# Seeking the Singular Universal: Writing in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Ireland in the work of Joseba Sarrionandia, Lluís Maria Xirinacs and Máirtín Ó Cadhain

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis links the concepts of modernity, its relationship with contested territorial sovereignty and how writerly production in a non-statewide or minority language in European political space interprets the impacts of the modern condition upon citizens living in contested political communities. Specifically, it looks at how left-wing authors writing in non-hegemonic, non-statewide languages claim particular and universal belonging for the minority political community they ascribe to and how equality is sought out from the recognition of difference and the consequences of such recognition.

Chapter One analyses modernity from within nationalism studies as well as International Relations and literary criticism literatures. Three empirical chapters follow, beginning with Chapter Two which deals with the exiled Basque poet, novelist and essayist Joseba Sarrionandia. Chapter Three discusses the Catalan priest and civil disobedience activist Lluís Maria Xirinacs whilst Chapter Four focuses on the Irish novelist, short-story writer and language activist Máirtín Ó Cadhain. In the light of these central chapters, Chapter Five expands upon the themes developed in the introductory chapter, combining Reinhart Koselleck's 'history of the vanquished' with Walter Benjamin's reinvigoration of history as well as utopian and dystopian elements in the authors' work to further enquire about the political ontology of the self-ascribing minority community they write mainly for. The thesis presents, for the first time to an English-speaking readership, an in-depth treatment of the writerly production of Joseba Sarrionandia and Lluís Maria Xirinacs and analyses them within a comparative framework.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction: Mapping the Modern from Inside and Outside

The work of Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño, '*the* literary sensation of the century's first decade', has been described as 'essaying a history of the present' (Jelly-Schapiro, 2014: 77). In his writing, he diagnoses the current brutalised condition of human life as an outcome of the implacable reach of the global in late modernity. In a television interview in his native Chile not long before his death in 2003, upon being invited to respond to whether, having lived many decades away from his native Chile, he could still be described as a Chilean writer, he replied:

> I'd say I'm a Chilean writer, above all one writing against the grain ... the Spanish don't consider me Spanish ... I'm a Spanish language writer, and dividing up literature on the basis of countries ... with the same language, takes us to the realms of absurdity. Where does Chilean literature come from, does it lie with Alonso de Ercilla, or with Bello? No, it lies with the Quijote, with Cervantes. (House, 2016).[1]

A number of assertions might be made from the interview. In the first place, we gather that Bolaño accepts the existence of Chilean writers alongside that of writers from other countries. We might then go on to call the panoply of countries existing in the world the 'international community', that is to say, countries which make up the international body of nations. The common denominator bringing together these nations, and these nations only, in this international community is that they are sovereign states. In this sense, it might be more exact to name the international community the 'inter-state community', with the use of the term 'inter-state system' gaining traction in academic or diplomatic circles only. Therefore, when the term 'international' is applied to the activity of any nation or group of nations, invariably the sovereign nature of the nation as *state* is taken for granted by virtually all sectors in society.

Bolaño, however, also introduces a linguistic component to how he envisages the relationship between Chile and other countries. Specifically, he accepts a linguistic link between Chile as a Spanish-speaking country with other Spanish-speaking countries and that Chilean literature can be traced back to the literary production of early seventeenth-

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[1] Translation from Spanish. All translations henceforth are my own unless otherwise stated.

century Spain. On this view, we might conjecture that for Bolaño his potential reading audience runs into the hundreds of millions, be it in Chile or other Spanish-speaking countries, irrespective of subsequent translation into other languages. This represents a regional extension of an 'imagined' Spanish-language speech and culture community as envisaged by the political scientist Benedict Anderson in his now influential formulation of the nation, 'it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both *inherently limited and sovereign*'[2] (Anderson, 2006: 6). The economic, political – and emotional – power generated by the concept of Anderson's imagined nation as social construction has undoubtedly gained weight across many disciplines since its publication. However, I emphasise here the words 'inherently limited and sovereign' because they would seem to make a claim, widely accepted and ratified within the inter-state system, to the nation as a particular entity whilst enjoying a window on the universal *at the same time*. In many senses it is a Janus-like formulation: the particular professes roots, it has a common history whilst the universal, forward-looking, embraces that which generalises and is generalisable. The nations Anderson refers to here are, invariably, nation-states with a seat at the United Nations. The human geographer Angharad Closs Stephens, whilst accepting the relevance and reach of Anderson's 'imagined communities' formulation within nationalism studies and beyond, believes that 'it doesn't necessarily enable an engagement with the *politics* of nationalism' (2013: 111) understood normatively as a desire to resist the repetition of the 'nation-form'. I accept this premise but adopt an alternative focus regarding two specific elements of such a politics: the imagining of substate and minority political community as both particular and universal and how left-wing writerly production in non-hegemonic, non-statewide languages arrives at such an imagining whilst seeking out equality from the recognition of difference and the consequences of such recognition.

Let us return briefly to the interview above by Roberto Bolaño. We might additionally assume that the author accepts that the existence of readerships in Spanish can be taken for granted as they exist within sovereign states wherein the use of Spanish is a given as well as a past, present and presumed future norm. Readership might increase or decrease but its existence is not in doubt. In this research, the hypothetical assumptions

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[2] Italics inserted.

made by Bolaño cannot readily be extended to encompass the three authors at the heart of this research for two key reasons: firstly, their body of work directly and indirectly problematises the inviolate territory of the nation-state from within that territory and secondly, they overwhelmingly adopt a non-statewide language or a minority language in giving voice to their writerly production. Benedict Anderson refers to the linked sites of struggles of state and non-state nationalism as 'old nations' and 'sub'-nationalisms' in the following manner: "many 'old nations', once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by 'sub'-nationalisms within their borders – nationalisms which, naturally, dream of shedding this sub-ness one happy day ... nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time." (2006: 3). On this view, the perceived legitimising universality of state nationalism underpins the challenge of 'sub-nationalisms' and represents the cornerstone of the Westphalian state system.

At the heart of this research lies also the concepts of modernity, its relationship with contested territorial sovereignty and how writerly production in a non-statewide or minority language in European political space interprets the impacts of the modern condition upon citizens living in contested political communities. As discussed later in this chapter, the analysis of the texts in this study accepts a broad interpretation of materialist criticism. On this view, the social theorist Jonathan Dollimore believes that the marginality of non-canonical texts acts as a counterweight to established literary canons and the 'cultural formations which produced them', highlighting thus 'different conceptions of (for instance) human identity, cultural, social and historical process, as well as the activity of criticism itself.' (Dollimore, 2004: xlv). His study of the Renaissance play in an England moving into modernity sees the human being as pre-constituted around identity. For Dollimore, the Renaissance already recognised, that although the individual subject was becoming more autonomous and conceiving of himself as 'his own universal', identity remained 'powerfully – one might say essentially – informed by what it is not.' (2004: lx-lxi). In this way, established literary canons, legitimated and reproduced through sovereign cultural space, have enabled such constructions.

The assertion 'living beyond identity is, for many, neither attractive nor conceivable' (in Closs Stephens, 2012: 8) seems self-evident and highly relevant to political life. This study thus problematises responses of non-hegemonic writerly production to the modern

condition as part of substate and subaltern national identity formation in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Modernity here is understood as the impact of the Westphalian sovereign system upon the human subject, with nationalism being its constitutive element (Greenfeld, 1992: 18). In a sense, this is equally as important for the reappraisal of legitimised culture blocks within the Westphalian state system as it is for those given voice to by marginal voices. The cultural materialist Raymond Williams understands such a reappraisal in the light of how history is accounted for, whereby marginalised and oppositional forms of social life and culture, 'in relation to the effective and dominant culture, have then to be recognised as subject to historical variation, and as having sources which are very significant as a fact about the dominant culture itself.' (in Drakakis, 2001: 52). The creative responses giving voice to these oppositional forms of social life and culture thus carry out a double task over and above their reflections on and portrayals of political and identitarian marginality. In doing so, they also offer readings hitherto unproblematised of the 'effective and dominant culture'.

As the vast majority of sovereign states in the international system include territorially undisputed and contested territories within their borders, I emphasise here the linking of modernity with the Westphalian system, whilst acknowledging the divergent explanatory approaches regarding the genesis of nationalism by, inter alia, 'the conservative historian Elie Kedourie, the Enlightenment-liberal philosopher and sociologist Ernest Gellner ... and the traditionalist historian Anthony Smith' (Anderson, 2006: 208). A more parsimonious 'fault line which runs through the field' is offered by Azar Gat, between approaches which see a lengthened modernity as the decisive factor in the creation of the nation and those which 'defend, adapt, and develop the more traditionalist view of the nation', emphasising a pre-modern malleability for the nation (2013: 1). Although the historian Eric Hobsbawm has been criticised for not fully recognising identity-based politics as legitimate sites of struggle (e.g. John, 2012: 98), this research accepts his penetrating parsing of nationalism – as with other social phenomena – because its explanatory power yokes itself, above all else, to the modern condition: 'the basic characteristic of the nation and everything connected with it is its modernity.' (Hobsbawm, 1990: 14). My aim is not to search for a concise definition of nationalism per se or to adopt a copper-fastened position on the plausability of any one theory of nationalism over the other. Rather, the objective is the linkage between specific self-ascribing, non-hegemonic political communities in European space and the

modern condition. In emphasising modernity, I do not deny the ethnosymbolic component of state or sub-state nations as proposed by, among others, Anthony Smith. This branch of nationalism studies invariably entails a diachronic acceptance of a perception of continuity for self-ascribing political communities. However, in the continuing Westphalian global system, it is in relation to modernity as the cornerstone of lived experiences that I wish to enquire how the writing of three authors, from their perceived marginalised and non-hegemonic political community, problematises the claim to universality whilst relating it to a more grounded and ethnosymbolic perception of that community. In the case of nation-states, the symbiotic claim to generality arising from singularity is given a normative formulation:

> the formal universality of nationality as a sociocultural concept - in the modern world *everyone*[3] can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender – vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, Greek nationalism is sui generis. (Anderson, 2006: 5)

Simply put, the writers in this study do not readily take for granted the automatic self-ascription by citizens of a nation-state to a given political community co-terminous with the nation-state, that is, the 'everyone' in Benedict Anderson's formulation above. Consequently, the linkage to the universal on their own terms becomes as paramount as it is observable. Mining the historiography of what Edgar Illas terms 'Catalan philosemitism' and Levinas' concept of 'universalist particularism' forming part of his interpretation of Zionism, he finds that the concept is a 'politically fruitful notion' in that self-ascribing political communities 'can become possible without being subsumed into the dialectics of universal history' and that this could entail an emancipatory 'possibility of articulation without assimilation, of language without communication, of collectivity without community' (2011: 89).

In *The Persistence of Nationalism*, Angharad Close Stephens uses post-colonial theory and critical approaches within International Relations (IR) to emphasise that the continued supreme ordering of nationalism within the sovereign Westphalian international system, as well as those non-sovereign political communities wishing to enter it, 'cannot adequately be addressed from within the disciplinary confines of studies of nations and nationalism.' In a similar vein, literary theory problematising

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[3] Italics inserted.

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issues of gender, racism and the role of non-hegemonic political communities in global affairs have also appealed for a need for rethinking the Westphalian paradigm. From their differing sub-disciplinary fields, Sarah Upstone and Joseba Gabilondo converge on the difficulty of analysing global systems without considering the various levels on which nationalism continues to be pertinent for political life. Here, both coincide on the lack of such an analysis in *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's thesis on di-centred global community:

> Citing Tom Nairn, Anderson concluded: "[T]he theory of nationalism represents Marxism's great historical failure". Even today, some of the newest theorizations of globalization fail to account for the persistence and centrality of the State and, utopically, advance new theories of "the multitude" as the subject of an ubiquitous globalization without a center (Hardt and Negri); ultimately a subject ridden by the same problems of the "international working class". (Gabilondo, 2010: 219)

> Equally, their concern for the use of fluidity by global capital obscures the fact that, like colonialism, contemporary powers utilise the lack of borders to in fact construct a system, ultimately, which is defined not by chaos, but by order. (Upstone, 2009: 9)

What is sought here is not a colonial/post-colonial frame for an analysis of the three authors but rather an investigation of a broad range of disciplines, including nationalism studies, political and literary theory and IR which allow for a historical basis for a politics of difference and recognition. Such a politics of difference in this study is linked to debates regarding the degree to which self-ascribing political communities stake a claim in the redefinition of concrete universality. Accepting the premise of Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* highlighting the terror involved in the eradication of 'inner differences' (2010: 226), raised to the level of an ontology for the political community, Gabilondo shifts his analysis from identity "to the issue of 'difference', as the question of difference is always at the root of any identity, including the national" (2010: 218) and offers itself as an interpretive tool here.

At this juncture, a rationale for methodology is needed. This study understands itself to be comparative and interpretive in its reach. The empirical sections do not seek to offer a comprehensive history of the authors' writerly production but rather filter concrete examples of their writing through the framing structures outlined in this introductory chapter and re-engaged with in the individual chapters as well as in the final chapter which will continue to develop an overarching explanatory structure in order to

reinterpret their work. Boswell et al contend that comparing is an intuitive act and that we do this in order to seek out patterns and incongruities we come across in the social world and which can lead to new interpretations of familiar settings. In this way, an interpretive approach offers 'interpretations of interpretations' in that meanings are privileged because they hold belief systems which in turn have a constitutive relationship to actions. The core logic here is one of iteratively moving between an inductive treatment of data (here, writerly production) and a deductive outworking of the relevant frameworks or literatures as they relate to the data. This frees up 'space for creativity to flourish' (2019: 8). The concept of creativity is introduced here because of Boswell et al's perception of disciplinary moderation and 'puzzling' in an attempt to reduce uncertainty:

> We use the word 'puzzling' to describe this creative process. It refers to solving a problem or answering a question creatively ... we change the puzzle as we seek to resolve our confusions, often multiple times over the course of a complex comparative project. Through deep, rigorous and continuous puzzling, interpretive scholars can feel emboldened to explore and tease out comparisons that surprise and intrigue, that uncover new insights or force readers to confront familiar insights in new ways. (2019: 8-9)

An engagement with 'puzzling' would thus seem to speak to the need for a transdisciplinary approach. Problematising transdisciplinarity itself, Peter Osborne engages with how 'the discourse of disciplines has become increasingly and successively differentiated and theoretically reflexive', resulting in a panoply of prepositional attributes to describe 'disciplinary self-reflections': antidisciplinarity, indisciplinarity; postdisciplines; de-disciplinarisation; re-disciplinarising. For Osborne, disciplines 'are institutional forms for the generational transmission of intellectual practices – traditions handed down and also therefore, of course, betrayed. (Betrayal is one of the meanings of *traditio*' (2015: 6). For this reason, and linking with the debate above around the search for creativity, theories and practices deemed perhaps out of vogue or otherwise linked to disciplines at first glance incongruent – for example IR in the first and final chapter – are used here in an attempt to counterbalance the perils of 'a Whig historiography of disciplinarity, whereby historically successive forms appear necessarily superior to, or more progressive than, earlier ones, by virtue of the relative chronological closeness to the present of their moments of emergence and consolidation alone' (Osborne, 2015: 6).

As this introduction argues, nevertheless, this does not foreclose the reappraisal of, inter alia, modernist studies and their enhanced relevance to the present research. Susan Standford Friedman highlights that as 'modernity has been predominantly a temporal concept, emphasizing a rupture separating the present and future from the past, the question of how to spatialize modernism faces particular challenges' with transnationalism, for example, in the form of Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone studies becoming more visible. As with Standford Friedman posing the question 'How has, or, for that matter, how should, modernist studies participate in this shift in literary studies toward the planetary?' (2012: 499), the emphasis here is on writerly production from non-hegemonic political communities *from within* European sovereign space where claims for singular universality invariably problematise 'traditional privileging of time, and the study of history, over space' (Upstone, 2009: 3).

Following on from this introduction, this chapter is divided into three sections dealing with disciplinary engagement with modernity, with each introducing the authors according to its specific focus. The first section deals with the modern condition within nationalism studies, the second within IR literature and the third within literary criticism. Three empirical chapters follow, beginning with the Basque poet, novelist and essayist Joseba Sarrionandia. Chapter Three deals with the Catalan priest and civil disobedience activist Lluís Maria Xirinacs while Chapter Four focuses on the Irish novelist, short-story writer and language activist Máirtín Ó Cadhain. In the light of the central chapters, the final chapter expands upon the themes developed in this introduction, using a 'history of the vanquished' from conceptual history literature as well as politicised utopian (and dystopian) elements in the authors' work to enquire about possible programmatic scenarios relating to the self-ascribing political community they write mainly for.[4] Using these elements as a heuristic allows ways of thinking about memory and its importance for both the present and the future. They are then connected to the emancipatory discourse forming part of their writerly production, whether this be in the form of novel, short story, essay or political pamphlet. As the literary historian Joan Ramon Resina would have it, 'Memory is a synonym for culture

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[4] The problematising of utopian thought is present in a number of disciplines. For example, the impact in international law around the tension between sovereign political order and its inverse depoliticisation upon human rights forms the backbone of debates within Critical Legal Studies. See Koskenniemi, 2005; Miéville, 2005 and Moyn, 2014.

and also for life'. And because history and memory are linked, 'not only is the original experience of paramount importance, but also the time through which it has traveled before its effect could break the surface of consciousness and become an experience in itself.' (2017: 1-3). On this view, memory is linked to acts of 'presence' arising from the act of reading, 'the making present of what is absent and that is what "captures" us in virtue of the annulling of time ... I am in no doubt that the present is strengthened as a result of the past and that the future can only be assumed as an ideal projection of this – a redemption, Benjamin would say' (2011: 48-49). The emancipatory power of hope, harnessed to a Benjaminian reinvigoration of history, powers the authors' interpretation of the role of the past in and for the present, as with Máirtín Ó Cadhain's rebuttal of history being 'merely the chronicle of human devices which have served their turn and been scrapped, one for which the world is the property of the living, a property in which the dead hold no shares' (in de Brún, 2019: 133).

The creative response to power relations between hegemonic and non-hegemonic political communities by the authors, Joseba Sarrionandia (the Basque Country), Lluís Maria Xirinacs (Catalonia) and Máirtín Ó Cadhain (Ireland) and to major political, social and ontological themes arising out of the modern condition empirically animates the theoretical backbone of this research. As stated above, I acknowledge the intellectual and interpretative legacy of cultural materialism, along with the explicit problematising of literature within society. In a critique of liberal humanism, Raymond Williams asserts that society 'is not fully available for analysis until each of its practices is included ... we cannot separate literature and art from other kinds of social practice, in such a way as to make them subject to quite special and distinct laws' (2005: 44). New historicism (developing in the United States) and cultural materialism (in the United Kingdom) approach literary texts, in the widest sense of the concept, from their relationship with historical contexts, with texts understood 'as both products and functional components of specific historical conditions.' In this sense, both approaches see literature as 'an active part of a particular historical moment' and deal with the relationship between historical context and text 'with an urgent attention to the political ramifications of literary interpretation.' This is made all the more urgent as both consider that 'literature does have powerful effects on history, and vice versa.' (Brannigan, 1998: 3-4). The literary theorist Terry Eagleton sees new historicism,

although yoking an 'epistemological scepticism about assured historical truth to a notable nervousness of grand narratives' as an historiography appropriate for a postmodern age, while cultural materialism (2008: 197-98) is deemed a bridging point between Marxism and postmodernism, possessing a 'political cutting-edge largely lacking in its transatlantic counterpart' due to the role of 'more vigorous socialist traditions' in British society (2008: 199). This reflects the earlier veiled suggestion by the cultural critic Walter Benjamin for the need to problematise literary texts in a much more vigorous and political manner:

> There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.' (2007: 257)

John Brannigan adopts a slightly different approach for the role of the literary historian. Whilst acknowledging new historicism's placing of literary studies within the sphere of politics, he critiques its 'insistence on the pervasiveness and ineluctability of an overarching power, which pays scant attention as a result to the specificities and complexities of history.' (1998: 9). While both theories home in on literature's capacity and desire to flesh out power relations, cultural materialism tends to concern itself with literature relating to late modernity,[5] and is thus somewhat favoured as a broad intellectual backdrop in this study as well as for its acceptance of, and emphasis on, the specificities of case analysis. There is, however, another reason for this choice and is related to the redistributionist convictions of the authors chosen here. For Brannigan, whilst new historicism understands subversion to be eternally constrained by state power, 'cultural materialism is slightly more hopeful', and takes 'new historicist work further in historicising its own practices within power relations' (1998: 10-11). This research understands these intellectual underpinnings as sharing similar concerns around a minimal foundationalism at the heart of the emancipationist turn within the Frankfurt School of critical theory. This is an explicit normative goal concluding that 'it believes there is a world out there, but that we can only access it from within our social, political, economic, and historical context' (Toros, 2016: 169).

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[5] The period of 'standardization, central control, and synoptic legibility to the centre' (in Moran, 2003: 7) from the mid-20th century onwards is henceforth called here 'late modernity'.

It is for this reason that a strand of analysis in this study deals with the authors' allegiance to socio-economic redistributionist convictions and the related concept of internationalist solidarity. This solidarity, according to the cultural historian Enzo Traverso, is propelled forward by the revolutions in France and Russia and within which "the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries projected themselves into a future identified with 'Progress' (industrial, technical, democratic, socialist)" (2017: 57). All three writers in this study were incarcerated for a number of years for their political beliefs, and discrete sections will be devoted in their respective chapters to the creative writing during their incarcerated years. A related strand in their writerly production is the direct and indirect reference to – and interplay between – the particular / universal binary in the quest for the acknowledgement, inclusion or acceptance of self-ascribing political communities and their associated territories within what continues to be essentially a Westphalian system albeit weakened by the hollowing out of state sovereignty by suprastate institutions. Echoing Reinhart Koselleck's emphasis on the 'vanquished', and aligned with Raymond Williams' comment that 'society is not fully available for analysis until each of its practices are included', in his comparative study of the short-lived 'potentiality' of Eurocommunism, Ioannis Balampanidis argues that 'in the long run it is through the losers that one can come to a deeper historical understanding' (2019: 4) in reference to post-world war European history. This study accepts this approach and applies it to autochthonous and non-statewide writerly production.

Before dealing more directly with the themes mentioned above, by way of initial illustration, it is briefly worth referring to excerpts from two novels which encompass the above interplay. One is by James Joyce and the other by Joseba Sarrionandia. The renown of the former has a multi-generational global reach whilst the latter is scarcely known outside Basque language readership in a territory of three million people. Emer Nolan, in her work on Joyce's relationship to the national question in Ireland and nationalism in general, reappropriates Joyce's modernist credentials following decades of a postmodern turn in literary criticism. Although the anti-hero Stephen Dedalus declared that his ambition was to 'fly by the nets' of nationality, language and religion, the linkage between what can be deemed particular and what can be taken as universal is complex. On this view, Joyce does not shirk the seeming conundrum:

[A]lthough Pound and Eliot, like later Joyceans, may have been convinced, at least at the outset, that Joyce's cosmopolitanism triumphed over his Irishness, they never regarded the question of Ireland in his work as of anything but fundamental significance. When they ceased to trust Joyce's ability to transcend his nationality, they lost respect for his art: for them, unlike later commentators, Irishness is never merely a preliminary wash of sentiment or nostalgia on a modernist canvas. It is misleading to remove Joyce from debates among modernist writers about nationalism and internationalism, for what we then congratulate as his superior wisdom may merely be our own blindness. (Nolan, 1995: 3)

Joyce, we gather from Nolan, is nothing if not interested in the boundaries of the relationship between the individual, identity and territory, ushering in a reassessment of Joyce's modernist credentials with a movement towards 'the very prototype of the postcolonial artist' (in Wollaeger, 2012: 8). In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce places Stephen Dedalus in the geography classroom, working out his place in the scheme of things:

He turned to the flyleaf of the geography and read what he had written there: himself, his name and where he was.

Stephen Dedalus Class of Elements Clongowes Wood College Sallins County Kildare Ireland Europe The World The Universe

That was in his writing: and Fleming one night for a cod had written on the opposite page:

Stephen Dedalus is my name, Ireland is my nation. Clongowes is my dwellingplace And heaven my expectation.

He read the verses backwards but then they were not poetry. Then he read the flyleaf from the bottom to the top till he came to his own name. That was he: and he read down the page again. What was after the universe? (Joyce, 2000: 19).

A range of subjects are engaged with here. Among them, the allegiance of the individual to the physical territoriality of Ireland – contrasting with those of other nations (the whole of Ireland formed a constituent part of the United Kingdom when *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was first published in 1916) – and the totality of existence, human or otherwise, recognised at the level of the universal, here represented in both cosmic and religious form. Turning to Sarrionandia and his novel *Lagun Izoztua* (The Frozen Friend). Josu, a member of the paramilitary organisation ETA now in exile in Managua, looks back on his school days in the Basque Country at the end of the 1960s during the Franco regime:

During one of those Geography classes, whilst Don Patricio signalled out Great Britain which looked like a refined and venerable lady of yore, I whispered to my friend Goio who shared a desk with me:

'So did you go yesterday?'

Churlishly, he replied:

'Yes.'

I looked over at Goio's exercise book and read in the corner of a squared page of paper:

> *Kaioarri*
> *Kalaportu*
> *The Basque Country*
> *Europe*
> *The World*
> *The Universe*

'The universe, stars and all...' I said to him.

...

Kalaportu was but a small speck in the world, but it was where we were. (Sarrionandia, 2001: 176-77)

In what is very likely a literary nod to the particular/universal binary in the writing of Joyce[6], and specifically to the above passage by Joyce, from the particularity of a town in the Basque Country during the epoch of Francoist autarchy, Sarrionandia plots geographical, ontological and relational co-ordinates between the specific and the general in one phrase, '*Kaioarri Kalaportu The Basque Country Europe The World The Universe*.' The particular, however, is the Basque Country, not the Kingdom of Spain or the French Republic in which the Southern and Northern Basque Country are located. For Sarrionandia, the village of Kalaportu is indeed a small speck in the world, but his affirmation of its existence also speaks to a politics of recognition, or perhaps more specifically, a politics of the desire to be recognised. On this view, recognition is a form of analysing the relational weighting within the particular/universal binary which the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has argued to flow as a logical extension of expositions by Jacques-Jean Rousseau and Immanuel Kant on the politics of equal dignity (Taylor, 1994: 44). However, a politics of recognition and subsequent

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[6] Aiora Jaka Irizar shows the extent of Sarrionandia's translations of modernist work, including an early published translation in 1980 (the year of his incarceration) of a fragment of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (2012: 248).

accommodation policies for national and cultural minorities are deemed to be 'largely absent or underdeveloped in normative traditional theories, in the constitutionalism and the political practices of democracies' (Requejo, 2010: 163). One of the writers in this study, Lluís Maria Xirinacs, drew up a radical interpretation of national accommodation policies subsequent to an acceptance of recognition politics and will be discussed in the chapter dedicated to him.

One possible way to exemplify the power behind the desire to be recognised, and the struggle to have cultural and linguistic recognition fostered politically and socially into the future, is to look at its opposite. The recent publication of *Languages of the Night: Minor Languages and the Literary Imagination in Twentieth Century Ireland and Europe* (2015) goes to the heart of this issue. For Barry McCrea, the multiple processes involved in the minorisation of non-hegemonic languages in European space has not been fully accounted for. In a critique of recent studies in modernist literature seeking to 'decenter Europe and "Eurochronology" as a whole from our models of literary history', a potential unintended result of such a turn is to 'further erase those dissonant and marginal forms of literary expression within Europe that spoke from places and lifeworlds far removed from metropolitan centers.' McCrea argues that language in general at the onset of classical modernity 'had become tired and alienated' and that minority languages not aligned with progress mediated through the nation-state might add, in the moment of their translation to the language of the territorial hegemon, an effervesence and a rejuvenating of expression. Through an empirical study of the provenance of 'minorised' language in modernist literature, he offers a counter-argument to the assumption that modernism represents a literary palimpsest upon which only the cityscapes of economic and social inevitability are visible. It is an account of the vibrancy with which peripheral – and rural – languages, in their death throes, accrue to themselves a literary afterlife. In their demise therefore, 'these declining vernaculars became unlikely repositories for a host of modernist dreams, expectations, and disappointments about what language could or should do.' (2015: xii). McCrea's research brings together four disparate studies: the use and referencing of the Irish, Friulian and French patois[7] languages in the work of James Joyce, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Marcel Proust as well as the Irish language poetry of Seán Ó Ríordáin.

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[7] It is somewhat unfortunate in this important study, yet perhaps indicative of the subalternity of the subject matter, that the continuum of the 'langues d'oïl' is referenced as 'patois'.

Multigenerational linguistic substitution, however, does not equate fully with language death as it is a social process difficult to categorise as simply one-directional. This study deals with creative writing countertrends to language substitution in the thesis of McCrea, arguing that these are essential to a more nuanced understanding of the depth of European writing, thus delivering a more comprehensive reporting of European literature's response to modernity. For McCrea, Ó Ríordáin was not engaging in maudlin neo-romanticism but rather with a fully-fledged form of modernist expressionism (2015: xiv). The creative writers in this study chose and choose to write in a non-hegemonic, non-statewide language and their texts will be examined insofar as they deal with the impacts of the modern condition upon their societies. These relational co-ordinates are manifest in the writing of all three authors in this study and are read off modernity and its provenance, to which I now turn.

**The Rise of the Modern**

The timing of the rise, role and implication of literature, and particularly the way in which novelistic writing, as a multi-layered tool has been able to reach into and map out the spaces inhabited by modernity whilst archeologising its development has been widely documented (for example, Bulson, 2007; Lewis Levine, 2008) as has the link between nation-state nationalism and the novel's redeeming response to modernity, allowing the individual to be shaped by historical circumstances in the very moment these provide the wherewithal to participate collectively in a reconfiguration of shared destiny (Lewis, 2004: 2-3). How literature has reacted to the continued evolution of modernity has been discussed at length from the viewpoint of particular nodes within the trajectory of modernity, for example in technology (Daly, 2004), cinema (McGrath, 2008), geographically-specific area studies (Pratt, 2001) and architecture (Edwards and Charley, 2012). A feature of these treatments of how modernity has impacted upon social realities is the search for, and analysis of, the interweaving of these nodes from the point of view of perceived subaltern groupings, for example girlhood and colonialism (Moruzi and Smith, 2014) or between womenhood and privacy (Gan, 2009).

In his treatment of the novelist W. G. Sebald, J.J. Long concurs with scholarly writers in their focusing on the themes which the author recurs to repeatedly in his oeuvre. These include 'the Holocaust, trauma and memory, melancholy, photography, travel and

flânerie, intertextuality and Heimat' (2007: 1). However, these recurring themes are deemed in the final instance epiphenomenal by Long as he deems them part of a wider problem which permeate Sebald's work. This relates to how human beings come to terms with modernity. Long's parsing of modernity includes both a *longue durée* interpretation and one of a shorter nature and it is this all-engulfing social background which provides the prime material for the creative writing of the authors in this study:

> By modernity, I understand the seismic social, economic, political and cultural transformations that took place in European societies from the eighteenth century onwards. These changes have their roots in a longer history that goes back to developments that occurred in the decades around 1500 (the 'discovery' of the New World, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the emergence of mercantilism). These moments conventionally represent the threshold between the medieval and early modern periods. But the eighteenth century witnesses accelerated change in economic, political and social organisation as a result of three related factors: Enlightenment thought, the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution ... *of particular significance is the expansion of the nation state sustained by a proliferation of bureaucratic apparatuses and a range of civic institutions whose intended function was the regulation, discipline and control of populations*. (Long, 2007: 1-2).[8]

Modernity thus interpreted is the grand, all-consuming narrative of the past 250 to 400 years. It possesses descriptive and explanatory capacity in that it can be used to both analyse the overwhelming changes to global society during this period inasmuch as it can be a tool with which to account for the degree and manner of their development. In this study, however, I understand modernity's provenance and development as a function of the increasing embedding of nationalism within state structures and the relationship between these structures and increasingly entwined global connections. The interdisciplinary work of the sociologist Liah Greenfeld is especially associated with this linkage and, in general, I accept this as a sustainable basis for interpreting the role of nationalism inherent in nation-state modernity and to which the authors in this study creatively respond. Let us look more closely at what this entails. In Greenfeld's formulation of modernity, nationalism is not its corollary but rather its cornerstone or 'organising principle'. Whilst accepting, with Max Weber, that 'history is the march (or, rather, ramble) of rationalization, the endless succession of disconnected attempts to introduce order into experience which does not carry it within itself' (2003: 20),

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[8] Italics inserted.

Greenfeld does not accept religion in general, and Protestantism in particular, as the driver behind the 'acquisitive drive' of rational self-interest and increased rationalisation and institutionalisation arising from modernity (2003: 21).[9] Despite accepting, with Weber, a more social-facing explanation for modernity, it is nationalism which has explanatory power here rather than religion. In opposition to what Greenfeld sees as 'structuralist' accounts of nationalism within modernity (Gellner, Anderson), it is nationalism which becomes the determining independent variable:

> the idea of the "nation" ... forms the constitutive element of modernity. In this belief, I reverse the order of precedence, and therefore of causality, which is usually, if sometimes tacitly, assumed to exist between national identity and nations, and nationalism and modernity: namely that national identity is simply the identity characteristic of nations, while nationalism is a product or reflection of major components of modernization. Rather than define nationalism by its modernity, I see modernity as defined by nationalism. (1993: 18)

Greenfeld's later work, *The Spirit of Capitalism*, continued in this vein, accepting nationalism as the driver behind the 'motivational dimension' orienting modern economic action, although adding the caveat that 'this does not make it "the sole agency" in this process.' (Greenfeld, 2003: 21-22). Greenfeld's analysis concurs with the work of Michael Billig whereby national state identities create forms of social life as embedded 'psychological space' formed by dint of a 'banal mysticism' (2002: 175) or with Anthony Smith's ethnosymbolism whereby the cultural history of the nation, conceived of as being co-terminous with the modern state and pursued through dedicated policy to this end, is diachronically read off the script of the modern state. In Smith's view, symbolic resources take a more prominent position as 'the traditions, memories, values, myths and symbols that compose the accumulated heritage of cultural units of population' which are the explanatory factors for 'motivating ideologies and collective actions' (2009: 16). For the purposes of this study, however, I accept the explicit yoking Greenfeld makes for nationalism as the *overriding* independent variable for modernity. However, it is also sufficiently comprehensive to offer an explanatory causal linkage for distinguishable periods preceding modernity:

> These social structures, a towering presence in the life of every conscious individual (and political collectivities which are the peculiar mark of modern society), owe their existence to the individuals' belief in it, and their character to the nature of their ideas. But the ideas of nationalism, which have forged social

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[9] Greenfeld deals extensively with Weber's thesis in *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1993) and *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth* (2003).

structures and suffused cultural traditions, were also produced by structural constraints and inspired by traditions that preceded them. Before nationalism was a cause of certain social processes, it was an effect of others. (Greenfeld, 1992: 21)

There is, therefore, a parsimony in Greenfeld's explanatory approach which I use here to situate the socio-political 'organising principle' behind the development of the Westphalian system of states loosely called the 'international community'. On this view, one of the consequences of nationalism, as the defining organising principle behind modernity, has been its capacity to provide an egalitarian and stratifying narrative whereby social integration and mobility within state structures free up market forces. The cognitive and moral base for reality experienced in modernity, for Greenfeld, is thus explained by the outworking of nationalism within a system of competing nation-states (Greenfeld, 2003: 23-24). It is against this foundational and all-encompassing organisational structure that this study maps alternative writerly production from *within* these discrete geopolitical systems.

If there is one way of understanding these responses to the seeming totality of modernity emerging from nation-state nationalism, it must surely be the revindicative thread running through this writing. In other words, it exudes a will to both survival and life as well as a desire to be accounted for. Behind this most base form of revindication is the linkage between national identity and the Kantian envisioning of dignity arising from respect gained on the basis of 'our status as rational agents' (Taylor, 1994: 41). Dignity has been operationalised by Liah Greenfeld more than perhaps any other social science nationalist scholar (see, for example, 2003: 3), and is equally as applicable to non-hegemonic interpretations of the nationalist narrative analysed here. While Greenfeld uses 'dignity' to illustrate how the individual as citizen is buoyed through methods of social integration, by dint of revindication the three authors here also add to the social spheres in which dignity is operationalised by making more explicit and conspicuous the relationship between the individual and the non-hegemonic territory within the nation-state.

**Mapping the Modern: Inside / Outside**

Social science-driven nationalism studies which focus on the *ontology* of nationalism tend in general, however, to underplay the relationship *between* state nationalisms,[10] although Michael Billig points to national identity involving "a dialectic of inwardness and outwardness. The nation is always a nation in a world of nations. 'Internationalism' is not the polar opposite of 'nationalism', as if it constitutes a rival ideological consciousness." (2002: 61). The social and psychological space of the nation-state can be taken for granted but alternative territorial orderings such as non-statewide nationalisms cannot lay claim to such a totality. It is in this context that a core set of claims laying bare *desires* and *dignity* exist within the writerly production in this study. The 'inwardness and outwardness' Billig refers to taking possession of, and having recourse to, a mutually constituting set of particularities and universalities. It is re-envisaged in Tom Nairn's singular depiction of nationalism as the Roman god Janus bestraddling modernity, looking forward to the future yet at that very moment "it must look desperately back for the ordeal of 'development'" (1975: 18). It is a binary fraught with symbiotic tension.

Other disciplines offer possible alternative narratives than nationalism studies per se. International Relations (IR) is a site of research apt for comparison here as it represents 'the discipline most explicitly constituted as a limit of authentically political life within the territorial container of the sovereign state' (Walker, 1993: 160). In *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory,* IR scholar Rob Walker problematises the contingencies inherent in the development of states as a 'historically specific spatial ontology' within modernity. For Walker, contestation inside and outside the state is linked with key themes of identity and difference and of space and time. He asserts that the Hegelian interpretation of a rational path towards modernity must now be rigorously questioned:

> The Hegelian trek to universality still echoes as 'progress', 'development' or 'modernisation', but living within 'modernity', we are just as likely to be bemused by histories as seduced by *Geist* ... we are becoming increasingly aware of other stories, of people who have been written out of the Hegelian script. For those drawing on other chronologies, other cultures, and other traditions, dreams of a universal History appear more convincingly as the particular claims of a culturally specific history, as claims arising from historical

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[10] For example, Anthony Smith in 'Nationalism and Modernism' (1998) devotes three pages to 'nations and the intra-state order'.

practices in which universalist aspiration is closely entwined with the
legitimation of domination. (1993: 28-29)

The claim to rationality in modernity has its roots in the elevation of the individual
subject. The philosopher Jürgen Habermas places subjectivity at the centre of Hegel's
quest to tease out the resultant normativity at the core of modernity, with transformatory
repercussions for science, morality and art (Holub, 2001: 281). In such a momentous
sea change in how societies govern themselves, the nation-state as historical fact raised
to the status of teleology gains traction across sovereign territories. Hegel revolutionised
philosophy in that he understood it to be possible only when it took account of the
contingencies and contexts of current and past historical periods (Beiser, 1993: 270).
Although peoples for Hegel could be categorised as 'world-historic nations' and those
that were not applicable within such a categorising, he was aware of the value and
consequences of the significance of recognition:

> A people is not as yet a state. The transition from the family, horde, clan, or
> multitude into a state constitutes the formal realization in it of the idea. If the
> ethical substance, which every people has implicitly, lacks this form, it is
> without that objectivity which comes from laws and thought-out regulations. It
> has neither for itself nor for others any universal or generally admitted reality. It
> will not be recognized. (Hegel, 2001: 268-69)

Here, Hegel links the construction of ideas to both identity formation and the struggle
for recognition and has been linked from the discipline of IR to the social construction
of international relations, 'for Hegel, power politics and the politics of ideas are not
mutually exclusive. More accurately, they are inseparable – the logic of the struggle for
recognition, and thus of identity consolidation, makes this so' (MacKay and Levin,
2018: 92). In this research, creative responses by the three writers problematise the
acceptance of a Hegelian worldview for the modern condition. In their case, however,
the themes of identity and difference within modernity form a struggle for recognition
*from within* the originating state and it is in this way that their writerly production is
compatible with a social construction of the societies and territories they portray. On
such a view, everything that is connected with a politics of recognition is transformable
through human activity. It is also necessarily contingent.

In the work of Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Lluís Maria Xirinacs, as we shall see, the claim to
universality is made *from* the particularity of their cultural and left-wing revindications

and *from* a specific non-hegemonic territory. Joseba Sarrionandia, along with the latter authors, also claims this yoking but in its very claiming seems to offer it up in order to reconfigure a 'Basqueness' going forward into a twenty-first century with distinctly post-Westphalian arrangements. Indeed, the literary theorist Joseba Gabilondo in his *Before Babel: A History of Basque Literature*, applies the Hegelian rationale to the writing of a postnational literary history for Basque literatures. On this view, what is required is 'to walk away from the narrative and teleology of a single nationalist subject, which, very much in a Hegelian fashion, celebrates the formation ... and final maturation or self-realization of such a national subject within its state.' (2016: 3).

Rob Walker interprets the co-opting of visions of the particular and the universal as core to – and symptomatic of – state sovereignty and asks: 'How is it possible to articulate a plausible account of identity, democracy, community, responsibility or security without assuming the presence of a territorial space, a sharp line between here and there, the celebratory teleologies of modern political life within the great universalising particular, the modern state?' (1993: 182). This goes to the heart of the writing of Ó Cadhain, Xirinacs and Sarrionandia because, through their differing writing styles, they respond to this very question and represent a reaffirmation of Charles Taylor's problematising of a difference-blind politics within the liberal state as 'a kind of pragmatic contradiction, a particularism masquerading as the universal' (1994: 44). From post-structuralism, Edgar Illas reads the Derridian 'gap' not as an attempt by 'contingent forms' to replicate 'the universal structure', reaching a similar conclusion to Taylor in that 'the gap becomes the product of an active distancing; that is, the gap is configured through the work to resist the inevitable inclusion into the premises of universal history. The gap conceived as struggle entails the exigency to articulate particularisms that unveil the particularism of universality' (2011: 89).

The debate around the particular and the universal is salient within modernity and it is natural that there should be creative and literary responses to the ramifications of this cleavage. Hegel, perhaps, is the supreme referent in Western European thought for indexing the manner in which immanence can be enlisted to provide – and maintain links between – two separate yet interconnected points for the nation-state, that is, a *particular* conception and a *universal* telos. The IR scholar Kamran Matin interprets this movement by Hegel as a legitimation for a hierarchisation between states and colonial territories:

> [N]ations are *not* implicated in relations of reciprocity with one another, while their relation with world history is unilateral and unilinear. Their passive connections merely form a medium through which world history travels from one site of historical progress to another in an essentially autonomous process of self-comprehension. In other words, in a world-historical sense, the relations between the parts are ontologically subordinate to the relation of the parts to the whole. Thus, Hegel justifies colonialism, his proposed remedy for the 'internal' contradictions of (European) civil society through a simultaneous dislocation of the colonized and colonizable peoples to the exterior of History. (Matin, 2011: 366)

Matin's interpretation is that modernity has been witness to the construction, legitimation and consolidation of socio-cultural homogeneity through the nation-state. He raises this point to the disciplinary level, criticising IR for an 'ontological exclusion of cultural heterogeneity' driven by Eurocentrism. In this study, the critique of IR's 'fundamental concern with the condition and consequences of the world's division into multiple political spaces' (2011: 354) is adapted *inwards* rather than outwards, that is, it focuses on how three authors problematise the 'multiple political spaces' that exist *within* the European nation-state. More specifically, they do this from creative writing in autochthonous non-statewide languages in European space and time.

From within socio-legal studies, the volume of Lindberg et al, *Europe beyond Universalism and Particularism*, chimes with the problematising made by both Walker and Matin above. The possibility of deepening supra-state European political and social structures is envisioned, but those structures are invariably linked to a Westphalian heritage:

> The tension between universalism and particularism is particularly important in the case of Europe, which, while being a particular geographical, cultural, and political entity, is also a proper name for an aspiration towards universality and the political project of its construction. Universalism is a European invention, that is to say, it is originally particular. (Lindberg et al, 2014: 2)

Coinciding with the IR scholars above, however, they point to a path whereby new debates might be brought into focus through engaging with new approaches and facilitating the access of hitherto restricted actors and voices:

> [I]t would be more productive to view universality and particularity in Europe in terms of a bipolar tension, in which the universal aspirations are problematized by the particular locus from which they are enunciated, while the stability of this particular locus is undermined by the universality that is affirmed from it ... In

this manner, universalism is rethought not *against* but rather *on the basis of* the pluralism of particularities (Lindberg et al, 2014: 2-4)

The objective of this research is thus not to conduct a close, deep or otherwise literary criticism of creative writers choosing to express themselves in non-hegemonic languages but rather to understand them as what Joan Ramon Resina calls 'interpretive paradigms' (2008: 11). In this way I link themes arising with the modern condition as defined above with the political commitment seen in their writerly production and how this relates to the recognition of alternative visions of territory. In other words, the creative responses by the authors in this study will be interpreted against a script of 'cosmopolitan nationalism' which contests the assumptions of territory-bounded civic forms of nationalism framed as liberal nationalism (Miller, 1995; Kymlicka, 2001). Within the worldview of a cosmopolitan nationalism, a supra-national 'solidarity emerges out of mutual identification with common goals' (Goodman, 2007: 200). These solidarities are, however, 'contingent and autonomous of dominant nation-state ideologies' and rooted in the pluralism of multi-generational lived particularity. Conceiving solidarity in this way has also been recently framed, again turning to IR, through the concept of 'grounded universality' or its noun-adjective inverse, 'relational singularity' (Goodman and James, 2007:16) and, as with Lindberg et al, allows the meshing or at least the further problematising of the particular/universal binary. Writing on the possibilities of emancipatory politics within nationalism of a sub-state or subaltern nature, the literary theorist Terry Eagleton writes the following in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, extrapolating from the Irish colonial experience:

> "Nationalism," remarks an African character in Raymond Williams's novel *Second Generation* (London, 1964), "is in this sense like class. To have it, and to feel it, is the only way to end it. If you fail to claim it, or give it up too soon, you will merely be cheated, by other classes and other nations." (1990: 23)
>
> Any emancipatory politics must begin with the specific, then, but must in the same gesture leave it behind. For the freedom in question is not the freedom to "be Irish" or "be a woman", whatever that might mean, but simply the freedom now enjoyed by certain other groups to determine their identity as they may wish. Ironically, then, a politics of difference or specificity is in the first place in the cause of sameness and universal identity – the right of a group victimized in its particularity to be on equal terms with others as far as their self-determination is concerned. (1990: 30)

For Eagleton, 'leaving it behind', that is, claiming a pathway to, and recognition within, universality, means a dialectical return to particularity. I argue here that this is the progressive politics bedrock of the three creative writers and what powered them to engage with the writing styles they employed, be it the realism or absurdist modernism of Máirtín Ó Cadhain, the postmodern turn of Joseba Sarrionandia or the maudlin messianic compositions and scientific philosophy of Lluís Maria Xirinacs. The 'abstract universal right of all to be free, the shared essence or identity of all human subjects to be autonomous' (Eagleton, 1990: 30) runs through the writing of all three authors yet they are keenly aware of the need to 'leave it behind' *once it is envisaged, claimed for and recognised as such by others*. For Eagleton, the parcelled and kernelled truth of the Enlightenment has always been at odds over the reconciling of difference and identity, the particular and the universal, primarily due to the Hegelian rationale underpinning it being linear:

> In a further dialectical twist, however, this truth itself must be left behind as soon as seized; for the only point of enjoying such universal abstract equality is to discover and live one's own particular difference. The telos of the entire process is not, as the Enlightenment believed, universal truth, right and identity, but concrete particularity ... The most sterile form of nationalism, to continue the Hegelian idiom, is one that merely elevates a "bad" or given particularity to the universal. (1990: 30-31)

**Mapping the Modern: Literary Criticism**

During the twentieth century the field of literary criticism has engaged with a plethora of methodological and theoretical approaches (Eagleton, 2008). This heterogeneity in approach might be labelled at a mere descriptive level as 'post-modern' in that it simply reacts chronologically to modernism's relationship to modernity through literary forms problematising – inter alia – identity, jouissance, crisis and anxiety in an age of sweeping technological and social change. Discussing the relationship between change and angst in modern social order, the literary historian Robert Holub suggests that it is not 'coincidental that a chief motif of modernist literature and commentary has been the transient, the fleeting, the contingent and the ephemeral' (2001: 285). Artistic responses via modernism to the transformative maelstrom of modernity and, by extension, to the perception of a totality of Hegel's 'spirit', took on a wealth of forms in a radically different manner to the nineteenth century realist text (Weinstein, 2005). In the field of fiction, Philip Weinstein interprets this form of problematisation, this drilling down into

the essence of modernity, as 'unknowing'. Whereas the realist novel from Defoe to Dostoevsky accepts 'achieved knowledge and self-knowledge' (2005: 1), modernism accentuates the blind spots inherent in the telos of modernity whereby the enlightenment premise of being able to assiduously map subject, space and time creates a correspondence between the rational individual and a world rendered knowable and navigable. Weinstein assigns to modernist 'unknowing' the function of assailing 'the confidence in Western norms for securing identity and funding the career of the liberal subject.' (2005: 3). In order to fully operationalise the procedure of unknowing, an '*identificatory* traffic' (2003: 7) is established between reader and text and achieved knowledge reassessed in the light of past lives lived through the ordering of modernity. On such a view, the language of the dead is empowered to speak and in order to hear it the reader of modernist texts needs to practice how to 'unknow'. One of the key works by one of the authors in this study, Máirtín Ó Cadhain's '*Cré na Cille*' (*Graveyard Clay*) carries out such an experiment. His text, first published in 1949, is formally absurdist but the themes of personal and communal decay will be interpreted here not only as an absurdist text but rather one with the additional hallmarks of a dystopian modernist work responding to the modern condition and focusing on the lives of individuals the majority of whom eke out a precarious economic existence. From their particularity, the characters experience modernity *in a peripheral society within a peripheral European state*, with Ó Cadhain linking their marginality to continued economic and linguistic erosion occurring through the very state structures set up to address these perceived grievances under British rule.

As we will see in Chapter 4, Ó Cadhain rejects the linearity of progress most clearly in his later modernist work, doing so with decreasing hopefulness rather than optimism. Focusing on such a fragile hopefulness as diagnostic rather than predictive, the individual's life is 'imprinted by a social machine writing in a foreign script. In these instances, the real emerges in all its deformation: where we are yet do not wish to be.' (Weinstein, 2005: 7). The creative writing of the three authors in this study, born at different stages of the twentieth century, is linked here to the disruptions caused by the modern condition, with 'achieved knowledge' doubly interrogated by the fact that, in their case, the 'foreign script' induced by the upheaval wrought by modernity is to be taken at its linguistic face value. Here, modernity is read off the foreign scripts of minority languages spoken *within* established states in Western Europe. In such a

scenario I argue that territory, the self-ascribing political community and the minority language text result in a discrete order of heightened interplay concerning the boundaries and contents of sovereign power.

It has not been an easy task for literary criticism to parse the political relationship between modernism and the socio-economic conditions alluded to in literary works. Tyrus Miller, writing on the undeniability of the linkage between political and social life in the twentieth century and literature and art, remarks of this connection that 'there has been little consensus on how precisely this might be so. This critical dissension, however, does not merely reflect the fractious ideological and methodological commitments of modernism's critics. It also points to the internally divided, ambivalent political character of modernism and avantgardism as cultural phenomena.' (2006: 29). Such an – at the very least – double-edged ordering invariably leads to conflicting aporia when an attempt is made to account for the disarray felt in western societies at the turn of the twentieth century. Not unlike studies bringing together modernity and nationalism under a banner of being able to access the particular and the universal within the same state political community *at the same time*, Kevin Dettmar hints at the attempt by modernists to claim a centralising impulse for modernism by way of an all-encompassing, 'hammer your thoughts into unity.' However, as suggested above, this was not easily achievable:

> The truth of modernism was always more complex, various, messy than was maintained in the official (and reactive) version. Pound, in his ill-considered tract *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*, suggested that genius consists in the ability to see a dozen different things where the ordinary man sees just one; Eliot, in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," had more or less said just the opposite: that Joyce's genius ... lay in finding the hidden unity that lay beneath the apparent incoherence of modern life. And both these positions are modernist.' (Dettmar, 2006: 3-4)

This view of modernism is supported by the historical geographer David Harvey. Citing the tensions unleashed by exponential urban growth in the late nineteenth century, he asserts that it 'at its best tried to confront the tensions, but at its worst either swept them under the rug or exploited them.' Modernism, he continues, 'looks quite different depending on where one locates oneself and when' (1992: 24-25). Could this heterogeneity, therefore, be anything else than this? In a similar vein, the literary historian Rachel Potter dissects modernism's response to nineteenth century individualist liberalism and early 20th century welfare state liberalism in the United

Kingdom by analysing the 'genealogies of modernism' of male and female poets, whereby:

> [A]t the heart of many modernist texts is the idea that modern democracies become formally inclusive at the historical moment when the state extends its power over the individual citizen. The change from restricted to mass democracy in the period alters the meaning of key political and aesthetic categories. At the moment when the state becomes inclusive, then, the terms of this inclusion become opaque. (Potter, 2006: 13-14)

Modernism's relationship to formal democratic transformations brought about by modernity is similarly echoed in Pericles Lewis' *Modernism, Nationalism and the Novel*. With the dawning of the age of mass politics ushering in a period of modernist experimentation, 'modernists' concern with the nature of consciousness in language, in particular, points to the sense that the nation shapes the individual through the national language.' (2004: 7). This represents, using terminology from the discipline of sociolinguistics, a form of linguistic authority bound up in, as with Lewis, an increasing unproblematic acceptance or 'deproblematising' of the link between sovereignty and a national or state language. This is palpably a majoritarian vision of modernism. Kathryn Woolard's work on the 'anonymous' and 'authentic' aspects of linguistic authority, in her *Singular and Plural: Ideologies of Linguistic Authority in 21st Century Catalonia*, provides a useful binary to help explain the basis for hegemonic 'anonymity'. Through the processes of anonymity, the *de facto* link between sovereignty and *a* state language is accepted both unconsciously and consciously. In the creative writing in this study, however, this linkage is challenged and, as with Woolard, modernity is parsed whilst making a claim for 'authenticity' alongside 'anonymity'. In Woolard's framework:

> [T]wo contrasting yet interdependent ideologies of language have typically underpinned linguistic authority in the modern western world: an ideology of authenticity, which holds that a language variety is rooted in and directly expresses the essential nature of a community or a speaker, and an ideology of anonymity, which holds that a given language is a neutral vehicle of communication, belonging to no one in particular and thus equally available to all. (2016: 7)

Despite the differing academic backgrounds of the above scholars, they come together at one specific juncture, that of linking the politics of modernity with the social world. Mark Wollaeger in his introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (2012) refers to the necessity for scholars working beyond the 'national paradigm' to

share viewpoints with those working within different national and linguistic traditions. Nevertheless, he forces home the point that 'the historical reality of nations and their institutions still requires analytic attention ... premature nation-blindness fails to acknowledge that too many national traditions have hitherto been left out of the discussion.' (2012: 3-4).

As with Eagleton and Walker above, this study aims to be a partial response to this call for redress by focusing on how non-statewide or minority writerly production from the Basque Country, Catalonia and Ireland connects the binaries of 'inside/outside' and the 'particular/universal' with a self-ascribed political community. This chapter has recognised the intellectual and interpretative legacy of both new historicism and cultural materialism. However, I wish to acknowledge, in my interrogation of the authors' response to modernity from their cultural particularity, an emerging analytical frame. It seems that the scope of modernism, if anything, is widening. Wollaeger scans the parameters of a 'new modernist studies' in the light of the 'global turn in criticism'. This means a certain resetting and a reverting to questions of primary importance, perhaps taken for granted for decades. He enumerates them: 'the issues of temporal delimitation (*when* was modernism?), the geographies of modernism (*where* was modernism?), modernism's conceptual contours (*what* was modernism?), and its motivations (the historical, cultural, and individual *whys* of modernism).' (2012: 7). Within new modernist studies, Laura Doyle includes 'global modernisms' not familiar to scholars of 'Anglophone modernism' due to their location as well as modernists 'in direct decolonizing negotiation with Western nations.' (2012: 670). Therefore, it is in this widened sense that I wish 'modernism' to be understood here, firstly, in that it reclaims explanatory power from postmodernism which does not possess, nor espouses to possess, an 'adequate theory of political agency' (Eagleton, 1996: 134). Rather, modernism as a unified concept 'tells us something essential about how artists and writers responded to a set of circumstances, not that they responded in a similar fashion.' (Holub, 2001: 287). Daniel Williams succinctly paraphrases this turn in modernism's zeitgeist when stating that a tension exists between a "narrowly focused inventorial approach that seeks to establish the formal characteristics of a distinct 'modernism', and a far more wide-ranging historical approach which registers the various forms of writing practised during the age of modernism." (2010: 798). This study favours the latter as what is being sought here is an analysis of how non-

hegemonic creative writing problematises the additional element of contested territorial politics as part of lived lives, clashing somewhat with Robert Holub's assertion that modernism comprises 'the range of responses by artists and writers to an identical historical, philosophical and aesthetic predicament.' (Holub, 2001: 287). The assertion for *identical* predicaments does not fully hold.

## The Persistence of the Modern

I argue, therefore, that the resetting of the when, the where, the what and why of modernism, for its Ockham's Razor-like parsimony, is more likely to be beneficial in order to interrogate writerly production from socio-political, economic and linguistic peripheries. In some respects, this realignment of – and expansion for – modernism might be seen as a critical response to the postmodern turn within Marxist cultural history. Using Ernest Mandel's framework of three long economic cycles within capitalism, Frederic Jameson superimposes three aesthetic 'dominants' or macrostructures, those of realism, modernism and postmodernism:

> The idea of an aesthetic "dominant" here refers to a cultural ascendancy that will never exhaust the entire phase in question but that designates, rather, the most novel and salient aesthetic forms of any period. The dominant aesthetic mode of a particular period, therefore, will always coexist with residual, contrapuntal, and emergent modes (Cleary, 2004: 212)

Seen thus, a reaffirmation of modernism is simply a claim that the conditions which gave rise to the dominant aesthetic that is modernism have not receded or been transformed sufficiently, and much less so in the case of locating explanatory power for non-hegemonic writerly production. *The dominant aesthetic has not become secondary or residual*. In this regard, the explanatory power Pericles Lewis confers to nationalism in the construction of state sovereignty when discussing sea-changes in global societies in the past 150 years echoes that of Liah Greenfeld whereby:

> The idea of the sovereign nation, whose individual members all shared common interests and cultural assumptions, underlay much of the actual working of liberal political systems. To the extent that some inhabitants of a given territory did not share, or were not seen to share, these common national interests and assumptions, liberalism increasingly came to seem incapable of reconciling their needs and interests with those of the national majority. (2004: 9)

alongside modernists' response to these transformations:

The narrator is no longer the instrument of justice, divine or earthly; he has become a sort of super-ego, a figment of the collective imagination. By describing the highly subjective experiences of their protagonists, the modernists demonstrated the inevitable lack of an Archimedean point from which to judge the world. Far from abandoning realism's concern with politics, they used these experiments to examine the shaping of knowledge by nationality and the limitations of "realistic" and liberal conceptions of society. (2004: 10-11)

As with the hegemonic 'realm of giants – the men of 1914' in Anglo-American modernism (Wollaeger, 2012: 8) and those perhaps beginning to be recognised in the wake of 'new modernist studies', the creative writers in this study are equally as concerned with grappling 'with political, epistemological, and existential problems that remain crucial to contemporary cultural and social thought' (Lewis, 2004: 11). This seems to represent a resetting of an agenda which happens periodically within literary studies, perhaps understandably so, given that the contents and discontents of modernity are at the core of modernism, its cultural inquisitor. In the posthumously published 'When was Modernism' lecture of 1987, Raymond Williams specifically referred to a recently published book *When Was Wales?* by Gwyn Williams. He did so, hinting at the problematising of territorial contestation alongside the breadth and depth of modernism. Bringing the two together, in reference to the historian Gwyn Williams, he stated, 'That was a historical questioning of a problematic history. My own inquiry is a historical questioning of what is also, in very different ways, a problem, but that is also a now dominant and misleading ideology' (2007: 31). Training his sights on postmodernism, he parsed the relationship between the modern condition and modernism, emphasising however that 'modernism cannot be seen and grasped in a unified way, whatever the likeness of its imagery. Modernism thus defined *divides* politically and simply – and not just between specific movements but even *within* them.' (2007: 34). Williams here contrasts the political positionings of, for example, Mayakovsky and Brecht with those of D'Annunzio and Pound. In this way, one of the consequences of another ordering of political division as suggested by Williams, digging down through modernism towards the very core of modernity and the Westphalian order, is that responses to modernity expressed in European non-statewide languages have been, even where translation

exists, rendered invisible[11] to the vast majority of Europe's citizens and those further afield.

On this view, the writerly production in this study might be described as inhabiting the peripheral because the coordinates of the writing invariably reflect the socio-economic and identity relationships across self-ascribing, contested political territories. However, the narrative of a seemingly distinct geographic and temporal impermeability between periphery and centre, and vice-versa, by Marxist cultural theorists such as Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson has recently been challenged. Calling into question the normative Marxist stance regarding fixed and unequivocal transitions from feudalism through absolutism to mercantile and industrial capitalism, Joseph Cleary uses the colonial relationship between Ireland and Great Britain to record significantly different outcomes *at the heart* of the 'structural modulations' of modernity:

> [W]hen mid-nineteenth-century English capitalist development issued in the Industrial Revolution that made Great Britain "the workshop of the world," Ireland was devastated by the social catastrophe of the Great Famine ... while this massive discrepancy in national experience speaks for itself, the real challenge posed by these concurrent developments is to conceive of them not as two altogether alien and disjunctive histories but rather as two divergent vectors of the same modernization process ... to be peripheral is precisely to be compelled to develop within constraints, sets of forces, and agendas – economic, political, cultural, intellectual – that have largely been prescribed or conditioned by developments in the metropolis. (2004: 210)

For Cleary, this places Irish modernity within wider global processes making it coeval with other modernities. Coevality, on this view, suggests a 'contemporaneity that recognizes the possibility of difference.' (2004: 211).[12] The point here is that the details, or the particularity, of the relationship between hegemonic and subaltern forces in a globalising system are paramount in understanding cultural responses to the configuration of modernity in specific states, and thus the self-ascribing territories forming part of them. Cleary uses the British cultural historian Perry Anderson's concept of 'conjuncture' to add to what he sees deficient in Jameson's version of 'Eurocentric Marxian metanarratives'. On such a view, a conjuncture represents 'the

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[11] Michael Cronin signals out the reductionism inherent in the post-colonial critique of translation's role mediating between power and history's account of it, 'The signal failure to account for the linguistic and translational complexity of Europe in part stems from the tendency by post-colonial critics to reduce Europe to two languages, English and French, and to two countries, England and France.' (in McCrea, 2015: 147).

[12] The reference to coevality with this meaning is also taken up by Mark Wollaeger (2012: 16).

exact balance or configuration of forces, and the overdetermination of the contradictions that obtain within that balance, that can be said to constitute a particular historical moment.' (2004: 215). In other words, Marxist metanarrative needs to be more circumspect to what Mark Wollaeger has described as contexts 'within diverse national and linguistic conditions' (2012: 3).

The chapters in this book dealing with the individual authors provide context for the relevant regional 'conjuncture'. One such example, using Cleary's argument, will suffice in order to highlight why conjunctures become core to a deeper understanding of 'diverse national and linguistic conditions.' For Cleary, Eagleton's desire for explanatory power leads him to metanarrative when discussing the conditions leading to the Irish literary revival in the mid-nineteenth century:

> Terry Eagleton argues that Ireland in this period was every bit as much a capitalist formation as its British counterpart, but that the Irish variety "was a woefully inert form of rural capitalism, an old-fashioned form of modernity." Moreover, he contends, the prime mover of modernization in Ireland was "the rural middle class" ("one of the most conservative formations in Western Europe"), and that class "lacked the challenge of an industrial working class to spur it into life." "There could be," he concludes, "no exhilarating encounter between art and technology in such an industrially backward country." (2004: 217)

Cleary finds this reading wanting. In order for this narrative to hold true, Cleary holds that the eruption, for example, of the Italian Futurists and Russian Constructivists, responding to the wonderment of the second industrial revolution in the 'least industrially advanced European societies' would also need to be accounted for and that, in the case of the futurists, 'a more militantly experimental modernism that embraced technology, the machine, and the city was no guarantee of a progressive art or politics' (2004: 223). Drilling down to the massive demographic movements which led to New York having a larger Irish population than Dublin by the 1860s and a counter-revolutionary industrial northeast of the country, Cleary argues that what is 'politically decisive is not whether a modernist writer embraces the archaic or the modern element ... but rather how the dialectic between the two is elaborated' (2004: 223). With the full gamut of literary modernist concerns[13] laid bare in the writing of Synge, Yeats, Joyce

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[13] Cleary here accepts that a wider modernist culture did not flourish in Ireland, not because it was a 'premodern or traditional rural backwater too isolated from the rapids of twentieth century modernity to do so, but because it was in one broad sociohistorical sense *too modern*, since it had been, via colonialism, catapulted directly into modernity without ever having passed through the feudal stage and

and Beckett, working from and within 'a social formation that was neither continental European nor Anglo-American in character', the call for reassessment raised by Wollaeger of who and what enters into literary canons is reaffirmed by Cleary when he portrays Máirtín Ó Cadhain as *engagé* in the same mould as Berthold Brecht. 'Eagleton', Cleary asserts, 'like everyone else, overlooks Mairtín [sic] Ó Cadhain, surely the most politically committed of the Irish modernist writers, his work regularly bypassed because he wrote in Irish rather than in English.' (2004: 224-25)

## Modernity in Minority Language Literature

The authors in this thesis chose and continue to choose writing in what various scholarly literatures term non-statewide languages, minority or languages of 'non-historical nationalities', problematised as such within the processes of modernity more than 150 years ago by Marx and Engels (Nimni, 1989: 306). This latter concept would seem to chime with how scholars have approached 'minority' and 'majority' writing in the twentieth century, that is, through a sovereign upper 'really existing' (Benner, 1995) and a lower minorizing frame. In essence, this is an all-encompassing politics of – and using here the musical term – flattening. As Timothy Laurie and Rimi Khan point out, 'composers discovered the complex relations between the minor and the major long before social scientists' (2017: 2). The metaphor here is a useful one for understanding the relevance of this binary to the humanities and social sciences given its relevance to debates around the particular and the universal in relation to the 'naturalization of the nation state as the privileged frame for the study of culture':

> Classical symphonies produce the minor primarily as a problem of desire: what do listeners want from the minor, if not a return to the major? ... To call a thing minor implies that its essential quality is its difference from the major; that it has a more temporary existence than the major; that it relates to a plurality of minors only by way of a single major; and that its political futures can be defined in only three ways: integration, assimilation or elimination. (2017: 2)

Here, the contents of flattening are desired, sought after, reclaimed, controlled and reformulated. One might ask to what degree scholarship concerning 'the minor' has fully come to terms with literature which, by dint of the otherness of its linguistic

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hence had so little of the vernacular "high culture" that many of its European neighbors had to work on' (2004: 225). Although Cleary's interpretation of a lack of a 'feudal stage' is tendentious, I accept the general tenor of his argument focusing on 'structural modulations' within modernity.

existence, offers narratives whereby characters and readers experiment with and envisage the contestation and construction of identities not synoptically read off nation-state narratives and assumptions whereby 'the consequential pressure to standardize and to codify' (Moran, 2003: 154) becomes explicit?

The publication of Paul Birt's *Cerddi Alltudiaeth: Thema yn Llenyddiaethau Québec, Catalunya a Chymru* (*Exile Poems: A Theme in the Literatures of Quebec, Catalonia and Wales*) in 1997 has gone some way in highlighting the lack of comparative treatments of minority language literature. His is a claim against the backdrop of ever-encroaching existential, geographical, metaphorical, physical and transcendent crisis centred around identity. Birt traces these themes across the three stateless nations whilst focusing on a specific poet from each of them. One of the major themes is that of an unassuming, unobtrusive and internalising exile for reasons of cultural security and which he compares in a wider comparative sweep with for example the 'trekgees' (retreating spirit) of the Afrikaners or the 'emigracja wewnetrza' (internal exile) in stateless 19th century Poland (1997: 5). One of the sociopolitical outcomes of this identity crisis taking on the form of cultural retreat in the literary output of stateless nations of the mid-nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century was the acceptance of the geopolitical and territorial realities of the nation-state in which the literature was produced. Birt asserts that the intention, rather, was to emphasise that being stateless did not necessarily equate to being 'non-historical' and that linguistic, if not political, identity could be expressed through the existing territorial reality, despite this entailing a recourse to 'internal exile' (1997: 6-9).

Dafydd Johnston (1993) approaches this debate in a different way, dividing literary responses to modernity in the Welsh language, for example, into an earlier turn of the century period whereby negative responses would proliferate and a subsequent more positive strand as the 20th century developed with the poet Gwenallt as the main advocate of such a positioning. Regarding the novel *Plasau'r Brenin* (The King's Mansions)*,* Paul Birt tentatively suggests a Welsh-speaking prisoner losing his mind and forgetting how to speak his first language as a form of flight from reality.[14] Such a disorder, unlike earlier negative responses to imagined horrors and realities of the

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[14] Birt also cites here an interpretation by the Donegal poet Cathal Ó Searcaigh, beinging together the madness of Suibhne and his own exile, as a metaphor for the obliteration of the culture of the Gael, the Irish-speaking subject steeped in pre-modern Irishness.

modern condition using biblical and messianic images of the cultural internal retreat, is faced head-on and minutely dissected for how it is perceived to exist (1997: 9).

The creative writers in this research reassert Birt's positioning and a 'positive' response, as Johnston would have it, to a millennial crisis of identity sensed within stateless political communities forming part of nation-states as they struggle to come to terms with their political status and role within late modernity. Here, the desire to achieve territorial re-ordering (in the case of Ó Cadhain) or statehood for the sub-state political community is taken as a given and is expressed through numerous metaphors and stock themes, including the recurring theme of the physical repercussions of exile upon the biological subject, most notably in the work of Joseba Sarrionandia. Here, culturally bounded responses to global processes are deemed worthy of study from the point of their particularist intersection with perceived wider unbounded processes. This amounts to a claim for the inclusion, acknowledgment and acceptance of the self-ascribing political community in question. The authors in this study do not 'go gentle into that dark night' as with the core material in McCrea's *Languages of the Night*. Rather, as with David Harvey, what is perhaps sought is 'a project of Becoming rather than Being, and to search for unity within difference.' (1992: 359).

Reference was made earlier to the periods of incarceration experienced by Joseba Sarrionandia, Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Lluís Maria Xirinacs. Their writerly production during incarceration will be examined as a discrete section in each chapter whilst forming part of the totality of their output. Whilst acknowledging the growing scholarly literature on prison writing (including for example Ahnert, 2013; Davis, 1990; Harlow, 1992; Rodríguez, 2006; Mac Giolla Chríost, 2014; Zou, 2014; Gordon, 2018; Rymhs, 2008), this study does not conduct an exhaustive analysis of the prison writing *per se* of the chosen authors, but rather I take their incarcerated writing within the totality of their writing for one overriding reason. Prison writing can, as with the prison notes of the Chinese artist Mu Xin, downplay the personal aspect of incarceration: 'As for myself, I still follow Flaubert's advice: "Reveal art; conceal the artist" ... how much an artist has suffered is not necessarily the measure for the value of his art.' (in Zou, 2014: 68-71). However, the main characteristic of prison writing is what Avery Gordon has described as the embedding of 'the work of transformative social struggle' (2018: 20) within a wider 'radical prison praxis which is fundamentally an institutional and discursive antagonism, that is, an insurgent or insurrectionist formation of critique, dissent, and

rebellion' (Rodríguez, 2006: 76). Whereas the specificity of, for example, Mu Xin's prison experience is translated into 'ahistorical, metaphysical and aesthetical experiences' (Zou, 2014: 101), this research investigates the authors' greater or lesser interpretations of – and approximation to – Paulo Freire's reaffirmation of Marx's incitement to transform social reality as 'an historical task, a task for humanity' (2000: 51). From both inside and outside prison, the creative writing of the three authors problematises not only power relations in prisons. Artistic creation moreover, broadly taken as a 'deflection, a changing and a transformation of reality' (Eagleton, 2002: 47), necessarily results in an enquiry into the transformatory possibilities of and within the subaltern societies affective adherence is claimed for, whilst linking these shifts to wider solidarity relations at the global-regional and planetary level. In this way, Ioan Davies argues that prison literature generates discourses which require an understanding of the manner in which:

> prisoners, through writing, try to rescue themselves and us ... not only are they literate but in a large number of cases they are there for political, religious or other ideological reasons which set them apart from the everyday criminal. They are as much interveners as they are prisoners.' (1990: 7-9)

Davies faces head on the place accorded to violence by prison writing. Chiming with Avery Gordon's assertion, in reference to attempts to break the political will of Antonio Gramsci and Victor Serge, that the praxis engaged by incarcerated writers represents 'a pedagogy of finding and making a life with political status where civil death and human destruction dominate' (2018: 21), Davies extrapolates the praxis of writing, including writing affected by violence, to and for society as a whole:

> Those who write in prison are not dead, though their lives are sharpened by the sense of death and the apprehension of violence. Their writing connects the reality of violence and the attempt to rearticulate humanity, re-establishing a bond between our sense of finitude and the infinity of our experiences. (1990: 18)

The impact of non-state and state violence is particularly relevant in the lives of the three authors in this study. In the past decade, epistemologies underpinning counterterrorism studies have been challenged by Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), informed in large part by Frankfurt School Critical Theory from within IR (Jackson, 2015). Under such an approach policymakers, practitioners and academics engaged in the study of political violence are encouraged to 'broaden the focus of terrorism

research to include both state and non-state terrorism, counterterrorism, and structural violence' (Toros and Gunning, 2009: 107). In this way, a critical and multi-level approach to terrorism studies means 'talking to those actors engaging in terrorist violence' on a political level in order that alternative projects and practices might come to pass as a result of 'enhanced social justice and reduced violence' (Toros, 2015: 224-25) in opposition to the seeking out of delegitimising 'objective truths' after sustained violent political conflict has come to an end (Serranò et al, 2018: 20). Joseba Sarrionandia and Máirtín Ó Cadhain were members respectively of ETA and the IRA, whilst Lluís Maria Xirinacs' positioning regarding political violence became the subject of significant public debate. Although the authors' participation in political violence – and the subsequent personal reflection on it in the case of Joseba Sarrionandia – is discussed in the relevant chapters, the chapter on Sarrionandia particularly links political violence to the wider issues discussed in this research.

Joseba Sarrionandia is the only living author in this study and extensive use is made in the following chapter of an in-depth interview conducted with the author in November 2017 in Havana, Cuba, home to Sarrionandia following his escape from Martutene Prison (San Sebastián) in the Basque Country in 1985. The extent of Sarrionandia's publications before, during and after his incarceration made his physical location the source of much speculation within Basque language readership circles for more than 30 years until this was made public in December 2016. The cultural historian David Prendergast, in a volume tracing the evolution of British cultural materialism, critiques the bundling up of exile as part and parcel of the 'phenomenon of the twentieth-century diasporic, deracinated, cosmopolitan writer, characteristically migrating or exiled to the great metropolitan centers', whereby it becomes 'packaged as a selective and marketable ideology of modern*ism*.'[15] (1995: 17). One generation later, Susan Standford Friedman in her discussion of comparativity across 'world modernisms' offers a dual reappraisal of modernist studies, contending that it was 'profoundly caught up in the logic of Western colonialism in locating the sites of modernist cultural production exclusively in Western metropoles and in regarding non-Western cultures primarily as the raw material to be transformed into modernism's avant-garde rupture of Western bourgeois conventions and art.' The personal trajectory of Sarrionandia as exiled writer, as with the other writers in this study, offers alternatives to what Standford Friedman

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[15] Italics in original.

labels 'standard histories of modernism' recanted to the tune of the 'primacy of Western creative agencies.' (2012: 500). This reappraisal comes from *within* the field of European 'primacy' yet it is also non-hegemonic and perhaps wider and more multilingual than 'new modernist studies' has hitherto acknowledged. In effect, the three chapters which follow represent a re-spatialisation of fully European cultural production within wider and *coeval* processes.

# Chapter Two

## The World is a Prison: Basque Political Community in the Work of Joseba Sarrionandia

> From his first book onwards, he has provided an extremely fluid,
> flexible and, to some degree, contradictory set of concepts
> around a sense of place, the nation, and Basqueness in general.
> (Gabilondo, 2012: 52)

### Introduction

The opening chapter introduced the main aims of this research which have at its core what creative writing in European non-statewide languages can tell us about the political ontologies arising from contested territorial sovereignty within this multi-state political space. Writerly production in a non-statewide language will invariably carry within itself a kernel of the recognition of its very alterity, whether or not this production is linked to the political desire to transform such a state. This chapter discusses how the Basque writer Joseba Sarrionandia, through his literature, essay writing and interview opinions conceives of the relationship between global, local and non-sovereign political ontologies. Perhaps more than the other authors in this study, Sarrionandia's creative and intellectual output deal with power relations through history. For this reason, harnessing insight from historiography to creative writing can be useful as it offers perspective on the relationship between the act of writing and control over the narration of history, as Ioannis Balampanidis reminds us: 'the winners tend to interpret their victory in accordance with an ex post facto teleology, whereas the losers have a greater need to understand why things turned out differently from what was hoped or planned' (2019: 4). Losing, according to Judith Butler, requires the undergoing or the submission to a transformation which she calls the 'transformative effect of loss' which cannot be readily navigated or planned for (2004: 21).

From the particularity of those deemed to be 'losers' in their relation with sovereign power, Sarrionandia's oeuvre focuses on the power relationships between victors and vanquished in so far as this relates to political belonging and community. The work of the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck can be fruitful in this regard because of his methodological adoption of the *necessity* for accounting for the role of the 'vanquished and banished' in society in order to reach a fuller understanding of history. Arguing

against a short-termist historiography of the 'victor' from the perspective of a 'continuous, long-term teleology ex post facto' (2002: 76), he asserts that the 'condition of being vanquished apparently contains an inexhaustible potential. Historical change feeds upon the vanquished. Should they survive, they create the irreplaceable primary experience of all histories: that histories take another course than that intended by those involved' (Koselleck, 2002: 83). In Hegel, Koselleck sees a desire to bring about a 'teleological unity for world history' through the extinguishing of chance and contingency (2004: 126). As we will see in this chapter, Sarrionandia argues against Hegel regarding a fixed teleology for progress in the world, primarily because chance and contingency is, at the very least, conceived of from the realm of particularity. In a playful one-line micro-story entitled 'Anti-Hegelian Axiom', contingency under such a view must be allowed for because history for Sarrionandia is still to be constructed: 'What is not known is much more than what is known' (2006: 57).

This chapter is divided into five sections. After a biographical introduction to the writer, the second section deals with how Sarrionandia encapsulates the political in his writing through reference to language (in sociolinguistic and philosophical terms), the politics of exile and the location of Basque political community along two connected continuums: the particular and universal on the one hand and time and place on the other. The third section discusses Sarrionandia's treatment of political violence in both his own work and personal trajectory in the wider context of democratising politics. In the fourth section, the relationship between the author and his readership is analysed in order to further problematise contestation within Basque political community. The sections above are supplemented by interview material conducted with Sarrionandia. The concluding section places Sarrionandia's thinking on what an ontology for Basque political community might look like in a post-conflict era in the context of a left-wing political melancholy which looks forward to the future by reactivating the past rather than dwelling on nostalgic remembrance.


Joseba Sarrionandia Uribelarrea was born in 1958 in Iurreta near the town of Durango in the province of Bizkaia in the Southern Basque Country and grew up in the final years of dictatorship following the success in 1939 of General Francisco Franco's coup d'état against the Popular Front government of the Second Republic. After obtaining a degree in Basque Studies in Bilbao, Sarrionandia became a teacher of Basque to adults,

gave classes at the Basque Summer School and worked as a part-time journalist with a number of publications including the long-standing *Zeruko Argia* magazine. In 1977 he joined the literary group 'Pott', many of whose founding members are now significant names of literary and musical repute.[16] The word 'Pott', meaning both 'kiss' and 'failure', is itself constitutive of the hitherto disperse and intermittent world of Basque letters becoming a more confident, self-referential and self-deprecatory field 'with an inner coherence and a political mandate: to write the modern Basque novel par excellence as a way to overcome allegorically its historical subalternity' (Gabilondo, 2016: 238).

At or around this time, he became involved with the terrorist[17] organisation ETA which, according to the historian Ludger Mees, by the time of his participation with the organisation had brought together 'a highly explosive ideological cocktail mixed with references to Sabino Arana,[18] Marx, Proudhon, Bakunin, Lenin, Mao, Ho-Tschi-Min, Clausewitz and European ethnolinguists like Guy Héraud.' (2003: 26). In 1980 he was arrested for his involvement in a kidnapping of a Basque industrialist which resulted in the payment of 200 million pesetas (1 million pounds) and the releasing of the industrialist after 4 days (Angulo, 1980). Claiming to have been repeatedly tortured for six days during his initial arrest (Goitia, 2016), he was given a 27 year prison sentence

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[16] Perhaps the best known is the Basque novelist Bernardo Atxaga.

[17] As alluded to in the introductory chapter, the use of the words 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' is highly contested. In the introductory issue of the 'Critical Terrorism Studies' journal in 2008, the editors presented their position on the matter; 'there are perennial thorny issues inherent to the central organising concept of the field, 'terrorism'. The employment of such a politically charged, culturally laden, and ontologically indistinct term poses significant challenges for research practice and political praxis, and discourages many scholars from engaging with the core issues and concerns of the terrorism studies field. Scholars who wish to engage in ethnographic studies in communities or groups typically described as 'terrorists' in Western discourse, for example, cannot be associated with the use of the term without risking both their personal safety and the integrity of their research (Breen Smyth, 2004). More fundamentally, acts of 'terrorism' and even the existence of 'terrorist' groups are always only one small part of a broader set of contentious political struggles and conflicts; narrowing the focus of research to a single, sometimes relatively small, aspect of a broader movement risks distortion and misrepresentation, while leaving out significant other aspects and their wider social context. The response to this conundrum thus far has been to accept that there are genuine reasons for retaining the 'terrorism' label, whilst arguing that it should always be used and applied with extreme care and sensitivity, and that there may be times when it should not be used at all. Clearly, much more work and intellectual struggle remains to be done in regard to this issue, particularly in terms of how the 'terrorism' label impacts upon and structures research.' (Breen Smyth et al, 2008: 145-46).
Likewise, critical terrorism scholar Harmonie Toros offers a general panorama for the dangers inherent in scholarly work which deals with political violence, 'Unlike research with non-state armed groups that may involve the danger of romanticizing clandestinity and resistance, research with state actors can be dangerous through its capacity to confer legitimacy and prestige' (2016: 175-76). This present research accepts the rationale of Breen's and Toros' positioning.

[18] For more on the founder of the PNV, the political hegemon in the Basque Country, see de Pablo and Mees, 2005.

for membership of ETA during which time he was incarcerated in three prisons, at Carabanchel in Madrid (eight months), in El Puerto de Santa María (two years) in the province of Cádiz and finally in Martutene prison (two years) in San Sebastián (Rodriguez, 2014: 80). During his incarceration he continued to write and publish (winning three prizes from Basque public bodies) until July 1985 when, along with another inmate, he escaped from Martutene prison in San Sebastián in the speaker system of the Basque music group Imanol who were invited by the prison authorities to give a concert. The breakout was organised by the logistical head of ETA at that time, Mikel Albisu, who would have been acutely aware of the symbolic value of both of the escaping inmates (Rodriguez, 2014: 80).[19] Sarrionandia subsequently went into hiding where he continued to publish in Basque on a regular basis. Over the course of more than 30 years the author has, according to literary critic Lourdes Otaegi, 'earned recognition for his own defined literary personality, which he has kept constant in some respects throughout his literary career: the delicacy, the deeply sensorial aesthetic fineness of his literature, as well as the ability to create worlds and to describe situations and states with precise strokes' (2012: 231).

His location became the subject of ongoing and significant public interest and scrutiny[20] for 31 years until November 2016 when the Basque Government's Etxepare Institute, created to 'spread the Basque language and culture throughout the world' issued a press statement to the effect that Sarrionandia would be Reader in Basque Studies with immediate effect at the University of Havana, Cuba (Etxepare Institute, 2016). An interview for this research was carried out with the author in November 2017 and forms part of this and the final chapter.


## Joseba Sarrionandia: Conceiving the Political

The writing and thinking of Joseba Sarrionandia revolves around acts of becoming, transformation and realisation. This allows him to analyse current power relations as well as speculating as to what may lie behind the conditions of historical possibility. An

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[19] The other inmate was Iñaki Pikabea, a senator in the Spanish lower chamber representing Herri Batasuna, the political wing of ETA.

[20] This is discussed further in the fourth section. An example of this can be seen in popular culture. In 2013, the long-running weekly soap opera 'Cuéntame' on the main state television channel used the theme of an inmate escape in a music group's speaker system from Carabanchel prison in Madrid. The inspiration behind these episodes' script has been linked with the escape by Sarrionandia and Pikabea, see Blog Cuéntame (2013).

early example of this can be seen in an interview he gave for a Basque nationalist weekly magazine only a number of weeks before his escape from Martutene prison. Responding to a question what literature meant for him, the concepts of construction, transformation and becoming from the viewpoint of left-wing politics were already forefront in his mind along with his trademark intertextuality:

> Cesare Pavese used to say that it was a defence against the affronts handed out by life. It's difficult however to explain what it is and what it is not. Things in general are articulated a posteriori, first you write and then you question yourself, you search for explications for what you have done. I think it was Barthes who said that the world is not yet complete. For me, now, literature is a way of completing the world, of continuing to construct it. I think that literature that has as its objective the transformation of worldly affairs, just as in the case of fantasy literature, its goal is just that, bringing the world to completion. (Forest, 1985: 10)

Reference was made in the introductory chapter to the influence of Joyce's writing on him. In reference to *Finnegans Wake*, he continues in this vein in this 1985 interview, bringing the conditions of historical possibility to the creation of literature in Basque and the problematics around the construction of a literary standard[21] as well as non-statewide languages in general. The second excerpt below, taken from his introduction to '*Narrazio Guztiak*' (All The Stories) in 2011, points to his understanding of the transformation through time of the sociolinguistic development of Basque:

> It hasn't been translated to Spanish because of the difficulties it poses, it's a work of language destruction. In Spanish also there are writers who have gone down that path, what with the depletion and corseted nature of language, it had to be destroyed to say things in another way. In Basque, that is practically impossible as there is nothing to destroy. Basque is a work still being cast like founding a city. Established languages are like a big city and some houses need to be demolished to make way for new ones. In the case of minority languages like Basque, you have to found the city, you choose the territory and space you want and how to build the houses. It has less limitations and more freedom to construct. (Forest, 1985: 12)

> It's not completely true that we were writing in Basque, because we weren't able to make our own the natural speech of our grandparents. And neither is it true that we were creating 'Basque' literature because we were simply creating literature, just like the English or the Swahilis. And it's not true that we were just doing literature because we were spurred on with – and frustrated by – transforming our lives and social structures ... a decent amount of time has gone by in three decades. What is called Standard Basque has strengthened, making a 'mountain' language an urban and flexible one, taking on another role in Basque

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[21] For more information on the development of standard Basque in the literary context, see Olaziregi, 2012 and Aldakoa, 2004.

society. A Basque literature has been constructed along the lines of other literatures and has been accepted in institutional settings. (Sarrionandia, 2011: 8-9)

Concepts of identity, difference and alterity through culture and language are manifest from the above quotations and point towards a life-long concern around what exactly literature could reveal about a political ontology – however defined – for the Basque Country in its relation with the sovereign states of Spain and France and further afield. In his study of normative approaches to pluralism in world politics, Vassilios Paipais finds that what binds together 'liberal neutrality and post-liberal particularism to critical dialogism and post-structuralist agonism' is the depoliticisation at work in how difference and diversity are treated. Paipais argues for a more explicit linking between the transformatory capacity of politics and political ontologies. On this view, it is the politics of recognition and difference which drive the internal workings of contestation between political communities. Going to the heart of the Westphalian sovereign state order, he envisions an antagonism between politics and the political which does not readily accept 'liberalism-friendly ideological and anthropological assumptions' around concepts of justice in the world. On this view, such an antagonism "refuses to allow genuine innovation or 'whatever being' to be settled into some proper order (as a cure to the disease of sovereignty and self-mastery) *and* stresses the necessity of adhering to some form of order in the end (sovereignty as the disease that cures from the purist fantasies of either passive detachment or messianic destructiveness)" (2017: 221-23). For Paipais, the essentialising component of ontology becomes partially disrupted because it is open to constant transformation. The chapter will argue that the path of such constant transformation is strikingly similar to major themes and concerns in Sarrionandia's work.

To date, academic study of Sarrionandia, his literary output and its social and cultural significance has by and large been studied from within Basque language literature studies (see for example Azkorbebeitia, 2001a; 2001b; 2003; Rodríguez, 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; Kortazar, 1997) while Iñaki Aldekoa's *Historia de la Literatura Vasca* (2004) and the recent *Basque Literary History* edited by Mari Jose Olaziregi (2012) have introduced Basque authors (including Sarrionandia) to respective Spanish and English-language readerships. From the field of both political philosophy and literary criticism, perhaps the scholar who has engaged most with Sarrionandia's writing and

Basque letters in general is the theorist Joseba Gabilondo who focuses on the nature of Basque political ontology through the historicising of Basque language literature and highlights inter alia what he considers within the Spanish literary field as control and regulation strategies of literary output created in a non-statewide language. According to Gabilondo, national awards and prizes for literary production in Basque do not respond to a logic of difference, but rather of indifference: 'these awards represent the guarantee and security that the State does not need to change its identity and logic ... indifference is not a symmetrical, democratic structure, but rather an asymmetrical relation on behalf of the State, wherein difference is expelled from the body of the State, from the nation, in the name of indifference' (2010: 225-27). Gabilondo contrasts award-winning Basque-language writers like Bernardo Atxaga and Kirmen Uribe who have 'followed the logic of state indifference' (2010: 230) with Sarrionandia's reluctance to engage in 'the global demand for the othering of his work' (2012: 45). Gabilondo's interpetation of Sarrionandia's oeuvre is used here as a grounding point for analysing aspects of his literary and essay output as well as interview material. This is done to further problematise Sarrionandia's understanding of the nature of the political ontology of the Basque Country and its relationship with other political communities:

> Sarrionandia critiques and subverts the structures of symbolic order that construct the Other as Other. In the degree that his literature is multicultural it is political, and thus Sarrionandia's politics rise from a rethinking of the historical heterogeneity of subjects. Sarrionandia always writes heterogeneous histories in opposition to globalisation, taking Basque Otherness as a starting point, historicising that Otherness and subsequently taking stock of and rewriting the history of other Otherings, in the same manoeuvre. (2012: 60)

The majority of the poems in Sarrionandia's first published anthology, *Izuen gordelekuetan barrena* (In the Recesses of Fear), were penned in the months leading up to his imprisonment in 1980. Its structure is based loosely on Homeric themes of exile, quest and the distance between appearance and reality, with Gabilondo contending that the volume displays 'an extremely fluid, flexible and, to some degree, contradictory set of concepts around a sense of place, the nation, and Basqueness in general' (2012: 52). The volume has two prefaces, the second of which – entitled 'The Log Book' – is in verse form and represents, according to the poet Gerardo Markuleta, 'a manifesto for literature that many of us would have liked to have written' (in Rodriguez, 2014: 116). The second, written in prose, was penned in prison. Sarrionandia binds together the importance of intertextuality to a literature for the vanquished and who the vanquished

might be, his support for ETA and other incarcerated Basque prisoners and the use of exile to flesh out the relationship between the individual and the indeterminacy of political community. It is worth quoting at length from this preface as it shows, except for his hitherto support for political violence which will be examined presently, that these themes have remained constant throughout his literary life:

> 1980 has been a rather special year for me: I turned twenty-two, and I hadn't felt a greater sense of freedom until they imprisoned me, seemingly for a long time, on the thirteenth of November, the day I got the news that this anthology was ready.

> In the preface, the anthology is set out as a 'Log Book' with the contents representing a journey divided into seven sections: homeland, Paris, Greece, Lisbon, Ireland, Prague and Place of Exile ... Bertol [sic] Brecht and others (including the subsequent poetic tradition developed in Basque by Gabriel Aresti[22]) wanted to believe or make others believe that [poetry] was a weapon that could be used to explain and struggle for social reality. In truth, nothing is fixed.

> All literature is the literature of literature, that is to say, literature about itself. Poems are rooted in previous poetry and mine is riddled with literary references ... it's often said that this kind of literature is difficult to understand, and why do we write it and for whom ... For those who sometimes place cherries on their ears, for the captains of grounded ships, for those whipped into a frenzy by love or night violins and for the flautist who creates a new painting. For those that I have felt close to me in dangerous moments but who do not believe too much in the axe and the snake,[23] for those who have gone away without leaving a trace ... for the scarecrow who salutes the dawn laughing, for prison inmates in dire straits, for the fighters of all lost causes. (Sarrionandia, 1981)

In the text itself, a number of poems reflect Sarrionandia's understanding of the transformative capacity of political community to reimagine itself. This stands in direct contrast to Gabriel Aresti's work a generation previously, highlighting the robustness of Basque identity, and seen in what is perhaps Aresti's most famous poem 'I will defend my father's house' in the *Harri eta Herri* (Stone and Country) anthology published in 1964. In Sarrionandia's poem 'Returning Home', the exiled traveller is faced with the realisation that political community is constantly subject to reconfiguration:

Treasure map under arm I left

the house

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[22] On the social poetry of Gabriel Aresti, see Olaziregi (2012) and Aldekoa (2004).

[23] This is in reference to the motto and symbol, 'Bietan Jarrai' (On Both Fronts) used by ETA to describe the dual strategy of political violence and institutional politics. The symbol incorporates two figures, 'a snake, representing politics, wrapped around an axe, representing violence' (Whitfield, 2014: 2).

I struck out in search of sirens' songs

in the recesses of fear


All I came across on my travels

was small pieces of greyish firewood

and decaying blackbird nests in the hidden

places of blackened rain forests


When time exhausted my travel

and I returned home

the wood on the door was new

and a different lock in place (Sarrionandia, 1981)

In the poem 'Homeland is chosen' the democratic impulse to decide on the nature of political community forms part of a never-ending balancing act of political contestation:

Homeland is chosen

– as with a woman –  or else

loneliness or serendipity

will impose itself. (Sarrionandia, 1981)


Sarrionandia, although firmly in favour of sovereign independence for the Basque Country, resists in his first publication an essentialising of the nation-based political community and accepts an ontology for the Basque political community which is contestable. In the introductory chapter, via a character in Raymond Williams' novel, the suggestion was made that although nationalism represents an essential element in the make-up of political communities, it possesses within itself the normative option to transform itself and open up other possibilities for political organisation, including its own dissolution: 'to have it, and to feel it, is the only way to end it.' (in Eagleton, 1990: 23). The perception of a claim to particularity for the sub-state political community whilst also accepting the capacity to transform the boundaries of such a community is a founding feature of the writerly production of Joseba Sarrionandia and is also explicitly expounded in his essay writing and in the few interviews he has given. In an interview in 2011 for the Basque literary magazine, *Hausnart*, his problematising of the

democratic impulse underpinning sovereignty resembles that of Eagleton and Williams. In a subsequent interview, for the Catalan daily *El Punt Avui* in 2014, he reflected on the apparent heterodoxy at the heart of his understanding of the political community:

> While a veto exists on self-determination, it also seems necessary to me for Basques to be nationalist, that is to say, to problematise the nation. If there was a way to resolve the national question in a democratic way, nationalism would be redundant. (Bereziartua and Olariaga, 2011: 28)

> Like many other prisoners, what I experienced in 1984 was an extremely Orwellian year. And I think I wrote quite a lot on the back of that feeling of bewilderment, things that today might be considered postmodern, although that term was hardly used like it is today. Although it's said that postmodernism is *light*, my texts are somewhat *hard* because they are linked to a certain kind of anxiety ... I was ideologically a rather disorientated person, despite being a rationalist or being eager to get things done. (Castillo and Paloma, 2014)

In '*Lapur Banden Etika Ala Politika*' (The Ethics or Politics of Bands of Thieves) (2015), an interactive rejoinder essay on the nature of Basque political community, Sarrionandia proposes a revisiting of Ancient Greek Athenian democracy tenets, deemed 'as differing from most modern forms of democracy in its emphasis on the direct participation of ordinary people in collective self-governance' (Ober, 2008: 70). Here, imagery of the uncluttered public square is invoked to represent a radical reworking away from what the author sees as the proliferation of protected interests at the heart of the state. We are invited to imagine the following:

> ... an empty square where citizens come together on a daily basis and look to solve common problems. In the square there's no place for God, a king figure, the banks, the army or corrective language. It's just space bringing people together and they can say whatever they want. It's a coming together of equals, of citizens. In complex society, it goes without saying, that's one vision of things, an ideal model. (2015: 62)

Sarrionandia thus problematises methodologies which underpin and replicate the construction and content of nation-state democracy narratives. Although he has explicitly stated that he is 'at a political level in favour of the Basque people constructing an independent state' (Bereziartua and Olariaga, 2011: 17), at the core of how he envisages a political ontology for the Basque Country is the acceptance of a 'negativity' which powers political difference. This is a methodology that Vassilios Paipais terms 'an act of engaged criticism that simultaneously problematises its own position in order to maintain an effective but self-cancelling distance from its object of

criticism ... It is this productive logic of a void negativity—pregnant with potentialities in its empty form—that political difference as formal ontology denotes although as such it is never encountered in the ontic world' (2016: 223). In an interview with Sarrionandia in November 2017, such a negativity is embedded within a historicising of the contestation between political communities and the malleability of national belonging. In the context of the outlawed independence referendum in Catalonia that year, Sarrionandia probes these concepts:

> The Catalans are saying 'we made a social contract and it's not there anymore'. And that is what is needed. Nowadays it's called the right to decide and I'm of that opinion. For me, what is Basque, what is Spanish is not a definite artefact. For me, in fact, its make-up is that which is not.[24]

This flexible interpretation of a Basque political ontology is further put into context by contrasting it with the work of the nationalism scholar Liah Greenfeld who defends the thesis that 'nationalism was the form in which democracy appeared in the world' (1992: 10). Sarrionandia readily accepts the premise and uses the example of the development of democracy in France to propose a 'rebooting' of the democratic process, including accepting future political negotiation around the territorial limits of the Basque Country:

> After the revolution in France practically simultaneously a massive counter-revolution occurred. Then Napoleon came along, took power and the French nation replaced God's reign but this French nation was the ethno-social culture of the Paris-centric bourgeoisie which extended all over France.[25]

> I don't consider myself nationalist because the theoretical nationalist project seems to me an anti-democratic affair. From the viewpoint of an ideal democracy you have the empty square where people can meet and decisions are taken and contested all the time. The imposed nation-state is still the dominant model today, it is a nationalist and excluding construct which does not permit decision-making ... I don't consider myself a nationalist because I am of the opinion that a state should not be constructed using imposed national criteria. Not for France nor for a hypothetical Basque state.[26]

> Territoriality for me is not a must-have requirement ... territoriality is contradictory to culture. For example, Baiona in the Basque Country[27] has always tended have an anti-Basque identity, along with Bilbao. Bilbao has never been part of the Basque Country. That is, its capital. In my opinion there's an ambiguity there. Politics has to be played out, of course, with varying criteria

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[24] Tracking: 1:08:54
[25] Tracking: 07:25
[26] Tracking: 31:33
[27] In reference to the seven provinces of a wider Basque Country (Euskal Herria) straddling France and Spain. Joseba Gabilondo traces the first written use of the term 'Euskal Herria' to the poetry of nobleman Joan Perez de Lazarraga in the late sixteenth century (2016: 63).

which reach the negotiating table from a sense of freedom, so they are things which need to be negotiated.[28]

Referring to exile as a means with which to engage concepts of political belonging in 'In the Recesses of Fear', the writer Iñigo Aranbarri has stated that 'Sarrionandia's own life history was written in that book, it is indeed a curious thing, but everything he wrote in that book has been subsequently experienced by him' (Gaztelumendi, 2019). Exile, as we will see in the analysis of Sarrionandia's novel *Lagun Izoztua* (The Frozen Friend), is perhaps understandably the main prism through which he problematises the perceived binary between particular and universal belonging. Inspired by American short story writer Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary* (Rodriguez, 2014: 121), his personal concept dictionary *Hitzen Ondoeza* (The Malaise of Words), published in 1997, included an intertextual entry under 'Exile':

**EXILE**

The exiled person comes to realise that to live in the world is to live in exile.

The majority of comforting words are rather illogical:

"Exile can be beneficial if one manages to survive."

(Stefan Zweig)

(1997: 396)

In some senses this mirrors the capacity of exile to problematise political belonging captured in the writing of the high middle ages Saxon mystical theologian Hugo of Saint Victor. The literature comparatist, Erich Auerbach in his 1952 essay *Philology and Weltliteratur*, quotes Hugo thus: 'the great basis of virtue ... is for the practiced mind to learn, bit by bit, first to change about in visible and transitory things, so that afterwards it may be able to leave them behind altogether'. This is, once more, reminiscent of Williams' 'to have it, and to feel it, is the only way to end it'. Continuing his analysis of Hugo's thoughts on exile, 'He who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his homeland is yet stronger; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is a place of exile', Auerbach remarks thus: 'Hugo intended these lines for one whose aim is to free himself from a love of the world. But it

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[28] Tracking 02:00:45

is a good way also for one who wishes to earn a proper love for the world.' (in Damrosch et al, 2009: 138).

In the preface to *Hitzen Ondoeza*, the effect of exile most likely only accentuates the importance of words to the social world which Sarrionandia views from a politics of the left. The preface (below) carries a coupling of real and fictional intertextuality, indicative of what might be termed an 'interactive chronotope' as both analytic concept and feature of the construction of narrative. Such a chronotope 'is a time-space created through intertextual strategies and practices that unsettle the idea of a stable, singular aesthetic work and 'world' with discrete boundaries and that instead foregrounds permeability and co-existence' (Spengler, 2017: 4). This is useful in getting to grips with the ever-present problematising at the heart of Sarrionandia's playfulness with the reader regarding the parameters of time and place:[29]

> The present book began to take shape around the year 1990. It began to grow of its own accord, each word arriving with its own charge, restlessness and malaise. I immediately realised that words, just like nuts, are wrapped up in quite a tough casing you might call a 'shell'.
>
> I felt the need to say certain things, but above all, I feel the need to weigh up words so that I might still believe that things in this world can be named. That is the hope of this book: that speech is still valuable and that things in this world can improve.
>
> I have written here with both head and heart. Regarding the head, I can't swell up with pride because, as François Villon said, I have wandered "*ne tout fol ne tout sage*" or, perhaps, more stupid than lucid. Concerning the heart, I also have to admit my deviation, "eu caminho torcido" as Joao Vagalume would say, deviating to the left due to the weight of the heart. On this theme, after all is said and done, I cannot value the integrity of those who function without that organ. (1997: 8)

Use of anatopism and anachrony and their dislocation of time and place is a constant in Sarrionandia's creative writing as a means to further probe political belonging and this seems only to have increased during the decades away from the Basque Country. The creative possibilities brought about by exile in the following analysis by the comparativist Hong Zeng seems particularly apt in Sarrionandia's case: 'Exile suggests longing for a lost center and a vagabond state. Reflected in the disjointedness of signification, it implies a deconstructive poetics with an absent center, floating signifier,

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[29] See Rodriguez, 2014: 261 for more examples of Sarrionandia's coupling of the 'really existing' and the fictional, for example in maps and diagrams.

simulacrum, and fragmentation that have singular affinity with postmodernism ...
Disjointedness within time implies fractured time and collage of times, as well as plural,
tangential sequence. In terms of genre, the semiotics of exile implies inability to belong
or categorize, thus has the propensity of upsetting genre' (2010: 2). Such disjointedness
and narrative irony are at work in *Hitzen Ondoeza* in two entries which appear
consecutively in alphabetical order: *Inoiz* (Never) and the linguistically fabricated
concept-entry *Inondegi* (Nowhere-point). We might infer that the juxtaposition of the
two concepts is intentional as they probe the interplay between possible
reinterpretations of the past and political action in the future, echoing Walter
Benjamin's claiming of 'a new conception of history and a revolutionary political action
whose aim was both reactivating the past and transforming the present.' (Traverso,
2017: 46). On such a view, Sarrionandia's preface recommendations take on added
significance, 'The game is the following: each of the shells must be broken one by one
to get to the insides, to see if they contain half a truth or a lie and a half, half a lie or a
truth and a half ... In fact, the book is not made up of reflections, but of pre-reflections.
The pre-reflections are excuses so that the reader can reflect' (1997: 8). At the end of
the entry '*Never*', a finger pointing symbol ☞ suggests the concept '*Dependentismoa*'
(Dependentism) to the reader, thus delving further into the contingency of political
belonging to existing state narratives:

**NEVER**

The Basque Country has never been independent, that in a nutshell is the main
argument the Spanish and French have used against the self-determination of the
Basques.

However, if that were the truth, the Basques as a country never having controlled
themselves politically would be a beautiful reason for the Basque Country to
become independent once and for all. As they have imposed the past on us we are
against the resultant future foisted upon us.

☞ DEPENDENTISM

**NOWHERE-POINT**

Thomas More gave the book *De optimo reipublicae statu, deque nova insula
Utopia* the title Utopia. From the name of the character Utopos who conquered
that imaginary island. But Thomas More, a lover of Greece, knew that 'u-topos'
in Greek meant 'non-place'. In Basque, apparently, the word 'inon' (nowhere) is
formed from the words 'ez-non' (no-where).

The term 'Eutopia', which in Basque is 'Lekuona' (Good Place), represents a good utopia. Plato's Republic or Thomas More's utopia are eutopias. Examples of dystopias, 'Lekutxarra' (Bad Place) are Aldoux Huxley's *Brave New World* or George Orwell's *1984*.

But of course, for some people what is eutopia is dystopia for others. That being the case, utopia becomes 'upotopia', that is, a place that is not yet. (1997: 465-66)

**DEPENDENTISM**

It's said that many people who do not believe in anything are fervent dependentists.

Dependentism in the Basque Countries[30] is extremely well-developed. More developed than independentism, according to official reports. (1997: 198)

In interview with Sarrionandia in 2017, in response to a question regarding particular and universal perceptions of national culture, the author discusses power relations in the Spanish cultural scene and goes on to use the example of the exiled Ovid on the northern Black Sea coast to signal the capacity of exile, as the utmost personal and physical manifestation of anatopism, to reassess the process with which proposed universality is rendered relative, and thus, originating in the particular. The relationship between the particular and the universal is a constant feature in Sarrionandia's work and is a major determinant in how he conceives of political belonging, ultimately shaping his writing. The introductory chapter proposed linkages between the writerly production in this research and the seeking out of a politics of recognition. Sarrionandia reflects on the 'quest for relevance' that the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o develops in his essay collection '*Decolonising the Mind*', using a 'politics of language in African literature' as a guiding principle with which to engage with "the search for a liberating perspective within which to see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves and to other selves in the universe. I shall call this 'a quest for relevance'" (1994: 87). The following interview section is linked with another interview conducted with Sarrionandia in 2011 where the quest for relevance is linked to a claim for the grounded importance of the particular within the sovereign state system:

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[30] The wider sociocultural Basque Country straddling Spain and France is usually in the singular (Euskal Herria). Here, Sarrionandia pluralises ('Euskal Herrietan'), most likely to convey the disperse nature of political communities across the two states.

In the realm of culture, in the culture of the Basque Country and Spain, to be a monolingual Spanish speaker is to be a speaker and possessor of a hyperculture. And with that monolingual mindset you extrapolate to the level of global control. In that world view the capacity to speak Basque despite also speaking Spanish is regarded as something inferior.

People are by nature local. You can be from Mont-de-Marsant, you're also French and you speak a language – Occitan has been lost there – but there is a continuum between the local and the universal, I think, all of us are both local and universal. All cultures are compact and small. Spanish culture as well. For that reason I consider extremely flawed the 'barbarian' concept ... Here, the Roman Ovid has an exquisite turn of phrase. When he overstepped the mark or whatever in 'Ars Amatoria', they exiled him to an outpost of the Black Sea. The Barbarians lived there outside the Roman empire and while there he wrote the *Tristia* poems. In the *Tristia*, he has a very good line which defines very nicely your question, and deals with the relativity between cultures. Which means you are both the barbarian and nobody is the barbarian. To be the barbarian is to be 'out of place' and in that sense Ovid understood that very well. More or less it goes like this, 'Barbarus hic ergo sum quia non intelligor illis' meaning 'Here, *I'm* the barbarian as they cannot understand me'. I don't understand them, so I'm the barbarian. For a Roman to say that is a very powerful thing. Which is like saying 'I'm the terrorist here'. But I'm not the one out there bombing cities.[31]

At a political level I am in favour of the Basque people constructing an independent state, but not because the Basques have a different world view. And if we were to have a different world view, what has that got to do with it? More than likely among the Basques themselves there are different world views. All the better for it. (Bereziartua and Olariaga, 2011: 17)

In *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, Daniel Williams argues against the conflation of two main forms of critiques of universalism, on the one hand an historicist exposure of the particular masquerading as the universal and on the other a 'philosophical universalism' following on from the post-modern and post-colonial turn which denies 'notions of truth, logic and reason' (2006: 225) for universal-leaning interpretations of political belonging. In Williams' opinion, the effect of this conflation leads to an 'uncritical elevation of the particular', thus weakening the intellectual basis for opposition to racism and xenophobia. Echoing a processual, history-driven acceptance of the particular echoed in the work of Vassilios Paipais above, Williams argues for the existence of a 'genuine universalism' in which culture is 'simultaneously an ideal realm of universal values towards which all individuals should aspire, and the imperfect historical process – riven by ethnic, linguistic and class interests – which labours

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[31] Tracking 53:20.

towards that, ultimately elusive, end' (2006: 228). Continuing in the intellectual tradition of Benjamin's 'weak messianic force' claiming the power of an unfinished past capable of being re-enacted in order to impact upon the future, and in line with Paipais' call for the maintenance of an 'effective but self-cancelling distance from its object of criticism' in the resolving of the internal contradictions inherent in the 'omissions, suppressions or silences' generated by universalist 'liberalism-friendly ideological and anthropological assumptions' (2016: 222), Williams contends that 'exclusions', that is, those vanquished from the vantage point of the universal gaze are likely to 'seek recognition and representation in a continual process of questioning and renegotiation' (2006: 228). From the specificity of the Basque language – albeit as reified object – Sarrionandia in his extended essay '*¿Somos como moros en la Niebla?*'[32] (Are we as Moors in the Mist?) upholds the universal as unrealisable except through spaces given over for the production of particular culture:

> It's not a matter of which language is or is not spoken but rather that those languages which are spoken are listened to, recognised and understood ... Entwined in each language are all others, woven together unconsciously yet in mutual support, not being contradictory but rather complementary with each other. Besides the fact that everyone speaks their own language, if Basque literature can contribute something, that something will not be dubbing, to be sure, but rather the discovery of intransferable spaces, times and modes in which they create meaning. These are specific, and thus, universal just like all other languages. (2012: 845)

In 2011, Sarrionandia won the annual Basque Government Essay Award[33] for his corpulent 500 page essay *Moroak gara behelaino artean?* (Are we Moors in the midst of the Mist?) dealing with colonial era relations between the Basque Country, Spain and the Amazigh peoples in North Africa as well as the nature of political ontology in the international state system in general. Its political impact will be discussed presently. Gauging the nature of political community by relating how the particular might be linked to the universal can also be approached through reactions to the process of othering. Joseba Gabilondo sees in *Moroak gara behelaino artean?* the ideation of the Basque nation as a way of deactivating globalising othering processes by writing comparative histories implicating the Basque Country itself as part and parcel of empire. For Gabilondo, 'Sarrionandia offers us a roadmap for a non-hegemonic Basque

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[32] The Spanish language version of the original Basque language essay of 2010 is a significantly supplemented text and is used here. The title is also slightly different from the original version.
[33] Awarding in this category began in 2010.

globalising, one among many other directions, and in the context of a hegemonic globalisation based on othering, he discusses the path Basque literature should avoid. In his last piece of work, *Moroak gara behelaino artean?* (2010), we can survey from a more detailed vantage point the successes and contradictions in Sarrionandia's work, something which can help us capture retrospectively all of his previous work' (2012: 53). The elements of exile, political violence and political belonging are the subject of Sarrionandia's first, and most well-known novel, *Lagun Izoztua* (The Frozen Friend), to which we now turn.

Basque literary critics Eider Rodriguez and Aitzpea Azkorbebeitia have stated about *Lagun Izoztua* that 'if it is about one thing, it is about exile' (Rodriguez, 2014: 254), forming the very marrow of the novel (Azkorbebeitia, 2003: 36). The material cause behind exile in the novel is the political contestation and violence experienced in the Basque political community at the time of the book's writing, and Rodriguez is surely right in the conclusion of her study of sea imagery in *Lagun Izoztua* to infer that Sarrionandia in the novel is equally concerned with 'conceiving new ways of constructing the Basque Country, leaving ETA to one side. As well as depicting exile, Sarrionandia's novel is also a reflection on ETA's armed struggle' (2014: 353). Joseba Gabilondo sees the fragmentation and disjointedness seen in his poetry reproducing itself in *Lagun Izoztua* and thus a continuation of the problematising by Sarrionandia of othering processes impacting upon Basque-language novels in a global market. This is prefaced with a consideration of Sarrionandia's relationship to political violence:

> In *Lagun Izoztua*, instead of engaging directly with, and specifically referring to, the armed struggle, he discusses his subsequent life overseas or his exile. He thus treats the armed struggle in an elliptical way. And it is for this very reason that I believe *Lagun Izoztua* to be so important; in fact, Sarrionandia has spurned the use of the novel which is the very genre that any Basque author has had to recur to in order to become global and enter into the canon. And in his attempt to do this, he has written an extremely lyrical, poetical and non-narrative novel which can in no way be considered his best work. Sarrionandia's best work, therefore, is always fragmented, making that splintering appear in his poetry or essay writing, including *Moroak gara behelaino artean?* (2012: 52)

A brief summary of the novel is given here. Goio Ugarte, an ETA member in exile, lives in the Creole English-speaking area of Bluefields on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast. Although he has no legal passport local people afford him protection, primarily because he is a nurse. He suddenly 'freezes up'. He does not recognise familiar faces and things around him and seems to have lost the power of speech. Maribel, another ETA member

who acts as courier between ETA exiles in the region, finds out about his condition and goes to Bluefields to find and bring Goio to Ecuador where a boyhood friend of Goio, Andoni (also an ETA member), lives. Through Andoni's contacts, Goio is placed in a psychiatric hospital in Baranquilla, Colombia where he receives the attention of a specialist, Imanol Urioste, the son of a Basque exile who fled there following the fall of the Second Republic in Spain. Imanol and his sister speak Basque with each other although they have never been to the Basque Country. Contrasting positionings within this family perform the function in Sarrionandia's novel of weighing up to what degree Basqueness is an added value or a hindrance in a global world and if the former, how might this be realised.

The novel is set in three timeframes and geographical regions and makes use of several narrators. The first is located in the past and deals with Goio and Andoni's boyhood in the village of Kalaportu[34] in the Basque Country. Andoni the boy is the narrator here. The final years of the Francoist regime are depicted, primarily through the portrayal of a double burgeoning, that of Andoni and Goio's political and territorial awareness and their first sexual experiences. The second timeframe is the present, narrated by Maribel, while the third timeframe locates Goio and Maribel in a nebulous future and in which Goio is contracted as a nurse on an antarctic scientific expedition. We assume that this represents for him an ideal place to remain hidden. The beauty of nature as well as its destructive power is the main protagonist. Goio has been cured of his frozen condition yet finds himself in a completely frozen external environment. Here, Goio comes to the conclusion that human beings are insignificant.

There is another narrator in this novel, Josu/Armando, an ETA member and Maribel's partner. He is writing a novel and reflects on his relationship with his partner and the vagaries of everyday life, for example, the advantages of baking bread rather than having to engage in arms acquisition. We are led during the reading of the novel to conclude that Josu is the overall author of *Lagun Izoztua*. In the first of the three quotations that follow, Sarrionandia discusses the relationship between his own life and that of the novel in a written interview in 2001 with the weekly cultural magazine *Argia*

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[34] This is a fictitious place-name meaning 'Havenharbour'. Sarrionandia plays with the reader throughout the novel as s/he will not necessarily know in the novel which place-names on a global scale are invented and which are not. This is a technique whereby Sarrionandia decenters territory, sets it off kilter, and thereby problematises our conception of the ontology, provenance and permanence of geopolitical realities.

magazine from his – at that time – unknown location a few months after the publication of *Lagun Izoztua.* Along with his poetry and essay writing, the novel also gives voice to the importance Sarrionandia gives to intertextuality as a ploy with which to seek out where truth lies and how it can be spoken. A good example of how he signposts the need for this comes from his concept dictionary *Hitzen Ondoeza* (*The Malaise of Words*). The third quotation from the author displays the distortions at work in *Lagun Izoztua*:

> I wrote the novel at a time of great stress and confusion. Although it's not autobiographical, being fiction, I can see myself reflected in the characters and situations they face ... Literature is more than imagination and word play, its importance lies in its ability to stretch our personal experiences. Shining a light on some of life's intricacies and taking note of the sense of things, those personal experiences in literature can become a collective experience ... Literature is a construct and therein lies the problem that its truth carries.' (Argia, 2001)

**REAL POETRY**

The poet W. H. Auden remarked that when he began to write he tried to compose 'good' poetry.

Then, as well as good poems, he tried to make them 'real'. These he embellished with beauty, with criteria based on intelligence as adornment whilst also taking into account criteria regarding truth.

But later on he didn't want to settle for composing good and truthful poetry. He wanted them to be 'true' in a more thoroughgoing manner, reflecting his own life. (Sarrionandia, 1997: 746)

> Josu is the narrator and the only primary character, all the other narrators and characters are secondary, fruit of his invention. He's writing a novel and I don't know to what degree he's describing reality and how much he's making up. He writes from Maribel's point of view, but I don't know if Maribel is real or not. Even if Maribel was Josu's girlfriend, Maribel's description of events has been created by Josu. Likewise with Andoni's recounting of events. Then the character Goio appears on some kind of a third level since he is a block of ice, adrift, with no control over his mind. (in Rodriguez, 2014: 299)

Exile and its impact on human lives is undoubtedly the core theme which sets up what is in fact a novel within a novel, a dreamscape replete with distinct locations and timeframes and an unclear future chronotope. The sea is also prevalent everywhere in the novel. Between the imaginary Kalaportu and Nicaragua, there are 8,000 kilometres

of ocean and 98% of the Antarctic is covered by frozen water. The imagery of the sea has at least three manifestations in the novel (Rodriguez, 2014: 313-28). The first is the Bay of Biscay, the fierce Atlantic sea redolent of hope, youth, mystery, fearlessness, freedom, Odyssean adventure and a constant foreboding of violence. This is a staple sea imagery of Sarrionandia since his days of incarceration. Another sea is the listless sea and tropical waters around Bluefield and Baranquilla. Goio here is listless, out of action and mentally frozen. Here violence is, to all intents and purposes, redundant. It is also the region where Sarrionandia deploys the family of Imanol Urioste to weigh up the power, role and capacity for the continued transmission of Basqueness. In the Antarctic, the frozen sea reigns supreme and man must reflect on harmony with nature. As both violence and frozen stasis occur here among the icebergs, the Basque writer Marko Zapiain argues (2012: 125) that Sarrionandia uses the metaphor of the one-part visible and eight-parts inscrutable iceberg to offer up a critique of the current Basque Country whereby old allegiance paths need to be let go and emancipating decisions taken regarding its future as a political community as part of a world contesting divergent narratives around globalisation. In this sense, Sarrionandia offers a diagnosis and prognosis of and for modernity, perhaps the most significant and all-encompassing chronotope of European-informed culture of the past 200 years.

In the written interview with *Argia*, Sarrionandia discussed how territorialisation and its counterpoint function through exile. On being asked, 'If someone becomes exiled from their homeland and that someone comes across another country, does that raise a kind of bad conscience that they might become a traitor to their own homeland?', he responded:

> I don't think it works like that. People become exiled because of the circumstances of the struggle. The word 'homeland' is a bit lofty in that sense and in another sense, I don't think that integrating into another society could be considered being a traitor to your own. Having said that, I think that exile is a somewhat complicated and confusing situation which imposes the need for being able to rationalise. The capacity to 'rationalise', you know, doesn't mean thinking about things with rational logic but rather the discourse you make to justify the situation or yourself. The discourse concerning abandoned reality becomes fossilised and contradictions between what someone says and does begin to creep in. For example, it could happen that a patriot[35] maintains a hyper-nationalist discourse and at the end of the day does not want to return to

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[35] The word widely used in Basque for both 'nationalist' and patriot', 'abertzale' is a turn of the 20th century neologism created by the founder of the Basque Nationalist Party, Sabino Arana. Its components are 'aberria' (homeland) and '-zale' (s/he who is fond of). Although 'abertzale' can be perceived to bridge left-right cleavages in the post-Franco Basque Country (Morán, 2004: 49), the word is currently aligned with militant left-wing ideologies.

the Basque Country ... in literary mythology the return of Ulysses is often mentioned, that myth is also covered in psychology and it's pretty obvious that the traveller and the exiled possess the Ulysses complex. But in my mind there is another complex, that of descending from the journey and staying where you are. What I don't know is if it has a name in psychology. (Argia, 2001).[36]

This brings us to the core of the novel where Sarrionandia uses Imanol Urioste's family to exemplify how exile, territory and time come together. When this is brought up by the interviewer, 'The exile Jose Urioste builds a farmhouse along Basque architectural lines in a foreign land, he teaches Basque to his son and daughter, he imbues the family with a pervasive Basqueness ...', Sarrionandia states:

In the novel, Jose Urioste represents a fossilised, withered, proud and by now kitsch Basque nationalism. He doesn't actually figure in the novel but his son and daughter live with this inheritance and take on this legacy to greater or lesser degrees. His daughter wants to maintain the flame of this original legacy because she loves him. On the other hand, his son has a love-hate relationship with the legacy. He strives to get to grips with things by means of, if you like, 'heterotopia' and other such Greek words. Mind you, technical terms may not actually be the best tools for understanding emotions (Argia, 2001)

The term heterotopia was conceived of by Michel Foucault in order to problematise our understandings of lived spaces. In his preface to his 'Order of Things' when discussing Borges, he contrasts the term with 'utopia', he asserts:

Utopias afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'. (Foucault, 2002: xix-xx)

The critical geographer David Harvey accepts Foucault's premise of the alterity inherent in the concept but criticises Foucault's optimism that states of alterity can have a fixedness and permanence about them. If alterities are to fully exist, then it stands to reason that they must have the possibility of being realised:

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[36] This interviewer's name is anonymous, most likely due to Sarrionandia's situation as regards Spain's administration of justice system not being at that time regularised.

> The concept of 'heterotopia' has the virtue of insisting upon a better understanding of the heterogeneity of space but it gives no clue as to what a more spatiotemporal utopianism might look like. (Harvey, 2000: 195)

The questions around alterity and its capacity to be realised forms the grist of what Sarrionandia explores in *Lagun Izoztua*. In the following discussion, Maribel narrates how the clinical psychologist Imanol explains to her what living out of place and time looks like for him:

> 'You're a natural Basque speaker' Imanol said in a low voice, 'tell me, what do you think of a family which uses a hermetic impenetrable language? In our house we weren't allowed to speak Spanish because Father forbade it. We'd leave the house then and you lived in another world.'
>
> ...
>
> 'It's possible our father was completely anatopic.'
>
> I don't understand the meaning of the word anatopic, just in case Imanol had a series of run-ins with his dead father.
>
> 'The word anachronic is a bit like anatopic', he said to me when my blank face became obvious to him, 'just like as you are anachronic you live outside time, with anatopic you live outside of place. You're here, but you really live there. And our father was dye in the wool anatopic ...'
>
> He takes a fine-edged pen out of the pocket of his white doctor's coat. It's pretty obvious he's drunk on gin. He then draws a square, sections it off with vertical lines, then makes two horizontal lines, and leaves six spaces within the square. In the upper left hand side he writes '*Where*', in the right hand side he writes '*When*', each of the three with letters. Then, he writes '*Space*' on top of the word '*Where*' and '*Time*' on top of the word '*When*', smudging both. On the second line, to the left, he writes '*Heterotopia*' and to the right '*Heterochrony*'
>
> ...
>
> 'Our father lived in anatopism. His life was clearly a topological absurdity as he lived out the guts of his life somewhere else ... and he inculcated in us that desire to return to his place of birth... that need to return to Orozko[37], his Ithaca,[38] and any psychoanalyst would tell you that kind of lifestyle represents a desire to return to the womb...' (Sarrionandia, 2001: 55-57)

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[37] Jose Urioste's hometown in the province of Bizkaia. Unlike Kalaportu, this village exists in reality.

[38] The reinvention of the Ithaca trope praising the journey rather than the destination is also seen in the poetry of Cavafy. According to Aiora Jaka, Sarrionandia has translated six poems by Cavafy to Basque (2012: 415-16).

In his critique of an arcane interpretation of Basqueness, the author links exile unable to reconcile itself to its new surroundings with pathologies involved in personal dislocation. Sarrionandia employs Imanol's sister, Arantxa, to suggest the possibilities of a more positive form of deterritorialisation whereby Basque culture and language can exist outside of the original political and social community:

> 'Not everything falls nicely into your simple schematics and your couple of made-up words' said Arantxa exasperated with her brother, 'you have such a need to rationalise everything that you can't see the wood for the trees ...'

> 'On top of that, our father' continued Arantxa, 'you make my blood boil when you mention Father! When he died I thought your obsession would end, but it's still there and it's got to stop! Leave Father in peace, Jose Urioste died peacefully and he left us with more or less roots and he left you with more or less trauma ...' (Sarrionandia, 2001: 57-58)

Arantxa's character is also used by Sarrionandia to locate linguistic renewal as a form of continuity which occurs through deterritorialisation of the language. Arantxa invites Maribel to make some corn tortilla bread, an activity connected with the feast day of St. Thomas in the Basque Country where the bread is eaten with chorizo sausage. Arantxa explains to Maribel how she makes the bread and she finds herself having to ask Arantxa, a Colombian citizen, what some Basque words mean. Through the prism of language, Sarrionandia shows us how exile can eventually take on the consistency of normality, of alternative banality:

> 'Here we use a *talaburdina*.'

> 'What's a *talaburdina*?'

> 'It's an iron plank used to cook the cornbread, silly! We bought the cornflour yesterday and Maialen wants to try out the corn bread using milk.'

> Arantxa repeats the word 'flour', corn bread with milk[39], when I was young I remember grandma making us round and flat cornbread, warm cornbread, I'm tasting its flavour in my mouth right now.'

> 'Do you need *labadurea*[40] for that, then?'

> 'What's *labadurea*?' '*Labadurea*? That's what you use to raise the dough'.

> Josu uses the word *lagamia* or *bentzagia* to say yeast. (Sarrionandia, 2001: 217)

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[39] Maribel does this unconsciously using her own Bizkaian dialect word for flour whilst the grammar of the whole sentence slips into this dialect.
[40] This is a loanword from Spanish.

Another repercussion of living out of kilter with place and time is how the lived complexity of exile impacts upon those in hiding. Melancholy for – and the sacralization of – the homeland left behind results in physical space being given over for this purpose. In the case of Andoni in Ecuador, this physical space affords brief moments within which he can reconnect:

> Andoni took me to the Basque room. I would be sleeping in the room where Andoni keeps his Basque books and other secrets. 'It's not my bedroom,', he said, 'I sleep in another room but during the day I come here and it's my dream room'. On the wall there are two Guernicas, a grove temple, sculptures by Oteiza and paintings by Ruiz Balerdi, and the Basque coat of arms, and Pyrenean oaks, and photos of Bilbao. (Sarrionandia, 2001: 84)

Andoni's thoughts and emotions seem here to mirror the melancholy and sense of loss of Imanol's father, Jose. They hold on to a concrete sense of territory. However, perhaps Sarrionandia feels more aligned with another positioning, one which at least initially detaches or loosens up the the fixedness of territory. Following the news that the Colombian authorities have been tipped off regarding Maribel and Goio's political status and identities, Imanol helps Goio to escape from the psychiatric clinic in Keystone cops fashion.[41] Imanol drinks heavily following this and stages a one-man play whereby he takes on the part of both father and son debating the point of a homeland. This is a device used by Sarrionandia which brings us head-to-head again with how the Basque Country might be reconfigured in the future. Following the drunken performance, Imanol continues:

> Deep down, taking on the form of fear, he knew that the Orozko of his infancy and dreams did not now exist. If he was to return now to the Basque Country with the brave mountains laid low, the clean rivers muddied, he'd find the roads he knew cut off, the homeland he wanted would be something else. And there would be nowhere he would feel further away from the Basque Country than there itself. He had an unconscious fear that with that kind of archaeological return he would be physically and metaphysically detached from himself.

> 'Homeland is an absence', says Imanol, 'and he'd feel that absence much more acutely in Orozko itself. Time didn't just pass by in vain. And so he stayed there in the farmhouse by the palm trees, being neither here nor there, neither coming or going, until time reduced the size of the lord of the manor's private room. We buried him in a two metre long, one metre wide and half a metre high coffin, with the Basque flag and an emerald in each hand'. (Sarrionandia, 2001: 412-413)

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[41] It seems unlikely that it would have escaped Sarrionandia that this scene could be easily interpreted as a literary nod to his own escape from Martutene prison in 1985.

The above examples display a melancholy which accepts the unattainable and confirms the status of the vanquished and might be considered forming part and parcel of Sarrionandia's overall critique of an essentialising Basque political culture and community. However, and linking with the main themes in his creative writing in general, in *Lagun Izoztua* Sarrionandia also hints at another form of melancholy at work, a melancholy which evokes Benjamin's 'weak messianic power'. Jonathan Flatley in *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* and Enzo Traverso in *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History and Memory* signpost a radical departure during the twentieth century from previous centuries' interpretation of melancholy as a crepuscular retreat under the sign of Saturn from everyday shared life. On this view, melancholy is political and vyes for the future:

> Benjamin's compelling case for a potentially disruptive imagination of radical and redemptive transformation within this melancholic mode of seeing notwithstanding, the retreat into contemplative melancholy could also serve a primarily compensatory, and thus socially affirmative, function. (Flatley, 2008: 38).

> This melancholia, however, does not mean a retreat into a closed universe of suffering and remembering; it is rather a constellation of emotions and feelings that envelop a historical transition, the only way in which the search for new ideas and projects can coexist with the sorrow and mourning for a lost realm of revolutionary experiences. Neither regressive nor impotent, this left-wing melancholia should not evade the burden of the past. (Traverso, 2017: xiv-xv)

> Left-wing melancholy does not mean to abandon the idea of socialism or the hope for a better future; it means to rethink socialism in a time in which its memory is lost, hidden, and forgotten and needs to be redeemed. This melancholia does not mean lamenting a lost utopia, but rather rethinking a revolutionary project in a nonrevolutionary age. This is a fruitful melancholia that, one could say with Judith Butler, implies the "transformative effect of loss." (Traverso, 2017: 20)

Diego Muro, in his analysis of Basque nationalist discourse, points towards the use of nostalgia evoking a bygone 'Basque Golden Age', considering that 'there can be no doubt that the cult of the Golden Age offers enormous potential for political action' (2005: 586). Melancholy, however, can be identified through the fixation on a *lack* rather than nostalgia's concern with *loss* (Traverso, 2017: 52). Throughout *Lagun Izoztua*, Sarrionandia points to an alternative version to the static melancholy referred to above. Here, the transformatory capacity of melancholy exists side-by-side with the

earlier interpretation and seems to offer in many senses a binary choice for Basque society. Sarrionandia's critique can be placed within a wider literary response to Basque nationalism. Ramón Saizarbitoria's 2012 gargantuan novel *Martutene* 'became a summary and culmination of the entire century. This novel represents the acknowledged failure of the project of the national allegory ... *Martutene* narrates the long Basque 20th century and its end by resorting to the political idea of failure: the failure of a nationalist project.' (Gabilondo, 2016: 280-81). In this respect, the contents of what a postnational Basque Country might look like gives vim and urgency to Sarrionandia's work. Dark humour also plays its part in his task of bringing to light the discontents of the nationalist project to which Gabilondo refers, in this instance bringing together the threat of death, the personal intimacy of relationship degradation and the architectural aesthetics of Basqueness and Basque nationalism. On returning home one night, Maribel finds her writer partner, Josu, with an indigenous woman who is walking naked from the bedroom to the toilet. The melancholic binary is expressed as being able either to refashion political belonging in the future or as an acceptance of a fatalistic present and past:

> And in that room I felt ridiculous, like a caricature, an artifical satellite or an old cloth, like a tourist postcard. The book I left is in the same place, open wide and pages facing downwards, looking like the roof tiles of a Basque farmhouse. Lifting it, I look at it and there it is, of course, the book is open at le néant est structure constitutive de l'existant, all nice and tiled.

> The girl, apparently, doesn't read much.

> I look at the wall and read a new graffiti, written in Josu's usual handwriting:

> *Our homeland is time*

> I'd go and score out time and write the words prison sentence instead.[42] Our prison sentence. It would be a homeland, were it not for the fact that death arrives with the punctuality of the firing squad ...

> Just beside it, I wrote:

> *"If I were a piano player, I'd play in the goddamn closet"*

> J.D. Salinger (Sarrionandia, 2001: 90-91)

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[42] The words 'denbora' (time) and 'kondena' (prison sentence) have a certain vocalic resemblance.

The weaving together of intertextuality, the distorsion of time and place and viable foward-facing melancholy is conveyed here, co-existing with the concept of time as doing prison time. However, unlike Saizorbitoria's novel *Martutene* which has a razing destructiveness targeted around the Basque condition, Sarrionandia gives us a clue about what might be the co-ordinates of Basque political community in the future. In the following three excerpts, it is not unreasonable to assume that oniric melancholy can be interpreted at both the level of the individual and the national political community. In the first, Sarrionandia provides the reader with another melancholic binary – redemption and reconstruction or regression. Maribel is alone at home and comes across a draft letter written by Josu, presumably written for her:

> You said that I write in order to be silent, that I'm getting further and further out of kilter, further and further out of season, that I pile up draft after draft and that I'm giving up on present day life to write narrative about the past and future.
>
> We've lost the ability to communicate, but I'm writing to try and recover it, in that old room with no fittings, no chairs, sitting back to back and telling each other things just like we used to do. But writing, since it's a way to talk to a friend while you have your back to them, is like a conversation that we all need. And each of us gets there as best they can, through monologues, through writing. There are people who converse through silence.
>
> ...
>
> But maybe you're right, maybe writing isn't another way to speak but rather a way to substitute speech because we have forgotten how to speak. And this language form belongs to another world, these words cannot come back to us, this ideolect looks very much like silence. (Sarrionandia, 2001: 306-07)

The second occurs at the end of the book in a chapter entitled, 'If not now, when?'. Maribel and Goio are seemingly at the beginning of a relationship. Josu does not imagine he will be invited to a future wedding, leaving him to 'carry on with this laughable archaeology of the future.' His final words are in the second person future and although nominally the recipient of the words is Goio, the reader is left with the doubt that Josu is addressing a larger audience. Joseba Gabilondo's reading of the novel's conclusion is that 'the placing of homeland and nation becomes a problem of time, that is, the homeland in the novel becomes transformed into a temporal yet non-spatial reality' (2012: 52). This research finds with Gabilondo in this respect and, in line with Flatley and Traverso above, also underscores Sarrionandia's recourse to a refurbished, hopeful and political melancholy which uses the past to inform and urge a reconfiguring of the future and the vanquished:

And as you travel forward to the future you will have the sensation you are travelling to the past. You have lost everything that you have gained because you really had more than what can be had, and despite this you will know that you will still have the most important of things that can be possessed: time.

Yes, time.

And your adventure will be more spectacular than that of Ulysses, it doesn't matter where you go, because you will return to the place you've never been. (Sarrionandia, 2001: 433)

We know that Sarrionandia is a close reader of Walter Benjamin's concepts of 'now-time' and 'messianic time' which provide for the reinvigoration of the present and future by dint of reinterpreting past events whereby the historian 'grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one' thus eschewing 'telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary' (Benjamin, 1968: 263). In the third example, perhaps invoking Benjamin's 'angel of history', Maribel reflects on her duties as messenger carrier in Central and South America, putting this in the context of time:

Like a jigsaw puzzle, time leaves us the vestiges of many tiny pieces from the past so that we can arm ourselves with that material. Nothing comes formed complete but rather it might be that this cluster of fragments will take on some kind of sense. (Sarrionandia, 2001: 88)

Sarrionandia's interpretation of time can be linked with the sociopolitical opportunities afforded by utopia and which will be developed more fully in the final chapter. In his book-length essay '*¿Somos como Moros en la Niebla?*' (Are we as Moors in the Mist?), he problematises the spatio-temporality of progress, his turn of phrase clearly influenced by Benjamin's 'now-time':

Utopia is not something in the future but rather something which illuminates all of time. Utopia cannot be understood as a chronological final state of history but as an illumination which diachronically traverses every moment of history and which constitutes its substance. History, in its official version, is the name given to the development of progress, it is the chronological narrative which explains and justifies existing domination ... The present has neither separated from the past nor has it transformed it. The idea of emancipation enlivens moments of people suffering oppression and humiliation. The past is neither closed off nor finished. (2012: 794)

In his discussion of left-wing melancholy in the twentieth century, Enzo Traverso highlights the similarity and capacity of Marxist and Christian teleological narratives to

withstand devastating experiences. For Traverso, the capacity to withstand dehumanisation through a 'dialectic of utopian melancholy, refractory to resignation,' can be subsumed under a relational continuity that he links to Raymond Williams' 'structures of feeling'. In Williams' definition of these structures as 'social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have already been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available' (1977: 133-34), the resonance of Benjamin's 'weak messianic force' can be felt. Traverso explicity brings melancholy to the fore as part of this force and links it to 'the metabolism of defeat – melancholic but not demotivating or demobilizing, exhausting but not dark' and pointing to the 'persistence of a utopia lived as a horizon of expectation and a historical perspective.' (2017: 50-31). This form of utopia is discussed in the final chapter in the context of all three authors analysed in this research.

**Political Violence**

The other significant element in *Lagun Izoztua* is the political violence resulting from territorial contestation in the Basque Country. This has been studied from a number of disciplines, including nationalism studies (Kolås and Ibarra, 2018; Mansvelt Beck, 2005; Mees, 2003; de Pablo, 2015; Muro, 2005; Gillespie and Gray, 2015; Conversi, 2000), socio-legal, counter-terrorism, security and critical terrorism studies (Zabalo and Saratxo, 2015; Muro, 2019; Landa, 2013; Zulaika, 2009; Guittet, 2008; Hamilton, 2007: Douglass and Zulaika, 1990), sociology (Mees, 2004; Pérez-Agote, 2006; Olivieri, 2015; Urla, 1993; Edles, 1999; López Romo and Fernández Soldevilla, 2018; Díez Medrano, 1994; Tejerina, 2001), political science (Zabalo et al, 2012; Lecours, 2007; De la Calle and Miley, 2008; Ibarra and Ahedo, 2004; Martínez-Herrera, 2002), anthropology (Zulaika, 1988), peace and conflict studies (Whitfield, 2014; Castells and Rivera, 2017), political theory (Jeram and Conversi, 2014; Ruíz, 2016); sociolinguistics (Tejerina, 1992; 1996), fiscal governance (Gray, 2015) and Basque literature studies (Zaldua, 2016). From within critical literary theory, on the subject of political violence and more specifically that of ETA, Joseba Gabilondo finds that Sarrionandia himself is somewhat 'frozen'. On this view, he is a 'library author' who writes successfully about the human condition and reality from within the autonomous institutional structures of literariness. Comparing him with Borges, it is Sarrionandia's disposition for reading which powers the fragmentation seen in his most subtle writing, 'it is the library which creates the distance with reality and it is that distance which facilitates Sarrionandia's

offbeat readings of reality'. It is at that moment, when distance and reality meet, that Sarrionandia becomes encumbered:

> At that perilous juncture where these two fields clash, Sarrionandia cannot write because he is drawing nearer to his traumatic moment, that is, the Basque Country and ETA. Ironically, what Sarrionandia cannot achieve is the use of direct reference to discuss the Basque Country. And when he does that ... Sarrionandia loses all of his discursive and political power; his opinion becomes just like any other, like any other citizen, and as regards ETA, his opinion might be ethically judged as being belated and slapdash. (2012: 58)

An ethical evaluation of whether Sarrionandia in his work has avoided a frontal discussion of Basque terrorism or has been treated 'elliptically' (Gabilondo, 2012: 52) cannot form part of this research. As we saw earlier in the chapter, however, in his earliest work '*Izuen Gordelekuetan Barrena*' (*In the Recesses of Fear*), political violence by ETA (the 'axe and the snake') is referenced alongside deaths through state torture (Sarrionandia, 1981). In a 2014 edition with amended prologue, Sarrionandia stated the following:

> I was young, and like many others, I went looking for the laberinth's entrance and not its exit. With extraordinary audacity, people of our generation entered into laberinths: that of armed resistance, those that *Heroin Airways* offered or the laberinth of recreating an old discarded language ...
>
> This book was a provocation, like most of our books in those days because it went against the grain, and in the etymological sense of the word provocation, 'the convoking of voices', in the spirit of co-operation. Modernity and cosmopolitanism, culture and hypertextuality were being proposed in tandem with our roots. But we were carrying those roots around our neck ...
>
> ... the preface written at that time in the special circumstances of February 1981 – when they carried in the half-dead Jose Arregi to Carabanchel [prison] where we were on hunger strike – has been replaced. (2014: 7-8)

*Marinel Zaharrak* (*Ancient Mariners*) published in 1987 was the first to be published after Sarrionandia had escaped from Martutene prison in San Sebastián and represents a revision of *Izuen Gordelekuetan Barrena* along with unpublished material from the prison period and the year following his escape. In this volume, paramilitary militancy is accorded more prominence to the detriment of the exuberant metaliterary signposting in his earlier volume (Rodriguez, 2014: 156). Instead, there is a scepticism and questioning of whether poetry is apt in certain dehumanising situations and that perhaps silence should reign (Kortazar, 1997: 94). The following passages, the first from his

preface to the volume and the poem 'Literature and Revolution' highlight his continued support for Basque political violence as well as his restlessness with literature's transformatory capacity:

> What use does poetry have in these times? That is Friedrich Hölderlin's question and that of any other poet. Moreover, has there ever been a period of time not brought forth from the material of destruction, when man's life is so ephemeral? How shameless the poetry of our days, unable to be silent, incapable of impacting upon or reversing reality, its desire for impossibility and indispensable emotions when that very desire crashes in agony against the jail wall ... I dedicate this book to Mikel Albisu[43] and especially to Basque prisoners in Spanish and French jails. It would be enough if my words were to echo their stillness in the narrow cells and in the grey prison yards. (Sarrionandia, 1987: 9)

In comparison with the weak expectancy or hope hinted at in *Lagun Izoztua*, 'Literature and Revolution' offers only despondency and the retreat of the word in the face of overwhelming physical force exercised by the state. Referring to the horrors of Auschwitz, the critic Jon Kortazar alludes to Adorno's essay, written in 1949, contending that to 'write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric'.[44] Kortazar links ineffability arising from inhumanity to George Steiner's *Language and Silence* in which the image is deployed of the poet preferring to cut out his tongue rather than lionise barbarity, producing in effect a politics of silence. In 'Literature and Revolution', however, such a politics is negligible and Kortazar's summing up of the poem, 'Sarrionandia tells us that literature does not discuss the suffering of Basque militants, and thus becomes ephemeral within the borders of silence' (1997: 94), reveals an intertextuality rendered sterile and able only to confirm its surrender to obscenity:

> LITERATURE AND REVOLUTION
>
> When the inspector Ángel Martínez places
>
> > the barrel of his revolver into the anus of the naked detainee
>
> And on taking it out, when he shows its smeared,
>
> > bloodied, pathetic muzzle, what does it matter to the tortured youth
> >
> > > whether the poet is **um fingidor**?
>
> I wonder whether G. K. Chesterton has ever visited La Salve?

---

[43] Mikel Albisu Iriarte organised the breakout of Sarrionandia from prison. At the time of publication of *Marinel Zaharrak*, Albisu was directing Fernando Pessoa's play *Mariñel* which had been translated into Basque by Sarrionandia. He subsequently went into hiding becoming the head of ETA. He was detained in France in 2004, given a prison sentence in 2010 (Rodriguez, 2013: 154) until his release in 2019.

[44] In Klaus Hofmann's reassessment of Adorno's essay (2005: 194), the need for poetry's persistence aligns itself more closely with Traverso's thesis.

In the cells at Intxaurrondo who knows of

      Hermann Broch?

How will the tortured youth then explain

      on arrival before the judge, body destroyed, the

      meaning of the term **objetive correlative**?

What does the dawn full of needles

      at Carabanchel mean for Molly Bloom?

Who is Michel Foucault for those

      wasting away in punishment cells?

         A five minute visit? A poetical encounter?

Do prisoners have to study Jean Duvoisin's Bible

      to be able to put the 'h's and the commas in the right place

        in their forbidden letters?

What does the inextinguishable ethical value of all

      rebellion, revolution and adventure mean for literature?

What has been written at the margins of the magazines **Voprosi Literaturi**

      or **Tel Quel** about Basque prisoners' never-ending hunger strikes?

Dodging police bullets, what does **commitment** matter to the

      escaping youth, his heart defenceless

        fluttering like a flag in revolt?     (Sarrionandia, 1987: 22)

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, in the sections of *Lagun Izoztua* dealing with Goio and Andoni's upbringing in Kalaportu coinciding with the beginning of ETA's paramilitary activities, we see how the young Goio becomes fascinated by the relationship between the world he inhabits and other possible worlds:

I glanced at Goio's notebook and then read in a corner of one of the squared pages:

*Kaioarri*

*Kalaportu*

*Basque Country*

*Europe*

*World*

*Universe*

71

'The universe, stars and all...' I said to him.

...

Kalaportu was a tiny spot in this world, but it was where we were. (Sarrionandia, 2001: 176-77)


Despite his fascination for the place of the Basque Country in the world in the widest sense, Goio would become involved with a terrorist organisation seeking a particularist recognition and legitimation of territory and his life, gradually moving away from violence, reflects the directionality Sarrionandia would seem to wish for the wider political community he ascribes to. The reader is shown at the beginning of the novel how Goio becomes aware – in his early teenage years – of political violence and its linkages with the social reclaiming of language. On a quay in his hometown of Kalaportu, Goio witnesses the challenging of the hitherto diglossic relationship between the public written presence of Spanish and the orality of Basque. This new situation would become instantly normalised among Goio's group of friends as they come to terms with a reality tainted with violence and navigate their own location within it:

His mother turned round and said:

'They've killed a Guardia Civil officer in Bilbao and I don't want you mooching about town.'

'Why?'

'Why what?'

'Why have they killed him?'

'What would I know. That's why!'

With daylight the next day, on the shipyard walls we saw the words written in huge red paint:

ETA

On all the street corners you could see photocopies on the ground, in Basque on one side and in Spanish on the other, with Guardia Civil jeeps screeching up and down.

...

That afternoon, the whole gang got together at Harriandi Rock ...'Hey, let's play a game of Guardia Civil and Basques?' one of them asked.

'What game's that, then?'

'You stupid or what, it's like cops and robbers!'

Juan Bautista and Agustin chose the sides by drawing straws. After choosing sides, we did the same, choosing who was going to be Guardia Civil and who got to be Basques. (Sarrionandia, 2001: 72-73)

Moving forward decades, in a section of the novel located in Goio's future, copperfastened invariably by the author in second person future tense, away from the combatant seas of the Bay of Biscay, the fugitive ETA member sets sail on a scientific expedition bound for the Antarctic. This chapter has made reference to Sarrionandia's interest in the theme of voyage, particularly the Odyssean/Ulyssean voyage. As we have seen, Eider Rodriguez has linked the development of sea imagery in Sarrionandia's novel to what she sees as an evolution in his thinking around ETA (2014: 353), hinting at possible end-game scenarios on both political and paramilitary fronts which would lead to its disbanding. In an interview held in 2017, Sarrionandia discussed the 'traumatic moment' referred to above by Joseba Gabilondo. The author refers to the failed negotiations held between 1986 and 1989 between ETA and the Spanish government, culminating in a series of six formal meetings faciliated by the Algerian government (Whitfield, 2014; Mees, 2003; Zabalo and Saratxo, 2015). This for Sarrionandia is a definitive period after which support for ETA began to wane quickly:

After Algeria, ETA's story is one of suicide. When we were young, up against the state, we were a bit like Robin Hood. And we had the support of most people. [T.E.] Lawrence explains what guerrilla warfare is and how with five percent support guerrilla actions can be maintained but you have to have the support of approximately 60 percent who are sympathetic or give overwhelming justification for it, and in the Basque Country we had that and more in the 1970s, we were against the state and the generals, but obviously if you get locked into a dynamics of violence you keep extending the military targets.

Everything that happened after Algeria represents, I think, political suicide ... In my opinion the manner in which ETA was presented as a military organisation that would achieve freedom was false. Those of us who joined didn't want to take part in that Francoist state, its Francoist police and its Francoist army ... in my opinion the state's apparatus in the Basque Country was beyond the pale. ETA also functioned sloppily, it wasn't viable, it was a resistance. So what happened? I joined ETA, not because I completely agreed with ETA or that our future would be better served by doing that but because when I was twenty, I had to do military service and in those days you did either military service in Spain or you joined ETA. For me, neither were optimal, but I preferred ETA as I considered it a more moral or honourable alternative than doing military service in the Spanish army. I would have liked another choice ... you're in a war, you don't get to choose, one or the other, Spanish army, take the conventional route, pay your taxes so that the police can come and torture, so for me it was an ethical decision not to take that path, and then, 'ok, so I'll support this. And it will turn out good or bad.' ETA during those years was bearable. Ten years later

and things begin to change, both as regards targets and mindset. I fled the Basque Country in 1986/87 because I saw that we weren't going anywhere. Up to that point things went sometimes better, sometimes worse but it was in the context of negotiations. I came however to the view in 1986/87 that I didn't agree with most of ETA's framework. It was based on military strength, its conception of the enemy had become very ambiguous and irresponsible, I mean, 'we don't care if something goes well or badly, we don't care', you know what I mean, it becomes justified, doesn't it? I was of another mind.[45]

I have been given a particular label but I'd say I'd be the person in the Basque Country who has had least contact with guns. I was in ETA for two years, then a prisoner and then I went into hiding. I wasn't part of the core organisation. I went into hiding and I'm described as an ETA member, a terrorist, and it's all a lie.[46]

In interview, Sarrionandia reflects on the freedom and restrictions exile has meant for his work as a writer and how the politics of maintaining a nuanced and critical relationship with a left-wing nationalist Basque diaspora linked to ETA[47] has impacted upon his readership in the Basque Country:

Basque society in the final days of Francoism reverted into its clan formation. That can be described many ways, as factions, clans, according to the party system power structure. The PNV[48] is not a political party. It's a place of power. It is like a small state. The Nationalist Left,[49] ETA's vanguard if you like, was a compact state. And the Spanish work in the same way, like a small state.

So I was in exile ... what happens if you're living back home, you arrive back from prison and you have to reincorporate into the apparatus, do you get me? You go back to a small town, everybody knows each other and it's very difficult to overcome that. By leaving the country, on my own and as I then spent time without being in the company of other Basques, subjectively I felt completely free from that point of view.

What I mean to say is that, in my situation, from one point of view I have been falsely 'over-labelled'. For example my friends, Atxaga and others are not in the Nationalist Left, they're very much against that. But they have been my friends. Anyone who reads any book of mine, they know I'm not in the mould of the Nationalist Left. But at the same time I am, but I don't belong to that apparatus, do you get me? And I have felt free in that sense ... because I'm against that kind

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[45] Tracking 02:08:43 - 02:15:46.
[46] Tracking 01:14:16
[47] See Oiarzabal, 2018 on the politics of Basque diaspora.
[48] On the history of the hegemonic role of the PNV within Basque nationalism, see de Pablo and Mees, 2005.
[49] Whitfield, 2014; Hamilton, 2007; Pérez-Agote, 2006 and Mees, 2003 deploy the adjective 'radical' to describe the 'ezker abertzalea' (Nationalist Left), the cluster of nationalist movements in favour of the creation of a socialist Basque state brought about by political negotiations as a result of continued political violence by ETA.

of system and we're not going to be the better for it, no democratic politics, no nation, nothing.

In my case, what has happened? On one hand, I have experienced the apparatus of Basque resilience, but it's a complicated thing, it's not overly negative, it's been a form of resistance, a different form of resistance, you have to understand it sociologically or politically. Having said that, it also works negatively. So I'm not in that club. I have had the liberty to write and do whatever I want. But then what happens? One thing is how I write and another thing is its reception because you can say the sky is blue and someone infers 'you're a terrorist', 'he's a Daesh terrorist, he's talking about the sky over Irak'. That's how it works, isn't it?

People who do read me I think they have understood what line I'm taking, that there is a critical position as regards the compact power system in the Basque Country. And I think that has become generalised, and it's the Nationalist Left which has powered that change. So you can find texts in my literature which go against the armed struggle. I didn't want to come out and say 'I'm against the armed struggle' but those who have read my literature understand that there isn't one single sentence in favour of the armed struggle. How it's received then is another subject. Whether I've been successful in that ... people of the Nationalist Left they read my work and they might think, 'this is a Nationalist Left writer.' But other people have understood it as 'well, this isn't a Nationalist Left writer, this is another animal.' And then I think there's another factor which I interpret this way, and it's important in my case, and it's got nothing to do with me. I've always been in a kind of power relation in the sense of 'ok I'll say this, I can't say that because this or the other will happen', due to indirect things. Because it will get manipulated. So I want to say something but it will be interpreted in another way. And I don't want that to happen. So I've been very constrained in what or how I say things.

You have felt constrained?

Those readers, yes. For example, ETA still hasn't disappeared[50] and I think it should have at the time of the Algeria negotiations, similar to what happened when the IRA began negotiations. The armed struggle no longer had any viability. And even less with that version of armed struggle. That kind of armed struggle, bombs going off on the streets, I had been against that for a long time. But I couldn't do that, because to say that would be getting into the apparatus of it all,[51] 'he's not with the Nationalist Left ... or he's with the PNV or whatever.[52]

Sarrionandia's envisioning of the end of political violence in the Basque Country seems to align itself with Julen Zabalo and Onintza Odriozola's contention[53] that Basque

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[50] ETA announced its complete dissolution on 03 May 2018 (BBC, 2018).
[51] Sarrionandia takes up some of these themes in 'Lapur Banden Etika Ala Politika' (*The Ethics or Politics of Bands of Thieves*) (2015: 41-51)
[52] Tracking 01:12:06 - 01:19:51
[53] See also Zabalo and Saratxo, 2015 on the relationship between Spanish and French counter-terrorism activities and internal ETA positioning on the political impact of terrorism. On the impact of globalisation processes and the post-conflict era on the construction of Basque political community, see Ruíz, 2016 and Jeram and Conversi, 2014.

nationalism is likely to evolve towards a situation whereby 'all forms of Basque nationalism appear to accept that the different projects must compete under the same democratic mantle.' Nevertheless, Sarrionandia's contestation of territory as overriding element in a political ontology of the Basque Country does not neatly tally with Zabalo and Odriozola's bedrock of residency-in-territory which would entitle 'all citizens living in the Basque Country to membership of the nation and would bring it closer to the classical view of a state' (2017: 147-49) as the author is manifestly open to other interpretations on how to reconfigure Westphalian territorial arrangements around political community, casting doubt upon whether sovereign political systems which have consolidated their legitimacy on the belief that dependence upon, and workings of, national institutions replicated throughout the international state system and cemented during modernity is an inherently progressive and desired state of affairs for human beings.

## Joseba Sarrionandia: Imagery and Reception
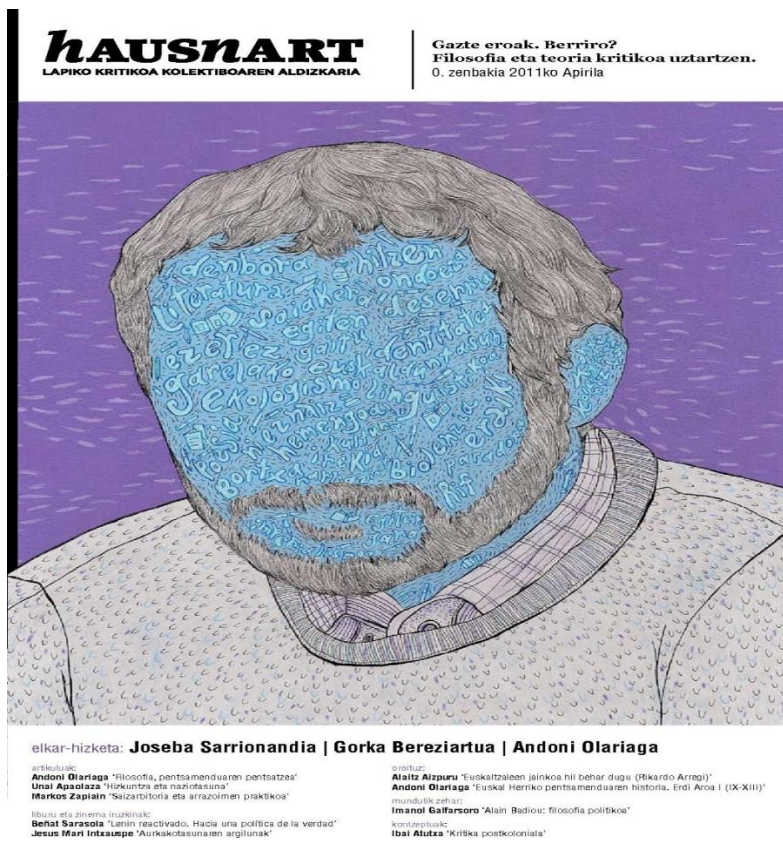


Figure 1. Source: Bereziartua, G. and Olariaga, A. (2011).

In the quotation above, Sarrionandia refers to his readership and how he perceives his writing as being interpreted. The image above in Figure 1 is taken from the cover of the first issue in 2011 of the Basque language literary magazine *Hausnart*. It shows the drawing of a man who we understand to be Joseba Sarrionandia. His face, devoid of eyes and nose, is made up instead of words, phrases and cultural geographical locations, for example 'time / literature / I'm not from here / because we are nothing / the malaise of words / Rif'. Underneath the drawing the headline article announces an interview with Sarrionandia.

It is perhaps inevitable that a certain aura exists around the figure of Sarrionandia due to the entwining of his singular personal trajectory with his literary output. Eider Rodríguez has linked readers' and critics' reaction to Sarrionandia in the context of reception theory whereby literary and otherwise texts are interpreted on the basis of individual lived experiences forming part of specific cultural, historical and political processes in which the text and personal lived experience take on added value (2012: 58). Reaction to his work (including news items about Sarrionandia in print media) over more than thirty years can be linked directly to the territorial contestation around perceptions of the ontology and political status of the Basque Country. A brief snapshot of Madrid-based media demonstrates how the literary output of Sarrionandia is linked to his relationship with ETA. An example of this is an article which appeared in 2011 in the Madrid-based paper *El Mundo* after Sarrionandia was awarded the Basque Government Essay Award for his socio-political essay '*Moroak gara behelaino artean?*' *(Are we Moors in the midst of the Mist?).*

# El Gobierno otorga el Euskadi de Literatura a un etarra fugado pero retiene el dinero



El etarra fugado y galardonado con el Premio Euskadi de Literatura, Joseba Sarrionandia. | E.M.

■ Cultura 'respeta' al jurado pero 'opone reparos' al premio a Sarrionandia

■ Retendrá los 18.000 euros hasta que 'Sarri' 'regularice su situación'

■ Destaca que el condenado 'no se ha retractado nunca de su militancia'

Figure 2. Source (El Mundo, 2011)

The headline (Figure 2 above) ran with 'Escaped in the speakers of a music group in 1985 / The [Basque] Government grants the Euskadi Award for Literature to fugitive ETA member but keeps the money back' whilst the sub-headings noted 'The Department of Culture 'respects' the jury but 'opposes' Sarrionandia being awarded the award / It will hold back the 18,000 euros until 'Sarri' 'regularises his situation' / The Department emphasises that 'the convict has never recanted his membership' (El Mundo, 2011). Between the title and sub-headings appears the black and white photograph of Sarrionandia, taken during the weeks before his escape from Martutene prison, being one of the few extant photographs of the author until November 2016.[54]

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[54] Within days of the Etxepare Institute making its press statement, the Basque language magazine *Argia* flew a journalist out to Havana, Cuba to take a photograph of the then 59 year old Sarrionandia. The

The fact that both Spanish and Basque media show interest in pictorial imagery[55] or otherwise of Sarrionandia is suggestive of the enhanced symbolic value of this imagery as a representational envisioning of the territorial contestation between the Spanish state and Basque sub-state political community. In 2015, the Basque language television channel, ETB1, broadcasted a series of audio conversations with the author as part of a televised programme and subsequently placed on the channel's website and entitled 'We have been able to hear for the first time Joseba Sarrionandia's voice' (EITB, 2015). This is suggestive of a certain fetishising of the exiled author with other presenters in the programme discussing the possible reasons behind why the author did not want to appear live on television. Regarding the contents of the same television programme, *El Mundo* fronted a different headline: 'ETB interviews the ETA fugitive Sarrionandia' (El Mundo, 2015).

According to Eider Rodríguez, the reader will find it difficult to embark upon the reading of a literary work with little or no background knowledge of the author or the rest of the oeuvre and that any attempt to rein in prejudice and expectations will be in vain (2012: 60). Reaction to Sarrionandia's work in literary circles within both Spain and the Basque Country reflect how his personal trajectory with difficulty can be diverted from his literary output and can be divided here *grosso modo* into two categories, those who criticise the mythification of Sarrionandia and the biographical linking with his work and those who value positively such linkages when evaluating the author.[56]

Towards the end of 1981 Sarrionandia was in Martutene prison when he published his poem anthology *Izuen Gordelekuetan Barrena* (In the Recesses of Fear). The literary critic Jon Kortazar wrote the following that same year, 'Joseba, I've got your book here with me. But you're not here.' (Kortazar, 1981). The reader assumes that the critic aligns himself to a certain degree with the current lived experience of Sarrionandia and that this is linked to the literary work at hand. The year after Sarrionandia escaped, a

headline ran, 'With this photo, I hope to have paid the debt to the society of the spectacle', perhaps in reference to Marxist theorist Guy Debord's 'Society of the Spectacle' published in 1967 on the the link between the degradation of human life and commodity fetishism (Argia, 2016).

[55] A standard inside-cover autobiographical resumé for Sarrionandia in a number of his publications contains a black and white pre-1985 photograph of the author followed by a brief account of awards received during his incarceration along with a description of subsequent publications following his escape from prison.

[56] This section uses Rodríguez, 2012.

series of short stories written by him appeared entitled *Atabala eta Euria* (The Drum and the Rain). Kortazar admits that his reading has been affected by the fact that Sarrionandia was now in a clandestine location, 'The silence that has wrapped itself around him means that a halo of mystery has descended upon these pages'. On the cold reception the critic perceives this publication to have received, Kortazar goes on to ask, 'Why has the book not received the prominence which the name of Sarrionandia deserves? Some might mention political reasons, others will offer up literary reasons. Some people will plead that the union between the writer and the man of letters is impossible to separate' (Kortazar, 1986). The writer Xabier Mendiguren, writing in 1988 after the publication the previous year of *Marinel Zaharrak* (Ancient Mariners) opines that the day of Sarrionandia's breakout from Martutene prison was a 'happy day' whilst supposing that readers will appreciate the anthology because 'as readers you will be aware of his personal trajectory' (Mendiguren, 1988). In 1990, after the publication in 1989 of the micro-story volume *Ez gara geure baitakoak* (We Don't Belong to Ourselves), the Venezuelan philosopher and poet Josu Landa wrote, 'Readers have no other option but to give a warm welcome to the books of Sarrionandia which arrive to our shores like shipwrecked bottles. This is the only way we have to reduce the imposed distance' (Landa, 1990). Here, the perception is formed that the physical absence of Sarrionandia from the world of Basque letters should be linked to any evaluation of his work, past and present. Envisaging the exiled and depleted artist communing with the nation (and the Basque literary world) by dint of flickering candlelight and blazing illumination, the poet and essayist Tere Irastortza, in her review of Sarrionandia's first novel, *Lagun Izoztua* (Frozen Friend) gives full rein to imagery aligning the author with the subject of the novel:

> Comrade, my frozen friend, will this answer somehow get to you? Our light is still shining here. Meanwhile, in the dark nights, some of us Basque readers know that a frozen friend has taken the trouble to leave a lighthouse lit up in a corner of Basque letters. (Irastortza, 2002)

Among those more critical of the blending of the personal and the literary in Sarrionandia's work, the novelist and poet Felipe Jauristi, writing in the '*El Diario Vasco*' newspaper injects a discrepant note regarding the relationship between copies sold and the author rather than the content. In his review of *Gartzelako Poemak* (Poems from Prison) in 1992, Jauristi states that Sarrionandia is 'without a shadow of a doubt this country's most charismatic writer. They have turned him into a myth, which to all

intents and purposes means that he is on everyone's lips but very few have got round to reading him' (Jauristi, 1992). In a similar vein, in his review of Sarrionandia's *Akordatzen* (Remembering) published in 2004, Ibon Egaña deploys Roland Barthes, observing that the over-riding deciphering code must be found within the text and not outside of it. Nonetheless, he admits that extratextual factors need to be considered:

> You begin reading *Akordatzen* and you find yourself invariably discussing all those things which exist outside the text ... you become forced to talk about ideology and mythification. It's well-known that his captivating trajectory and the ideological affinity people feel towards him have resulted in him having a certain unconditional support among the majority of his readers ... as a result, what you have is a text which with difficulty avoids being tied to the elements cited above (trajectory, ideology, mythification) which, in order to appeal to emotion, engages with the *a priori* complicity on the part of his reader. That being the case, the questions flow one after the other. What kind of reception would the book have had if it was another author? Would it stand up to the test of translation? (Egaña, 2005)

Sarrionandia himself is acutely aware of these debates. In interview, he refers explicitly to the renown linked to his personal trajectory, referring to this as a 'spectacle' which he has lived with over the years and connects this with interpretations of his writing and contestation with the state at the sociopolitical and psychological level. Discussing the 'frozen' character Goio in *Lagun Izoztua*, Sarrionandia talks about his escape from Martutene prison and the aftermath of this event. It would not be beyond the bounds of reason to argue that in his sociological account of the Nationalist Left's and wider Basque society's reaction to his ensuing exile that the author uses here his own personal trajectory to mine a Koselleckian history of the vanquished whereby new perspectives on history, in large part its capacity to be rewritten, lead to new methodological tools (Olsen, 2014: 114) which, in their turn, begin a path away from the criminalisation of the enemy:

> The character loses the capacity of speech, of being able to explain things, things that happen he can't explain. It's to do with language but not explicitly uttered. However, there's another aspect here which has nothing to do with me. And it's a factor which belongs to the realm of the spectacle which, as far as my written work is concerned, hasn't been understood. It's something that's been done in my name and belongs to the realm of the spectacle. When I escaped from prison they brought out the 'Sarri Sarri' song[57] etc.
>
> In my opinion the state is a Leviathan, a monster of sorts, or a minotaur, so when the state gets a bloody nose, everyone likes that, someone breaking out

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[57] This song by the Basque rock group Kortatu, published in the same year as Sarrionandia's escape, is perhaps their most famous song, see Weston, 2011.

from prison, going on the run, it's not that it was me breaking out of prison, because for me that wasn't a thing done lightly. So what happened? For Nationalist Left people, it was their only true victory because another kind of victory is killing a general, killing people, there comes a point in war when you are compelled to do it but at the end of the day it's a tragedy. But the only positive victory during all of the 1980s was us escaping and the following decade I don't know what it would have been but the victories have been far and few between. Basques have lost every single war against the Spanish.

That being the case, in my opinion, a psychological compensation can be that of hurt, of defeat when for example some guy escapes from prison and mocks the state and it remains in many people's psyche, not only for Nationalist Left people but for PNV people who in fact seem to celebrate the escape more than Nationalist Left people ... So all the things around the escape and 'Sarri Sarri' and all that revolves around me but it actually has nothing to do with me. That myth has nothing to do with me. Its impact has been that it becomes a figure around whom you can stake a claim, distinct from literature. That is something that I haven't come to terms with. So I have tried not to engage much with the press. But the thing has snowballed and so if I come out saying some nonsense or other, it's made into a huge thing and that is something which frightens me, because then I can't actually say anything. I'm an ordinary guy, I'm not looking for the limelight.

The escape is like a heist, all capers and buffoonery. It turned out ok but it could have turned out very bad. It was something that happened that has little importance but there are people who take the personality myth and use it to beat up on Spain, on the state. Not just Nationalist Left people but PNV people as well, 'wow, what a guy, screw the state'. Something like that.[58]


**Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with Joseba Sarrionandia's response to the relationship between modernity and political sovereignty. Because his concerns are global, they are also rooted in the particular. He does this in an attempt to map out what legitimacy for the Basque Country might look like within a refurbished modernity. In doing so, he ushers in a cacophony of related themes: contestation around territory, irredentism within territorial claims[59] and the role of non-hegemonic languages within political communities. These provide core material for Sarrionandia in his ongoing dissectioning of the bases for political belonging and community and act as reminders, in the exercise of sovereignty, that these matters go to the very heart of the modern condition.

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[58] Tracking 01:20:00 - 01:26:34

[59] The Northern Basque Country, comprised of three provinces and currently situated within the French state, forms part of traditional 20th century *abertzale* territory claims, with a totality of seven Basque provinces taking in the Basque Autonomous Community, the Foral Community of Navarre and the Northern Basque Country.

Sarrionandia does not make an indiscriminate, aimless leap into the global but rather all-world concerns in his work link with the grounded affairs of non-hegemonic political communities.

Reinhart Koselleck's rejoinder to Marx that history is written by the victors is that such a view is short-termist (Olsen, 2014: 237), arguing that a 'search for middle or long-range reasons' offer 'an attractive hypothesis that precisely from the unique gains in experience imposed upon them spring insights of lasting duration and, consequently, of greater explanatory power. If history is made in the short run by the victors, historical gains in knowledge stem in the long run from the vanquished' (2002: 76). The idea of a purposeful and politically acting melancholy has been put forward in this chapter as a thread running through the writing of Sarrionandia. It is also linked to the concept of thoroughgoing political utopia. In his essay *¿Somos Moros en la Niebla?* the author links the growth of utopian literature as a 'politico-literary genre' which begins in the sixteenth century when human will begins to emancipate itself from divine providence through processes of social construction. For Sarrionandia, "utopia reflects every moment of history as a 'flipped image' representing the concerns, the hopes and the transformatory will of people." Paraphrasing Karl Mannheim and Manuel Castells, he defines ideology as 'the legitimising identity' while "utopia would be the equivalent of 'resistance identity', but above all, of 'identity as project'. Utopia is not 'that which does not exist' but rather 'that which power impedes'." (2012: 817). It is a concept whose possibilities as well as problematics will be raised in the final chapter in the context of all three writers.

# Chapter Three

## Lluís Maria Xirinacs: The Inside and Outside of a Political Ontology

> He didn't want to be a cosmopolitan whose identity went
> unacknowledged, but rather a grass-roots *animateur*.
> (Martí, 2012)

**Introduction**

A biographical commonality linking Joseba Sarrionandia, Lluís Maria Xirinacs i Damians[60] and Máirtín Ó Cadhain in this study of writerly production in European non-state or minority languages is the incarceration they underwent arising from their political beliefs. Xirinacs, however, occupies a somewhat different place in this respect to the other writers. Although the main thrust of his inordinate and highly varied writing might not be considered literary, the term 'writerly production' here encapsulates the breadth of his non-literary and somewhat lesser body of literary work. More overtly in the case of Lluís Maria Xirinacs than in the case of the other two authors, understanding both literature and creative writing writ large 'as a constitutive part of the way a society orders and governs itself' (Brannigan, 1998: 6), this study accepts the rationale whereby modes of critical interpretation such as New Historicism and Cultural Materialism seek to erase the distinction between literary and non-literary works (Eagleton, 2008: ix) insofar as the forms, styles and meanings found within creative writing can be analysed as products of interlinking social histories (Eagleton, 2002: 3).

Availing himself of diverse forms of writing, Xirinacs engaged with the relationship between self-ascription to a territorial community and inclusion within wider forms of human solidarity, affinity and attachment. These include, inter alia, prison diaries and memoirs; daily newspaper opinion columns, parliamentary and extraparliamentary speeches; the construction of a transdisciplinary, meta-rational and topological system linking ontology and the natural sciences, including the theory of relativity and quantum physics, otherwise described as an exploration of the 'macrophysical expanded world versus the internal microphysical world' (Busquets, 2017: 563); letter-writing to world and state leaders, poetry as well as the full drafting in the mid-1970s of an alternative constitution for a Spain which was emerging out of almost forty years of the 'repressive

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[60] The truncated form of his surname, Xirinacs, is the more common form and will be adopted here.

regime' of Franco's dictatorship (Fusi and Palafox, 1997: 297).[61] The platforms Xirinacs chose to use for expressing relationships to the universal from the territorial particularity of Catalonia were nothing short of varied.

The chapter contains four sections. Broadly chronological, they highlight – where relevant – the development of major conceptual themes informing his writing: the gradual bringing together of singular, concrete universality, redistribution politics and the 'embodied activity' of hunger strikes forming part of the wider – and contested – concept of civil disobedience and resistance (Yuill, 2007; Habermas, 1985; Robert and Garton Ash, 2009) and the meticulous planning for his own death as a political – indeed, cartographical – site of resistance and bio-struggle (Cameron et al, 2013). The first section deals with the family background of Xirinacs,[62] the beginnings of his engagement with sub-state nationalist positions, the onset of his inclusion of territory within a generalising theory of human emancipation and his left-wing political activism in late Francoist Spain, leading to incarceration both before and after the death of Franco. The second section examines the relationship between his writerly production as activist whilst in jail along with his numerous hunger strikes. This is then linked to wider instances of global civil disobedience and how academic literatures have interpreted this development. The manner in which Xirinacs harnessed the time and endurance-linked performativity of his own body as both site of resistance and political strategy in and outside prison to his political, social and economic envisioning for Catalonia will be analysed using published prison diaries, memoirs and politico-philosophical essays by Xirinacs ('Secularisation and Christianity: A critique of the theology on the death of God', 'The Future of the Church: grassroots Christian community', 'Hunger Strike for Catalonia: Diary of Twenty-One Days', 'The Obsessive Spectacle: Prison Diary I', 'I go into the Great Emptiness: Prison Diary II', 'The Betrayal of the Leaders: I. The Arduous Sowing ', Constitution: Bundle of

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[61] For nationalism scholar Montserrat Guibernau, 'Francoism exemplified the rise, for the first time in the history of Spain, of a powerful modern state equipped with the necessary tools to embark upon the cultural and linguistic homogenization of the country' leading to the 'end of the freedom of expression, the international isolation and the promotion of an ultraconservative Catholicism' (2004: 35-36). Fusi and Palafox (1997: 297) assign distinct phases to Francoism, a totalitarian, pro-fascist and economically autarchic version following on from the civil war, eventually giving way later on to a technocratic and development model.

[62] Regarding the family and personal background details of Xirinacs, this chapter leans heavily on the first definitive posthumous biography (Busquets, 2017). A much earlier biography by Silvio Balbuena was published in 1978.

Amendments)[63] and secondary sources. In this respect, the prolonged and sustained performativity of Xirinacs' body in the various scenarios of multi-location incarceration, the streets of Barcelona and the Spanish upper chamber whilst senator will be thematically linked to the heterogeneity of his writerly production mentioned above. This aspect of his coupling of the literary and the physical as associated instruments of political struggle will be introduced here and explored chronologically throughout the chapter.

The third section deals with a short and tumultuous yet highly productive parliamentary and journalistic period in the late 1970s when Xirinacs entered the Spanish senate as the most voted independent senator in Spain. During this period he published a fully amended, and overtly socially progressive, version of the Spanish constitution going through the legislature at that time, a task he conducted whilst publishing almost daily articles in two Barcelona daily newspapers, one in Spanish and the other in Catalan. These pared-down articles give an unequivocal account of how Xirinacs viewed the national question in its relation to class struggle and internationalism. The fourth and final section, with Xirinacs now withdrawn from the public gaze, can be interpreted as a culmination of his previous prison and journalistic writings, with his highly ambitious – and necessarily tendentious – attempts to formulate an exegesis on the linkages between individual, national, global and cosmic conscience, bringing together economic and politico-philosophical concerns in a metarational encasing. No attempt is made here to perform a literary critique of this period of his writings, including a much smaller body of work of poetry written in the month before his meticulously planned death in 2007, on the basis of its singular philosophical, literary or otherwise aesthetic underpinnings. Rather, Xirinacs' later body of writing is discussed in the manner in which its formal systemization pays homage to the philosophical system developed by the thirteenth-century polymath and Franciscan monk, Ramon Llull, during the period of Catalan expansion in the Mediterranean basin. This is carried out specifically to further the argument, introduced in the first chapter, that Xirinacs was acutely engaged with the political concept of 'concrete universality', in effect, a response to the Hegelian

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[63] Respectively, '*Secularització i Cristianisme: una aportació crítica a la teologia de la mort de Déu*' (1969); '*Futur d'Església: Comunitat cristiana de base*' (1976a); '*Vaga de Fam per Catalunya: Diari de 21 dies*' (1977); '*L'Espectacle Obsessiu: Diari de Presó, I/1974*' (1976b); '*Entro en el Gran Buit: Diari de Presó, II/1975*' (1976c); '*La traició dels Líders I: La sembra laboriosa*' (1993) and '*Constitució: Paquet d'Esmenes* (1978b).

treatment of homogeneity as intrinsic to the universal (Matin, 2011). I argue that the creative writing during his adult life, along with the writings linked to the 'political martyrdom' he wished to be associated with his very public death, might be seen as a rejoinder on the political ontology of subaltern groups and their claims for recognition by – and possible altering of – the sovereign political and social systems forming the international state system.

Philosophical interest in the politics of recognition was first theorised by Rousseau, Fichte and Hegel (McQueen, 2015: 9). The empirics of Xirinacs' body of creative writing would seem to confirm the struggle for recognition as core to what the international relations (IR) scholar Alexander Wendt, in discussing the putative construction of a world state, has described as the prerequisites demanded of universalism by recognition politics, asserting that 'intra-group struggles today are taking place within states (as in sub-state nationalism)' in the same way as inter-individual struggle is occuring at the level of global society (Wendt, 2003: 516). Echoing other scholarly disciplines, this would seem to straddle on the one hand the priority given by multicultural politics to group-specific claims (e.g. Charles Taylor) and, on the other, political theories of recognition at the individual level (e.g. Alex Honneth) and the role they play in the normative foundations underpinning theories of justice (McQueen, 2015: 9-10). Although concurring with Paddy McQueen that 'we should not understand a liveable life as achieved through being secured through recognition' and that as a result, 'recognition can often initiate a whole new set of struggles that have no easy or final outcome' (McQueen, 2015: 17), it would also seem reasonable to normatively conclude that liveable lives must nevertheless pass through a politics of recognition in order to engage with such a 'new set of struggles'.

**Lluís Maria Xirinacs: The Early Years**
Xirinacs was born in 1932, four years before the onset of the Spanish Civil War. The family he was born into, Catholic, upper middle-class, austere, was marked by the brutality of the recent conflict. During the war, his father Enric had formed part of a resources gathering network for the Francoist forces soon to take power in Spain. At the end of the war, in 1939, he had narrowly avoided being detained and quite likely an

immediate execution by the retreating Republican troops.[64] Lluís Maria was the third of five children. In an early unpublished autobiography of his early years, written during his incarceration in Carabanchel prison[65] in Madrid in 1975, he reminisces on the impact the war had on both himself and his siblings, three of whom became Carmelite nuns:

> The war, with its hard-hitting images, prevented me from having a spontaneous life. The cruel psychological repression resulting from the conflict – always having to eke out an existence locked up and in fear – wasn't the fault of anyone in particular ... it was society itself, rather, which produced the palpable hostility everywhere pervasive and at all hours of the day. (Busquets, 2017: 55)

The amalgamation of scientific learning and mystic leanings would come to the fore early in Xirinacs' life. Reflecting, a month before his death, on the beginnings of his entry into the clerical world, he described these entry points in terms of 'suffering an attack'. When he was 10 he states of himself, 'I suffered an attack of mysticism, and desired more than anything to lead the life of a hermit,' followed by, aged now 17, 'another attack, a strong bout of contemplation.' (Xirinacs, 2007: 66). His unpublished 1975 autobiography suggests, however, that the mystic element he felt in his early teenage years had by then fused with a ardent scientific desire for knowledge, whereby the 'narrow path to the frontal lobes of the neoencephalon, seat of the superior mystical experience ... now closed off by a religious intervention which had no truck with emerging and transcendental episodes,' would soon be yoked with the 'realm of innovation in the paleoencephalon.' According to his biographer, Lluís Busquets, the teenager Xirinacs wanted to 'link everything with everything. His objective was a secret one. No-one grasped this about him. He was completely alone in the world. His objective was to be sovereign and independent.'[66] From his cell room at Carabanchel, 30 years later, Xirinacs analyses this period:

> Heidegger says that totality is the essential condition for metaphysics, just as analysis is a condition of physics. I would add that the experience of totality is fundamental in mysticism, which always has a pantheist or panpsychic dimension. The scientific devil substituted the mystic angel. And I understood science and society, not from the point of view of analysis, as should be the case, but from the point of view of synthesis, from the point of view of

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[64] The family was widely supportive of Franco and the Axis powers in general. In 1942, Xirinacs is described as jumping with joy as his father listened to radio reports detailing German advances on Volgograd (Balbuena, 1978: 69).

[65] Joseba Sarrionandia was also incarcerated in Carabanchel for eight months during the early 1980s.

[66] Busquets, 2017: 77. He also describes the contemplative Xirinacs of the early seminary years as those of a young man 'living on the moon' (p.99).

metaphysics which limits both mysticism and physics. I considered everything from a totalitarian, fascist angle. (in Busquets, 2017: 76-78)

As has been suggested above, the concept of totality for Xirinacs represents a core element in his placing of Catalonia and other sub-state territories within a particular/universal binary. It also seems to have formed early on in his life, with the 1975 autobiography hinting, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the territorial component had not yet been formed. Whereas mystic awakenings, at the age of 11, had led to 'an infinite panorama: *the universe from inside*. I had discovered the secret passageway which, from the core of the individual, leads to the heart of all things without going through the senses,'[67] Xirinacs's prison voice in 1975 reveals that the social world could engage with mystic positionings: 'people will say: aloof, sterile, egotistical. People don't know that through the mystical path one can actually align oneself with as much efficiency in the world as in external cultural life.' (in Busquets, 2017: 73).

Following on from the economic autarchy Spain entered into under Franco, Xirinacs' family would soon experience economic hardship[68] and it would seem that it is at this point during his childhood that Xirinacs, albeit relatively well off, became aware of the politics of poverty. His autobiography at this point codes Xirinacs' increasing awareness of the world around him, shifting from first to third person singular to passive forms of the verb:

> I wasn't destined to be a manual worker like most people. I was privileged ... I hadn't yet read, and wouldn't do so for a long time, anything of Dickens, Gogol or Gorky ... since the end of the war, a huge question mark existed concerning the vanities of this world. His strong religious inclinations found a way to eke out an advantage point resistant enough to withstand the pounding, fickle whims of mankind ... The plight of the poor came to trouble him. In Pallejà, during the summer holidays, he became concerned more for the run-down nature of a number of nearby farmhouses than the stunning mirages of the house towers of second home owners from Barcelona (in Busquets, 2017: 84).

At the age of 15, the young Xirinacs began the road to priesthood, leaving home for seminaries in the northern provinces of Navarre and La Rioja, being finally ordained in 1955 (in Xirinacs, 2012: 37-8). In his 1975 autobiography, aged 43, the incarcerated Xirinacs analytically parses the institutional socialisation of clerical students in Francoist Spain. It also suggests, before the onset of middle age, a carving out and

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[67] Italics as in text.
[68] in Busquets, 2017: 67.

confirmation of a lesser-travelled and minority position within the Catholic church, one which would lead him to fracture point and beyond in his relationships with church hierarchies in the final years of the regime and the beginnings of a democratising political system in Spain. The following passage suggests a nuanced criticism of Catholic socialisation processes for priesthood candidates:

> During this period of formation and instruction, the brain is subjected to an ideological bombardment as well as a completely stripped-down and dogmatic conception of life which turns the clerical student into a *comfortable* civil servant, in the sense of not being dangerous and forming part of that great ecclesiastical system, the most ingenious social machine ever conceived. (in Busquets, 2017: 92-93)

Although taking succour from within Catholic institutional structures[69], it was clear from early on in his ministry that Xirinacs would consider himself, nor be deemed to be, a rank-and-file member. Indeed, in many respects, he actively worked not only against Francoist ecclesiastical structures but also vigorously challenged the core organisational mechanisms of Catholicism. A theme which therefore cuts across his political and social activity – enlarged upon in the third and fourth section – is his deep suspicion, problematisation of, and action against institutionalised ecclesiastical and party political systems. This is coupled with, and undoubtedly related to, what might be deemed an intense interest in religious and/or sociopolitical leadership figures such as Gandhi, Siddharta Gautama, and concentrating specifically on the life and martyrdom of Jesus Christ. The present work does not provide a case-specific martyrology for Xirinacs, a work still to be carried out from within Catalan studies.[70] Rather, it attests to the resemblance between the writings and actions of Xirinacs and the five circumstances or characteristics of martyrdom death as listed by Arthur Droge and James Tabor in the case of early Christians. The chapter argues that the first four of these are directly applicable to Xirinacs' life and death, whilst obviously accepting a grey area whereby 'the distinction between suicide and martyrdom is in the eye of the beholder'. The characteristics are listed thus:

> 1. They reflect situations of opposition and persecution.
> 2. The choice to die, which these individuals make, is viewed by the authors as necessary, noble, and heroic.

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[69] For more on the Catholic church during Franco's dictatorship, see Julián Casanova's *La Iglesia de Franco* (Franco's Church) (2001) and Guibernau, 2004: 39-42.
[70] From a comparative perspective, on the theme of martyrdom pertaining to Welsh-language prison literature, see Mac Giolla Chíost, 2013.

3. These individuals are often eager to die; indeed, in several cases they end up directly killing themselves.
4. There is often the idea of vicarious benefit resulting from their suffering and death.
5. The expectation of vindication and reward beyond death, more often than not, is a prime motivation for the choice of death. (quoted in Cormack, 2002: xii)

Michael Jensen, in his *Martyrdom and Identity: The Self on Trial*, defends Christian self-abnegation through martyrdom as political communication from philosophical and literary accusations of being 'a cult of death', inter alia those by Charles Taylor and Salman Rushdie. He accepts the political nature inherent in the martyr and hews out diachronic aggregate parameters for political action by Christian martyrdom. In his view, 'the martyr's ethnic identity has no priority in the Christian self-identity, but is not dissolved either.' For Jensen, however, these parameters have their limit in that rebellion against sovereign power is not openly solicited nor is regime-change actively orchestrated. Referring to Jesus, he 'is offered a choice to undermine the status quo. In neither case does he pursue this course; but at the same time he does not become an advocate for the regime.' (2010: 107-9). On both counts, that of allegiance to an 'ethnic identity' forming part of his political compass and his willingness to be a full political actor with the express aim of bringing about unmitigated social and economic reform, it could be argued that Xirinacs transcends the parameters set out by Jensen. It is argued here that Xirinacs considered himself to be following a martyr's path, an estimation shared by the greater or lesser hagiographic recollections of him following his death, for example Fèlix Martí (in Xirinacs, 2012). This is foregrounded at this juncture to highlight the relevancy of Xirinacs' relentless pursuit of 'sacrificing the self' during both his lifetime and the very moment of his death to a teleology of sub-state territorial aspirations within an evolutionary and global community of political belonging founded on radical social Christian principles. This is what underpins the core of his creative writing and political activity. From the month before his death, he wrote:

> Ramon Llull wanted to die a martyr. I want to die in Total and Free Offering. In birth, my life did not issue from me. It did not belong to me ... Now, after 75 years of my life, this life, which has been given to me in order that I might do with it what I felt most befitting, is mine and I want to give it to Him to whom I am married. He gave me the Gift of my life and I, after 75 years of bearing its fruits – and what a beautiful harvest! – give it back before all of the harvest becomes rotten. I give that which I love most to Him I love most. A religious delirium? Off with you, you have no idea! What kind of monumental myopia exists which would confuse the worst thing, suicide, with the best, the giving of everything for those that you love? (Xirinacs, 2007: 75)

The key placing and role of the life of Jesus within his later programme for political thought and action had been in formation from the beginning of his instruction as a clerical student, and despite the ponderance of certains aspects of Jesus' life, for example his death and martyrdom, gaining traction from the age of 70 onwards, the Christological core within his cosmovision for social and political transformation can be traced to his teenage years:

> The utmost love of Jesus for men was the definitive answer to all the questions which had made my life absurd until that moment ... I would give up everything: sex, family, fame, culture, friendship and conjugal love. I would give it all up ... in a typical sentimental teenage milieu the most powerful ideal had installed itself. (in Busquets, 2017: 94)

The territorial component of this programme took longer to fuse with the spiritual aspects. According to Lluís Busquets, by the beginning of the 1960s Xirinacs had not yet problematised the national question in Catalonia. Sub-state nationalist resistance against the dictatorship was by now, however, aligning itself with the anti-Francoist struggle in general whereby 'the demand for autonomy and respect for one's own language and 'culture' came to be seen as consubstantial with the democratisation of the Spanish state' (Smith and Mar-Molinero, 1996: 23). It was also becoming more daring, an example of which was the performative hurling into the audience during a concert in Barcelona in May 1960 of flyers entitled 'We give you General Franco' written by the future president of Catalonia, Jordi Pujol, for which he was tortured, court-martialled and handed a prison sentence of seven years (Pujol, 2007). At a summer camp in 1961, Xirinacs met the Italian Catholic poet-philosopher Lanza del Vasto, an influential European follower of Gandhi whose rural 'Community of the Ark' in France introduced anti-war civil disobedience to the Massif Central region in the 1950s (Panter-Brick, 2015: 17-18).[71] He began a degree in Biology in October of that year at the University of Barcelona and soon became embroiled in the heady student politics of anti-Francoism. Following reports of the detention and torture of students supporting miner strikes in the northern Spanish region of Asturias, he went to the main police station in Barcelona and asked the police on duty why they were torturing students. He was arrested and later expelled from Barcelona by the civil governor (Xirinacs, 2012: 38).

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[71] Xirinacs would again meet del Vasto in 1969 (Busquets, 2017: 199).

The church authorities wrote to him with the following advice, 'Study, pray, work.' The incident was picked up in the *The Sunday Telegraph*:

> A Spanish Catalan Priest of the Piarist Order who protested to the police chief was expelled from Barcelona. The Civil Governor called on the priest's immediate superior in the Order and showed him a record of the priest's conversation with the police chief. It is reported that he said 'something quite frank'. The Governor said it was his desire that the priest should go, and was transferred to a Roman Catholic school in Olot, Gerona. (in Busquets 2017: 180-2)

In his new diocese he began preparing for a community based on the same Catholic communitarian ideals as Lanza del Vasto had done with the 'Community of the Ark' in France. The development of this project was, however, stymied by civil and church authorities. In 1966, after the siege and subsequent assault by police upon students at a convent in Barcelona who had been taking steps to unionise with the logistical help of the Capuchin friars, Xirinacs wrote a homily condemning the police raid. He was once again expelled from his position and sent to a village with a population of 21 with no electricity or telephone. Whilst in the parish, he refused to accept church wages (Dalmau i Ribalta, 2017: 28), becoming the first parish priest in Spain to do so. The components of national and spiritual transformation by which Xirinacs would gain notoriety in the following years had by now coalesced. Lluís Busquets places at the end of 1966 a number of mystical poems by Xirinacs using the imagery of Ramon Llull of the 'Friend and the Beloved', a daily compendium of contemplations focusing on the love relationship between the monk (the friend) and God (the beloved). This would also be an imagery he would return to shortly before his death. Although Llull's period is connected with the high tide of Catalan expansion in the Mediterranean in the fourteenth century, no such linkage – as might be expected – is made in the late medieval 'Book of the Friend and Beloved'. Xirinacs here gives the imagery a territorialised update for the twentieth century, explicitly linking a 'people', the 'Mediterranean' basin, self-sacrifice and wider universal claims to international solidarity:

> I am the Friend with my body, with my brothers and friends ... the Friend is my people, with its regions, with its family of peoples and friends, with the blue Mediterranean sea and the snowy Pyrenees.
> The Friend is the whole of humanity with all the animals and plants living on the earth, with the moon, the sun and the stars.
> The Friend is man with the universe.

The Beloved is the centre of attention of man and all the universe (Busquets, 2017: 194-5)

The fleeting period of French and Italian Eurocommunism, with clandestine Spanish variants (Balampanidis, 2019: 116-7), offered comparator political and social backdrops with which Xirinacs was able to reconcile the cultural significance of national territory whilst accommodating Christology (Comín, 1977) within "a 'third-way' between Soviet-style communism and reformist social democracy" (Sassoon, 1997: 73). This was to lead to a number of – on first view – incongruous binaries within radical left European politics, for example the "renewal of the communist project while at the same time demolishing its central assumptions' or the 'phony marriage' between class struggle and internationalism on the one hand and the nation on the other" (Balampanidis, 2019: 5-7). This however, can be partly explained by the attempts of radical left politics in these countries to achieve and maintain a synthesis of 'party of struggle – party of governance' (2019: 11) in order to gain a foothold within liberal democratic systems in order to reconfigure them. Xirinacs was partially able to avail of this discourse and manipulate it accordingly, but as we shall see, specifically in his repeated calls for concerted and united party political action around the issue of self-determination, he was incapable of fully squaring the social radicalism and political opportunity flowing from the events of 1968 with the internal logic of competition within the newly freed-up party political system in the Catalonia of the mid-1970s.

In Spain, in the context of a Catholic church openly riven apart on the basis of territorial, identitarian and resource redistribution claims by Basque, Catalan and other socialist-leaning priests[72] and of emerging Catholic nationalist movements supported by high-ranking Church figures in Catalonia (Guiberneau, 2004: 59-60), Xirinacs by 1968 had come to the attention of the authorities, and quite possibly, his potential for resistance to state power. A number of examples will suffice. After being cited to appear at a military court to answer charges of being linked to a newly-formed Marxist-Leninist paramilitary organisation, the FAC (National Liberation Front), he was subsequently acquitted (Balbuena, 1978: 137). Years later, he stated that two men gave his name as a collaborator as a result of police torture, adding: 'If I was useful in putting

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[72] A prison in Zamora, close to the border with Portugal, had been by now set up between the Francoist penitenciary system and the Catholic church for the exclusive incarceration of priests (Albin, 2018)

an end to a nightmarish hell, then some good will have come from the problems they heaped onto me.' (in Busquets, 2017: 199). In 1969-70 he gave up teaching at the Catholic Theological College of Igualada in the midlands of Catalonia, setting up a self-styled School of Social and Labour Instruction in a church rectory in the same town and giving classes on utopian socialists such as Owen, Fourier, Proudhon along with lectures on Marx, Engels and Feuerbach (Dalmau i Ribalta, 2017: 29; Busquets, 2017: 205). The following year he won a church-mediated prize for his book '*Secarització i Cristianisme: una aportació crítica a la teologia de la mort de Déu* (Secularisation and Christianity: A critique of the theology on the death of God) which uses twentieth century protestant scholastic philosophy (including Barth, Tillich and Bonhoeffer) to examine possible meeting points between religion and increasing secularity. For the purposes of the present research, however, what is discernible in this publication is the bringing together and further development by Xirinacs of key recurrent themes by way of a quadruple linkage that would inform his writing through to his death: i. that of Gandhian non-violent resistance using religious ideals, ii. non-violence with the politics of global material redistribution, iii. the intimation that non-violent actions could be applicable in Catalonia and iv. the positive interpretation of the interplay between national revindications and a sense of a growing international community:

> The force of the Spirit is growing in the world. It is possible that the first person who brought about large-scale action based solely on the force of the Spirit was Mahatma Gandhi. It was he who standardised, at a personal and national level, a processual method that, along with the evangelical spirit of universal reach, is taking root in the spirit of black people, of the impoverished, the proletariat, youth, those controlled by brute force. The recent cascade of converts to non-violence is marvellous to behold. A new wind is blowing through the world. The distinctive way that the same invaders are being resisted in Czechoslovakia and previously in Hungary is truly significant. (Xirinacs, 1969: 178)

At the core of these revindications is a particular building-block in a strategy of civil resistance, that of non-violence, and will be examined presently in its historical setting. However, there is one element which is not mentioned in the above quotation and which needs to be accounted for within the Xirinacsian cosmovision alluded to here: that of martyrdom, its provenance, its meaning and strategisation in the context of civil resistance in Francoist and post-Francoist Spain. The following year he wrote another book, *Futur d'Església: Comunitat cristiana de base* (The Future of the Church: grassroots Christian community) which was not published until 1976, the year after Franco's death, due to church and state censure. At its core, Xirinacs offers here a

radical proposal for the reconstruction of Christian faith in the aftermath of a deep religious crisis whereby 'even the shepherds participate in the disorientation of the sheep.' Unlike 'Secularisation and Christianity', Xirinacs the activist makes clear what his objectives are: 'this is a practical book, an essay, a pamphlet as it were, and not a theology compendium. That makes it a very debatable and imperfect book.' (Xirinacs, 1976a: 10). What strikes the reader, however, is the referencing to martyrdom (11 times) and its linking to the politics of non-violence and Christological passion seen as suffering:

> This community has a specific objective: that of training members in the (non-violent) system of struggle, through love, martyrdom accepted freely, both personal and collective ... The announcement or decision regarding martyrdom will be able to substitute partially or completely the institution of the Eucharist. One day, an 'elderly man' might freely say before taking his leave: 'take this and eat all of you my body which will be given up for you tomorrow and for the salvation of all the world'. Verily, Eucharist and martyrdom are two inseparable things. (Xirinacs, 1976a: 138-41)

It is beyond the scope of this research to fully enquire into the gestation period Xirinacs initiated regarding his own 'martyred Eucharist' in 2007 but the reference to the apparently self-sacrificing elderly man is perhaps suggestive of a mind aware of its place and objectives in life and will be further discussed in the final section of this chapter. However, the inclusion of self-sacrifice – and Xirinacs' understanding of his own death as political martyrdom – form part and parcel of his indirect leadership and participation in widespread civil resistance and disobedience in one main period of fifteen years before and after Franco's death in 1975, followed by a second, more discrete period relating to the final five years of his life. These early years of activism, however, are key in understanding the development of Xirinacs' thinking. In 1968, for example, following a fact-finding trip to the Basque Country with other socially progressive Catalan priests, Xirinacs drew up a manifesto entitled 'Basis for a Union of Active Non-violence across the Peninsula' on how to achieve independence for Catalonia within a wider territorial system of Iberian federalism taking in the nations of Spain and Portugal.[73] In the manifesto, Xirinacs specifically rejects the paramilitarism being carried out by ETA as a strategy to be followed in Catalonia:

> The urgency of a radical social renewal in the Iberian Peninsula is evident.[74]

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[73] For a comprehensive review on pan-Iberian political and cultural union, see Rina Simón, 2017.
[74] Portugal in 1968 was still under military dictatorship, hence the Iberian-wide reference.

> We are not aware of any (movements) proposing an explicitly non-violent style true to the truth and using pure methods.
>
> We call upon (movements proposing) peninsular non-violent union to adopt this style with the utmost rigour ...
>
> Non-violent struggle will take inspiration from Gandhi and others who have been engaged in it ... we commit ourselves to serve the Truth ...
>
> Without any bitterness, we will happily accept in advance fines, confiscation of property, the ruining of businesses, prison, forced labour, torture, defamation, death ... (Fundació Randa, 2019, 13 February, personal communication)

Before dealing with perhaps the most turbulent years, including incarceration and creative writing whilst in prison, in the life of Xirinacs the activist and senator, a discussion is required in order to situate his activist-related actions – for example his nine hunger strikes, his prison diaries, the daily newspaper opinion columns as well as his parliamentary and extraparliamentary speeches – during this period. This discussion refers to wider global civil disobedience occurrences and their treatment in relevant academic literatures, in order to form an opinion as to whether the actions and writings of Xirinacs should be placed within literatures centred around the politics, objectives and strategies of civil disobedience and civil resistance, and if so, in what manner?

**The Activist Years: Civil Disobedience and Hunger Strikes**

The response of the individual to her relationship with the state and its moral, legal and institutional ordering, when such a system is considered unjust or offensive, has been debated since at least 399 BC when Plato's dialogue between Crito and Socrates debated how to arrive at criteria operationalising justice and injustice in the political system of ancient Greece (Daube, 1972). 'Disobedience' as a term in its own right defining individual and collective responses to perceived injustice on the part of the state did not appear until the American essayist Henry David Thoreau wrote in the mid-nineteenth century of his refusal to pay poll tax to the federal government on the issue of slavery as well as the war being waged at that time with Mexico. Subsequent publications appended the term 'civil' to 'disobedience' a few years after his death, with the parameters of Thoreau's ideas given more international projection by Leo Tolstoy and Mohandas Gandhi (Badau, 1991). After the second world war particularly, a growing awareness of the possibility for success of non-violent civil resistance as a means to effect significant social change – for example, strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience, political non-cooperation – can be discerned (Carter, 2009: 25-26). The

fact that this form of resistance and disobedience politics was now occurring in North America – for example, the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 instigating a period of agitation in favour of civil and political rights for black American citizens – drew the self-doubt of North American academic ranks, with the political theorist Hannah Arendt among the first to link civil disobedience – as opposed to civil resistance[75] – as a requirement *for* the well-being of, as opposed to *against* the stability, of the liberal and consolidated state:

> [p]erhaps an emergency was needed before we could find a home for civil disobedience, not only in our political language, but in our political system as well ... it is such an emergency in the United States today that has changed voluntary association into civil disobedience and transformed dissent into resistance ... what is new is that this country is no longer an exception. (Arendt, 1972: 101-2)

Hegel's assertion that the owl of Minerva flies only at dusk has gradually since been addressed, particularly from the discipline of political philosophy, with the appearance of significant contributions by – inter alia, Joseph Raz, John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin and Jürgen Habermas – on civil disobedience. All of these academics accept the Rawlsian given of a 'nearly just democratic regime ... a nearly just society ... a nearly just constitutional regime' (Rawls, 1999: 293-323) when weighing up the restitutive role of civil disobedience within a generalised liberal paradigm. The nature of the democratic regime in question would thus seem to offer key criteria for discerning between the right to engage in civil disobedience and the justification for acting upon it (Badau, 1991: 11). Although Rawls frames civil disobedience as constituting a 'problem' and a 'difficulty' in a 'spectrum of possibilities' within the wider parameters of the recognition and acceptance of the legitimacy of a generally healthy constitutional regime, he does not doubt its role within the democratic state: 'a theory should explain the role of civil disobedience within a constitutional system and account for the appropriateness of this mode of protest within a free society'. This provides the basis for his subsequent parsimonious definition, 'a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or

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[75] In the introduction to the edited case-study volume by Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash on non-violent action, *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, Roberts operationalises civil resistance as opposed to civil disobedience, 'Civil resistance is a type of political action that relies on the use of non violent methods. It is largely synonymous with certain other terms, including 'non violent action', 'non violent resistance', and 'people power'. It involves a range of widespread and sustained activities that challenge a particular power, force, policy, or regime hence the term 'resistance'. (Roberts, 2009: 2)

policies of the government.' (1991: 319-20). However, it might be argued that Rawls' operationalisation of the level playing field, the 'nearly just society', whereby 'there exists a viable constitutional regime *more or less* satisfying the principles of justice' (1991: 310)[76] is insufficiently clear-cut. This lack of generalisability for what is, after all, the basis for the liberal social contract would also seem to have the knock-on effect of undermining the parsimony Rawls constructed for civil disobedience.

Using the recent stationing of cruise missiles and Pershing II rockets on German soil as an empiric example of the tensions arising from civil disobedience, Jürgen Habermas resuscitates the problematic of Rawls regarding not only where to locate civil disobedience in its relationship to the state, but how to conceive of it. Although in agreement with Rawls on the democratising elements inherent in civil disobedience and the morally justifiable actions arising from them, he goes further than Rawls in civil disobedience's more social aspects by claiming that it is a public act involving premeditated transgression of legal norms and which *accepts* the judicial consequences of such action:

> [c]ivil disobedience must remain suspended between legitimacy and legality; only then does it signal the fact that the democratic constitutional state with its legitimating constitutional principles reaches beyond their positive-legal embodiment. Because, in the last instance, this state relinquishes the possibility of demanding obedience for any other reason than that of its legitimacy as a constitutional order that is reasonable for all, civil disobedience belongs among the indispensable necessities of a mature political culture. (Habermas, 1985: 106)

On this view, civil disobedience is justified precisely because any given constitutional regime is understood as being an unfinished project (in Thomassen, 2007: 205), thus according to it teleological and quasi-utopian characteristics. This much seems to be alluded to by Cohen and Arato in their operationalisation of civil disobedience as 'a key form that the utopian dimension of politics can assume in modern civil societies', a utopia which they in turn extend to the rights regime underlying constitutional democracies (1997: 566). Sensibility of and towards utopian possibility at the core of liberal political life in the academic literature on civil disobedience is also reflected in Xirinacs' political strategies, although his account of civil disobedience as utopia is much more urgent and pressing compared to the 'litmus test' and facilitator role

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[76] Italics inserted.

assigned to it in the liberal versions above. On the one hand the sense of urgency gathered in his writing can be attributed to the fact that, in this specific period of activism, the now famed Rawlsian common denominator positioning point of 'nearly just democratic regime' with which to gauge applicable criteria for the nature and parameters of civil disobedience did not obtain in Spain's political autarchy system (Juliá, 2007; Fusi, 2007).

The work of Gene Sharp in both qualifying and quantifying the cost-benefits of non-violent action as opposed to the use of violence for political reasons has focused on the internal relations within and across civil society and state power structures. The core conclusion reached by Sharp in his writing – and echoed in the writings of Xirinacs – is that civil resistance strategies should focus on raising awareness and impacting upon civil society over and above strategies directed at the political adversary:

> Mohandas K. Gandhi always argued that the primary aim of the nonviolent struggles he led in India was not to attack the British, who were an important but secondary factor in the situation, but to strengthen the determination, independence, and ability to resist of the Indians. (Sharp, 1980: 173-74)

An example of Xirinacs' thinking on the capacity of civil society to engage with the political discourse and ontology of territorial relations can be seen in an article entitled 'Masses and National Consciousness' written in the newspaper *Avui* in 1978 and directed at Ernest Lluch, a politician within the Catalan family of social democrats:[77]

> No party should hasten or mitigate the rhythms of how citizens interpret their nation. Political parties can neither invent nor dissolve nations ... The progressiveness of the Catalan nation lies not only within those cultural professional cohorts with a propensity to verboseness, but rather in the heart of the masses. When the worker, finding his path blocked off by trade union politicians, is able to liberate himself during the course of the gargantuan National Day demonstrations in the respective regions of our nation, thus becoming a citizen, that is when he gains an historical understanding which makes the politicians' jaws drop ... Ernest, understanding the history of the Catalan Countries is not a problem of the masses. No. It is a political problem, a problem between politicians. The country is more than intelligent enough for these elemental things. (Xirinacs, 1978a)

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[77] Lluch was assassinated by ETA in 2000.

Xirinacs' renown became manifest in the late Francoist period and is undoubtedly due, in the main,[78] to his use of the hunger strike as an instrument with which to gain leverage as part of a widespread civil resistance, both in terms of his objective of seeking political gains from the central state as well as securing a greater diffusion of power through civil society (Sharp, 1980: 169). This chapter does not aim to give a detailed account of the nine hunger strikes conducted by Xirinacs (Busquets, 2017: 418) nor does it attempt to weigh up the strategic effectiveness of the strikes as opposed to other alternative options. Rather, through his writerly production focusing on these hunger strikes, it is his willingness to use his own body as a leverage tool during the final years of Franco's dictatorship which will be analysed here. This will also provide the background for a later discussion of the 'politics of martyrdom' which was to form his writing at the very end of his life.

In *The Body and Social Theory*, Chris Shilling argues that classical sociology, whilst engaging with social consequences of the human body, its treatment of the body had been rarely explicit. For Shilling, this earlier period in sociology 'displayed a *dual approach* to the body. Instead of being neglected completely, the body has historically been something of an *absent presence* in sociology' (1993: 9). During the second half of the twentieth century, and echoing more radical and frontal attacks on the Descartian separation of the mind and body than the broad church of the post-classical Frankfurt School, existentialism and phenomenology, a social ontology of 'embodiment' was put forward. Within a sociology of the body, actors' practice and performance are analysed within a myriad of settings whereby 'in commonsense terms, the social actor is embodied' (Turner, 2008: 516). Parsing the influence of both Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu to the development of a sociology of the body, Bryan Turner synthesises their empirical and intellectual impact by offering a binary whereby the idea of the body belongs to the realm of representation whilst embodiment helps us understand social practice and experience. (2008: 521). A seminal anthropological work on the IRA hunger strikes in the 1980s, *Formations of Violence: the narrative of the body and political terror in Northern Ireland*, took embodiment as its operational

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[78] Xirinacs' was also actuely aware of his position as a Catholic priest within the regime's 'ideological-political mission' to integrate Spain on the basis of national uniformity and Catholic confessionalism (Casanova, 2001) and that this could afford him a certain permisiveness that others could not enjoy.

concept, bringing together the political agency of the body to an understanding of late modernity in an area of Europe with acute political territorial contestation:

> The Northern Ireland situation has much to teach us about the problematic of political agency in late modernity. It has compelled me to treat the political subject, particularly the body, as the locus of manifold material practices. The subject is not read here as the unified and underlying originator of actions and values. Political agency is not given but achieved on the basis of practices that alter the subject. Political agency is relational – it has no fixed ground – it is the effect of situated practices. (Feldman, 1991: 1-2)

Homing in on the body's relationship to modernity, Chris Yuill accepts Anthony Giddens' claiming (1991) of the body as a site of identity and Pierre Bourdieu's placing of the body within the context of social distinction (1984). He further develops Feldman's discussion on the 'body as weapon' whereby the body is able to '*destabilise* notions and discourses of the body and embodiment in modernity', thus claiming a wider link between violent and non-violent self-sacrifice on the one hand and the core ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity as outputs of modernity on the other, citing as examples 'Japanese kamikaze pilots in WWII, the heroic individualism of European Romanticism or the sacrifices made by individuals during the French and American revolutions that were the harbingers of modernity' (2007, para 5:14).

From a chronological and comparative lens from 1906 through to 2004, Scanlan et al (2008) provide a conceptualisation and taxonomy for the hunger strike based on a broad social movement approach analysing the concept of political 'jiu-jitsu' (taken from Gene Sharp) whereby civil resistance uses the political adversary's position of hegemonic strength against it. A synthesis between social movement theory, political opportunity structure and the sociology of the body can be discerned here and I argue that decisions taken by Xirinacs to engage in hunger strikes are interpretable in this light:

> Hunger strikes exhibit the interplay between structural factors influencing their emergence and the emotions that surface given the existing opportunities and barriers to change. Hunger strikes exemplify the potential martyrdom and self-sacrifice that carry invaluable symbolic meaning (Tarrow, 1998) in nonviolent action ... the power of the hunger strike might be its utility when other means of protest are not possible, or ineffective, that is, when a political *inopportunity* structure exists that limits the emergence or effectiveness of other tactics in such a context. (Scanlan et al, 2008: 277-88)[79]

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[79] Italics in original.

In the period leading up to the end of Francoism in Spain, decisions regarding which of Xirinacs' numerous writings to concentrate on here have been taken using the following criteria: i. they deal with a hunger strike conducted by him and ii. relate to writing carried out immediately before, during or directly following a period of incarceration. Xirinacs' first hunger strike, carried out with no publicity in a small benedictine monastery, lasted for a week. He subsequently travelled to the centre Barcelona and distributed leaflets with the following demands: 'JUSTICE FOR THE OPPRESSED / FREEDOM FOR NON-HOMICIDE POLITICAL PRISONERS / DEVOLUTION FOR EUSKADI AND CATALONIA / SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE'. He proceeded to distribute leaflets at the central police station in Barcelona where he was immediately arrested and subsequently released due to a concordat between Spain and the Vatican, itself the subject of criticism by Xirinacs in letters to church authorities. In a letter dated the first day of the hunger strike and left with the intention of being found, he notes that he was 'extremely dismayed with the bishops' and goes on to reflect upon how his actions might be interpreted, 'Now let me do what I have to do. It will be criticised as a suicide. All I ask is to be respected. I am offering myself up because I want to.' (Busquets, 2017: 203-4).

The first of his major hunger strikes, his second, dates from Christmas Eve of 1970 through to January 1971 and is partly the subject of *Vaga de Fam per Catalunya: Diari de 21 dies (Hunger Strike for Catalonia: Diary of Twenty One Days).*[80] This publication, in essence a hunger strike diary with a number of final additional insertions including poetry and a letter to Franco a number of years after the penning of the original diary, is analysed in order to show how Xirinacs linked the strategies of civil disobedience with the cross-cutting themes highlighting the particular and the universal, specifically the referencing of the Catalan Countries as a discreet territory underpinning civil society objectives within wider global redistribution and solidarity processes. These themes are subsequently placed in the context of Xirinacs' life-long obsession with Christology and martyrdom.

The hunger strike referred to above came about directly as a result of two incidents. The first was the trial and subsequent death sentences handed down to several ETA militants

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[80] The first legal publication, published in 1977 two years after Franco's death, went through a number of typed and printed clandestine versions beginning in 1973 (Busquets, 2017: 213).

in Burgos (northern Spain) in early December 1970 (Juliá, 2007: 213). This was followed by the staging of a three-day protest a week later by 300 writers and intellectuals in the iconic monastery of Montserrat in central Catalonia to denounce the sentences being requested by the prosecution, as well as calling for the opening up of democratic culture in Spain. In the diary entry for Christmas Eve, Xirinacs writes that he would add his voice to those of Montserrat, 'This fast is my contribution to the Montserrat Manifesto' (Xirinacs, 1977: 19).[81] The trial in Burgos was also linked to a discourse of democratisation of the European demos pursued by the European intergovernmental system of the early 1970s. Three days into his hunger strike, his diary gives a bullet point resumé of the current political scene, sensing the possible opportunity structure arising from European governmental and intergovernmental pressure on Spain, 'Europe is demanding from Spain trade union rights, freedom for political parties and national devolution if Spain is to enter the Common Market.' (44). Preambling the demands arising from his hunger strike, he strikes a mystical tone linking his decision making not only with unspecified, exalted figures from Catalonia's past but also in terms of an irresistible external force:

> I entered into contact with the heroes of the nineteenth and the twentieth century, those who fought and fight in earnest for the people. And I decided to give everything for my people. It's wasn't me who decided this. At the horizon of my life the biggest wave I have ever heard rose up. It was a mountain of water with an immense force, appearing at the very bottom of my being yet rapidly approaching the centre of my life. (21)

The pamphlet dissemination of a number of slightly different versions of these demands – reproduced below – at the beginning of 1971 would lead to Xirinacs' longest period of incarceration in 1974, at the very twilight of the Franco regime. The demands, in the wider context of these diaries, are constructed using dialectical, personalistic and religious recourses and correlate with Gene Sharp's interpretation of civil disobedience's objective of awareness raising among the population deemed to be oppressed alongside that of attendant actions directed against the political adversary. Heroic – and perhaps violent – actions are contrasted with civil disobedience and are found wanting. Xirinacs' message for the Catalan demos is that civil disobedience as strategy will better achieve overall objectives. Moreover, he sees strategising forming part of active Christology, creating triangulated connections between civil disobedience

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[81] In this section, unless otherwise stated, the quotations refer to *Hunger Strike for Catalonia: Diary of Twenty One Days.*

as concept, the population of the Catalan Countries engaged in disobedience and Xirinacs as a Christ-like fulcrum for this activity:

> Let's throw away the antiquated custom of dreaming up utopian heroic opportunities which never arrive and rather let's avail ourselves of the magnificent possibilities at the present for protest, for non-collaboration, for disobedience ... Jesus Christ was silent and worked for thirty years, he spoke for three years ... and passed over into momentous action, radical protest against the oppressive powers of his time and place. (187-88)

His consideration of the use of violence as part of political strategy is a complex one. It seems that his own preference is similar to the academic opinion of Gene Sharp above, i.e. that political violence, whilst being the main instrument recurred to in a wide range of social and political objectives throughout human history, is becoming a less than optimal strategic option. Although deontologically he rejects violence, he chides proponents of non-violent civil disobedience for their lack of purposefulness of action, a purposefulness which he envisages a distinct possibility for himself:

> Adherents of non-violence, remain silent, please, remain silent. The day that you are more effective, you may talk with deeds, only with deeds. And don't stop those who use violence until you have achieved what they have been achieving for the majority of humanity.

> In taking on this fasting, I feel almost like a traitor to the cause of justice in my country. My action seems utopic, weak, ineffective and quixotic. It seems to me that maybe death will need to be endured in order to truly awaken the somniforous people, the drugged masses. (85)

Moreover, alongside the by now well-rehearsed emphasis on eking out a Catalan territory within a fully confederal Spain or reconfigured Iberian Peninsula, Xirinacs once again deals with the contentious issue of political violence and its relationship to Catalan self-determination. Declaring the beginning of his hunger strike, he states:

> The path of violence in order to return to justice and freedom deserves much respect and it is perhaps at this moment the most understandable one for our people and the great mass of humanity persecuted with oppression.
> However, it seems to me that we are more inclined towards action based on the force of spirit rather than action based on the force of arms.
> I have decided to begin this Christmas time a fast[82] with the aim of achieving true freedom for my people ... my life is of little worth. The happiness I share with others in my family is of little worth ... without [political] amnesty there can be no true elections. With capitalist oppression, even from a section of the Catalans themselves, there cannot be true elections ... The union or separation of

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[82] In the diary entry for Christmas Day, Xirinacs acknowledges that what he terms fasting is 'in the realm of politics called hunger strikes.' (31)

Spain must be the subject of self-determination of the different national groups in the Peninsula.

<div align="right">

Lluís Maria Xirinacs
Santa Maria del Camí
25-XII-1970

</div>

I CALL FOR SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE CATALAN COUNTRIES
(UN Declaration of Human Rights, article 15)

<div align="right">(22-24)</div>

Xirinacs' struggle was one fought on many fronts. The hunger strike placed Xirinacs in continued direct confrontation with the Catholic church in Spain whose concordat agreement between the Francoist regime and the Vatican, in his eyes, had resulted in a locally stagnating clerical culture whereby 'priests in an absurd infantilism and the Bishop with farcical paternalism' had placed him 'outside of the law, not with the intention of demeaning it, but rather that of bettering it ... all of the responsibility will be mine, so the Bishop will be able to stay on the good side of the Papal Nuncio and the State.' (148-49) Media outlets became interested at different stages of the hunger strike, including Italian television and the Daily Telegraph, whose report of the 10th of January entitled 'Priest Determined [to continue fasting] until Death' Xirinacs translated in its entirety for Catalan readers of his account of the hunger strike. (120) In an interview with a cinema director on the 31st December, Xirinacs registers his discomfort with being in the public limelight but accepts that the film will be targeted also at '[audiences] abroad, at workers' and feels that they 'perceive my action as a balancing act between religion and politics, between human rights and tactical efficiency, between nationalism and internationalism, between revolution and diplomacy.' (56-57).[83]

Xirinacs was not the only actor in an increasing panorama of groupings hostile to Francoist autarchism and by the time of his second hunger strike, he was considered significant enough to receive visits from those who would later on in 1971 coalesce into the Assembly of Catalonia,[84] an umbrella organisation consisting of illegal political parties, trade unions and social organisations from across a broad sweep of national, redistributionist left-wing and liberal positionings (Sobrequés i Callicó, 2010: 444). Unity of political action was deemed throughout his life by Xirinacs a constant requirement in the face of what he considered a state of continued economic, social and

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[83] The film was entitled 'El Cura / The Priest' (Busquets, 2017: 219).
[84] During Xirinacs' second hunger strike, this clandestine umbrella body was termed the 'Coordinating Commission of the Political Forces of Catalonia' (Caminal Badia, 1998: 47)

political struggle and his inability to accept the failure of contesting political options to reach consensus should be considered a factor in his 'lone wolf' approach when engaging with other actors: 'We are in a state of permanent emergency. The population has become massified and led by a handful of unscrupulous leaders. The parties are divided and riddled with mutual suspicion. Some of them would want to take exclusive control of my actions.' (41) The concerted and finally successful pleas of those involved in the creation of the Assembly of Catalonia for Xirinacs to call off his hunger strike was undoubtedly a high point in his political trajectory as it aligned a significant part of his own programme for radical change with one of the main political forces in Catalonia at a moment of weakness within Spanish state structures. Responding to a communication to him acknowledging his place in Catalonia's 'history of sacrifice and struggle, which is the foremost assurance of triumph in the cause of the people,' and highlighting his success in 'bringing the national oppression suffered by the Catalan people to the attention of the world,' (160-61) he asserts:

> It came to an end because the most responsible men in Catalonia asked me to give them time and confidence. I gave them time and confidence. And the reality of the Assembly of Catalonia, now up and running, corresponds exactly to the response of the Catalan people to my fasting, although it is much more than the simple response to the insignificant gesture of a lowly man who doesn't mean much when compared to the protracted and extensive struggle which is leading the people to its own self-determination. The Assembly have killed the fast. And it is now alive and strides forth. (169)

Although Xirinacs relativised the gripe made by others that he was somewhat chaotic in his decision-making, maintaining that 'short term efficiency is the only thing that people really understand ... I wanted to act purely and transparently, not in a Machiavellian way' (30), he was keenly aware of his growing importance within the now increasing strands of groupings revolving around the twin demands of national recognition in Catalonia and wider democratisation in Spain. Conscious that his clerical status accorded him a fillip among both politicians and the population at large, his diary takes a partial step back from this characterisation before finally embracing it, "The role of 'the prophet of the people' does not have any value nowadays, it reeks of vanity. That said, the function of social guide and promoter that it refers to is a function that the people needs ... the idea is one of an unaligned independent role which is neither totally political or strictly levitical: it is a prophetic one" (75). In an annex at the end of the diary, written under the period entitled 'May 1972', his understanding of his role as messianic catalyst upon citizens as well as his impact upon Catalan and statewide

politics shows no sign of abating, with the term 'fasting' being rejected in favour of the more emotionally charged 'hunger strike' and the deontological urge asserted upon the *demos*:

> I carried out a hunger strike to the death with the intention of calling upon the Catalans to assume their historical responsibility. To the degrees that it is possible, I summoned the people regarding the self-determination of the Catalan territory and of all the peoples of Spain, always with the understanding that it was the working classes who were to take power. Without wishing to claim for myself the success [of the Assembly of Catalonia], I am very happy with the work done in the country over the past months to unify the hard-working [political] forces. (183-84)

Xirinacs' juxtaposition of a blanket rendering of 'the people' upon a self-determining Catalan territory occurs frequently in his writing, giving his writings a certain populist leaning. One passage from 'Hunger Strike for Catalonia', however, does problematise the term in that he recognises the Catalan *demos* as being predicated upon subtler – and contested – demographic, political and socioeconomic realities which were in turn considerations that civil disobedience strategies needed to weigh up both in terms of the relationship between different sections within Catalan society as well as the interaction between an 'intellectual' vanguard and that part of society receptive to messages from it. Discussing the wider Catalan-speaking countries, he perceives twenty percent, approximately 1.5 million people as still existing as 'a people' capable of slowing down a process of 'provincialisation'[85] being carried out by social media much more capable of influencing society 'than all of our words and all of our actions put together.' For Xirinacs, that part of society susceptible to political alternatives 'for the time being, represents the country' as opposed to the 'meager hopes that can be garnered within this mass of five and a half million.' Using imagery of the 300 Catalan intellectuals protesting at Montserrat monastery as well as his own hunger strike taking on the form of a risen flag as a clarion call, he contends that 'my fasting is not directed either to the occupying authorities nor to States nor other peoples. It is strictly directed to my people.' (93-94)

Xirinacs places his vision of a differentiated demos for the Catalan Countries within the context of wider resistance to Franco's regime. Referring to progressive civil

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[85] A reference to the framing of the Catalan Countries within a uniformising state with its centre in Madrid.

disobedience activists in other areas in Spain, as opposed to those operating from sub-state positions in the Basque Country and Catalonia, he criticises those 'closed-minded catalanistas' unable to see the 'hidden riches among the fraternal peoples of the Peninsula. The free union of the peoples of Iberia is something I would see in a very kind light'. However, the weakest pole of resistance he considers to be Castile, the geographical centre of Spain, its condition of being the 'most oppressed nationality in Spain' allowing it to play out the role of 'the spoiled child of the current Spanish state.' (82) Nevertheless, he reserves for the Basque Country and Catalonia the position of political and social systems capable of bringing about significant change within Spain, linking civil disobedience in Spain whilst enumerating examples of civil disobedience in other countries: 'Bernadette Devlin advocates the non-payment of rent to Ulster Catholics. The singer Joan Baez does not pay her tax in protest at the war in Vietnam' (185). In one of his earliest written references to civil disobedience, addressing the population as 'my people', Xirinacs links the choice between violent and non-violent tactics – specifically in the context of the Basque Country and Catalonia – to redistributionist and sub-state political demands and encases this in a binary of the people and its prophet:

> Do you understand, my people? Only the people which knows how to die will gain freedom. So how could I call on my people to a struggle to the death if I didn't put my own life on the line? Do you understand now the morality of my actions?
> Our people will perhaps have resort to another method of struggle than that of the Basque Country. That is still to be seen. But there is one thing that is the same among all the peoples of the world. Life is bought with death. He who fears death will live as if he was dead in life. He who fears prison becomes his own gaoler in his apparent liberty.
> My people, I ask of you an escalation of action. What is at issue is not risking what is available, but rather of risking everything. (95)

Xirinacs' vision of human redistributionist progress was partially influenced both by classical Marxism and Eurocommunism in that he saw 20th century history as both evolutionary in that it evidenced development from liberal parlamentarianism through to a post-socialism scenario as well as possessing a teleological mission in its advancing of democratic rights. The linear optimism Xirinacs shows in this view of history – a pared-down historicised version of Frederic Jameson's cultural dominant (Jameson, 2002: 28-30) – is perhaps not inusual for this period, but perhaps what is less conventional is his bringing together of this particular brand of redistributionist politics with a form of religious and literary liberation theology on European soil, itself infused

with a dual universality, that of his own religious 'commitment to the Absolute' and of territoriality (the substate claim for the Catalan countries, in opposition to the Hegelian mode of construction of the universal). Writing on the fourth day of his hunger strike, he asserts that his actions form part of a liberation dialectic, whilst accepting that in his negotiations with anti-Francoist forces he runs the risk of 'being branded mystical and self-righteous':

> There are two popular sayings that go along the lines of: 'All rules have exceptions' and 'The exception confirms the rule'. It's a simple formula within dialectics. You have something dominant in a historical period which is the rule, but then invariably the contradictory exception comes into view ... Marxism is the law of the 19th and 20th centuries, and most likely of the 21st. The authentic religion, not those degenerations that we see all around: the religion of Lao-Tse and Buddha ... of Christ and his disciples until the 4th century, of the Cathar and the Albigensian brothers ... of Tolstoy and Ruskin, of Gandhi and the totality of his movement, of Albert Schweitzer, of Luther King ... this unique religion is the exception ... I have begun an act of exception in contrast with the rule and to confirm it. (50-52)

The bringing together of civil disobedience in the context of substate territorial contestation are seen clearly in a piece of poetry penned by Xirinacs on 11 April 1974 in Carabanchel prison in Madrid when he received news of being awarded the 'John the 23rd Peace Prize', a Catalonia-based peace prize initiated in 1967, for 'his non-violent action in favour of peace'. It is an enumerated addendum to 'Hunger strike for Catalonia' and entitled simply, 'A reply to the John 23rd Memorial Prize, awarded to the author for his non-violence activity in favour of peace.' His poetic acknowledgment of the prize chronologically occurred between two prison hunger strikes, the first of which left him close to death after 42 days. The main themes are the ideational yoking of the 'senyera' – the  Catalan flag –with the concept of peace and brought together by Xirinacs, 'chosen by the people to hold up upon high the combative senyera of peace'. This allows Xirinacs to open up a front of thought in direct opposition to the Hegelian 'notion of the universal' accessible only by and through state political and identitary systems (Matin, 2011: 353). In his poetic acceptance of the award, the coupling of the substate territory (the 'senyera' representing Catalonia) with the objective of peace leads to a global emancipatory civil disobedience, a universal level playing field of contestation, conceived of as 'perpetual war', a never-ending dialectic of hegemony 'against the strong when we are weak, and against ourselves when we are strong.':

> I am a son of the people,
> chosen today by the people to hold up upon high the combative

senyera of Peace.

I have fought alongside all of you.
We are fighting together to achieve Peace.
Someone else held up the senyera,
while I, just like so many others,
followed the flag-bearer wielding the weapon for Peace.
Today you ask me to change the weapon for the senyera.
I do so with regret.
It is the direct struggle which opens up the path of the senyera.
...

The victory of peace will not be our victory, but rather an
ardent and joyous toiling between men, nations and races.
Where there are neither victors nor vanquished,
exploiters or exploited,
learned or uncouth men,
saints or sinners.
We know that the construction and maintenance of the struggle for peace
demands of us perpetual war,
against the strong when we are weak,
and against ourselves when we are strong.'

It is on this condition that I accept the senyera of peace. (203-04)

Direct communication with political adversaries was another tactic employed by Xirinacs as a way of doing politics. In Carabanchel prison on the 1st of January 1975 he wrote an open letter – included in the '*Hunger Strike for Catalonia*' addenda – to the now ailing Franco, entitled 'Open Letter to the Head of the Spanish State on the announcement of the 5th Hunger Strike,' demanding amnesty for all political prisoners in Spanish jails and overseas. The letter itself is not recorded in the prison diary entry for these days, although his diary reveals that he was keenly aware of the danger he was putting himself into by doing this. In the entry for the 4th of January, he states, 'I got the feeling that the letter to Franco could get me court-martialed. I wasn't thinking about the all-powerful privilege of priestly status or of the negative reception the bishops would give to another possible charge against me. I just can't get used to privileges' (Xirinacs, 1976c: 9-10). The tone, despite Xirinacs affirming in the letter that friends had advised him that 'reconciliation is impossible', is one of equals and invokes the dictator's first name: 'Francisco, I am among those who find themselves in opposition to your regime as I believe it to be at the behest of a cabal of powerful men' (Xirinacs, 1977: 209). The letter details what is needed for a reconciliation between the central state and the 'peoples of the Spanish state':

> Reconciliation requires a conversion, a change on both parts. But the two parts are not symmetrical. One part is the aggressor of the people and the other is the aggrieved people. Putting an end to the aggression also requires the surrender of privileges, dissolving the power base, returning to the people the right of assembly, trade union affiliation, political association, the right to strike and freedom of expression ...
> You see now, Francisco, the place you have arrived at and where you have placed us all: one million deaths, forty years of oppression and another holocaust of working-people on the way if reconciliation does not arrive ... I suggest that you use this quasi-divine power to self-destruct ... I suggest that you bring about an inconditional AMNESTY with associated freedoms. (210-11)

By the end of that year, Franco had died and Spain entered what has become subsequently known as the 'Transición', a regime-initiated velvet transition termed as both *reforma pactada* (consensual reform) and *ruptura negociada* (negotiated rupture) from decreasing degrees of autarchy to increasingly democratising state structures (Balampanidis, 2019: 71). It has also been described by the historian Santos Juliá as a 'reform of the irreformable' whereby the sociological Francoist component of state institutions strove to reign in those desirous of root and branch reform, leading to a volatile political paradigm whereby 'reform became incompatible with continuity' (2007: 228-30). Juliá hints at an acceptance by the main actors of the 'Transición' of the need to 'erase, bury or transcend' the deep divisions in Spanish society rather than approach the wounds of the past head-on by means of a robust truth and reconciliation process. Marcelino Camacho, first secretary general of Comisiones Obreras (Workers' Commissions), destined to become the largest Spanish trade union, reflects Juliá's poignant etymological reminder that the words 'amnesty' and 'amnesia' have the same root: 'How were those of us who had been killing each other ever going to reach a point of reconciliation if that wasn't going to be achieved through an erasing of that past forever?' (in Juliá, 2007: 247).

Xirinacs' final significant period of incarceration – 22 months – came to an end when he was released from Carabanchel prison in October 1975, during which time the Norwegian Nobel Committee accepted his candidature for the Nobel Peace Prize (Xirinacs, 1993: 343). Six weeks after his release Franco died. Barely a week later Xirinacs began a new hunger strike, this time from Montserrat Monastery. In a coincidence indirectly linking the Irish component of this study to this chapter, Xirinacs was visited during his hunger strike in Montserrat by Seán MacBride, then Assistant

Secretary-General of the United Nations. Seán Mac Bride previously had been the Chief of Staff of the IRA in 1936 and was involved in Máirtín Ó Cadhain's rising through the ranks of the organisation (Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 35). In a subsequent trilogy in the 1990s criticising the failure of Catalan politicians to achieve unity in the drive for self-determination in the 'Transición' period, and drawing heavily upon his period in prison, Xirinacs reminisces on the visit by MacBride. Noting that he 'had participated in the struggle for the independence of Ireland' and had 'received the Nobel Peace Prize for 1974':

> We embraced effusively and we gave him a message addressed to the global audience and from which I now reproduce a selection of the demands:
>> We demand that the Spanish State desists from falling back on the use of force and becomes once and for all a state where the rule of law prevails. A referendum based on universal suffrage is thus required ...
>> We demand the annulment of all outstanding court cases for supposed terrorist crimes motivated by a permanent situation of official terror, and that guerrilla groups are given the opportunity to cease their activity in a new genuinely democratic situation. (1993: 237-38)

Three days after he came off the hunger strike in Montserrat, Xirinacs began a campaign on Christmas Day outside the 'Model' prison in Barcelona, stating that he would remain there every day 'from sun up until sun down'. His demands were straightforward, 'I want the political prisoners out: either that, or they lock me up in there ... Jesus wasn't born there, but the people sustain him in the humble stable of their heart in the form of amnesty.' He would remain in front of the prison for 21 months (Busquets, 2013: 40) until he was returned as a senator at the newly constituted Senate in Madrid in 1977. On the festival of the Epiphany (6th of January), a date celebrated widely throughout Spain, Xirinacs was asked to provide a piece of writing for the 'Sardanista' (Catalan dance) section of a cultural group in Barcelona. Again we see Xirinacs envisioning a symbolic element of Catalan culture (the *Sardana* dance) forming part of the wider global cultural of peoples. Describing the virtues of the dance, from a seated position at the entrance of the prison, Xirinacs places the *sardana* within the realm of the religious as it is 'inspired by an unseen master'. The *sardana* here is the fulcrum of both town square and national territory, reaching into the realm of universal fellowship from the particularity of 'my land':

> Woman and man, woman and man
> Both without privileges,
> In the heart of the towns and cities,
> At the very centre of the town square.

This is how I want my land to be.
This is how I dream of the universal company of all peoples.

Lluís M. Xirinacs, 155 Entença Street, 6-1-1976 (Busquets, 2013: 44)



Figure 3: Armengol, 2016.

Soon afterwards, during an illegal march demanding amnesty and political and legislative devolution for Catalonia in February 1976 (Figure 3), Xirinacs was severely beaten: 'the police officers concentrated on me ... the authorities had had enough of my protest outside the Model prison and they wanted to give me a lesson.' (Busquets, 2013: 52).[86] Shortly afterwards he would be tortured after people involved in the International Workers' Day march on the 1st of May began to converge around the Model Prison where Xirinacs was carrying out his daily protest. (Xirinacs, 2006: 92-93). It is in this context of widespread civilian insecurity in Spain as a whole following the death of Franco, whereby newly coalescing state forces 'succeeded in uniting several interests, stemming the incipient fragmentation and the spiral of violence before it could escalate into a new civil war' (Conversi, 2002: 235) that Xirinacs penned in March 1976 'A Letter to an Armed Policeman' after a number of Jesuit clerical students asked him, again in front of the Model prison, if he would write a piece of fiction on the subject of

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[86] Although the photograph did not appear in Spain due to censorship until one year following the event – Xirinacs was on the ground at the other side of the melée from where it was taken – it was published a number of days later in other media outlets including *The New York Times*, *Der Spiegel*, *Stern*, *L'Express* and *Paris Match* (Busquets, 2013: 53).

the police. The themes of territorial and identitarian equality, the redistribution of wealth and the Christ-like figure displaying international solidarity are recurrent. After a number of days, with pen and paper on the pavement outside the prison, he addressed the 'armed policeman':

> There does not exist a single state without police. Maybe one day those circumstances will come about. Today that is not the case. The police are necessary ... I love the police intensely, yet none of my friends are policemen. Jesus ordered us to love even our enemies. I consider the police enemies of the people and therefore they are my enemies ... You have hit me, detained me, insulted me many times. Do you know what I think, for example, when I'm crouched on the ground, hands on head, protecting it, while I take the terrible deluge of the blows from your sticks? I feel a deep sadness that you have been obliged to hit me ... When you hit me, policeman, without knowing it, an act of justice happens. You free yourself from an unconscious just anger as you strike me and I free myself from the just shame of privilege as I receive your blows. When the society arrives that I want to see, you will give up striking me because you will not be envious of me, because you and I will have equal opportunities in life.

> That day we can give each other a long embrace. (Xirinacs, 2009: 54-58)

The letter was translated into many languages and was read on the radio in Denmark Copenhagen Radio (Xirinacs, 2006: 120). The letter resulted in Xirinacs being brought before a military court, with him being warned that defending himself in Catalan would be considered contempt of court. As he did not pay the fine resulting from the court case, he was sent to jail for two weeks at the Model prison where he had been protesting on the pavement up to that point (Busquets, 2013: 63).

Figure 4: Avui, 1977

His political capital was at a high point during the chaotic – and blood-stained – years
of democratising transition.[87] The beginning of 1977 saw him accepted as a Nobel
Peace Prize candidate for a third time, coinciding with his continuing street protest
outside the Model prison (Busquets, 2013: 67). Events on the ground were moving
quickly in the context of upcoming general elections in June 1977 to both houses of the
Spanish '*Cortes*', the first since the Second Republic in 1939. The edition of 10th April
of the newly established *Avui* newspaper, the first to be published in Catalan since the
fall of the Second Republic, ran two main stories on its front cover that day (Figure 4),
the first reporting the legalisation of the Spanish Communist Party and the second
dealing with Xirinacs' call for political unity in the form of the Assembly for Catalonia

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[87] See Baby (2018) for a detailed account of political violence between 1975 and 1982.

(AC) being transformed into a provisional and constituent parliament presided over by Josep Tarradellas, elected President of Catalonia in exile (Guibernau, 2004: 54) thus paving the path for further discussion around political self-determination as well as by-passing the upcoming Spanish election.[88] The *Avui* front cover shows Xirinacs in front of the Model prison in conversation with a leader of the AC, with the article piece running with 'Act of Sovereignty / Acte de Sobirania', a discursive formulation Xirinacs used abundantly to rally the cause of unity of Catalan political forces for a greater end. It was an allusion which was to be a constant throughout his adult life and which he would have recourse to, even in death, as will be dealt with presently. In the article he states that 'the sovereignty of Catalonia currently resides in the Assembly for Catalonia. We don't have anything better. And we have to be proud of what we have' (Avui, 1977). The hope, however, that Xirinacs had placed in the AC a number of years previously was rapidly dimishing, in his opinion, due to the stymieing by Catalan political forces within the AC of his proposal for an all-out self-determination push which would convert the AC into a temporary parliament. In the second volume of his *La traició dels Líders* (The Betrayal of the Leaders), a trilogy of political memoirs written between 1993 and 1997, his sense of desperation was total because, at this juncture, it is quite likely that Xirinacs had come to the uncomfortable conclusion that the political opportunity structures that he had been part and parcel of during the twilight Francoist years were now on the wane with the arrival of new political actors and structures. After what he considered the knocking back of his proposal into the political long grass, he decided to begin what would be his ninth and final hunger strike which would last five days, he envisaged the changing political landscape:

> That same night, for it really was the dead of night, the weather was unsettled, bunged up with a cold as I tend to somatise those hours when I am low of spirit, I began a spur-of-the-moment, absurd, painful and desperate hunger strike. My first action against those who were my old comrades in the anti-francoist struggle. It wouldn't be the last. From here on in, the 'national and classist' enemy was closer to home. (Xirinacs, 1994: 244-5)

Two days later, Jordi Pujol, who would later become President of Catalonia for 23 years, led an ad-hoc political delegation to the Model prison where Xirinacs was still protesting, still enduring the effects of the physical exertions from continued exposure to the elements:

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[88] Xirinacs states that 11,000 signatures had been gathered to this end (1994: 245).

The flu was making me shake. It was wet and cold. I could make out Jordi Pujol in person making his way over to me under an umbrella ... "Lluís, I've come to pay homage to what you're doing. Don't think that I'm insensitive to your hunger strike, but I wanted to tell you personally that neither I or my party will accept your proposal. Don't waste your time or energy on us. And I'm minded that the other parties will be thinking along similar lines. Your proposal just isn't going anywhere." I said to him, "And why are you so firmly against it?" He looked at me straight in the eye and said, 'Because each of us wants to govern." (Xirinacs, 1994: 249)

Three days later, Xirinacs issued a press statement to inform the public that the hunger strike which was begun so that the political parties opposed to a provisional parliament could 'reflect upon their attitude' was now being called off because he wanted to 'confide in their sense of responsibility' (Xirinacs, 1994: 252) with a view to the upcoming plenary session on the political future of the – by now mortally wounded – Assembly of Catalonia. Xirinacs reflected at the time that the failure of the AC represented for him 'the day of the momentous defeat of the Catalan nation. The tribes took priority over the nation and the leaders over the tribes' (Xirinacs, 2006: 437). With party politics displaying an internal logic of competition within the emerging Catalan political system rather than a seemingly over-ambitious drive for self-determination requiring all-party co-ordination, the stage was set for Xirinacs' entry into formal politics (Figure 3) when he became an independent candidate for the Spanish Senate in June 1977 under the slogan of 'Democracy + Catalonia = Social Justice' (Figure 5) clearly showing Xirinacs' desire to usher in a pedagogy of democratising politics through a federal territorialising of Spain.[89]

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[89] This was formulated as "a) "DEMOCRACY": Complete Amnesty, legalisation of all parties and trade unions and derogation of laws repressing human rights, including the right to strike. b) "CATALONIA": Re-establishment of the Generalitat (Catalan Government) and the devolution settlement ('Estatut' of 1932) as a framework to exercise our self-determination. And, at the state level, constitutional respect for the nationalities and the regions which constitute the former. c) "SOCIAL JUSTICE": Amending of legislation and economic management serving the majority, a better distribution of work remuneration and tax reform." (Xirinacs, 2006: 439)

His campaign manifesto noted starkly, 'There are no means of its being financed. I simply offer this new opportunity to the people of the Principality of Catalonia', concluding with a personal observation, 'Never had I dreamed of putting myself forward for political office. This manifesto, however, opens up the way for this' (Xirinacs, 2006: 437-9). Xirinacs was returned to the Spanish upper house as the most voted independent senator in Spain with 550,678 votes (Busquets, 2017: 423) where he would concentrate on three areas: the passing of a general political and social amnesty; the drawing up of an alternative Spanish constitution and the subsequent drawing up of a devolution settlement for Catalonia, all of which, objectively speaking, would lead to unequivocal failure. A month after being elected, he reflects on his own personal timeline:

> 1973: travelling to Madrid in a car, handcuffed between two policemen and on hunger strike, destined for Carabanchel prison;

1975: travelling to Madrid in a van, flanked by four military guardia civil officers, destined for Carabanchel prison;
1977: travelling to Madrid as a senator to participate in the constitution of the first Spanish Congress and Senate, on the march destined for democracy (2006: 521)

## Xirinacs as Senator: The Civil Disobedient within Institutions

In accounting for political opportunities, the political scientist Sidney Tarrow argues that it is the concatenation of events which protest and social movements feed into which helps the success or otherwise of their life cycles. For Tarrow, political opportunities:

[C]reate the most important incentives for triggering new phases of contention for people with collective claims ... The outcomes of such waves of contention depend not on the justice of the cause or the persuasive power of any single movement, but on their breadth and on the reactions of elites and other groups. (Tarrow, 2011:12)

On this view, history matters and because of it, a significant amount of what actors do is constrained by institutional contexts writ large, although this does not discard the inescapable observation that actors themselves become a component of the 'political opportunity structure to be faced by future political actors; that sometimes actors influence the circumstances in which they operate through previous actions; and that some constraints may indeed be of their own making.' (Phelps Bondaroff and Burke, 2014: 168). Writing in 2005 on a diary entry referring to the period between the June elections and his taking up of office as senator, Xirinacs continued in his criticism of party structures, this time the target of his displeasure was the Catalan branch of the Spanish socialists who in his opinion were edging towards a 'devolutionist' rather than a full-on self-determination drive. Noteworthy is his constant insistence on the placing of social justice within the parameters of nation-building and *of Catalonia taking its place among sovereign states*:

If the parliaments of Estonia ... etc between 1990 and 1993 had done the same thing, where would these nations be as I write these lines (2005)? Are we less than them in our culture, history, economy, arts, sports or geographic extension? Is the DNA of our politicians somehow of an inferior quality? (Xirinacs, 2006: 492)

The significant upturn in Xirinacs' public recognition meant that he had become a household name. For some he represented a threat and during the many months of

protest outside the Model prison he suffered intimidation on a number of occasions and was abducted from outside its doors on more than one occasion (Busquets, 2017: 385-86). Commenting decades later on an entry for the week before the June elections he wrote, "On the majestic gothic wall of the *Rambla de Catalunya* of Barcelona there is a *graffito* in unwashable tar: "'Xirinacs to the gallows'. It stayed there for years." For others, he was the embodiment of radical change in the country. In the same entry, he quotes a poem for him written by Joan Oliver i Sallarès, an influential poet-playwright during the Franco years (using the pseudonym Pere Quart), lining Xirinacs up in the company of 20th century heavyweights:

> THE SONG OF EXAMPLES
>
> Macià,[90] the coronel, comes back home
> To defend our liberties
> After throwing away the sword into the well.
> Here's Khrushchev with his shoe raised up
> In the Assembly of Nations
> And, let's be perfectly frank, he's mocking these frauds ...
> And there's Paul Sartre with an unheard of gesture
> He declines the Nobel, prize of yes-men
> And he sends the Swedish academics into a spin ...
> And Lluís Xirinacs, pure essence,
> Of peace and respect, with abundant tenacity
> He combats violence, solitary he, with love ...
>
>         Pere Quart".
>
> *11 June 77*
> *Dear and admired Lluís:*
> *I have just written these "street" verses thinking*
> *of you. I dedicate them to you with affection*
>         *Pere Quart".* (Xirinacs, 2006: 482-83)

During the election campaign, Manuel de Pedrolo – perhaps the most prolific writer in Catalan letters and heavily censured during Francoism – wrote a letter to *Avui* in support of Xirinacs. A libertarian socialist subscribing to Catalan independence, Pedrolo highlighted the need for a measured approach towards international recognition of self-determination in Catalonia, analysing the perceived political opportunity structure around the figure of Xirinacs. The letter is reproduced by Xirinacs in 2006 under the heading 'Manuel de Pedrolo speaks (8-6-77)':

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[90] Military man turned politician, he became the first President of the Generalitat, the Catalan government, during the Second Republic.

... There is no doubt that X. is not a party political animal, something he would surely confirm if we were to question him on this. None of his actions have, in the conventional sense, been political. So it's somewhat of a surprise that they actually have had an impact, galvanising public opinion ... in the sense that he has been put forward for the Nobel Peace Prize, for example, which I would like him to be awarded as that would add to the international attention that his demonstrations are beginning to have and would help our national struggle. That said, I would be rather disillusioned if he accepted it. (2006: 487)

On becoming a senator in the upper house, Xirinacs became aware of the brusque change of scenery, architectural and otherwise: 'the civil governor has detailed two bodyguards for me. He fears for my life ... they follow me around everywhere. Are they protecting me or keeping tabs on me?' (Xirinacs, 2006: 511). One of his first undertakings as a senator was to commission a draft bill for a wide-ranging political and social amnesty, which he described as "in the absence of anyone else who wants to do it, an 'act of sovereignty' by a senator" (2006: 515), with an accompanying letter to all 247 senators stating the necessity for the comprehensive amnesty to constitute 'an act of peace and harmony among Spaniards' if there was any hope for a democratic future which would accommodate 'peace amongst the peoples of the peninsula' (1997: 110).

In his first trip to Madrid as senator, he arrived laden with two suitcases, full of copies of the draft bill and letter and had them duly placed in the senators' pigeonholes (1997: 110-11). In the King's inaugural speech opening the lower and upper chambers there was no mention of a general amnesty. Xirinacs notes that there was applause followed by everyone sitting down. He continues, 'That's not right. There's one still standing up ... towards the end of the chamber room, one parlamentarian can be seen stood up until the end of the session.' (2006: 538). Xirinacs insistence on remaining standing went unreported but he became the centre of attention on the next first full working day of the Senate. His memoirs tell us that he reported to the upper house's authorities that he would be standing upright in his designated place in the Senate until a general amnesty was declared. The following day the full front cover of the traditionalist Madrid daily *ABC* ran with a photo (Figure 6) of the upstanding Xirinacs with the headline 'Ridiculous spectacle in the Senate' (ABC, 1977). On his reasoning for the use of his body as a vehicle for political action and protest (Shilling, 1993: 31), he remarked on the headline in ABC:

In the small print they portrayed me as mad. But people do not usually read the small print. With no money, I had gained the best kind of publicity. It was in all

of the papers. Yes, they considered my actions as shameful. But nevertheless it was such a respectful way to go about things! I didn't interrupt anything. I wasn't a nuisance to anyone. (1997: 127-28)

Initially supported for a number of days by a reduced number of Basque and Catalan parliamentarians, he remained standing for three months until a general political amnesty was passed. (Xirinacs, 2006: 612). This piece of legislation did not address social components of a general amnesty, a consideration which led to express the opinion eighteen months later that he felt he had erred in voting for the amnesty as passed (Busquets, 2017: 439).



Figure 6: *ABC*, 1977

By mid-1978 both houses of Congress were engaged in the policy cycle which was to determine the Spanish constitution. Not a single one of his amendments was accepted (Xirinacs, 1978b: 4) and he found himself left out of the political consensus on the

Constitution arrived at by the majority of Catalan parties and was the only senator from Catalonia to vote against it, 'In reality, it's not a Constitution for all ... parliament has the duty to hear all the voices in the country, albeit minority voices and thus doomed to defeat' (Xirinacs, 1978c). A referendum on the *magna carta* was held at the beginning of December of that year and was resoundingly accepted in Spain, with 90% accepting it in Catalonia on a turnout of 68%. Although he would have known that there was every likelihood that the referendum would be accepted, Xirinacs decided to have his alternative constitution published in book form in both Spanish and Catalan. Entitled *Constitució: Paquet d'Esmenes* (Constitution: Bundle of Amendments) (back cover in Figure 7) it reads like a primer on the sociology, social affairs and geopolitics of both Catalonia and Spain. Consisting of four main 'blocks' (human rights and citizen participation in the political system, the evolution of a plurinational state, checks and balances upon the separation of powers and lastly the role of the worker in the control of economic power), it reproduces the constitution as passed side-by-side with the alternative version along with an explanatory section for every article. The four building blocks of his alternative are linked to the following questions:

> What is the PERSON, what is COMMUNITY, what is POWER, what is ENTERPRISE? These are the four essential and interconnecting questions to organise society justly ... the text which is being passed is, as I have said, the result of the anti-natural pact between people linked to dictatorship and people linked to democracy who have been roundly deformed due to having lived forty years submerged in an ocean of authoritarianism and fascism. (Xirinacs, 1978b: 4)

UN **TEMA** POLÈMIC

la CONSTITUCIÓ **DE TOTS**

UN **AUTOR** POLÈMIC

**XIRINACS**, SENADOR **INDEPENDENT**

UN **LLIBRE** POLÈMIC

**DEFENSA** i **ATAC**
a un PROJECTE
de CONSTITUCIÓ

P.V.P.: 225 ptes.

<div align="right">Figure 7: Xirinacs, 1978b[91]</div>

These four blocks, reproduced below in Figure 8, are given schematic form in a prelude to the book's constitutional content and represent a totalising metaphysical whole. In its determinist structuring, it follows a similar pattern to 'Subjecte: A delirious meditation concerning a source entitled Source of True Peace', an oriental-influenced meditation on the achieving of peace in the world, published in 1975, and penned when he was on hunger strike in Carabanchel prison and 'Globalium: A Global Model of Reality', published in 2007, the year of his death. Directly below the schematics, Xirinacs lays out an exegesis of social organisation based on popular sovereignty:

> Primitive humanity, beginning with the human biological unit which is the individual person (1.2), endeavoured to build sovereign community (2.2) on the basis of confederations (2.3) of tribes (2.1) which made up spontaneous nations. Population growth and thus hunger forced man to work as a slave (1.1), to create oppressive economic enterprises (4.2), great empires (4.1.) and, since the liberal revolutions, the separation of powers, executive (3.3), judicature (3.2) and

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[91] The back cover reads thus: A polemical SUBJECT / Everyone's Constitution / A polemical AUTHOR / Xirinacs, Independent Senator / A polemical BOOK / A defence of, and attack upon, a draft constitution.

legislature (3.1), the result of elections carried out in the popular sovereign community (2.2) which recognises the fundamental rights of the family (1.3), the person (1.2) and the worker (1.1). And with that the circle is closed, when the enterprise is democratic (4.3). (Xirinacs, 1978b: 8)
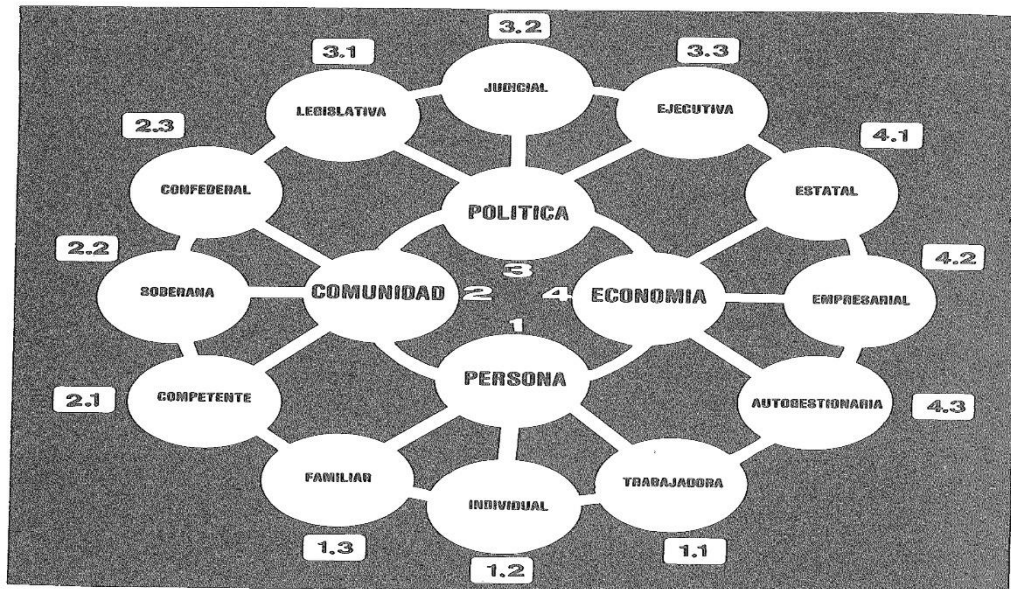


La humanitat primitiva, a partir de la unitat biològica humana, que és la persona individual (1.2), intentà constituir la comunitat sobirana (2.2) a base de confederacions (2.3) de tribus (2.1) que formaven nacions espontànies.

El creixement de població i per tant la fam, forçà l'home a treballar com esclau (1.1), a muntar empreses econòmiques opressives (4.2), grans imperis (4.1) i, des de les revolucions liberals, l'equilibri de poders, executiu (3,3), judicial (3.2) i legislatiu (3.1), resultat de les eleccions fetes en la comunitat popular sobirana (2.2) que acaba reconeixent els drets fonamentals de la família (1.3), de la persona (1.2) i del treballador (1.1). I amb això es tancarà el cercle, quan l'empresa sigui democrati-ca (4.3).

Figure 8: Xirinacs, 1978b

Xirinacs next turns to the preamble. Most constitutional preambles specify the nature and source of sovereignty. Despite being previously disregarded as mere symbolic statements, a growing number of countries have legalised the language of the preamble and now seem to be considered possessing both legal and sociological functions relating to 'the basic structure of the society and its constitutional faith' as well as reflecting inherent social and political norms (Orgad, 2010: 738). Liav Orgad cites the preamble to the post-WW2 German *Grundgesetz* linking itself explicitly to a new Europe, thus gaining popular support in a situation whereby new social, political and institutional norms are being cemented. Xirinacs was critically aware of the sea changes occurring in Spain following the death of Franco and in his amendment to the Spanish constitution preamble, he proposed what was to all intents and purposes a new ontological ordering

of Spain in both the preamble and itself and its subsequent political interpretation. The left hand version shows the draft preamble as passed and on the right Xirinacs's amendment for a confederated Spanish state:

| | |
|---|---|
| The Spanish Nation, desiring to establish justice, liberty, and security, and to promote the wellbeing of all its members, in the exercise of its sovereignty, proclaims its will to:<br><br>- Guarantee democratic coexistence within the Constitution and the laws, in accordance with a fair economic and social order.<br>- Consolidate a State of Law which ensures the rule of law as the expression of the popular will.<br>- Protect all Spaniards and peoples of Spain in the exercise of human rights, of their culture and traditions, languages and institutions.<br>- Establish an advanced democratic society, and<br>- Collaborate in the establishment of relationships with all the peoples of the Earth.<br>- Consequently, the Cortes pass and the Spanish people ratifies the following: | **The sovereign peoples of Andalusia, Aragon, the Canaries, the Basque Country, Galicia, the Castilian Countries and the Catalan Countries, with the intention of establishing a just and democratic set of statutes concerning their political life in concert, have agreed the present Constitution of a Spanish Confederation.** |

(Xirinacs, 1978b: 9)

The interpretation that followed was based on two pillars. The first was that the peoples making up the Spanish state needed to be so defined in order to be the recipients of international recognition in the case of individual processes of self-determination with agreements around subsequent confederation. The second was Xirinacs' denial of the existence of the Spanish nation, although he did not preclude that Spain as a 'nation of nations' could come into existence following confederation. Whilst averring that an absolute majority would have to be achieved in each of the territories delineated in the preamble in order for the constitution to be valid, he expounded on the Spanish nation and how the mechanics of confederation might function:

> We currently talk of a Spanish state due to the great respect which the idea of Spain affords us, something which we might consider to have become reality only fleetingly throughout history. Spain, nation of nations, might well come into existence one day, but that day is still very far away. Up to now all we have is a Spanish State maintained by force and through the oppression and colonisation of all the peoples which constitute it ... the apposite political model required to maintain united different nations without each giving up their respective sovereignties is the confederal model. (Xirinacs, 1978b: 10)

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He had previously rehearsed these same formulation in the Senate's Constitution Commission in August of that year. Acutely aware of banal nationalism, he uses his time to engage in political pedagogy with the philosopher-essayist Julián Marías, a senator nominated through designation by King Juan Carlos rather than by direct election:

> In the State of four centuries back we can make out four nationalities. The most well-known and demographically the largest with some eleven million habitants, I will call for the sake of internal heterogeneity the Castilian Countries ... My senator colleague Julián Marías is wrong when he says, 'Castile cannot be nationalist, because it has never been a nation ...'. Even Isabel I the Catholic[92] would be up in arms with Julián Marías. *(Laughs.)* (Spanish Senate, 1978)

The alternative constitution in book form, in many social policy areas, ran counter to Catholic teaching. On the day of his solitary vote against the Constitution in Senate among Catalan representatives, he penned his virtually daily article in *Avui*[93] on the reasons for the direction of his vote. It is clear that Xirinacs had arrived at an understanding of human emancipation that allowed for territorial and identitarian considerations to be given parity alongside a Marxist envisioning of universal class understood as the pursuit of general interests coinciding with nation-state frontiers (Llorente, 2013). Here, he outlines aspects of what he considered composite forms of hegemony, domination, exploitation or oppression in the proposed Constitution which he was not prepared to renege upon their abolition:

> I could choose to abstain my vote because the current Spanish State does not respect the nation of the Catalans. However, I am a senator in the Spanish Cortes and I am obliged to make my views known or else leave the Senate. My vote today will be 'No' ... human rights and fundamental liberties which have been recognised in it have been curtailed too much. (Xirinacs, 1978d)

It is safe, I believe, to come to the conclusion that for Xirinacs political and social contestation with the Spanish state could be considered what the political theorist Renzo Llorente terms 'composite' forms of oppression whereby 'in absolute terms, so to speak, composite forms of oppression are surely the most injurious, assuming that they include class oppression' (Llorente, 2013: 556). The sociologist C Wright Mills, in his critical reassessment of Marxism, proposes that at the centre of Marx's thought there existed a metaphysics woven through labour in that 'it is the wageworkers who are

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[92] In reference to the Early Modern period associated with the political unification of Spain.

[93] During his time as senator, Xirinacs penned another article column in the left-leaning and Spanish language newspaper *Mundo Diario*, and published almost every day (Busquets, 2017: 423).

destined to be the dynamic political actors in the maturity and in the decline of capitalism' and that, in the specific case of Rosa Luxemburg, such a 'labor metaphysic' was 'both a final act and an ultimate faith' (Mills, 1966: 127, 149). It is however unlikely that such an ultimate faith existed for Xirinacs. In an *Avui* column at the beginning of 1978, he critiques Marx for 'opting non-dialectically to push to the margins other aspects which cannot be reduced to socialism-made-science.' For Xirinacs, the split between Bakunin and Marx had led to a form of Marxism which was 'more an oppressive church than a focus of profound liberation' (Avui, 1978e). Despite these reservations, it is clear that in the emerging Catalan party political and institutional system he wished to further enmesh class politics, a privileging of the proletariat, in Llorente's words, as part and parcel of other social and identitarian factors. Fittingly, Xirinacs contains an epilogue in which he encapsulates an appeal to the reader using recurrent biological-deterministic comparisons. It would also begin to draw a curtain on this short period of activism within the institutional political system:

> Nature, after millions of experiments, has found the formula for the harmonious coexistence for those unicellular creatures in a larger community ... Put a piece of bread into your mouth and it is distributed equitably throughout all of the body and it sustains all the cells according to a distributive law which socialist or communist planners would give their right arm for ...
>
> Democracy means programmed community for everyone.
> A democratic constitution means that it is valid for everyone.
> In my amendments, I didn't ask for the privileging of anyone.
> Equality. Freedom. Solidarity. Coherence.
> They didn't approve a single one.
>
> They have handed out some candy to the working-class parliamentary parties.
> This Constitution has a number of good things.
> It's better than the recent dictatorship.
> However, it still contains too many anti-democratic elements.
> Elements which cannot be reneged upon.
> Vote as you wish.
> I will vote 'NO'. (Xirinacs, 1978b: 186-7)

Xirinacs participated somewhat half-heartedly in the subsequent drawing up of the devolution settlement for Catalonia. The historian Jaume Sobrequés – at that time, a politician involved in the drawing up of the Catalan *magna carta* – notes that Xirinacs was in disagreement with a significant amount of the text, stating that it was 'globally unacceptable' (in Busquets, 2017: 467) as he was unwavering regarding exclusive powers for Catalonia in fields such as social security and labour law. He produced a

number of amendments on his own as well as with other groupings. When the final text was voted on by Catalan deputies and senators, his was the only vote to abstain. In one of his last newspaper columns for *Avui*, he states his reasons, addressing Catalan politicians directly:

> I am convinced of the sovereign right of the Catalan people. This settlement does not reflect this. It is, therefore, invalid ... with the majority vote you have decided upon you have been coherent regarding your YES vote for the Constitution. You couldn't have arrived at a different devolution settlement than the one you have arrived at. You have provided a good service for the bourgeois and centralist Spanish State, but, like everything in politics, that has led you to serve our country badly along with the working people of Catalonia and you have deflated the other peoples of the State who had their eyes fixed upon us and on our work. (Xirinacs, 1978f)

When the first Catalan elections were held in 1980, Xirinacs headed up the BEAN (Left Block of National Liberation) coalition, garnerning a mere 0.52% of the vote. His two daily articles in *Avui* and *Mundo Diario* dried up (Busquets, 2017: 472-75) as well as having a number of articles rejected, possibly due to their emphasis on state torture and probably for his defence of the political violence of ETA and the incipient paramilitary organisation Terra Lliure,[94] 'I am obliged to defend and make the case for the armed struggle of national liberation and of class, which is maliciously included within the rubric of terrorism' (Xirinacs, 2009: 63). Years later, in September 2002, Xirinacs was charged on a count of glorifying terrorism for stating the following in a public speech: 'Gandhi said that the non-violent person cannot treat with neutrality the different actors in a violent conflict: the aggressor is the enemy, the aggressed against is the friend, albeit a violent one. I have struggled all my life for the non-violent life. But I declare here and I say it loud and clear, if there are any policemen or public prosecutors in the vicinity: I declare myself a friend of ETA and of Batasuna.' (Fundació Randa, 2016).[95] A number of months later, during his trial, he added, 'The unsettling sentence causing difficulty is: '*I declare myself a friend of ETA and Batasuna*', which I did indeed say, but it should have gone along with '*and I declare myself an enemy of the Spanish state*' which I forgot to say. That sentence is the purest application of the non-violence doctrine of Gandhi, which I have always preached: The non-violent person, facing a violent conflict, cannot remain neutral; he must declare himself friend of the oppressed,

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[94] See for example Laitin, 1995.

[95] Batasuna was a socialist political party dissolved in 2001 by a ruling of the Spanish Supreme Court which determined that it was the political wing of ETA.

of the invaded, and declare himself enemy of the oppressor. It is Spanish tanks which are occupying the Basque Country. No Basque army wishes to conquer Spain.' (Xirinacs, 2009: 135). He was finally jailed in October 2005 and released a number of days later on health reasons (Busquets, 2017: 679).

## Xirinacs: The Final Years

Xirinacs spent the next two decades after 1980 in relative distance from the public gaze and political life in general, devoting his time, energy and financial resourses in projects devoted to internationalism and peace studies. The decade of the 1980s was a period of a certain introspection. His biographer, Lluís Busquets, reproduces a document Xirinacs penned in November of 1981 entitled '30 hammer strokes against my heart, 30 pieces of silver' referencing thirty political, personal and financial failures, crises and disappointments such as the failure of the BEAN coalition to garner support in the Catalan elections of 1980, his failing health and the decision in 1990 to leave the priesthood (2017: 543-45). The document's title suggests the continuation of the alignment he had made at different junctures throughout his life between the betrayal of Christ, the political future of Catalonia and his own life. In the mid-1980s he wrote two conference documents, 'Individual Conscience, National Conscience and Cosmic Conscience' (1985) and 'An Alternative World' (1986) which act as positioning pins, against the Hegelian thesis, in the legitimization of the subaltern nation as a necessary particularising and agglutinative element within a common humanity. Posing the question 'Open to the world or closing off borders?', in order to illustrate how he understood the relationship between the particular and the universal, he again employs a biological analogy:

> There exists a dependence on material and spiritual exchanges and an independence of certain structures, a certain spirit and certain functions deriving from them. Borders are therefore needed, but of a singular kind. As with animals and vegetables, they require a complex semi-permanent membrane, closed off to that in the exterior world which might threaten their essential identity and freedom whilst being open to that in the exterior world which it needs to live and function. (Xirinacs, 1985: para 4.8.3)

Xirinacs then takes a more direct route. Suggesting the substitution of the United Nations, created through the violence of nation states, with a global federating structure possessing its own worldwide telematic currency to eradicate money laundering, he envisages the 'emergence of the human Nation' as:

an undivided space where all nations, as well as living out their one identity directly, will live indirectly from the identity of all the other federated nations ... It is pleasing to see that these great universalist souls have never wished to deny their own small nation whether it be, for example, Jesus of Nazareth, Gandhi for India or Tolstoy for Russia. Those universalist and nation-less 'citizens of the world' are shrivelled leaves tossed about by the wind. We are in need of an internationalism among all nations at all levels, rather than an interstatism for the powerful and or an interindividualism based on massification. (Xirinacs, 1985)

The following year, giving a conference paper to the Tascó Co-operative in Barcelona on the subject of an 'Alternative World', a more tenebrous Xirinacs engages once more with the ontological co-ordinates of Catalonia in a wider world. Despite the possibility of inflated or presumptuous elements within a Catalan particularity, an alternative world ordering for Xirinacs should accept it despite these failings. Like the metaphor used above, he offers a navegational map for the existence within, and enjoyment of, both the particular and universal:

> Alternative worlds should not deny, but rather affirm, the positive will to exist that our civilisation has. That it has developed availing itself of certain vanities, a certain stamp, a raison d'être with certain values – which do not represent all of the values in the Universe, just some of them – and, as some of them exist, it dispenses with a number of others, many more than those which we do affirm ... our society is an emancipation from the totality of the Universe. If this emancipation can be carried out completely, if it can be broken – which is impossible, because we would arrive at another Universe, and there isn't another one – then you have an umbilical chord which connects you with the Universe. (Xirinacs, 1986: 19-20)

The connection or acceptable tension between particularities and universalities of various hues Xirinacs couches in terms of a 'radical peace' compared with a 'radical violence' when the umbilical chord between the two is broken. It is at this point that he is able to connect the above with the theme of death and the prophet. Although the younger Marx of the Paris Manuscripts of 1844 was for Xirinacs someone who had 'acted prophetically' (1986: 25), later Marxism was guilty of being unresponsive to the 'subjective conditions of the revolution' leading to the substitution of 'one system for another' (1986: 22). This critique I interpret as representing for Xirinacs the particular aspects of human social life, including territoriality. It is plausible that Xirinacs saw himself, at a base psychological level, fulfilling the role of prophet in the bringing about of a type of coexistence between the particular and the universal as far as Catalonia or the Catalan Countries was concerned. As we have seen, Xirinacs had a decade

previously used his body as a performative object of struggle during the hunger strikes of the early 1970s. Although the reference to 'dying unto onself' can patently be interpreted as an allegory for profound changes at a personal and collective level within society, in light of the circumstances of Xirinacs' own death, his words in 1986 take on wider significance. Here, death and the prophet appear to be aligned:

> One's dying means forgetting oneself, one's force and propulsion, dreams, phobias, loves, interests. One's dying means just that, until you reach the point when you become no-one ... An authentic radical revolutionary – not a trumped-up part-time revolutionary – is a person who has to know how to die unto himself.

> The prophet is not a person who talks from himself but is rather a person through whom a new spirit, a revolutionary spirit, a testimony is channelled ... the true prophet never knows when he will possess the word of God and when he will not have it ... the prophet does not give technical solutions ... he gives a spirit, he provides a line, he gives testimony, he gives radiant example.
> (Xirinacs, 1986: 21-25)

In the 1990s, as well as publishing his three-volume political memoirs under the banner of 'The Betrayal of the Leaders' title, Xirinacs engaged in more personal projects, completing a doctoral thesis entitled, 'A Global Model of Reality' part of which was published in 2007, the year of his death. This topological work deals with the concept of metarationality, bringing together 'ontology, spiritual traditions, the theory of relativity and quantum physics in order to simulate in a geometrical, cinematic and dynamic way a circular field whereby distinct philosophical are hosted dialectically, even when they oppose each other' (Busquets, 2017: 563). Busquets notes that its philosophical interdisciplinarity ressembles the 'Great Universal Art of Finding Truth' of Ramon Llull, the lay evangeliser and reformer of the thirteenth century.[96] Born in Mallorca only a few years after the Catalans under the Aragonese crown had taken control of the island from its Muslim rulers (Bonner, 2007: 1), the work of Llull "synthesizes a vast range of techniques for private meditation, scriptural exegesis, and apologetic argument into a single system for 'discovering' how all knowledge and being reveals divine truth" (Johnston, 1996: 12).[97]

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[96] It is not unreasonable to think that Xirinacs would have been familiar with the '*Concepte General de la Ciència Catalana*' (*General Concepts of Catalan Science*) published in 1918 by the writer Francesc Pujols', part schematics for a Catalan school of philosophical thought and part broadside against the European philosophical tradition (Resina, 2017: 138). Pujols' placing of Ramon Llull at the centre of his philosophical history (Casasses, 2012: xvi) would have likely attracted Xirinacs to Pujols' work.

[97] The foundation dedicated to the propagation of Xirinacs' works and ideas bears the name Randa, after the hillock of that name on the island of Mallorca where Llull experienced 'divine intervention' (Bonner, 2007: 2-3).

From the age of 70, and more specifically during the month before his death at 75, Xirinacs adapted a bespoke martyrology to the conditions of how he envisioned his imminent and planned death. In the posthumous edited volume 'Final Memoir' published in 2007, two memoirs are brought together, the former – entitled 'Five Years: 'Sein zum Tode' (Being for Plasma)' – which begins in 2002 and comprising mainly of recollections and personal anecdotes, while the latter contains mystical-leaning creative compositions and penned one month before his death in August 2007. This latter memoir is entitled 'Last Flickerings: Lluís Maria Xirinacs i Damians, accompanied to a good death by Master Ramon Llull'. Throughout the volume, Xirinacs employs the spiritual binary of Llull's mystical work, 'The Book of the Lover and the Beloved' whereby the lover represents mankind and the Godhead the beloved, as a framework with which to encompass his final thoughts during the month of July 2007. The legend of Ramon Llull's martyrdom mentioned earlier in this chapter, 'Ramon Llull wanted to die a Martyr. I wish to die in Complete and Unrestrained Offering' (Xirinacs, 2007: 75) and the specific referencing of the work of Simone Weil when she would have been close to death[98] offer a glimpse of how the martyrology Xirinacs constructed created a bridge across time to personalities he felt in union with. Using Lullian binary imagery, one of these compositions, entitled 'Iniquity', creates the human Lover who beseeches the Beloved and receives the Beloved's response:

> The Lover was sobbing:
>> When will the ways of iniquity caused by ignorance cease?
>> When will grace win over impenetrability? (Simone Weil)
>> When will there be more innocent people than guilty ones?
> An unexpected answer:
>> When the Lover longs to die for the Beloved
>> When the Beloved sees the Lover fail on account of his love.
> I add:
>> When the Lover is totally consumed on account of love of the Beloved.
>> (Xirinacs, 2007: 43)

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[98] Xirinacs appends the following quote by Weil, 'Father, since thou art the Good and I am mediocrity, rend this body and soul away from me to make them into things for your use, and let nothing remain of me, for ever, except this rending itself, or else nothingness' with a bibliographical addition in brackets, 'Written in 1942-1943, shortly before her death' (Xirinacs, 2007: 77). The English translation above is taken from Finch, 2001: 126.

Early on the 6th of August, his 75th birthday, his personal doctor drove him from Barcelona to a forested area above the town of Ogassa in the province of Girona (Lara, 2019). His body was discovered on the 11th of August and a natural death was recorded on the circumstances surrounding his death (Busquets, 2017: 699-701). 'Final Memoir' tells us that forty years previously he had engaged in 'exercises in asceticism' and had slept overnight in the same place where his body would be found in 2007. This he describes as 'the first visit to the tomb (omega) of my ascetic death in the bonds of this world and the cradle (alpha) of my mystic birthing in the bonds of the other world' (Xirinacs, 2007: 65).[99] Before leaving Barcelona on the 6th of August, he had left at the offices of the Randa Foundation what would be in the eyes of the general public a final political and religious testimony, entitled 'Acte de Sobirania / Act of Sovereignty' (Figure 9), published soon after his death in the Catalan media. The elements of author, political and territorial contestation, sovereignty for the Catalan nation infused with its particular and universal components are melded together in a particularly public legacy:

ACT OF SOVEREIGNTY

I have lived enslaved for seventy-five years
in a Catalan Country
occupied by Spain, by France (and by Italy)
for centuries.
I have fought against this slavery
all the years of my adult life.
An enslaved nation, as with an enslaved person,
is a shame for humanity and the universe.
But a nation will never be free
if its sons and daughters do not wish to risk
their life in its liberation and defence.
Friends, grant me
this final victorious absolute
of my struggle,
to counterbalance the cowardice of our leaders, creators of a mass-produced
people.
Today my nation becomes
entirely sovereign in me.
They have lost a slave.
The nation is that little bit more free,
because I am in you, friends!  (Xirinacs, 2007: 86)[100]

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[99] He had made another visit to this forested area, once again describing his journey in mystical terms, in August 2002 (Xirinacs, 2007: 29).

[100] Later on that year (2007), the folk-rock group 'Mesclat' composed a song using as lyrics the content of 'Acte de Sobirania', see Rubio Estades, 2007.

ACTE DE SOBIRANIA

He viscut esclau setanta cinc anys
en uns Països Catalans
ocupats per Espanya, per França (i per Itàlia)
des de fa segles.
He viscut lluitant contra aquesta esclavitud
tots els anys de la meva vida adulta.
Una nació esclava, com un individu esclau,
és una vergonya de la humanitat i de l'univers.
Però una nació mai no serà lliure
si els seus fills no volen arriscar
llur vida en el seu alliberament i defensa.
Amics, accepteu-me
aquest final absolut victoriós
de la meva contesa,
per contrapuntar la covardia
dels nostres líders, massificadors del poble.
Avui la meva nació
esdevé sobirana absoluta en mi.
Ells han perdut un esclau,
ella és una mica més lliure,
perquè jo sóc en vosaltres, amics!

Figure 9: Xirinacs, 2007

Three weeks previous to his death, on the 13th July he made a long diary entry. He reflected on what might be the public response to his intentions, concluding that he might well be deemed deranged or 'embittered by life, frustrated and having failed in my ambitions, eager for fame, a victim of my desire for prominence, self-destructive, desperate, mentally disturbed, or simply suicidal' (Xirinacs, 2007: 60). He subsequently creates a triple binary: placing the Christ figure and his betrayal within the realms of class and territorial politics, linking both; the coupling of the particular with the universal, and in the final instance, the conflating of Christ with Catalan politics and very likely the author himself. In his diary, Xirinacs adds the contested territorial and social elements of late modernity to what Daniel Boyarin (1999: 94-95) describes as "martyrdom as a 'discourse', as a practice of God and of talking about it":

> Dead in life, he was incapable of avoiding the tragic and obscure background of
> the fickleness of the masses, the cowardice of the disciples, the betrayal of

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friends, the collaborationism of Jewish politicians and the invasion of Roman imperialism. The effects of class struggle of this unfaithful world in the other world. However, the cause of class struggle is the lack of individual, national and universal love: to be engaged, to take part, to risk life itself and then to leave freely over and above all instincts or the will to survive. (Xirinacs, 2007: 68)

The text of '*Final Memoir*' teems with the amalgam of all the elements listed above, fusing Catalan claims to self-determination with a radical re-ordering of the bases of the international sovereign system. In the prose and stylistically poetic excerpts below, it is a counter-Hegelian call for internationalist solidarity, critiquing the homogeneity of the concept of the universal based on current modes of construction (Matin, 2011) and a certain sense of guardianship for an incomplete Catalan nation which take prominence in a synthesis of individual and territory within a flawed modernity in need of belief systems:

> [M]y people is neither free nor accountable. My desire, thus, is to offer up the last portion of my long, good life, for the independence of my people. A small contribution to true universal fraternity between nations which need to be equally free and accountable among themselves ...
>
> 'I offer up my life because I want to.
> I offer it up to the whole universe.
> I offer it up especially to the oppressed of the earth
> and the oppressed earth.
> And more particularly, for the liberation and and reunification
> Of my beloved Catalan nation.
> I offer it up. No homicidal 'transgressor' is taking it from me.
> I am the homicidal 'transgressor' who is taking it ...
>
> One needs to know when to take one's leave opportunely and elegantly
> From the stage of life:
> not too early, nor too late.
> And to leave holding in one's hand
> the only essential offering
> worthy of the receiver:
> the last morcel of the Good Life[101] which She has given us.
> Lady life, if it is your wish
> make it, that when I drink from the *chalice* of my death,
> there might be still a drop
> of good wine to drink.
> I wish to offer you, not the remains of
> my humanity,
> but rather my life, because You gave it to me.
> A well-lived life, a sensible life,
> The last portion.

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[101] A mountain overlooking where Xirinacs died is called 'Som de Vidabona / Summit of Good Life'.

> What other thing could I offer you
> that wasn't yours
> that wasn't your best offering
> that You have never offered me?' (Xirinacs, 2007: 56-57)

His last diary entry was the 6th of August and consists of two elements, a partial restructuring of the 'Binding of Isaac' in Genesis 22 and a final composition comprising of the author as bridge between the territorial realm of Catalonia and a universality of infinite ordering. In Xirinacs' version of Genesis Chapter 22, the local typonomy of his final resting place is glossed upon the original and God appears in female form. The other subject of the composition is named 'Amanç' after the mountain of Sant Amanç to the north of the mountain of Som de Vidabona, with 'Amanç' substituting Abraham, Isaac and the ram sacrificed in Isaac's place: 'I raised my eyes, I looked and saw my body *caught in the thicket*. I *disentangled* my body and sacrificed it in complete offering, instead of my soul'.[102] The only unglossed verses, seventeen and eighteen, bringing to a close the original text of the Binding of Isaac, refer to Abraham's descendents and God's blessing of all nations equally in recompense for their obedience. These verses are concluded by a final added gloss, 'The remains of the body of Amanç returned to the earth' (Xirinacs, 2007: 124), suggesting that his imminent death represents both the sacrifice for, and realisation of, such an equality among nations.

Although the literary critic Terry Eagleton states that 'what counts as literature is a notably unstable affair' (2008: 11), it is perhaps '*Final Memoir*', among all of Xirinacs' texts, that renders the reader vulnerable as a piece of creative writing as it locks together the particular/universal binary as well as metaphysical and biblical subject matter into what would presently become a particularly poignant, public and political death. Discussing his own writing, the Catalan novelist Jaume Cabré discusses the deploying of the sacrifice of Isaac by the Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert in his poem 'Photograph', asserting that when reading a text, 'beginning from zero is nigh impossible' due to our prior knowledge and perception of the narrative power of biblical texts, particularly in their construction of the origins of nations. In Cabré's opinion, 'we read without defences in place' (2019: 523-37).

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[102] Italics as in original.

The last composition in '*Final Memoir*' comprises three blocks: an initial and concluding rewriting of verses from the Gospel of St. Matthew and an intervening section concentrating on the inclusion of territory as particularity within the universal, and emanating from the 'town square'. In this middle section, this is achieved by the almost identical repetition of the second and final verses, with the addition of the word 'here' in the final verse confirming the interdependence of the particular / universal binary:

> My soul
> this soul created by my body,
> chiselled by numerous souls
> specifically today,
> has been rendered universal unto me.
>
> I have abandoned the sweet solitude,
> the fortress of myself;
> what an instinct is the conservation of life!
>
> I have traversed the intimate and welcoming rampart
> of friends, family and neighbours
> of that 'us'
> that flowed like honey.
>
> I have left behind the inviting barbican
> of my people, of my language,
> of ancestral customs,
> which, now lost, create an aching
> for projects yet to arise:
> the longed for assemblies *in the town square*.[103]
>
> I have shed the comfortable womb,
> the protecting borders
> of my civilisation,
> of my beloved spiritual
> and material traditions, so rich and ample,
> of human fellowship,
> of the warm tenderness of this planet Earth
> between absolute zero
> and the twenty million degrees
> at the heart of the stars.
>
> My soul,
> this soul created
> by the millions of souls in my body,
> chiselled by all the other souls,

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[103] Italics as in original.

specifically today and here,
has been rendered universal unto me!

<div align="right">Lluís Maria Xirinacs<br>
*The day of my death* (Xirinacs, 2007: 124-26)</div>

**Conclusion**

The figure of Lluís Maria Xirinacs remains an area of contention within Catalan politics and society. Two days following the discovery of his body, the journalist Salvador Sostres sews together the multi-generational political contestation of Catalan sovereignty and the death of Xirinacs:

> Lluís Maria Xirinacs has died, ill and alone, in the middle of a forest. He has died just as Catalonia has died: alone, unhinged, eccentric, demented, falling to pieces, abandoned ... most likely, Lluís Maria Xirinacs had not been in full faculty of his senses for some time, but if this country rallied after the long night of Francoism it was thanks to the fact that Xirinacs and some people like Xirinacs risked their lives for Catalonia. A man has left us who did no harm to anyone and who provided an admirable portfolio of services to the nation. If he has died in sickness, he has died sick with love for his country, for our country. (Sostres, 2007)

That same day, the journalist Francesc-Marc Álvaro commented that two Xirinacs existed. One was the Nobel prize listed Xirinacs, the civil disobedience leader destined to become historical documentary material, the most-voted for senator in Spain on a ticket of radical democratisation for Spain, whom the ex-President Jordi Pujol, systematically condemned by Xirinacs, had 'yesterday styled a *prophet*'.[104] The other Xirinacs was the "icon for the extremely minority and marginal Catalan independence movement, the Xirinacs who ends up saying things like he was 'a friend of ETA, they place bombs, but they give warnings'" (Álvaro, 2007). More than a decade later, a book-length psychogeographical essay was published dealing with the circumstances surrounding his death (Lara, 2019) and in the context of the Catalan independence movement currently possessing a numerical majority in Catalonia's parliament – along with the subsequent political and judicial turmoil of incarcerated political leaders carrying out hunger strikes – the political force of memorialising Xirinacs, the civil disobedient, can be adduced from a number of press articles in late 2018 (for example, Pons, 2018; Payeras, 2018) referring to the hunger strike carried out by him in support

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[104] Italics as in original.

of political amnesty at the end of the Francoist regime. Here, a clear connection is made between the civil disobedience of Xirinacs and current political instability.

The cultural materialist and literary critic Raymond Williams, in his *Keywords* parsing the changing cultural meanings attached to words throughout history with special emphasis on modernity, wrote an entry under 'nationalism'. In a definition resonating with the fraught creative writing of Xirinacs, he creates an optimistic asymmetric weighting for 'internationalism', counterposing it with the current international state system. In Williams' opinion, a 'separable distinction between nationalism (selfish pursuit of a nation's interests as against others) and internationalism (co-operation between nations)' has been created in opposition to each other. However, representing an experimental political ordering in the world, regardless of its probabilities of coming into being, Williams considers internationalism a mode of international dialogue: 'Internationalism, which refers to relations between nation-states, is not the opposite of nationalism in the context of a subordinate political group seeking its own distinct identity; it is only the opposite of selfish and competitive policies between existing political nations' (Williams, 1983: 214). This chapter demonstrates that Xirinacs, leaning heavily upon the ontology of a intertwining particular/universal binary, intended Catalan political sovereignty to be located within the realms of such an internationalism. Jaume Cabré, writing on the material of the novel, refers to the mechanism by which the particular is linked to the universal: 'A novel takes from life that which is particular and forges it in its own specificity, its own individuality. But if the author is dexterous enough, she can produce in the reader a sense of globality, of totality, despite dealing only with the particular' (2019: 469). Xirinacs was no novelist yet his – for the most part prosaic – writerly production encapsulated this binary, accepted it for the human subject and raised it to the level of political and religious ontology.

# Chapter Four

## Máirtín Ó Cadhain: The Clear, Political Choice of Allegory

> Ó Cadhain's maxim that hope rather than reason was the chain
> detonation in Irish history is at once a recognition
> of the imperative of renewal but also a metaphor for
> revivalism as an act of radical *becoming* (de Brún, 2019: 177)

### Introduction

In the previous chapters, the writerly production of Joseba Sarrionandia and Lluís Maria Xirinacs was analysed in the context of the desire for political recognition within wider and continuing transformations within modernity. The argument developed in this study is that all three authors – including Máirtín Ó Cadhain – engage with the contents of the modern condition, such as modernisation, materialism, the agency and reach of capital, technical rationality, technological change and state power (Harvey, 2000: 209) and that they do so from the territorial and linguistic peripheries of state sovereignty. In this chapter, we see how the writer and political activist Máirtín Ó Cadhain was influenced by 'a broader and more inclusive idea of modernism' in the depiction of his protagonists' attempts 'to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it' (Berman, 1988: 5) as well as 'making a home' within modernity for their chosen, minoritised, subaltern language of writing. At a base level, this deals with the relationship between his writing and nationalist, republican and minority language-oriented politics within the newly-created state political system of the Republic of Ireland. The author Cian Ó hÉagartaigh contextualises Ó Cadhain in the case of wider European revolutionary change whereby revolution takes on its more literal sense of breakneck social change:

> ... Máirtin Ó Cadhain was one of a distinct group of twentieth century writers whose lives included a significant personal involvement in the patriotic and revolutionary movements of their time and place. It is a large, various, and distinguished group, including Andre Malraux, Ignazio Silone, George Orwell, Victor Serge, Doris Lessing, and, among Irish writers, Frank O'Connor, Peadar O'Donnell, Brendan Behan, Ó Cadhain and others. Most of them were revolutionaries before they were writers and, although active political involvement usually did not survive the trials of life and experience, most of them retained a lifelong sympathy with the sufferings of ordinary people caught up in the troubles of the times. (2008: 28).

Statehood is a form of ordered spatial and territorial organisation within modernity (Cleary, 2004). The sites of undisputed hegemony statehood possesses within interconnected global organising systems invariably gives rise to writerly responses from within the individual state system and serves as witness to contestation at the territorial, socio-economic, political and linguistic level. The other writers in this study encompass responses to pre-statehood sites of territorial contestation (The Basque Country/Sarrionandia and Catalonia/Xirinacs) whereby a firmly established state sovereignty – Spain – is challenged, while Máirtín Ó Cadhain responds to the sea changes of transformatory statehood as experienced in the Republic of Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century. We have seen that political violence as part of territorial contestation in the Basque Country provides content for a significant part of the work of Joseba Sarrionandia, yet it also serves as a jumping-off point for the author whereby he interrogates what post-statehood might look like, and this is where the complexity of his writing at the particularist/universalist meeting points can be discerned. On the other hand, as we will see, political violence arising from territorial contestation at the onset of the Republic of Ireland in the writing of Máirtín Ó Cadhain is mainly a background element rather than being overtly conspicuous. However, politics writ large is always present in his work and essential to the literary themes of an author deeply concerned with the future of the Irish language capable of providing credible and meaningful responses to the cultural challenges of modernity. Unlike Joseba Sarrionandia, born a full half-century after Ó Cadhain, what is dealt with in this chapter is the sustained attempt by the author over the course of a lifetime to claim a place for the Irish language within the raging vortex of classical and late modernity whilst invoking claims to both the particular and universal and a politics of recognition. After a brief biographical treatment of Ó Cadhain's childhood and participation in the IRA during the formative years of the Irish Republic, these claims are explored through an analysis of three core texts in three subsequent sections, the short story 'An Bóthar go dtí an Ghealchathair' (The Road to Brightcity), the author's most acclaimed novel *Cré na Cille* (*Graveyard Clay*) and the later novella, '*An Eochair*' (*The Key*). Each of the texts reflects a different time period in the author's work and are contrasted with his more explicit and forthright non-literary publications.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, there has been increased academic interest in the engagement of the novel as a distinct literary form focusing on disparate sites of the socio-political world (gender, race, geography etc). However, it is worth offering here a brief rejoinder to that debate as a prelude to Máirtín Ó Cadhain's work. In 1957, the American literary critic Irving Howe's *Politics and the Novel* focused on the convergence in the 19th and 20th century between the medium of communication and the direction that politics gives to moral and ethical conflict. In his 2002 introduction to Howe's book, David Bromwich remarks upon the title itself, whereby he claims the form 'political novel' is eschewed in favour of a more nuanced and comprehensive bringing together of the novel *and* politics. This is brought out further by Howe himself. Quoting Stendhal, he equates the existence of politics in a work of literature to a 'pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar, and yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse one's attention' (Howe, 2002: 15). Howe is not seemingly interested in rigid categorising but rather in the interrogation of the relationship between politics and literature, thus arriving at the somewhat wide-ranging interpretation of, 'a novel in which *we take to be dominant* political ideas or the political milieu ... without thereby suffering any radical distortion.' (Howe, 2002: 17).[105] Albeit with the dominance of the 'political', he understood such a novel to be a work of internal tensions whereby on the one hand the novel's content confronts experience from the position of immediacy and closeness whilst on the other ideology remains more general, more approximate and indefinite:

> The political novelist must be able to handle several ideas at once, to see them in their hostile yet interdependent relations and to grasp the way in which ideas in the novel are transformed into something other than the ideas of a political program ... no matter how didactic or polemical his purpose may be, his novel cannot finally rest on the idea "in itself" ... he must pit himself against the imperious presence of the necessary. (Howe, 2002: 21-23)

Let us borrow the 'presence of the necessary' invoked by Howe and apply it to the writerly production of Máirtín Ó Cadhain, Joseba Sarrionandia and Lluís María Xirinacs. Highly contested territorial politics is not explicitly invoked in Howe's reading due to that fact that, to paraphrase Michael Billig, it is rendered banal and thus more invisible in political systems like the United States where sovereignty is not deemed an issue from which significant political cleavage might develop. However, this

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[105] Italics in the original.

is the case in the writings of the authors analysed in this research because there exists an overriding ontological need to name and problematise the political community. Joseba Gabilondo makes a similar critique of the influential Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson when dealing with the allegory of the nation as unresolved political conundrum. For example, in reference to Jameson's declaration that all 'third-world texts ... necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory', Gabilondo argues for a widening of the academic gaze regarding the locations wherein such national allegories can emerge within literature:

> '... his claim is valid if it is taken out of the context of "the Third World" and is applied, instead, to many political or national contexts not regulated by a hegemonic nation-state during this time, as it is the case of the Basque Country. Furthermore, it is important to realize that the allegorical nature of these works is not something that is unconscious or historically inherent as Jameson claims: it is a clear, political choice made by some minority writers'. (Gabilondo, 2016: 219-20)

Moreover, both the problematising of territory and the use of minority languages as the medium selected represent an extension to the thesis of Barry McCrea's *Languages of the Night*, discussed in Chapter One, whereby 'minor languages exerted a fundamental if not always immediately visible influence on the work of modernist novelists in major languages.' (2015: xiv). In the case of the three writers analysed here, there is no subsuming, no incorporation or transference into the main stream of modernity as mediated by modernist literature. Here, the peripheral modern is given voice and any universalism created or summoned forth will arrive from, at the very least, a more commensurate congregation with the local and particular. This would seem to be in keeping with the thrust of Michael Cronin's 'microcosmopolitan' argument whereby dialogue with progressive cosmopolitanisms can occur. On this view, the latter might be released from a 'historical vision and a set of ideological presuppositions that threaten both its survival as a necessary element of human self-understanding and its ability to speak meaningfully to many different political situations.' (Cronin, 2004: 206). Luke Gibbons also argues that 'cosmopolitan' modernity shimmers, star-like, with more hidden discontents vying for recognition among more easily recognisable elements. Here, the key features of modernity, 'subjectivity, the city, commodity culture, technology, democracy, empire – harbor their own phantoms, particularly as they impinge on the dislocations of the colonial periphery.' (Gibbons, 2015: xiv). Joseph Cleary is equally unequivocal when stating that 'the experimental thrust of Irish

modernism – in Wilde, Synge, Yeats, Sean O'Casey, Joyce, Beckett, and Ó Cadhain – was essentially linguistic in character.' (Cleary, 2004: 226).

However, it is at this very juncture that the language chosen for literary creation can *itself be understood as an allegory, inherent in the artistic work, on the unresolved nature of the political community*. Ó Cadhain tends to be overlooked in the above pantheon, despite being 'surely the most politically committed of the Irish modernist writers, his work regularly bypassed, however, because he wrote in Irish rather than in English.' (Cleary, 2004: 224-25). This study is thus a comparative rejoinder on the voicing and the significance of the particular within the upheaval of a universalising modernity. Republican values lie at the core of the writing of all three authors and it is no surprise that the seeming contradiction at the core of the binary are present at the organisational centre of republicanism. In Richard Kearney's study of what a postnationalist Ireland might look like, he sets up what he calls the 'fundamental paradox coiled at the heart of modern republicanism ... On the one hand, republicanism promoted an enlightened universalism of world citizens. On the other, it permitted a separatist nationalism which subordinates the universal rights of the citizen to the rights of the nation-state' (1997: 23). Let us now look at how Máirtín Ó Cadhain fashioned his own distinct dialogue between the particular and the universal and whether this constitutes, with Cleary, a debate driven by the 'experimental' and the 'linguistic'. As Ó Cadhain's incarceration in the Curragh Barracks on the outskirts of Dublin between 1940 and 1944 can be considered a key period in the development of the writer, the following sections will be divided into a 'before', 'during' and 'after' period for chronological reasons, with the themes alluded to in this introduction weaving through the time periods.

## Máirtín Ó Cadhain: Local, Organic Community – When I did read it, I knew exactly what it was

One year before his death, in 1969, Ó Cadhain published *Páipéir Bhána agus Páipéir Bhreaca* (Blank Pages and Written Pages), a short literary autobiography and personal rejoinder on the state of literary and linguistic affairs in Ireland. This chapter suggests that the need to reflect Irish-language culture in his writing as well as weighing up the place of such particularism within universal settings come through strongly in his work.

Ó Cadhain's writing, on this view, can be interpreted as a response to modernity formulated in the Irish language, described by the author himself as most probably nearing extinction in the near future. The sheer will to fight passionately for its continued existence, against the power of despair, is cited as a reason for writing in Irish (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 40). Coming as he did from the Connemara 'Gaeltacht' area where the Irish language was still at that time the overwhelming language used in social communication, the richness and depth as well as the societal faultlines of this economically beleaguered region was acutely aware to him from a very young age. He gives an example of the linkages between territory and the individual in the following manner:

> A couple of years ago I was chatting in America with a woman who hadn't seen in sixty years the townland where we were both raised. There wasn't a single field, path, shore rock, hillock or mountain watercourse that she couldn't name without wavering. The townland had been whirring around in her head for sixty years. A bit like me. (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 8)

Citing mid-20th century cultural studies, he defines territory, the individual and society thus:

> I came from a *local organic community*,[106] the kind which particular English writers are very interested in, like Eliot, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart ... You could see the virtues and defects in the community, during turf-cutting and reaping, giving advice, being there in times of distress. But there was also strife, conflict and jealousy. (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 9-10)

This 'local, organic community' is the background which defined almost the entire parameters of Ó Cadhain the political activist, yet Ó Cadhain the modernist writer also uses the Irish-speaking territory of the Conemara Gaeltacht as the particularist axle of human endeavour and depicted almost exclusively by the author in his earlier work transforming itself at some juncture between social realism and the problematising of the spacial dislocations and cultural interchanges within modernity. The author's later literary creation tends to address issues regarding the increasingly urbanised individual in society. It is through the exploration and mining of the Irish language in the later phase of his life that he finds expression for the meeting points between perceived universals of modernity and its discontents and the disgruntled acceptance of a narrative of particularism placing the Irish language within a straightjacketed territorialised

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[106] Ó Cadhain translates 'local organic community' as 'comhthionól fuinniúil fuinte' which appears as italics in the Irish language text.

frame. Ó Cadhain, especially in his later work, simply brought the two together and in so doing, rejected – in his mind at least – the fate laid out for non-majoritarian language use as depicted in *Languages of the Night*. Describing the kind of language used in his ground-breaking novel *Cré na Cille* (*Graveyard Clay*) and his later novella *An Eochair* (*The Key*):

> Any time I depart from the speech patterns of my own dialect, it's when I write the kind of language that I heard someone say, or the speech anyone from the Gaeltacht with any familiarity with the ideas that I'm trying to bring forward would understand. In *Cré na Cille*, the speech used by the schoolmaster and his wife and other people sometimes isn't normal Gaeltacht speech, but rather an artistic speech, an ennobled or faux-ennobled turn of phrase. In *An tSraith ar Lár* 'An Eochair' or 'Cé Acu' are not Gaeltacht stories. (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 21)

The literary critic Alan Titley has described Ó Cadhain as a 'fierce modernist' (Titley, 1998: 90), bringing the Irish language to the festival of modernism, and by extension, to its referring object, the modern condition. A subsidiary aim of this chapter is thus to analyse the use of the Irish language in the sociolinguistic context of relatively unmarked speech (use of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht) and marked speech (use of the Irish language in Dublin) in order to problematise a further objective, that of evaluating the creative struggle in bringing together the particular and the universal in Ó Cadhain's writing. This should not perhaps surprise us, as Titley reminds us, giving a nod to post-colonial concerns when discussing Ireland in the decades following the creation of the Irish state:

> The concerns which are the essence and the festering scab of intellectuals and literary critics in Ireland since from the middle of the nineteenth century – nationalism, colonialism, language, people, community, the individual, identity, selfhood, all these came back in through the back door exactly at the moment when people thought that they had rid themselves of them. (Titley, 1998: 91).

Máirtín Ó Cadhain was born at the turn of the twentieth century in An Cnocán Glas, a townland just east of the village of An Spidéal, an overwhelmingly Irish speaking area 'where the people scratched a scanty living from a patchwork of stony fields beside the sea' (Ó hÉigeartaigh, 2008: 28) in the west of the country in what would in post-independence Ireland be called a 'Gaeltacht' district where the Irish language would be the subject of state policy designed to revitalise the language. In the census of 1851, over 80% of people living to the west of Galway understood little or no English (Denvir, 1987a: 94-5). More than one hundred years later, by the early 1970s, Irish was the majority language in only 30% of Gaeltacht communities (Giollagáin et al, 2007: 9).

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It is thus very likely that An Cnocán Glas during Ó Cadhain's formative years was one of the townlands where Irish was still the language through which the vast majority of everyday human interactions were conducted.

There is uncertainty whether his birth date, the 4th of January, refers to 1905 or 1906 (Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 8). As a young child he was given to writing down oral tradition in an attempt to forget the hunger he experienced. From there, he quickly advanced to his own compositions and began winning prizes for them (Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 3). Events witnessed during his formative years would mark the rest of his life. In the pre-independence Ireland of his youth, skirmishes occurred between the IRA and the police as well as the British Government counter-insurgency units of the 'Black and Tans'. The First World War had also impinged itself in a direct and tragic manner in the locality, resulting in civilian deaths of people that Ó Cadhain would have known (Siggins, 2017). The living conditions of his youth were harsh with thirteen family members sharing a three-room house and it is in the harsh living conditions of the Connemara Gaeltacht that Ó Cadhain made hybrid and flexible linkages between Marxism, left-wing Irish republicanism and direct action in favour of the Irish language. These ideas were to last a lifetime:

> These ideas had crept into my mind before I left the Gaeltacht or before I had even heard people talk of Marx or Connolly[107] ... because more than any other place in Ireland it's in the Gaeltacht that you can see **class distinction**[108] ... Irish speakers and the poor are one and the same thing. I had this class hate instilled in me long before I read the first words by Connolly or **Das Kapital**. And when I did read it, I knew exactly what it was. (Ó Cadhain, 1970: 10)

> What is actually incredible is that ordinary people, downtrodden people all over the country are organising themselves and beginning to understand that the individual's struggle is that of their neighbours and that Ireland's struggle is also that of the Irish language. (in Denvir, 1998: 76).

The bringing together of nationalist politics and redistributionist politics were to be his political compass for the duration of his life as a language agitator and the social deprivation suffered by people from the Gaeltacht formed a backdrop for his earlier writing before his years of internment between 1940 and 1944 in the Curragh Barracks

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[107] This is a reference to the early twentieth century syndicalist and republican leader James Connolly executed in 1916 for his role in the armed insurrection of the Easter Rising against British rule in Ireland.
[108] Ó Cadhain singles out 'class distinction' in the Irish text, translating it into English and putting it into bold.

outside Dublin. Of almost 17,000 acres in his local electoral ward of Cill Aitheann, more than 9,000 belonged to two people. Ó Cadhain referred to this landed class as possessing a distinct culture from the sizeable monoglot Irish-speaking population living there, 'The bourgeois element didn't make nor sing nor tell our songs or stories, nor spoke our language except in cases of necessity.' (Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 2).

Before he was twenty he had moved to Dublin to train to be a teacher and it was not long afterwards that he joined the IRA whose overall aim was the political sovereignty of Ireland in its entirety, with the six northern counties remaining within the United Kingdom, thus creating a border with the dominion-status Irish Free State within the British empire as a result of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. During the first two decades of the emerging political system in southern Ireland, the IRA had an uneasy relationship with the governments of the day and its paramilitarism was backed up with widespread membership on both sides of the border running into the thousands (Ó hÉigeartaigh, 2008: 28). Ó Cadhain during this period was an effective recruiter for the IRA (Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 26). He also turned to writing in the furtherance of the nationalist cause. Whilst in Dublin, he penned a number of articles for the relaunched official newspaper of the IRA at that time, *An Phoblacht* (The Republic), coinciding with the editorship of Peadar O'Donnell, a republican who also advocated socialist revolution whilst also being a member of the IRA Army Council, a combination which would become a minority position within the organisation in the mid-1930s (English, 1990). Under O'Donnell, attention was brought to bear on the payment of land annuities by farmers to the British government via the newly founded Free State government. Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh is of the opinion that this engendered sympathy from Ó Cadhain towards the two-pronged objectives of the newspaper during this period, a more speedy severing of political and social relationships with Britain and an emphasis upon a social reorganisation of the country's economic resources. The populist tone adopted by Ó Cadhain would remain with him during his life in his political writings as a form of pre-eurocommunist Connollyism appealing to an internationalism eschewing the trappings of empire whilst promoting the bringing together of nationalism and redistributionist politics. Here was Ó Cadhain's Janus, looking forward to progress as it simultaneously looks back to tradition. Writing in *An Phoblacht* in 1928 in an article entitled 'Looking Forward', he writes:

> As in the ancient Empires the individual citizen is powerless and lost in an inert mass ... patriotism, freedom and culture do not flourish in the great centralised State. They require smaller centres of active life. They flourished in ancient Ireland under the loosest form of central government ... we must frame our modern political system on broad lines corresponding to our original native social organisation. (Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 22).

In 1932, Ó Cadhain returned to Connemara as a schoolteacher in Carnmore, 8 miles to the east of Galway and quickly became the leader of the local IRA unit. His desire for sea change in the socio-economic fortune of Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht led also to his involvement, parallel to that of the IRA, with 'Muinntear na Gaedhaeltachta' (Gaeltacht People), a language-based activist group centred on the Gaeltacht (Ó Hainle, 2002: 3). There is evidence that during his involvement with 'Muinntear na Gaedhaeltachta' he continued to recruit for the IRA from within the group's numbers (Ó Ciosáin, 1993: 59), reflecting perhaps a tendency during his life to maintain a somewhat fluid positioning on furthering the language within civil society.[109] His links to language activism would lead to tensions regarding his alignment with mainstream republicanism which communicated with civil society overwhelmingly in English. With Ó Cadhain broadly aligned to socialist republicanism, unease was also felt with an IRA leadership, and indeed the country as a whole, which did not embrace left-wing politics (English, 2003: 49-50). Although in agreement with the need for political violence in the achieving of full independence, specifically in terms of class struggle, he wrote in 1960:

> I know what brought me into the IRA. What was required was a struggle to emancipate my people, poor country people. (in Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 29)

The interweaving of territorial language politics and land reform were equally prominent in his general worldview, with sustained policies in favour of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht being mirrored by complimentary action in favour of the language in non-Irish speaking areas. Being renowned as an eloquent orator, the inaugural edition of 'An t-Éireannach', the first weekly newspaper in Irish[110], produced verbatim a speech he gave at a meeting in An Cheathrú Rua in the heart of the Gaeltacht:

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[109] In the year of his death, 1970, in a published pamphlet entitled *Gluaiseacht na Gaeilge: Gluaiseacht ar Strae* (The Irish Language Movement: A Movement Adrift) this flexibility was formulated thus, 'if the objective is the right one the method or way of achieving it is the right one' (Ó Cadhain, 1970: 11).
[110] This socialist-leaning newspaper, focusing overwhelmingly on, and bringing together conceptually, Gaeltacht and European issues, was short-lived, publishing from 1934 to 1937.

> Until the day that every public position in the country can be taken up without the need for English, Irish speakers will not have fair play. I have nothing against English. I'm not against it because it's the language of Empire which has plundered and pillaged us for hundreds of years. Not because it's a foreign erudite language inappropriate for our race. But rather Irish and English will not run the course together, just like the cat and the mouse won't last it out in a box.
>
> For centuries the Irish language and poverty have been synonymous. Nothing has changed as regards that. There are midland pasture and bullock farmers and those with fattened stomachs unwilling to let go of the fertile ondulating land in this country. The language and the land question must be solved together. Irish will not be saved without saving the Gaeltacht and the Gaeltacht will not be saved without the land. (Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 40-41)

Ó Cadhain moreover had veiled criticism of the IRA leadership regarding their positioning on the language question. In an article in An Phoblacht in 1934, he rounds on the organisation for its relegation of the Gaeltacht within the Irish political community as a whole:

> Might I ask the Army Council to state explicitly its Gaeltacht policy? The lack of interest in the I.R.A. in the Gaeltacht at the present time is deplorable. It is not due to any lack of manliness, but to apathy and indifference. (Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 43)

His allegiance to the IRA remained unwavering, however, and he was in agreement with the general thrust of the IRA's decision to plan for a bombing campaign in England in the run-up to the Second World War. He was elected onto the IRA Army Council in April 1938 and resigned in December of the same year, later to be arrested in September 1939, interned at Arbour Hill, Dublin and released later on that year. The book publisher Cian Ó hÉigeartaigh states that relatively little is known of these years of Ó Cadhain's active service, 'But what did he actually do? What operations did he take part in or authorise? What was his record as officer in command in Galway and later in Dublin? Did he shoot anyone, or shoot at anyone? We do not know. The details of his IRA service are difficult to pin down' (Ó hÉigeartaigh, 2008: 30). It is known, however, that he was involved in the Magazine Fort raid in Phoenix Park, Dublin in December 1939, home to the Irish Army's munitions depot with the resultant requisition of more than a million rounds without a shot being fired. It resonates that so little was known of Ó Cadhain, even with the passing of decades:

> In the 1960s, when a student at Trinity College, I knew Ó Cadhain quite well, and spent some time in his company outside lectures, but I never remember hearing him speak of his time in the IRA, whether in Galway or in Dublin. I

certainly did not know at that time that he had been an Army Council member or O/C. (Ó hÉigeartaigh, 2008: 30)

Ó Cadhain, Ó hÉigeartaigh tells us, would keep distanced the world of literary creation and political agitation, 'The disconnection between the capacity for political calculation, conspiracy and ruthless violence inherent in these activities and the gentle, whimsical tone of most of the stories in *Idir Shúgradh agus Dáiríre* (Half in Earnest) is striking. It is as if Hans Christian Andersen had another life as an agitator and a terrorist' (Ó hÉigeartaigh, 2008: 29). However, as the literary critic Louis de Paor (2013: 167) points out, this distance should perhaps not be overemphasised as both territorial, political indignation and social injustice inform both the paramilitary, the agitator and the writer *engagé* and this reassessment chimes with Irving Howe's belief that 'the writer can only struggle, through the sobrieties of realism or the artifices of antirealism ... all writers look for ways to scale walls or slip past barbed wires' (2002: 255).

In summary, Ó Cadhain was a political agitator bringing together claims concerning the possession of land in the new Free State political system and the fate of language speakers was mainly embodied, as far as Ó Cadhain was concerned, by those living in the Gaeltacht. Added to this was his unbridled paramilitarism and acceptance of political violence both at home and abroad in the United Kingdom, by that time a separate sovereign state. In this regard, Ó Cadhain certainly shared with other writers during the twentieth century a personal involvement with sociopolitical and socialist revolutionary upheaval, such as Yiannis Ritsos, George Orwell, Brendan Behan, Mahmoud Darwish, Frank O'Connor, André Malraux and Victor Serge. Ó hÉigeartaigh makes a pertinent point regarding the manner in which Ó Cadhain fenced off his own paramilitary activities from his own creative writing:

> It is surely remarkable that you can read all Ó Cadhain's published fiction without finding anything to suggest that this is a writer who spent almost two decades, almost half his adult life, intimately engaged day by day in the affairs of an oath bound underground army ... Máirtín Ó Cadhain was well equipped to write that novel, but he chose not to do so. (Ó hÉigeartaigh, 2008: 30)

Ó Cadhain's writing would shift from gritty social realism to a linguistically effervescent and particularist engagement with classical and late modernity, and the possibilities this would offer for envisaging a binary incorporating both the universal and the particular. In his discussion of an exchange of articles in the monthly 'An

tUltach' magazine in 1962 regarding 'revivalist Irish' with the grammarian Muiris Ó Droighneáin, Fionntán de Brún hints at this binary:

> While it is clear that Máirtín Ó Cadhain was deeply committed to the integrity of his local community both linguistically and politically, there can be no doubt that he also shared a belief in the need for a more abstract, utopian ideal and in particular the ideal to which Ó Droighneáin alludes in his essay, summarised in a single word, 'republic'. (2015: 238)

before asserting that 'perhaps the pull of the local was too persistent for him to fully accede to this' (de Brún, 2015: 238). That Ó Cadhain was ideologically aligned with the 'republic' from the point of view of nation (in the sense of Tönnies' *gemeinschaft* as imagined community) and demos (in the sense of *gesellschaft* with the citizen at the political core of the state institutional system) will be attested to here, yet I would argue that it was the very 'pull of the local' which was the enabling force, allowing him to lock horns critically with the discontents, ownership and boundaries of modernity in his ground-breaking novel *Cré na Cille* (*Graveyard Clay*) and the later novella *An Eochair* (*The Key*). Writing on *Cré na Cille*, Cian Ó hÉigeartaigh (2008: 31) has remarked, 'nothing about it was commonplace in 1950. In the sixty-odd years of the Gaelic revival many worthy novels had been written, exploring Irish versions of English and European models, but here was a book that owed nothing to any European model.' This chapter will argue that Ó Cadhain's response to modernism could not emanate from anything other than a 'European model'. The moves to Ó Cadhain's engagement with, and response to, modernism will now be examined and they have without a shadow of a doubt their epicentre in the four years of interned incarceration at the Curragh barracks 35 miles outside Dublin.

## The Curragh: Why hadn't anyone told me that stories like that existed?

Following his arrest in 1939 after the law and courts minister included him in a detention order for 60 people 'whose activities appear to him to be prejudicial to the security of the State', he was eventually released, soon to reappear in the aforementioned raid on the Magazine Fort. It was during his speech at the funeral of a friend, Tony d'Arcy, an IRA hunger striker, that a scuffle ensued. Ó Cadhain is reported to have shouted to the army and police present, 'the murderers, the murderers ... not even satisfied to kill him, but they want to hound him into the grave!' (in Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 80). He was arrested and soon after deemed, after a medical examination, 'fit for

internment' on the accusation that 'there is reason to believe that Coyne[111] took part in the armed raid on the Magazine Fort'. Ó Cathasaigh describes the conditions at the Curragh, also using television interview material by Ó Cadhain from 1969:

> 'Well, the first hundred years are the worst, you know', said Ó Cadhain on Curragh life. 'The Irish Siberia' was 'definitely the coldest place in Ireland. There was severe shortage of food there: Ó Cadhain was so hungry one day that he ate the food another prisoner had thrown up. The beds were made from wooden planks, in the first place, until they were taken away. 'It was body on the ground then for another two and a half years'. (Ó Cathasaigh, 2002: 82).

Before entering the Curragh, Ó Cadhain had previously translated in 1932 a novel by the 19th century novelist and revolutionary Charles Kickham and published a series of folk-tales from Connemara. In 1938, in the midst of his paramilitary activity as a member of the IRA he submitted a collection of short stories to the state's publishing arm for Irish language materials 'An Gúm' which was published as *Idir Shúgradh agus Dáiríre* (Half in Earnest) in 1940 a few months before he was interned. The *Leader* newspaper in 1940 set out its stall, waxing lyrical:

> There can be no doubt at all that he is in the same category as Pádraic Ó Conaire and 'Máire' ... His work has some of the best qualities of both the others and an individual flavour of its own ... If he is in prison we hope the Government will make no rules in regard to the treatment of internees which will deprive him of the use of pen and paper. (in Ó Cadhain, 1973: 168)

A source of invaluable information about life in the Curragh and the transitions Ó Cadhain's work went through can be seen in the letters Ó Cadhain wrote to his friend, the journalist and author Tomás Bairéad, and published three years after Ó Cadhain's death. Comparing *Idir Shúgradh agus Dáiríre* with a second short story collection *An Braon Broghach* (The Dirty Drop), the first drafts of which were prepared in the Curragh, Bairéad writes about this series of transitions a number of times in his preface to Ó Cadhain's letters:

> When I read the manuscript of *An Braon Broghach* in May 1944, I noticed the difference between it and *Idir Shúgradh agus Dáiríre*. The Curragh Academy was responsible for it! (Ó Cadhain, 1973: 34)

> There's a world of difference between *An Braon Broghach* and *Páipéir Bhána agus Páipéir Bhreaca* – the testament to his life and work. You wouldn't think they are from the same author. (Ó Cadhain, 1973: 16)

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[111] The anglicised version of Ó Cadhain.

This is perhaps not altogether unexpected as there are almost 40 years between the publication of his first literary work and the breadth of his last reflections. Although his evolution as a writer has received attention as has the consistency of the content of his political revindications, lobbying and pamphleteering, an equally relevant question has not been adequately made: why did Ó Cadhain the social agitator and more than 10-year paramilitary remain constant in his political goals while his literary creations, not unlike that hinted at in Cavafy's 'Ithaca', would undergo a gradual and overlapping development? This is a common theme in all of the author chapters, highlighting the degree to which the authors responded *in their own language of choice* to power and spatial relations highlighting movement back and fro across the particular and the universal. The totalising pendulum around which these power relations chime here is that of classical and late modernity, and Ó Cadhain responded to modernity in the only way he knew how: with the language of attack. The poet Seán Ó Ríordáin, himself subject to light reproach from Ó Cadhain ('Why doesn't he write more? All he has is those two little books.'), described him thus, 'He had a sharp and strident intellect, a rich heritage and a raging heart that was more rooted in the culture of the country than any other living soul.' (in Ó hAnluain, 2008: 38).

As mentioned earlier, the locus of the direction and tenor of change in his writing is the Curragh. The one major theme in Ó Cadhain's pre-Curragh *Idir Shúgradh agus Dáiríre* was that of the cruelty of life in the Gaeltacht and the wrought acceptance of the inevitability of the making the best from eking out an existence from a rocky, barren landscape. Cathal Ó Hainle (2002: 5) describes the collection thus:

> The title is interesting in that it points up Ó Cadhain's inability to take himself entirely seriously, an aspect of his character which reveals itself again and again in his creative writing. The stories are not particularly strong in terms of imaginative engagement and provide no signal that they were the work of a writer who might break out of a kind of mould that had established itself in writing in Irish in the generation or two since the beginning of the revival.[112]

We know that Ó Cadhain had a lot of time on his hands during internment. Part of that time was spent teaching Irish to inmates (Ó Cadhain, 1973: 58-9). On the linguistic

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[112] A reference to the pre-independence late-nineteenth century proliferation of associations and institutions promoting Irish culture in general, with specific emphasis on the Irish language (see de Brún, 2019). See Nolan (2005) for the literary links and contradictions between Irish modernist writing in English and revivalist writing in general.

plane, he studied Welsh, Breton, French and Russian at various levels. Towards the beginning of his internment, an inmate called Hugh McCormack, writing to Tomás Bairéad due to the policy at the barracks of one letter per week, wrote the following in October 1940, having been asked to do so by Ó Cadhain, about the latter's drafting and redrafting:

> He's of the opinion now that you wouldn't find anything wrong with the stories that he's now written, in that he gave two stories he wrote here their finishing touch. He spent two months writing them – he wrote each story ten times and said that he learned more from doing that than he had ever learned from books and things. He also says that he's got 'a line' – that he's got an idea now about what he's trying to achieve. He's confident that he can tell a cracking story, he just needs time to work on it. (Ó Cadhain, 1973: 55).

The following year, in 1941, we get an inkling of Ó Cadhain's consistent engagement with European literature and literary criticism as well as his growing awareness that he could participate in his own right and from the particularity of his own language and culture:

> I think I'm better skilled at writing now just like English language writers. Having said that, I'm not particularly fond of getting at writing from that entry point. I read some of Gorky's stories in a French translation – I don't think any of those have been translated into English – and it's given me a whole new perspective. At least that's how I see it. They're 'long' short stories and I liked them a lot. (Ó Cadhain, 1973: 70).

More information would be added decades later in his literary biography, *Páipéir Bhána agus Páipéir Bhreaca* (Blank Pages and Written Pages), when Ó Cadhain hints at the very earliest awakening of this engagement during his final years as a paramilitary activist:

> I hadn't anything really completed and then I wrote *Idir Shúgradh agus Dáiríre* in the absence of doing anything else. But that left me feeling unsatisfied. In other people's work I saw there was no comparison with what I could do. One day I got an old copy of a French magazine, for a penny I think, in a bookshop in Aungier Street in Dublin, and well that was an eye-opener for me, just like St Paul on the road to Damascus! I found a story in it by Maxim Gorky: a harvesting day among the Cossacks. Upon reading it, I leapt up out of the bed I was stretched out on. I hadn't read anything like that beforehand. Why hadn't anyone told me that stories like that existed? 'I could write something like that,' I said to myself, 'That's work that my people do, just that they have different names.' Then a kind of hunger descended upon me, a hunger much more unbearable than the kind that I get in my stomach from time to time. All of these things, the stony ground, bare rocks, inlets, brooks, streams, lakes, mountains, the face of men, women and children began to appear to me. That magazine was

in my pocket and I had very little else the day that they arrested me.' (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 26).

The author's perception that manual labour 'that my people do, just that they have different names' would suggest that at the very least an equivalence was being made with other cultures' engagement with the modern condition from the particularity of his own culture. How should we parse his coming to modernity? Apart from reviews, generally aghast and perplexed immediately following the publication of *Cré na Cille* in 1949, there is general acceptance that Ó Cadhain can be located within the broad expanse of responses to modernity – and to modernism as its artistic vehicle of expression par excellence – from within writing in the Irish language. It is perhaps a moot point regarding the exact time period to which this can be traced back, as if something akin to a specific date could be arrived at. Gearóid Denvir takes Alan Titley's assertion that Ó Cadhain only truly became a modernist during the fifties and sixties of the last century and offers an earlier timeline. In a clear reference to Ó Cadhain's internment at the Curragh, he rolls the timeline back:

> With Alan's permission, and with thanks to Éamonn de Valera and the government of the Republic at the time, I'd like to stretch back that timeline a number of years and consider Ó Cadhain's holidays in Ireland's Siberia, the internment camp at the Curragh during the Second World War ... It was there, I think, that the development in his capacity and imagination which was to produce *Cré na Cille* and *Cois Caoláire* occurred ... works which are stamped with the compelling imprint of modernity ... it's difficult to define the term 'modern'. It's a matter of conscience and perception beween the author and his work. Ó Cadhain's characters in early stories published in magazines or in the *Idir Shúgradh agus Dáiríre* stories wouldn't think of searching out or craving for a different life. The same is almost true for *An Braon Broghach*, in the rural stories at least: if life was hard, they accepted it and they rejected any insane thoughts about other options in life. (Denvir, 1987b: 25)

Ó Cadhain's final publication before his death helps us to perhaps be more relaxed about the author's engagement with European responses to modernity, although chronologically speaking it does look like the onset can be traced to the years just before his entry into the Curragh. As alluded to earlier, early reviewers were disconcerted. Although a reviewer confirmed that:

> I don't need to tell anyone who has read anything by Máirtín up to now that his Irish is mellifluous. You have all kinds of prodigious and trifling words, common and uncommon, from Bearna just outside Galway all the way to Carna, all herded into the mouths of eight or nine characters.

on the content of *Cré na Cille*, however, the verdict was unequivocal, 'there's a lot of it I just wouldn't put even in a dog's mouth.' The subject matter was not the only thing that jarred. There was the matter of who was speaking for whom. The review continued:

> The author doesn't let on that it's actually himself doing the talking. What he's done is to put it into other people's mouths ... If the author had a manliness about him, he would make himself a first party in the book using his own words. (in Denvir, 1987: 25).

Disapproval, however, went in both directions. Ó Cadhain was caustic in his excoriation of the Irish language revival movement. In a posthumous essay, the author tears into what he considers essentialist and soulless writing by scholars acting as guardians of the literary canon, 'they were, and to a lage extent still are, more concerned with the type of Irish and the idioms in a piece of writing, than with its literary value. In fact, many of them are obtuse regarding literary appreciation.' (Ó Cadhain, 1971: 142)

Although Louis de Paor (2015: 164) reminds us of responses by Irish language authors of the Revival period such as Patrick Pearse and Pádraig Ó Conaire to the modernist themes of despair and marginalisation arising from industrialisation, Ó Cadhain's writing is as self-aware and self-deprecating in its acknowledgment of the discontents and spatial dislocations within classical and late modernity as it is belligerent and antagonistic in its sense of rage and struggle for recognition of the culture area from which he sprung at a time of nation-state standardising of language and culture. Ó Cadhain's interpretation of the speech of his own community would seem to be key in the author's turn to the modern from the realms of the particular. The literary critic Declan Kiberd picks up on this thread of thought:

> Ó Cadhain understood that literature has to be built upon the speech of the people, but that the speech of the people doesn't equate to literature, and that (as he said himself), truth in art is not the same as truth in life. 'The best literary tool I inherited from my people is the bawdy, earthy, lithe language which from time to time gets up and does a jig on top of me, in spite of myself.' However, in his opinion, that's a weakness which he more often than not eschewed by printing his own personal stamp on his people's turn of language, *donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu*. (Kiberd, 1985: 25)

In *Páipéir Bhána agus Páipéir Bhreaca*, Ó Cadhain gives a fuller account of how he developed and justified the use of local speech patterns as well as his purposeful divergence from them in writing which dealt, at least on a mere geographical level, with the Gaeltacht and its immediate environs. The referencing of T. S. Eliot is worthy of

mention as it suggests that he was equally at home with social and romantic realist responses to modernity (Gorky, Dostoevsky) as he was to a more broooding and problematising response such as that of Eliot:

> I have discussed how a writer should choose his material and how to go about arranging it. It's just the same with speech. What Eliot has to say about poetry is as true for prose:
>
>> Poetry is never one hundred percent like the speech the poet will speak and hear; but it needs to be as close-knit as possible to the language of that time so as the reader or the listener can say, 'that's how I would speak if I could speak poetry'.
>
> He went further than that in that the poet should pay attention to the kind of speech from the place he was from, as well as his own daily language. Having said that, there's not one Irish language writer, be he first language speaker or otherwise, who uses that kind of language. What the writer does, if you like, is to elaborate people's speech, or people's speech along with his own speech which might perhaps be the same thing. (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 20-1)

The conscious broadening of language registers of a minority or non-statewide language in the post-modern[113] condition is invariably much more marked than that of a statewide language, and the possibilities for deviation from perceived limiting registers of the minority language, as well as the resulting criticism for engaging in such a propulsion, are numerous. Ó Cadhain was a linguistic innovator in all periods of his writing, yet this was always utilised to respond to modernity. In 1944, his last full year of internment, again writing to Tomás Bairéad, the author provocatively expressed thanks to Gerard Boland, the Minister for Justice, for the literary silver lining of his years of captivity. Despite the paucity of reading material in Irish and niggling doubts about his own writing, Ó Cadhain believed that what before was his 'line' had now transformed into his own particular 'medium':

> I have four or five others which I've written here which I sent home and which I'm reacquainting myself so I can send them to you. One of them is quite long and which I think isn't at all bad ... I'm rewriting a story which I wrote lately. I'll send it on to you in a fortnight. It's quite long. It's not a short story or a novel but it's the closest thing to my 'medium'.[114] I think it's one of the best I've written ... The worst thing about it now is that I have an ease and productiveness with ideas that previously weren't there. In spite of Gerard Boland, prison has galvanised my mind. I feel sure of myself and am able to integrate[115] (a business word) my reading and my life, something that I wasn't able to do before. My

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[113] I use this term to refer solely to timeframes following on from the digital third industrial revolution.
[114] Ó Cadhain uses the English word, 'medium', subjecting it to the grammar of the Irish language: "mo 'ṁedium'-sa". Ó Cadhain wrote his letters to Bairéad in the now disused Gaelic script, a characteristic of which is a diacritic or dot above a word which, on pronunciation, lenites its initial consonant.
[115] The word is given an Irish-language makeover and placed within quotation marks: 'integrateáil'.

> Irish has become stilted. I've been reading too much English and French and too little Irish except the usual run of the mill. And I haven't heard a word of good Irish for almost four years. (1973: 141-142)

Comparing this letter with Ó Cadhain's description in 1969 of his burgeoning as a writer during his period of internment, it is reasonable to conclude that the story referred to above is 'An Bóthar go dtí an Ghealchathair' (The Road to Brightcity), first published in 1948 in the short story collection *An Braon Broghach* (The Dirty Drop). It would not be out of place to connect this longer short story with 'new literary insights' influencing Ó Cadhain (Ó Hainle, 2002: 6) after reading Gorky, as he had already extolled the Russian author in his letters. The difficulties and constant redrafting faced by the author are laid bare in this passage:

> I did a lot of work in the internment camp, despite life there being so rough. I can read in a number of languages and can make use of them if I have to. I don't think this is important for a writer. It's with his own language that he needs to put the work in. In any event, he'll be able to read [material] in English. ... Short stories that I read in German and Italian taught me things about the short story that Chekov used, or other people used, but that I hadn't read in a detailed manner. Nevertheless, it's a good thing not to be beholden to English, even if there's excellent translation for everything out there. Those years in the camp I read a huge amount. But it wasn't the best place for writing ... I wrote two novels that have got lost but that's no real loss. They taught me the kind of conversation and writing style that I used afterwards to write *Cré na Cille* and *Athnuachan*. I wrote quite a bit of poetry but that's been lost as well ... I specifically remember writing 'The Road to Brightcity' in a secluded corner of a canteen ... I remember the exertion that it meant for my mind and how it was boiling over as I was writing. (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 27)

Louis de Paor cites Gorky as an influence for the both the Blasket islander Tomás Ó Criomhthain and Ó Cadhain in that he showed that the material conditions of 'peasant life' of Irish speakers eking out an existence in the west of Ireland could be used as raw material for literature, although between Ó Cadhain and Gorky de Paor sees a 'fraternity in imagination emanating from a particular political faith which can be perceived in their stories' (1990: 51). On this reading, deficiencies in character can also be partly ascribed to the reproduction of social inequality. Writing in the same vein, the author Diarmuid Ó Gráinne asserts that, after reading Gorky, 'the Russian spirit could be perceived in his stories from here on in – immense sorrow, sympathy for his fellow human being laid low by life's vicissitudes' (Ó Gráinne, 1990: 10). The influence of Gorky is clear, yet the multiple literary sources with which Ó Cadhain acquaints himself is much more expansive than this seemingly unique connection with Gorky, as Ó Hainle

shows us[116] in his summary of Ó Cadhain's literary appetite during his internment years. Another of these influences was Tolstoy. Writing to Bairéad in late 1941, eighteen months after entering the Curragh, he chastises himself:

> I've written a series of stories right enough: then I was doing this one story, and it just seemed to me that I wasn't getting it right, that I couldn't do the job properly, so I just put it aside and that's how it still is. That's a month or so back now. I couldn't write anything now unless I had got a 'vein' from Tolstoy. He wasn't there in the story above. That's probably why I failed. (Ó Cadhain, 1973: 83)

In the forging of his own style, in 'The Road to Brightcity' Ó Cadhain eschews the statism part and parcel of Gorky's socialist realism, creating a distinct medium within which the realities of life in the Gaeltacht undergo enquiry in the the dislocations of modernity. Specifically, in Bríd, the central character of 'The Road to Brightcity', the beginnings of self-awareness with its possibilities of individual distinctiveness co-exist with the co-ordinates of a pulverising and predestined life. The degree of self-awareness of the individual within the modern condition in the short stories of 'The Dirty Drop', compared with the lack of awareness of self in 'Half in Earnest' (Denvir, 1987b: 31), represents Ó Cadhain's first serious engagement as an author with the relationship between the spatial concreteness of tradition within a specific territory and the reconceptualising of the place of territory and the individual within modernity. Ó Cadhain, the political agitator and the author, believed in a future of some sorts for the 'local organic community' which he came from, yet it was as author that he most effectively problematised the fate of the individual in such a community. In 'The Road to Brightcity', Bríd's lot is to get up every Saturday at four o'clock and walk the nine miles to Galway to sell her butter and eggs and then return after lunch. Ó Cadhain has us accompany Bríd on her journey as she weighs up her lot in life with her thoughts turning to the barely discernible possibility of another kind of life. Bríd is aware that her options for another way of living are next to nil, yet she is to a certain extent aware that

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[116] Referring to Ó Cadhain's letters to Bairéad, Ó Hainle states: 'He refers to the authors and even individual books he has been reading, mentioning, apart from material in Irish, authors such as Auden, T.S. Eliot, Hazlitt, Rob Donn (Robert Mackay), Walter Pater, Pound, Edith Sitwell and Stephen Spender in English; in French, Chateaubriand, Corneille, de Vigny, Maritain, Mérimée, Racine and Villon; and in German and Russian, Bakunin, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Gorky, Koestler, Pushkin and Toller; and works by writers such as Cervantes, Dickens, Charles Reade, Franz von Rintelen, Sholokhov, Lesage, Swedenborg, Flaubert, Tolstoy and Turgenev. He says in one letter that he has read Rabelais from beginning to end, and in another that he is studying Maritain.' (2002: 5)

they exist. Bríd experiences these openings, flickerings and closing off of possibilities, yet it is Ó Cadhain the author who reveals to us that Bríd is not fully aware of her situation *as an autonomous individual*:

> She was far from realising that man, not Providence, was answerable for the sea of troubles which confined her to struggle and skimp, sent her tramping every Saturday to Brightcity barefoot ... Though she understood the ideas 'luck', 'bad luck', 'mis-fortune', well enough, she was unable to give any precise sense to the notions of 'pleasure', 'joy of life'. (Ó Cadhain, 1981: 65)[117]

Ó Cadhain responds here to the pressures that modernity placed on societies undergoing the spatial effects of hegemonic economic hubs elsewhere. This includes not only focusing on an awakening of the self in rural society but also on how women as a social group respond to the vissitudes and possibilities of new economic models as a consequence of modernity (Kiberd, 1987: 24-5), albeit in the stories of 'The Dirty Drop' the path dependence of continuing hardship and the acceptance of, and subordination to, the permanence of social roles outweighs the fleeting glimpses of other possibilities afforded by changing economic and social conditions. As we have seen, although literary critic Gearóid Denvir places Ó Cadhain's increasingly complex portrayal of women from the publication of 'The Dirty Drop' onwards, with varying degrees of self-awareness pertaining wholly to the female characters, in the author's earlier engagement with the modern condition the majority of the characters are catagorisable as types,[118] 'representative samples of their own kind within their own community and seen through the eyes of someone from that very region' (Denvir, 1987b: 25). This engagement, though, is underway in 'The Dirty Drop' and represents the beginnings of Ó Cadhain's interpreting of the tension between the particular and the universal.

Earlier in the chapter, Irish responses to a perceived post-colonial condition since the onset of the literary revival from the mid-19th century onwards were briefly discussed. There is patently an ongoing debate (for example Wyn Jones, 2005) to be had around the context whereby political and social systems are deemed to be constructed – at least partially – through and following processes of colonialism. In this respect, Joseph Cleary nuances relationships between the island of Great Britain and Ireland in the following manner, emphasising linkages rather than separateness:

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[117] Translations here from Ó Cadhain, 1981 are from the published English-language version.
[118] In this respect, Denvir refers to the stories of 'The Dirty Drop' as immature (1987a: x).

> To say that Ireland's condition has been one of 'colonial peripherality' is not at all to suggest that it has developed somewhere entirely beyond the pale of metropolitan modernity. On the contrary, to be peripheral is precisely to be compelled to develop within constraints, sets of forces, and agendas—economic, political, cultural, intellectual—that have largely been prescribed or conditioned by developments in the metropolis. (2004: 210)

Here, the condition of post-coloniality is understood to be subsumed to the meta-narrative of modernity and it is argued here that it is as a response to this wider configuration that Ó Cadhain dealt with in his literary work. Indeed, the fact that Ó Cadhain linked both a growing self-awareness of the individual within the modern condition adds to the problematisation in the Irish language of the individual and selfhood in tight-knit, and quite likely, self-regulating communities. Although Denvir sees a preponderence of characters as types in 'The Dirty Drop', Ó Cadhain does offer us nuancing in the counterbalancing forces of an Irish-speaking woman from the west of Ireland speaking hesitant English as she makes her way along the road in the dark to the nearest market town where life was strikingly different. If Bríd is a type rather than a character, then she is a type sensing a society on the cusp of change. Darkness and – quite literally – the road to novel interactions governed more fully by the modern condition conjured up in Bríd responses difficult to reconcile with one another. The liberty she feels when 'the companionship of the road is free', is also accompanied by 'dark ideas slinking at the edge of her mind, and bitterness to sting her feelings, but to her conscious mind the drag and dudgery of life never seemed anything to grumble at ... she regretted that such things must be, part of the load to be carried in this Valley of Tears' (Ó Cadhain, 1981: 64-5). Ó Cadhain had probably been consuming European literary responses to modernity for at least five to 10 years previous to writing 'The Road to Brightcity' and here we have a response from the particularity of the Irish language.

Ó Cadhain did have other options, for example, that of a particularism antagonistic to engagement with wider social forces, but he chose another path. Let us look again at 'The Road to Brightcity'. Bríd spends a lot of this journey walking in the dark and Ó Cadhain, deeply imbued in the folklore tradition of the area,[119] could easily have used this as a pretence to introduce supernaturalism. By this time in his writing, however, he

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[119] Ó Cadhain had previously worked in this field, publishing in 1933 on supernaturalism inter alia (Ó Gráinne, 1995).

was on a different path and eschewed this option, 'If there was one story where I could have used folklore, it was 'The Road to Brightcity'. I didn't give in to the temptation. I was after something else entirely.' (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 9). Here, the author uses the dark of night to present a physical background against which a partial escape – and liberation – from life's drudgery could be conjured up. Darkness also harboured the threat of sexual violence close to home:

> A stream of shadow from Tomas' carthouse cut across the track ... Of course she hadn't forgotten her husband's vexation when she wouldn't wait for Tomas's Taimin. As well as being a neighbour Taimin was also her husband's first cousin once removed ... she had no wish for the company of Taimin Thomais. He had been at her matchmaking. She recalled clearly his flaring eyes as he gripped her fingers drinking her health. From that on he couldn't stand the look in his eye ...

> She would much rather be shawled in dark. She could make more free with the dark. By moonlight more than by the light of day a body might easily forget the eternal weft of one's being and think oneself part of the transient material world all round. Brid was happier in the dark, it gave her mind a chance to come to grips with life instead of having the brilliant extent of the view to distract her with thoughts of life's merciless hardship. (Ó Cadhain, 1991: 59-60)

Ó Cadhain rejects supernaturalism because he is by now totally engaged with the social realities of the modern condition, yet he does so from the specificity of the Irish language, and forges a path radically different from the major theme developed in *Languages of the Night* whereby the price to be paid for being visible to, and empathised by, modern readers is that awareness by others will occur in those languages considered compatible with, and legitimated through, modernity. Ó Cadhain, throughout his literary career, gives his account of the sheer comprehensiveness of modernity's turmoils to those able to access it in the Irish language, stating 'the writer in Irish whether good, bad or indifferent, is writing for his own people and only for his own people' (Ó Cadhain, 1971: 151). Although the discontents of modernity, for example the bringing together of emigration, marginalisation and physical degradation (de Paor, 2014: 164) at the beginning of late modernity, had been introduced to Irish language readers from the early decades of the 20th century through works like Pádraig Ó Conaire's *Deoraíocht* (Exile) and the modernising poetics and short stories of Patrick Pearse (Kiberd, 2000: 587),[120] it is Ó Cadhain who drives this forward and meshes it with accounts of people living on the peripheries of modernity as well as those fully part

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[120] Like Ó Cadhain, Pearse was a republican activist. He was one of the leaders of the Easter Rising of 1916 and was executed by firing squad the following week.

of, and alienated by, the range and depth of the unrelenting anxieties and incoherencies associated with it. Although the following observation by Declan Kiberd probably remains unanswered, it is palpably clear that Ó Cadhain had little truck with what he would have no doubt interpreted as colonial assumptions regarding the 'other':

> To creative artists may have fallen the task of explaining what no historian has fully illuminated – the reason why the English came to regard the Irish and inferior and barbarous on the one hand, and, on the other, poetic and magical. (Kiberd, 1995: 646)

On a more prosaic level, taking his work as empirical data, perhaps Ó Cadhain through his literary output gives a partial retort to what, as Kiberd would have it, other framers and appointed chroniclers chose to exclude, even if that meant Ó Cadhain attacking coveted social statuses and cultural icons of his own linguistic community. Writing on the author and extrapolating to the Irish-speaking community in general, Alan Titley grasps the fissile co-ordinates with which Ó Cadhain felt compelled to write:

> Máirtín Ó Cadhain fulfilled the desires of Irish speakers regarding what they craved for in literature of quality ... he validated the understandings that we had of ourselves ... through the very fact that we are both traditional and modern together, the conclusion arrived at is that we are a *rational continuation of the past*[121] in that we are legitimate heirs of the revival, reproducing ourselves. That's all fine and good, but we have to convince ourselves first of all before we go about influencing anyone else. (Titley, 1998: 92-3)

Before turning to Ó Cadhain's major work, *Cré na Cille (Graveyard Clay)*, I refer back to the degree to which some critics have tended to presume a literary firewall between Ó Cadhain the Gaeltacht and Irish language activist and Ó Cadhain the author. The premiss behind this, however, does not easily bear up as Ó Cadhain shows us the degree to which his characters parse the social world they come across and is present in a significant number of his short stories and novels. In 'The Road to Brightcity', Bríd makes short shrift of the national question whereby we gather that she empathises more with the possibilities of the redistribution of wealth arrived at under the tutelage of the Catholic church. When a more affluent acquaintance passes her by on the road to Galway, she muses:

> He was infatuated with some crowd he called Sinn Feiners and anyone who wasn't a Sinn Feiner had no longer any hope of a lift. Brid often tried to puzzle out what sort of folk these Sinn Feiners were ... It was rumoured they were drilling with hurley sticks by night and were all set to make war on England.

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[121] Titley uses the words in italic here in both English and in italic.

They had a meeting in Ballindrine lately and were at daggers drawn with the priest of the parish. But such doings were no affair of the poor. How should they have any inkling of them? The poor as always had to struggle on. (Ó Cadhain, 1981: 61-2)

The inclination to attack the sacred cows of the newly-established state, paramilitary republicanism and the miserliness and menacing deviance of people born into Irish-language communities, all of which had hitherto received a certain degree of reprobation from Ó Cadhain would be intensified in *Cré na Cille (Graveyard Clay)*, his major modernist anti-novel, first published in 1949. The reason for his literary invective, however, had evolved. His problematisation of the modern condition needed content, and the rowdy and fractious inhabitants of the graveyard provided it.

## Cré na Cille: A Novel about Novel-writing

The location and gist of the novel are simple enough. A community of dead people quarrel and squabble with each other underground just as they had done above it. The narrative infringes the general order of the traditional novel as there is only dialogue, the vast majority of this being conducted by graveyard inhabitants eagerly awaiting new inhabitants to be interred so they can get the latest news on those hoped to be still engaged in constant pitched battle above ground. The central character, if such can be ascribed to *Cré na Cille* in a roll-call of hundreds difficult at times to decipher, is Caitríona Pháidín. Her sole objective in the graveyard is to see atonement done for her sister Neil's marriage to Jeaic, a man she herself wanted to marry. In order to complete Neil's social erasure, she yearns for her son's enhanced social status at her sister's expense and, perhaps more importantly, to defeat her in death by having the finest 'island greenstone' erected over her own graveyard plot. In keeping with the general tenor of the novel, however, Caitríona will continue thwarted in her plot as her and Neil's children replicate the same marriage balance sheet of winners and losers. The graveyard is a land without pity or mercy where relationships are 'dominated by envy, spite, vanity, mutual suspicion, begrudgery, and endless malice' (de Paor, 2008: 13).

The texts considered in this chapter – 'The Road to Brightcity', *Graveyard Clay* and *The Key* – respond in differing ways to the meta-narrative of the modern condition. *Graveyard Clay* is understood here, in addition to its now unassailable centrality within the canon of Irish language literature (Ó Broin, 2006; Denvir, 1987a; Ní Ghairbhí,

2008), as Ó Cadhain's absurdist response to late modernity whereby irrational and illogical speech is deemed a logical conclusion to prevailing socio-economic forces over and above the conventional absurdity of existence. Steeped in the riches of Gaeltacht folklore wherein the border between life and death is ambiguous and unchartered, it is perhaps not so surprising that the author would engage at some point along his literary career with the liminality of death. In *Graveyard Clay*, however, existence in death is thoroughly modern, as noted by Declan Kiberd who places the novel's theme within a wider sweep including Gogol's *Dead Souls*, Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* and Borges's *Book of the Dead*:

> Modernists from Beckett to Ó Cadhain have all but erased it [the border between life and death], preferring to explore the liminal zones between. Whereas nineteenth-century romantic poets like Coleridge often described the experience of feeling dead while being alive, the moderns, more frighteningly perhaps, suggested that a person may die and yet go on talking. (2000: 574).

Kiberd positions Ó Cadhain's in a modernist timeline (2000: 588), whereby his supernatural mises-en-scène are located after those of *Ulysses* and before those of the explosion of Latin America's magic realists. Indeed, there is a striking similarity between Mexican author Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* published in 1955 and *Graveyard Clay* in that Rulfo's literal ghost town is populated by people whose dialogue and thoughts go unattributed (Lewis, 2008). In Ireland, initial reaction to Ó Cadhain's major work, however, tended towards the appreciation of linguistic excellence rather than literary criticism and as such were unable to fully assess what the author was striving to achieve. Kiberd again is damning in this respect:

> *People's speech* and the theories attached to it were so ingrained in the minds of Irish language reviewers from the Revival onwards that they were incapable of discussing anything else except speech. To prove this point we need only to look at the back sleeve of **Cré na Cille** with quotes from reviews praising the work. '**Cré na Cille** is an important book ... its author a writer grounded in the earth' says Daniel Corkery, 'that's a piece of Gaeltacht language we have there that won't be bested in many a moon'. Linguistics! – that's the criteria used by the Irish language's preeminent reviewer. (1987: 25)[122]

Writing in 1969, Ó Cadhain emphasised that the relationship between an author's raw material and act of creating literature is a complicated one. Yet as opposed to Kiberd above who indexes the author at a higher level of individualism from the optics of

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[122] Italics and bold as in original.

absurdism, the author alleges a correlation between the community he was using as raw material and his artistic goal. I argue that part of the nuancing here perhaps lies with Ó Cadhain's adherence to a form of wish-list for Irish-speakers within the modern condition, and this is crucial in understanding why his turn to the absurd is not as clearcut as Kiberd would have it. It is true that Ó Cadhain the modernist berated slavish interpretations of folk traditions: 'how is it, therefore, that people in other parts of Europe can produce literature in the absence of folklore, and quite indifferent to it?' (in Kiberd, 2000: 587). Despite this, however, he was not prepared to see offered up to the voraciousness of the modern condition the culture which he so fiercely adhered to. His language, at least not while he could produce literature, would not share the fate of those described in *Languages of the Night*. In other words, he envisioned the Irish language and its cultures partaking in modernity, even as the linguistic base for such a participation waned. The 'local organic community' would not yet be erased:

> [T]ruth in fiction or art is not truth in life. I'm minded that all authors have always seen it that way ... The main idea in *Cré na Cille* isn't at all credible, that is, that bodies talk to one another in a graveyard. Some reviewer or other said that this is the old Gaeltacht belief. If that's the case, it's not one that I'm aware of ... There's not a place for folklore in any single word I've written. I know what people I write about would not say and do and I think that's much more important for a writer than anything somebody did or said in life. (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 10-12)[123]

Seen thus, Ó Cadhain does not accept that modernity is totalising in its rapaciousness. In *Graveyard Clay*, every single character is aware of the existence of the other. They know the genealogy of those above and below ground. They may wish ill will to the majority of them, but they cannot but strive to know what is happening to them above ground. Gearóid Denvir follows a similar line:

> This is the fundamental difference between *Graveyard Clay* and Beckett's characters: despite their many deficiencies as Ó Cadhain lays them out, the characters of *Graveyard Clay* aren't soulless, rootless people with no inkling of where they're from. (1987b: 26).

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[123] The Chinese novelist, Lu Xun, writing in the opening decades of the 20th century in a China beginning to experience the effects of modernity, also wrote in a similar vein to Ó Cadhain regarding the relationship between society and the writer, 'Some writers today use the common people – workers and peasants – as material for their novels and poems, and this has also been called people's literature when actually it is nothing of the sort, for the people have not yet opened their mouths.' (Lu, 2009: xxviii)

The link with Beckett, thus, only goes so far. Perhaps Kiberd is also alive to this when stating of the core thrust of the novel, 'the truth of art was not the truth of life ... his was no social documentary, but an account of the psychic state of a locality. He probably wished to contest de Valera's vision[124] of a 'pastoral Ireland at a perpetual crossroads dance' (2000: 586). Ó Cadhain was not interested in any pastoral dances, yet at a crossroad one needs at least two directions, and this is what Ó Cadhain was striving for, a cultural path for his 'community' at the meeting point of wider global realities. A place under the modern sun, however, comes with a price. In a novel replete with noise, bustle and voice, the only condition is stasis:

> At first the method seems very like that of Beckett but Beckett's figures know the hell that the perceptions of others can create for the self, and strive to break free; whereas Ó Cadhain's characters or voices speak out of that hell itself. *Esse est percipi,* as Beckett had it out of Berkeley; and in Ó Cadhain that is that. Stasis. The complete lock of immutable unchanging hate ... There is not the slightest hint of moral transformation. (Welch, 1993: 151-2)

The stasis manifests itself in a number of ways. Firstly, as characters' hypocrisy and their inability to communicate, albeit with a torrent of words. Here, there is no conversation but rather monologue and the ability to listen and empathise is non-existent. For example, John Willy is lowered into Caitríona Paidín's plot, still not fully conversant with graveyard conventions. Caitríona immediately lays verbal siege on him with only one objective in mind, namely, gleaning every single bit of information about her own funeral and how it socially enhanced or decreased her stock above ground:

> —What sort of funeral did I have, Seáinín Liam?
>
> —Funeral? The heart, Caitríona! The heart! I had just been to collect the pension. Devil a thing I felt. I drank a drop of tea. Down I went to the Common Field to fetch a creel of potatoes. When I was easing it off me inside the house, the strap handle slipped and the creel came down lopsided. I gave my side a little wrench. There wasn't a puff of breath left in me …
>
>  —What sort of funeral did I have, I'm asking you?
>
> —The heart, God help us! The heart is a serious matter, Caitríona. A weak heart …
>
> —To hell with your heart! You'll have to give up that nonsense here …
>
> —Bedamn but the heart's a poor thing, Caitríona. We were building a new stable for the colt we bought after Christmas. We had it finished except for the

[124] Head of Government in Ireland for three legislatures and linked to a socially conservative and traditionally Catholic understanding of Irish society.

roof. I wasn't able to give the young fellow much help, but little and all as it was he'll miss me. I wouldn't mind but the weather was great for a long time now …

   —Weather! Time! Those are two things that won't worry you here, Seáinín. You were a dimwit all your life. Tell me this much! Why don't you pay attention to me? Did I have a big funeral? (Ó Cadhain, 2015a: 66-67)[125]

Social codes and morals mores are lampooned as Ó Cadhain adroitly ascribes a high-register 'fake gentlemanly' (1969: 21) form of Irish to the schoolmaster and his wife. In the graveyard, any discrepancy from socially accepted sexual behaviour will be seized upon in earthy language as stasis continues underground:

Over I went then. When I got to the school gate there wasn't a grunt or a groan from inside. "I left it too late," said I, letting on to be mannerly. "He's gone home." I looked in through the window. Faith then, begging your pardon, Master, you were screwing her inside …

—I was not, I was not, Máirtín Pockface.

—Faith then, you were, Master, there's nothing better than the truth …

—Ha Dad, Master!

—You should be ashamed of yourself, Master. (Ó Cadhain, 2015a: 158)

This form of stasis, or miscommunication, is at the heart of the novel. It infers that what is not communicated is unrealisable hope and unattainable love. These are the very things which *cannot* be communicated because the characters are simply incapable of doing so (Ní Gháirbhí, 2008: 50). Indeed, the fact that the author opted for the arcane form 'interlude' instead of 'chapter' perhaps indicates that graveyard life occurs outside of meaningful communication: it is only an interlude between something much more worthy and unassailable. Perhaps here is where Gorky, Beckett and Ó Cadhain come together. And then they diverge, as we encounter again the ramifications for the latter writing all of his literary work in a language spoken by an overwhelming minority of the new Republic he became a citizen of as a young adult.

The second way in which stasis is consumed is through the the voice of the Graveyard Trumpet (Stoc na Cille). This voice is comprised of a false antiquity, its language contrived and vacuous, diametrically opposed to the carping and choleric speech of

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[125] The translations here from Ó Cadhain, 2015a and Ó Cadhain, 2015b are from the published English-language versions.

everyone else underground. The Trumpet aims for total comprehensiveness in his, her or its understanding of – and ennui with – the human condition. Ó Cadhain tells us (1969: 9) that he used St. John's Gospel ('In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God') to create this voice, perhaps also being reminiscent of the verbiage of Amergin the druid of the Milesians in the Irish mythological cycle (Ní Gháirbhí, 2008: 51):

> For I am every voice that was, that is and that will be. I was the first voice in the formlessness of the universe. I am the last voice that will be heard in the dust of Armageddon. I was the muffled voice of the first embryo in the first womb. When the golden harvest is stacked in the haggard, I am the voice that will summon home the last gleaner from the Grain-field of Time. (Ó Cadhain, 2015a: 65)

Upon its publication, this graveyard voice was deemed, inter alia, an attempt to forge 'a foreign-sounding romantic garden path in order to extol the whole work and make it feel deep' (Ní Gháirbhí, 2008: 49). Declan Kiberd sees the Graveyard Trumpet's role as that of providing a playful contrast between the superficial yet assured voice of the Trumpet and that of irascible graveyard dwellers (2000: 583). Both, though, are incapable of engaged communication. We are approaching the point at which *Graveyard Clay* can also be understood as a novel about novel-writing. As we have seen above, Seán Ó Ríordáin described Ó Cadhain's modus operandi as that of all-out attack, and yet here it is Ó Cadhain disparaging and uncloaking himself as author and reminding us perhaps, as with Kierkegaard, that 'the deepest modern seriousness must express itself through irony' (Berman, 1988: 14). On this view, *Graveyard Clay* belongs to the category of anti-novel with the author himself taking aim at his own self-importance and pretensions:

> It is interesting to recall ... how Ó Cadhain's greatest critics often complained that, though he was a master of idiomatic Irish, he had no vision or philosophy. He seems to have been well aware of this and to have identified himself his own voice with that of Stoc na Cille. (Kiberd, 2000: 583-4)

Writing in 1969, he returns to this self-belittling, half in jest, with a nod to the Irish modernists of the previous decades who used the matter of Ireland to problematise the modern condition, 'I am the age of the Hag of Beare ... two thousand years of that clapped-out sow called Ireland reverberating around my ears, mouth, eyes, head and dreams' (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 40). Róisín Ní Gháirbhí takes another route, accommodating

Ó Cadhain within the mystic canon. In this respect, Ní Gháirbhí sees Ó Cadhain here giving testimony rather than being concerned with giving lessons:

> Not only is *Graveyard Clay* a novel, it is a novel about novel-writing. If, as with Nabakov, satire is a lesson, then I very much doubt that *Graveyard Clay* is a lesson because there is no one single voice that triumphs: the book is more akin to testimony than to a lesson. (2008: 50-1)

If this is the case, then novel-writing for whom? In Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) novels are analysed to illustrate how novelistic content and structure can (re)construct the reader, with an 'open invitation to readers of different conditions to become insiders, even while the novel raises as a possibility the distinction between insider and outsider, friend and foe, that becomes the basis of political development' (Culler, 1999: 38). To what degree, however, can the 'open invitation to readers of different conditions' obtain for literary work expressed in a non-hegemonic minority language? Ó Cadhain patently gave this some thought. This heightened degree of self-awareness and reflexivity helps locate the author in exactly the same way as it would, for example, Michelangelo Antonioni or Kenji Mizoguchi concerning their cinematic responses to the modern condition. After his Curragh internment years we see Ó Cadhain reflecting upon content, structure and the construction of readership:

> It's said about the great novels of the past that their authors understood that there was an established order behind them, an arrangement that he could have recourse to in order to determine whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, but he knew that that thing invariably existed. What we have today is not a permanent condition, a condition which a writer could adhere to or struggle against. Everything has a provisional appearance to it, even our own life. Everything is uncertain, in suspense, as if it were accidental, fateful, contingent and the individual incapable of doing anything about it. That said, the individual strives for some form of permanence. That's why novelists bring about fusion in the novel that doesn't exist in life. A lot of what is created is a representation of human relations, people living in close quarters with each other in a fluctuating and threatening world. Life in Ireland is not exempt from that anxiety either. No Irish language writer could imagine that there would be a shred of permanence regarding their community or the life that they consider they use as raw material. It's for that reason that it's noteworthy that *Graveyard Clay* is in a cemetery. There isn't any single thing more permanent than a cemetery other than the permanence of non-life. (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 23-4)

Here, the author brings together two core concerns. On the one hand we see the anxiety which he felt throughout his life for the future of the Irish language. In this the image of Kiberd's crossroads is helpful for another purpose, that of the tenacity of Ó Cadhain's

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literary output in its struggle to keep forward-moving directionality for the Irish language as modernity deepened in Irish society. Kiberd himself chooses to downplay this, stating 'the central *datum* of the novel is less a metaphor for the state of Irish than it is a metaphor of the fate of literature in a future world' (Kiberd, 2000: 589). This chapter, however, recuperates the significance in *Graveyard Clay* that Ó Cadhain ascribed to the Irish language. The author endeavours to respond to modernity and he fervently wishes for the language to partake of the modern condition even as the odds dwindle. Indeed, it is Ó Cadhain as consummate and accomplished modernist who will not countenance the Irish language relegated to the position of a 'language of the night'. We will encounter this duality again presently in a different setting altogether in *The Key*. That said, everything is offered up, consumed and regurgitated in the maelstrom of modernity with Ó Cadhain holding, with Beckett, 'the desperate, terrified hope that even after a language dies, the voices may continue.' (Kiberd, 2000: 589). In Ó Cadhain, the existential vein within late modernity is debated cheek by jowl with its opposite, the formalism of language and territory within its classical version. *Graveyard Clay* shares many of the innovative traits of the modernist European tradition but also the 'scientific' attributes of the *nouveau roman* in France (Gabilondo, 2016: 239). Ó Cadhain builds this edifice from the primacy of place.


**The Key: The City shouldn't be left as a Blank Page**

*The Key* is a surreal tragicomic novella, the longest short story in a wider collection of stories entitled *An tSraith ar Lár* (The Mown Swath) (1967), his first literary work published since *Cois Caoláire* (Beside the Sea Shore) fourteen years previously. A change in characterisation and geography compared with previous work is immediately felt, with the author transferring his attention from the dilemmas seen through the eyes of mainly empoverished Gaeltacht women to the predicament of men trapped in and overwhelmed by the impersonal drudgery of urban life (de Paor, 2008: 14), and in the case of *The Key*, by the emotionless impersonality of the civil service. As we shall see, however, the inability to effectively communicate or have purposeful human relationships is equally as present here as in *Graveyard Clay*. Ó Cadhain here has packed his bags 130 miles eastwards to the city of Dublin but his literary responses to wider socio-economic forces continue to focus on the snaring and entanglement of people within them. Additionally, his juxtaposition of the Irish language on top of what

is in real life a central state administered in the English language suggests that, 20 years on from the publication of *Graveyard Clay*, his interest in linguistic and territorial engagement within Irish political community showed no sign of abating. Kiberd's suggestion of Ó Cadhain wanting to contesting the image of a 'pastoral Ireland at a perpetual crossroads dance' is not only confirmed but made more complex in that Ó Cadhain was doing nothing less than engaging in the mid-20th century in an excavation of Irish political ontology.

The first two sentences of the story introduce us, as with Kafka in *The Trial* and *The Castle*, to a soulless everyman divested of his humanity, 'Páipéar-choinneálaí a bhí i J. Aontó duine cneasta ar bith gurb é sin an ceann posta is mó morthabháil agus is anshocraí sa Státsheirbhís [J. was a paperkeeper. Any honest person will admit that this is the most responsible and difficult position in the Civil Service]' (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 6-7). We glean that J., first and foremost, is a paperkeeper with an function in the civil service whose humanity appears somehow relegated. The first word, 'páipeár-choinneálaí', a neologism, is most likely not one that would have been used in the Gaeltacht or indeed in many places in Ireland in the 1960s. With the flavour and drive of a different language register, the author suggests to us at the outset that we are entering surreal terrain, with the Irish-language reader's sociolinguistic sensibility challenged and confronted.

The nameless J. finds himself accidentally locked into the room where he works as a junior administrative officer, the key having broke inside the lock. S. is his boss, a senior paperkeeper but cannot help J. because S. is on holiday in the Isle of Man, most probably having an affair, a matter that J. cannot stop thinking about. There is a phone in the room with which J. could call someone to let them know of his predicament, yet he decides not to because only senior paperkeepers and above may use the phone. When due and drawn out civil service process has been adjudged to have occurred, with J's case going right up to the Minister himself, the door is finally opened only to find J's corpse lying on the floor, file cover in mouth, and we are led to believe that he has probably had a heart attack from anxiety, hunger and thirst.

As de Paor suggests, though, there is change in Ó Cadhain's writing which perhaps reflects his discerning of the sociolinguistic realities of the Irish language which would raise the ire of cultural and linguistic nationalists. As a language activist, Ó Cadhain battled on many fronts as he was not content to see the use of the Irish language

restricted to the administrative zones in the west of the country deemed worthy of positive action measures by the newly-established Irish state. In this sense, he was an inveterate subverter of this geopolitical battening down of the Irish language and was at loggerheads with what he deemed a romantic confiture topping laid down on top of the Gaeltacht and its inhabitants. Earlier in his life, in the 1930s he was involved in the relocation of Irish-speaking families to County Meath in the midlands near to Dublin, wielding a rhetoric combining the taking back of fertile land lost during British colonial control of Ireland with populist socialism. Here, the subject of his venom are those Irish-speakers on-message with a mawkish and dewy-eyed officially-approved discourse:

> Some Gaels like to make a mealy-mouthed inhuman construction from the rocks that historical Ireland did not wash away with her as her tide receded. Many readers of Irish are people who have learned the language. They spend a month in a Gaeltacht area and see its outer skin in the prettiness of summer when "The coming of grass and desire is sweet, and the crash of the waves at Lios na Sí." (in de Paor, 2008: 14)

That Ó Cadhain should use Dublin as a backdrop for his literary work should not be a surprise since after his release from the Curragh in 1944, he would live for the rest of his life there. After a number of labouring jobs, he began work as a translator, firstly with 'An Gúm' and then with the Government Translation Office in 1947 (de Paor, 2008). The author was well-versed with Dublin. Writing in 1969, and perhaps stung by criticism of a propensity for bombastic language in his previous work, he feels that using Dublin as a general location for his work could be fruitful:

> The kind of speech that I'm trying to create maybe it's awkward, but it's not as awkward as before. The new stories that I'm writing now – there's another substantial book with the publisher, *An tSraith dhá Tógáil* (Binding the Swath) – it's not about my own area or Galway in any shape or form. *If there's a Gaeltacht story to be had, it's not about any Gaeltacht in [county] Galway.* I have been living longer in Dublin now than I ever lived back home. I had to get to know the city like the back of my hand, much more than many Dubliners do, while I was an active member of the IRA. More of my immediate family live in Dublin than in Connemara. Many of my neighbours from back home live quite close to me. Maybe we are a kind of ghetto. Both Kafka and Heine were from the ghetto to mention only two writers whose work is familiar to me. As far as I can see Dublin is completely made up of ghettos. Nobody could really say, from Joyce's time onwards, when it was much smaller, compact and audacious, that it's a community. (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 22)

This would seem evidence that Ó Cadhain was engaged in all-out conceptual war with those mainstream linguistic and cultural nationalists whose antennae were turned westwards towards the Gaeltacht areas only. Here, he seems to be suggesting that, even if the Irish language is not alive and kicking in the capital city, it should be, or could do so at some point in the future. Referring to the 'organic community' that he had borrowed from Raymond Williams' reading of the term (1969: 9) whilst describing the community of An Cnocán Glas in Connemara, he links the future of the language with the city. Ó Cadhain has accepted, at least from the 1960s onwards, the totalising nature of the late modern condition but he still advocates a place for the Irish language within it. There are targets to be attacked using the backdrop of Dublin and he is not willing for his chosen literary language to go into the dark night of extinction and the departed. For the time being at least, Ó Cadhain the Modern will not ascribe the place for the Irish language hinted at by Joyce in 'The Dead':

> In city suburbs, which are neither city nor country, that's where the well-to-do live, people of industry who are not at all industrious, people who are at times reflexive but have no intellectual curiosity ... I also think that for people like me who have lived most of their lives in Dublin, the city shouldn't be left as a blank page. (Ó Cadhain, 1969: 23)

Dublin, then, also provides a backdrop to the conceptual crossroads Ó Cadhain was desperate to maintain traversable and negotiable. *The Key* provided ammunition for his onslaught upon post-civil war Ireland and a modernising, individualising world. In the world of J., files are raised to the order of sentient beings:

> It was easy to imagine that a file and its label had its own faith and afterlife ... people swore they heard squealing, battering, thumping and wailing of files in the cabinets. Files were found crumpled, stabbed, torn, tattered. (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 7-9)

Files in this particular city have a recent history, they are not always at peace with one another, just like the country itself, 'In the morning a file might be found dented, or the head of one might be butting another. There were even civil wars between files.' (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 9). This is patently a quip at the post-civil war scenario of what Ó Cadhain considered political stasis. He uses the allegory of the warring files to train his sights on the two major alternating government parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, both of conservative leaning and deemed by civil society to continue to hold contempt for each other since the creation of the state (Geoghegan, 2016):

> Especially when His Father's Government put out his Friend's Government ... The file on Secret Service monies under His Friend's Government had been destroyed years ago but it was still regularly sighted, its red ink seeming more like the colour of blood every time, if the stories were true. (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 9-11)

In his political pamphlets, the author had railed against both the Civil Service, an institution he knew only too well[126] and its political masters, believing that the values underpinning Irish statehood had been defiled by its institutions post-independence. Following Seán Ó Ríordáin, it is worth referring again to the rancor, animosity and bile that drove Ó Cadhain's work forward and this can be seen in how literary critics approach this aspect of his oeuvre. Gearóid Denvir tells us that he held especially in contempt the political party Fianna Fáil as the reason for, and perpetual reminder of, 'the split within the ranks of the republican comrades'. Yet Denvir feels the need to recalibrate the resentment Ó Cadhain felt for Fianna Fáil when dealing with the author's positioning on Fine Gael, "Despite all the abuse he heaped upon Fianna Fáil, however, I think that his loathing for Fine Gael was even more ardent, a party whose opinions and policies he considered to be 'dictated by ... utter political bankruptcy'" (Denvir, 1998: 68-9). As a past member of the IRA, he believed in the legitimacy of violent action, even against the State itself, in the restitution of the founding values of the state as he considered them, believing that 'the result and the generations to come would validate those kind of actions.' (Denvir, 1998: 78).

In *The Key*, through the person of J., the files which he venerated and the rules and regulations which dictated how to order the files' positioning in his office, Ó Cadhain took aim at the decadence which he saw embodied by Civil Servicedom. Thinking through the possible ways he might extricate himself from his predicament, J. runs through in his head civil service procedures, a form of circular reasoning instantly beguiling and assuring in times of doubt:

> He felt vaguely that this was the part of the religious instruction that would stamp its spiritual seal on his soul forever. Who made the Civil Service? God. What does the Civil Service make? Civil Servants. What are you? A Civil Servant. Why were you created? To be in this office. What is the purpose of this office? To serve paper. What is the purpose of paper, and memoranda? To serve the Civil Service. What is the purpose of the Civil Service? To serve the State.

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[126] Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh describes Ó Cadhain's new job as translator as being 'in the very gullet of the beast' (2002: 114).

What is the purpose of the State? To serve the Civil Service. (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 29)

On this view, the functioning of the State as system is rendered a matter of life and death for society as a whole, as 'one missing link would mean utter chaos, humanity reduced to the level of animals' (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 13). Being responsible for the death of a state-property key is tantamount to a walk to the gallows, 'He had just killed a key, a living thing, murdered it, a Civil service paper-key' (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 37). Everything that an employee does must be carried out according to the appropriate rubrics. S. takes pity for once on J. and offers some pertinent civil service advice, yet menace and foreboding lurk around the corner:

If you have to say something, say it properly according to the rules, procedures, provisions, intellectual acumen and dexterity of mind that befits a civil servant. For your own sake, for your own good I'm telling you: be tough with the weak and kind to the strong. (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 63)

The reader is invited to feel a certain sympathy for J.'s everyman as the Civil Service would even take over his subconscious, 'He had bad dreams ... Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed by thy name, Thy keydom come.' (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 57). The system will have the last word since, even after J.'s death, the civil service doctor decides to reserve his evidence until the coroner's inquest. Yet inducing sympathy for J.'s demise is also the manner with which Ó Cadhain implicates us all in first person plural (Denvir, 1987b: 133-4) as it is the files and our acquiesence to them which does for J. and all junior paperkeepers like him, 'it was as if they belonged to another order of creation, separate to ours, and dwelt among us without being noticed.' (Ó Cadhain, 2015b: 7). From Ó Cadhain's other writings, it is hard not to believe this to represent a certain reprobation on the part of the author towards the reader. If reproach can be discerned, then it is a reading of citizens' passivity regarding Ó Cadhain's take on late modernity's annihilation of the self.

A final word on *The Key*. His partial reconstruction of language register is relevant as we see the author once again engaging from, and adding to, the particularity of the Irish language with one of the core artefacts of classical and late modernity: the central state. In the texts analysed in this chapter, we have seen the single-minded manner in whch Máirtín Ó Cadhain, from one of the geographical peripheries of Europe, unceasingly strove to add the Irish language to the plethora of languages dealing with human

responses to the transformations brought about by the modern condition. The task was not a simple one. In reference to *The Key*, Gearóid Denvir (1987b: 123-4) remarks how the author, in order to create a feeling of a pervasive and penetrating linguistic precedence, anonymity[127] and continuity – a state of affairs that the Irish language palpably does not possess with regards to the language of administration in the modern central state – called up outmoded proverbs and aphorisms in an attempt to give his otherwise tragicomic turn of phrase a sense of weight, for example:

> Áit gan bun chleite amach na barr chleite isteach / Spick and span
>
> Níor leithne an t-aer ná an timpiste / Accidents will happen
>
> In a dhiaidh a fheictear don Éireannach dar ndóigh / Of course, when the horse has bolted.

## Conclusion

It is perhaps a moot point to try to calibrate the degree to which Ó Cadhain attempted to set a bar for a conscious 'Irish-language' response to developments affecting post-sovereignty Ireland, yet this can be undoubtedly be argued for. He was thoroughly modern and his years in the Curragh were to cement the associations he made with late 19th and 20th century literature. Yet the particularity of his linguistic background marks him out in one specific sense from responses to modernity written in 'unmarked' statewide languages. In discussing Milan Kundera, Irving Howe argues that Kundera, through his work, implies that his work merits 'attention for its literary elements and that he should not be fixed as a writer captive to his time, place and situation'. In other words, Kundera makes a claim for the generalisable nature of his literature. That is, it is generalisable due to the perceived *universality* of his work. A caveat, however, follows:

> But in some measure, alas, he is captive. He struggles against that condition, mobilizing all his gifts to send out signals of freedom. He succeeds, in part. But his situation as a novelist born and raised in Czechoslovakia holds him in its grip. While by no means a mere helpless victim, neither is he quite the free spirit he wishes and no doubt deserves to be. The problem is known as history. (2002: 262-3)

Ó Cadhain approaches 'history' from a different, if not the opposite direction. He seeks out the claim to universality but he does so from the 'marked' circumstances of writing

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[127] See Woolard, 2017 on linguistic authority and anonymity, and referred to in Chapter One.

in a language which is nominally the first official language of the state but which is, in reality, spoken by a small minority in its own sovereign space. He does not, thus, reject the particularity of the Irish language but rather seeks to fuse it with the coeval realities of modernity. In Chapter One and Two, mention was made of Terry Eagleton referring to Raymond Williams on the possibilities of emancipatory politics forming part of social life within a nationalism-structured Westphalian scenario *as well as* a post-national global setting whereby nationalism forms a legitimating current in social life until that element ceases to exist. Ó Cadhain was an Irish republican nationalist and a modernist but perhaps, as with Eagleton above, wished to leave nationalism behind given the right conditions. But he could not because he did not feel that the particularity that gave him his life force was on 'equal terms'. His version of emancipatory politics, always uncompromising, began with the specific but, in his literary work at least, he travelled on his own personal voyage towards a meeting point with the modern condition, at the risk of reification, accompanied by the Irish language firmly ensconsed as co-pilot.

How should Ó Cadhain be weighed up in the context of his wider political activism? The novelist and literary critic Liam Mac Cóil is of the opinion that a biographer should not 'make inferences from the stories in order to tell us something about Máirtín Ó Cadhain, the man.' (1998: 19). Perhaps so. The inverse, however, would seem equally as valid. Earlier in this chapter, when discussing the 'political novel', Irving Howe discussed the tensions for the novelist that can exist between the immediacy and closeness of a novel's material and the more abstract ideology behind the experience exposed in it. Ó Cadhain was, after Irving Howe, a 'nimble dialectician' in that the ideas in his literary work were 'transformed into something other than the ideas of a political program' (2002: 21). Along with Alan Titley, Gearóid Denvir understands Ó Cadhain's reading of Irish politics as being a 'classical post-colonial positioning' (1998: 81), and equates it with the work of the politician and academic Daniel Corkery. Yet he does so using the wealth of material left by Ó Cadhain the activist. The example of Corkery is illustrative here because it was Corkery who was somewhat flummoxed by the voice of the 'Graveyard Trumpet' in *Graveyard Clay*. Ó Cadhain the creative writer is not so easily superimposed onto Ó Cadhain the activist because the writer was translating post-coloniality onto a wider engulfing script.

Ó Cadhain undoubtedly played fast and loose with major political concepts such as democracy. A favourite turn of phrase for the Irish-speaking Gaeltacht Everyman striving for his rights was the 'Gaeilgeoir-democrat / Irish-speaking democrat', used at the earliest in 1939 at the beginning of his internment at the Curragh (Ó Cadhain, 1973: 47). By 1969, he had this so say about democracy, "The word 'democratic' is bandied about, but it's often just an excuse for villainry and diffidence" (Denvir, 1998: 78). Whatever democracy meant for Ó Cadhain, it included the Irish language on a national basis. On a cultural and linguistic plan, he was first and foremost a Gaeltacht man, but he firmly believed in the dream of the revivalist-period Gaelic League for an Irish-speaking Ireland, as the title of the publication *Irish Above Politics* suggests. In discussing the creation of a new language pressure movement, he states:

> Our intention was not eventually to confine organisation to Gaeltacht people or Gaeltacht interest. We know that the cause of the language, like the magpie's nest which goes by the name of Irish culture, is indivisible. (Ó Cadhain, 1964: 5-6)

There is no room in the above for 'nostalgia as a mode of resistance, as a memory of trauma, in this case of dispossession and language loss' (Nic Dhiarmada, 2008: 53). Here, the modern nation is linked firmly with the reappropriation of the Irish language. There are aspects in Ó Cadhain's non-literary writing which remind us of one aspect of the Janus orientation, the longing for nostalgia in a reading of the past. However, Bríona Nic Dhiarmada is surely right when rejecting such an interpretation of his literary work, along with other Irish-language writers from the 1940s to the 1970s, stating that 'it can be read as a refusal of all nostalgia and is profoundly anti-utopian ... they were the first generation to come of age in post-independence Ireland, and they tested the reality of their lives against the official utopian promises held out by the nationalist agenda and found them wanting.' (2008: 55-6). It is Ó Cadhain's unwavering condition as Modern that compelled him to reject any literary descent into nostalgia, converting the Irish language into conveyer belt of the mainstream contents and concerns of modernity. However, the 'official utopian promises' of emerging Irish state nationalism do not foreclose a more political, emancipatory envisioning of the utopian/dystopian binary, a state of mind which powered all three authors in this study and which is discussed in a more detailed manner in the final chapter. On such a view, the 'poignant but harmless dip' of nostalgia into reminiscence (Nic Dhiarmada, 2008: 54) is countered by the political continuity of memory. Like Joseba Sarrionandia's 'nowhere-point', Máirtín Ó Cadhain interpreted

Irish history as a spatio-temporal representation of hope, as an 'act of radical *becoming*' in direct opposition to the creation by the Irish state of the *Gaeltacht* as 'an alternative site of unattainable desire' whereby the Irish language was 'always elsewhere' (de Brún, 2019: 177). For both authors, the past must always be a site of contingent reappraisal because 'for some people what is utopia is dystopia for others. That being the case, utopia becomes 'upotopia', that is, a place that is not yet.' (Sarrionandia, 1997: 465-66).

# Chapter Five

## If we cannot move from 'here' to 'there', why not find a better starting point?

> The Portuguese are original and interesting because,
> being strictly Portuguese, they are cosmopolitan and universal.
>
> Fernando Pessoa, *Orpheu* (1916)

### Introduction

This chapter brings together the debates introduced in the first chapter and applies them to a discussion around the writerly production of the three authors. This is carried out in four main sections. In the first, the continued relevance of the authors to the political communities they ascribe to is discussed in the context of a continued linking of political incarceration with society in general and how this is associated with a problematisation of the political ontology of the self-ascribing community within which borders, boundaries and contents become susceptible to historical and identitarian probing. For reasons of contemporaneity, this section focuses on the relationship between the invocation of the legacy of Lluís Maria Xirinacs and the current sovereignty crisis in the Kingdom of Spain. The discussion of matters surrounding political incarceration in Spain leads onto a section dealing with the relationship between incarceration, the politics of place and society in general. The third section carries the weight of this final chapter. It proposes that, in addition to the link between their imprisonment for their left-wing political beliefs, elements exist across the authors' creative writing which can be framed within a broad category of utopia/dystopia or temporal and spatial counterworlds broadly along the lines of the categorisation by the literary Sinologist Douwe Fokkema of utopian fiction as 'arguably the most political of all literary genres' (2011: 5). Discussing global expansion by European colonial powers in the eighteenth century, the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck confirmed the future as a timeframe which utopian writing would now be linked to in view of the fact that 'the authors of "nowheres" had for some time already switched over to the moon or the stars or descended below the surface of the earth' (2002: 86). This final chapter argues that forward-gazing utopian/dystopian positioning regarding alternative political programmes impacting upon the core of sovereign political community can be linked to Joseba Sarrionandia and Lluís Maria Xirinacs. Although the sovereignty of the Republic of Ireland is never put in doubt, Máirtín Ó

Cadhain's writing problematised its linguistic regime significantly enough to warrant further investigation into his reading of the relationship between territoriality and the contents of political belonging to the infant Irish state.

Examples across the work of the three writers within these futuristic, parallel, counterworld alternative frameworks include: the uchronic components of *Lagun Izoztua* (The Frozen Friend) by Joseba Sarrionandia in addition to his own essay thoughts on the use of utopia as political positioning, the absurdist dystopian elements in *Cré na Cille* (*Graveyard Clay*) and *An Eochair* (*The Key*) by Máirtín Ó Cadhain and the overt utopian political programming, part and parcel of the journalistic writing of Lluís Maria Xirinacs, following on Fokkema's claim that utopia as subject matter at the end of the twentieth century[128] in the 'republic of letters' was in the process of being transferred to the 'plain language of reports' in governance structures and in journalism (2011: 400). The cultural historian Enzo Traverso further contextualises the direction of Fokkema's comments averring that because 'historically, revolutions have been factories of utopias; they have forged new imaginaries and new ideas, and have aroused expectancies and hopes', there exists an 'overwhelming heaviness paralyzing the utopic imagination' (2017: 3-4) following the defeat of thoroughgoing twentieth century revolutions and the growth of other, more regulated and dehistoricising forms of engaging with human inequality, liberation or emancipation issues.

I do not make the claim here that by framing elements in the authors' literature and creative writing as plotted points along mappings of either a principled utopia, a politically contingent version of utopia or a dissonant dystopia that this in itself approaches a full-blown genre within their work. Rather, I make the point that they might be interpreted as what Phillip Wegner has described as 'relational webs' or 'computer hyperlinks' which help create 'homologies' yoking together disparate 'and what at first may appear unrelated texts and materials in such as way as to bring to light their common cultural logics' (2002: 5-9). The suggestion made here of the 'utopian' link across the three authors is developed in the context of the wider literature on the political thrust

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[128] Enzo Traverso discusses further the historical moment of the twenty-first century being 'born as a time shaped by a general eclipse of utopias' (2017: 5-7).

behind utopia as genre in its response to hegemonic ideologies. Referring to the work of Karl Mannheim and Paul Ricoeur specifically counterbalancing ideology and utopia, for Wegner utopia represents a 'progressive counterblast to the essential conservatism of ideology ... if ideology creates the synchrony or place of a given social reality, then utopia marks its potential for diachrony or historical becoming' (2002: 18).

As we saw in Chapter Two on Joseba Sarrionandia, core to the development of an interdisciplinary approach to conceptual history (*Begriffgeschichte*) linked to a historiography of the vanquished, Reinhart Koselleck located utopia and dystopia as part and parcel of a realisation and subsequent philosophy of history, referring to this move as the 'temporalization of utopia'. Comparing Louis-Sébastien Mercier's futuristic utopian novel '*L'An 2440*' first published in 1770 with '*Die Buribunken*', a dystopian and satirical essay by international relations theorist Carl Schmitt published early in his career in 1918, Koselleck teases out the point that the broad range of utopian writing suggests that past events are unfailingly reinterpretable from one generation to another, a recurrent element in the writing of Joseba Sarrionandia: 'we should learn from both utopias that historical times run differently than how we are retrospectively and anticipatively generally forced to interpret them.' Alluding to Schmitt's later involvement with Nazi power structures, Koselleck additionally shows that utopia and dystopia are susceptible to becoming mirror images of each other, 'Mercier's utopia fulfilled itself, only in a way that was opposite to what he thought. Carl Schmitt's utopia was likewise fulfilled – despite its admonitory function – and, indeed, in a way that was even worse than what he parodied' (2002: 99).

Resembling a Koselleckian refurbishing by the vanquished of the historical account, past failures for Walter Benjamin possess a 'retroactive force' revealing a 'secret heliotropism' that comes about when the 'past strives to turn toward that sun which is rising in the sky of history' (2007: 255). In this sense, utopian alterity does not only rise from 'religious roots in paradise, political roots in socialism, economic roots in communes' (Gordin et al, 2010: 1) but rather is linked with a 'riddle-image, pointing to something different, having something more to say than a mere critique of reality or a mere depiction of an ideal' (Ivancheva, 2006: 85). The third section thus problematises spatial histories through the prism of utopian writerly production in order to expand the discussion in a fourth section to the modern condition itself and the place accruing in it to sovereign belonging.

In the light of the seeming permanence of the nation-state, the bedrock of the international system, which has become equivalent to and 'virtually inseparable from political consciousness' (Anderson, 2006: 135), and from the specific instances of utopian writing in this research foregrounding the persistence of the socio-cultural relevance of identity, language and adherence to self-ascribing territories, the claims and/or proposals made by the authors, in their varying degrees of directness, obliqueness or participation in wider political programmes, are then assessed in the final section which re-engages with the particular and universal co-ordinates of the ascribed political community introduced in the first chapter. Here, links are made between the three authors' creative writing with debates within International Relations (IR) and critical literary theory and historiography, discussing the contestation between particular and universal discourses and how these relate to the continued legitimising of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic political ontologies within modernity and the sovereign international system. Linking across to the disciplines mentioned above, in the conclusion to the chapter final thoughts are traced out, most explicity through the writing of Joseba Sarrionandia and Lluís Maria Xirinacs, regarding the likeliness or otherwise appropriateness of the continuance of state actors to be deemed sole legitimate executors of political claims around sovereignty, modernity's core base.

**The Reaffirmation of the Political Community**

The Kingdom of Spain, as it is officially known, is currently embroiled in a constitutional crisis of the first magnitude. On the 1st of October 2017, the Catalan government conducted a referendum on the creation of a Catalan state. The organisation and carrying out of the referendum, deemed by secessionist parties to be politically legitimate by dint of successive parliamentary majorities and juridically supported by legal instruments in the Catalan parliament (Hansard of Catalan Government, 2017; Catalan Corporation of Audiovisual Media, 2017), was considered illegal by the Spanish Constitutional Court[129] and voting on the day itself was partially disrupted by state police and military forces, with one person losing an eye (Riart, 2019) and 893 people requiring hospital treatment (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The president of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, declared independence on the 27th October hours before the central Spanish government sacked his government and took regional Catalan

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[129] For an in-depth debate on this issue, see the article discussion and rejonder between López Bofill 2019a; 2019b and Bar, 2019.

government and institutions over. As the declaration of independence was not recorded in the official record of the Catalan government, a debate exists around its symbolic or otherwise nature (Pi, 2018). Two days after the declaration, Carles Puigdemont and four members of his cabinet left the country. The majority of president Puigdemont's government remained in Catalonia, however, and were subsequently remanded in custody along with two leaders of civil society organisations. Facing charges of rebellion, sedition, the misappropriation of public funds and disobedience carrying prison terms for the defendants of between 7 and 25 years, the handing down of a judgement of sedition by the Spanish Supreme Court in October 2019 led to a period of sustained massive civil disobedience along with intense rioting.[130]
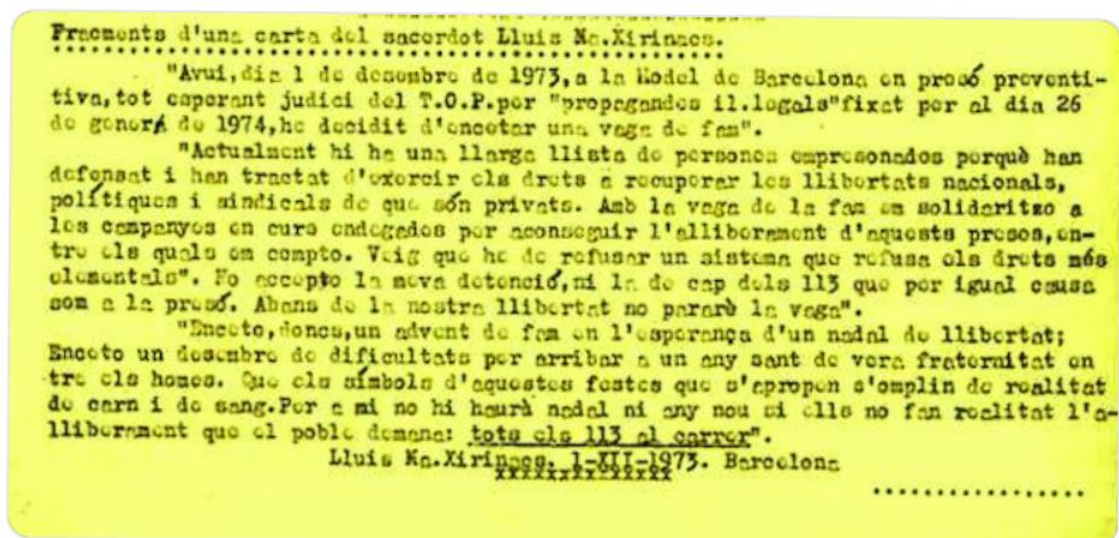
Before, during and after the ensuing trial, the figure of Lluís Maria Xirinacs took on a certain relevance in media reports and well as in defence testimony.[131] At the beginning of December 2018, three months before the court case was due to begin, print and digital news outlets in Madrid and Barcelona carried informational and opinion articles (for example Esculies, 2018 and Estrada, 2018) regarding a hunger strike that the majority of the defendants had begun. The hunger strike lasted until December 20th (Catalan Corporation of Audiovisual Media, 2018a). The author Joan Esculies situates the strategic and intellectual context linking Xirinacs, examples of civil disobedience in other countries and the current independence drive:

> Fasting in Ireland with the aim of highlighting injustice or discrediting an enemy had been common practice since times remote. The struggle for independence in Ireland and the methods used also influenced nationalism in India as it did in Catalonia. Between 1913 and 1948 Gandhi was the king of hunger strikes, 17 in all, three of 21 days. Catalan nationalism, from Macià through to the priest Lluís Maria Xirinacs – a seasoned campaigner in this kind of protest – also drank from Gandhi's non-violence and then the circle closed up ... a section of the Catalan independence movement is still overly burdened with mimicking past leaders and their Catholic legacy, a trait palpable in their very pursuance of sacrifice (and martyrdom). (Esculies, 2018)

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[130] For the full judgement see Poder Judicial España, 2019.

[131] In an additional link to Joseba Sarrionandia, a Catalan online newspaper reported in February 2020 that one of the civil society organisation jailed leaders, Jordi Cuixart, had received a letter from the Basque author via a visiting third-party: 'You are in prison, but you are spreading freedom. By defending diversity and political freedoms, and furthermore, by struggling for the right to decide of the Catalans you are struggling for everyone' (in Estruch, 2020).

Laura Estrada in her news report links the beginning of the collective hunger strike – the 1st of December – to the hunger strike begun on the same day 45 years earlier by Xirinacs whilst in the Model prison. The news item also carries a tweet sent on the same day as the news report by the Museum of Catalan History in Barcelona (Figure 10 below), a public institution funded by the Catalan government. The tweet states '#thisveryday 1973 Lluís Maria #Xirinacs began a hunger strike whilst imprisoned at the #Model prison seeking #amnesty for the #politicalprisoners. The strike lasted for 42 days' and is followed by the image of a typewritten sheet of paper dated 1973, bearing the authorship of Xirinacs, which gives the reasons for his hunger strike while in remand:



museu his tòria **Museu d'Història** ✔
@mhistoriacat

Segueix ⌄

#taldiacomavui 1973 Lluís Maria #Xirinacs va iniciar una vaga de fam mentre era empresonat a la presó #Model per reclamar #amnistia dels #presosPolítics. La vaga va durar 42 dies.

Fragments d'una carta del sacerdot Lluís Ma.Xirinacs.
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
   "Avui,dia 1 de desembre de 1973,a la Model de Barcelona en presó preventi-
tiva,tot esperant judici del T.O.P.per "propagandes il.legals"fixat per al dia 26
de gener de 1974,he decidit d'encetar una vaga de fam".
   "Actualment hi ha una llarga llista de persones empresonades perquè han
defensat i han tractat d'exercir els drets a recuperar les llibertats nacionals,
polítiques i sindicals de que són privats. Amb la vaga de la fam em solidaritzo a
les companyes en curs endegades per aconseguir l'alliberament d'aquests presos,en-
tre els quals em compto. Veig que he de refusar un sistema que refusa els drets més
elementals". No accepto la meva detenció,ni la de cap dels 113 que per igual causa
som a la presó. Abans de la nostra llibertat no pararé la vaga".
   "Encето,doncs,un advent de fam en l'esperança d'un nadal de llibertat;
Enceto un desembre de dificultats per arribar a un any sant de vera fraternitat en-
tre els homes. Que els símbols d'aquestes festes que s'apropen s'omplin de realitat
de carn i de sang.Per a mi no hi haurà nadal ni any nou si ells no fan realitat l'a-
lliberament que el poble demana: tots els 113 al carrer".
            Lluís Ma.Xirinacs. 1-XII-1973. Barcelona
            xxxxxxxxxxxxx                        . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

11:25 - 1 de des. de 2018

(Figure 10: in Estrada, 2018)

In the trial itself, which lasted for four months from February through to June 2019, Ruben Wagensberg, senator for the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) in the Catalan parliament, gave evidence for the defence. Responding to a question by the defence

regarding the implementation of secure civil disobedience guidelines issued to members of civil society manning referendum polling stations locally, he replied:

> At no moment did any of us invent anything. All of that was poured over meticulously, from looking at Gandhi, Martin Luther King. In the case of Catalonia, for example from the Christian tradition, using Xirinacs, Pepe Beúnza ... and what we did was use all of those experiences, trajectories, theorizations etc. We didn't reinvent the wheel. (Catalan Corporation of Audiovisual Media, 2019b)

In a tweet two weeks after the beginning of the trial from the account of Jordi Cuixart, a remanded leader of Catalan civil society organisation 'Òmnium Cultural', reference was also made to the legacy of Xirinacs (Figure 11), 'On way back to the Supreme Court thinking of political prisoners all over the world, of Muriel and Xirinacs. Knowing that you're always there defeats injustice. Being able to fight for liberty is a huge privilege. No passaran! #J'accuse'



Jordi Cuixart ✔
@jcuixart

Camí del Suprem penso en els presos polítics d'arreu del món, en la Muriel i en Xirinacs. Saber que sempre hi sou derrota la injustícia. Poder lluitar per la llibertat és tot un privilegi. No passaran!

#JoAcuso

7:00 - 26 de febr. de 2019

(Figure 11: Cuixart, 2019)

Later that year, in the week leading up to the judgement on the remanded prisoners when widespread unrest was expected, Liz Castro, an American writer linked to the civil society organisation Catalan National Assembly, tweeted the following (Figure 12), "An organised people has an extraordinary force" - Lluís Maria Xirinacs via @LluisPlanasH #civildisobedience" with an attached video of Xirinacs giving an interview in 2003 outside the Model prison about the legitimacy of non-violent civil disobedience.

"Un poble organitzat té una força extraordinària."—
Lluís Maria Xirinacs via @LluisPlanasH
#DesobedienciaCivil

**La força interior de la noviolència segons Xirinacs (2003)**
Reflexions de Lluís Maria Xirinacs entorn de la noviolència
davant de la presó Model de Barcelona l'any 2003. Entrevista ...
🔗 youtube.com

12:41 p. m. · 11 oct. 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

Figure 12: Castro, 2019

**Incarceration and Society**

Clearly, the fact that Xirinacs spent a significant amount of time incarcerated in the early 1970s and whose legacy is firmly connected to civil disobedience resonated with supporters of the accused. The trial of political and civil society leaders in Catalonia has resulted in a hightened awareness in Catalan society of the relationship between incarceration and writerly production, with three ministers in the sacked government (Vice-president / Minister for External and Institutional Relations, and Transparency / Interior Minister) and a leader of Catalan civil society producing published memoirs, reflections on civil disobedience and children's stories during their period of remand (see, for example, Antich, 2018; Creus, 2018; Casulleras, 2019; Camps, 2019). Ioan Davies, in *Writers in Prisons*, reflects on the reasoning behind writing during incarceration:

> Prison writing is about guilt, but the ultimate guilt of not knowing whether one's own actions were locked into a world over which one had no control or into one's self (which comes to the same thing). Prisoners (whether political, religious, civil or criminal) write to make sense to themselves and others of that predicament ... prison writing is self-reflexive. (1990: 237)

Davies' analysis, however, takes on a normative edge when he links the relevance of prison writing to society in general. He asks whether prison writing exists on a different

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plane to that of non-prison writing before coming down in favour of society-wide relevance and the necessity that this be interpreted as such:

> ... what interconnections can we make between the recorded accounts of prisoners and our own attempts at writing out of our commonplace experiences? ... The relevance of prison writing to everyday concerns must, however, be pursued along another path: that of the prisoner taking the experience of writing in gaol and transforming it into a language that might be applied to non-prison situations.' (1990: 219-24)

Another way of visualising the links that Davies suggests between the incarcerated society and that of society in general is that of how freedom is calibrated from conditions whereby restriction on freedom is felt in the most physical manner. John Berger begins a reflection on the metaphysics of 'incarceration areas' in modern life by firstly accepting the metaphysics of both places of incarceration and society *per se* as well as the relative freedom attached to each: 'Prisoners become experts at this. They develop a particular sensitivity towards liberty, not as a principle, but as a granular substance. They spot fragments of liberty almost immediately whenever they occur.' (2008: 1). However, he extends the realm of the incarcerated area, thus problematising the associated limits – and legitimacy – of citizen freedom and state sovereignty by the use of what he calls a 'landmark' which act as 'reference points to be shared'. Doing so invariably recalibrates a metaphysics of society. The landmark in question is prison, with freedom for Berger being reassertable and reprogrammable from within prison cells:

> The landmark I've found is that of prison. Nothing less. Across the planet we are living in a prison ... Penitentiaries still exist and more and more are being built. But prison walls now serve a different purpose.
>
> Wasn't living under any tyranny in the past a form of imprisonment? Not in the sense I'm describing. What is being lived today is new because of its relationship with space. It's here that the thinking of Zygmunt Bauman is illuminating. He points out that the corporate market forces now running the world are ex-territorial, that's to say "free from territorial constraints – the constraints of locality".
>
> Cells have walls that touch across the world. Effective acts of sustained resistance will be embedded in the local, near and far. Outback resistance, listening to the earth. Liberty is slowly being found not outside but in the depths of the prison. (2008: 2-13)

What Berger suggests here – an increased awareness of the relationship between prison and society – is mirrored in this research's focus upon direct and diffused instances of critique and resistance in creative writing from both inside and outside incarcerated life. Although all three writers in this research underwent periods of incarceration, it is Joseba Sarrionandia who most forcefully reduces distance between the confines of prison and the concepts of freedom and power relationships in society.[132] In his voluminous book on the ontology of political community in the international state system *¿Somos como moros en la niebla?* (Are we as Moors in the Mist?) – a prize-winning essay subject to political controversy discussed in Chapter 2 – he teases out this linkage, making common cause between the incarceratory in Bentham's panopticon and listless mechanisms within current democracy structures, echoing somewhat Lluís Maria Xirinacs' reflections on the robustness of civil society:

> The captive prisoner who understands power relationships deduces that all those who have their freedom restricted, not being for him an abstract idea but being rather a very concrete substance, have something in common. It is thus of importance that horizontal relations of collaboration become known and established. To pass from the 'horizon of the one' as Paul Éluard said, to the 'horizon of everyone'. (2012: 851)

> Society today is bewildered by the struggle between the naturalisation of the social and that of democratic self-determination ... in the face of powers whose intention is the imposition of the idea that no alternative to the state of things is possible, with the Panopticon in which existence is carried out being a work of nature, the citizen conceives of coexistence as an order constructed by society itself. (2012: 834)

In the writing of Joseba Sarrionandia, the defamiliarisation and subsequent problematising of territory and sovereignty is a constant theme and, as we have seen in the interview conducted with the author, these concerns are linked with his own personal experience of exile. In the poem collection '*Hnuy illa nyha majah yahoo*' published in 1995, in a nod to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, in the poem 'Inongo lekuak' (Nowhere places), the first person plural is used to displace a multiplicity of layers of identity within an unsure panorama of where and to what these identities might belong:

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[132] Fionntán de Brún, in his critical analysis of revivalism and modern Irish language literature, touches upon a form of internal exile as experienced by Máirtín Ó Cadhain during his Curragh internment years, quoting Ó Cadhain as being allowed to 'come out to Ireland' (2019: 130) to attend his mother's funeral. Bríona Nic Dhiarmada extends the spatiality of exile in Ó Cadhain's case to include 'economic exile' in that he lived most of his life in Dublin (2008: 54).

We are staying or going.

Anyway, when we stay don't we
                         go a little bit?
And when we go don't we
         stay?

Here, are we staying or going?
                    Or are we still coming here?
And after getting there, is it to return here
         or to start off yonder?

Coming from there, did we stay there?
                    When we stay here
do we continue here? When we leave from here
                    will we return there?

Is going always returning? Will we return to a place
         where we have never been?
And what if returning was nothing more
                              than going yonder?

Can the person who stays think that they
                         will stay forever?
Must we start off and stay
                    without being able to arrive?

Will the person that starts off ever stay
                              anywhere?
Or will they return? But, when they return
         do they return to the place they set off from? (1995: 25)

The imagery contained above – 'Will we return to a place / where we have never been?' – is practically a replica of the revolutionary possibilities inherent in the Benjaminian 'now-time' of the last line in Sarrionandia's first novel *Lagun Izoztua* (*The Frozen Friend*): 'And your adventure will be more spectacular that that of Ulysses, it doesn't matter where you go, because you will return to the place you've never been.' (Sarrionandia, 2001: 433). As discussed in Chapter Two, Sarrionandia aligns himself time and again with Benjamin's 'tiger's leap' into past histories 'filled by the presence of the now' (2007: 261) in order to reclaim a future time. As we have seen, the author problematises the historical and geographical-social co-ordinates which make up modernity through chronotopes seen as configurations and interplays of time and space. A constant in his writing, place for Sarrionandia encompasses both the

phenomenological-ontological as well as reflecting on – and especially so in *¿Somos moros en la niebla?* – an epistemology of concept and theory for place.[133] Examples of this appear in Sarrionandia'r collection of micro essays '*Han Izanik Hona Naiz*', first published in 1992. The Basque literary critic Koldo Izagirre, addressing a Spanish-language readership, teases out the possible significance of the title as it is as ungrammatical as it is redolent of continued indeterminacy, paths wrongly taken, unexpected outcomes and perhaps a gnarled acceptance of such outcomes, as if the ungrammaticality of the phrase becomes indexed to the indeterminacy of its use: 'How am I going I translate for you *Hona Izanik Hona Naiz*? I've tried it a number of times, none of which I am satisfied with. *Han izanik hona naiz*: here I am being there (I'm here by being there)'[134] (1997: 72). When the phrase is used in the volume (3 times), Sarrionandia seems to use it rhetorically to highlight the dislocation of characters in his micro-essays as well as his own exiled situation. In the essay entitled 'Mistake', Sarrionandia defamiliarises the Sinbad voyage cycle:

> Reaching the unknown island, Sinbad the sailor glimpsed the towering walls beyond the sand and dared to enter those narrow doors.

> He walked through the passageways this way and that, not reaching anywhere. Until he heard the Minotaur's roar he hadn't noticed that he was in the wrong legend, and by that time, it was too late to turn back.

> I am to here by being there. (1992: 15)

The readings are invariably open-ended, from a veiled criticism of Hollywood fictionalising to perhaps a more subtle criticism of continued political violence in the Basque Country, a matter Sarrionandia discussed in interview in Chapter Two. He continues the paradigm of defamiliarisation in a micro-essay entitled 'The Hamelin Piper'. With the scene set, the town's rats follow the piper to the sea. The piper notices that the rats stop short of entering the water. The piper enters the water in an attempt to persuade them to follow, entering further and further:

> A huge wave broke and, when the now mute wooden flute appeared adrift on the water's surface, and when it became clear that the Piper of Hamelin had

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[133] On approaches to the study of place, see Freestone and Liu, 2016.

[134] Izagirre explains the linkage between the ungrammaticality of the phrasing used and its capacity for inventiveness, 'For that reason he works with dreamed or imagined situations, and his proposal is always open, repeating itself to us insistently yet prudently: han izanik hona naiz, I am two points. And he continues struggling, that's why he says *hona naiz* [I am to here] and not *hemen naiz* [I am here]. The corresponding verb is of movement, an impossible closing of distance, of desire repressed and compensated for in new escapes over and over again.' (1997: 73).

drowned in the water, all the rats amassed on the coast began to applaud and cheer.

I am to here by being there. (1992: 79)

The ungrammaticality – an instantly defamiliarising and estranging element – of 'I am to here by being there' in the Basque original is also indexed to Sarrionandia's long-standing problematising of territory. Sarrionandia's capacity to play with the reader's sense of sovereign and geopolitical security, especially in his use of maps, was also discussed in Chapter Two. John Berger's use of the prison as 'landmark', with its penetration into the marrow of society, is suggested in the essay, 'A Basque Writer', written in English. At first blush, an adolescent-like and ingenuous plea for Australian citizenship brings language and a – perhaps – subtly worked pathos to a context of political exile which the Basque language reader knows has no ready solution. The text contains stylistic conventions used in Basque, Spanish and French, such as non-capitalisation in reference to languages:

> I have been writing in basque language for thirteen long years. During all this time I have suffered innumerable pain, sorrow and punishment. Therefore, taking into account the situation of the Basque Country, threatened by inexistence, taking into account the standing of our language, reduced by the spanish and french languages, and taking into account also the insuperable difficulties to the normal development of my work, I'd like to write in another language. But this language wouldn't be spanish or french, limited in themselves, because working with these idioms would undoubtedly make me feel insatisfied. Therefore I'm asking you to grant permission to work with the english language, if possible.
>
> At the same time I would be much obliged if I could be granted Australian citizenship. (1992: 51)

### Another Nowhere: Utopia, Dystopia and Alterity in the writerly production of Joseba Sarrionandia, Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Lluís Maria Xirinacs

Much of Sarrionandia's work deals with themes of exile, obliqueness and the unexpected and is often achieved through the inversion, defamiliarising and problematising of what we expect to be the natural order of things. In his book-length essay '¿*Somos como moros en la niebla*?' Sarrionandia is equally as intertextual as in his literature, bringing Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt and Karl Mannheim among others to bear upon what is at the heart of his argument, that is, that utopian writing and concepts are 'radically critical with the really existing' (2012: 817) and do not just offer

'an alternative society that, in addition to being attractive, could be realized in principle' (Fokkema, 2011: 15). Following Mannheim, he sees in utopia a counter-project to prevailing power: "Utopian is not 'what does not exist', but rather 'that which power hinders'" (2012: 817). Contested territory becomes the subject of utopian focus and is linked to other identity struggles:

> The past is murky and ambiguous, and the future is still to be written, so Benjamin proposes filling up the present with history and the future, that is, with utopia. Thanks to knowledge of history one learns that situations endured do not constitute an exception or an anomaly but rather the rule ... homosexuals can come out of the closet, but how does one forget the never-ending history of humiliations? Like them, not only do the Basques or the Berbers struggle so that the generations to come might live a little more comfortably. The continuity of history must also be interrupted in order to dignify the existence of past generations. (2012: 796)

> Nevertheless, axioms of the established order might also be considered 'utopian' and 'alternate' in the sense that what is put forward in discourse and official media is feigned, false and does not correspond to reality ... [A]nother world is possible, because this world is not even as we are told it is. (2012: 816-7)

For Sarrionandia, problematising power relations of the present is an invitation to re-engage with Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: writing about the world implies acting upon it in order to transform it. As with Benjamin, however, change can come about through a reactivation of the past whose narratives are as equally contested as the present, not for a reappropriation of past events but rather for their reinterpretation in new political arenas. Making sense anew of the past forms part of attempts to transform the present, with Benjamin's 'now-time' creating a dialectic link 'between an unaccomplished past and the utopian future' (Traverso, 2017: 223). This opens up the possibility for Benjamin of a politics – indeed, a cabalistic theology – of redemption whereby contested narratives of the past vie with each other:

> The past carries with it a secret index by which it is referred to redemption ... there is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Then our coming was expected on earth. Then, like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim. (in Eiland and Jennings, 2003: 390)

> Working through the contradictions of the present is the condition of reactivating the past ... In order to rescue the past we have to give birth again to the hopes of the vanquished, we need to give a new life to the unfulfilled hopes of the generations that preceded us. (Traverso, 2017: 222)

In the western tradition, partly inspired by Plato's Republic, Thomas More's 'Utopia' is regarded as laying the basis for the utopian tradition in Europe. His publication, a generation after Columbus' landfall in the Bahamas (Fokkema, 2011: 16), is interpreted by Phillip Wegner as presaging 'a radically new and deeply spatialized kind of political, social, and cultural formation: that of the modern nation-state.' Wegner sees in More's utopia a tension existing between the 'twin dimensions of an emergent modernity, of the constant movement between universalization and particularization' (2002: xxii). As argued in the introductory chapter and from the specificity of the empirical chapters, this research is in agreement with this fundamental tension at the heart of the state-based and overwhelmingly state-regulated international system. The tension between the twin dimensions above results in the continual reaffirmation of core concerns of any political community, that is, those of boundaries and identities within them. In the work of the three authors, the adherence to both the particular – interpreted as holding potentiality for a progressive and beneficial relationship between the individual and the ascribed political community – and the universal (with hues of international solidarity) is also claimed for from non-hegemonic positions wherein sovereign political and/or linguistic recognitions have been denied. Wegner, perhaps, views less optimistically the particularist component within this tension, noting that the rise of universalist aspirations (for example, human rights and liberal democracy) has co-existed with particularisms such as nationalism, Eurocentrism and racism at the core of the European nation-state, its very hyphenisation revealing its provenance and content. In his opinion, this admix is not likely to abate:

> [T]his deep contradiction between universalism and particularism is not the consequence of a conflict between the values of the past and those of the modern; rather, it is, as Slavoj Žižek persuasively argues, "constitutive" of modernity itself. (2002: 2)

Where Sarrionandia the essayist explicitly highlights flux in the relationship between powers and counterpowers as a core element in utopian literature, for Wegner, utopian literature – more than other literary genres – brings front and centre the requirement for the reader to engage with political or 'extraliterary' knowledges. In this way the reification of the category of 'autonomous' literature becomes disrupted (2002: 3). In his introduction to Paul Ricouer's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, George Taylor hints at the points of encounter between ideology and utopia following on from the sociologist Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* in the first half of the 20th century,

noting that 'ideology has been a topic for sociology or political science, utopia for history or literature.' (1986: x). Reinhart Koselleck similarly problematises the partitioning, grading or evaluation of the writing of utopia in the following way:

> [I]t is striking that writers of utopias only reluctantly call themselves "utopians" and that the term, despite its genealogy dating back to Thomas More, seldom appears in the titles of literary utopias. A good author of good utopias evidently has very little desire to be a utopian, in the same way that Machiavelli was no Machiavellian, or that Marx did not want to be a Marxist. (2002: 84)

The 'no place' in Ricoeur's reading of utopia provides a view of political community from the outside, a site he calls a 'special extraterritoriality' whereby everyday reality might be questioned and defamiliarised. Utopia in this way becomes 'the field of the possible ... it is a field, therefore, for alternative ways of living.' (1986: 16). He goes further than Mannheim in highlighting that the points at which both ideology and utopia fuse is where authority inhabits and this is where power becomes most visible:

> [T]he turning point of both is in fact at the same place, that is to say, in the problem of authority. If every ideology tends finally to legitimate a system of authority, does not every utopia, the moment of the other, attempt to come to grips with the problem of power itself? (1986: 17)

Ricouer, however, retains significant doubts that utopia might have at its core a 'pretext for escape' whereby an 'escapism of utopia belongs to a logic of all or nothing. No connecting point exists between the 'here' of social reality and the 'elsewhere' of the utopia.' (1986: 17). Sarrionandia, making possible the grammatically impossible 'Han izanik hona naiz / I am to here by being there', is perhaps more circumspect than Ricouer in this respect, signalling that perhaps no escape or clean break is programmatically possible. Nevertheless, he makes common cause with the ambigueties inherent in Ricouer's 'turning point'. Koldo Izagirre brings the specificity of Sarrionandia's exile within the realms of utopia's emphasis on defamiliarising the present and sketching embryonic political options at the location of turning points: 'when the exiled person is a fugitive, an outlaw, the speck that he was divides itself up into new personalities, in new cultural surgeries. Each new speck is divisible and divided ... every new speck gives rise to new partitions, new points of departure' (1997: 75). From within political philosophy, Stephanie DeGooyer holds that for Edmund Burke there is no such place as 'nowhere' as impermeable state citizenship will be the ultimate guarantor of political belonging. Sarrionandia's problematising of exile brings

into focus the difficulty in "untethering the natural rights of individuals and the right of the 'people' to national emancipation." Discussing Hannah Arendt's treatment of Burke in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, deGooyer argues that the refugee crisis after the First World War 'revealed to her that humans *can* exist in a place called nowhere; they can be displaced from political community' (DeGooyer, 2018: 33-35). In a similar move engaging with the possibilities that the concept of utopia can offer Critical Legal Studies, the historian of legal thought Samuel Moyn proposes a rethinking of the 'depoliticized moral norms' which are human rights in today's post-bipolar 'world-historical situation' and warns that 'if the human rights movement does not offer a more realistic and politicized utopia, something else will take its place' (2014: 146). On such a view, human rights regimes take on a more overtly *political* hue.

In their political history volume, *Utopia/dystopia: conditions of historical possibility*, Michael Gordin et al seek to recover utopia and dystopia as analytical categories of historical inquiry. Foregrounding Foucauldian *conditions of possibility* over past accounts of time and space, utopia and dystopia are examined for what is revealed about 'a set of abiding concerns and cultural formations that generated both the desire for utopian transcendence and the specific form that utopia/dystopia took' (2010: 4) and helps to contextualise work carried out by Sarrionandia on the broad canvas of utopia and alterity as paradigm, political programme and genre in his essay and literary output. For Gordin et al, utopia and its troubled doppelgänger dystopia are forward-minded *practices* precisely because they represent and reveal in equal measures histories of the *present* (2010: 1-4). Fredric Jameson arrives tentatively to a similar conclusion after posing the following question: 'we ordinarily think about utopia as a place, or if you like a nonplace that looks like a place. How can a place be a method?' (2010: 21). Describing the utopian impulse as detective work at turning points, where 'utopian clues and traces in the landscape of the real' (2010: 26) become decipherable, utopia represents signposts to procedural moves:

> This kind of prospective hermeneutic is a political act only in one specific sense: as a contribution to the reawakening of the imagination of possible and alternate futures, a reawakening of that historicity which our system – offering itself as the very end of history – necessarily represses and paralyzes ... Such a revival of futurity and of the positing of alternate futures is not a political program or even a political practice, but it is hard to see how any durable or effective political action could come into being without it. (2010: 42-43)

Jameson's hermeneutics is the ethereal subject in 1916 of Marxist philosopher Marc Bloch's *Spirit of Utopia*. Not only is an arrival path to utopia sketched out but its realisation is also hinted at. As in the work of Sarrionandia, the ontological location of reality is questioned:

> To find it, to find the right thing, for which it is worthy to live, to be organized, and to have time: that is why we go, why we cut new, metaphysically constitutive paths, summon what is not, build into the blue, and build ourselves into the blue, and there seek the true, the real, where the merely factual disappears – incipit vita nova. (2000: 3)

*Lagun Izoztua* is perhaps Sarrionandia's most well-known work. As discussed in Chapter Two, the novel is formally divided into three sections – the past, the present and an indeterminate future – which repeat throughout the novel, each of them with their own chronotope coupling space and time: the Basque town of Kalaportu in the past, various locations in Central and South America in the present and Antarctica, occurring shortly after events in the present. The novel's multi-voice narration, we gather during the course of the novel, is actually being carried out by one of the characters, the political exile Josu/Armando, who is writing a novel in Managua, hinting perhaps to the reader that the secondary and tertiary characters are but figments of Josu's creative mind. The indeterminacy of time and space is a technique recurred to by Sarrionandia (Azkorbebeitia, 2001) and used by him with more meaningful effect in later examples of his work, bringing directly the discontents of exile to his deploying of chronotopes (Rodriguez, 2014: 399-400). This is seen in the novel in the triangulation of exile, space and time, an example of which occurs when Goio, the novel's *frozen friend*, is on the scientific expedition ship in Antarctica:

> 'I use a watch', you will say to Edwin, 'not so that time can keep me in check, but rather so I can forget it for a while (2001: 180)

Eider Rodriguez describes the passages relating to Kalaportu corresponding broadly to the *bildungsroman* genre with events occurring in Antarctica deemed as approaching something similar to the dystopia witnessed in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2014: 299). The narration in this section occurs in the future tense and second person singular, lending a dreamlike, other-world effect. (2013: 297). Events described, however, as occurring in Antarctica are difficult to reconcile physically and temporally with events occurring in Central America (2013: 298). In the novel's narration, they are

literally anatopic, out of their assigned and due place. In 2001, shortly after the publication of *Lagun Izoztua*, in an interview[135] with a Basque-language weekly magazine, Sarrionandia stated that he had written the novel whilst in a state of 'great anxiety and confusion' and 'deep unease' (Argia, 2001; Azkorbebeitia, 2011: 37). Whilst the chronology of some elements in the Antarctica section may or may nor have been deliberately planned for by Sarrionandia, situations faced by characters in Colombia show the novelist's interest in the concept. Jose Urioste, fleeing from the defeat of the Second Republic in Spain, family, has built near the city of Barranquilla a homestead resembling a Basque farmhouse and has raised his two children in Basque. His is a life preserved in aspic and has no wish to return to the Basque Country for fear of what he might find. Just as in his poetry and flash fiction, Sarrionandia has Josu, the omnipresent narrator, parse the consequences of anatopism through exile experienced by both father and son. Imanol, Jose Urioste's alcoholic son, is a doctor at a mental health centre where Goio has been hospitalised. In conversation with Maribel – discussed in more detail in Chapter Two – he describes how his father's Basqueness was lived out in exile:

> 'Just like as you are anachronic you live outside time, with anatopic you live outside of place. You're here, but you really live there. And our father was dye in the wool anatopic ...' (2001: 56)

'You're here, but you really live there' represents a re-enacting of 'I am to here by being there' seen earlier in this chapter, pointing to the ways in which the author uses exile to problematise the concept of sovereignty at the Westphalian core of territory. In interview with the author in 2017, Sarrionandia discussed the effects of attempts at reproducing a cultural and linguistic milieu similar to a pre-exile life. Explaining how the character of Jose Urioste was based on a Basque acquaintance living in Cuba, he reflected on his own family life:

> The same thing happened with my son and naturally he's not ... Basque ...
>
> *He was born here ... ?*
>
> He was born here, yes. And at age six when he was sent to school, well, he didn't want to speak Basque ...
>
> *He understands it ... ?*

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[135] The interviewer's name is deliberately not supplied, a fact referred to in the interview itself.

He understands it, yes, but he doesn't want to speak it. He has a passive knowledge of the Basque Country but he's not really Basque. And then I got to thinking that my problem, and that of other exiled Basques ... and it could be a problem of nationalists, of anyone ... the same thing will happen to Spanish people here, won't it, you belong to a particular nation and you think about your descendents ... that is, that's it's a natural occurrence, it's DNA, it's biology, that is, that there's no difference between biology and culture, and you see it as a natural process, but your son ...  he was brought up speaking Basque at home etc etc and Basque was the language spoken at home and our son had to be Basque. Then he begins to grow and grow and until he was four that's what happened. But when he started school the culture becomes Cuban immediately and absorbs you and from the word go he didn't want to speak Basque. So I got to see how difficult it was for him being different ... and that is what it's about ... so my son ... is nothing and then the thing is, neither are we ... in *¿Somos como moros en la niebla?* the whole thing is about difference, violence, power relations but regarding the national question, conceiving of the idea of homeland, well, we aren't anything. What are you? Physically I'm nothing, what am I? You can say whatever you want to say you are, you can have references etc etc, but culture is also a choice, a construction as well.

So my thinking on this is that everything, culture, homeland and suchlike should be considered a construction. So what are you? You go into exile, you're Basque but your son starts from zero. He will decide for himself. And among the options is to forget Basque.[136]

It is clear that the indeterminacy, relativism and alterity in time and space employed by Sarrionandia are linked to his engagement with power relations. In his later work, specifically in his essay volumes *¿Somos como moros en la niebla?* (2012) and '*Lapur banden etika ala politika*' (*The Ethics or Politics of Bands of Thieves*) (2015) Sarrionandia pares down the choices to be made in democratic societies and offers a stark comparison between the Athenian 'agora', the public square where citizens debate problems and engage in dialogue:

For the citizens of a city to be able to govern themselves it is important that the square where they meet to discuss and decide on ways forward is empty. God cannot take up residence in that square, because then scarcely anyone would fit in. Neither can the army, or the monarchy, or the bankers' lobby, or the Academy of the Language park themselves there because that would impede the people's meeting. (2012: 607)

Territorial contestation and its linkage with radical democratic culture forms a major part of Sarrionandia's concerns. *Lagun Izoztua* ostensibly deals with exile yet territorial relations in Spain are always in the background, with the author stating, 'throughout all

of that novel concepts about time are at work, [the characters] have half lost the three dimensions of space and all they have left is time' (in Rodriguez, 2014: 301). As argued earlier, alterity is given priority in the Antartica section of the novel. However, it could also be argued that there are positive utopian undercurrents at this point in the novel. This is a landmass unlike any other and in comparison with the vast spread of ice formation, the totality of day over night during the scientific expedition and the sheer dominance of non-human life and organisms, the insignificance of human life becomes devastingly clear for the passengers and a taking stock of the preconceptions of organised human life occurs. It could be argued that for Sarrionandia, and additionally in the light of his subsequent publications on democratic culture, Antarctica represents a signpost for new ways of conceiving of, and adapting, the modern concept of territorial sovereignty. In the 2014 Venice Biennale of Architecture, an 'Antarctopia' pavilion was installed with the aim of conducting a public debate on the nature of sovereignty and to get citizens:

> [T]hinking about Antarctica as an imagined utopia, a pointer to how people might think and live differently in the future, beyond sovereignty.

> Looking back, the 1959 Antarctic Treaty made possible the construction of a complex new architecture, a post-sovereign polity unknown to the political science textbooks. (Rowley, 2014)


It could be argued that the abrasive satire in Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* (*Graveyard Cla*y) is somewhat echoed in its tortuous odyssey-like translation into English, a full sixty-six years after its publication in Irish. Previous to two published translations appearing within a year of each other in 2015 and 2016, the possessor of the copyright since 1981 had resisted its translation, being 'conscious of the great difficulty that there would be in translating the work and doing it justice in another language' and of the pressures 'involved in authorising a translation of a work of such standing.' (Brennan, 2016). A translation into English must be assumed in the comments above, as translations to Danish and Norwegian had already been published twenty and fifteen years previously (Harman, 2016). As discussed in the chapter on Ó Cadhain, some critics (e.g. Kiberd, 2002; 2000) attributed to Ó Cadhain's novel Beckettian characteristics within a wider absurdist setting. Absurdist elements are at work, with characters eking out an existence in the townland's graveyard, inhabiting almost the same territorial space, but in a grotesque defamiliarised manner. Here, absurdity is

'understood as unfamiliar juxtapositions of otherwise familiar elements' (Proulx et al, 2010: 818). I accept this reading but propose that dystopian elements also pervade the novel, and overtly so in another of Ó Cadhain's works, the dark novella *An Eochair* (*The Key*) dealing with stifling state bureaucracy post-independence. In Ó Cadhain's searing critique of Irish society in the townland graveyard, the graveyard conforms to the literal dystopian image of a 'bad place' with stifling social immobility and the impossibility of its overcoming being one of the driving forces in the novel. Socio-economic power relations receive salvo after salvo from Ó Cadhain's pen, giving rise to class concerns, the notions of religious respectability 'so preoccupied with crosses' (Kiberd, 2000: 579) and the ever-present jealousies, hatreds and suspicions abound with snatches of petty conversations. In his *Dystopia: A Natural History*, Gregory Claeys contrasts the 'enhanced solidarity' of utopia with a 'compulsory solidarity' (2017: 8) seen in dystopia, eroding all that solidarity can offer. Ó Cadhain is unsparing in his portrayal of this version of solidarity:

> —'Twas in the east cemetery he was buried. I remember it well and I have good reason to. I twisted my ankle when I slipped on a flagstone …
> —When you made a glutton of yourself, as you often did …
> —… To have more potatoes than Nell; to have more pigs, hens, turf, hay; to have a cleaner, neater, house; to have better clothes on her children: It was part of her revenge. It was all revenge … (2015a: 30-31)

> I was hoping you'd tell me about the court case, and you told me about the Glen of the Pasture crowd going to England. Let them go to England! Good riddance to the Glen of the Pasture crowd! The beggars wouldn't come to my funeral ... (2015a: 114-15)

It is perhaps worth making a comparison here with Merle Tönnies study of the absurdist dystopian play in British theatre and its focus on immobility in society which pervades 'the characters' world both literally through physical and linguistic stasis in claustrophobic rooms and metaphorically with regard to the impossibility of political change and genuine private relationships'. For Tönnies, 'the combination of dystopia and absurdism currently seems to be one of the few ways in which political theatre can return to the fundamental questions of unequal power relations in society which preoccupied the twentieth-century political works' (2017: 170). However we might formally categorise *Cré na Cille* as art form, power relations in society were a core concern for Ó Cadhain, just as they are for Joseba Sarrionandia. Tönnies remind us that works forming the 'Theatre of the Absurd' in the second half of the twentieth century 'usually came from leftist perspectives and scrutinised power relations between

different social groups' (2011: 157). Ó Cadhain shared that view. Despite the inequalities in these relations, according to Declan Kiberd, 'he maintained firm in hope, hope gives rise to courage, courage gives rise to action' (2002: 252).

Yet it is possibly in Ó Cadhain's socio-political vision for Ireland that dystopia is felt most in his creative writing when we perceive the lessening of distance between the dystopian and the utopian. Gregory Claeys, using Foucault's work on the prison, hints at the resemblance by degrees dystopia can have with utopia regarding the surveillance and control operations carried out in the name of state sovereignty. In the second quotation below, linking the categorisation of utopia and dystopia within conceptual history, Reinhart Koselleck reaffirms the transmutability of utopia into dystopia. Ó Cadhain likewise problematises dystopia: the underground graveyard is a prison, and the Benthamite panopticon is at work:

> The resemblance of such a system of control to Utopia is clearly more than merely superficial. Its success is bound up with the development of the modern state, the idea of sovereignty, the mutation of ideas of lèse-majesté into lèse peuple, and the extension and magnification of both individual and collective guilt. Yet the prison is of course not the death camp. Punishment precedes reform, and is not merely intended as the prelude to murder. (Claeys, 2017: 13)

> Actual history is always simultaneously more and less, and seen ex post facto. It is also always different than we are capable of imagining. For this reason, there are utopias, and also for this reason, they are condemned to be wrong. And their success may more likely lean toward unhappiness than toward the happiness they promise. (Koselleck, 2002: 99)

As we saw in Chapter Two, Sarrionandia also problematises the distance between utopia and dystopia, offering tongue in cheek a refurbished concept, 'for some people what is eutopia is dystopia for others. That being the case, utopia becomes 'upotopia', that is, a place that is not yet' (1997: 465-66). In Ó Cadhain's case, the 'half-way materialized, perverted eutopia' (Fokkema, 2011: 20) the author railed against was the milk and honey post-independence 'vision of a pastoral Ireland at a perpetual crossroads dance' (Kiberd, 2000: 586) championed by the multi-term President of Ireland, Éamon de Valera. Declan Kiberd, as discussed in Chapter Four, uses the highly-ornamented narrative voice of the 'Graveyard Trumpet' who appears intermittently and leaves a trail of verbose language in order to contrast its voluble speech with that of the pithy earthiness of the graveyard dwellers (2000: 583). However, it might be equally as plausible to interpret the 'Trumpet' as the virtuous and pompous discourse of a newly-established God-fearing and conservative state apparatus which the republican socialist

Ó Cadhain felt repugnance toward. Under the ground, the 'Trumpet' tells us that there is only putrefaction but above the ground:

> [A] heat haze hangs lightly on the air. The springtide is pulsing constantly in the channels of the shore. The meadow is as if a can of green milk had been spilt on its grass. Hawthorn, bush and boundary hedge array their formal gowns like ladies-in-waiting before entering the presence of the King. There is a soft lonely ring to the blackbird's song in the groves. The children's eyes widen as they handle the toys tumbling from the treasure-chest of the virgin year. (2015a: 66)

De Valera founded the conservative political party Fianna Fáil (Warriors of Ireland) in 1926 which would go on to dominate political life in the Irish republic, basing itself on a 'nationalist Ireland, with symbol, history, Gaelic ethnicity and culture, and Catholicism all being woven together' (English, 2006: 328). Ó Cadhain took issue with Fianna Fáil's political narrative regarding economic policies and the Irish language, solutions for which, as we have seen, the author considered intermeshed. In *Gluaiseacht na Gaeilge: Gluaiseacht ar Strae* (The Irish Language Movement: A Movement Adrift), an essay published the year of his death in 1970, to work in an official Irish language organisation for Ó Cadhain was tantamount to being a member of Fianna Fáil (1970: 6), and his solution was the setting in train of nothing less than a revolution in post-independence Ireland with the invocation of – at the very least – civil disobedience:

> I hope that we all grasp from this that the language under the stewardship of Fianna Fáil is destined to draw its last breath. Unless that is taken on board its demise is totally assured. Ireland must be made rid of Fianna Fáil and its like ... at the end of the hunger strike in the General Post Office during the Easter celebrations of 1966[137] I said that the Irish language had to made part and parcel of the Irish people's struggle to achieve the objective in the Easter Proclamation. The repossession of Ireland, the Revolution, the revolution of the mind and soul, the revolution of resources, property and livelihood ... I don't think there's much to be gained from this way any more [traditional lobbying through letter writing, official delegations etc] except as part of **active resistance**.[138] (1970: 11)

Dystopian attributes are at their clearest in his novella *An Eochair* (*The Key*), published in 1953 and translated for the first time in a bilingual edition in 2015. A junior civil servant, the paperkeeper J., is locked in from the inside in his office in a governmental

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[137] Referring to the Easter Rising of 1916, with 1966 being its 50th anniversary.
[138] The English words in bold are included as such in the original Irish following the equivalent Irish term which are likely not to have been instantly understood without the subsequent term in English. He describes active resistance in tandem with passive resistance, a term similarly calqued to the Irish language equivalent (1970: 13).

department which we presume is located in Dublin, eventually succumbing to a heart attack due to his incessant fretting about inconveniencing his senior officer. The novella resembles Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (Denvir, 1987: 130-31) in that this dystopia has at its core an *avant la lettre* governance version of prison, the '*carcerotopia*' (Claeys, 2017: 13). Part of the defamiliarising involved here is of course the distinctly unreal setting of the Irish language as the natural language of the machinery of government. Rules are to be strictly obeyed and the governmental teleology internalised by senior paperkeeper 'S.', linking the file with national sovereignty, has its internal logic, creating a hermetically-sealed ontology of the state:

> Without a label there can be no file, without a file there can be no civil servant, without a civil servant no hierarchy of grades, without a hierarchy of grades no section, without a section no department, without a department no Civil Service, without a Civil Service no secretary, without a secretary no minister, without a Minister no Government, without a Government no state. (2015b: 13)

J., however, is in dire straits. Time passes and no rules giving permission to unlock the door can be found. The invective against centre-right two-partyism in Ireland, so much a part of Ó Cadhain's writing as a language activist, is prevalent here as well. The local member of the Irish Parliament makes his way to the office to see what can be done to extricate J. from his plight:

> 'It's me ... Patsy Fitzprick, your local TD. You know me well, I'm Fine Fáil? I'll have you out of that hole in less than an hour, sooner, if I can ... It's a disgrace. But it's no wonder: the Boss made one mistake, understandable enough in the circumstances, when he left a shower of Fianna Gaelers in the Office of Public Works the time we went into Government. That gave them control and since they know you're Fine Fáil–' (2015b: 87)

At this point, a connection becomes visible between Ó Cadhain's writing and Koselleck's critique of Carl Schmitt's *Die Buribunken*. While *Cré na Cille* and *An Eochair* are uchronic in the sense that they represent 'an explicit *temporal* transformation of the present' (Wegner, 2002: 25), they are also, as Koselleck would have it, 'spatial counterworlds' in that on the one hand life is eked out a few metres below ground and on the other in Irish-language speaking government offices. In the Buribunkian world, everyone is a writer and compelled to write a diary. In a world where diarisation means easy access for surveillance mechanisms and instant historicisation, it matters not what is written but one must write something every day. Quoting a passage from *Die Buribunken*, the bombosity of Ó Cadhain's 'Graveyard

Trumpet' is reflected in what Kosellech describes as the 'ironizing light of this historical philosophy of identity' following the Buribunkian writer's propelling of the self towards future progress:

> I write that I write myself .... What is the great engine that lifts me out of this complacent circle of egohood? History! - I am thus a letter on the typewriter of history .... But upon writing, the world spirit apprehends itself through me, so that I, apprehending myself, simultaneously apprehend the world spirit .... Meaning: I am not only the reader of world history, but also its writer. (in Koselleck, 2002: 94)

Illuminating the perception suggested earlier that the distance between the utopian dream and dystopian collectivism might be closer than one might expect, Ó Cadhain himself in 1970 engaged in a utopian language policy construction – not altogether unlike the Government-sponsored settling in 1935 of fifty-five Irish-speaking families from Connemara in the west of the country to townlands some 60km from Dublin, swelling later to more than 400 people – urging the Irish language movement to construct a dormitory town[139] within reach of the capital. For Ó Cadhain, this would reflect the Janus-faced fulfillment of ancient dreams as well as the latter-day republican nationalist and republican socialist programmes of Patrick Pearse and James Connolly for radical reform:

> The residents would work in Dublin, but industry would arrive [to the dormitory town] in good time. This town would be a fulfillment of our political vision, an Irish-speaking town, a town of co-operatives, a town of equality, an echo of the ring-fort at Raholland, an echo of Lawlor's political vision, of Pearse and Connolly. (1970: 12)

The Catalan priest Lluís Maria Xirinacs based his political and religious life – and death – on the utopian[140] ideal of a radically progressive confederal and plurinational Spain through his journalistic writing, seen most prolifically before and during his years as a senator in the upper chamber in Madrid. The confederality he sought for the whole of Spain was predicated on the previous political union of a wider 'Catalan Countries' administratively organised around a devolved structure (for example 1978a; 1978b). However, the publication which reflects this vision in the most thoroughgoing manner is perhaps his *Constitució: Paquet d'Esmenes* (Constitution: Bundle of Amendments) (1978c), a comprehensive – and unsuccessful – overhaul of what would become the

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[139] The English term is given, in bold, in the original.
[140] The frequent correlation between naivety and utopian programming is made in the psychogeographical essay on Xirinacs, see Lara, 2019: 80.

current Spanish constitution. Two items only will be dealt with here to exemplify this, i. the reconfiguration and location of Spanish state sovereignty and ii. a radically progressive view of gender relations.

Placing individual articles of the draft Spanish constitution beside his own so that citizens could compare both, the first article deals with national sovereignty. Directly comparing the proposed draft article whereby as a parliamentary monarchy 'national sovereignty resides in the Spanish people, from whom all the powers of the State emanate,' Xirinacs' amendment states, 'The Spanish Confederation, constituted by those States that belong to it through voluntary adhesion, recognises that sovereignty resides in the individual peoples that form it and from which the powers of all the organs of the Confederation emanate ... the political organisation will be a democratic and parliamentary Republic.' In the notes alongside, Xirinacs perhaps playfully adds, 'A Republic is preferred to a Monarchy for reasons of rationality.' (1978c: 13). The chapter on Xirinacs dealt with his often antagonistic relationship with Catholic church authorities due to his stance on the national question and social matters. Comparing article 30 of the draft Constitution which made provision for heterosexual marriage only, with procedures for 'separation' and 'dissolution' rather than divorce, his amendment is a testament to his belief that a reconstruction of social relations was not only desirable but possible:

> Everyone has the right to the development of their emotional life and sexuality, to enter into marriage, to create stable family relationships in freedom, in full equality of the rights and duties of the partners between and of both regarding their common offspring and to freely decide upon the children they wish to have ... marriage may be dissolved by mutual agreement or if either of the partners seeks it, if there exists just cause in accordance with divorce law. (1978c: 51)

The focus on Joseba Sarrionandia's discussion on the political and democratic parameters for utopia and the wider discussion concerning utopian/dystopian elements across writerly production in this research has been carried out for the specific purpose of relating these parameters with wider debates from within international relations (IR), critical literary theory and political philosophy for the reasons proposed in the introductory chapter: the problematising of which political communities may be considered legitimate and legitimising actors in the international state system, understood as the sovereign spaces consolidated by the inclusory and exclusionary processes of modernity, itself a means by which the 'antinomies' of a world politics

such as those between particularism and universalism are contested (Prozorov, 2011: 286). The final section of this chapter looks at sovereign and suprastate actors' positioning regarding the legitimacy of aspirant sovereign actors and asks what an international system might look like from the optic of – at the very least – the non-hegemonic positions alluded to in the three authors' work which have at their core a claim for recognition.

**Enjoyment of the Particular**

In Robert Walker's *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, discussed in the introductory chapter, international relations are understood as predicated upon a set of inclusions and exclusions of political communities within and from a mutually recognising regime of statehood. In his follow-up volume, *After The Globe, Before The World*, the movement from a particularist international system of sovereign states to a perceived 'politics of the world' is criticised for its encouragement of 'visions of escape' (2009: 8) into the latter which, for Walker, headlines itself as an emancipatory project based on its universalist credentials and misrepresenting the problematics of spatiotemporal categories in modern politics. The fact that the terms 'international politics' and 'world politics' in IR literature are used in an interchangeable manner or are portrayed as diametrically opposed to each other leads Walker to suspect that 'an array of constitutive contradictions' are at the heart of 'both affirmations and denials of a specific philosophy of history, specific accounts of the necessary relation between spatiality and temporality, and specific accounts of where and what political life must be and who it must be for' (2009: 1).[141] The rejoinder by Sergei Prozorov to Walker's volume sides with his reticence that a universalising world politics is predicated upon 'various strands of cosmopolitan universalism that conceal the particularity of their claims' (Prozorov, 2011: 287).

That said, Prozorov emphasises that particular claims around *really existing* statehood, the core material of IR, are the product of fortuitous historical factors and that 'although the passage to world politics is necessarily impossible in the historic-political constellation of the international, this constellation itself is wholly contingent' (2011: 288). It is at this point that the combined voices of the authors in this study begin to

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[141] A similar critique of a 'politics of the world' in the form of liberal cosmopolitanism is made within sociology by Craig Calhoun, see for example 2002 and 2007.

come into view. Once contingency is accepted for the particularist pluralism of the international system – or, put another way, the acceptance of the critique of particularisms posing as universals, as Daniel Williams would have it (2006: 225) – Prozorov teasingly puts the question, 'if we cannot move from 'here' to 'there', why not find a better starting point?' (2011: 287). Walker himself hints at other forms of organising elements for political community, reminding us that this will not come about until boundaries, borders and limits are 'understood as complex sites and moments of political engagement rather than as lines that merely distinguish one form of politics here or now, and another form of politics there or then' (2009: 6) and that a revised understanding of the complexity of these sites might lead to new possibilities of how the sovereign state is conceived and implemented: 'the experiences of the sovereign state do not exhaust our historical experiences of the practices of sovereignty, and I suspect that they will not exhaust our experiences of sovereignty in the future' (2009: 11). The hermeneutics of the academic gaze and that of the creative writer are naturally distanced the one from the other, but I argue for a similarity between Walker's and Prozorov's insistence on a re-engagement with 'boundaries, borders and limits' and Sarrionandia's indexing of the contingencies of spatiotemporality through the deployment of, for example, 'I am to here by being there' discussed earlier in this chapter and his essay treatment of the possibilities inherent in a Benjaminian interpretation of utopian potentiality. If Walker critiques *teleological and depoliticised* 'visions of escapism' in order to problematise core elements of the international state system, the authors in this study engage in *contingent and politicising* 'visions of entry' into this wholly imperfect, fissile, antagonistic and inescapable construct where there is 'no obvious exception to a politics organized as a contradictory structuring of norms and exceptions' (2009: 5). Although Walker naturally takes into account political projects such as substate claims around territory (2009: 10), he is in the main concerned with the depoliticisation and making invisible of the immutability of the building blocks of 'bounded political communities' within political theory, taking aim at the underlying statism of the Rawlsian model:

> While modern forms of political theory, for example, may also have many virtues, they depend very largely on drawing a veil over the background conditions that permit a focused concern with questions about freedom and justice within a bounded political community. Both the method and the extraordinary influence over several decades of John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* has been paradigmatic in this respect, and its capacity to depoliticize the practices of political theory has been especially unsubtle ... many of the most

basic questions about politics have been more or less evacuated, leaving only an abstract field of reason to be occupied by claimants to a philosophy or an ethics innocent of all notions of power, authority, social forces or legitimate violence, let alone of a world of differences beyond any particular state. (2009: 91)

For Walker, modern political life – including, we must gather, substate claims around sovereignty – is interpreted as being constituted through the antagonistic relationship between the enjoyment of particularist and universalist visions of the political world. Seen thus, any movement towards postsovereignty must predicate its construction from the co-ordinates of the particularist pluralism of territorial boundaries, a proposition in itself difficult to transcend in an 'aporetic order that is always prone to fracture' (2009: 259). In a similar manner, Joseba Sarrionandia, in his essay 'Are we as Moors in the Mist?' takes issue with the Rawlsian veil of ignorance, the charge being the very veiling – with all the attendant inclusions and exclusions – of the bedrock element behind the political ontology of the just society, that is, its constitution through sovereignty:

> When the collective rights of a sector of society are not recognised, individual rights of each of the particular members of that collectivity are violated. The 'veil of ignorance' to which John Rawls refers, simulating the apathy of those subject to it, may be drawn down. The problem can be given a facade, keeping the majority of the population in the dark. It is not difficult for a state to bring about a majority consensus or even to further suppress a minority which, instead of being brought to the attention of others and recognised, would continue being denigrated and criminalised. (2012: 560)

Writing from a broad literary theory perspective, Joan Ramon Resina probes some of the essential questions Walker raises concerning the constitution of the international state system whilst focusing on political communities searching for 'visions of entry' into that system. In an extended article entitled 'The Scale of the Nation in a Shrinking World' dealing with the criteria used in the arduous construction of a European space susceptible to the 'aporetic order' described by Walker, Resina criticises, among others, Julia Kristeva and Alain Finkielkraut for presenting the central myth of sovereignty that the political pact between free and equal citizens, the 'transcendental covenant allegedly consented to by each *citoyen*' (2003: 48), is better couched within the bounded legalism rather than the cultural security of the state. On first view, this appears to be a partial move to the terrain of a politics of the world as delineated by Walker whilst covering up particular origins, what Resina frames as a process of universalising abstraction which 'removes the contingencies of origin' (2003: 49). He goes on to focus on non-hegemonic substate claims, critiquing 'postmodern theory' which at once de-

territorialises and levels national identities with other forms of identities: 'One gets the impression that such theorists are trying to raise themselves above their own political niches by pulling their national bootstraps ... there is something illusory, and politically self-defeating, in the notion that identities are a matter of free choice' (2003: 54). This is an argument also identified by Daniel Williams in which he refers to the critique of post-modernist 'philosophical universalism' within which "notions of truth, logic and reason cannot be held independently from specific cultures or specific 'discursive communities'" (2006: 225). In Chapter Two, following on from Joseba Sarrionandia's discussion concerning the 'barbarian', Williams' argument that 'philosophical universalism' can lead to 'an uncritical elevation of the particular and culturally specific and leaves no intellectual basis from which to attack racist or xenophobic practices' (2006: 225) was referred to. But what might such an 'intellectual basis' look like? There is, perhaps, no easy answer here. Resina uses the analogy of the Kantian dove that imagines its flight easier with no air to flap against, but reassigns air as particularising territory and the impossibility of the unencumbered dove's flight as cosmopolitan attempts to do away with the necessity of such boundedness. The realigned analogy is thus a warning regarding the dangers inherent in the realisation of such an operation. This argument is carried out in order to make the case for the individual being socialized in concrete settings whereby 'common experiences create attachments and self-definitions which over time become articulated in cultural practice' (2004: 48). This is what Walker deems ineluctable and what the authors in this study hint at in their writerly production as grounding entry points for and into the international system.

The core element binding together the interpretations made by Resina and Walker around the ontological construction of the international state system is its spatiotemporality, that is, the multiple array of spatialities and their rootedness through time which makes a postnationalist politics of the world currently inconceivable. It should not go unmentioned that Resina also mentions the necessary aporia at the heart of the two faces of Janus account, laying bare the necessity for the particularism/universalism binary and noting that 'postnationalists fail to consider the spatial location of the polity and the place-based socialization of citizens according to slowly changing orientations drawn from the past' (2003: 50-51) and for which reason there can be 'no autonomy without the possibility of heteronomy'(2003: 56), confirming the plurality arising from particular political communities. Recalling the

work of Liah Greenfeld on the core function of nationalism in the rise of modernity referred to in the introductory chapter, Resina aligns the multiple spatiotemporalities of the state system with democracy itself where this is only hinted at by Walker. Concurring with Greenfeld that 'the location of sovereignty within the people and the recognition of the fundamental equality among its various strata, which constitute the essence of the modern national idea, are at the same time the basic tenets of democracy' placing the birth of nationalism and democracy together 'as a butterfly in a cocoon' (1992: 10), Resina includes what amounts to a cautionary shot across the bows in the case of a rise of a postnational organising of human life. If nationalism's credentials are democratic 'ab ovo', this would then suggest that 'democracy may be spacebound; that it arises and functions at a certain geographic scale but becomes dysfunctional above a certain threshold. The notion of world democracy could easily turn out to be a totalitarian constellation' (2003: 53). While acknowledging that Jürgen Habermas accepted the possibility of democratic breakdown in postnational situations through his understanding of the importance of communicational space, Resina argues for the bolstering of this very space following on from what for Resina represents a 'decoupling' by Habermas of cultural identity from a legal and political constellation, in effect a 'juridical patriotism', of what binds civil society together. For Resina, that cultural identity is spatial and therefore represents in sovereign states a 'de facto national identity' making it improbable that cultural identity will easily become sublated within a procedural form of abstract representative democracy:

> Communicational space is not produced by fiat. It presupposes a "concrete" intersubjectivity: a shared language, a common set of references (provided by a culture), and an array of common values and conventions. In other words, it cannot be abstract space, but the space that arises from the interrelations among concretely situated subjects and their relatively stable dispositions. A space without recognizable referents cannot be communicational space. This is why democracies do not survive crises that destroy the essential meanings of everyday living. (2003: 52-53)

It is for this reason that Resina, whilst reclaiming the universalising of rights and duties within the bounded space of the state, probes the possibility of the erosion of politics in transformations towards a 'politics of the world'. He understands bounded politics as the 'universal participation in public affairs through stand-ins whose claim to represent the civic community rests on the assumption, or the fiction, of a coequal relation to the public good' (2003: 56). The globalising world thus contains within itself forms of

democratic renewal, albeit within multiple parameters, and the reason for which 'to the chagrin of analysts who would rather ignore the question of scale, substate political-geographical formations mimic or claim national form on the basis of an internal set of values, which may range from those of a civic to those of a traditional culture' (2003: 55). Joseba Sarrionandia, as we have seen in this chapter, comes to similar conclusions in his reconstruction of the 'where' and 'what for' of the utopian ideal. For Sarrionandia, in his declaration that 'another world is possible, because this world isn't even as we're told it is' (2012: 817), roles are reversed with utopia representing a possible attainment of the public good while the present fulfills a more sinister dystopian role. In repeated reference to the 'agora', for example, 'politics is a disinterested activity. It does not consist of going to the square to intimidate or make profits among priviliges and wealth but rather to make sure the square is empty so that all the neighbours can fit in' (2012: 816). Here, using the contingency of the Athenian city as a primary site with which to probe other ways of imagining community (Closs Stephens, 2013), Sarrionandia suggests that these are the democratic co-ordinates fulfilling the promise of utopia and echo Cohen and Arato's problematising of the utopian aspects within an expansive and emancipatory view of civil society, proceeding 'from the assumption that rights and democracy, as we have interpreted them, involve, in part, utopian political principles (in the Kantian sense of regulative principles) underlying constitutional democracies' (1997: 566). In an interview given in 2017, Sarrionandia gives practical voice to Resina's theorising:

> In the Basque Country a number of networks exist which militate against the creation of the empty square. If the empty square was possible in the Basque Country, Basques would come together and as a society, culturally it's quite homogenous, we're all in favour of the Basque language ... from that debate, an egalitarian form of capitalism or a social-democratic society would emerge. The right to decide on self-determination would also be accepted by everyone.[142]

This optimism is tempered by, among others, Slavoj Žižek who, despite his opinion that the boundedness of nations functions in a continued contingent manner as a "'particular Absolute' resisting universalization" within which 'some real, nondiscursive kernel of enjoyment' can be lived and breathed, asserts that the capacity exists for 'the devotees of international solidarity' to be taken by surprise by its violent instability (1993: 201-06). That said, Sarrionandia's putative point of entry to the international system,

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[142] Tracking: 2:26:15 - 2:27:04

deemed to be a re-engagement with the democratic process, is taken up by Resina from another angle. As discussed in the introductory chapter and in the chapter on Lluís Maria Xirinacs, much contemporary work in political theory and nationalism studies has difficulty in recognising identity-based politics as legitimate and democratising sites of struggle. Resina finds that there has been an inability to differentiate nationalism from imperialism, considering the later as 'a degraded form of universality' (2003: 59), and citing in the case of Eric Hobsbawm, 'a critic of imperialism reaffirming imperialism's legacy in his lasting reverence for Hegelianism',  an inability, based on 'a bias for larger spatial configurations' (2003: 57) to accept that the legitimation of progressive or otherwise politics can flourish within non-hegemonic spatial territory. Restricting the definition of nationalism to the confines of substate claims around self-determination and the political objective of achieving sovereignty, Resina not only provides legitimation for the democratising credentials of such claims, but he operationalises these credentials within a solidarity-based universalising framework, taking aim at Francis Fukuyama, 'another Hegelian' who finds nationalism in stark opposition to universalism: 'group differentiation is not opposed to universality, and conflict does not follow from claims to recognition but from disputes over resources and the disempowerment of certain groups' (2003: 58). In this conceptual move, the internationalism driving forward Lluis Maria Xirinacs' sovereignty-based activism and journalistic creative writing can be discerned:

> Contrary to Hobsbawm's grim view that nationalism is inescapably 'the expression of sectional or minority interests,' peoples aspiring to political recognition as national groups must ineluctably base their demands on an ethical universality that is lacking in their master states. This means, in effect, that they cannot demand their freedom without simultaneously affirming the right of every nationality to exercise self-determination. They must, that is, practice international solidarity as nations. (2003: 57)

What then of the fabric of the territorial 'agora' alluded to by Sarrionandia, Xirinacs and Resina once the claim is made for its recognition? In the introductory chapter, in work by Liah Greenfeld and Anthony Smith, the forging of identities fuelled by myths, memories and symbols was shown to be highly capable of transformation even when such forging occurred through the maelstrom of modernisation. This form of ethnic symbolism has been shown capable of mobilising citizens and acting as representational sites of commonality, with tradition and culture being continually reinvented. Resina

does not understand 'common ground' in mystical terms but rather it is the malleability of these commonalities which power the political claims behind them:

> [I]t hardly matters whether the content of the memories is historical or mythical. In fact, a people and cultural memory imply each other; they are both aspects of a longue duree phenomenon seeking political expression. Identity, then, is not a precultural or prepolitical given but develops as part of the process whereby a group attempts to achieve national recognition. It can be considered an effect of a group's location in space, a matter of perspective. The principle of national identity, then, is not exclusion, as is often asserted, but location in a grid of political coordinates. (2003: 66)

On this view of nationalism as a self-legitimating political phenomenon, truth claims around cultural and historical narratives are seen for what they are, reinterpretations of history which then become content for socialisation. Because Resina is trenchant in how the historical record should operationalise nationalism and imperialism, he offers the censure of national narratives based not on 'nationalism's fictionalization of the past but the moral quality of the identity produced through collective self-representations' (2003: 69). Mirroring to some extent Walker's preoccupation within IR scholarly debate concerning the 'inclusions' and 'exclusions' between the politics of the international and a politics of the world, Resina notes the debate within political philosophy between liberal cosmopolitanism and recent proponents of liberal nationalism. There is a scalar level of difference in the focus of the two disciplines and perhaps this is why Resina chooses 'liberationist nationalism' as a rejoinder to liberal nationalism, bringing political philosophy terminologies to the realm of borders, limits and boundaries. He does this because the claim for a recognition of the particular/universal binary becomes implicit: 'Liberationist nationalism struggles for the rights of particular groups, but this does not make it a strategy against universal rights' (2003: 70). From the creative writing of Joseba Sarrionandia, Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Lluis Maria Xirinacs, this research finds common cause with scholars working in a broad field of critical literary theory, for example in the interrogation of the particular/universal binary by, among others, Joan Ramon Resina, Phillip Wegner and Angharad Closs Stephens. What at first flush appears contradictory is in fact aporetic in that the fissile binary is deemed core to a constructivist 'as if real' political ontology of the state (Hay, 2014: 465), at least in the case of nation-states whose theoretical *abstraction* is recognised by other members of the international system and by a significant number of substate political communities endeavouring to achieve their own political ontology recognised through statehood.

Although the state 'is likely to remain ontologically contested' along with other composite constructs like civil society or class (Hay, 2014: 462), a constructionist paradigm seems useful in helping to understand the binary attached to sub-state nationalist attempts to 'alter rank by securing a place in the interstate hierarchy' (Resina, 2003: 71) rather than in any concealment of the particular in a cosmopolitan drive to a politics of the world. We are left thus with the perception of an almost irreconcilable aporia because a transformation into another form of politics which leaves behind the binary remains simply elusive, despite attempts to begin theorising a geography of scale constituted by neither cosmopolitan nor strictly national imaginaries which invariably take the state as the established site of politics. On such a view, 'the notion of urban encounters' is conjectured as a possible way of 'thinking coexistence that defies the forces of unification' (Closs Stephens, 2013: 120). Of the three authors, Joseba Sarrionandia's work leads suggestively onto this terrain, if this means encouraging a 'more open and pluralistic understanding of the present in order to be able to be more responsive to new ideas, possibilities and solidarities' (Closs Stephens, 2013: 118).

Clearly, the writerly production of the three authors amounts to more than the utopian and dystopian components alluded to in this chapter. However, the framing of their writing in this way allows for the asymmetries of power which each of them turns to repeatedly to be highlighted and accounted for as part of a wider claim around recognition for the political community. Volker Heins, in a rejoinder to Alex Honneth's theory of recognition, applies the literature on recognition to the 'place of peoples' and sovereign statehood within the international state system, finding that 'international recognition and related practices are not on the radar of recognition theory, as it stands today' (2010: 165). The assertion is made that the concept of 'peoplehood' needs to be integrated into a recognition theory as individuals do not only seek recognition as individuals but also as part of a self-governing political community. Heins argues that modern liberal theory has no method for responding to cases whereby self-ascribing political communities seek statehood. In such cases where there is a struggle over power, ideas and legitimacy, normative precedents offering guidelines are at a premium to the extent that the "recognition of new peoples or states has therefore been called 'not a matter governed by law but a question of policy'" (in Heins, 2010: 164). Attempting to field a response to the question of whether the identity of political communities, as

with the identity of individuals, is constituted and changed in and through struggles for recognition, his assertion that 'the very point of the self-constitution of peoples is to uncouple the fabrication of a positive collective self-image from the opinions of mankind' (2010: 167) points to a continued desire for the maintenance of the aporia at the heart of what is a seemingly irresolvable particular/universal binary.

**Conclusion**

We have seen in the empirical chapters and in this final chapter that Heins' uncoupling of the collective self-image from 'the opinions of mankind' at the point of statehood is both recognised and interrogated by Sarrionandia, Xirinacs and Ó Cadhain from the viewpoint of a non-hegemonic internationalism or a 'liberationist nationalism'. Interpreting their creative writing from the optics of utopia's lofty ambitions and its curbing through dystopia throws light on their rejection of a 'politics of the world' due to the concept's masking of the particularising core of the state hegemon whilst also allowing for the dangers involved in a blind repetition of statehood to come into view, particularly, as we have seen, in the power of utopia to indicate possible ways of redemption (Ivancheva, 2006: 93) following on from a perception of generalised bankruptcy in world affairs (Agamben, 2000: 141). Their writing might appear specter-like, due to the inevitable reduced readership born of writing in a non-statewide language but also perhaps in how their work constitutes a reminder as to the politics involved in foregrounding a Koselleckian historicising of the vanquished, as the cultural historian Enzo Traverso suggests: 'the legacy of liberation struggles has become almost invisible, taking on ghostly form. As psychoanalysis explains, specters have posthumous existences, haunting our recollections of supposedly finished, exhausted, and archived experiences. They inhabit our minds as figures coming from the past, as etheric revenants separated from our bodily lives' (2017: 19).

In the series of rejoinders following R.B.J. Walker's volume pursuing political alternatives in the international state system using key texts of the 'philosophical masters', Costas Constantinou offers another route to arrive at a similar critique. What if, instead of engaging with Plato, Hobbes and Kant, one 'wants to engage instead with Euripides, Gentili, Las Casas, a minor poet or cultural practice to reflect on the state of imprisonment in and the possibility of escape from dominant political discourse?'

(2011: 298). After Constantinou, this research has as its objective the problematising of the borders, boundaries and limits of minority political communities through an examination of how social practices of the subject and object of creative writing – their authors, readership and texts – have been generated. Although Terry Eagleton's referral (2002: 3) to the remark of painter Henri Matisse that 'all art bears the imprint of its historical epoch, but that great art is that in which this imprint is most deeply marked' talks to the importance of placing art within its historical and cultural context, no attempt has been made to forge an opinion regarding the literary excellence or otherwise of the three authors or to minutely examine matters of form and textuality. As argued in the opening chapter, a broad cultural materialist approach has been adopted whereby Benjamin's 'brushing against the grain of history' is considered particularly relevant as much of the cultural, linguistic and cultural milieu forming backdrops for their writerly production deals with manifestations of political and cultural hegemony which are not always recognised as such. For John Brannigan, the 'cultural materialist shares the new historicist method of describing the processes and forces of ideological hegemony, but also attempts to activate the dissidence and subversion which the cultural materialist believes lies dormant in any textual manifestation of ideology' (1998: 28). This approach shows similarities with the concept of the institutionalisation of literature which highlights its systematicity, being 'concerned neither with the analysis of texts nor with their genesis and dissemination, but rather with the conditions under which writing and reading occurs' (Hohendahl, 1989: 34). This becomes relevant in the light of recent tendencies towards canon revision which react against processes of exclusion and selection, whereby 'socially defined minorities, due to their social exclusion from power and political position, possess certain works that are designated as non-canonical' (Wang, 2013: 166). In the context of creative writing in non-hegemonic minority languages giving voice to significantly distinct programming for self-ascribing political communities, a subtle binary created by Raymond Williams is useful here: alternative cultural *formations* sit in tension alongside those of hegemonic *institutions*:

> These are most recognizable as conscious movements and tendencies (literary, artistic, philosophical or scientific) ... we find that these are articulations of much wider effective formations, which can by no means be wholly identified with formal institutions, or their formal meanings or values, and which can sometimes even be positively contrasted with them. (1977: 118-19)

Peter Hohendahl's understanding of Williams' formations as 'specialized practices that take place within or on the periphery of institutions' (1989: 21) is given creative

expression in the boundaries, borders and limits problematised in the work of Joseba Sarrionandia, Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Lluís Maria Xirinacs. It is at these real and imagined boundaries that 'grammars of power and struggle' reveal conflict (Fortier, 2008: 104). As we have seen, the perceived ineradicability of political borderlines and their necessary pluralism are also a matter for IR literatures, troubled by the inability to overcome the core political ontology of whether reality is made up of difference or unity (Paipais, 2017: 2), the particular or the universal, as well as being a retheorising matter for literary theory and historiography which, as Min Wang notes (2013: 170), has now entered an epoch-making 'transhistorical period' whereby literary practices and production have been integrated within wider historical and cultural domains. In his consideration of the role of whether ontology can be an utimate grounding for social reality, Vassilios Paipais points to a distinction in late modernity – fruit of the crisis of foundational accounts of political community – between *politics* as the traditional grounds of political legitimacy and the radical and uncertain contingency of the *political* brought to bear upon the former (2017: 12). Joseba Sarrionandia's questioning of the place of the political subject – announced creatively through the use of 'I am to here by being there' – the doggedness with which Máirtín Ó Cadhain highlighted the incongruities of state policy on the Irish language within the foundational discourse of the newly-established Republic of Ireland and Lluís Maria Xirinacs' two-stage independence/confederation proposals for territorial contestation in Spain, go to the heart of continuing counter-hegemonic claims around the bases for self-ascription to political community in contested spaces within European bounded sovereignty.

Barry McCrea's *Languages of the Night*, discussed in Chapter One, portrays the transformation through the vortex of modernity of dying European non-hegemonic languages into rejuvenating material for prevailing modernist literary imagination. The writerly production in non-hegemonic languages in this study encompassing high and late modernity signals the desire for root-and-branch transformation in the social and identitarian fabric of political community. Referring to the 'failure of the Communist effort to transcend the classic democratic heritage' in his discussion of Europe's revolutionary traditions, Martin Malia notes that 'there remains the problem which initially inspired the socialist project: human inequality. So long as this problem exists – and there is no prospect of it disappearing in any conceivable future – utopian politics will remain with us.' (2006: 278). Reprising the link with the pluralism at the heart of

political boundaries, a recent volume of the journal *Discourse* used the concept of separation – across contexts such as abstract labour, colonial relations, identity politics and modernity built upon fossil fuel 'petrocultures' – as a heuristic in order to problematise this 'fundamental dimension of politics, key to the operations of the dynamics and practices of belonging and exclusion and of permission and prohibition' (Szeman, 2018: 253) in the social world. Whilst Imre Szeman argues that philosophical and political programmes within modernity have given prominence to a gradual untangling of the 'mechanics of separation' in order to achieve justice and a fairer sense of even-handedness, he calls for a challenging of the 'continued function of the narrative that has long driven political change (both implicitly and explicitly), which is that social separations need to be overcome and rendered whole.' (2018: 261). On such a view, emancipatory practices might be conceived of and programmed in other ways and directions. Such an orientation is suggested by Edgar Illas whose vision of the translation and exercise of universalist particularism is 'always an incomplete, ongoing, unsystematic, non-programmable task' (2011: 90). This study recognises these pluralities as they claim their own grounding within, and contribution to, necessarily contingent and uncertain forms of political life.

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