worth considering, first, its opposites. Francoism rejected the perceived cosmopolitan ideals of its foes and cherished the idea of empire: although some Falangists dreamed of a new Spanish empire, the main focus of the utterly conservative Francoist ideology, obsessed with the concept of an "eternal Spain," was the imperial dominance of the Spanish Golden Age in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see, e.g., Sueiro Seoane 2009). To a large extent, the dreams of the past fueled the ambitions of the present.

Inimical to the imperial imaginary was the presence of the vernacular. As already noted, the nationalist ambitions of Catalans and Basques had been one of the major reasons for the coup d'état, and during the war the anti-separatism of National Catholicism was declared:

> A central element of this ideology, in addition to anti-Marxism, anti-liberalism and anti-Semitism, was an aggressive and exclusive Spanish nationalism, which postulated the absolute supremacy of Castilian and the subordination or marginalization of "regional dialects"—also called "vernacular languages"—since, as Jaime Solá argued in 1937 in the magazine *Vida Gallega* "under the innocent defense of vernacular languages lurks the grim intentions of separatism."[4]

[4] *Elementos centrais desa ideoloxía, ademais do anti-marxismo, o anti-liberalismo e o anti-semitismo, era un nacionalismo español agresivo e excluínte, que postulaba a supremacía absoluta do castelán e a subordinación ou marxinación dos "dialectos regionales" —tamén chamados "linguas vernáculas"—, xa que, conforme argumentaba en 1937 Jaime Solá na revista Vida Gallega "debajo de la inocente defensa de las lenguas vernáculas acechan las torvas intenciones del separatismo"* (Monteagudo 2021: n.p.).

The term *vernacular languages* is thus used negatively by the regime's ideologues, in parallel with the equally derogatory term *regional dialects*, in a clear contrast to the imperial stateliness of Castilian. In the eyes of the Catholic Church, of course, all Romance languages may be seen as vernaculars, but in the particular thinking of National Catholicism, it could be said that Catalan was to Spanish what Spanish had been to Latin: a bleak and vulgar tongue, estranged from the loftiness of the divine and eternal language. In addition, behind the supposedly innocent defense of those vernaculars lurked separatist intentions, a threat to the very existence of the Spanish nation, and as such, it needed to be suppressed in favor of Spanish:

> After the fall of Catalonia under Franco's boot, the newspaper *La Vanguardia* published an editorial entitled "Speak like Franco," in which a threat was made: "All Spaniards must do three things: think like Franco, feel like Franco and speak like Franco, who, speaking, of course, in the national language, has imposed his Victory."[5]

Think like Franco, feel like Franco, speak like Franco: the totalitarian aspirations of the Spanish dictator, imbued with religious resonances, have rarely been invoked in this way: to shape Spaniards in his own image and likeness. The mind of the new citizen must be colonized, and, perhaps most importantly, the language spoken must be that of the dictator, already endowed with divine and imperial qualities. The regional languages, dismissed as lowly vernaculars in relation to the language of victory, had no place in the new state formation.

The control over language and literature was asserted in the beginning of the Civil War, in the areas controlled by the rebels. Six months after the outbreak of the war, the Junta issued an order that would have far-reaching consequences: "The production, trade and circulation of newspapers, magazines, brochures and all kinds of pornographic prints and engravings, as well as socialist, communist, libertarian, and, in general, solvent literature are declared illegal."[6] An order issued the following year specified the jurisdiction in some further detail, prohibiting any publication containing "subversive

[5] *Despois da caída de Cataluña baixo a bota franquista, o xornal La Vanguardia publicaba un editorial titulado "Hablar como Franco," en que se ameazaba: "Todos los españoles debemos hacer tres cosas: pensar como Franco, sentir como Franco y hablar como Franco, que hablando, naturalmente, en el idioma nacional, ha impuesto su Victoria"* (Monteagudo 2021: 297).

[6] *Se declaran ilícitas la producción, el comercio y la circulación de periódicos, revistas, folletos y toda clase de impresos y grabados pornográficos o de literatura socialista, comunista, libertaria y, en general, disolventes* (in Abellán 1984: 158).

ideas, immoral concepts, propaganda of Marxist doctrines and everything that means disrespect for the Dignity of our glorious Army, attacks on the Unity of the Nation, contempt for the Catholic Religion and anything that opposes the meaning and purposes of our National Crusade."[7] Since this study explores in part the suppression and prohibition of regional languages in Spain under Franco, I have tried to trace this repression back to the original documents. Where and when, exactly, does the Franco regime state the prohibition of the regional languages of Spain? The answer is that no laws or unequivocal regulations seem to have existed. At least in the Spanish case, the censorship itself was by nature evasive—to the point that we can talk about "censura de la censura" (the censoring of the censorship) (Torrealdai 1998: 8)—and would do anything to erase its traces. What we have, then, are two vague wartime orders and the actions that they spurred. The orders themselves are certainly open for interpretation but nonetheless sufficiently clear for regional and local authorities in the period: as we have seen, the Fascist rhetoric of the time drew a clear line between language and separatism, so the fact that the "subversive ideas" and the "attacks on the Unity of the Fatherland" were to be chastised could only mean that local languages had to be repressed.

In spite of the vagueness of the language of the proclamations—or even because of that vagueness—the local authorities took their task extremely seriously, to the point that they were, as Solé i Sabaté and Villaroya phrase it, "*más papistas que el papa*" (more Catholic than the Pope) (1995: 48). The first step was, of course, not so much to stop book production but to hinder their dissemination and "purge" the books already circulating. At first, people were urged to hand over books in Catalan, Basque, and Galician voluntarily, but then, shops, libraries, and private collections were raided, and the books were burned in the streets of Madrid, Barcelona, and Bilbao (Perriam et al. 2000: 5). The archives of Catalanist politician Antoni Rovira i Virgili or the invaluable library of Pompeu Fabra, the engineer and linguist behind the standardization of Catalan in the 1920s, were thrown into the flames (Abellán 1984: 161). However, there were a few cracks in the regime's attitude towards the languages. Dionisio Ridruejo, director of propaganda and a convinced Falangist, was shocked by the

[7] *Ideas disolventes, conceptos inmorales, propaganda de doctrinas marxistas y todo cuanto signifique falta de respeto a la Dignidad de nuestro glorioso Ejército, atentados a la Unidad de la Patria, menosprecio de la Religión Católica y de cuanto se oponga al significado y fines de nuestra Cruzada Nacional* (in Abellán 1984: 158).

repression when a truckload of propaganda leaflets in Catalan was stopped from entering Barcelona. To him, content trumped language; to the regime, it was the opposite.

After the war was over, with much of the purging already achieved, the regime moved to control production. At this point, the regime did not so much prohibit different social activities but, rather, obligated citizens to request prior authorization, as an *a priori* form of repression (Solé i Sabaté and Villarroya 1995: 52). This measure created an effective form of self-censorship among many authors and publishers. In general, what was striking about the Spanish censorship at the time was its sheer arbitrariness: "The most totalitarian feature was inconsistency and arbitrariness as methods of state terror: the unpredictability of censorship was often based on exemplary prohibitions and on the display of its discretionary character. The contradictions of its opinions, the apparent capricious nature of its decisions, the diversity of censors could give the impression of a permissiveness that did not exist" (Gracia and Ródenas 2011: 24).[8] The "double censorship," regarding both language and content was felt by regional writers and publishers (De Blas 1999: 296).

At the same time, the regime magnified the social status of Castilian at the expense of the regional languages. By order of the Ministry for National Education the *Catecismo Patriótico Español* was required reading in all Spanish schools in 1939, making the governing attitude clear:

- Why do you say that the Spanish language will be the language of the civilization of the future?
- The Spanish language will be the language of the civilization of the future because English and French, which could share this function with it, are worn-out languages, on the way to complete dissolution.
- Are there other languages spoken in Spain besides Castilian?
- It can be said that in Spain only the Castilian language is spoken, since apart from this there is only Basque, which, as the sole language, is only used in some Basque villages and was reduced to dialect functions due to its linguistic and philological poverty.

[8] *El rasgo más totalitario fue la inconsecuencia y la arbitrariedad como métodos de terror de Estado: la imprevisibilidad de la censura se fundaba a menudo en las prohibiciones ejemplarizantes y en la exhibición de su carácter discrecional. Las contradicciones de sus dictámenes, el aparente carácter caprichoso de sus decisiones, la diversidad de censores pudieron aparentar una permisividad que no fue tal.*

– And what are the main dialects spoken in Spain?
– There are four main dialects spoken in Spain: Catalan, Valencian, Mallorcan and Galician.[9] (Solé i Sabaté and Villarroya 1995: 86)

The imperial fantasy is on display: French and English are completely worn-out languages, since they are spoken by the degenerated Allied powers, and Spanish is destined to be the language of the future civilization. The other Romance languages of the country are reduced to mere dialects, vulgar variations of Castilian—a strategy that would become a standard procedure during most of the dictatorship. Basque, on the other hand, may be a language, but it is not exactly *spoken*, since it is only used in some Basque farmhouses. The vernacularization of languages that only three years earlier had enjoyed full legal status in their respective regions had begun.

As we shall see, the totalitarian grip loosened after World War II was over, and Spain had to clean up its image by distancing itself from the ideology of the Axis powers. By the end of the 1940s, the first books in Catalan were published, though still under strict censorial control. After all, literature had a limited influence on the masses; much more important was the control over radio, film, theater and, later, television. A major shift occurred in 1959, both for the languages and, more generally, for oppositional culture. The Franco regime was close to bankruptcy and, for the first time since the war, social unrest was growing among students and workers. In order to survive in power, Franco purged the last Falangists from the government and turned toward a neo-capitalist, less ideological, and less autarkic policy. The reshuffle led to the employment of a class of technocrats, well-educated professionals belonging, almost without exception, to the secular Catholic order Opus Dei (Hooper 1995: 17). The technocrats courted rather than crushed the regional languages, and were led by the modern and dynamic minister of Tourism and Information, Manuel Fraga Iribarne. The Press Law had not been revised since the wartime

[9] *– ¿Por qué decís que la lengua castellana será la lengua de la civilización del futuro?*
– La lengua castellana será la lengua de la civilización del futuro porque el inglés y el francés, que con ella pudieran compartir esta función, son lenguas gastadas, que van camino de una disolución completa.
– ¿Se habla en España otras lenguas más que la lengua castellana?
– Puede decirse que en España se habla sólo la lengua castellana, pues aparte de ésta tan sólo se habla el vascuence, que, como lengua única, sólo se emplea en algunos caseríos vascos y quedó reducido a funciones de dialecto por su pobreza lingüística y filológica.
– ¿Y cuáles son los dialectos principales que se hablan en España?
– Los dialectos principales que se hablan en España son cuatro: el catalán, el valenciano, el mallorquín y el gallego.

orders referenced above, and Fraga's *Ley de Prensa e Imprenta* (Law of Press and Printing) of 1966 was seen as a significant progressive step and an attunement to more democratic times (Torrealdai 2019: 26). The major change was that the prior authorization was canceled and substituted with a voluntary *consulta previa* ("prior check") but, in reality, not much was different: the State still reserved the right to control all publishing, and, according to Abellán, "there were in actuality more governmental interventions against publication of objectionable material than in preceding years" (in Ugarte 2005: 13).

In a country where the Catholic Church had been intertwined with political power, more substantial protection for the languages came from a somewhat unexpected direction. The Second Vatican Council of 1962 explicitly stated that Mass should be given in the vernacular, and in the language most understood by the people. Sections of the Spanish Catholic Church, especially in the bilingual regions, were dissatisfied with the way the local languages were treated by the monolingual regime (and with their role in the distribution of power, where they sometimes felt like mere alibis to the military dictatorship), and seized the opportunity granted to them by Vatican II to use the regional languages in sermons.

In the 1970s, near the end of the dictatorship, there were some drastic changes in the attitudes towards the languages, as we shall see. But let us first look at the different modes of vernacular resistance, without which those changes would never have been made.

Catalunya: Collaboration and cooption

Catalonia was (and is) the richest and most populous of the bilingual regions, with solid cultural traditions, a powerful and Catalan-speaking bourgeoisie, a broad and successful manufacturing industry, and a strong national identity. A Statute of Autonomy was approved in 1932, which, among other things, led to the creation of the Catalan Parliament and the Court of Justice, giving the region far-reaching autonomous rights. Due to the industrial economy and heavy influx of immigrants from other parts of Spain, Catalonia and its undeniable hub, Barcelona, were also the scenes of radical political activity, for both Anarchists and Socialists, which often led to street fights and violent clashes with the authorities. Even though the political class and the bourgeoisie were often conservative and Catholic, Catalonia therefore came to represent all that

Franco and the insurgents resented: leftism, separatism, and atheism, bundled together in the neologism *rojo-separatista* (*red-separatist*), despite the fact that many separatists were not leftists nor, certainly, were all leftists separatists.[10]

When the Civil War was over, the idea of Catalonia as the quintessential enemy of the Spanish nation—a recurring image over the centuries that has served Spanish nationalists well both in 1898 and in 2017—led to harsh state repression. Catalan was banned from all official use, including street signs, tombstone inscriptions, and first names; thousands of university professors, schoolteachers, and clergymen were fired and replaced with Castilian-speaking Franco loyalists; and all publishing of books, journals, newspapers, as well as films, musical acts, and theater plays in the language were prohibited. Catalan was in effect vernacularized: after a few years of official use during the Republic, the language was relegated to familiar and private life. Josep Benet, author of the pioneering *Catalunya sota el règim franquista* (Catalonia under the Franco regime), a thorough examination of the cultural and linguistic repression in Catalonia published anonymously in Paris in 1973,[11] states that the aims of the Franco regime were clear: the "persecution of the language and culture was the inexorable fulfillment of one of the essential objectives of Francoism, winner of the war of Spain: the disappearance of Catalonia as a national minority in the Spanish state, with the destruction of its linguistic and cultural personality and the reduction of its language to the condition of patois" (Benet 1973: 10).[12]

During the first post-war years, the repression was so broad and severe that Benet talks about an attempt at "cultural genocide."[13] As already mentioned, even Franco's Minister of Propaganda, Dionisio Ridruejo, a poet and a devoted Fascist

[10] According to Vilanova i Vila-Abadal (1998: 140–41), the term was invented by Maximiano García Venero at some point before January 1937.

[11] Benet's book (just as the later *La censura de Franco y el tema vasco* (Torrealdai 1998) in the Basque case) responds precisely to the lack of historical memory: if linguistic and cultural repression was only de facto and not de iure, then the only way to prove this repression was to document how it was carried out in practice, painstakingly enumerating the evidence. The first edition was published by the *Institut català d'estudis polítics i socials*, a "scientific institution that operates clandestinely in Barcelona." The prologue "regrets that the Francoist repression still faced by the Catalan Countries of Spain does not allow for the names of this report to be made public. Its authors, according to the legislation of the Francoist Spain, risk sentences as high as thirty years of imprisonment" (14). Later editions, published after the death of Franco, have Benet as the author.

[12] *La persecució contra la llengua i la cultura catalanes era el compliment inexorable d'un dels objectius essencials del franquisme, vencedor de la guerra de Espanya: la desaparició de Catalunya com a minoria nacional dins l'Estat espanyol, amb la destrucció de la seva personalitat lingüística i cultural, i la reducció del seu idioma a la condició de patois.*

[13] For a long discussion on the possibility of cultural genocide in Catalonia, see Vilanova's "Did Catalonia Endure a (Cultural) Genocide?" (2016).

(in contrast to Franco) expressed disappointment and nausea when the insurgent troops entered Barcelona and destroyed truckloads of propaganda leaflets, well aligned with the Francoists' political line, because they were written in Catalan (Abellán 1984: 160–61). In these dark years, which Gallén calls the "grau zero de la cultura catalana" (zero degree of Catalan culture) (1987: 213), Catalan intellectuals were left with few alternatives. Some writers, especially the more conservative ones, aligned with the regime and switched their working language from Catalan to Castilian; others preferred to continue publishing clandestinely in Catalan. The most radical choice was to move into exile, normally via Nazi-occupied France to the Spanish-speaking countries in the Americas. All of these choices had their obvious limitations, but they nonetheless lay the ground for a more significant cultural resistance once World War II was over and the regime somewhat loosened its grip.

However brutal the cultural repression during the first years of the dictatorship, it was fairly limited in time. After the Allied victory, when the Franco regime needed to distance itself from European Fascism, a period of minimal tolerance began in Catalonia. Some cultural manifestations in Catalan were now permitted: a few classical works were reprinted, theatrical plays were staged, and, notably, the Orfeó Català—a choir with huge symbolic importance, due to Catalonia's long-standing choral traditions—was allowed to perform again. These were minor steps in the recovery of Catalan culture, but, nevertheless, they represented an opening in State-enforced monolingualism, where "every niche of freedom was exploited by the cultural activists" (Conversi 1997: 115). From here on, clandestine classes in Catalan language and history were organized, new literary prizes appeared, the Institut d'Estudis Catalans slowly started to recover, and the publishing house Selecta, which would later be very important, was founded. The first major publication was a reprint of the complete works of Jacint Verdaguer, a Renaixença poet of great symbolic importance, which sold 100,000 copies within a year (Dowling 2018: 375). The regime underscored his Spanishness and that he wrote "in the Spanish language of Catalan," as one religious critic pointed out (375), but only allowed the publication language in its non-standardized form, prior to Pompeu Fabra's normative reforms in the 1910s, as a way to *dialectalize* the language and downplay its unity (Conversi 1997: 116). The number of books published rose steadily—from twelve books in 1946 to ninety-six in 1954—though, at least in the first years, they were mainly translations of works not already published in Spanish, poetry and folkloric and religious texts, while bilingual congresses and other intellectual, "para-official"

collaborations began to flourish (Samsó 1999b: 223). Without the support of the literary system—criticism, publicity, and literary prizes, as well as bookshops and distributors—the task for the editors was to reach the literary audience. Sales went from public to individual, with distribution by subscription and home deliveries (Samsó 1999a: 235).

During the first two decades of the dictatorship, the Francoist approach to Catalan culture went from repression over tolerance toward a growing co-option. The permissiveness of the latter part of the 1940s was not only due to a shift in European politics but also included "the intention to de-victimize and normalize the Catalan peculiarity" (Samsó 1999b: 221).[14] State officials realized that all intents to suffocate Catalan culture would be in vain, so they shifted their strategy in order to assimilate Catalan heterogeneity as a natural part of the larger Spanish nation, while intent on not giving Catalan nationalists at home and abroad any reasons for martyrdom. At the same time, the defeat in the Civil War and the ensuing repression ignited a soul search on behalf of Catalan intellectuals, particularly Jaume Vicens Vives and Josep Ferrater Mora: in contrast to conservative, autarkic, enclosed, and reactionary Spain, Catalonia would be open, pluralistic, modern, and reflective.

In 1959, the regime laid out the Plan for Economic Stabilization, which brought about a major shift in the policy of the dictatorship. The new direction of the country was to be neo-capitalist[15] and Europeanist, as a response to the growing power of the financial oligarchy and the new industrial bourgeoisie. The Franco regime—at this point more interested in its own survival than in ideology—realized that the country needed economic reform, modernization, and a moderate opening to the outside world, and it had to deal with growing political opposition among students, workers, and cultural activists. New cultural organizations were created, such as the Ómnium Cultural in 1961, and even though it was temporarily banned by the increasingly erratic regime, it was highly influential in creating a new, more organized opposition.[16] The

[14] *La intenció de desvictimitzar i de normalitzar la peculiaritat catalana.*

[15] As with other Fascist movements in Europe at the time, the Falange was strongly anti-capitalist. Ramón Serrano Súñer, chief ideologue of the party after the death of José Antonio Primo de Rivera in 1936 and the architect of the Francoist Estado Nuevo (New State), made his position clear: "We know perfectly well that we cannot demand from the workers a love of the country, as long as that country is not something vital to them. But the working population of Catalonia will soon understand that we have not undertaken the task of war to defend a capitalist position" (Benet 1973: 229–30).

[16] Ómnium Cultural was also one of the leading actors behind the Catalan referendum for independence in 2017. As of 2021, two of its leaders are still imprisoned, convicted for sedition.

cultural resistance, with the strategy of "move, countermove, adjustment and negotiation" (Dowling 2018: 385), organized a flurry of activities, from semi-official to grassroots levels. Somewhat paradoxically, given the political symbiosis between the Catholic Church and the Franco regime and the fact that merely 15 percent of Barcelonans considered themselves Catholic in 1963 (Conversi 1997: 126), the local clergy took a leading role in the defense of Catalan language and culture. With the unexpected support of Vatican II and its vindication of vernacular languages, Catalan bishops and priests used their legitimacy to work for moderate language and cultural reforms. In 1947, the Benedictine abbey of Montserrat held mass in Catalan (and flew an enormous Catalan flag on top of a mountain), and in the 1960s, their publishing house "engaged in the publication of books and magazines that no private publishing house would dare to print" (127). Chairs of Catalan language and literature were created at the University of Barcelona in 1966 and at the Autonomous University of Barcelona in 1969, although courses on Catalan language and literature had first entered the university during the Republic (Subirana 2018: 219). Students, professors, and intellectuals organized in a common union, and a broad coalition of Leftist parties organized street protests and roundtables. The political apparatus of Catalanism offered a mode of organized resistance to disenchanted activists along the whole political spectrum, particularly on the Left, just as in the case of the *Indignados* movement in Catalonia that started on May 15, 2011. Perhaps most interesting of all was the everyday resistance organized by grassroots movements: through Scout organizations, hiking groups, soccer supporters, dance companies, and even mushroom excursions, a strong bond was created between the people and territory, tradition, folklore, and nation, hinged on the community-building of nineteenth-century Catalonia (Conversi 1997: 135). As Conversi points out, "this brought about a diffused sense of optimism, showing the unique value of cultural resistance—and cultural nationalism—shaping a country's identity without needing to resort to violent strategies" (135). As we shall see, the non-violent strategies, patent, too, in the independence activism of the 2010s, are in stark contrast to the case of the Basque Country.

In the face of such overwhelming activity at all levels of society, the Franco regime chose co-option before repression. Catalan culture was declared part and parcel of the Spanishness that was at the base of Francoism, even though it was expressed in the vernacular. In fact, by sleight of hand, vernacular heterogeneity was now seen as the core of Spanish grandeur. It is not difficult to see that the initial repression of all things Catalan in the end had the opposite

effect of strengthening a culture at the brink of extinction, with lasting political consequences both in the transition to democracy and in today's national politics. The heavy-handed and blunt Francoist repression—hateful and bigoted in the beginning, inconsequential and morally confused toward the end—also gave Catalan nationalists a sense of "inner moral superiority" (Conversi 1997: 140) that, to some extent, has lasted to this day.

Euskadi: Ikastolas and violence

The Basque Country suffered repression similar to that in Catalonia. Although the region surrendered to insurgents in 1937 and was home to the ultra-Catholic and conservative (albeit also Basque Nationalist) Carlists that Franco used as ideological alibis, it nevertheless endured unprecedented state terror in the first postwar years. *Lehendakari* José Antonio Aguirre, the exiled President of the Basque government, who tirelessly travelled the world in support of the Basque cause, issued a statement to UNESCO in 1952, at the time Spain was applying for membership, in which he denounced a wholesale attack on Basque language and culture: universities and social and cultural associations had been closed, books written in Basque publicly burned, all public use of Basque prohibited, Basque names forbidden, and—once again that eschatological zeal—Basque inscriptions on tombstones had to be erased (Conversi 1997: 81). As in the case of Catalan, Basque itself was associated with separatism and thus needed to be eradicated from public use and relegated to the private sphere.

The first literary work in Basque published after the Civil War, Telesforo Monzón's significantly titled *Urrundik* (*From Afar*), came out in Mexico in 1945, initiating a rich and important trans-Atlantic interchange between the silenced Motherland and the uprooted exile community, particularly in Mexico, Chile, and the River Plate region. The first publication in the Basque Country proper, the Franciscan friar Salbatore Mitxelena's poetry collection *Arantzazu: Euskal sinismearen poema* (*Arantzazu: Poem of the Basque Faith*), saw the light of day in 1949. The book centers on the oral tradition of the Gipuzkoan monastery of Arantzazu, shrewdly telling a story of resistance and defiance through religious allegory, and served as a call for action among an array of intellectual Franciscans and artists to the defense and renovation of the Basque language (Juaristi 1987: 106). Publication of books in Basque was still heavily regulated by the regime, but religious and folkloric texts often

passed censorship. The center of Basque intellectual and literary debate was still elsewhere; for example, the literary journal *Euzko Gogoa* was published in Guatemala and distributed to diasporic communities in twenty-six countries all through the 1950s (Gabilondo 2016: 226).

One of the Franciscans to heed the call of Arantzazu was Joan Mari Torrealdai, who later became the foremost scholar on Francoist censorship in the Basque Country. During the first two decades of the dictatorship, the censorship was, at the same time, extremely rigorous and subject to individual judgments and personal favors (such as in the semi-official system of *padrinos*, according to which a person with ties to the regime could recommend personally the publication of certain books). In general, the censors prohibited the publication of anything that smacked of opposition to the regime and its policies, to the extent that opposing theories could not even be mentioned in order to be refuted or by way of fictional characters. In the case of books in Basque, things became even more complicated. Since almost no censors read Basque, books in this language had to go directly to the provincial delegation in San Sebastian, where one reader had all the power to stop a work or let it pass. In giving their verdict, censors had to adhere to a centrally designed form with the following guidelines:

> Does it attack Dogma or Morals?
> The institutions of the Regime?
> Does it have literary or documentary value?
> Circumstantial reasons that advise one or the other decision.[17]
>
> (Torrealdai 1998: 24)

Consequently, there was a certain margin for subjective interpretation; not only did the censors have to judge whether a work followed Francoist principles (and here, even the *lack* of satisfactory Spanish national sentiment could be sanctioned) but also if the text in question had any literary value. Censors were not just bureaucrats but also more or less qualified readers (more so in the beginning of the dictatorship, when the ranks were still filled with Falangists) that often saw the censorship report as an opportunity to exercise literary criticism.

1959 was a watershed year in Spain in general and much more so in the Basque Country. The Plan for Economic Reform turned the tables with respect

[17] *¿Ataca al Dogma o a la Moral?*
¿A las instituciones del Régimen?
¿Tiene valor literario o documental?
Razones circunstanciales que aconsejen una u otra decisión.

to cultural politics and vernacular resistance throughout Spain, sparking myriad more-or-less significant semi-official and grassroots activities. It was also the year of the creation of *Euskadi ta Askatasuna* (ETA), the armed separatist guerrilla group that would be a major factor in Spanish and Basque political and social life until the final, unilateral ceasefire in 2011. These two struggles—cultural and military—have the same origins and run parallel over decades, although they underwent radically different developments.

In the beginning of the 1950s, a group of students, too young to have participated in the Civil War, became disenchanted with the main Basque opposition party, Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV). As mentioned before, the PNV's leader, the *lehendakari* Aguirre, had fought for the Basque cause ever since the end of the war, but when the United States came to see Franco more as a strategically located anti-Communist ally than a Fascist enemy, the students started to look elsewhere for ideological inspiration. In secret study groups, they discovered the radical roots of Basque nationalism and realized the need not just to save and preserve Basque culture and language but also to reformulate it according to the modern world. They were generally referred to as the *Ekin* [To Act or to Insist] group, after their clandestine literary journal. Their intellectual leader was the writer José Luis Alvarez Enparantza, who wrote under the nom de plume *Txillardegi* and whose literature and political thought were tinged by the existentialism of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre (Gabilondo 2016: 226). Indeed, Sartre would later voice his explicit support for ETA during the infamous Burgos trial in 1970 (Conversi 1997: 89). By the beginning of the 1960s, however, ETA was still a cultural movement, mainly concerned with the protection and cultivation of Basque language and culture. The shift toward the armed struggle came with the influence of another intellectual, Federico Krutwig, son of a German industrialist and adult learner of Basque, and the publication of his long book *Vasconia* (1963). Krutwig was heavily influenced by Franz Fanon's anti-colonialism and the revolutions in Algeria and Cuba, and he advocated for armed struggle against what he saw as the colonial occupation by Spain; his thinking was also decidedly anti-clerical and anti-racist, as opposed to the Catholic and racist leanings of the founding father of Basque nationalism, Sabino Arana. By straying away from the old ideas of blood and race, Basque nationalism could appeal to the newly immigrated masses of industrial workers from other parts of Spain and thus integrate a class perspective to the national struggle. From here on, and with the influence of Mao Tse-tung and Ho Chi Minh, ETA became a Marxist Nationalist movement, embarking on the deadly

path of revolutionary war. Police repression was severe, which resulted in several controversial trials and executions as well as scores of ETA militants in exile, and internal strife estranged the moderates and gave way for militant hardliners. By the time ETA reached its peak of popular support, inside and outside the Basque Country, which coincided with the spectacular assassination of Franco's successor, the admiral Luis Carrero Blanco in 1973, the organization had abandoned theoretical discussions and cultural activity in favor of relentless guerrilla warfare.

The main grassroots movement during the dictatorship, which would have a lasting impact on Basque language, culture, and society, was the movement that resulted in the groundbreaking work of the *ikastolas*—schools with Basque as the language of instruction. Often conflated due to their supposedly separatist intentions (and strong industrial economies), the Basque Country was in most respects quite different from Catalonia. Where the latter had a well-developed literary system, a large publishing industry, and a broad, urban, Catalan-speaking bourgeoisie, the former had a very rich oral literature but scant book publications, no public universities (the only university in the region until the 1950s was the Jesuit-run University of Deusto, founded in the 1880s), and a middle class that almost exclusively spoke Castilian—and, as in the cases of highly prominent intellectuals such as Miguel de Unamuno and Ramón de Maeztu, even resented the use of Basque and declared it a moribund language.[18] Basque was widely spoken in the countryside, but by a fairly small population,

[18] See, for example, Unamuno's speech to Congress on September 18, 1931:

And about thirty years ago, there, in my native land, I gave a speech that caused a great commotion, a speech in which I told my countrymen that Basque was dying, that we had no choice but to pick it up and bury it with filial mercy, embalmed in science … Today that continues, that agony continues; it is a sad thing, but a fact is a fact, and just as it would seem to me a true impiety to try to awaken someone who is dying, the dying mother, it seems so impious to inject drugs to extend a fictitious life, because drugs are the works that are carried out today to make a cultured Language and a Language that, in the sense that is ordinarily given to this word, cannot become so.

(*Y hace cosa de treinta años, allí, en mi nativa tierra, pronuncié un discurso que produjo una gran conmoción, un discurso en el que les dije a mis paisanos que el vascuence estaba agonizando, que no nos quedaba más que recogerlo y enterrarlo con piedad filial, embalsamado en ciencia … Hoy continúa eso, sigue esa agonía; es cosa triste, pero el hecho es un hecho, y así como me parecería una verdadera impiedad el que se pretendiera despenar a alguien que está muriendo, a la madre moribunda, me parece tan impío inocularle drogas para alargarle una vida ficticia, porque drogas son los trabajos que hoy se realizan para hacer una Lengua culta y una Lengua que, en el sentido que se da ordinariamente a esta palabra, no puede llegar a serlo.*)

However, he had not always had that somber view of Basque. In 1888, he participated in the *oposiciones* to the first chair in Basque at the Instituto de Bilbao, along with the founding father of Basque nationalism, Sabino Arana. The chair went to another 24-year-old, the priest Resurrección María de Azkue.

and with that plus a very large influx of Castilian-speaking industrial workers and a weak institutional status, the Franco repression meant a severe, even life-threatening blow for the language. The *ikastola* movement started with the semi-clandestine, collective homeschooling of the *casas-escuelas* in the 1950s, as a way of creating a community around Basque-language teaching that harkened back to the interrupted labor of the Basque-language schools of the Republic. Astutely tiptoeing the limit between private and public—or, if you will, between the vernacular and the national—the pioneer Elbira Zipitria and the *maestras* following in her footsteps provided the children of nationalist families with a primary education at least partly in Basque (Iza and Ikastolak 2011: 28).

The next step, the creation of more formal Basque-language schools, was made possible by fundraising campaigns throughout the Basque-speaking areas—even those belonging to France—and a genuinely popular mobilization. Even though a loose network was created, the schools grew organically, independently, and, again, semi-clandestinely, each one according to the work of teachers and parents and to their abilities to circumvent regime control. Through contacts with Catalan activists, with experience from schooling in Catalan during the Republic, they realized the potential of a school free from both State and Church influence. Once the first *ikastola* had opened in Bilbao in 1957, followed by another one in San Sebastian in 1961, there was a snowball effect, and in 1977, there were as many as 40,000 students attending 185 schools (Conversi 1997: 104). The first years were marred with obstructions and legal difficulties, where schoolteachers were imprisoned or given hefty fines. In 1965, the Franco regime introduced the *cartilla de escolaridad* (school card), which was necessary when a student wished to transfer to another school or access secondary education. Even though the *ikastolas* could not issue these cards as pedagogical institutions, they ingeniously managed to circumvent the rules, either by registering the schools as cultural or mercantile societies, or, as an act of solidarity, by teachers in public schools issuing the cards for *ikastola* students (Iza and Ikastolak 2011: 58). The *ikastolas*—still highly active, pedagogically advanced, and cooperatively owned—are a prime example of a genuinely grassroots vernacular resistance in the face of an aggressively monolingual dictatorial regime.

After 1959, there was also "a virtual explosion of culture in Basque" (De Pablo 2009: 55). Book publication increased significantly, music with lyrics in Basque became popular (in parallel to the Catalan *Nova Cançó*), poetry readings were held, and literacy campaigns for adults were initiated. The lively oral Basque culture, traditionally related to couplets, ballads, lyric songs, tales,

proverbs, carnival productions, and Christmas plays (Etxeberria 2012), had its outstanding representation in the popular *bertsolaritza*, "a rhetorical genre of an epidictic, oral, sung, and improvised character" (Garzia 2012: 46). The *bertsolaritza* shows, unique to Basque culture on the Iberian Peninsula (and very rare even on a European scale), became acts of resistance, celebrations of vernacular and popular culture that excluded everyone without a thorough grasp of Basque, and reinforced the bonds of the community. Equally important was the standardization of the Basque language, finalized with the creation of *euskera batua* (unified Basque) in 1968, which brought together the myriad dialects and paved the way for a developed literary language. This cultural activity was a boost for a new generation of writers, especially Ramon Saizarbitoria and Bernardo Atxaga, who renewed Basque literature and made it part of the cosmopolitan circuits of world literature.[19]

Although a very different region, the vernacular resistance in the Basque Country partly mirrored the development in Catalonia: broad grassroots movements that took advantage of every opening and ambiguity in the regime control in order to foster and advance local culture and language. The major difference, of course, is that while Catalans favored non-violent action, part of the Basque resistance found that, due to the severe repression of an already weak linguistic culture, armed struggle was the only way to reverse the situation.

Galiza: The importance of the diaspora

Unlike Basque-language letters, Galician literature has a long and prestigious pedigree. The school of Galician poetry behind the important *Cancioneiros* was established in 1196 (Rodríguez Alonso 2004: 310). Galician-Portuguese was the language of poetry, both in Galicia and in the court of Castile, throughout the Middle Ages, until it was finally pushed aside by the expanding Castilian. Literature in Galician led a life in the shadows until the publication of the first poetry collection in the modern era, Rosalía de Castro's *Cantares gallegos* (1863), which sparked the *Rexurdimento*, the renaissance of Galician culture and language. Just as in the case of the Catalan *Renaixença*, this cultural movement was part of a general national awakening in Europe, both in nation-states and

[19] Atxaga is mostly known for his *Obabakoak* (1988), translated into 27 languages—all preserving the original Basque title.

in sub-state nations, where a people's efforts to distance itself from the Other frequently entailed a search for medieval roots. In nations without states, this endeavor was often seen as a struggle for cultural survival in the face of urbanization, industrialization, modernity, and the growing, homogenizing power of the modern nation-state. Its first decades saw a flurry of cultural activities, especially through the *Irmandades da Fala* (The Brotherhoods of Language), which strived not only for the use of Galician as a literary and cultivated language, but also for its implementation at all levels of society. The Statute of Autonomy was ratified in a referendum in June of 1936—no less than 99 percent of Galicians voted in favor (Rodríguez Alonso 2004: 315)—but, since the Civil War broke out the following month, it never came into effect. As in the cases of Catalonia and the Basque Country, the Statute declared that Galicia was to be bilingual at all official levels.

However, Galicia differed politically, economically, socially, culturally, and geographically from the other two bilingual regions. It had virtually no industry and was therefore a region of emigration, both to other parts of Spain and to the Americas, rather than immigration. Even though it was "fundamentally Republican" (Fernández Prieto 2011: 38) at the outbreak of the war, it was already within Francoist territory, and political refugees had nowhere to escape once the military crackdowns started. The region did not have the symbolic position of Catalonia or the Basque Country, but the strong support for the Republic made Francoist repression as severe here as in the other bilingual regions, including prohibitions of all official use of the vernacular language. The Caudillo himself was Galician, born and raised in the naval town of Ferrol, but he never spoke Galician publicly. Both the repression and neglect only confirmed a long history of marginalization: "the repressive policy of the Franco regime against Galician was not an absolute novelty but meant a qualitative leap in a long trajectory of the marginalization of Galician and subjugation of the people who spoke it: the culmination, in a particularly violent, extremist and subjugating way, of an age-old history."[20] *Dialect* or *vernacular* were regularly used to belittle the Galician language, framed in opposition to the universal Spanish. This rhetoric was even part of well-meaning efforts, as when the poet and editor Ramón González Alegre tried to convince the Galician poet Manuel María to write in Castilian: "Don't do

[20] *a política represiva do franquismo contra o galego non constituía unha novidade absoluta, senón que significaba un salto cualitativo nunha longa traxectoria de marxinación do galego e de asoballamento das persoas que o falaban: a culminación, por unha vía particularmente violenta, extremista e asoballante, dunha historia secular* (Monteagudo 2021).

it in Galician for God's sake. Don't humiliate yourself for no reason. Seek universality, seek transcendence" (María 1995: 28–9 in Monteagudo 2021).[21]

The linguistic situation was similar to that of the Basque Country: in the countryside, people spoke almost exclusively Galician, but the economic and intellectual elites of the urban centers tended to speak Castilian. In 1935, a mere thirteen books were published in Galician, among them a translation of Federico García Lorca (Alonso Montero 1991: 103). Between 1936 and 1946, due to the political climate, there were virtually no books published in the local language. As in other regions, publication in Galician was not officially banned; even though significant scholarly efforts have been made, no government documents stating formal prohibition of publications in other languages than Spanish have been found. As Alonso Montero states, this operating procedure, more insidious that an outright ban, cleared the Franco regime of possible international criticism—and also makes it possible for right-wing, present-day apologists to question that language repression during the Franco dictatorship ever existed.[22] Instead, the prohibition was informal—political rather than legal—and exercised by the police and local authorities, through oral threats, firings, closings of theaters, schools, and journals:

> For the Franco regime it is more important (effective) to create an atmosphere of fear, a climate of wariness, a thick fabric of suspicion, so that writing in Galician, which is not formally prohibited, feels like an obvious risk. It was also not forbidden to give lectures in our language, but no one, in that web of precautions, fears and threats, did so until ten years after the end of the Civil War.[23]
>
> (Alonso Montero 1991: 105)

Considering Galician literature's rather weak situation during the Republic, not to mention the immediate post-war years, things changed quite drastically in the beginning of the 1950s, mainly due to two important factors: the Galician diaspora in America and the creation of the publishing house Galaxia. Between 1850 and 1960, almost two million Galicians—roughly three-quarters of today's population and over half of the Spanish emigration in general—emigrated to America; even today, especially in the River Plate region, a *gallego* metonymically

[21] *No lo haga en gallego por Dios. No se humille sin motivo. Busque universalidad, busque trascendencia*.

[22] See, for example, Pío Moa's "Franco y las lenguas regionales" (2011) and Pedro Insúa's "La mentira del franquismo y las lenguas" (2017).

[23] *Para o franquismo é máis importante (eficaz) crear unha atmósfera de medo, un clima de recelos, un mesto tecido de sospeitas, de tal xeito que escribir en galego, que non está formalmente prohibido, se sinta como un risco evidente. Tampouco estaba prohibido pronunciar conferencias na nosa lingua pero ninguén, naquel entramado de cautelas, medos e ameazas, o fixo ata dez anos despois de terminada a Guerra Civil.*

refers to an *español* in general. This enormous diaspora—Buenos Aires was its unrivalled capital, with a Galician-speaking population five times larger than that of the biggest cities back home—became crucial for Galician literature throughout the dictatorship. In the 1940s, the darkest years of Francoist repression, the Centro Galego of Buenos Aires—"the most important entity of Galician emigration of all time" (Monteagudo 2021)—was a hub for all kinds of cultural activity, managed by the important figures of the artist Luis Seoane and writer Eduardo Blanco-Amor. The former was also the editor of the most important literary journal of the diaspora, *Galicia*, for the better part of the 1940s and 1950s and was succeeded in this role by the latter. Galician exiles from the Spanish Civil War could thus enjoy an ebullient cultural and literary life in Galician: publications, cultural and political celebrations, courses, and lectures on Galician language and literature; invitations of prominent intellectuals to the Xornadas Patrióticas/Galegas, conferences celebrated yearly from 1947 to 1980 (although they became infiltrated by Francoist intellectuals and lost some of the initial radicalism); economic support to institutions (especially the Real Academia Galega) and publishing houses in Galicia; literary prizes for poetry, fiction, essays, and scholarship, particularly on language and culture; and, importantly, denunciations of Francoist repression and solidarity campaigns, support of political prisoners, and boycotts of Spanish institutions.

The most publicized (and effective) of these denunciations is known as *a batalla de Montevideo*. When Spain entered UNESCO in 1953 and the seventh General Assembly was to be held in 1954 in Montevideo, across the River Plate from the very heart of the Galician diaspora, the exiled intellectuals were well prepared. They presented a manifesto called *Denuncia diante a UNESCO da perseguizón do idioma galego pol-o Estado Hespañol* (Denunciation before UNESCO of the persecution of the Galician language by the Spanish State) translated into English and French, where they drew attention to the persecution of language and culture not only in Galician but the other vernacular languages of Spain:

1. The prohibition to publish newspapers or cultural journals in Galician, as well as in Catalan and Basque, and the prohibition to use these languages in lectures and cultural events.
2. The prohibition to publish translations into these languages; for example, Heidegger's *The Essence of Truth* was translated to Galician before Spanish, but its publication was denied.
3. The prohibition to use Galician or other non-Castilian languages in school, universities, and churches.

Franco officials (among them the aforementioned Manuel Fraga, a Galician who would be a crucial part of the modernization process in the 1960s and was a senator for Galicia until 2011) explained that Galician was not legally forbidden, which was technically true, but he still made a few concessions after his return to Spain: a chair for Galician language and literature was opened at the Universidad Central of Madrid, a special issue of a prestigious literary review was dedicated to poetry in Galician—and Heidegger's *Da esencia da verdade* was published in 1956.

Like many other important books in Galician to appear during the dictatorship, the Heidegger translation was published by Galaxia, founded in 1950. This publishing house was not only meant to assure the continuity of the *Rexurdimento* and the generation Nós of the first decades of the century, interrupted by the Civil War and the dictatorship, but also to act as the cultural front of political resistance. Galaxia, under the auspices of the foremost Galician intellectual of the period, Ramón Piñeiro, had great ambitions for its cultural work: among them, to further Galician as a cultivated and literary language and put it on the same level as Spanish and Portuguese language literature; to promote fiction and essay writing in Galician (at this time, only poetry and folkloric texts were granted publishing permits by the government); to modernize and standardize Galician; and to foment historical and etymological studies of Galician language and literature. It was thus important not only to find a place in the Spanish literary system but also to relate, in the first instance, to Lusophone letters—through the language and its physical proximity, Galicia has always had a close relationship to Portugal—and, thereby, to the World Republic of Letters. Even though publication was made difficult and Galician literature dismissed, vilified, ridiculed, and censored,[24] Galaxia managed to carve out a space, thanks

[24] When Juan Aparicio, a Falangist hardliner and editor of the regime's mouthpiece *Pueblo*, learned about the Heidegger translation, he wrote a fuming open letter to Raimundo Fernández Cuesta, the Minister of Justice:

> In Galicia, some pedant translates German philosophy with the rhythm of a bagpipe, as with the Bernat Metge foundation, the Greco-Latin classics were translated into a jargon that was more like a French "patois" … The writer who writes in the "Grial Collection" from Editorial Galaxia de Vigo or writes verses in the ancient langue d'Oc or in more archaic Basque, because Spanish seems crude, unfaithful and inexpressive to him, is a writer who has spelling mistakes in his pen and in his soul, being ashamed that his private parts should be seen in the nude. Dear and respected Raimundo, they should be cured by a psychoanalyst or brought to Madrid by hook or by crook, so that they can tone their moral and nervous systems. (Alonso Montero 1991: 151)

Here, the contempt for the vernacular languages is not so much related to separatism as to aesthetics and the perceived superiority of Castilian. Condescendingly, Aparicio refers to the use of bagpipes in Galicia, a residue of the Celtic past.

to the efforts of the *galeguistas* and the support of the exile community. When the repression was eased in the 1960s, through Vatican II and the change of guard in the Franco government, Galaxia had paved the way for the robust recovery of Galician letters, the publishing boom, and the highly sophisticated *nova narrativa galega*, inspired by the French *nouveau roman*.

In a country with political prisoners, prisons may be used for political purposes. When Piñeiro was sentenced to prison for anti-fascist activities in 1946, he came to share a cell with Koldo Mitxelena, who later would be the creator of the unified Basque language, *euskera batua*. Books on philosophy, which most interested Piñeiro, were often considered subversive and difficult to get in prison, so he read Mitxelena's books on linguistics. The conversations between the two intellectuals made Piñeiro realize that a small and subjugated language like Galician needed to be standardized in order to thrive. The *Normas ortográficas e morfolóxicas do idioma galego* (Orthographic and morphological norms of the Galician language) was not published until 1970, but Galaxia had already set the standard for a unified Galician during its two decades of publishing (González González 1993: 145).

From brutal repression to legal protection

Although the repression of vernacular culture and language is similar in the different regions, it also becomes clear that the vernacularities differ among themselves. The strong position of Catalan—a broad, Catalan-speaking bourgeoisie, a well-developed intellectual and literary system, a long tradition, a unified language, and a far-reaching autonomy before the war—made it very resilient in the face of brutal and widespread repression. Despite the odds, books were soon published again after the war, every breach in the dictatorial machinery was used for cultural resistance, and once the monolithic wall had begun to crumble, there was no way to stop the counter-offensive of Catalan culture. In the second half of the dictatorship, after the reshufflings of 1959, Francoist authorities found that it would be more efficient to coopt Catalan culture than to combat it; Catalans, on the other hand, realized that sly and steady endurance and the strength of the vernacular culture, rather than direct confrontation, would break down the opposition. In contrast, Basque culture, with a much more precarious social and institutional status, suffered more from the Francoist stranglehold and could not afford the same passive resistance.

Once the spark of militant, confrontational nationalism was lit, fueled by its "Third World" anti-Colonialist struggles elsewhere, a realization of cultural specificity in the face of extinction, and a merciless and violent response from the authorities, there was no way to avoid the fire: what started as cultural resistance and study groups ended in a forty-year armed conflict that would deeply affect Spanish politics and traumatize Basque society. Especially in the later decades, the ETA conflict was as much a Basque civil war as a war against the Spanish state. Simultaneously, grassroots activists—or agents of the vernacular—initiated an assault on the institutions of the state, beginning with its foremost ideological apparatus: the school. The *ikastola* movement boosted Basque as a language of instruction and gave thousands of students the opportunity to study in the regional language, thereby strengthening their ties and loyalty to vernacular culture and specificity. Finally, Galicia benefited from the support of the very large groups of exiled Galicians in Spanish-speaking America, both in terms of economy and politics as well as cultural infrastructure and intellectual mobilization. Galicia had the most widely spoken vernacular of the three regions but the weakest nationalist sentiments; however, the persistent efforts of a fairly small group of intellectuals—just as during the Rexurdimento—made literature and culture in Galician not just survive, but flourish and spread in a hitherto unseen expansion.

Lastly, it is also illuminating to see how the regime's attitude vis-à-vis the vernacular languages changed through the decades. From the book burnings and violent repression in the immediate post-war years, through the growing but arbitrary permissiveness in the 1950s and the pragmatism of the 1960s, into the last years of the dictatorship, the regime even came to declare the vernacular cultures, with their specific languages, part of the greatness of the Spanish nation. In one of the last decrees to be issued in Franco's lifetime, published only five days before his death on November 20, 1975, the vernacular languages are conceded a status unthinkable at the beginning of his reign:

> Article One. — The regional languages are the cultural heritage of the Spanish Nation and all of them are considered national languages. The knowledge and use of them will be supported and protected by the action of the State and other Public Law Entities and Corporations.
>
> Article Two. — Regional languages may be used by all spoken or written mass media, and especially in acts and meetings of cultural nature.
>
> Article Three. — Spanish, as the official language of the Nation, and the vehicle of communication for all Spaniards, will be used in all actions of the High Bodies

> of the State, Public Administration, Administration of Justice, Local Entities and other Corporations Public Law.
>
> Article Four. — No Spaniard shall be subject to discrimination for not knowing or not using a regional language.[25]
>
> (Decreto 2929/1975)

This might seem like a complete u-turn: the state had gone from a genocidal approach, stamping out all official use of the vernacular languages, to giving them protection throughout the entire State apparatus, not just making possible their use in all written and oral media but also especially in cultural gatherings. A less benevolent but more realistic reading is that the decree merely recognized a *fait accompli*—the vernacular languages were already widely used and the aggressively Spanish-nationalist rhetoric was doomed—and that it ultimately, especially in view of an imminent transition to democracy, served to safeguard the official status of Spanish and to convey the message that the vernaculars would not get further than this. Besides, what does it really entail to say that the knowledge and use of the vernaculars will be supported and protected? The wording more or less survived in the Constitution of 1978; the languages are a cultural patrimony that "will be the object of special respect and protection," and remains notoriously vague: not only are the vernacular languages not named, but neither is it specified what the respect and protection will actually look like. It was not until the beginning of the 1980s, with the reform of the Autonomous Communities and the bilingual reforms, that the vernacular languages were granted official status and thus real legal protection.

However, in Franco's decree the vernaculars are granted the status of national languages, which in fact makes this decree, still issued under the dictatorship, *more* progressive than the democratic Constitution of 1978. The constitutional text goes to great lengths precisely to avoid any identification of the bilingual regions as nations: the languages are called "different linguistic modalities" and "other Spanish languages," and the vernacular groups are labeled with the neologism *nacionalidades*. The government decree of November 1975, issued

[25] *Artículo primero.—Las lenguas regionales son patrimonio cultural de la Nación española y todas ellas tienen la consideración de lenguas nacionales. Su conocimiento y uso será amparado y protegido por la acción del Estado y demás Entidades y Corporaciones de Derecho Público. Artículo segundo.—Las lenguas regionales podrán ser utilizadas por todos los medios de difusión de la palabra oral y escrita, y especialmente en los actos y reuniones de carácter cultural. Artículo tercero.—El castellano, como idioma oficial de la Nación, y vehículo de comunicación dé todos los españoles, será el usado en todas las actuaciones de los Altos Organos del Estado, Administración Pública, Administración de Justicia, Entidades Locales y demás Corporaciones de Derecho Público. Artículo cuarto.—Ningún español podrá ser objeto de discriminación por no conocer o no utilizar una lengua regional.*

at the end of an almost forty-year-long dictatorship that emphasized the use of Castilian as the basis of citizenship, goes as far as to state that no Spaniard should suffer discrimination for not knowing or using a regional language. The history of the change in attitude from 1939 to 1975, reflecting the declining strength of the regime and the rise of the vernaculars, could not have had a more striking conclusion.

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