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"L'estaca:" Transnational Trajectories of a Catalan Antifascist Song

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the song "L'estaca," which was composed in 1968 by Catalan songwriter Lluís Llach and became emblematic of the struggle against the Francoist dictatorship. I trace the ways in which the song has been reused and assigned new valence in a variety of cultural and political contexts, including the 1980s Solidarność movement in Poland and the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia. I interrogate how this anti-Francoist song has been recently recaptured by leftist social movements and political parties in Spain, as well as by the Catalan separatist movement.

KEYWORDS

"L'estaca"; Catalonia; Francoism; Lluís Llach; Nova Canço; Spain

Compared to other Western European countries, with the exception of Portugal and partly of Greece, it was not until the mid-1970s that Spain experienced a process of democratization, effectively putting an end to the long-lasting fascist dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–1975).[1] This temporal and historical difference with respect to Italy, France, or Germany accounts for an equally dissimilar, but no less interesting, context for the study of the musically mediated memory of antifascism. In particular, thanks to a new generation of songwriters active in the years of late Francoism and soon thereafter (1966–1978), the memories of the Spanish Second Republic (1931–1936) and the Civil War (1936–1939) were recovered, contributing to the creation of what we can call the antifascist memory of the Iberian country. This article analyzes the history of, and the diverse memorial trajectories triggered by "L'estaca" ("The Stake"), an emblematic song of the struggle against the Franco dictatorship composed in 1968 by the Catalan singer-songwriter Lluís Llach. "L'estaca" incorporates two layers of Spanish antifascist memory: for one, emerging in the context of the political struggles of the late 1960s, it memorializes the ongoing experience of the Francoist dictatorship; second, it recovers the memory of the heated political period preceding the dictatorship – i.e. the socially progressive Second Republic and the Civil War – through the figure of *avi* Siset (grandfather Siset), one of the protagonists of the lyrics.

To write the history of a song, be it a folk song or a popular music song, is an endeavor that offers an extremely productive vantage point to look at political and

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social histories. This is demonstrated, for example, by studies dedicated to Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" or to the worldwide known Italian partisan song "Bella ciao" (Marcus; Pestelli; Bermani 224–60). "L'estaca" has been often associated particularly with the latter, due, among other things, to their numerous translations and the international status they both have acquired as songs of struggle and resistance. According to Carlo Pestelli, the two songs share "the same universal message, the same freedom as a declared goal" (92). Indeed, "L'estaca," after becoming a veritable anthem of anti-*franquismo*, has been reused in the following years in a variety of geo-cultural and political contexts, thereby taking on new values and meanings.

In the following pages, I will first address the history, circulation, and significance of the song in the Spanish context: its emergence from the Catalan Nova Cançó ("New Song") movement of the 1960s; the role of its author and performer, Lluís Llach; the meaning of its lyrics; the rapid process of mythologization of the song that started already in 1969, partly in response to Franco's censorship; its use as a song of struggle in the years of transition to parliamentary democracy. Second, I will discuss the trajectory of "L'estaca" beyond the borders of the Catalan and Spanish contexts, following how it has been taken up elsewhere since shortly after its composition. Symptomatic here are the Polish adaptation of the song in the late 1970s and early 1980s – with the free translation of Jacek Kaczmarski, entitled "Mury" ("The Walls"), which became the anthem of the Solidarność trade union – and the Tunisian one – during the Arab Spring of 2011 with Jasser Jradi's version, entitled "Dima Dima" ("Always Always"). Third, I will analyze the revitalization of "L'estaca" in Catalonia and Spain in the last decade on: the one hand, its use by the Catalan independence movement, in which Llach himself has played a far from secondary role; on the other hand, its use by the 2011–2012 Indignados movement as well as by new Spanish leftwing parties, such as Podemos, since 2014.

Through "L'estaca," I intend to propose a reflection on how both the memory of an anti-Francoist song, and the musically mediated memory of the particular historical past it carries with itself, have been modified and reinterpreted in democratic Spain and beyond (Borrull 219–33).[2] Grounding my reflections is the understanding that it is necessary to analyze cultural memory in dynamic terms, by taking into account what Erll and Rigney call an ongoing "process of remediation" of the past (1–12), and that music plays an important role in such a process (Gilbert 121). As Caroline Bithell remarks, music, and consequently songs, are constructed anew every time they are played and sung: "performance does not constitute a simple review of the music of the past. The music itself is 'made' anew at each rendition. In the moment of resounding it is fully and incontrovertibly part of the present" (4). Here, it is crucial to understand "the mechanisms by which the past is remembered, constructed and invested with meaning" in the present (Bithell 6).

The methodology I adopt in this article is primarily historiographic: I trace the history of "L'estaca" and relate it to its broader historical and political context(s). To this end, I use scholarly sources as well as news media. With regard to the Catalan and Spanish contexts of the last decade, I complement my historiographic approach with direct observation, thanks to which I was in a position to detect dynamic processes of (re)utilization of "L'estaca" today. I attended a number of demonstrations

of the Indignados movement in Barcelona in 2011 and 2012 as well as several demonstrations of the Catalan independence movement, notably on occasion of the unilateral referendum of self-determination on 1 October 2017.

The Nova Cançó Movement

In a political context marked by the continuity of the Franco regime, but also by important social and cultural changes, including the formation of a heterogeneous opposition to the dictatorship, the Nova Cançó was born in Catalonia in the early 1960s. This was "a protest song movement," which set out to recover Catalan cultural and linguistic identity (Ayats and Salicrú-Maltas 28–29). It did so primarily by adopting Anglo-American protest song referents as a means to convey its message.[3] As Andrew Dowling notes, the birth of the Nova Cancó, which was embedded in the broader emergence of a new youth culture in Western Europe, gave popular impulse to a Catalan cultural renaissance that, up until then, had been a minority phenomenon linked to the wealthy classes and the Catholic world (Dowling, *Catalonia* 95–103).[4]

In order to understand "L'estaca" as part of the Nova Cançó movement, we need to take a step back, at least to the end of the 1950s, when the foundations of what Fernando González Lucini calls the "social and anthropological song movement"[5] were laid in Spain (González Lucini, *Veinte años*, vol. 1, 172). Two events in particular anticipated the birth of the Nova Cançó. First, in 1957, the journalist Josep Maria Espinàs gave a groundbreaking lecture in Barcelona about the French *chansonnier* Georges Brassens. This stimulated a growing interest in this singer-songwriter, who, having already achieved success in France and gone on his first European tours by the late 1950s, was championing a new way of writing songs, in a similar way as Woody Guthrie had done in the United States.[6] Brassens, an anarchist, was also a model in terms of political engagement, as many of his songs featured anti-militarist and anti-authoritarian themes. There was also an important link with poetry, since Brassens had set to music texts by French poets such as François Villon and Paul Fort. These characteristics drew the attention of a new generation of songwriters in the Iberian peninsula, who, like many other young people in that period, were particularly interested in the cultural and artistic developments taking place in France, not least because many exiled Spanish Republicans had settled there after the end of the Civil War. Indeed, the points of reference for the awakening of Catalan and more generally Spanish musically mediated social engagement in this period and the following decade are clearly to be found in the French *chanson* (with authors such as Georges Brassens, Jacques Brel or Leo Ferré), complemented importantly by American protest folk (e.g. Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Pete Seeger) as well as the Nueva Canción Latinoamericana (e.g. Violeta Parra, Victor Jara, Atahualpa Yupanqui) (Ladrero 253–82).[7]

A second pivotal event was the publication of the article "Ens calen cançons d'ara" ("We Need Songs of Today") by Lluís Serrahima (1959) in the January 1959 issue of the magazine *Germinàbit*. Serrahima's article was the direct consequence of the interest in Brassens shown by Espinàs. The Catalan writer claimed that songs "of

today" were needed to represent Catalan identity, in the face of the official prohibition to speak Catalan in public enforced by the Francoist authorities:

"We have to sing songs but [they must be] our songs, songs created today, relevant to us. Can you imagine a situation in which we had bards such as the *chansonniers* in France, and they travelled to every town of the country singing our songs?" (15).

After Serrahima's article, between 1959 and 1961, the collective of singers Els Setze Jutges ("The Sixteen Judges") was formed. The choice of the collective's name already showed the centrality of the linguistic claim, since *els setze jutges* is a quotation from one of the most well-known traditional Catalan tongue-twisters (Sacchi, Staino, and Forti 154). Established by Josep Maria Espinàs, Miquel Porter, and Remei Margarit, who held their first concert in Barcelona in December 1961, the collective was soon joined by other young musicians and songwriters, such as Francesc Pi de la Serra, Joan Manuel Serrat, Maria del Mar Bonet and, in 1967, Lluís Llach, who became the sixteenth and last "judge."[8] Not least thanks to the establishment of the Edigsa independent record company in 1961 and, four years later, of the label Concèntric, both creations of Espinàs, Els Setze Jutges played a prominent role in Catalan society. The collective disbanded in 1969 as a result of the different and often conflicting paths chosen by its individual members in pursuing their professional careers. Tensions within the collective also arose because of Serrat's decision to sing not only in Catalan but also in Spanish, and to participate as a representative of Spain in the 1968 edition of the Eurovision song contest (Vázquez Montalbán 31–35; Vuletic 82–83). Although Serrat eventually refused to participate in Eurovision due to the prohibition of singing in Catalan and was replaced by the young Massiel, who would win the festival, the "Serrat *affaire*" marked the decline of Els Setze Jutges. But it would not affect the Nova Cançó movement as a whole, which continued to develop in the following years with new singer-songwriters like Ovidi Montllor, Marina Rossell, and Joan Isaac.[9]

The Catalan Nova Cançó was not an exception in 1960s Spain. Similar movements appeared in other regions of the country in the same years, such as Ez Dok Aimaru in the Basque Country (1965), Voces Ceibes in Galicia (1967), Canción del Pueblo in Castile (1967), and Manifiesto Canción del Sur in Andalusia (1968). These represented a new generation of songwriters (e.g. Mikel Laboa, Amancio Prada, Elisa Serna, Luis Eduardo Aute, Pablo Guerrero, Carlos Cano, José Antonio Labordeta) who, together with their Portuguese "peers" (e.g. Zeca Afonso, Fausto, Sérgio Godinho, José Mario Branco), revolutionized the Iberian song.

We must add two forerunners to the new Spanish song movement: the Valencian Raimon who sang the first song in Catalan, "Al vent" ("To the Wind"), in 1959, anticipating the movement of the Nova Cançó; and another Valencian, Paco Ibáñez, who grew up in the Basque Country and established himself artistically in France. In the second half of the 1950s, Ibáñez recorded the first songs featuring poems by Góngora and García Lorca. The recovery of Iberian poetry constituted one of the leitmotifs of the songs of those years and was understood as a means to sustain linguistic and cultural identity – especially in the case of "minority" languages such as Catalan, Basque, or Galician – as well as to avoid the meshes of censorship thanks to the literary value and register of the lyrics (Valiño 513). But to sing poems connected to the republican era or to members of the anti-Franco opposition (such as García

Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Gabriel Celaya, Miguel Hernández, Antonio Machado, or Blas de Otero) meant to implicitly rediscover and give voice to antifascist memories silenced by the dictatorship.

Finally, another figure must be added, that of Chicho Sánchez Ferlosio from Madrid, son of the Falangist writer Rafael Sánchez Mazas[10] and author of the clandestine album *Canciones de la resistencia española* ("Songs of the Spanish Resistance"), published in Sweden in 1963 as its release in Spain under Franco would have been inconceivable. Two years earlier Sánchez Ferlosio had met the Cantacronache, the group of Italian musicians, writers, and poets founded in Turin in 1957 with the aim of enhancing Italian songwriting through social commitment. In 1961, the Cantacronache, led by Sergio Liberovici, Michele Straniero, and Margherita Galante Garrone, traveled to Spain to secretly collect poems and songs of resistance to the Franco dictatorship. These were later included in *Canti della nuova resistenza spagnola (1939–1961)* ("Songs of the New Spanish Resistance"), a volume published in Italy in 1962 (Carrillo-Linares 195–224). The role of Sánchez Ferlosio was thus far from secondary in the creation of a new *cancionero* ("song repertoire") of resistance and in providing an indirect stimulus to the birth of the Spanish songwriting movement, especially the Nova Cançó (Fleury; González Lucini *Veinte años*, González Lucini, *Y la palabra*, vol. 1, 387–96).

Lluís Llach and "L'estaca"

It is in this context that we should situate the figure of Lluís Llach. Born in Girona in 1948 into a conservative Catholic family, Llach spent his childhood in Verges, a small town in the Empordà region of northern Catalonia, where his father held the office of mayor during Francoism. Llach then moved to Figueres for his higher education and, in 1965, to Barcelona to attend university. After a recital in La Cova del Drac, a meeting place for the new generation of Catalan singer-songwriters managed by Espinàs, Llach was invited precisely by Espinàs to record an EP with four songs. This was released by Concèntric in 1967 (*Jutge No. 16 – Canta les seves cançons*, "Judge No. 16 Sings His Songs") as Llach joined Els Setze Jutges. His first LP, *Els éxits de Lluís Llach* ("The Hits of Lluís Llach"), was published in 1969. The subsequent albums *Com un arbre nu* ("Like a Bare Tree," 1972), *Viatge a Ítaca* ("Journey to Ithaca," 1975), *Campanades a morts* ("Bells for the Dead," 1977) turned him into a worldwide appreciated singer-songwriter in the Catalan language, even after his retirement from the scene in 2007 (González Lucini, *Y la palabra*, vol. 1, 231–38; Baudriller; Morales and Jurado; Borrull 221–23).

"L'estaca" appeared for the first time in Llach's third EP, released in mid-1968. Written and composed by Llach, the song featured two important contributions, that of the writer Maria Aurèlia Capmany, who suggested the title – at first Llach had called the song "La columna" ("The Column") – and that of the composer and pianist Francesc Burull, who modified some musical passages (Morales and Jurado 99–102). The lyrics portray a dialogue between an unnamed young protagonist and an elder, *avi* Siset. The young man asks Siset about the stake "to which we are all connected." Siset replies that "If you pull hard here/And I pull hard there/It is certain that it will fall, fall, fall/And we can liberate ourselves."[11]

In the second part of the song, the young man tells Siset that a long time has already passed and that sometimes he lacks the strength to continue pulling; so, he invites Siset to

sing his song once again. In the last part – which is not included in the 1968 recording probably for reasons of record length – the protagonist, after the death of Siset, becomes the one responsible for taking forth the spirit of unity and the struggle for freedom of the new generations: "And as the young lads passed by/I stretched my throat to sing/The last song of Siset/The last one he taught me."

Avi Siset refers to Narcís Llansa i Tubau, the grandfather of a childhood friend of Llach, who, until 1939, was a leader of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia), a left-wing nationalist party that ruled Catalonia during the Second Spanish Republic. Llach had met him in Verges as a boy and spent with him many afternoons fishing, playing cards, and chatting. In an age of silence and repression, Llansa i Tubau's stories allowed Llach to access a past that had remained unknown to him as a young man coming from a family that supported Francoism (Feliu).

Memories handed down from generation to generation thus inspired the composition of a song that became an eminent symbol of the struggle against the dictatorship. However implicit, the reference in the song to the regime of General Franco can hardly be missed. In an interview of the late 1990s with his French biographer, Brigitte Baudriller, Llach remarked that, in the text of "L'estaca," he meant to "highlight a corrupt system – a political and social system that tolerated Franco – and encourage people to pull, from one side and the other, and make it fall" (qtd. in Baudriller 93). At first, the censors did not understand the song's meaning and in June 1968 issued the permission to record it. Llach sang it for over a year and a half, and it was only in December 1968 that the censorship authorities forbade it, belatedly realizing its intended message. At concerts following that date, time and again the audience loudly demanded the song; Llach played it and, since prohibition concerned only the lyrics, not the musical composition, the audience sang it back. This performance dynamic marked the future of the song. On 13 December 1969, Llach gave a concert at the Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona, which was recorded and released as an album, *Ara i aquí* ("Now and Here"), in 1970. The release included "L'estaca" sung by the public, underscoring the importance of this participatory element in the enduring significance of the song. Indeed, we can say that censorship possibly increased the popularity of "L'estaca," despite the fact that Llach himself did not consider this song particularly important in his repertoire. From the end of 1968, as Llach himself recalled, "a surprising process of mythicization [of the song] began" (qtd. in Moya Argeler 17; Borrull 223–25). But the success of "L'estaca" might not be so surprising after all. In addition to its quite catchy tune, the song's lyrics metaphorically signified "cooperation and resistance, and the possibility of victory and hope" (Ladrero 263; see also Vilarnau, "L'estaca catalana" 27–38). In this way, they touched on a key experiential dimension shared by many who lived in Spain during late Francoism, namely the sense of "co-responsibility and confluence of endeavors as crucial components of solidarity" (González Lucini, *Veinte años*, vol. 3 331).

As a result of censorship, especially after the 1970 concert in Cuba where he openly criticized the Franco regime, in 1971 Llach decided to move to Paris, where he lived until 1975. There, he made friends among other exiled Spanish singer-songwriters, such as Paco Ibáñez, Elisa Serna, Carlos Cano, and Teresa Rebull, and performed several times in large theaters. It is symptomatic of the rapid international popularity of "L'estaca" that a live album of a March 1973 concert at the Olympia in Paris was published in France the

following year as a double LP with the title *L'estaca*.[12] Another historic recording of the song is the one contained in the album *Barcelona, Gener de 1976* ("Barcelona, January 1976"), which brings together the three concerts that Llach held at the Palau d'Esports in the Catalan capital just two months after the death of Francisco Franco (20 November 1975). The documentary *La Nova Cançó* ("The New Song") by Francesc Bellmunt and Àngel Casas (1976) shows the performance of "L'estaca" sung by Llach together with the 30,000 people present at the Palau d'Esports. Immediately after the song, the audience started to chant "Llibertat, Amnistia, Estatut d'autonomia" ("Freedom, Amnesty, Statute of Autonomy"), the main slogan of anti-Francoism in those years, especially in Catalonia, demanding the end of the dictatorship, the release of political prisoners, and greater administrative decentralization.

The crisis of Francoism began some years before the death of Franco with an intense cycle of protests captained by workers and students. Historiography, in fact, tends to assign the beginning of the phase of transition to democracy to the end of the 1960s, finally leading to the 1982 formation of the first socialist government of Felipe González. However, the crucial years were those between 1975 and 1978, with the instauration of the government led by the reformist Adolfo Suárez (July 1976), the legalization of political parties (Jan.-April 1977), the first democratic elections (June 1977), and the approval of the new Constitution (Dec. 1978).[13] In those years, Llach's song was sung frequently at strikes and demonstrations against the dictatorship, to the extent that it came to be seen as the anthem of the struggle to regain freedom not only in Barcelona but also in Madrid and in different Spanish regions.

"L'estaca" beyond "L'estaca"

"L'estaca" has not only continued to encode a Catalan (and Spanish) memory of antifascist struggle. It has become the "most attractive Catalan song internationally" (Ayats and Salicrú-Maltas 35). This process has oftentimes played into the constitution of an international antifascist sound- and memoryscape; at other times, it has entailed a shift of discursive and political coordinates across ideological boundaries and historical differences. In the notable cases of Poland and Cuba presented below, for example, "L'estaca" has come to speak to critical positions toward, or even open mobilization against, State socialist systems, while in other cases it has been taken up to support a variety of oppositional stances to an equally diverse set of systemic constraints. As Llach himself recalled, "this song has lived much longer than me [sic]. In the hearts of others, in places I've never been, in languages I've never known or even heard, in loves I've never experienced. When it comes back to me, it tells me things that are always interesting. But as I listen to it, I know that it no longer belongs to me" (qtd. in Blay 55). Llach's statement concisely encapsulates a process of diversification of meaning assignment and of ramification of memory making in music, which resonates with the concepts of transnational and multidirectional memory studied by Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, and by Michael Rothberg. As Shirli Gilbert points out in the case of Yiddish Songs and the memory of the Holocaust, "in order to function as agents of memory, songs uniquely have to be recreated" (123). That is, "As objects from the time which are simultaneously involved in an ongoing process of recreation, songs embody the process of negotiating the remnants of the past and the needs of the present" (Gilbert 124).

Indeed, amid the international circulation of an antifascist song repertoire from the 1970s onward, "L'estaca" is arguably second only to the Italian partisan song "Bella ciao" in terms of number of versions and translations. The journalist Joaquim Vilarnau has counted as many as 250 versions in the last fifty years in almost thirty languages (Vilarnau, "Les 250 versions" 62–74). Renditions from Spain abound, including numerous ones in Catalan, as well as in Castilian ("La estaca," first recorded by Abel García in 1976), Basque (recorded in 1976 by Gorka Knörr under the title "Agure Zaharra"), and Galician. But there are also versions in French ("L'estaque," e.g. by Jacques-Emile Deschamps, Serge Utgé-Royo, and Marc Ogeret in the mid-1970s, or "Le pieu" by Marc Robine in the late 1990s), Occitan (both from France, by singer-songwriter Patric in 1972, and from Italy, by Lou Dalfin in the mid-1990s), Greek ("Tora tora" by Vasilis Papakonstantinou in 1976), Yiddish ("Der Yokh" by the New-York-based Klezmatics in 2016), English, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic, Italian, Sardinian, Corsican, and even Esperanto. The Persian version has become the hymn of the Revolutionary Afghan Women Association (Ayats and Salicrú-Maltas 30). In 1997, "L'estaca" became the anthem of the USAP, the rugby team of Perpignan, in the Catalan-speaking territory of southern France. Coach Alain Teixidor chose Llach's song to motivate his players and the public and to reinforce the Catalan identity of the team, who had already been wearing on their shirts the colors of the *senyera*, the official flag of Catalonia since 1979 (Morales and Jurado 343–45).

In the following, I discuss selected cases of transnational circulation that are of particular interest due to the conspicuous reformulations of meaning and political referents they display. The Polish case is undoubtedly the most eloquent in this sense. In 1976, upon returning to Poland after a brief stay in Catalonia, Bozena Zabolicka, a student at the University of Warsaw, brought back with her the Lluís Llach record *Barcelona Gener de 1976*. In the following months, she organized private listening sessions at her house with a group of friends interested in Hispanic culture. In one of these sessions, the singer-songwriter Jacek Kaczmarski was impressed by the audience singing along to "L'estaca." Kaczmarski translated the song freely, renaming it "Mury" ("The Walls"). The Catalan stake was thus converted into Polish walls to be demolished, with a clear reference to the communist regime. Here, it is interesting to see how the message of the song was indeed understood as a counterstatement in the face of an authoritarian state system; and yet, it had to be adapted to a different socio-political and historical context by going beyond, and to some extent by overturning, the intended ideological standpoint, markedly leftist and socialist-leaning, of the original. The piece took on considerable importance in Kaczmarski's repertoire. In January 1981, in the city of Gdańsk – where the Solidarność trade union movement led by Lech Wałęsa was founded the year before[14] – Kaczmarski sang "Mury" in a songwriting festival, further contributing to its popularity. After the December 1981 proclamation of martial law on the part of the government of General Jaruzelski, "Mury" became the aural symbol of the opposition and, notably, the anthem of Solidarność, whose clandestine radio station began its programs with a fragment from the song.

Two further events underline the importance of "Mury" in Poland. First, in 1983, the singer Jacek Stefański was arrested by the police while he was playing this song in the streets. As days later Stefański died in prison as a result of torture – an incident that became paradigmatic of state repression in Poland – the association between Stefański's

arrest and "Mury" provided this song with heightened significance in the fight against the communist regime. Second, in 2005, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of Solidarność, the French musician Jean Michel Jarre interpreted "Mury" as the highlight of Space of Freedom, a large concert held in the shipyards of Gdańsk. In Jarre's version, a choir performed the song to the accompaniment of a full orchestra, and thousands of people sang back the lyrics, as had been the case in Catalonia years before. Jarre's emphasis on this song testifies to the embedded status of "Mury" in Polish memory culture and, particularly, to its strong association with the history of Solidarność (Vilarnau, "L'estaca revolucionària" 51–61; Jarre). By that time, the Polish "L'estaca" had taken on a life of its own: Lluís Llach remembered that, on a trip he made to Poland in the mid-1990s, the people he met thought it was based on a traditional Polish melody. Also, Llach recalled in an interview how his Polish audience had ambivalent or even adverse reactions upon hearing that, in his intentions as the composer, "L'estaca" was meant to be a leftist song, reflecting in this way widespread anti-communist sentiments in post-socialist Poland (Morales and Jurado 100; see also Vilarnau, "Entrevista a Lluís Llach" 40–47).

Continuing along the chain of remediations (Erll and Rigney) of "L'Estaca" via "Mury," it is relevant to note that, in 2009, the Cuban group La Babosa Azul translated "Mury" into Spanish, renaming it "Los muros" ("The Walls"), and included it on their record *Cuando amanezca el día* ("When the Day Breaks"), obviating – or perhaps simply not being aware of – the Catalan original. Furthermore, in April 2012, a Russian version of the song, "Steny" ("The Walls"), featuring a translation of Kaczmarski's lyrics, became a symbol of the opposition to Vladimir Putin. Kirill Medvedev, lead singer of the Arkady Kats Band, sang it in the street in front of the Tagansky District Court in an improvised protest demonstration during the trial proceedings against Pussy Riot. The YouTube video of the police intervention after the performance made the song viral in Russia (Baird).

Another significant use of "L'estaca" is that of the Tunisian musician Jasser Jradi. During a stay in Bern, Switzerland, in 2003, Jradi listened to "L'estaca" in the version by the French group Motivés, sung in Catalan and contained in their 1999 album *Chants de lutte* ("Songs of Struggle"). Like Kaczmarski, Jradi set to the music a new text that was only loosely based on the original, remaining however faithful to its rebellious spirit. He renamed the song "Dima, dima" ("Always, Always"), a dispassionate declaration of love for his country and its people, pinpointed by the realization that "no matter how much you betrayed me, you always remain my beloved." As Jradi himself said, "L'estaca" is "something more than a song, it is a creature that breathes, that is always popular, that speaks of freedom, love and humanity in general" (qtd. in Vilarnau, "L'estaca revolucionària" 60). Upon his return to Tunisia, Jradi founded the group called Dima Dima and the song became one of the hymns of the Tunisian Arab Spring mobilization which, rising up after the suicide of activist Mohammed Bouazizi, put an end to Ben Ali's regime in January 2011.[15] Here as in the Polish People's Republic, it bears highlighting that the intended message of the song could be adapted to serve as a vehicle of contestation against an authoritarian regime quite removed historically from Francoist Spain.

A final example of the transnational circulation of "L'estaca" is provided by an incident that occurred in a Greek school in January 2017, and that brings us somewhat

closer to the song's original antifascist register. A group of neo-Nazis, led by the far-right Golden Dawn party leader Yannis Lagós, attacked an elementary school in the Athenian neighborhood of Pérama, because this school had involved in its educational and recreational activities several children from a nearby refugee camp. This racist act caused a wave of indignation across the country and, as a reaction, led many other Greek schools to welcome refugee children in their premises. Reportedly, in an otherwise unspecified school, a choir of Greek children and their teacher saluted the arrival of refugee children singing "L'estaca" in the Greek version by Vasilis Papakonstantinou, entitled "Tora tora" ("Una escuela griega").

"L'estaca" in Today's Catalonia and Spain

One piece is still needed to complete the mosaic of the memorial trajectories of "L'estaca," namely the uses of the song in contemporary Catalonia and Spain. Llach's song has not ceased to be an eminent anti-Francoist symbol across the country after the transition to parliamentary democracy between the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s. However, although new versions continued to be recorded in the 1990s and 2000s, especially in Catalan, until very recently the song has been primarily perceived as encoding an aural memory of the struggles of the past. There have been exceptions to this, such as when, in 2002, the Spanish police sang "L'estaca" as they demonstrated for wage increases and better working conditions. In this particular instance, Lluís Llach intervened stating that he would not allow the police to sing his song again. "That repressive corps should sing 'L'estaca' … and, in those same days, go on to hit hard on the anti-globalization protesters," Llach pondered and further declared, "I denied them my intellectual permission and my copyright, so that they never use it again" (qtd. in Riaño). This anecdote shows that "L'estaca" has become a potent symbol of dissent for the Spanish population at large, and yet, that it has come to serve political positions and to harbor memory layers that are not uniform or agreeing. While the police might have regarded the singing of "L'estaca" as referencing the spirit of contestation that the song has historically been associated with, their understanding did not necessarily espouse an openly anti-Francoist memory. Indeed, Llach's reaction to their appropriation of the song indicates that, for him as presumably for many others, the memories carried by "L'estaca" (i.e. Franco's regime and the antifascist struggle against it) are incompatible with what the police stands for. Interestingly, this dispute was not only about the mnemonic status and the political identity of the song, but also about who sings it, so ultimately about ownership of and entitlement to memory.

More generally in the last decade, "L'estaca" has taken on new meanings strongly related to current and ongoing political struggles in Spain. As a closing section to my article, I now turn to discuss some of the most recent examples of such recuperation and repurposing of the song, none of which has arguably incorporated or responded to the changes and new configurations of meaning emerging from the many transnational crossings of the song I discussed earlier.

The Catalan independence movement has made "L'estaca" its own, singing it in virtually every demonstration organized since the Diades (Catalan National Day) of 11 September 2012, including the campaign for the unilateral self-determination referendum held on 1 October 2017 or the initiatives held in 2018 and 2019 to demand the

release of the independence leaders imprisoned for the events of autumn 2017. For the Catalan separatists, the fight now is against the Spanish state, which they tend to consider authoritarian or even fascist, despite being technically a liberal democracy (Pérez and Sánchez). Their objective is the constitution of an independent republic. According to the magazine *Enderrock*, with clear separatist sympathies, "L'estaca" in Catalonia now stands for "freedom, solidarity and independence" ("L'estaca' és independència"), carrying forth and at the same time redirecting the memory of the anti-Franco struggle, especially for the generation that experienced the dictatorship and the transition to democracy in the 1970s, and that now participates in the independence movement (Vilarnau, "De Sisets i estaques" 93; Bunyol). I have been able to take notice of the centrality of "L'estaca" in Catalan separatist politics on several occasions I have personally witnessed. On 1 October 2017, for example, volunteers, who assisted in the organization of the unilateral referendum of Catalan self-determination at the Consell de Cent school in the Poble Sec neighborhood of Barcelona, sang it on a couple of occasions along with hundreds of people who lined up at the voting booth. Together with Llach's song, they sang also "Els Segadors" ("The Reapers"), which became the official anthem of Catalonia in 1980. Further, the massive demonstration organized by the Catalan separatist movement in Madrid on 16 March 2019 ended in the Plaza de Cibeles with a collective singing performance of "L'estaca" (Forment).

In this process of further indexical layering affecting the memorial status of the song, Llach himself played a significant role: as a symbol of Catalan culture, the singer-songwriter has shown consistent political commitment to the Catalan nationalist and separatist left (Rojas 423–46).[16] In June 2013, after a six-year absence from the stage, he decided to organize a major concert at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, the *Concert per la Llibertat* ("Concert for Freedom"), with the participation of dozens of musicians from Catalonia as well as from other regions of Spain and other countries. The concert was not simply a tribute to Llach, but was set up by Catalan separatist associations (Assemblea Nacional Catalana and Òmnium Cultural) to claim the independence of the region. Over the stands of the stadium, the audience created a mosaic of colored signs forming the words "Freedom Catalonia" in support of the referendum that the Catalan government had announced for the following year. The highlight of the evening featured the invited artists singing "L'estaca," as well as the 90,000 event participants singing along with Llach another song bearing the emblematic title "Tossudament alçats" ("Strongly Standing"), referring to the Catalan people's struggle for independence ("Steven Forti"; Steven Forti). Some invited singer-songwriters refused to participate because the concert had turned, as the Canarian Pedro Guerra stated to the media, into a "purely separatist claim" ("Steven Forti"). In 2014, during the demonstration of the September 11 Diada attended by over a million people, Llach played on the piano in a square of Barcelona the "Cant de la Senyera" ("Song of the Flag") – a late 19th century composition by Lluís Millet based on a poem by Joan Maragall dedicated to the Catalan flag, the *senyera* – and "Ara es l'hora" ("Now Is the Time"), a song composed specifically for the campaign in favor of the referendum planned for the following November (Playà).[17]

Llach's commitment to independence even intensified in the following two years, when he was elected regional deputy of the Junts pel Sí ("Together for Yes") independence list. Between September 2015 and the fall of 2017, he played a prominent political role: he was president of the parliamentary commission appointed to devise the

procedures of a constituent assembly and endeavored to defend unilateralism through an intense propaganda activity throughout the region, including conferences, debates, and meetings (2017). After the fall of 2017, although his media presence has decreased, Llach has maintained close ties with the independence parties. The president of the Catalan Generalitat, Quim Torra, has appointed him president of an advisory board dedicated to promoting the debate on the process of self-determination of Catalonia and to laying down the foundations of a hypothetical Catalan Republic ("Torra pone").

While "L'estaca" has become a symbol of Catalan separatist claims, in the same years there has been yet another (re)utilization and remediation of its memory in the Spanish public sphere. During the rise of the leftist, grassroots and anti-austerity contestation movement of the Indignados in Spring 2011, Llach's song was sung several times, not only in Catalonia, as I personally observed, but also in Madrid, as testified by several interpretations by La Solfónica folk orchestra. Its popularity in the Indignados movement involved notably and primarily younger generations who had not directly experienced the struggles of the 1970s. Reflecting on this aspect, the philosopher and journalist Amador Fernández-Savater posted an inquiry on his Facebook page asking participants to indicate what protest songs should be sung in Spain today. In Portugal, he recalled in his online inquiry, protesters often sing "Grândola, vila morena" ("Grândola, Swarthy Town"), the song by Zeca Afonso that served as the anthem of the Carnation revolution in Portugal in 1974.[18] In Italy, Fernández-Savater continued, "Bella ciao" enjoys a similar popularity. What about Spain? – he asked. The answers to his question were diverse, with "Canto a la libertad" ("Song to Freedom") by José Antonio Labordeta, "A cántaros" ("Pouring Down") by Pablo Guerrero, and "L'estaca" being often named (Fernández-Savater).[19]

In the autumn of 2014, Podemos, a left-wing party born on the wake of the Indignados movement, concluded its foundation congress by singing "L'estaca." In the following years, in demonstrations organized by the party, the song has continued to be played on loudspeakers and sung by activists alongside "El pueblo unido" ("The People United") of Quilapayún, "Canto a la libertad" of Labordeta or "Todo cambia" ("Everything changes") of Mercedes Sosa (Mateo).[20] One of the founders of Podemos, Juan Carlos Monedero, explained, "We are aware that we lack an anthem; but we chose for ourselves a song, so that younger people realize that our struggle is inherited from those who freed us forty years ago" (Playà). Here, it is evident how, echoing Gilbert (121), music and songs play an important role in mediating people's understandings of history and, following Bithell (4–6), how they allow resignifications of the past as they are recreated anew in each new performance. According to the music critic Diego Manrique, "L'estaca" "conveys a message of collective imagination and functions as an emotional glue: it lends itself to join hands and sing at full capacity." Moreover, thanks to the memory of the struggles against the Franco dictatorship of forty years earlier, the song has come to be powerfully connected with Podemos's discourse about the current Spanish political system as a corrupt and dysfunctional system to be completely reformed.[21]

Conclusion

In this article, I have traced the history of "L'estaca" from its birth in the context of the Catalan Nova Cançó at the end of the 1960s until its reutilizations in Catalonia and Spain

in the last decade. Here, the example of "L'estaca" has served to illuminate how the meaning and the memory of an anti-Francoist song have been formed, modified, and reinterpreted across different phases of Spain's political history. Further, I have discussed several of the transnational trajectories that "L'estaca" has followed, sometimes undergoing unexpected changes in terms of both political valence and mnemonic status, as the Polish and Tunisian cases in particular have highlighted. This process shows how an antifascist song – translated, adapted, and more generally inserted in the memorial and political coordinates of different socio-historical contexts – may take on new values to the point of living a life of its own. What is certain is that the last page in the history of "L'estaca" is yet to be written.

Notes

1. The political and ideological nature of Francoism (Spanish *franquismo*) is the object of extensive debate in both Spanish and international historiography. Rather than simply ascribing Francoism to a broad category of conservative authoritarian dictatorship (as is sometimes done also for Salazar's Portugal), this article considers Franco's regime as fascist, fascistic, or at least heavily influenced by fascist cultural and political referents, in this way reflecting both widespread understandings on the part of Spanish antifascists and an established lineage of scholarly exegesis (Saz; Casali; Gallego; Kallis).
2. Núria Borrull's article examines the trajectory of "L'estaca" in the context of the development of a specifically Catalan song movement since the 1960s until today. Although her and my contributions share a number of basic data and considerations, they also differ in important ways. Besides eschewing any positioning toward the Catalan independence movement, my article examines at greater length the transnational trajectories of "L'estaca" and, further, explicitly sets the discussion of the song within a wider culture of antifascism in Spain.
3. The best-known representatives of the Anglo-American protest song are Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Donovan, and Phil Ochs (see Lynskey 14–69; Ladrero 356–84).
4. On the political, social, and cultural changes in Spain during Francoism, see Carr 155–73; Vincent 117–98; Casanova and Gil Andrés 217–88; Radcliff 209–49.
5. All translations from foreign languages are by the author.
6. American folk musician and singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie (1912–1967) was the singer of the Great Depression and, particularly, of the so-called hobos, the migrant workers who crossed the United States in those years. Author of famed songs such as "This Land Is Your Land," Guthrie became a point of reference for a new generation of singer-songwriters, including Pete Seeger and Bob Dylan, for his reinterpretation of traditional music, his ability to depict real life, and his antifascist political commitment (Kaufman).
7. On protest songs, see Lynskey; Dillane et al. It should be remarked that Spain too experienced, not only musically, the momentous mobilization of 1968. Although set in a dictatorial context, social and cultural changes were in many cases comparable to those occurred in other European and North American countries. In this regard, see Horn.
8. Among these young singer-songwriters, the Barcelona-born Joan Manuel Serrat (1943) was the most successful in the following decades, singing mostly in Spanish and setting to music some of the greatest Spanish poets (Miguel Hernández, Mario Benedetti, Antonio Machado). Since the release of his 1971 LP *Mediterráneo*, he became a famous singer also in Latin America. Also from Barcelona, Francesc Pi de la Serra (1942), nicknamed Quico, and the Mallorca-born Maria del Mar Bonet (1947) sang only in Catalan. The former, influenced by blues and rock, went on to sharpen the ironic and markedly political slant of

his song writing, while the latter devoted herself to extensive research into Mediterranean traditional musics (see González Lucini, *Y la palabra*, vol. 1, 213–43).

9. For literature on the Nova Cancó, see Ayats and Salicrú-Maltas 28–41; Porter-Moix; García-Soler; Pujadó; 2009, *50 anys de la Cançó*; Castro.
10. Founded in 1933 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera and inspired by Italian fascism, the political party Falange Española merged in 1934 with the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (JONS) and, in 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, with the monarchic Carlist traditionalists. Resulting from this unification, the FET y de las JONS, known during the dictatorship simply as the National Movement, was the sole legal party of the Franco regime. Journalist and writer Rafael Sánchez Mazas (1894–1966) was one of the founders of Falange Española and Minister of Franco's cabinet in 1939–1940.
11. The original Catalan lyrics can be found in Gàmez 132.
12. In that same year, a shortened version of the concert recording, entitled *Lluís Llach a l'Olympia*, was released in Spain. In the Spanish edition, however, "L'estaca" and other songs were not included to avoid censorship (Valiño 513).
13. See Molinero and Ysàs; Radcliff 250–65; Casanova and Gil Andrés 289–328.
14. Solidarność (Solidarity) is a trade union founded in Gdańsk, Poland, in August 1980. It was the first independent union to be officially recognized in a country of the Soviet bloc. In September 1981, the union's membership peaked at around 10 million. With the imposition of martial law in December 1981 activities were suspended. During the 1980s, not least thanks to significant financial support from the Vatican and the United States, Solidarność played a central role in the end of communism in Poland.
15. On music in the Arab Spring, see Sprengel.
16. In Catalonia as well as in the Basque Country and Galicia during the 20th century and especially the Franco dictatorship, nationalist and separatist stances have traditionally been linked to the political left, in contrast to a predominantly centralist political right. Since 2012, however, this situation has partially changed in Catalonia, given that, within the Catalan separatist movement, there is now also a significant right-wing faction. On the Catalan independence movement, see Forti et al.; Dowling *Rise of Catalan Independence*.
17. The referendum held on 9 November 2014 was a non-binding popular consultation promoted by the government of the Generalitat de Catalunya. By contrast, the referendum held on 1 October 2017 was deemed binding by the Catalan government, although it was declared illegal by the Spanish Constitutional Court and was not recognized by any foreign country (Rodríguez-Teruel and Barrio).
18. For the (re)utilization of "Grândola, vila morena" in Portugal during the socio-economic crisis of 2011–2013, see Gray 60–73.
19. "Canto a la libertad" is the best-known song by Aragonese singer-songwriter and writer José Antonio Labordeta. Composed in 1975, the year of Franco's death, and included in his second LP *Tiempo de espera*, the song represents a dream of solidarity, humanity, social justice, hope, and freedom. "A cántaros" is a song by Extremadura singer-songwriter Pablo Guerrero, included in his debut LP *A cántaros*, published in 1972. It became one of the libertarian anthems of that epoch. Both Labordeta and Guerrero were committed anti-Francoists (see González Lucini, *Y la palabra*, vol. 2, 263–69, and vol. 1, 657–63).
20. "El pueblo unido" is a Chilean protest song. Its music was composed by Sergio Ortega Alvarado to the text written by Alvarado and the band Quilapayún. It was recorded in 1973, a few months before the coup d'etat led by Augusto Pinochet; it eloquently represents the ideals of social equality and the progressive spirit of the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. "Todo cambia," released in 1982 during his exile in Sweden by the Chilean Julio Numhauser, one of the founders of Quilapayún, is a song popularized by the Argentine Mercedes Sosa, key exponent of the Nueva Canción Latinoamericana.
21. For Podemos's discourse about the so-called "regime crisis," see Iglesias 143–69.

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