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A Difficult Nation?

History and Nationalism in Contemporary Spain

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The aim of this study is to show how the concept of Spain prevailing today originates from the nationalist ideology of the nineteenth century. The creation of this concept served both to justify the new power relations established during the liberal revolution and to give coherence to its political independence from other states and nations. For historiography, the emergence of the concept of the “Spanish nation” had decisive consequences. From monarchical history *ad usum delphinis*, there was a change to a teleological interpretation of Spain’s origins which served to justify the formation of the nation-state then under construction vis-à-vis feudal and absolutist powers. Historiography, as part of liberal and romantic thought, was the architect of a temporal, determinist construction, in which the Spanish nation and the nineteenth-century nation-state were inextricably interwoven into an age-old eternal reality. Hence, the historical concept of Spain contained a meta-history that imposed an essentialist new memory, which has subsequently been reproduced at different levels in the history of the country’s autonomous regions or in local history, as variations on the principal narrative.¹

Such an account of history did not emerge from an earlier national reality. In effect, the state was born out of different entities (feudal states, principalities, kingdoms) amassed by the dynasties of the old regime

through successive wars, marriage alliances and accidents of fate. The concept of power was regarded as the patrimony of a few interchangeable people, inheritable or conquerable depending on their strengths and ambitions. This power had been geographically attributed as Spanish or Hispanic but had never had any national significance. It was in the year 1812, the same year that the first Spanish constitution, the so-called Cádiz Constitution, was drawn up, that Spain was defined for the first time as a sociopolitical concept, as identifying a community called “the Spanish nation” which defined itself as “the coming together of all Spaniards from both hemispheres” in reference to the citizens who lived both in the metropolis and in the inherited colonies of the old empire.²

This was the first social pact between the people who, protected under one state, were no longer subjects but became instead citizens, since the Spanish nation—as laid down in Article 2—“is not, nor can be the patrimony of any family or person.” However, this early concept of nation already contained different perspectives: not only the traditionalist and federal viewpoint, but also, above all, the Americanist perspective, which would very soon see itself made irrelevant for the official representation of the nation, with the colonies cut off in successive wars of independence. So the Spanish nation, once constituted, was immediately greatly reduced in geographical, demographic and cultural terms. As a result, according to the new constitutional text of 1837, the interests that defined the nation’s sovereignty belonged exclusively to the Peninsula. Moreover, in the name of these national, peninsular interests, equal conditions were denied to the territories of the Antilles and the Philippines, which remained part of the Spanish state.

Thus Spain as a nation was established, not only on the basis of ideas, but, above all, on the basis of governing interests that nationalized church and common property, abolished customs duties and protected markets.³ Due to the diminishing role of Spain’s ruling classes in the international arena, Spain’s territory shrank significantly between 1812 and 2000; nevertheless, the assumption of a stable nation with its unchanging territory still persists. The present-day Constitution, in force since 1978, does not define territorial borders but does establish in Article 2 “the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common, indivisible land of all the Spanish people.” Between 1812 and 1978, the borders had changed so much that neither the “Spanish nation” (as

defined by political sovereignty) nor the subsequent nationalism that it sustains has remained the same.⁴ However, the word Spain and especially the concept of nation associated with it remain immutable. For this reason it is important to unravel the process involved in the construction of the historical discourse of Spanish nationalism, which is accepted as if it were an objective fact, without any attempt to distinguish ideology from empirical content. The following pages are concerned with concrete aspects of the role of history in the construction of Spain as a nation and of the meaning attributed and applied to the historical discourse in its different variants, one concerned with the education and formation of Spanish patriots and one that established the collective memory based on common national pride and a shared social ideal.

CULTURAL FRAILTY AND A STRONG STATE

The premise of this article is that the nation-state established during the nineteenth century had sufficient strength to support cultural nationalism. It is true that in the case of Spain there has been much debate about the weakness of this state, about the fragmentation of the bourgeoisie that sustained it and about the effectiveness of its actions among a mainly illiterate population.⁵ Despite these limitations, the role of the liberal state as a pillar for the construction of capitalism from the mid-nineteenth century cannot be denied: it was the state that nationalized basic wealth (especially land, mines, railways, etc.) and then immediately privatized it, creating the "property-owning class." Through the state, the speculative wealth of early capitalism was forged, and through the state the legality of economic development was channeled and adapted to serve the interests of the ruling classes, who existed by virtue of this very state.⁶

At the same time, the state played a crucial role in shaping national culture. The profound transformation in the role of culture within the national revolution of liberalism occurred in Spain between the last decades of the eighteenth century, marked by enlightened patriotism, and the mid-nineteenth century with the creation of the concept of a culturally and politically unified Spain. This was a structural transformation which, due to the educational system and, above all, to the press,

signified a completely new use of culture. Once the monopoly of the privileged few, the majority of whom were ecclesiastics, this state culture underpinned the identity of the new liberal citizens, those with the right to vote by virtue of their income, property, profession or ability. In the imagination of these new middle classes, who were the force behind the liberal revolution, the idea of a common Spain established itself city by city while local and regional royalties still held firm. A civic, political nationalism was established, promoted by the state and its subsequent mechanisms of institutional organization, in particular the right to vote which, from 1836, was restricted to the few hundred thousand male landowners or liberal professionals. This same political nationalism had sufficient energy and strength to overthrow the old regime and to lay the foundations for the development of Spanish capitalism.

An interesting, little-researched aspect of the state's efforts to shape the collective memory is the creation, throughout the nineteenth century, of a national heritage. To this end, the state employed a variety of instruments, such as patronage of the arts, the work of the academies and the establishment of archaeological and historical museums. This process led to extensive artistic output which, although now largely forgotten, inundated public places and public memory. It can be seen in the statues that stand in public squares and gardens in cities and towns throughout the country. They filled the nineteenth-century urban areas with national heroes and, as art historian Carlos Reyero has rightly pointed out, none of the monuments erected during this period depict a non-Spanish figure:

Thus, there is a process of identification between the effigy and its belonging to a certain fatherland. Its military, political, social and cultural values belong to the heritage of a national community. They are a valuable example to be followed. They are valued, not so much for themselves but because the fact that they are members of our group fills us with pride.⁷

A similar effect was created by the monumental paintings depicting historical themes commemorating glorious moments in the nation's history, which covered the walls of buildings that housed the offices of the new state. Labeled by one art historian as "an administrative genre,

the product of historical and political circumstances,” these paintings depended on the commissions and purchases by the new institutions that were emerging under the aegis of the state. Thus, a painting of the conversion of the Visigothic king to Catholicism was painted in 1888 by Muñoz Degraín to decorate the Senate Conference Hall, where *The Surrender of Granada* by Francisco Padilla and *Roger de Flor’s Assault on Constantinople* by Moreno Carbonero also hung. There were also paintings depicting themes related to Columbus and the Catholic Kings, which were valued not only for their artistic qualities but also for their historical accuracy.⁸

However, the greatest impact of the state’s formulation of a nationalist ideology was in education. Once history was made a compulsory school subject, there was a flood of textbooks summarizing the state’s historical standpoint. Not only did the state control the content of these textbooks, it also established the procedures for appointing teaching professionals. The educational system thus transformed the former subjects of a dynasty into citizens of one nation and patriots with the same interests. All the resources of the new liberal society were deployed in order to preach the civic religion of a whole nation whose image was superimposed upon its constituent parts and its social contradictions. Moreover, the works of historians established the nation as a scientific fact. In simplified form, this account found its way into the various textbooks which, from 1838, the state decreed for the teaching of patriotic sentiment in schools. This was a national school, equal for all, which taught Castilian grammar along with the history of Spanish patriotism. Given the great cultural diversity inherited by the liberal state, it was necessary to add the ingredients and sow the seeds that would support the collective idea of what was Spanish.

The teaching of Spanish history throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has recently been extensively researched.⁹ In particular, it is significant that the 1857 General Law of Public Instruction, known as the Moyano law, established that museums, archives and libraries were important elements in the organization of teaching. Ten years later this law was to become more concrete. In 1867 a Royal Decree was published which established the foundation of the Madrid National Archaeological Museum, and of provincial museums housing archaeological exhibits from each province, to be handed over by the provincial

Monuments Commissions. A paragraph from this decree reveals the motives behind this legislation:

Our peninsula, the privileged theater of various invasions and colonizations, guards in its breast some precious remains from its indigenous peoples, from the ancestors of the noble Iberian race ... our duty is to gather together these vestiges, which help so much to elucidate the annals of those times, which providentially prepared the way for modern civilization.

Similar sentiments were expressed at the museum's inauguration ceremony in 1871 which was presided by King Amadeo de Saboya. A cantata composed especially for the occasion and performed by pupils from the National School of Music, proclaimed:

Everything here, every object shows
the path traced by genius.
Whose breast cannot be stirred
by enthusiasm, by vivid emotion?
Glorious, venerable treasures,
Today, science changed our fortune
And you will find life, not death,
In the tomb which the Nation bequeaths you.¹⁰

Reports from the time indicate that the National Archaeological Museum was not visited by large numbers.¹¹ It contained collections from the National Library, coins and objects that had originally been housed in the Royal Library and from the Natural Science Museum whose origins were in the Royal Cabinet of Natural History founded by King Charles III. Other collections were gradually added. Some came from private collections belonging to members of the aristocracy but others from the members of the enlightened upper-middle classes, such as the Marquis of Salamanca or the Marquis of Cerralbo, or from scholars such as Antonio Vives. They were either purchased or donated, often after a long process of negotiating and bargaining.¹²

A large part of these funds came from the work of the Provincial Commissions of Historical and Artistic Monuments established in 1844

to coincide with the sale of church lands and property. They collaborated with the commissions sent by the museum to collect and classify the objects from the religious orders. We do not know enough about the work of these commissions, but it certainly was not easy as is clear from what happened to the Governor of Burgos. When he visited Burgos cathedral in 1869, accompanied by a member of the museum staff, to select exhibits for the state museum, he was greeted by a mob shouting "Long live religion!" They put a rope around his neck and dragged him down the steps until he was dead.¹³

André Chastel has noted that the church's resistance to the removal of its most precious consecrated objects was also linked to the general public's indifference to a heritage that was supposed to be national and common to all but which lacked the social esteem that the state tried to give it. "Manifestations of public appreciation for holy sanctuaries, relics, statues or local treasures do not extend to buildings, to the value of the works themselves."¹⁴ In fact these people, whose consecrated memory these museums hoped to represent, hardly ever manifested a desire to protect their heritage but on the contrary were more inclined to want to destroy it, as the manifestation of a traditional order that in moments of crisis they tried to eliminate.

The references we find in scholarly works of the nineteenth century to the people's indifference, lack of culture and ignorance in matters relating to the conservation of their heritage points to the paradoxical fact that the nationalist political discourse which justified this meritorious labor of conservation was in no way a spontaneous manifestation of popular sentiment emanating from the people but an ideological construction that has so completely triumphed that today it is taken for granted. Within this ideological construction the museums and, in general, the elements that make up the so-called "national heritage" have become shrines housing relics which, for one reason or another, have a certain value or a certain social significance. The acclaimed art critic Robert Hughes argues that museums have replaced churches as sources of public pride in Western society. Museums not only displayed their exhibits, they also represented the importance these exhibits warranted. While they were entrusted with the safekeeping of objects that were profoundly significant to a certain sector of the population, they were

the dedicated custodians of the values which this community claimed to represent.¹⁵

The ideological articulation of these values, however, is not something that emerges spontaneously, nor is it explicit in the exhibited pieces: this ideological articulation needs a discourse, and this discourse is fundamentally political. As such, it has no single, incontrovertible expression; it can be the object of wide controversy if the premises on which it is based are not wholly shared. Spain was no exception in the creation of a collective memory linked to the idea of nation and supported by the state. Asymmetry emerged in nearly all the nation-states of nineteenth-century Europe because in some cases, like Germany, cultural nationalism generated political nationalism, while in others, as in France, it was state nationalism that was the driving force behind the cultural assimilation of national homogenization through acculturation.

For this reason, the history of Spanish nationalism should be studied as part of the state's endeavors to create a national identity for itself and as an expression of economic interests that aimed quite openly to unify the multiple aspects of the economy, while still allowing different cultural loyalties to survive, as, for example, in the case of the Catalan bourgeoisie.¹⁶ We should therefore analyze the political drive of Spanish nationalism from the Cádiz Courts until the "glorious revolution" of 1868, to the cry of "Spain with honor!" as part of the process of creating the nation-state's middle class and its social and economic position (above all in the Spanish market). It was, of course, a process that was not incompatible in those decades with sectorial organizations or local or regional loyalties. These survived and were transformed by the economic revolution brought about by capitalism.

THE RITUALIZATION OF THE STATE

If the political and social order of class and feudal privileges of previous centuries was broken up and revolutionized under the aegis of the nation's sovereignty,¹⁷ if this new nation preached and declared its sovereignty and established laws and regulations,¹⁸ then this nation, that is Spain, became the object or purpose toward which the actions of its component parts were to be directed, thereby making it the personal

property of all citizens. “Love of the Fatherland” was therefore declared to be a fundamental obligation (as stated in Article 2 of the 1812 Cádiz Constitution), and from then onwards there were constant appeals to the fatherland to justify the mobilization of resources and ideas, the waging of wars or the nationalization of property and introduction of customs duties, and so forth.

However, it was not enough merely to inculcate in the public memory the heroic deeds, national heroes and works of art that would inspire patriotic feeling; it was also necessary to reformulate certain historical circumstances from a perspective that was as much Spanish and national as it was Catholic and monarchist. The direction taken by Spanish nationalism from the end of the nineteenth century—the shift from facts to symbols in order to forge public opinion—can be seen in the commemorations of the nation’s major historical events.

The first major historical anniversary was celebrated in 1881 to mark the bicentenary of the death of a literary figure of the Spanish Golden Age, the playwright Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681), whose work had become popular since the end of the eighteenth century among the German Romantics, who had laid the foundations of the essence of nationalism. Compared to modern, lay playwrights such as Shakespeare and Molière, Calderón represented the expression of the “Spanish soul,” of a nation characterized by a militant Catholicism. This was a quality which, in 1881, some of the liberals organizing the event considered to be a limitation, while for the conservatives it was its most important cultural merit. Nonetheless, the anniversary was attended by almost the entire intelligentsia, who, despite their different political affiliations, were unanimous in their attachment to Spain and to cultural nationalism. The most spectacular part of the celebrations was the public procession from Madrid’s town hall, controlled by the Liberals, which included a delegation of journalists from the major newspapers, ranging from the conservative-liberal *La Época* to the republican *El Liberal* and the democratic *El Imparcial*. Floats from a wide range of institutions and associations paraded along six kilometers of streets during the grandiose commemorative event. At the head of the parade were twenty-five horses of the Guardia Civil followed first by the musicians of a battalion and then by a number of actors. All were greeted with “applause and joyful cheering.” There were floats representing the different trades,

citizens' organizations and public institutions, ranging from the blacksmiths' and locksmiths' guild, the Society of Mutual Aid for Artists, the Society for the Promotion of the Arts, to the masons' association, teachers' association, the Merchants' Union, the press, cultural associations, the army, city and town councils such as Zalamea, Toledo and Granada, whose councillors were preceded by "handsome pages" bearing the shield of the Catholic Kings and a herald bearing the Christian ensign placed by the Count of Tendilla in the Alhambra, when the city of Granada was conquered by the Christians in 1492. Bringing up the rear of the procession were the floats of Spain and the city council. Of course, the whole retinue was escorted by hussars and Civil Guards, who guaranteed the "smooth advance of the procession" through the streets. It was an "event the likes of which had never been seen before" in the history of "solemn celebrations," a "noble manifestation of national fervor" which hoped to "leave an indelible mark on the ardent imaginations of youth and infants ... [associating] them with the veneration of the glories of the fatherland."¹⁹

This celebration was a homage not only to the playwright's genius but also to the nation. It was designed to "draw the attention of other nations," according to the official newspaper of conservative liberalism, "to an event in the organization of which we have imitated nobody, and indeed, the foreigners who have honored us with their presence on this solemn occasion, may perhaps have a fair amount to learn from our original and inventive character." This was a nationalism that suffered from an evident sense of inferiority to other nations, despite these proclamations of creative originality. It also extended to matters that were seemingly trivial but had huge popular impact, such as declaring that the food offered by journalists to the foreign press invited to the event was "a typically Spanish lunch, which included the national Valencian paella." The wines were of course also national and inspired the comment that "when tasted by the foreigners all were of the just opinion that this nation has rightly been called *the wine cellar of Europe*."²⁰ Agreement was not, however, unanimous. There were reactionary sectors who were of the opinion that the Catholic nature of Calderón had not been sufficiently highlighted.²¹ These were no doubt minority forces but were influential ideologically and intellectually.

There was greater nationalist consensus over the fourth centenary of the discovery of America. According to *La Época*, the faith and monarchist patriotism of this achievement expressed the destiny of a “chosen people,” while for *El Liberal* it signified the superiority of a nation that had brought progress to the Americas. They all agreed that it was the most significant contribution of a united Spain, strengthened by the Catholic Kings. It was made clear that the aim of the commemoration was to “bear witness to the solidarity of Spain today with the Spain of that time, to the uninterrupted continuity of the life of our fatherland and of our race, which joins us in spirit with the forceful generations of four centuries ago.”²² On this occasion events were aimed at the international arena. The royal family and the whole government were directly involved. There was also a “public parade” with floats—this time in Huelva—at which the Regent Maria Cristina, the government and the main authorities of the state participated. Newspapers such as *El Liberal* published special editions on 12 October and historians took part in the Americanist congress, which was officially closed by the prime minister and director of the Royal Academy of History, Antonio Cánovas, in the presence of the Regent. At the same time, dissidents held a similar event in Madrid—a Congress of Freethinkers presided over by a portrait of Victor Hugo and opened by Professor Antonio Machado Núñez, emphasizing the hegemonic identity of Spain and the need to establish a republican fraternity with Latin American countries, duly represented by their respective freethinkers.²³

This congress aroused protests from the Catholic reactionaries who called it “profane.” The fourth centenary of the discovery of America was the perfect occasion for the nationalist reactionary forces to launch their arguments in support of the idea that Catholicism was synonymous with Spanishness.²⁴ In the view of the Catholic reactionaries the congress of freethinkers was just as serious a matter as the fact that the Cánovas liberal-conservative government had permitted it, because the “Spanish people, led, or rather misled, by liberalism,” in the words of an official Catholic newspaper, “see with sorrow and shame how the whores of impiety idly prance around Spain’s capital city.” But the subsequent complaints of the reactionaries reveal their true motives; for the people, in whose name the paper claimed to speak,

have hardly an inch of land on which to lay their weary limbs, since all the land of our fatherland is insufficient to bear the fruits seized by the treasury in order to feed the insatiable greed of the liberal State. Heavy is the guilt of those who did not want or did not know how to resist the invasion of the liberal corrupter who destroys and dishonors us.²⁵

At this point in the century, reactionary thought was in direct confrontation with the liberal state over the very Catholicism that this same state proclaimed constitutionally. The reactionaries not only claimed Catholicism as part of the Spanish identity, but, by appealing to Article 11 of the 1876 constitution, which established state confessionality, they were also able to add extra weight to their arguments vis-à-vis the government and even the royal family who were publicly and officially practising Catholics. For this reason, during the month of October 1882, the reactionary sectors spread their message about “the providential mission of the Catholic Church and the Spanish nation in the discovery of the New World.” The aim was to proclaim freethinking as un-Spanish. In response to the freethinkers’ congress, they organized a Catholic congress in Seville, including a mass, in order, among others, to “commemorate the glories of the Church during the discovery of America.”²⁶

Having reached this level of confrontation, the Catholic traditionalists, convinced that the Spanish people—who, they believed, had been chosen to defend the faith before the world and to carry out the special mission of converting the American people—was now in crisis through the fault of liberal materialism promoted by the Cánovas government of liberal conservatives, decided to organize their own centenary celebrations under an exclusively Catholic-Spanish banner, separate from the state event. They had already had two opportunities to monopolize the nation’s memory: the first, in May 1859, on the thirteenth centenary of the so-called “Catholic unity” of Spain with the conversion of Recaredo the Visigothic king (whom we earlier saw immortalized in the paintings decorating the Senate halls) in the year 589; and the second in October 1882, on the third centenary of the death of Saint Teresa. If the religious acts commemorating Saint Teresa mostly exalted the Catholic nature of the Spanish and their missionary capacities (since Spain was the only “land worthy” of such a saint) and consisted of supplications for protec-

tion and strength in the defense of “traditional Catholic Spain” and in the “fight against impiety,” the celebration of Recaredo’s conversion was designed to mark the start of a “prompt religious and social regeneration in our fatherland, which has been so weakened today by rationalism, liberalism and naturalism, as it once was by Arianism before pious, magnanimous King Recaredo came to the throne.”²⁷

Thus, the failure of liberal historiography to create an idea of the nation clearly distinguishable from the Church or the Crown led to a major weakness in the concept of Spain: the representatives of the most reactionary forces argued, not without a certain logic, that if the *raison d’être* of the nation was unity achieved in the name of the Catholic faith, any attack on this faith should be interpreted as an attempt to cast doubt on the nation itself. The Spanish nationalist argument was also weakened by the emergence of various regional nationalist tendencies that rejected the equation between Castile and Spain. This process was particularly evident in the decades around the turn of the century, when, in the name of regenerationism and with the strong political emergence of Catalan nationalism, the identification of Castile with Spain collapsed. This identification had served as a frame of reference for interpreting the evolution of Spain as a nation-state, both in its relations with the rest of the Iberian Peninsula and in its role in the international arena.²⁸ Thus, both the arguments of the regional nationalists (Catalans, Basques, Galicians) and the reactions of the defenders of a single, centralist state provoked the cultural and political fracture of Spain as a nation.

José Ortega y Gasset, one of the most respected Spanish intellectuals, famously remarked that “Castile made Spain and Castile unmade her,” a phrase that has become almost a historiographical and cultural cliché.²⁹ But it was not only those that, like Ortega y Gasset, identified with Castilian-centralist, Spanish nationalism who thought this way. A similar message was conveyed by the regional nationalist tendencies emerging in state politics. One of the main figures of Catalan literature at the beginning of the twentieth century, Joan Maragall, expressed it in words as forthright as Ortega’s:

The Castilian spirit has concluded its mission in Spain ... [it was this that] directed and personified the Renaissance ... [then] came the nineteenth century which enhanced the reputation of parliamentari-

anism. Its men prolonged the mission of shining, sonorous Castile in Spain. But all this is dying and Castile's mission is over. The new civilization is industrial and Castile is not industrial; the modern spirit is analytical and Castile is not analytical; material progress encourages cosmopolitanism and Castile, situated in the center of the African plain, with no view of the sea, is resistant to European cosmopolitanism.... Castile has concluded its mission and must pass the sceptre on to other hands.³⁰

Nonetheless, the identification between Castile and Spain in the nineteenth century had long-term implications for the configuration of Spanish nationalism. Moreover, the hegemonic role given to the Castilian language and literature and the consequent elimination of linguistic and cultural diversity were as essential to the construction of national homogeneity as the removal of political and social barriers that impeded the free movement of individuals. The Castilian language still retains its place as the national language, supported by numerous measures introduced by the state in its favor, even though the Catalan, Basque and Galician languages are just as "Spanish" as Castilian. However, in the nineteenth century these languages were ignored by the state; even today they are regarded as being the sole responsibility of their respective regional governments, as if they do not belong to the state or to the whole of Spain.

Awareness of this asymmetry between Castile and the rest of the Iberian cultures is essential for understanding the situation of cultural coexistence of disparate national identities and cultures in Spain despite the centralization of the state initiated by the Bourbons in the eighteenth century and completed by the Liberals in the nineteenth.³¹ This is why Spanish nationalism still functions today, despite claims that it has weakened and is incapable of hispanicizing all citizens, as if the only way to achieve this were the cultural expansion of Castilian. Indeed, Spanish nationalism today is most aggressive in the cultural-linguistic realm. The highest state authorities turn a blind eye to the plurality recognized in the 1978 Constitution, regarding culture written in Castilian as the only true expression of Spanish culture. The state institutions systematically silence cultural works written in other Spanish languages and focus all their energy on defending Castilian internationally, justified, in their view,

by a market of 300 million Spanish-speakers worldwide. At the same time, they hinder and neglect the promotion of the other languages, as if these were the concern of the corresponding autonomous governments alone.

OLD MEMORIES AND NEW PROBLEMS

Until now we have outlined the change that took place in images of Spain's past as a result of the emergence of the nation-state coinciding with the liberal revolution of the nineteenth century. In the eyes of the Liberals, the nation's existence was based not only on a citizens' agreement or contract, but the culmination of a long historical process as well. Both the liberal Romantics and the traditionalists concurred in viewing the result as a nation with a unique essence and way of being. The similarity of their ideological viewpoint on this essentialist concept had far-reaching consequences for the organization of national power, and hence for subsequent history, which are still perceptible today. The new historical narrative no longer focused on the royal dynasties or the church but related the past of a people in their long pilgrimage toward becoming a nation.³² But what sort of nation was envisaged—a single Castilian-focused Spain as we have seen above, or a federal Spain, as proposed by other intellectuals and politicians? Or perhaps the Catholic Spain of traditions and *fueros* (local rights) was the only possible answer, as the ultra-Catholic traditionalists believed?

Although the historiographical subject changed, the resulting narrative reflected the balance of power within the Spanish state in the nineteenth century. The former narrative of the old regime that had made the Crown and the Church the pivots of its tale, with romantic liberalism and the liberal nation's confessional state, was now replaced by one buttressed by erudition and the latest historiographical methodology. As a result, if, on the one hand, the action of the state laid the foundations of national history as part of the collective memory, on the other, the internal contradictions of that state undermined the nationalist conception of Spain's history. These contradictions have become increasingly obvious as other nationalist tendencies (especially

the Catalan, Basque and Galician) have begun to generate their own interpretations of the past.

Some of Spain's current historiographical debates are in fact a legacy of such unresolved contradictions from the nineteenth century. Thus, for example, the current debate about what has been called "constitutional patriotism" includes everything from neo-Spanish centralism to different kinds of federalism, with history and the past serving as an arsenal of arguments in favor of the respective positions.³³ If Spanish nationalism insists on presenting itself as non-nationalist, as an unquestionable and comprehensive historical reality, while in practice ignoring plurality, regional nationalism will oppose it by also resorting to history to consolidate former identities or even, in the new Autonomous Communities established by the 1978 Constitution, to discover ancestral origins previously forgotten. Hence, from Murcia to Extremadura, from La Rioja and Cantabria to Castilla-La Mancha, ancient customs and local idiosyncrasies are being used today to justify a radically new political structure, arising from the sovereign will of the 1978 Constitution.

The problems posed by this new situation are evident from a recent debate in education over the content of the school syllabus, similar to the debates that have been taking place in various European countries in recent years. The new educational trends, which were implemented in schools during the 1980s and 1990s, have met with considerable criticism by defenders of the old methods of teaching and by concerned parents who believe that their children are not receiving the same kind of knowledge they acquired in their schooldays. In the opinion of these critics, although the current system has granted universal access to education, today's children and young people have no idea of what they are supposed to learn. From time to time columnists and academics have echoed these concerns in the media, complaining about the supposed deficiencies and declining standards in the teaching of the humanities. Defenders of the new methods of teaching have argued that in the cultural revolution of the information era, committing factual data to memory is less important than mastering the tools necessary for retrieving those data.³⁴

The debate in Spain on the changing nature of the teaching of the humanities has taken, however, a peculiar twist. Analysts are not particularly concerned with educational issues, but rather with the impact of

the historical discourses of emergent nationalist claims and their projection into education. The current bill on education (passed in 1990) gave the central government the right to establish the minimum educational requirements for all students throughout the state; however, the autonomies were empowered to determine part of the syllabus: up to 45 percent in the autonomies with their own languages (Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia), and 35 percent elsewhere. This bill attempted to bring the educational system into accord with the constitutional framework of the state, based on the existence of the Autonomous Communities.

This arrangement has particularly affected the teaching of the humanities as the different autonomies have weighted the syllabus in favor of local history, geography and literature, and the distinctive features that justify the *raison d'être* of a given autonomy. The pedagogic rationale behind this stress on localism is that students can acquire a better understanding of the abstract issues addressed by the humanities if they are able to apply them to their own environment. It is clear why the widespread failure to provide straightforward answers to simple historical questions becomes in Spain a major political issue, rather than a matter of educational concern as in other European countries. The problem is perceived not as a sign of declining or changing educational standards, but rather as denoting the failure of the political cohesion of the country. It is feared that if future citizens do not recognize the landmarks of Spanish history, the common references of the nation's past, they will feel no attachment to the state. If local perspectives, deemed as narrow-minded and parochial, replace these common references, for some analysts this is a clear indication of the irreversible breakdown of Spain's unity.

The debate on the school syllabus immediately took this political orientation. Articles in the media compared school texts from different autonomies showing their different perspectives and the different weight given to the same historical events. The word "falsehoods" was widely used to refer to the interpretations of history presented in these school texts. Basque and Catalan nationalists were singled out as inventors of traditions, of a mythical past, which they were trying to inculcate in the younger generation as part of a calculated and long-term political strategy aimed at achieving independence from the central government.

These arguments were actively taken up by the ruling Conservative Party, who thought that the regional education authorities were deliberately downplaying the concept of Spain.³⁵

The debate was polemical but failed to produce fresh pluralist perspectives. The central government resolved the matter with a decree that imposes a more or less uniform nationalist view, although, in accordance with the constitutional framework, the regional governments retain their right to determine a certain part of the history syllabus. This political and historiographical debate, in which both political forces and the highest academic authorities have participated, is a manifestation of the battle being conducted in Spain today to use history in the school curriculum in order to form *Spaniards*, *Basques*, *Canary Islanders*, *Galicians*, and so forth, a battle in which Spanish nationalism is on the offensive.³⁶

The persistence of a nationalist frame of reference in a discipline such as history, which claims to have undergone significant advances both in methodology and in content during the last century, is a complex matter which can be explained by a number of factors. The first of these derives from the very nature of the historical narrative, based on the selection of events. This narrative fits perfectly with the premises of a nationalist discourse which selects those events in the nation's historical evolution that create emotional attachment to its history, perceived not as something distant or neutral but as closely linked to the present. The aim is to construct a narrative in which people are the protagonists, emphasizing the differences between the people of this nation and others. This narrative transmits the dual message that, on the one hand, the people of the nation have existed in the past and still exist in the present, and, on the other, that this legacy from the past demands a commitment to carrying out a future plan. Legacy, commitment and political plan are the three basic premises of nationalist ideologies and constitute the message that is always implicit in the historical narrative sustaining them.

This political dimension of historical memory requires those responsible for shaping this memory, that is, professional historians, to adopt some sort of stance. It is they who are expected to sanction nationalist claims of one kind or another. Generally isolated in their limited areas of expertise, these historians see their work subjected to intense political and social scrutiny and becoming a matter of political controversy

between the various parties in confrontation with each other over various national claims. Professional historians do not feel particularly comfortable in this situation. They prefer to see themselves as “experts,” as the impartial seekers of historical truth with no agenda or political objectives. Indeed, they are disturbed by the tacit or unconscious nationalisms circulating via osmosis through the most rigorous and respected works of their profession.³⁷

In short, nationalism changes all the rules. By demanding from historians the confirmation or rejection of a nation’s existence based on the past, it does not permit impartiality. The problem obviously resides in the fact that historical facts are not as evident as one would hope, that opposing views of an event represent different interpretations and that there is always a more or less convincing line of argument that can be used to support or deny nationalist claims. When there is a confrontation between opposing nationalist tendencies, as in Spain today, each side can always bring in “experts” to support its claim. This gives rise to complex relations with the governing powers which not many historians are willing to recognize but which nonetheless exert a good deal of pressure on their work.³⁸

In any case, the sources of power within a society are located not only in the state but also in other areas of social relations, for example in the capacity to deploy mechanisms of ideological legitimation, not all of which are controlled by the state. Since the nineteenth century the state in Spain has always had to share the means of shaping the socialization process through which images of the past are disseminated with other leading institutions like local councils or the so-called *diputaciones provinciales* that include the local councils of a given province. Although the Cádiz Constitution established national sovereignty as a means of controlling property, production and political activity (the reason for the birth of the nation-state with Spanish liberalism), subsequent development reversed the relation. The state was restricted to supporting the interests of the property-owning classes protected by public institutions.

Indeed, the state did not have the exclusive cultural control that could have created a single historical memory, a single cultural, linguistic and artistic tradition and a single patriotism for all the people of the country. It is true that the state imposed what can be schematically

termed a centralist and Castilian-centered paradigm, particularly through the educational system, with Castilian as the only national language and a historical memory focused on a single historical subject—the Spanish nation—and organized around museums, an artistic heritage and a culture defined by the Romantics as distinctly Spanish. It is also true that the citizens of the state inaugurated by the Liberals began to emerge as a less heterogeneous national Spanish people by virtue of better communications, commercial networks and political and military relations such as elections or military conscription. This process was encouraged by the advantages of sharing the same language and collective memory. There was even an attempt to create an identity by exalting the heroes of the 2 May 1808 uprising in Madrid against the Napoleonic occupation forces.³⁹

However, in nineteenth-century Spain, unlike in other European countries, these processes, initiated by the state, were accompanied by tendencies toward cultural pluralism and political federalism. The liberal state established itself in Spain on the legacy of peoples whose rulers promoted a different cultural memory and who were strong enough to demand their own share of power. Consequently, since the nineteenth century various historical memories have been constructed in Spain, one fostered by the state, focused on Castile and claiming hegemony, and others that foster alternative popular, national identities. In both cases, historiographical explanation has been mostly teleological, converting history into a tale of moral success and giving priority to those who defended or created what were perceived as the essential virtues of each national or regional collective. However, in order to decipher the construction of the various national memories, one would have to reconstruct the process of interaction of social classes and economic interests, political power and social exclusion in such a way as to explain the corresponding sociological supports of the different images of the past, and even to rescue from oblivion those memories that have hardly had the chance to express themselves. For example, how was the Spanish nation, or Catalan or Andalusian identity, perceived by those mothers who for decades rebelled against the system of conscription or who, with their hungry children in their arms, periodically raided the cities' bakeries?⁴⁰

In other words, both Spain and the autonomous regions have been regarded as intrinsically homogeneous entities, each of which necessarily

having different boundaries and characteristics. This model of reality has made existing political divisions fixed and unquestionable. Such images can block or short-circuit the possibilities of open cultural encounters and the understanding that historical processes are in constant flux and transformation, an understanding that is vital for the relationship between Spain and its Autonomous Communities, as well as for placing the history of the whole in relation to other societies and cultures.

All too frequently, texts or proposals make it seem as if the national or autonomous entity is the result of divine providence, merely to ensure the continuing power of its current political leaders.⁴¹ This applies as much to the Autonomous Communities as it does to Spain because in both cases almost divine vocations are invoked and the political borders appear to be the evidence of a fixed historical reality. It is, therefore, particular images of history that endorse a map and territorial divisions which are in reality far from indivisible neither in the case of Spain nor in the case of the regions. It was wars, conflicts and the changing divisions of feudal patrimonies that defined the ever-changing borders which each present political entity—state or regional—now presents as indivisible and immutable. What is more, in the case of Spain, teleology has a theological tinge because the rise of the state is often presented in the textbooks as the expansion of a Christian settlement extending its language and culture from the *meseta* (central plateau of Spain) throughout the globe.

Since the times of the Cádiz Courts, the history of Spain has been identified with Spanish nationalism. The concept of Spain is based on the unquestionable assumption that the state is one single entity, which is itself the diminished legacy of a monarchy whose many possessions were once scattered over the globe. Its vaguely defined, ever-changing borders are also the result of chance however much we map them as immutable since prehistoric times. Historians not only played an important role in creating this concept of Spain, but they still provide arguments in support of the various competing versions. For example, some of the most recent, prestigious syntheses of the history of Spain have a new focus, that of the *normalization* of Spain's past within the European context.⁴² After decades of emphasizing how "Spain is different," today the most up-to-date scholarship is now used to highlight the similarities between Spain and the rest of Europe in order to normalize

the present. This should no doubt be seen in the context of Spain's political and economic integration into the European Union since 1986. However, this approach, too, leaves many blanks in Spain's past. The Europe toward which it orients itself is decidedly "Western," excluding Tsarist, Orthodox Russia and disregarding the question whether the agrarian, Christian Mediterranean can be understood without the Muslim Mediterranean. To judge by the tone of most of these works, they take for granted a uniform Europe of triumphant capitalism. But Spain's pace was always several steps behind the development of modern capitalism.

The most recently published books on the general history of Spain, such as those mentioned here, still reflect the persistent, underlying, unresolved debate about the link between the state and the nationalism promoted by that state. This problem becomes even more complex when the state is confused with the monarchy in order to date it back to Visigothic times.⁴³ In short, Spain is a nation that was formed as a result of the expansionist trends which drove the nation-state created in the Cádiz Courts to establish itself as the only significant national entity. Its historical development should therefore be examined not only through an analysis of ideas but rather through unraveling the different interests involved in such a concept of sovereignty and in a Spain that was primarily created as a "home market for the sale of church lands." Hence, in order to understand the apparent fluctuations, weaknesses or breakdown of Spanish nationalism since the nineteenth century, it is necessary to examine, not the conceptions of Spanish identity, but the origins of the ruling elite and the economic and social forces at play. Their result has been that during the two centuries of the single state's existence broad sectors of the population have been either marginalized or opposed to the idea of the Spanish nation, continuing to exist in a perplexing situation of semi-integration.

NOTES

1. On the character of nationalisms and the leading role of states in the formation of national identities, as part of the general process of the expansion of capitalism, see the classic works: Eric J. Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990); Anthony Smith, *Theories*

of *Nationalism* (New York, 1971); Ernest Gellner, *Culture, Identity and Politics* (Cambridge, 1987); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London, 1983); Michail Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (Cambridge, 1985); John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (New York, 1992); Gil Delannoi and Pierre André Taguieff, eds., *Théories du nationalisme* (Paris, 1991); Carlos Forcadell, ed., *Nacionalismo e historia* (Zaragoza, 1998); Montserrat Guibernau, ed., *Nacionalisme: Debats i dilemes per a un nou millenni* (Barcelona, 2000); and Montserrat Guibernau "El nacionalismo en tiempos de globalización," *New Left Review*, no. 1 (2000).

2. Constitution of 1812, Art. 1.

3. Juan Sisinio Pérez Garzón, "La nación, sujeto y objeto del Estado liberal español," *Historia Contemporánea*, no. 17 (1998): 119–38.

4. Francesc Andreu Martínez Gallego, "Entre el himno de Riego y la marcha real: La nación en el proceso revolucionario español," in Manuel Chust, ed., *Revoluciones y revolucionarios en el mundo hispano* (Castelló de la Plana, 2000), 115–72.

5. For a useful survey of recent research on this topic, see *Historia Social*, no. 40 (2001).

6. For an analysis of connections between private interests and public reason, see José A. Piqueras Arenas, "Negocios y política en el siglo XIX español," in Javier Paniagua and José Antonio Piqueras, eds., *Poder económico y poder político*, (Valencia, 1998), 11–52.

7. Carlos Reyero, *La escultura conmemorativa en España: La Edad de Oro del monumento público, 1820–1914* (Madrid, 1999), 393.

8. Carlos Reyero, "Los temas históricos en la pintura española del siglo XIX," in idem, *La Pintura de Historia del siglo XIX en España* (Madrid, 1992), 50.

9. On the role of history and geography teaching, see José Luis Peset, Santiago Garma, and Juan Sisinio Pérez Garzón, *Ciencias y enseñanza en la revolución burguesa* (Madrid, 1978); Antonio Viñao Frago, *Política y educación en los orígenes de la España Contemporánea* (Madrid, 1982); Horacio Capel et al., *Ciencia para la burguesía: Renovación pedagógica y enseñanza de la geografía en la revolución liberal española, 1814–1857* (Barcelona, 1983); Angels Martínez Bonafé, *Ensenyament, burgesia i liberalisme* (Valencia, 1983); J. García Puchol, *Los textos escolares de Historia en la enseñanza española: 1808–1900. Análisis de su estructura y contenido* (Barcelona, 1993); H. Capel et al., *Geografía para todos: La geografía en la enseñanza española durante la segunda mitad del s. XIX* (Barcelona, 1985); and more recently R. Cuesta Fernández, *Sociogénesis de una disciplina escolar: La Historia* (Barcelona, 1997); R. López Facal, "O concepto de nación no ensino da historia" (Ph.D. diss., Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 1999); Carolyn P. Boyd, *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875–1975* (Princeton, 1997).

10. Alejandro Marcos Pous, "Origen y desarrollo del Museo Arqueológico Nacional," in idem, ed., *De Gabinete a Museo Tres siglos de historia del Museo Arqueológico Nacional* (Madrid, 1983), 26–27; Cristina González Sánchez, "La primera inauguración del Museo Arqueológico Nacional," in ibid., 126.

11. Inmaculada Zaragoza, Feliciano Novoa Portela and Enrique Pérez Cañamares, "El MAN durante el sexenio revolucionario (1868–1974)," *Boletín del Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, IV (1986), 192.

12. On these collections see the section "El Museo en el Casino de la Reina desde Septiembre de 1868 a Julio de 1885: Las Grandes Colecciones," in Pous, ed., *De Gabinete a Museo*, 261–376.

13. Pous, "Origen y desarrollo del Museo Arqueológico Nacional," 52.

14. André Chastel, "La notion de patrimoine," in Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1997), 1:1433–69.

15. Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New*, 2d ed. (London, 1991).

16. The Catalan case should be explained bearing in mind other factors, which have recently been discussed by, for example, Pere Anguera, *Els precedents del catalanisme: Catalanitat i anticentralisme: 1808–1868* (Barcelona, 2000); and Borja de Riquer i Permanyer, *Identitats contemporànies: Catalunya i Espanya*, (Vic, 2000).

17. This rupture has its roots in the 18th-century monarchy, as shown by Antonio Morales Moya, "El Estado de la Ilustración," in Guillermo Gortázar, ed., *Nación y Estado en la España liberal* (Madrid, 1994), 15–75.

18. See José Varela Suanzes-Carpegna, *La teoría del Estado en los orígenes del constitucionalismo hispánico* (Madrid, 1983.)

19. See the descriptions in *La Época*, *El Imparcial*, *La Iberia*, *El Liberal*, *El Siglo Futuro* and *El Progreso*, 25 May 1881.

20. For a description of the event, see *La Época*, 25 May 1881.

21. Since the homage had foreign guests, the traditionalist slogans recited by the historian Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo were intended to be provocative: "A toast to the Catholic faith which is the essence, and the greater and more beautiful substance of our theology, our philosophy, our literature and our art ... a toast to the Spanish nation, amazon of the Latin race, of which it was shield and barrier against Germanic barbarism." *La Cruz*, no. 1 (1881).

22. This quote is taken from *La Época*, 12 Oct. 1892, but similar ones can be found in the rest of the press.

23. *El Liberal* 13 Oct. 1892.

24. *El Siglo Futuro*, 13 Oct. 1892.

25. Ibid.

26. Quotations from issues of *El Siglo Futuro* published from 17 to 21 Oct. 1892.

27. Manifiesto of the Juventud Católica from Vitoria, as cited in *El Siglo Futuro*, 4 May 1889.

28. For a thoughtful analysis of this question, see Julio Carabaña, "De Castilla como nación, región y desolado paisaje," *Negaciones* 4 (1978): 97–136.

29. José Ortega y Gasset, *España invertebrada: Bosquejo de algunos pensamientos históricos* (Madrid, 1998), 48.

30. Published in *La Lectura* (1902): 27.

31. José Luis de la Granja, Justo Beramendi and Pere Anguera, *La España de los nacionalismos y las autonomías* (Madrid, 2001.)

32. See note 9 above for references on the teaching of history. See also Juan Sisinio Pérez Garzón et al., *La gestión de la memoria: La historia de España al servicio del poder* (Barcelona, 2000.)

33. The two main political parties in Spain today (the conservative Partido Popular and the Partido Socialista Obrero Español) are producing a considerable amount of literature on the topic of "constitutional patriotism" and on how Spain should be organized in order to take account of the identities and histories of different peoples.

34. See John Sutherland, "Do These Results Matter?" *The Guardian*, 28 Oct. 2000.

35. See the contributions by Ramón Villares, Javier Tusell, Carlos Forcadell and Antonio Morales in José Ortiz de Orruño, ed., *Historia y sistema educativo*, special issue of *Ayer*, no. 30 (1998); see also the special issue of *Con-Ciencia Social*, no. 4 (2000), which is dedicated to nationalisms and humanities education.

36. See, for example, the collective work by the Real Academia de la Historia, *España: Reflexiones sobre el ser de España* (Madrid, 1997), in which members of this institution decided that the occasion was ripe to implement one of the aims of the Academy included in its founding statutes written back in 1738: "to clarify the important truth of the events, dismissing the fables created by ignorance or malice." For a critique of this volume, see Juan Sisinio Pérez Garzón in *El País*, 9 Dec. 1998.

37. Eduardo Manzano, "Nacionalismo e Historia," in Pérez Garzón et al., *La gestión de la memoria*, 32–62.

38. This analysis has been carried out in a number of recent works; see, for examples, the articles by Juan Sisinio Pérez Garzón, "Sobre manuales de historia de España," *Teoría*, no. 6 (1981): 41–59; "El debate nacional en España: Ataduradas y ataderos del romanticismo medievizante," *Ayer*, no. 36 (1999): 159–75; and "Los mitos fundacionales y el tiempo de la unidad imaginada del nacionalismo español," *Historia Social*, no. 40 (2001): 7–27.

39. See the article in this volume by Paloma Aguilar and Carsten Humlebæk, "Collective Memory and National Identity in the Spanish Democracy: The Legacy of Francoism and the Civil War," pp. 121–64 above.

40. Carlos Serrano, *Le tour du peuple: Crise nationale, mouvements populaires et populisme en Espagne (1890–1910)* (Madrid, 1987).

41. On these texts and proposals, see Pérez Garzón, "Los mitos fundacionales."

42. This historiographical trend has been developed in works on economic history such as: Gabriel Tortella, *El desarrollo de la España contemporánea: Historia económica de los siglos XIX y XX* (Madrid, 1994); David R. Ringrose, *España, 1700–1900: El mito del fracaso* (Madrid, 1996); Juan Pablo Fusi and Jordi Palafox, *España, 1808–1996: El desafío de la modernidad* (Madrid, 1997); José Luis García Delgado and José Carlos Jiménez, *Un siglo de España: La economía* (Madrid and Barcelona, 1999); and Gonzalo Anes, ed., *Historia económica de España: Siglos XIX y XX* (Barcelona, 1999). For a survey of this revisionist approach, see Santos Juliá, "Anomalía, dolor y fracaso de España," *Claves de Razón práctica*, no. 66 (Oct. 1996); and Carlos Dardé Morales, *La idea de España en la historiografía del siglo XX* (Santander, 1999).

43. See, for instance, Joseph Perez, *Historia de España* (Barcelona, 1998); and Miguel Artola, *La Monarquía Española* (Madrid, 1999).