

Pain, Anger, and Productive Revenge in the Early Modern Defenses of the Catalan Language

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1. Introduction

Emotional pain, stemming from anger and a desire for revenge related to language, is a significant element of Spain's current political climate. A recent example can be found in the actions of the President of the Autonomous Region of Madrid, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, during the 28th Congress of Presidents of the Autonomous Regions of Spain, held at the Palace of Pedralbes (Barcelona) on June 6, 2025. In line with her previous warnings, Díaz-Ayuso left the meeting on two occasions: when the President (Lehendakari) of the Region of the Basque Country, Imanol Pradales, gave his speech in Basque, and when the President of the Catalan Government, Salvador Illa, used Catalan in his corresponding discourse (Cué). Afterwards, Díaz-Ayuso justified her actions by indicating that the Spanish co-official languages should not be used as weapons to create division and that she does not support the idea of making visible the idea of a multinational state that does not correspond to the real Spain (Brosa). According to the President of the Autonomous Region of Madrid, it made no sense that everybody spoke Spanish in the corridors and then other languages were used in the official speeches. Moreover, Díaz-Ayuso argued that the Spanish Government should be more worried about promoting the role of Spanish in the European Union (Villalvilla). Díaz Ayuso's angry tone was shared by the President of the Autonomous Region of Extremadura, María Guardiola, with very similar arguments about the common use of Spanish in the informal contexts of the Congress and by arguing that there were more important issues to discuss ("La presidenta extremeña"). These comments can be related to the previous opposition of the President of the conservative Popular Party (*Partido Popular*), Alberto Núñez Feijóo, to the officiality of Basque, Catalan, and Galician in the European Union, by claiming that the issue of the protection of the Spanish language in education in Catalonia was much more urgent (Riveiro). Finally, the emotion of anger and the desire for revenge played an important part in the Autonomous Region of Valencia with the agreement between the conservative Popular Party (*Partido Popular*) and the far-right party *Vox* on June 22, 2025, regarding the budget of the Region. In this arrangement, the economic support provided by the Valencian Government to the Valencian Academy of the Language (*Acadèmia Valenciana de la llengua*), was reduced by 25.6%—a decrease of one million euros compared to the previous year. This reduction implies less support to the use of Catalan in the Region of Valencia.¹ Moreover, part of the million euros will be granted to the organization The Bat (*Lo Rat Penat*), which supports that Valencian and Catalan are two independent languages (Tena).

In Early Modern Iberia we also encounter the emotions of anger and desire for vengeance associated with language. We must bear in mind that the definitions of anger and the desire for vengeance have evolved over time, since emotions are not permanent concepts that remain stable in space and time (Dixon, 18). Therefore, it would be naïve to establish a complete identification between the anger and desire for vengeance in the examples described above and the Early Modern

¹ The Catalan language is known as Valencian (*valencià*) in the Valencian Region. For the lack of support of the Catalan language in the Valencian Region in the electoral programs of both *Partido Popular* and *Vox* in the election of May 2023, see Lledó-Guillem 2023b.

texts that I am going to analyze in this study. Nevertheless, in the Catalan-speaking lands it is possible to establish important continuities without adopting a teleological perspective, that is, we should not assume that the emotions of anger and the desire for vengeance regarding language are more regulated or civilized nowadays than in the past (Lynch, 3).

In this article I analyze four texts written in the Catalan-speaking lands in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries that can be related to the recent scenarios described above. Thus, the topic of language evokes issues of anger and desire for vengeance with their concomitant emotions of pain and suffering. The textual selection does not intend to be exhaustive due to the limited extension of this study. I use the concepts of emotional community, emotional regimes, and emotional Transition established by Barbara H. Rosenwein, William Reddy, and Martha C. Nussbaum respectively. Rosenwein explains that an emotional community is a group “tied together by fundamental assumptions, values, goals, feeling rules, and accepted modes of expression.” Yet inside each emotional community we may find subordinate emotional communities “partaking in the larger one and revealing its possibilities and its limitations” (Rosenwein 2006, 24). At the same time, different emotional communities exist at the same time and, while each one expresses emotions “in certain characteristic ways,” they can intersect like a Venn diagram (Rosenwein 2020, 3-4). In my study I consider the existence of a Catalan-speaking emotional community in the Early Modern period regarding the expression of emotions of anger and desire for vengeance when Catalan speakers feel the pain of their language not being respected. Yet this Catalan-speaking emotional community can be divided into different subordinate ones that may or may not share the same political objectives. Forty years ago, P. N. Stearns and C.Z Stearns indicated that a society maintains a series of “attitudes or standards [...] towards basic emotions and their appropriate expression” (813). Later, William M. Reddy developed this concept further by indicating that societies “require individuals to express normative emotions and to avoid deviant emotions.” These requirements and the practices that reflect the emotional control receive the name of emotional regimes (Reddy, 125). We can only talk about emotional regimes when communities enforce normative emotions with penalties such as “gossip, exclusion, or demotion” (Colwell 8). Reddy’s concept has the advantage of emphasizing not only the changing nature of individual and collective emotions in time, but also the political impact that questioning these emotional regimes may have (Colwell, 7).² The opposition to emotional regimes constitutes a productive transformation of anger and the desire for revenge into a productive goal. Martha C. Nussbaum, a contemporary philosopher who shares many ideas with 17th century Neostoicism (Rosenwein 2020, 50), is the creator of the concept of emotional Transition, which implies transcending the revenge caused by anger and take “constructive forward-looking action” (Nussbaum 118). In my study I use the term “Transition” in capital letters to describe the productive transformation of anger and the desire for revenge.

I focus on how the Catalan-speaking community opposed different Early Modern emotional regimes by expressing pain, anger, and the desire for vengeance when Catalan was undervalued, attacked, or erased. Specifically, I explore Early Modern Catalan-speakers’ emotional responses to emotional regimes that promoted patience, resignation, and acceptance of prescriptivism and/or linguistic substitution. I demonstrate that in this respect the Early Modern Catalan-speaking emotional community, while maintaining certain common emotional features, was far from monolithic, as it had to adapt to different political and linguistic circumstances.

² The political importance of supporting or opposing a particular emotional regime has been masterfully proven by Núria Silleras-Fernández in her most recent book: *The Politics of Emotion*.

The first text that I analyze is *La brama dels llauradors (The Wrath of the Peasants)* written between 1475 and 1490, or between 1490 and 1496,³ by Jaume Gassull (ca. 1450–1515) and published in 1561 (Lledó-Guillem 2020, 81). I demonstrate that *La Brama* opposes the dominant social emotional regime in two ways: first, the peasants, despite their social rank, have the right and the skill to get angry when their Catalan variety is undervalued. Second, their anger does not necessarily imply violence, but can be transformed into opposition to a linguistic prescriptivism that naturalizes the superiority of the *sermo urbanus*, that is, the variety of the members of the urban bourgeois oligarchy, the urban nobility, and the highest ecclesiastical ranks of the city of Valencia over the peasants, artisans, and artists' *sermo vulgaris*. The second text is *Dialogues. A Catalan Renaissance Colloquy Set in the City of Tortosa (Los col·loquis de la insigne ciutat de Tortosa)*, written in 1557 by the Catalan knight Cristòfol Despuig,⁴ and published in 1877 (Lledó-Guillem 2023a, 234). I argue that this work shows anger towards the linguistic dominance of the *sermo urbanus* of the city of Valencia in the Catalan-speaking lands, and towards the increasing presence of the Castilian language in the same area.⁵ In this case, anger does not lead to violence but is transformed into an opposition to the dominance of the Valencian *sermo urbanus* by making a Valencian character, don Pedro, consider the variety of Catalonia as the original and purest in the Catalan-speaking lands. The peaceful acceptance of the increasing influence of Castilian in the Catalan-speaking lands is opposed by writing the book in Catalan and by transforming the character Lúcio's anger into the productive recovery of the memory of the Catalan-Aragonese empire in which Catalan was the dominant language. Martí de Vicià's *Libro de las alabanzas de las lenguas Hebrea, Griega, Latina, Castellana y Valenciana (Book of Praises of the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Castilian, and Valencian Languages)* (1574) accepts the emotional regime by publishing his book in Spanish. Nonetheless, Vicià shows his opposition to the dominance of Spanish in the Kingdom of Valencia by transforming his anger not into violence but into a defense of the Catalan language as superior to Castilian because Catalan is closer to Latin and is not corrupted by Arabic. Religion plays a crucial role in Vicià's opposition to the emotional regime that demands acceptance of the perceived superiority of Castilian over Catalan. The final text is Diego de Cisteller's *Memorial en defensa de la lengua catalana para que se predique en ella en Cataluña (Memorial in Defense of the Catalan Language So That It May Be Used for Preaching in Catalonia)*, published in 1636. Cisteller also follows the emotional regime of acceptance of the power of the Spanish language by publishing his work in Castilian. His opposition to the emotional regime lies explicitly in the defense of Catalan as the language of sermons in the Diocese of Tarragona and the rebuttal of the idea that Saint James preached the Gospel in Spanish when he visited Spain. However, there is a Transition or transformation of his anger into an implicit refutation of Bernardo de Aldrete's linguistic ideology, who in his book *Del origen y principio de la lengua castellana (On the Origin and Beginning of the Castilian Language)* (1606) argued that Catalan was essentially the same language as Castilian differing only by an added degree of corruption relative to Latin.

2. The productive transformation of anger in *The Wrath of the Peasants* by Jaume Gassull

Gassull's poem is, without a doubt, the best example of a defense of the Catalan language that traces the process of becoming angry, tempering the desire for revenge through reason, and

³ See Nadal i Prats, 570.

⁴ Joan-Pau Rubiés argues that the work must have been written in 1562 (222).

⁵ In this study, I use the term "Castilian" as a synonym for the Spanish language.

transforming both anger and the urge for retaliation into a productive opposition to the emotional regime of peaceful acceptance. In this case, Valencian peasants oppose the naturalization of the superiority of the linguistic variety of the urban bourgeoisie oligarchy, urban nobility, and the high ecclesiastical urban ranks over the language of peasants, artisans, and artists.⁶ This opposition implies a questioning of the emotional regime that demanded the peaceful acceptance of the idea that only members of society of a certain rank could express their anger, as authors such as Francesc Eiximenis had argued in *Lo Terç del Crestià* (1379–1392). Yet, this opposition to the emotional regime is relative, as the peasants express their productive anger through the voice of a poet who belonged to the urban nobility: Jaume Gassull.

La brama describes how Jaume Gassull came across a group of peasants who were extremely angry because Bernat Fenollar (1438–1516), a canon from the Cathedral of Valencia and a poet, had written a treatise in which he undervalued the linguistic variety of the peasants.⁷ The peasants had decided to burn down Fenollar's household. Jaume Gassull talked to them and promised that he himself would defend the linguistic variety of the peasants before Fenollar. The peasants accepted Gassull's proposal and returned to their homes shouting and singing. Out of the 280 lines in *La brama*, the Valencian peasants disappear after line 100. Gassull describes the anger of the peasants in the following manner:

I was resting, my thoughts bringing me memories of past events, of the evils and blessings that love had bestowed upon me. While I was repaying with joy and sadness, adding up the years and days of time, my ears heard a murmur. I doubted whether it was the song of cicadas or the sound of cowbells, jingle bells, or the sound of people, or a swarm of bees, or a flock of cranes, or crows, or ravens. While I was in this doubt, as they drew near, I looked out of my study window and saw, across the ravine, such heavily armed squadrons descending that it certainly seemed to me like some great noise or resounding commotion. They were hurling words without control, and it seemed that they had a great division among them, since they demonstrated and contradicted each other with great confusion while they brought news. It seemed to me as though I was at the trading post hearing a crowd of Moors.⁸

⁶ For a more detailed analysis of the poem from a linguistic ideological point of view, see Lledó-Guillem 2020.

⁷ Fenollar's treatise has not come down to us.

⁸ The translation is mine. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this article are my own.

Estant de repòs, portant-me record dels mals i dels béns amb goig i tristor sumava lo temps quan, sentint remor dubtava si era o so de cencerros, o veu de persones, o passa de grues,	vetlava ma pensa de coses passades: que amor me dispensa, fent jo recompense, per anys i jornades; les mies orelles, cantar de cigales, tifells, o esquelles, o eixam de abelles, o corbs, o cucales
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I estant en est dubte, Isquí en la finestra i viu, pel barranca, d'armats tals esquadres, algun gran roïdo,	quan més s'acostaven del meu escriptori, avall davallaven que cert me semblaven o gran rebombori;
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This passage is an excellent description of the peasants being overwhelmed by anger and the desire for revenge in which the most logical consequence would be violence. The power of anger brings confusion and an utter lack of reason. The comparison with a large variety of animals, insects, objects that produce strident noises, as well as the final identification with a crowd of Moors trying to negotiate, makes the description of the peasants in the context in which it was written, extremely negative and inhuman. In fact, Gassull's depiction reminds us of Gregory the Great's metaphor to refer to anger: a violent army with continuous "brawls, swollen minds, insults, clamors, angry outbursts, and blasphemies" (88-89). However, as Rosenwein explains, during the Middle Ages, members of the lower ranks, such as peasants, did not have the right to get angry:

In the traditional view of society there were those who prayed, those who fought, and then (on the lowest rung) those who worked. Medieval poems and tales depicted peasants as rough, stupid, and generally docile. They might fuss and fume about something, but when they did so, they were either impotent or comical—or both. On the other hand, sometimes they banded together and presented a terrifying threat, burning, pillaging, and murdering with such abandon that they might as well have been wild elephants. (2020, 111)

While this emotional regime started to change in the 14th and 15th centuries, *La brama* initially followed the emotional script that placed peasants in the lowest level, to such an extent that in this passage Gassull apparently agreed with Eiximenis's dehumanization of the peasants in chapters CIII and CIV of his *Terç de lo Crestià*:⁹

I had always heard that it was dangerous to be among peasants, but now I would say that it entails taking a mortal risk because they lack any reason, and they believe the most absurd things. Moreover, they revolt in unexpected ways without any control or consideration, and they always enjoy putting down and humiliating men of higher rank [...] Because of their brutality they do not understand any kind of reasoning and this lack of reasoning gives rise to every kind of evil such as thinking that everyone intends to deceive them. This concern is the origin of a terrible evil in their hearts with which they try to protect and defend themselves. And when sometimes Our Lord lets them reign, they behave in such a cruel manner that they do not forgive anything.¹⁰

llançant les paraules a lliures i a roves,
que em sembla tenien entre ells molt gran cisma,
que els uns amb los altres fent contres i proves,
amb molt gran desodi venien a noves,
que em par que en l'alfòndec oís la morisma. (vv. 1-20)

⁹ See Lledó-Guillem 2020, 89. For a thorough comparison between Eiximenis' works and Gassull's poem in the political context of *pactisme*, see pages 86-92.

¹⁰ Totstemps havia oït dir que perillosa cosa era estar entre pageses, mas ara dic que és cosa mortal, car no usen de raó, e creen tost tota follia, e sobte són avalotats e no guarden dret ne envers, e tostemp s'adeliten en minves e en dejecció d'hom d'estament e d'honor [...] Per tal, de la bestialitat los ve no entendre raó, e de no entendre raó los ve tot llur mal; e d'aquesta bestialitat los ve, per consegüent, que es pensen que tot hom los vulla enganyar; e d'aquest cuidar los neix e'l cor terrible malícia, volent-se sots ella cobrir e ab ella defensar. E com molt avorresquen persones nobles, ells ho ensenyarien si hi havien poder; per tal quan nostre Senyor a vegades los lleixa un poc regnar, ensenyen tanta de crueltat que no perdonen a res. (Eiximenis 115-116)

Nevertheless, the moment Gassull approaches the peasants and talks to them, we receive a very different image. They can explain the reason of their anger and they are willing to take revenge. From an Aristotelian point of view, they have been slighted and their honor has been damaged. They feel a kind of pain that makes them angry, and they tend to seek revenge. Yet this anger and desire for revenge are justified only if the moment is right (Aristotle, 2.6.20; Rosenwein 2020, 82). However, could this anger be justified if the person undervaluing the language of the peasants and damaging their honor belonged to a higher rank? According to the text of *la brama*, this is the case, but the opposition to the emotional regime that presented the anger of the peasants as irrational, is only partial as the Valencian peasants must rely on Jaume Gassull, an urban noble, to represent them. Certainly, the result is a clear questioning of the superiority of the *sermo urbanus* over the *sermo vulgaris* mainly in the city of Valencia, but with important implications within the whole Catalan-speaking area of the Crown of Aragon. It could be argued that, from a Stoic point of view, the peasants have controlled their anger by using “an additional category of milder feelings called *eupatheiai*,” in which reason has played an important role (Dixon, 52).¹¹ This control and moderation have in this case transformed the emotion of revenge and the tendency to violence into a more productive result: the demonstration that the variety of the peasants must be respected, although this opposition to the emotional regime has not been achieved directly by them. The *eupatheiai* will be present in the next three texts to be analyzed, as the emotion of anger occupies a lesser role than its Transition or transformation into a productive opposition to the emotional regimes.

3. Despuig’s emotional Transition: Opposing both Valencian *sermo urbanus* and the acceptance of Castilian linguistic dominance

Los col·loquis is a dialogue between three characters who belong to the urban oligarchy. Lívio, the main character, is a noble from the Catalan city of Tortosa, Fàbio is a citizen of the same city, and don Pedro is a Valencian knight who is visiting Tortosa.¹² *Los col·loquis* is often considered the best example of a Renaissance dialogue in defense of the Catalan language. However, as I have indicated in a previous study, this work is not comparable to the dialogues written by other authors such as Bembo, Speroni, Du Bellay, Bamos, and Valdés, since Despuig does not focus exclusively on the Catalan language (Lledó-Guillem 2023a, 234; Chabrolle-Cerretini and Narcís Iglésias, 55; Duran, 38). In *Los col·loquis* we do not find any descriptions of the emotion of anger that is not controlled by reason, but we know that Lívio is the only character that feels outraged for the way the Catalan language is being treated. Lívio transforms his anger into several productive discourses that oppose the emotional regimes that support accepting the situation with patience. Yet the author Cristòfol Despuig also contests the emotional regime by writing his work in Catalan, not in Castilian, which had important consequences regarding the printing market. In fact, as mentioned above, his book was not published until 1877.¹³

As far as the geographical varieties of the Catalan language are concerned, don Pedro and Lívio agree on the superiority of the variety spoken in Catalonia over the other varieties:

¹¹ For a detailed explanation of *eupatheiai* see Graver, 51-53

¹² For one of the most recent studies of Despuig’s work from historical sociolinguistics point of view, see Lledó-Guillem 2023; Chabrolle-Cerretini and Narcís Iglésias.

¹³ Nevertheless, this late publication may have also been due to Despuig’s enmity with the archbishop of València Ferran de Loaces (1497–1568), who had important contacts in both the Crown and the Inquisition (Lledó-Guillem 2023, 234; Querol and Solervicens, 10)

DON PEDRO: What I mean is that we Valencians came from Catalonia, and we regard those families that didn't come from Catalonia as inferior. And we use the language of Catalonia, even though it's been badly affected by the fact that we are so close to Castile [...]

LIVIO: There's no two ways about it. And the same goes for Majorca, which was also conquered by King James, as well as Menorca and Ibiza when they were conquered. That's why Catalan came to be spoken on all those islands, and still is, just as it was at the beginning. They had no need to change it, as they did in Valencia or in Sardinia.¹⁴ (Despuig 2014, 46-47)

Don Pedro, a Valencian knight, opens the discussion by undervaluing the Catalan variety that he himself uses. Lívio responds by establishing a linguistic hierarchy of the Catalan linguistic varieties from a Neoplatonic perspective, according to which the best variety is the one closest to the original language. Since Catalan originated in Catalonia, its Catalan variety is considered superior to all others. Second in this hierarchy is the variety spoken in the Balearic Islands, followed by the Valencian and Sardinian varieties, which are deemed less pure due to the influence of other languages (Lledó-Guillem 2023a, 239). The content of this passage can be interpreted as an emotional Transition in which Despuig expresses his anger and frustration for the superior reputation of the *sermo urbanus* of the Kingdom of Valencia. In fact, after the end of the *Cancelleria reial* (Royal Chancellery) of the Crown of Aragon in 1494, when it was substituted by the Council of Aragon, there was no official institution in charge of establishing a written norm for the Catalan language. Certainly, the *Cancelleria reial* had lost considerable influence during and after the Civil War (1462–1472) between King John II (r. 1458–1479) and the Government of the Principality of Catalonia, but in 1494 the linguistic reference was completely lost. From that moment on, until at least the beginning of the eighteenth century, the *sermo urbanus* of the Kingdom of Valencia and the criteria of the printers of the city of Valencia became the model for publication in Catalan (Ferrando Francés 2019, 224-225). Despuig hides his anger under don Pedro's native Valencian testimony supporting a hierarchy that is immediately reinforced and explained by Lívio.

Lívio also plays the role of a teacher who explains to don Pedro that Catalan was an imperial language that embraced different identities in the Middle Ages:

LIVIO: [...] because there [Sardinia] Catalan is the language of prestige.

DON PEDRO: Actually, I don't see why. After all, Catalan isn't held in such great esteem. In fact, Aragonese is thought to be superior, because it's closer to Castilian.

LIVIO: That's true today, but in the olden days Aragonese was regarded as extremely unrefined, as indeed it was, which is why it was held to be inferior to our language. (Despuig 2014, 47)¹⁵

¹⁴ *Don Pedro*: Sí, que los valencians d'ací de Catalunya són eixits, i los llinatges que d'ací no tenen lo principi no els tenim per tan bons; i la llengua, de Catalunya la tenim, encara que per lo veïnat de Castella s'és molt trastornada [...]
Lívio: Que no hi ha que dubtar en això, i lo mateix fou en la Conquesta de Mallorca que féu lo mateix rei, i en Menorca i en Ivissa, que après se conquistaren, fonc lo mateix, que en totes estes illes restà la llengua com ancara per avui la tenen i tal com la prengueren en los principis, perquè no han tingut ocasió d'alterar-la com los valencians. I en Sardenya. (Despuig 2011, 40-41).

¹⁵ *Lívio*: [...] perquè la catalana és allí [Sardenya] cortesana.

From a linguistic anthropological point of view, Catalan used to be an anonymous language, that is, the language of everybody and of no one, in which the content of the discourse is much more important than the identity that the language represents. In other words, from this point of view, Catalan was not an authentic language (Woolard 2007, 136). Lívio demonstrates that Catalan was an imperial and a global language in the past (Lledó-Guillem 2023a, 241-243). The Catalan knight clarifies that in the Middle Ages Catalan had a higher reputation than Aragonese. Don Pedro has indicated that, in his time, Aragonese is more valued because it is closer to Castilian. By explaining that Catalan was superior to Aragonese until recently, Lívio identifies Aragonese with Castilian and places the dichotomy between Catalan and Aragonese in the Crown of Aragon in a new context: the Spanish Crown (Lledó-Guillem 2018, 182).¹⁶ Thus, Lívio emphasizes that the superiority of Castilian over Catalan is accidental, not natural, and subject to change.

Lívio's exaltation of the former prestige of the Catalan language is indeed the result of the anger that he feels after listening don Pedro's comments and witnessing his ignorance, since the Valencian knight is not familiar with Catalan history. Lívio transforms his anger into a recovery of historical memory that constitutes an opposition to the emotional regime that demands a blind acceptance and naturalization of the natural superiority of the Castilian language over Catalan. It is indeed an emotional Transition with positive results, but Despuig acknowledges that transforming the indignation and anger that Catalans feel when their history is manipulated or ignored even by Catalan-speakers themselves, may have limited results. Thus, one of the characters, the Catalan citizen of Tortosa, Fàbio, admits that he cannot abandon the emotional regime that implies the patient acceptance of the linguistic invasion of the Catalan-speaking lands by Castilian: "I reckon there isn't much that can be done about it" (Despuig 2014, 48).

As members of the same emotional community of Catalan speakers who felt anger for the growing influence of Castilian in the Catalan-speaking lands, Martí de Viciana and Diego Cisteller also controlled their emotion with reason giving rise to the Stoic *epatheiai*. Yet we also witness a different emotional transformation or Transition in which the opposition to the emotional regime of peaceful acceptance of Castilian dominance was carried out in Castilian.

4. Martí de Viciana and the emotional search for linguistic and religious justice

The *Book of Praises* (1574) written by the Valencian historian and notary Martí de Viciana (1502–1584) constitutes a transition from anger to an opposition to the emotional regime that demands the peaceful acceptance of the superiority of Castilian over Catalan. While the *Book of Praises* implicitly accepts the emotional regime of Castilian dominance by being written in Castilian, its content opposes the naturalization of linguistic Castilian superiority by underlining the excessive and negative influence of Arabic on Castilian and by revisiting the linguistic competition that took place in the Court of the Valencian Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503) in 1498. Thus, it demonstrates that the Catalan language is closer to Latin than any of the other Romance languages, including Castilian. In Viciana's opposition to the emotional regime, the religious criterion plays a much more important role than in the works of the other authors analyzed in this study.

Don Pedro: No sé jo per què, que a la veritat, no és tan cobdiciada com això la llengua catalana, i l'aragonesa és tinguda per millor per semblar més a la castellana

Lívio: En nostres dies, sí, mas en lo temps atràs no la tenien sinó per molt grossera, com a la veritat ho era, i per ço tinguda en menys que la d'ací. (Despuig 2011, 41-42)

¹⁶ Placing this dichotomy in a new context constitutes an example of fractal recursivity: "a semiotic process that consists of "the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level" (Irvine and Gal, 38).

The event that apparently has caused the emotion of anger in Viciano goes back to the linguistic competition that supposedly took place in 1498 in front of Pope Alexander VI. Four ambassadors competed to demonstrate which Romance language was closer to Latin: the Tuscan, French, Portuguese, and the Spanish ambassador, Garcilaso de la Vega, the father of the famous poet with the same name (f. A7r). Garcilaso suggested that each ambassador should write a prayer so that it could be judged which one was closer to the Latin language. Garcilaso volunteered to be the first one. Once he had finished, none of the ambassadors recited their prayers. Viciano describes the Valencian Pope's disappointment at seeing that none of the Catalan-speaking humanists who stayed at his papal court took the initiative to write the prayer in Valencian, that is, in Catalan (A8v).¹⁷ Viciano transforms his anger into a short history of the Catalan language with a comparison with Castilian regarding the degree of proximity to Latin. Viciano ends up writing the prayer that Pope Alexander VI would supposedly have liked to hear in 1498 to prove that Catalan is closer to Latin than Castilian. Yet, the final decision will be taken in Jerusalem in a Court presided by the most perfect language: Hebrew (ff. B6r-B6v).

Nonetheless, Viciano has already proved that Catalan is superior to Castilian by focusing on religion and the influence of Arabic on both Castilian and Catalan. The superiority of Catalan will not be proven by the supreme Hebrew language, one of the languages that appeared on the Cross where Christ was crucified, but by an Arabic speaker, a *morisco* who supposedly lives in the Kingdom of Valencia:

These converts from the Mohammedan Sect to our holy Catholic Faith are such that, after fifty years of baptism, we have never been able to convince them to leave their Algaravia [Arabic language] and speak the Valencian language. And when we press them hard, some of them respond: "Why do you want us to leave the Arabic language? Is it bad? And if that is the case, why do Castilians speak it mixed with their language? Let them leave our language and we will leave it little by little." And coming to contradict them, a well-informed convert said in Castilian: "Don't you see that Castilians lack many of their own words and, because of that lack, they take from the Algaravia [Arabic] these terms: sarten, azeyte, azeytuna [...]"¹⁸

Viciano has controlled his anger with reason to such an extent that, while he has responded discursively to the event at the Papal Court that made him angry, he has made such a productive emotional Transition that he has already proven that Catalan is superior to Castilian even before describing the Papal linguistic contest. Moreover, Viciano's arguments are based on religion. The Arabic language is associated with Islam and is considered a sign of the enemy. In fact, later in the text, Viciano argues that even though there have always been many Arabic speakers in the

¹⁷ As the Kingdom of Valencia was the economic, cultural, and demographic center of the Catalan-speaking lands since the second half of the sixteenth century, the common language was very often referred to as Valencian. One important example appears in Cervantes's *The Travails of Persiles and Segismunda* (*Los trabajos de Persiles y Segismunda*) (1617) (Lledó-Guillem 2023, 238; Ferrando Francés, 228-230).

¹⁸ Son estos conuersos de la Secta Mahometica a nuestra sancta fee catholica tales, que al cabo de cincuenta años que son baptizados, jamas se ha podido acabar con ellos que dexen el Algarauia, y hablen lengua Valenciana: y quando mucho los apretamos, responden algunos dellos. Porque quereys que dexemos la lengua Araviga? por ventura es mala? y si es mala, porque la hablan los Castellanos mezclada en su lengua? dexen ellos nuestra habla y nosotros la dexaremos poco a poco. Y viniendo a contradiezirles, vn conuertido bien auisado, en lengua Castellana, dixo. No veys que a los Castellanos les faltan muchos vocablos propios y por aquella falta toman de la Algarauia estos, sarten, azeyte, azeytuna. (f. A6r)

Kingdom of Valencia, and although many Muslims have converted to Christianity and continue to use Arabic, the Valencian language does not contain even a trace of Arabic, as Valencian uses words from Latin (f. B1v). In the passage quoted above, the possible productive revenge caused by the event at the papal court is performed by two Arabic speakers. From their comments, it can be inferred that the degree of imperfection of Castilian is proven by the extreme distance from Latin, which prevents Castilian from taking the words that it needs from Latin. Therefore, Castilian needs to resort to Arabic to exist as a functional language. As there is an intimate association between Arabic and Islam, Castilian can never represent a Spanish Empire that is supposed to fight Islam because Castilian cannot exist without the Arabic language. The testimony of the bilingual convert supports this idea. It is obvious that the Catalan language is much more appropriate for defending the Catholic faith and, as a result, is far superior to Castilian. There is no need to wait for a final verdict from the Hebrew language in Jerusalem regarding which language is closer to Latin.

In the final author, religion also played an important role, but the main emotional Transition took the form of a critique of the first history of the Spanish language written by Bernardo José de Aldrete.

5. Diego de Cisteller's anger and the questioning of the different degrees of linguistic corruption

Cisteller's *Memorial in Defense of the Catalan Language* (1636) has been analyzed in the context of his defense of Catalan as the appropriate language to be used in sermons in the Diocese of Tarragona, as well as his opposition to the "Theory of the Primitive Castilian."¹⁹ Yet, from a history of emotions point of view, Cisteller's *Memorial* is an example of acceptance of the emotional regime that demands patience and approval of the need to publish in Castilian. On the other hand, his work can also be read as an emotional Transition in which Cisteller's anger and desire for revenge are transformed into a productive discourse against Bernardo de Aldrete's *On the Origin and Beginning of the Castilian Language* (1606), which opposed the "Theory of the Primitive Castilian." The main objective of this Transition is to challenge the Castilian emotional regime, which is shared by Aldrete, that normalizes the right to feel indignation and anger for the use of Catalan as the administrative and judicial language of the Catalan-speaking lands in the Crown of Aragon.

In 1636, the Archdiocese of Tarragona, which included most of the Principality of Catalonia and extended over the northern part of the Kingdom of Valencia, approved a decree and a constitution that obliged all the priests and bishops in the archdiocese to preach in Catalan during the homilies. The reaction against the decision was immediate and the same year, Juan Gómez Adrín (a pseudonym), published *Memorial en defensa de la lengua Castellana*, in which the author argued that Castilian should be used in the homilies because Saint James had preached Christianity in Castilian throughout the Iberian Peninsula. The author admitted that he based his opinion on the "Theory of the Primitive Castilian," which had been explained in Gregorio López Madera's *Discurso* (1601). According to Madera, Castilian was one of the seventy-two languages that had originated in the Tower of Babel and had been brought to the Iberian Peninsula by Noah's grandson: Tubal. Moreover, the language had not changed since the arrival of Tubal. There may have been some changes in vocabulary, but the substance of a language was based, in current linguistic terminology, on morphosyntax and idiomatic expressions. Therefore, Castilian did not descend from Latin. Moreover, the rest of the so-called Romance languages used in the Iberian

¹⁹ See Lledó-Guillem in press.

Peninsula were not real languages because they lacked substance. They were mere accidents or deformations of the real language: Castilian. The main difference was based on vocabulary, which was not considered to be part of the substance of a language (López Madera 70v-71r).²⁰ Following López Madera's "Theory of the Primitive Castilian," Adrín argues that Castilian should be used to preach in the Catalan-speaking lands not only because Saint James spread the Gospel in Castilian throughout Iberia, but also because Catalan is not a real language but an accident or deformation of Castilian. In fact, Catalan-speakers could understand Castilian, as the only difference between the two languages was lexical (f. A2r).

In his response to Adrín's *Memorial*, Cisteller claims that: "I am really amazed that Dr. Adrín (who is such a wise person as his book clearly demonstrates, and whom I admire and appreciate as a scholar) may have believed such a thing, which seems more like a fairy tale rather than a real possibility" (f. 24v).²¹ Regarding Adrín's comment that during Pentecost the Apostles received the gift of speaking and understanding only the languages that different nations could understand, even if it was the general meanings, Cisteller responds that "it does not apply here [Catalonia], because the Holy Spirit allowed them to speak the ones that the listeners could understand and that does not happen in Catalonia with the Castilian language."²² In fact, not only are the individual words not understood but neither the general meanings or "sentenzias" (f. 21v). Consequently, Cisteller states that "it is clear that many in Catalonia do not understand Castilian" (f. 22v).²³

While Cisteller's anger can be observed in his disappointment in Adrín for believing in the "Theory of the Primitive Castilian," we may assume that the main reason of his anger lies in Adrín's idea that Castilian should be used exclusively in the homilies. The emotional transformation of Cisteller's anger starts with a strong critique and humiliation of Adrín for believing that Castilian was one of the seventy-two languages that originated in Babel. Certainly, this humiliation or critique could be considered an example of anger with a certain degree of verbal violence, but there is also a constructive emotional Transition. Thus, Cisteller focuses on Adrín's observation that during Pentecost the Apostles received the gift of languages to preach the Gospel. However, according to Adrín, the Apostles were only given knowledge of the real languages, the ones with substance, the seventy-two languages that had originated in Babel. Therefore, Castilian was the only Iberian language that Saint James learned and used to preach in the Catalan lands. Cisteller argues that this narrative construction goes against the very idea of converting people to Christianity, as Castilian is not understood in the Catalan-speaking lands. The reason lies not only in superficial differences in vocabulary but also in the lack of knowledge of the so-called "sentenzias" or general meaning.

It can be inferred that, with this explanation, Cisteller is opposing the linguistic ideology of the author of the first history of the Castilian language: Bernardo José de Aldrete. In his *On the Origin and Beginning of the Castilian Language* (1606), Aldrete expresses anger and frustration for the use of Catalan as an administrative and judicial language in the Catalan-speaking areas of

²⁰ For a more detailed explanation see Binotti; Woolard 2013; Lescasse; and Lledó-Guillem 2022.

²¹ "Admiracion mas que ordinaria me causa, que el Dotor Adrin (persona tan juyziosa como en su papel se trasluze, que le admiro y aprecio por erudito) se haya beuido tal cosa, que tiene mas talle de conseja, que de posibilidad (f. 24v).

²² "No haze a nuestro caso; porque alomenos les infundiò aquellas que entendian sus oyentes, que no corre en la Castellana en Cataluña" (f. 21v).

²³ "Es claro que muchos en Cataluña no entienden el Castellano" (f. 22v).

the Crown of Aragon. Cisteller's *Memorial* can be read as an emotional Transition in which his anger towards Adrín defense of the "Theory of the Primitive Castilian" is emotionally transformed into an effective defense of the use of Catalan in formal contexts. Certainly, Aldrete also opposed the "Theory of the Primitive Castilian" and supported that Castilian descended from Latin, but as far as the multilingualism of the Iberian Peninsula was concerned, especially regarding the Romance languages, the ideological similarities between Madera and Aldrete were evident. Both Madera and Aldrete believed that Catalan and Portuguese were corrupted versions of Castilian.²⁴ According to Aldrete, Castilian was the result of the corruption of the Latin language due to linguistic contact with the Visigoths (Aldrete, 156-157). However, until the Muslim invasion, there was a common Hispanic Romance language for the Visigothic Monarchy that was the basis of Castilian. After the Muslim invasion, the original Hispanic language, itself the result of the corruption of Latin, underwent a second stage of corruption that led to the emergence of Portuguese and Catalan. In other words, Portuguese and Catalan are the result of a linguistic mixture between the original and common Hispanic Romance language and a second mixture with the French language (143). According to Aldrete, Catalan has also been influenced by Provençal (143), to such an extent that there is a confusing similarity between the two languages (165).²⁵ Once Aldrete has established this linguistic hierarchy, he shows his frustration that the expansion of Castilian over the whole Iberian Peninsula has been stopped in the Catalan-speaking lands:

In Catalonia, and especially in the Kingdom of Valencia, all sermons are delivered in Romance, which everyone knows and speaks, although ordinary people differ from their natural Catalan, which is different from ours. In those parts, if one looks closely, one will see the converse of two languages together, and how one is being introduced and the other forgotten. If in those Kingdoms a language other than Castilian were not admitted in the courts and tribunals, it would have been introduced more quickly, but without this, it is growing daily. This is what happened at first with the Latin language in this and other provinces.²⁶

It can be argued that Cisteller's main interest lies in defending the use of Catalan in the formal administrative and judicial contexts that Aldrete criticizes. Therefore, Cisteller's anger towards Adrín's comments, which underline the inferiority of the Catalan language, is transformed into a productive emotional Transition that aims to defend the status of Catalan in formal contexts that are controlling the advance of Castilian. Cisteller is opposing the emotional regime that normalizes the patient acceptance of the imperial expansion of Castilian in the Catalan-speaking lands. By stressing that Catalan speakers do not understand Castilian in the sermons, Cisteller is opposing the belief that Catalan is just a deformation or corruption of the purer Castilian language. This opposition to the acceptance of a supposedly natural superiority of Castilian helps protect Cisteller's language, Catalan, even if he needed to write his defense in Castilian to do so.

²⁴ For a more detailed study of these ideological similarities, see Lledó-Guillem 2022.

²⁵ See Lledó-Guillem 2018, 130; Lledó-Guillem 2010, 2-5.

²⁶ En Cataluña, i mas en el reino de Valencia todos los sermones se hazen en Romance, el qual saben i hablan todas las personas, que son de alguna suerte, si bien la gente ordinaria vsa de la suia natural Catalana, diuersa de la nuestra. En las quales partes, si se mira con atención, se vera el vso de dos lenguas juntas, i como se va introduciendo vna, i olvidandose la otra, i si en aquellos Reinos no se admitiera en los tribunales i juzgados otra lengua, que la Castellana, mas en breue se acabara de introducir, pero sin esso va cada dia en crecimiento. Assi passò al principio en la lengua Latina en esta, i otras provincias. (Aldrete, 100).

Conclusion

The analysis of the work of Gassull, Despuig, Viciano, and Cisteller has proven that there were politics of emotion with respect to language in the Early Modern period. In other words, accepting or opposing the dominant emotional scripts or regimes of society implied accepting or opposing a certain distribution of power.²⁷ Moreover, opposing an emotional regime carried with it the possibility of change. By focusing on the emotions of anger and the desire for vengeance in the context of the Catalan language in the Early Modern period, I have shown how the four texts analyzed demonstrated that the emotions of anger and the desire for vengeance could undergo an emotional transformation or Transition into a creative opposition to a dominant emotional regime. This emotional regime demanded the acceptance of the natural inferiority of either a certain variety of the Catalan language or the Catalan language as a whole. Gassull transforms the anger of the Valencian peasants into an opposition to the emotional regime that tried to naturalize the superiority of the Catalan variety of the high ranks. Despuig's anger for the naturalization of the superiority of the *sermo urbanus* of Valencia and the essential superiority of Castilian over Catalan is emotionally transformed into the recovery of the memory of a Medieval Catalan-Aragonese empire lead by Catalonia in Catalan. Viciano accepted the emotional regime of the need of publishing in Castilian but transformed his anger for the naturalization of the superiority of the Castilian language into a history of the Catalan language that supported its Latin roots and highlighted the strong Arabic linguistic influence upon Castilian. Finally, Cisteller moved beyond his anger and pain at the attempt to impose Castilian as the language of the homilies in the Catalan-speaking lands. He transformed his frustration into a calculated and reasoned response that opposed not only the "Theory of the Primitive Castilian," but especially the emotional regime that demanded the peaceful acceptance that Castilian was the purest Romance language in the Iberian Peninsula. The natural superiority of Castilian had also been supported by Bernardo de Aldrete in his history of the Spanish language, despite opposing the "Theory of the Primitive Castilian."

This study has also shown that the Early Modern period was no less emotionally developed than our own regarding the control of anger. As I indicated above, the control or appraisal of our emotions does not evolve teleologically from an uncivilized past to a more refined and advanced present. Thus, the anger expressed by several current politicians in reference to the use of languages other than Castilian that we have seen in the introduction, makes us realize that we can learn from the Early Modern authors that have been analyzed. How could these current politicians who feel so upset about the use of the different co-official languages in Spain transform their anger and their desire for vengeance in a productive way? How could they start a Transition leading to a constructive use of that emotional energy? Salvador Illa is an example of a politician who transformed his initial indignation or anger when the Catalan and Basque languages were despised by certain politicians in Barcelona on June 6, 2025. The Catalan politician responded in an emotional constructive way that opposed the emotional regime of acceptance of a monolingual Spain. Illa simply encouraged politicians who govern in multilingual Autonomous Regions to use their regional languages fully in formal contexts. In other words, it is necessary to establish an emotional regime in which the use of a Spanish language other than Castilian is admired and supported, even if those politicians who are using the co-official languages are fluent in Castilian and may use it in other informal or formal contexts. As Illa indicated, the use of the co-official languages should not be limited to the beginning or the end of a discourse, but to the whole speech

²⁷ I follow John Joseph's definition of politics: "we find a broader application of the political to any situation in which there is an unequal distribution of power, and where individuals' behaviour reflects the play of power, or is guided (or maybe even determined) by it" (2).

(Palau). This statement could be interpreted as a constructive emotional appeal aimed at encouraging monolingual Castilian speakers to value the other Spanish languages and to understand that using a language other than Castilian does not threaten its status. It protects and gives visibility to the rest of the Spanish languages. Illa's statement may also be read as a productive emotional response to the linguistic policies that can be observed in the Region of Valencia since the regional elections in May 2023.²⁸ In this Autonomous Region, the conservative regional government has transformed its anger over the previous administration's support for Valencian into an explicit policy promoting the linguistic secessionism of Valencian from Catalan. Under the pretext of defending the Valencian identity, the goal is achieving Castilian monolingualism in the Valencian Region. The rejection of certain politicians to the use of languages other than Castilian during the meeting of the presidents of the different Autonomous Regions, showed that the emotion of anger impregnates the issue of multilingualism in the Spanish State. Ultimately, it is a matter of understanding the linguistic and cultural realities of other parts of the Spanish State, so that we may begin transforming anger into pride and come to emotionally appreciate the multilingual heritage that Spain has held and continues to hold. An examination of how anger and language were connected in the Early Modern period may contribute to achieving this objective.

²⁸ See Lledó-Guillem 2023b for the linguistic implications of this regional election.

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