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From Catalan PEN to the World: Writers, Activists, and Diplomats

How it is that one group can generate the conditions for complexity under heterogeneity while another cannot depend [. . .] on the ability of the relevant group to maintain an industry that is rarely discussed and analysed – the industry of ideas.

Itamar Even-Zohar

PEN International celebrated its centenary in 2021, while Catalan PEN reached this anniversary in 2022. The PEN centres are part of a close-knit network that brings together people of letters from around the world. Their literary activism has maintained productive relationships “on a larger-than-the-domestic scene” (Even-Zohar 2000, 390) for a century and it continues to influence important political events in practically all four corners of the world. The loose but, at the same time, highly committed structure of this international writers’ association is a good example of “soft power,” the transformative energy that is generated by cultural projects.¹

¹ The PEN International website is continuously updated with accounts of the organisation’s activities in more than 150 countries. Also of interest is the Writers and Free Expression blog (writersandfreeexpression.com), run by the researchers Rachel Potter and Peter McDonald, who have created a wide-ranging project with funding from the UK’s Arts and Humanities Research Council, in order to study the global influence of PEN. To mark the organisation’s centenary, a richly illustrated and carefully documented book has been published that recounts its history (Torner and Martens, 2021). PEN functions like a rhizome: the organisation has the capacity to weave together global trends while at the same time acting decisively at a local level. Despite all of its efforts, it is possible that readers in the academic community are not aware of the challenges taken on by the organisation and they may not even be familiar with its activities. PEN International quickly became an institution that was active in the defence of freedom of expression on a global scale. Even though the organisation has been led by well-known writers and has worked with prominent intellectuals, its operational approach has kept it, and continues to keep it, at a distance from the literary hierarchy in an academic sense. This article intends to help form a connection between literary activism and academic study, with the aim of showing that literature can be a powerful agent for social transformation.

1 PEN International: A Close-knit Network of People of Letters

Many believe that one of PEN's theoretical mainstays is that its delegations are not drawn from countries but from languages, and its congresses are not attended by states but instead by literary communities. Variations on this theme, which is so favourable to Catalonia's interests and the need for international recognition of its culture, can be read in all the texts describing the organisation's history in Catalonia. Although the rules have gradually changed over the course of these hundred years, and there has certainly been some debate about the best way of defining cultural representation in the international arena, the fact is that PEN International owes its longevity and incredible vitality to its pragmatism and its capacity to adapt. There are only two fixed rules governing the creation of a PEN centre. The first is that each new member must be willing to sign up to the constitutional principles of the PEN Charter in support of freedom of expression and a world without frontiers or exclusion. The second requires that the initiative for creating a new centre must come from the writers-activists themselves and that there must be at least twenty members who are able to organise themselves as a group. The remaining criteria are and always have been very pragmatic and linked to the political and social realities of each individual location.

Catalan identity, defined by its culture, saw in this organisation an opportunity for recognition and legitimisation from its very beginnings (Subirana 2011, 63). And it is true that in May 1923 the Catalan writers attended its inaugural dinner in London as equals. "Madrid" and "Barcelona" were given tables alongside those of Belgium and Czechoslovakia and the other eleven centres. This comparison with two other countries with a culturally complex structure is particularly important: both Belgium and Czechoslovakia were, in the 1920s, states with two different cultures and two languages, in addition to having other cross-border cultural links. A section of the population in Belgium speaks French, one of the most influential languages in the world, a fact that tips the scales when it is compared with Flemish, which also has its links with the Netherlands. In Czechoslovakia, Czech culture experienced one of the most vibrant renaissances in Europe, but there were also the Slovaks, and in 1923 a lot of German was still spoken. This was eventually to have grave consequences, and we could say reached the point of no return with the Second World War and the annexation of the Sudetenland. The diplomacy practised by PEN, that agile hand with the capacity to calm tensions and at the same time indicate a potential way forward, led to the inclusion at that first dinner of states that accepted their multiculturalism in their own name. By contrast, the

state that was incapable of acknowledging its own internal structure, Spain, was left with the names of the two cities that represented, albeit in attenuated form, the country's latent political tensions: "For many years, the records held at the headquarters in England (I have personally checked this) talked about "Spain, Madrid" and "Spain, Barcelona." It was very difficult for us to be known as the "Catalan centre," but we achieved it!" (Artís-Gener 1978, 67).

The question of whether a language that does not form part of a whole territory can be entitled to its own PEN was discussed for the first time at the Brussels Congress in 1927. Although it was decided at that time that it could not, and the Belgian centre had to be organised as a single body representing both cultures, Flemish PEN was established in 1930, and from that moment on the country has had two centres that operate independently (Jauniaux 2021, 306–317). The solution for Spain that involved naming the centres after their respective cities took root because in this way a lot of disputes were avoided. In 1933, *PEN News* provided a list of the following places with more than one centre: in Canada there were the Montreal and Toronto centres, in Yugoslavia there were centres in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade, Scotland (sic!) had centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow, while in Switzerland there were centres in Basel, Geneva and Zurich. This creation of multiple centres also spread to monolingual cultures: in Germany there are centres in Berlin Freiburg and Hamburg, in South Africa, they can be found in Cape Town and Johannesburg, while in the USA there are centres in New York, Chicago and San Francisco, thus confirming the loose organisational structure that has existed at PEN International since its beginnings.

The Catalans' belief that they have a "right" to be a member of an international forum (based on the conviction that Catalan is a language that is comparable with all others and that Catalan culture provides a passport for entry into the "club" of nations working towards a better world) has had huge consequences, and not only in Catalonia. Once the country had attained a certain level of stability following the end of the Franco dictatorship, its efforts to position itself among the players that resolve the world's most important questions never ceased. In 1993 at a meeting of PEN International's Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, chaired at that time by Isidor Cònsul, it was decided to support the preparation of a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (UDLR). Approved in May 1996, this Declaration has still not been recognised by UNESCO or any other similar body. However, the capillary nature of the NGO networks, as Carles Torner has observed, has offered access to the international arena by communities that normally find themselves excluded: the Berbers, the Aymara, the Kikuyu and the Kurds. Representatives from these communities were involved in drafting the Declaration and it was approved by them. The legitimacy of the Declaration springs from the broad level of support it has received,

through all those individuals and groups that have made use of it in order to direct their efforts towards the acceptance of these ideas as a valid template for improving their living conditions. In this connection, Catalan PEN has helped make it possible for a once Utopian idea to become a strategy for action that still provides drive and motivation in the never-ending struggle to change the rules of the game (McDonald 2018).

Based on an analysis of the history of the early years of Catalan PEN's operation following its establishment in 1922, through to its re-establishment in the country in 1973 (even though the Franco dictatorship remained in place), we will attempt to show why these activities with a clearly international outlook have the capacity to create cohesion within a group over a long period of time and in circumstances as difficult as those experienced in Europe and Catalonia during the 20th century.²

2 The Establishment of PEN Català (1922–1923)

In Catalonia, the first meeting of the writers' association we now know as PEN was held in April 1923. It was attended by twenty-two members, including Carles Riba and Caterina Arderiu and many of the most important names from the Catalan literary community of that time: Josep M. de Sagarra, Joan Puig i Ferrater, Carles Soldevila and Pompeu Fabra, the oldest member and the person who would become the organisation's President (Subirana 2015, 26).³ The Catalan organisation had begun life a year earlier with a letter written by Josep Maria Batista i Roca on 28 February 1922 and addressed to an unidentified member of English Pen, in which he reported that Catalan writers had formed themselves into a group and were beginning to organise themselves (Safont 2018, 13). Following this, the first documented activity was a dinner, held at the Ritz Hotel in Barcelona on 19 April 1922 and attended by Josep Maria López-

² The article works from the premise that certain specific people play an important role in the construction of a culture, and it takes the culture of Catalonia as an example. Certain people, certain mediators, have made a conscious, highly complex intellectual effort that merits investigation in terms of the individual actions and decisions taken. It is impossible to omit references to specific names and events, even though an international reader may not be used to seeing such detailed information about a non-dominant culture.

³ The publications that give an historical overview of the association are Cid 1992, Cònsul 2002, Subirana 2011 and Safont 2018. The association's records are kept at the *Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya* (National Library of Catalonia). Some come from the PEN International archive kept at the Harry Ransom Centre (HRC) at the University of Texas, Austin.

Picó, Joan Crexells, Josep Maria Batista i Roca, Josep Millàs-Raurell and a young English, probably the Catalanophile John Langdon-Davies, who in the same year had published a collection of poems, *Man on Mountain*, printed in English in Ripoll.⁴ López-Picó wrote to his mentor, Carles Riba: “On the 19th. First dinner of the PEN Club, Catalan branch, at the Ritz. Poets, publishers, essayists, novelists, contemporary cosmopolitan show-offs who want to ensure the boredom of a monthly dinner in the company of gossips. We have modestly begun, however, thanks to Crexells, Millàs-Raurell, Batista and a young English teacher whose name we do not recall” (Safont 2018, 14).⁵

Was there only one intermediary behind the establishment of Catalan PEN in 1922 with the international contacts required to establish such a direct and effective connection with British intellectual circles? Probably not, but the presence of this mysterious guest at the table in the Ritz Hotel allows us to suggest the reasons that must have led to this need for Catalan culture to play a role in international forums: “I have already hinted at the attraction that Langdon-Davies must have had,” writes his biographer, “among that *band of nationalist intellectuals with their ideals further fired up* by the news they were hearing about the independence process in Ireland” (Berga 1991, 45) [emphasis added]. This “band” of fired-up intellectuals represented some of leading protagonists of the Catalonia of that time. During his first stay in remote Ripoll during the 1920s, Langdon-Davies had already become close friends with writers and politicians like Ventura Gassol, Marià Manent, López-Picó and Tomàs Garcés. He also played an active part in conferences on Irish independence, as part of the

4 Langdon-Davies (1897–1971), having withdrawn from “mechanical civilisation,” had a long association with Catalonia. He worked as a correspondent for the British press, reporting on both the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the Spanish Civil War. He is the author of some remarkable books about Catalonia which nevertheless remain practically unknown among Catalans. During the years of the tourist boom he managed a hotel on the Costa Brava which became a hub for British intellectuals like the author and travel writer Rebecca West, lover of H.G. Wells. During the Spanish Civil War, Langdon-Davies also successfully organised a network to assist refugee children, which eventually became the NGO Plan International, an organisation that remains active to this day. All of this is well documented in Miquel Berga’s biography, *John Langdon-Davies (1897–1971). Una biografia anglo-catalana* (1991), which does not, however, confirm the journalist’s involvement in the founding of Catalan PEN.

5 We offer a large number of quotations throughout the article, and this is for two reasons. The first is that very little information on these events and their leading players is available to an international audience, and we believe that it would be interesting to give these activists and authors a voice. The second and more important reason is that we have frequently worked with documents that are very difficult to access, fragments extracted from primary sources that have never before been translated. For us, therefore, these quotations are of clear documentary importance.

activities organised by Acció Catalana throughout the territory. Acció Catalana, the movement that was born in the Spring of 1922 as a breakaway group from the Lliga Regionalista youth organisation, was led by the poet Jaume Bofill i Mates, *Guerau de Liost*, and it brought together “the youngest intellectuals who, while originating from the Lliga Regionalista, advocate a kind of nationalism that is purer and more radical or, if you like, less pragmatic than that of the Lliga” (Berga 1991, 48). The signatories to the party’s founding Manifesto included two of the four Catalans who had attended the inaugural PEN dinner, López-Picó and Crexells, along with many other writers, some of them doubling up as politicians, who in the next few years would play a prominent role in coordinating the activities of the Catalan Centre, such as Carles Pi i Sunyer, Ventura Gassol, Lluís Nicolau d’Olwer, J.V. Foix and Francesc Trabal.

Those present at the Ritz Hotel dinner were young intellectuals, committed to Catalan literary culture who, in addition to being writers, translators and activists, [. . .] were open to the events occurring beyond our borders (Subirana 2011, 62). Even if we include Carles Riba, who was away studying in Germany, López-Picó, founder of *La Revista*, was the only person over the age of thirty, having been born in 1886. These were young, active people who were committed to the literary world. The fact of their youth is in this case a clear indication of the profound transformation taking place in the world of Catalan letters and culture. PEN reflected and amplified an ongoing dynamic and it attracted a new generation based on the idea of crossing borders, obviating differences. An idea which, in fact, forms the basis for all literary activity: literature only exists in the sense of a deeply interconnected network that does not recognise any linguistic barriers or even the passage of time: literature has constantly nourished and been nourished by other literature from around the world, and if there is any area in which human collaboration is a reality it is in the world of letters.

3 From One Dinner to the World (1923–1933)

PEN’s first International Congress was held in London in May 1923, with eleven centres in attendance. The Catalan “Club” sent two delegates, Josep Millàs-Raurell and Pompeu Fabra, respectively its Secretary and President. A diagram showing the table layout for the banquet of honour shows the long high table and then a first row of tables, the one on the far left marked “Barcelona.” This table was presided over by PEN’s founder, C.A. Dawson Scott, and the two Catalans sat either side of him. Then came the tables for Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark and France, with a second row of tables for Italy, “Madrid” and,

alongside them, Norway, Romania, Sweden and the USA. The young men from the Ritz dinner had come a long way: PEN had included them alongside all the other delegations. Catalonia had now been accepted as a culture *inter pares* by a leading international organisation that had only recently been created (Subirana 2011, 64).

The Catalan centre did not have a presence at the second PEN International Congress in New York in 1924, though it was present at the third Congress in Paris in 1925. It was represented by Professor Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer, one of the founders of Acció Catalana and a member of the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* (Institute of Catalan Studies) and the Union Académique Internationale, who at that time was a Barcelona city counsellor and would subsequently become Spanish Minister for the Economy (in 1931, with the establishment of the Republic). The delegate for Spanish PEN at that 1925 Congress was Miguel de Unamuno, who had been exiled to Fuerteventura by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. It seems that he had obtained support from French writers, though it was not sufficient for the organisation to begin developing an aid programme. In 1925, PEN International did not have a clear position regarding the repression of freedom of expression, nor did it know how to tackle the cases of writers who were being persecuted for their ideas. The PEN "Club" was viewed by the European press as a literary association that was able to bring together some famous names, though without delving too deeply into specific issues. The British newspaper, *The Morning Post*, for example, reported that the people present at the Congress included "many prominent French writers, Heinrich Mann from Berlin, Pirandello from Rome, James Joyce, the Irish-American author of the novel *Ulysses*," ending with a reference to "Unamuno, the Spanish *martyr*, who is such an admirer of the French revolutionary faction" (23-V-1925). In the Europe of that time, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera was not seen as a bad omen for the continent: these were events that were taking place on the margins and were only of interest to the "revolutionary factions." This was, of course, a perception that would soon change.

The Congress of 1926, PEN International's fourth such event, was held in Berlin. According to official sources, the Catalan PEN delegate was the philosopher Joan Crexells, though his name does not appear on the list of attendees held in PEN International's archive at the Harry Ransom Center (HRC). It is possible that the original plan was for him to attend but that he could not make the trip in the end, due to the illness which eventually led to his death that same year. In 1920, Crexells had studied under Rudolf Stammeler in Berlin, where he would later also become a correspondent for the newspaper *La Publicitat*. Josep Pla wrote that "he was perhaps the best, most cultured, most complete person, one of finest of nature's young (very young) men ever to breathe this country's air" (Pla 1969, 437). Crexells was a good friend of Nicolau d'Olwer, who wrote the following

about him in his book of memoirs, *Caliu*: “I should like to talk about Joan Crexells, as if the balsam of time has healed the wound that his passing, swift and brutal like an amputation, left in the hearts of his friends. Those who are loved by the gods die young, says Menandre. But if the gods now have him with them forever, why do they jealously fight with us mortals, who also love him, for the sake of a few miserable years?” (Nicolau 2012, 123).

The delegate who attended the fifth International Congress, held in Brussels, was Ventura Gassol, now thirty-four years old and both poet and politician. Gassol had been a member of the political party *Acció Catalana* and, with the arrival of the dictatorship in 1924, he went into exile in France. There he joined the more radical *Estat Català* party and participated in a failed plan to liberate Catalonia (*Fets de Molló*), for which he was arrested and tried in Paris alongside Francesc Macià. After the trial, in 1927, he went into exile in Belgium and then, with Macià, left for America.

The sixth International Congress, held in Oslo in 1928, marks a particularly important moment in PEN’s history. The Catalan delegates were Carles Riba and Josep Obiols, a painter and good friend of Riba and his wife Arderiu, who had travelled with them to Italy in 1920 and 1922. They were accompanied by PEN Secretary, Josep Millàs Raurell. The delegates were received by King Haakon VII, and among the more famous attendees were Jules Romains and Benjamin Crémieux, as well as PEN founder, C.A. Dawson Scott. The Catalan trio were surprised by the Norwegians’ warm hospitality, the country’s financial prosperity and the trust that they were shown. On their return to Barcelona, Josep Navarro Costabella, a reporter for *La Veu de Catalunya*, interviewed both Riba and Millàs-Raurell, who commented that, until now these congresses have been quite pointless affairs, but they would now seem to have entered a more practical phase. Furthermore, an initiative for specific actions had been introduced, such as obtaining the creation of a grand International Literature Award from the League of Nations and the appointment of PEN as advisor to the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation in Paris as regard the books to be translated and their translators. They also underlined that their experience in Norway included “the encouragement of relations between intellectuals, and our unequivocal treatment. People are interested in our literature. What is more, they know it. Indeed, when the issue of regional literature was raised, ours was not mentioned because it was regarded as forming part of the European group” (Navarro Costabella 1928). Those open minds came home with ideas on how to manage their cultural heritage, how to ennoble something that had formerly been regarded as an out-of-date rural legacy and open people up to artistic innovation.

This was followed by four years (and four Congresses) in which the Catalans played no part in the organisation's international life: the seventh Congress in Vienna in 1929,⁶ the eighth in Warsaw in 1930, the ninth in Amsterdam in 1931, and the tenth in Budapest in 1932. It was perhaps for this reason that PEN's International Secretary, Hermon Ould (who on 10 January 1928 had written to Millàs Raurell and said, "Alas, I never hear from you but I hope that this does not mean the Barcelona P.E.N. Centre is not thriving"), remarked in a letter to Millàs on 18 January 1933 that he had spoken with the novelist Henrietta Leslie, who had just returned from Barcelona and had mentioned him: "I am delighted to think that you have not forgotten me, and that the Catalanian P.E.N. Centre is not dead. I will confess to you that the absence of news troubled me somewhat" (HRC archive, 10-I-1928). Things had changed in Spain and Catalonia with the advent of the Second Republic in April 1931, the approval of the Statute of Autonomy in September 1932 and the appointment of Francesc Macià as President of the Catalan Government (*Generalitat*) in December 1932, with Ventura Gassol as Minister for Culture.⁷ Ould was surprised to learn of the Catalans' intention to host an International Congress,⁸ though the proposal would be confirmed at the Dubrovnik Congress in 1933, another key moment in PEN International's history, though for different reasons, as we shall go on to explain.

4 In a Europe on the Verge of Collapse (1933–1939)

The eleventh PEN Congress in Dubrovnik in 1933 marked a turning point for the international organisation. The ancient city of Ragusa provided the venue for an historic milestone: "The burning of books in Germany and the fact that the greater number of well-known German writers are living in exile cannot be ignored by an association which has always worked for the free interchange of ideas through literature" (*PEN News* 1933, 6). Following Adolf Hitler's victory in the elections of January that year, Germany had in a very short time become a place that was hostile to any kind of intellectual activity. Indeed, one of the

⁶ Safont, quoting a report in *La Veu de Catalunya*, says that the Catalan delegate was the philosopher Joaquim Xirau (1895–1946), though we have not found confirmation of this elsewhere.

⁷ He held this post until October 1934 and then again between March and December 1936.

⁸ In the letter of 18-I-33 to Millàs Raurell, mentioned above, he also said that "The news that you would like to have a P.E.N. Congress in Barcelona is very intriguing. You ought to send a delegate to the congress in Yugoslavia with a formal invitation" (HRC archive).

first targets for this purification of ideas was PEN Germany. The three delegates who attended the Dubrovnik Congress were not writers but mere emissaries from the Nazi party (Matvejević 1984; Matan 1993; Škrabec 2019).

The delegate representing Catalan PEN at that 1933 Congress was the poet and journalist J.V. Foix. He was sent to Dalmatia with instructions to persuade the organisation to hold its Congress in Barcelona two years later, a mission in which he was successful. Foix's presence in Dubrovnik was also significant because the poet cast one of the ten votes that confirmed PEN's founding principles following a moving speech from Ernst Toller. Henri Saydel Canby brought with him from New York a resolution that extended and refined the founding principles approved at the Brussels Congress in 1927. This acceptance of the PEN Charter was all that was required of the delegates who were present, though it was only approved by ten delegations. Sixteen delegates abstained, and two centres voted against, Germany and, probably, Austria (Barbian 2013; Aman 2014). As an illustration of the tense atmosphere of this encounter, it is worth quoting the telegram from the Union of German literary figures abroad, which Foix passed on to *Mirador* magazine: "The men of German literature, worthy of such a title, are condemned to remain silent: half of them are in concentration camps, and the other half have no possibility of expressing themselves whilst living "freely" in Germany" (Cid 1992, 13).

All of these open questions reverberated around the Congress held the following year in Edinburgh. The Catalan delegates at this Congress were Marià Manent and the centre's Secretary, Josep Millàs-Raurell. The writers who had been forced into exile from Germany had managed to organise themselves into a PEN centre. Aside from creating this Yiddish centre, which was regarded from the outset as a cross-border organisation, the German writers were the first people who needed to establish effective strategies for communication between the members who were scattered all over Europe and would also soon travel to the Americas. It was Paul Frischauer, who had also been present in Dubrovnik in 1933, who succeeded in turning PEN International into an organisation to help writers in danger. The letter that requested funds to make it possible temporarily to provide refuge for threatened writers was signed jointly by Secretary General Hermon Ould and English PEN President Margaret Storm Jameson and sent out on 16 June 1938. This solidarity between writers from around the world in the face of serious crises has continued from that moment right through to the present day (Škrabec 2019).

From 20 to 25 May 1935, PEN International held its 13th Congress in Barcelona. As a result of the political events of October 1934, the organisers had had to warn the organisation's headquarters in London that "the political situation in our country is, unfortunately, not normal" (Subirana 2011, 66). Even though

Catalonia's autonomy had been suspended and Spanish was now the language of government, with Parliament turned into a barracks and Catalan politicians arrested and imprisoned on a ship in the Port of Barcelona, PEN's thirteenth International Congress boasted a splendid programme of activities: a bus tour of the city, a visit to the museum of Romanesque art and tea at Pedralbes Palace among other events. There was also a reception at the Sala Parés and a private concert by Pau Casals. The programme for Wednesday was a trip to Poblet, lunch in Sitges and tea in Tarragona followed by a tour of the city. On Thursday there was a trip to Montserrat and opera at the Liceu in the evening. Friday was taken up with a trip to the Costa Brava (for which a supplement had to be paid), while on Saturday there was a farewell dinner at the Ritz Hotel and a concert at the Palau Nacional de Montjuïc. A trip to Mallorca was offered on Sunday. The working sessions were held at the Casal del Metge. The situation in Germany was once again discussed, as were PEN's general principles. Henri Saydel Canby, the delegate from the USA who was highly active at the Congresses held during the 1930s, raised the issue of Haitian author Jacques Roumain, who had been imprisoned as the result of an "administrative error." The meeting agreed to contact the government of Haiti and put pressure on it to release him. At this meeting in Barcelona, the organisation also began to take action on the world stage (Torner and Martens 2021). Given the violation of freedoms observed in much of Europe at that time, PEN President H. G. Wells asked the meeting whether PEN clubs were limited to being a "society of banquets and leisure trips, or if they should form a society of International Intellectuals of sorts" (Cid 1992, 16).⁹

The person who presented himself as the Catalan PEN delegate at the Buenos Aires Congress in 1936 was Joan Estelrich (Riquer 2011). The Centre's delegates should have been Carles Soldevila and Pere Coromines, but they were unable to attend.¹⁰ The Congress was held in September, but Civil War had broken out in Spain on 18 July 1936. Estelrich travelled to the Congress first class by ship, but on arrival was presented with a letter from PEN Barcelona cancelling his authorisation as delegate (Estelrich 2012, 265). He had no further public involvement, other than "a brief and moving speech explaining the circumstances why Catalonia had enjoyed so little visibility at the Congress" (HRC archive).¹¹ It is interesting that the

⁹ J.V. Foix described the atmosphere and the discussions held over these days in an article in *La Publicitat* (22-V-1935), which was reproduced in *Els lloms transparents* (1969).

¹⁰ The letter sent to H. Ould on 9-VI-1936 in relation to this matter is held in the HRC archive.

¹¹ The press made only brief reference to Estelrich's contribution. "The Catalan delegate speaks," *La Nación* (15-IX-1936), 9. "The International Writers' Congress will hold its first sessions in its general assembly. A Catalan member of parliament and writer". *La Prensa* (7-IX-1936), 12.

author of a book like *Per la valoració internacional de Catalunya* (1920) should do everything possible to participate in a PEN Congress. The aims of the writers' organisation were clearly at odds with his idea of "influencing economic expansion through idealistic and political propaganda." PEN International could also not be accredited with any attempt to closely align political ideals with artistic creations, industrial production and scientific discoveries. Less still could PEN's activists subscribe to the central idea of that ambitious project with totalitarian overtones that excluded any intellectual activity from all political questions: "This technical element is not suited to the pure intellectual but rather to someone who has prepared specifically for the purpose. Unhappy the intellectual who wishes to replace the politician in his regulation and action!" (Estelrich 1920, 29).

Nevertheless, the international organisation remained unsure of how it was to behave in the face of the increasingly serious threats to peace. F. T. Marinetti's proposal at the Buenos Aires meeting to hold a Congress in fascist Rome was rejected, though with regret, because many delegates would still have liked to visit the city. The proposal to confront the author of "War, the world's only hygiene" and demand that he leaves the organisation did not receive much "open support," as the minutes of the Congress record. It was clear that if Marinetti were forced to resign, PEN would not find any other intermediary in Italy, and Italian writers would most probably follow their German; Hungarian and French counterparts and other fascist writers who had already joined the International Writers' Federation established by Nazi writers following the tensions that had arisen at the Dubrovnik Congress in 1933.

The Catalan delegation to the Paris international Congress were Clementina Arderiu, Josep Millàs-Raurell, Carles Riba, Carles Soldevila and Joaquim Xirau. Over the course of those few days in 1937, all of the concerns with which the organisation had been confronted throughout the 1930s came to the fore. At the Paris Congress, Corpus Barga (Andrés García de la Barca) and Enrique Díez Canedo submitted a motion seeking condemnation of the killing of Federico García Lorca and all the "pure victims" of the civil war, along with a tribute to the "people of Spain who are faithful to the principles of freedom, which are also the principles of PEN" (HRC archive). This phrasing rather covertly sought support for the Republican cause. The proposal was strongly rejected by the President of Pen International at that time, Jules Romains, because any explicit political positioning was to be avoided. Both Carles Riba and Octavio Paz, as delegate for Mexico, supported Barga's proposal, but in the end two separate resolutions were adopted regarding Spain. The wording of both declarations was vague and, particularly in the second case, pompously rhetorical, in order to ensure avoiding taking any kind of position. The first said that "Federico García Lorca, who had never involved himself in politics, had been shot in Granada by rebel soldiers

acting against the legitimate government,” while the second was addressed to the “whole of Spain,” expressing “sincere sympathy for all victims from the intellectual community” and hoping that, in Spain, “the use of violence will be set aside and the freedom of expression and rights of the individual respected and safeguarded,” until Spain succeeded in realising “*the depth of its Spanish spirit through mysticism and heroism*” [emphasis added]. At that same 1937 Congress, the delegate from PEN Argentina had asked whether the “thousands of innocents massacred in government-run Spain and also in Catalonia were not also pure victims?” (HRC archive). In addition to the resolution on Spain, the Congress also approved a resolution objecting to the persecution of minority groups, particularly Jews, stressing that “human culture cannot advance in an atmosphere of hate and persecution” (HRC archive). Another declaration was adopted against the persecution of writers in Germany, and there was an attempt, though ultimately unsuccessful, to arrange for the pacifist Carl von Ossietzky, who was under arrest in Germany, to attend the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony in Oslo and give his speech. This Congress saw a repetition of the tensions between Yiddish PEN and Polish PEN, because Jewish authors felt that intellectuals in Poland were not doing enough to prevent the persecution. However, the final resolution that was approved supported the establishment of an “international book exchange,” and it asked the PEN Centres to send foreign books to libraries in other countries. PEN’s naïveté is sometimes overwhelming.

After the Paris Congress, PEN International became aware of the seriousness of the situation in Spain: in addition to playing an active role in the campaign that succeeded in obtaining the release of Arthur Koestler, condemned to death in Seville for insurgence, it organised the collection of funds for Catalonia, which took the form of the direct sending of food parcels to members of the Catalan Centre. It also used the same channels to provide paper for printing, which at that time was in very short supply.¹² By 1938 therefore, Pen was operating as an organisation with the capacity to offer effective aid.

Carles Riba planned to attend the sixteenth Congress in Prague in 1938, but in the end, he was unable to travel. He nevertheless prepared an address to the Congress, “To the writers of the world,” which consisted of a clear assessment of the Spanish Civil War and the historic role of Catalan writers. The text that was read out in Prague was published, with some alterations, in *Meridià* magazine.¹³ That same year, Carles Riba and Clementina Arderiu did attend a meeting of PEN

¹² It was thanks to these donations that three thousand copies of *Revista de Catalunya* were able to be printed (Subirana 2011, 68–69).

¹³ Reproduced in: Carles Riba, *Obres Completes* 3. Crítica 2. Enric Sullà and Jaume Medina (eds.). Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1986, 291–293.

International's Executive Board, which was held in London on 8 and 9 November 1938. Riba took advantage of the stay in England to give seminars on Catalan literature in London, Cambridge and Oxford, and to act as propagandist for the Republican and Catalan cause. He explained this in a letter sent from Cambridge on 16 November 1938 to the young poet, Joan Vinyoli: "We are acting as sort of intellectual ambassadors for Catalonia, its republican beliefs and its desire to remain as a spiritual value in the world. I don't think I exaggerate when I say that our actions are not without effect. Others have come before us and they give us encouragement. Still more must come. We will succeed here too, and not only through the use of arms" (1990, 507). Although he was working in the service of his government, the task that interested Riba most was that of maintaining culture in a time of war. This was just two months prior to the fall of Barcelona, and preparations for the exile of those supporting the republican cause had already begun.

In the end, the Catalan delegates who travelled to Prague were Francesc Trabal and Mercè Rodoreda.¹⁴ "A few months ago, in the middle of the summer, the PEN Club Congress was held in Prague," explained Mercè Rodoreda in a talk she gave on the radio, and she ended with the following promise: "Like the poet [. . .] who allowed his emotions to flow, waiting patiently for them to come with time, I will speak (once many things have happened, and when the pain in the heart of Europe has been set aside, as if there were no war) of the charm of a garden in the light of the sun and under the moon" (Rodoreda 1994, 121). During the interwar period, Europe was marked by an intense contrast between light and shade. All around the continent one could be living without a care and then, in an instant, find oneself immersed in terrible suffering, almost without warning. In 1938 one section of the continent was still living in the light, while other places, like Catalonia, were already suffering war or relentless repression.

On 15 December 1944, Trabal, who was already in exile in Santiago in Chile, wrote to PEN Secretary General Hermon Ould: "We were the first to arrive at PEN's French headquarters in the Rue Pierre Charron; we were immediately able, however, to greet the Czech writers, who were next to arrive. They were followed by our Bulgarian and Romanian colleagues, who are witnessing turbulent times in their own countries. The Belgians, Danes, Norwegians and Dutch were not far behind. The PEN headquarters in the Rue Pierre Charron would shortly not provide a refuge even for French writers" (Trabal 1944). Trabal wrote this note on learning of the death of Benjamin Crémieux at Buchenwald concentration camp

¹⁴ To learn more about the importance of women writers in Catalan PEN's activities over this period, see the article by Neus Real (2022).

near Weimar, the city regarded as the birthplace of classic German literature. The author's tragic end was terrible evidence of the collapse suffered by the whole of Europe. Crémieux had been the right-hand man of Jules Romains, elected President of PEN International in Buenos Aires in 1936. In contrast to the Jewish author, who died in a concentration camp, "Jules Romains spent the war in New York, as the director of the French Institute, defending *la France Immortelle*," as Gabriel Ferrater acerbically remarked (1987, 15). Carles Riba had observed Romains handling delicate matters like the condemnation of the Franco regime at the Paris Congress in 1937 and the motion by the Czech delegates against England's and France's betrayal in ceding the Sudetenland to the Nazis in the Munich Agreement of 1938 (Subirana 2011). Romains's impeccable "neutrality" at that time might have seemed a sensible approach, though in retrospect it now seems more like a demonstration of the disappointing powerlessness of people of letters, especially in the period between the wars.¹⁵

Do all these examples undermine the power of a forum like PEN? On the contrary, it required a great deal of effort, even within the organisation's own ranks, to define the ideas and attitudes that would best ensure peaceful co-existence in the world. Far from the option set out, for example, in *A League of Minds* (1933), a document prepared by Paul Valéry and Henri Focillon for the International Institute on Intellectual Cooperation, PEN delegates are not a collection of sages who always find the correct position to adopt at each turning point in history. The lesson that writers can teach governments is quite different, that of remaining completely open to opinions, assuming that dialogue will always involve tense confrontation and that the solutions that are finally

15 The disintegration of European society at the time and the many intellectuals who fell victim to its consequences are difficult to imagine when seen from our comfortable viewpoint as academics in a united and peaceful continent. We would, however, be doing a terrible disservice to their suffering if we interpreted the "circulation" of people at that time as merely providing a stimulus for the construction of a network for international collaboration, or if we defined the deprivation they suffered as providing inspiration for their literary work. It is clear that the suffering endured by all of those authors and the persecuted communities to which they belonged is reflected in their literary output. But it is also clear that an intellectual exodus as huge as that of the Catalans had a decisively adverse effect on relations between forces in the cultural system. It would be insensitive to discuss these issues using the sterile language of academia and to talk about "displacement" or the "circulation of people" when referring not only to past experiences but also to current events which other, more assiduous scholars have described as "necropolitics" (Mbembe 2003). In this regard, the difference between the way that Romains and Crémieux respectively ended up is chilling. The anecdote recalled by the Catalan poet Gabriel Ferrater leads to a serious reflection on the fact that some intellectual circles adapt quickly to the worst of circumstances in order to preserve their own privileges.

reached would not be possible if one did not listen to all the parties involved, especially those that are not in a position of power.

In this connection, Heinrich Böll, PEN International President during the dark days of the Cold War, criticised the hypocrisy of the idea of “non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states” in a provocative article written in 1973. According to Böll, concealed behind this approach is the risk that “conscience will become no more than a faded flower.” To prevent this, the President issued a call to the literary community: “As writers we are born interventionists; we intervene in the administration of justice, in cultural politics, in the Soviet Union, in Czechoslovakia, in Spain, in Indonesia, in Brazil, in Portugal, and we also intervene in the terrible discord in Yugoslavia, where false accusations are once again flying and where we once again have to bury our latest hopes. We also intervene in the People’s Republic of China, in Cuba and in Mexico. We may seem to be idealists, but we are not. Intervening is the only way to be relevant” (Böll 1973).

5 Breaking the Silence (1939–1973)

“Breaking the silence, though without making any kind of concession, since they appeared secretly and were sold from person to person, there was no shortage of publications. With false printer’s marks and publication dates, etc.,” books such as *Nabí* (1941) by Josep Carner, *L’aprenent de poeta* (1943) by Josep Palau i Fabre, and *Elegies de Bierville* (1943) and *Versions de Hölderlin* (1944) by Carles Riba “acted as a unifying force” (Castellanos 2013, 245). These slender volumes, along with underground magazines like *Poesia* (1944–1945), to which J.V. Foix and Marià Manent contributed along with the authors mentioned above, all of them members of PEN, show that the network of Catalan writers living both in exile and at home was quite extensive under the dictatorship.

The resistance of a culture like that of Catalonia can only be explained by this non-negotiable commitment that binds society together: culture, especially literature, took on the role of preserving cultural activity in the face of a savage assault. The Franco regime tried to turn Catalan literature into local folklore, “preserved in a tin for small groups of people” as Castellanos remarked. Books intended for wide circulation could not obtain the permits required in order to be published, and translations of contemporary writings into Catalan encountered particularly insurmountable obstacles. In this regard, the link with international literary activism, which the PEN network at least made conceivable, was a sustaining force. Knowing that literature knows no frontiers, as the PEN

Charter states and was printed on its members' membership cards from the time of the organisation's foundation, became one of the ideas that allowed them to imagine a different world. Far from being a pastime or folk emblem, Catalan literature took on the promise of possible change: Hölderlin's poetry could be read in Catalan, and Catalan emissaries could detail the repression of their language in important foreign forums in which they found solidarity and understanding. Even though it was forced to operate in secret, Catalan literature could still face up to the challenges it shared with other cultures, and the Catalan language could continue to be used as a tool to confront the present in all its complexity.

The list of the members of PEN Club Barcelona in 1939, which is kept at the Harry Ransom Centre, contains forty-six names, of which thirty-two went into exile with the fall of the Republic. A small cross alongside their names, probably marked by the then Secretary, Armand Obiols, indicates their departure. This single sheet of paper provides chilling evidence of the extent of the repression and the level of commitment of these writers (Subirana 2011, 71–73). Neither the writers who went into exile, nor those that remained, nor those that returned relatively quickly like Carles Riba, abandoned a language and culture with the capacity for cohesion. Catalonia's own internal literature resisted, despite all the immense obstacles in its way, and the links within PEN and its international network were not unimportant in this fabric of cultural resistance. Following Riba's death in 1959, the position of President of the centre, now essentially a symbolic role, passed to Josep Carner (Cònsul 2002).

Like other institutions and associations that were banned inside the country but had representative bodies that were consolidated to a greater or lesser extent outside Catalonia, Catalan PEN managed to establish a busy agency in the United Kingdom. It was run by one of the founders who had become the organisation's secretary, Josep Maria Batista i Roca, a Professor at Oxford. We should also mention other activists in this context, like the publisher Joan Gili, along with the fact that Batista i Roca was, at that time, Secretary to the National Council for Catalonia, a body created by President Companys following the dissolution of the Generalitat, and thus had close links with its President, Carles Pi i Sunyer. Pi i Sunyer had been the Mayor of Barcelona who had promised support for the holding of the 1935 Congress, though when the event happened, he was in prison, along with other politicians who had taken part in the events of October. Batista i Roca regularly attended PEN International's Congresses and executive meetings, such as the one held in July 1945. There he explained that, "the problem lies deeper. The entire country is a concentration camp. Writers may enjoy freedom of movement, but the mind has no freedom to think or to express its thoughts . . . The great task that now confronts writers

of all nations, is the spiritual reconstruction of Europe. No effort, no contribution is too small to be neglected. As a first step, it is our common duty to secure the rights of the mind in all countries and to ensure that no barbarians are left anywhere free to use force to destroy the mind” (*PEN News* 1945).

The exiled writers were often able to integrate themselves into the cultural life of the country that had taken them in while at the same time maintaining their links with Catalan culture, participating from a distance and contributing to its development. Among the authors that would be tasked many years later with reviving Catalan PEN, particular mention should be made of Josep Palau i Fabre and his experiences in Paris. Francesc Trabal and Joan Oliver worked on cultural reconstruction from Chile. Oliver, who worked under the pen name Pere Quart, was the first President of Catalan PEN once it had been re-established back in its own country. For his part, Trabal, regularly corresponded with his friend Hermon Ould at PEN in London, from his exile in Chile. And we should not forget Avel·lí Artís-Gener who, once he had returned from Mexico, would play a key role in restoring the activities of the Catalan Centre just before Spain returned to democracy.

The most important feature of Catalan PEN was its continuity, because this intellectual network has made it possible to carry the ideal of constructing a country with a robust and diverse culture all the way from the 1920s through to the present.

Here, Catalan culture has demonstrated its capacity for resilience: the extreme situation of having overcome a mass exodus of the most creative minds became an opportunity for opening up and renewal. The Catalan literary canon as a whole cannot be imagined without the contribution made by its exiled authors. Rather paradoxically, the wounds caused by the long period of repression under the Franco regime actually strengthened and revitalised energies and imbued Catalan culture with that wide range of viewpoints that is essential in order to understand the world and interact with it.

Jospe M. Batista i Roca, interviewed in 1978, recalled his activism during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, even acknowledging his involvement in the creation of a secret society (“propaganda, espionage, helping prisoners”). Batista i Roca was the founder of Palestra, a movement that wanted to forge “men of action, men with character,” because “the Catalan people were a morally defeated people with no backbone; everything had to be rebuilt.” Batista i Roca’s patriotic and militarist scouting organisation found its inspiration in national renaissance movements like those in Ireland and Czechia.¹⁶ With this kind of training, Batista

16 In 1935, he was imprisoned together with Pompeu Fabra, as President of this patriotic and sporting body, as a result of the scouts’ participation in the events of 6 October 1934 (Mascarell 1978, 12–16).

i Roca was entirely capable of ensuring that a Catalan delegation enjoyed a visible presence at PEN and other international bodies. At the 1953 Congress in Dublin, he had Pau Casals prepare a speech, which was read to the assembly by Batista i Roca himself. Taking advantage of his considerable reputation, the cellist declared in this emotive statement that “freedom is indivisible” (Cid 1992, 60). Batista i Roca’s reports on cultural repression in Catalonia under Franco are historically important documents and they are beginning to become known (Batista i Roca 2013). In a letter sent to Marià Manent on 2 July 1964, Batista i Roca made a highly important observation: “I have acted [. . .], as far as has been possible, on behalf of the writers who remain in the country. For this reason, I have always refused to affiliate Catalan PEN or myself to the PEN centre for Exiled Writers” (Cònsul 2002). The institutional continuity and its hundred years of uninterrupted activity depended for three decades on the *sangfroid* of an activist trained in the fight of the intellectual guerrilla. The organisation’s Secretary was aware that he represented that thin thread that was not to be broken in any way.

As the years passed, however, this situation of just one man taking all the decisions became problematic. Furthermore, Batista i Roca was becoming increasingly disconnected, not only from the country but also from new literary trends, if he could ever actually have been regarded as a man of letters. His marked anti-communism, for example, meant that he was unable to comprehend the way that contemporary literature was evolving around Europe and the Catalonia of his time (Cònsul 2002). The lofty aims of cultural resistance became outdated. Its individual protector became an obstacle (Subirana 2015, 29). Tísner mentioned this turning point in his memoirs: “Our centre had a secretary who was untouchable, most highly venerated, and I was aware of this from the very beginning. Doctor J.M. Batista i Roca’s position was immovable” (Cònsul 2003, 348). The group of writers who met at the beginning of the 1970s to re-establish the centre in Catalonia decided unanimously to “go to Cambridge and take the bull by the horns.” After their first meeting with the acting secretary, Avel·lí Artís-Gener noted with his characteristic irony that “The man was completely steadfast [. . .]. He blindly believed that all those of us who lived in Catalonia under Franco’s yoke did so because we were Francoists” (Artís-Gener 2003, 349; Cònsul 2003, 347–355).

A Permanent Committee of the Executive had been established at a private address in Barcelona on 17 December 1965 at the proposal of Rafael Tasis. On 9 July 1968 there was another meeting at the Palau Dalmau, the headquarters of Òmnium Cultural, which was attended by among other people, Marià Manent, Maria-Aurèlia Capmany and Jordi Sarsanedas, with the idea of “organising a PEN delegation in Barcelona” (Cid 1992, 32). In April 1970, this group of activists was responsible for organising the First Popular Festival of Catalan Poetry, with the noted participation of Joan Oliver, *Pere Quart*. And on their instruction,

Avel·lí Artís-Gener embarked on his trip to London to agree the regularisation of the Catalan Centre with Pen International. On 4 February 1973, an assembly was held (on a bus!) at which PEN was “organically” reconstructed within Catalonia, with the idea that the centre should become “operational for all purposes.” Joan Rendé, one of the leading participants at that strange meeting, which was designed to evade the ban on secret gatherings, explained the following anecdote: “To avoid any kind of interference from the police, I carried some of the assembly documents myself, in my Citroën Dyane-6, which I was driving some kilometres ahead.” The other attendees were travelling on a bus that had been hired to make a tourist outing, and “once in Eस्पuga we all had lunch together at the Hostal del Senglar, like ordinary day-trippers” (Rendé 1997, 20).

6 Conclusion: Intellectual Ambassadors

From its establishment in 1922 through to its re-establishment in the country in 1973, Catalan PEN pursued its desire for Catalan culture to operate on the international stage as an equal among equals. The relaxed and changing rules on affiliation with the network of PEN International centres have meant that the Catalans have been able to achieve a recognised presence within this international forum, without any kind of restriction.¹⁷

¹⁷ Going beyond the “Industry of Ideas” (Even-Zohar 2018), it is difficult to identify a direct influence on the international diffusion of Catalan literature during the decades examined. In Barcelona in 1935, the Dutch delegate, Johan Konig, aroused great interest with his proposal to create a veritable crusade against “inferior [sic] translations.” Under his proposal, PEN International would have to bring translators and literary critics together in a combined action via the press in order to bring pressure to bear on publishers and force them to stop paying derisory fees and applying inadequate practices. Even before the war, Holland had specialist translator magazines that had the power to force publishing houses to withdraw books that had already been translated, even if they had been printed and were awaiting distribution, in order to prevent the embarrassment resulting from poor translations. They also demanded that 10 per cent of royalties be paid to the translator.

In the 1930s, with the Second World War just around the corner, PEN International cultivated the idea of close collaboration with the Society for Intellectual Cooperation within the League of Nations, in order to promote the circulation of translated literature. July 1932 saw the publication of the first volume of the Index Translationum (now an inaccessible digital database held under the supervision of UNESCO which needs an urgent review of its criteria for inclusion and systematisation). To date, this dream of an organisation of independent writers who might promote good practices and high-quality translations has not yet been realised. Promoting translation without borders remains a Utopian ideal. Individual States have gradually created their own institutions for external diffusion, based on the Dutch model from the

Over the last hundred years, Catalan intellectual ambassadors (to use Riba's words) armed only with a pen have shown the world that theirs is a vibrant culture. Delegates from Catalan PEN have helped to define and consolidate a world that has the capacity to build bridges through intellectual collaboration. In 1932, PEN International General Secretary Hermon Ould, referring to both Nazi Germany and the USSR, pointed out that these two countries "were refusing to subscribe to two very simple principles, namely friendship without arbitrary reservation and the free exchange of intellectual ideas; without these there could be no PEN centre. Indeed, without them no civilisation could survive" (HRC archive). For all the Catalan "connectionists and facilitators" (Sommer 2014) that we mentioned in this study, it is no small achievement to have helped construct and consolidate a civilisation that friendship without reservation and the free exchange of ideas must have made it more lasting.

Making a distinction between "culture-as-goods" and "culture-as-tools," as proposed by Itamar Even-Zohar, allows one to analyse one of the most elusive aspects of culture: its complexity.¹⁸ Complexity is not some vague and indefinable element that can only be understood when seen in contrast to that which is simple. For Even-Zohar (1997, 2000, 2016, 2018), complexity is a component that is substantial, even essential, for a society to be able to function and prosper. In this regard, culture as heritage and culture as creative energy operate as two opposing forces. The former has the stability of a noun, while the latter displays the transformational properties of a verb. Complexity is clearly not a static phenomenon, a measurable value that can be added to the heritage that has already been acquired: culture seen as a creator of complexity can be

1930s, and this has led to the predominant construction of a solid national literary canon, often with criteria that are preclusive and politically conditioned. Publishing houses have also taken over from organisations with a more voluntary approach and imposed rules that will ensure greater commercial success. For this reason, the strategy of "unexpected" discoveries, literary works with an exotic flavour that are so slight that they will not have the power to change anything or stir any conscience, so frequently grace the international book trade. The debate about literary translation that was heard at the conferences in Brussels in 1927, Edinburgh in 1934, Barcelona in 1935 and Buenos Aires in 1936 still remains open-ended.

18 In social sciences, the idea of complexity emerged from chaos theory and the need to be able to study and describe non-linear relationships (Byrne 1998). In literary studies, going beyond the Polysystems of Even-Zohar, we can find the inspiration for this in the work of Franco Moretti (1988). All of these ideas are united by the need to abandon the simplified abstractions of reality aimed at "isolating" infallible rules. We are thus not seeking to identify a methodology that demonstrates predictable, standardised modes of behaviour. Instead, we have used the case of the Catalan cultural mediators to illustrate the difficulty of the task of preserving the internal complexity of a culture, a complexity that is fundamental to its growth and evolution.

characterised by its capacity to transform. When culture operates as a tool, it creates the “energy” required as the driver for action. And action creates cohesion, while cohesion in turn creates the conditions for a mental willingness to act.

This forward motion, this desire for change, can become a very powerful binding element. The cultural repertoire makes it possible for the group to provide justification, content and *raison-d’être* for the separate and distinct existence of the entity. The greater a culture’s capacity for creating activity, the more entrepreneurial energy is created within that same group. Through its dynamism, cultural energy is capable of generating conditions of prosperity for the whole of society. In this connection, Even-Zohar makes provocative use of the concept of “wealth” from Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), contradicting the all too widespread disregard for culture among economists. It is, in fact, culture that has the capacity to create cohesion because through this adoption of a shared repertoire, groups, large and small, are both created and survive (Even-Zohar 2000, 395–396). Cohesion on its own is not sufficient to ensure a society’s capacity to adapt and innovate. It is the complexity of its culture that allows its activities to be more widely distributed within the group as a whole. A diverse and complex culture creates “greater chances for a more *shared wealth*” (Even-Zohar 2000, 400) [emphasis added]. And it is worth pointing out that complexity is not exactly the same as heterogeneity, but is instead a specific variable that provides solutions for coping with changing or unrecognised circumstances (Even-Zohar 2018, 2).

In this regard, a state of complexity is particularly important for non-dominant cultures like that of Catalonia, the subject of this study. A complex culture that includes antagonistic options and is able to manage its own internal tensions provides the conditions that enable a society to find solutions to unexpected problems. During the 20th century, Catalonia was subjected to a serious historical ordeal but came out of it reasonably well in competition with the contiguous world, as Even-Zohar (2018, 3) remarks about other cases that he has studied (Italy, Israel, Galicia, Iceland, Quebec). There is a tendency to believe that the main reason that a national culture becomes consolidated is because of its internal homogenisation. The cases examined by Even-Zohar, however, indicate otherwise. A state of active opposition creates the necessary dynamics within the culture to generate continued argument about desirable repertoires (Even-Zohar 2018, 6). This conclusion about a continuous state of complexity echoes the reflections of Yuri Lotman (1990), who places the areas that are culturally most fertile and capable of innovation and adaptation at the interstices of society, the place where tensions are created. When the canon is not taken as given but must instead be constructed in a continuous and difficult search for options and solutions, plain culture acquires the ability to confront adversity.

Culture-as-tool is firstly a set of procedures with the help of which ‘reality’ is analysed, explained and made sense for and by humans. It is not enough to have a “passive” understanding of the complexity of the world. What we want to uncover here is how abstract ideas (PEN’s strapline is “culture knows no frontiers”) become strategies of actions that operate as “organisers of life” (Even-Zohar 2000, 392). The history of the organisation in terms of specific individual actions, viewed in their historical context, demonstrates how static cultural values became tools for triggering change.

We could reach a similar conclusion using Pierre Bourdieu’s analytical tools. The positions that one adopts within a social space also include one’s own presumptions about how that space should be. We cannot observe society from the outside; we form part of the space that includes us and that we help to define with our own contributions. We cannot see all of this reality that surrounds us unless it is from the perspective that we ourselves occupy within it. Social space is therefore the first and last reality, because the view that social agents have of their own society is determined by themselves (Bourdieu 1979).

Culture operates by means of repertoires that are “used in ready-made bundles” (Even-Zohar 2000, 393). For this reason, any lasting change must be achieved by changing the established set of models. And to make it possible for established repertoires to be changed and allow an effective renovation of living conditions, one must first have a firm hand at the wheel, something that frequently comes from an individual or a very small group of people with the capacity to point in a new direction and ensure that simple cultures leave behind their outdated templates that merely operate through inertia.

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