

# INTRODUCTION

## NOURISHING CATALAN NATIONALISM



When I first arrived in Catalonia, in the summer of 2008, I was like most of the 32 million tourists who visit Barcelona every year. I expected a typically ‘Spanish’ holiday experience, to practice Castilian Spanish, and eat *tapas*. Yet it soon became clear that another language and identity was very visibly and audibly present, called ‘Catalan’. Later, when my family and I travelled to Empordà, in the northeast, Catalan became even more prominent. In a small restaurant, we could find menus in Catalan, English and several other European languages – but not in Castilian. The food was clearly not the *paella* or *tapas* I had expected, but rich stews, combinations of meat and seafood, and fruit mixed with savoury dishes. This presence of a clear, strong,



**Figure 0.1** ‘The Yolk of the Egg’: Vic’s Plaça Major (Central Square) in January 2018. Note the ‘Free Political Prisoners’ banner, and the pro-independence *estelada* flag on the town hall in corner of the square to the right. Photograph by the author.

Catalan identity intrigued me. Years later, as I studied nationalism during a masters in social anthropology at Oxford University, I was continually brought back to memories of a summer in Catalonia. My curiosity piqued, I delved further into Catalan nationalism for a doctorate in anthropology, to see how national identity is expressed in everyday life.

My aim here is to consider how food is used to express Catalan national identity in the Catalan Autonomous Community (CAC) of Spain. I seek to improve understanding of the lived realities (Llobera, 2004) of nationalisms and to do so through an ethnography of ‘national’ foods in Catalonia. I argue that, due to its quotidian and essential nature, food is an excellent means of studying the mundane, everyday, lived aspects of such movements. In doing so, I also aim to elucidate the ways in which food can be used to study nationalist movements more generally.

Ernest Gellner described nationalism as ‘a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones’ (Gellner, 1983: 1). While I believe this is a useful definition, the use of the term ‘ethnic’ begs a number of questions. I shall therefore draw on the anthropological sensibility of Benedict Anderson (1983: 6) that a nation is ‘an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’, with cultural roots as the source of its power. His concept of this ‘imagined community’ is the most useful theory of nationalism when dealing with Catalan nationalism, especially in the arena of food.

The Catalan political theorist Montserrat Guibernau provides the most accurate definition of nationalism for the Catalan case, as ‘a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future, and claiming the right to rule itself’ (Guibernau, 2002: 3). Guibernau believes that nationalism itself is the ‘sentiment of belonging to a community whose members identify with a set of symbols, beliefs and ways of life, and have the will to decide upon their common political destiny’ (ibid.). Anthony Smith’s notion of a ‘common, mass public culture’ and a ‘common economy’ (Smith, 1991: 14) as part of his definition of nationalism is also instructive in the Catalan case, because these are two fundamental parts of the Catalan national identity today, a fact that shall become apparent throughout this ethnography.

Now is an interesting time to study Catalan nationalism, due to recent political events, including the contested independence referendum of 1 October 2017. This event was the culmination of a rise in support for the Catalan independence movement within the Catalan Autonomous Community (henceforth, I will call it by its most common moniker ‘Catalonia’, or the ‘*Principat*’), which has gained force since approximately 2005 (Cramer, 2014). Nationalism has perhaps been one of the most

enduring ideologies of modern times, rather than an example of false consciousness that will simply go away. Indeed, national identities have gained an almost untouchable reverence, and have 'acquired a privileged status as a resource or bargaining chip, a card which is difficult to trump, the defence of which does not have to be justified' (Jenkins, 2000: 159). Whilst globalisation produces weak states it does not accordingly weaken nationalism, and can even have the opposite effect as nations seek to reassert a political or cultural identity they feel to be at threat, perhaps due to globalisation itself (Pratt, 2003; Castells, 2004). Simultaneously, globalisation has also produced a renewed interest in local food cultures and traditional foodways (Freedman, 2007), which has ramifications for the construction of national cuisines (Ichijo and Ranta, 2016).

Despite the continuing power of nationalism and national identity in the twenty-first century, we are still lacking a consideration of their lived aspects (Llobera, 2004; Edensor 2003; MacClancy, 2007), although promising steps have been taken with the consideration of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) and everyday nationalism (Skey, 2011). Michael Billig's theories are useful in relating to Catalonia, although Catalan nationalism is a cultural, civic nationalism, as opposed to a state-based nationalism (Llobera, 2004), which is the focus of Billig's approach. For Billig, we need to understand 'why people in the contemporary world do not forget their nationality' (Billig, 1995: 7) outside of crisis moments, and how national identity becomes commonplace and routine. This is done by more subtle means, such as the hanging of national flags in prominent places, the language by which people think about nationhood and their situatedness in a homeland.

The shying away from studying the lived realities of nationalism may be thanks to Gellner's view that 'their precise doctrines are hardly worth analysing' (Gellner, 1983: 124), because nationalism springs not from a particular set of circumstances but from a common social condition. He did modify his position somewhat in later life, but still denied the importance of culture to nationalism (MacClancy, 2007). In cultural nationalisms, identity is borne by institutions and practices in civil society and the shared values inherent in such a society (Keating, 1996), thus it is important to gain an 'emic' understanding of why nationalisms occur (Pi-Sunyer, 1983). To do so, one must consider cultural dynamics, as purely economic and political arguments do not suffice. Jeremy MacClancy recommends that to study nationalism we must look at the 'everyday, unofficial nationalism' (MacClancy, 2007: 14), based not on politics, but on everyday interaction.

I am inspired by the late anthropologist Josep Llobera's (2004) call for a better understanding of nationalisms through the anthropological study of their 'subjective feelings or sentiments' and 'concomitant elements of consciousness' (Llobera, 2004: 188). As he bluntly states, 'We cannot make

a scientific inventory of the social facts of nationalism, for the simple reason that we lack the basic building blocks: good monographic studies of nations' (ibid.: 184). He attempts to examine these cultural aspects of nationalist movements in his work *Foundations of National Identity*, a seminal work on Catalonia. With this ethnography I hope to contribute to these 'building blocks' by considering Catalan national identity (Catalanism) through the perspective of food. I do so against the backdrop of a fraught relationship with the Spanish state that has given rise to the pro-independence movement in Catalonia, a movement that has gained strength over the last decade and brought questions of Catalan national identity into sharp focus for the area's population.

In this introduction I will detail why I believe food is a beneficial means for studying nationalisms, including some useful practical case studies that provide pointers for Catalonia. I then give a brief history of Catalonia and the nationalist movement, which is essential for understanding the contemporary situation, which I will also describe. As a further introduction to Catalan nationalism, I will introduce some of its key components and symbols, which are useful for understanding the rest of this ethnography. Next, I will outline my methods for data collection, including an introduction to my fieldsite of Vic. Before outlining the rest of this book, I define my approach to questions of identity, performance and power, as well as the scope and limitations of this work.

## **Food as National Identity**

Food might at first not seem an obvious choice for studying a politicised ideology such as nationalism. Yet, food is one of the fundamental ways that particular human societies have differentiated themselves from others and asserted a separate identity. The act of eating 'lies at the point of intersection of a whole series of intricate, physiological, psychological, ecological, economic, political, social and cultural processes' (Beardsworth and Keil, 1996: 6). Food is central to our sense of identity, a means of expressing in-group affiliation and delineating boundaries, demarcating insiders from outsiders (Fischler, 1988; Bell and Valentine, 1997; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993). Food helps to reveal the 'rich and messy textures of our attempts at self-understanding' (Narayan, 1995: 64).

In seeking to study the lived reality of nationalisms, food as an everyday point of reference is a useful lens through which to consider such movements. Catherine Palmer (1998), inspired by Billig (1995), considers food to be one of three 'flags' or cultural objects with which national sentiments are associated in everyday practice (the others are the related concepts of

the body and landscape). Jeremy MacClancy, based on his experiences in the Basque country, suggests that ‘turning foodstuffs and dishes into bearers of national identity is a down-to-earth way to make an otherwise abstract ideology more familiar, domestic, even palatable’ (MacClancy 2007: 68). This approach also applies to Catalonia, where questions of national identity permeate every aspect of life. More recently, Atsuko Ichijo and Ronald Ranta, on focusing on the specific topic of food and national identity, have claimed that:

Practising and asserting national identity through food means making choices and decisions that provide direct links to, among others, the nation’s perceived or imagined history, social traditions, culture and geography. Through these decisions and choices people get to ‘perform the nation’. (Ichijo and Ranta, 2016: 8)

This performative aspect is beneficial for understanding modern nationalisms, which are increasingly viewed as continually evolving, changing processes, rather than as static objects (Raviv, 2015). On a practical level, food is also useful for entering informant discourses in national arenas as a more ‘palatable’ subject than controversial issues such as language or politics, which may alienate potential informants (a factor also recognised by Avieli, 2018). Choosing food as a subject of study is therefore both a research strategy and a research focus. I do not wish to argue that food is the most important delineator of Catalan identity. This role falls to the Catalan language, the most prominent means by which Catalans differentiate themselves from the ‘Other’, namely Castilian-speaking Spain. Still, like language, food is a thread that runs through all manifestations of Catalan identity, due to its ability to carry ‘powerful meanings and structures under the cloak of the mundane and the quotidian’ (Sutton, 2001: 3).

Useful terms of reference for this phenomenon (and which will be used throughout this work) are ‘gastronationalism’ (DeSoucey, 2010) and ‘culinary nationalism’ (Ferguson, 1998). Sociologist Michaela DeSoucey (2010), defines ‘gastronationalism’ thus:

The use of food production, distribution, and consumption to demarcate and sustain the emotive power of national attachment, as well as the use of nationalist sentiments to produce and market food ... It presumes that attacks (symbolic or otherwise) against a nation’s food practices are assaults on heritage and culture, not just on the food item itself. (DeSoucey, 2010: 433)

DeSoucey recognises that gastronationalism often acts as a tool for state intervention, something that has also been recognised by Ichijo and Ranta (2016) and Di Giovine and Brulotte (2014). The protection of certain foods as carriers of national identity, even in the face of international criticism

(or *because* of it, as in the case of *foie gras*), is a means of protecting the nation. As Ferguson (1998) has demonstrated when considering the development of French cuisine in the nineteenth century, this process can work both externally and internally. As French cuisine developed its international reputation for excellence, so too did the cuisine of the centre (as well as language and norms) become imposed on the periphery to create a unified French nation that subsumed regional products and dishes into the whole (Ferguson, 1988).

On regional cuisines, there is some debate about when the regional becomes national, and vice-versa. Sidney Mintz (1996) categorically stated that national cuisines cannot exist, because cuisines belong to a region, never a country. So-called national cuisine can only exist in contrast to some other national cuisine, 'a holistic artifice based on the foods of the people who live inside some political system, such as France or Spain' (Mintz, 1996: 104). The illusion of national cuisines remains because regions contribute chefs and ideas. While perceptive (one can draw parallels to the raising of folk culture to national culture – Gellner, 1983), Mintz is arguably too keen to oversimplify reality by presuming the existence of a nation-state, while forgetting that states may contain more than one nation (like Spain). Despite his shortcomings, Mintz's concept of 'signature foods' (1996: 7) is a useful one for this work. These are foods positioned within the histories of those who have eaten them, through which they become 'conditioned with meaning'. Through regular consumption, a population comes to consider themselves experts on this cuisine.

Rachel Laudan (2013) agrees with Mintz that familiarity is a basic element of cuisines in the milieu where they are eaten, but she also accepts the existence of national cuisines. I will adopt her definition of national cuisine henceforth:

A national cuisine is usually thought to be one which is familiar to all citizens, eaten by all of them, at least on occasion, and found across the entire national territory, perhaps with regional variations. It is assumed to have a long continuous history, and to reflect and contribute to the national character. (Laudan, 2013: 324)

While accepting the existence of national cuisines (as an example of 'invented tradition', Hobsbawm, 1983) she highlights that these cuisines are recent, nineteenth-century constructions. The modern concept of national cuisines came into being with the arrival of nation-states. In this period, the centralisation of the nation-state, industrialisation, internationalisation and urbanisation were all intertwined, leading to the rise of 'middling cuisines' and homogenous eating habits and diets. By the early-twentieth century,

national cuisines were a useful tool for citizens to understand the abstract concept of their own or others' national identities.

Ichijo and Ranta (2016) have systematically addressed the relationship between national identity, nationalism and food. Like MacClancy, they argue that the study of food and nationalism 'sheds light on a variety of dimensions of politics and the way it matters to us' (Ichijo and Ranta, 2016: 1), as a form of 'everyday nationalism'. They approach the topic from three areas: unofficial/bottom up (phenomena that are not controlled by the nation-state), official/top-down (mediated by the nation-state, i.e. 'gastronationalism' *sensu strictu*) and at the global level (how the nation-state interacts with global actors via food). While I believe their approach somewhat dichotomises social reality, (it may not be possible to neatly categorise every instance of the interaction between food and nationalism), and I take a broader interpretation of gastronationalism than either theirs or DeSoucey's (that it can be used to describe sentiments from the bottom up), some of their conclusions are highly relevant for this work.

## Gastronationalism in Action

There have been few in-depth, direct studies of the intersection of food and national identity, and such literature has often been a by-product of other research. That said, this situation has begun to change in recent years. Wilk's work (1999) on Belizean cuisine is a key text in understanding national cuisine and identity. Belizean nationalism is comparatively young (they achieved independence in 1981), and in cross-national encounters it became clear that a cohesive national cuisine was necessary to present Belize as a nation on a global scale. Thus, interactions with globalisation were essential for developing Belizean national cuisine. Often, national foods were former festival foods, or 'poor' dishes that were converted into national cuisine – a similar process to that of international Italian cuisine (Helstosky, 2004). Goody (1982) recognised a comparable process amongst Ghanaian elites, who showed a preference for local as opposed to European foods to oppose colonial rule.

Two contributions from José Sobral and Maria Yotova in Domingos, Sobral and West's *Food Between the Country and the City: Ethnographies of a Changing Global Foodscape* (2014) raise the questions of both the idealisation of rurality (and, by implication, the past) as well as the importance of social changes, and global trends, in the industrialisation of food. Sobral demonstrates that in the nineteenth century the countryside was defended as a cradle of authentic Portuguese national cuisine. As in the rest of Europe, this occurred against a background of cultural and political nationalism that

gained pace with urbanisation. The rural linked both past and present as the only place to grow proper Portuguese products for use in 'traditional' cuisine. More recently, Portugal saw a rejection of fast food and demand for so-called traditional foods and 'authentic' cuisine towards the end of the twentieth century, part of a global criticism of the agro-food industry (Belasco, 2007; Pratt, 2007).

The rural ideal also plays a part in Yotova's account of Bulgarian yoghurt in national identity construction. The rural is made manifest in the figure of the grandmother and of old-fashioned 'grandmother's yoghurt' (DeSoucey, 2010, noted a similar role of grandmother's *foie gras* production). The village is seen as the cradle of Bulgarian national identity, and as in Portugal it is these places that are regarded as keeping culinary traditions alive. Despite this official discourse, modernity is crucial to the development of this narrative. The industrialisation of food in the Communist era was essential for creating this 'traditional' food, when a formerly regional, seasonal product could finally become an everyday 'source of national essence' (Yotova, 2014: 177). Bulgaria and Portugal also show well how food and cuisine becomes intimately connected with notions of landscape and territory, artefacts that feature frequently in nationalist ideologies.

Sobral recognises the important role of cookbooks in national cuisine and places them in parallel with B. Anderson's concept of imagined communities, by their 'establishing boundaries and identifying certain dishes and recipes as national; hence, they are a powerful instrument for the reification of national cuisines' (Sobral, 2014: 150). Arjun Appadurai (1988) has contributed substantially to the discussion of cookbooks as creators and disseminators of national cuisine (his work is discussed in more detail in the next chapter). MacClancy (2007) also dedicates an entire chapter in his ethnography of Basque nationalism to this subject.

Like DeSoucey (2010), MacClancy also considers the political dimension of the promotion of cuisine by politicians. As a key part of European identities, food and drink has been central to many of the policies of the EEC and CAP (Delamont, 1995), and the decision to protect certain products can become a means of self-promotion and national identity assertion, for example, feta cheese in Greece when opposed to Danish 'feta' (Sutton, 2001; DeSoucey 2010). In this case, foods express national identities in the context of the European Union, a phenomenon also noted by Klumbyte (2009) with the 'Euro' versus 'Soviet' brand sausage in Lithuania. As Leitch (2003: 442) has pointed out, 'food and identity are becoming like the 'Euro,' a single common discursive currency through which to debate Europeaness and the implications of economic globalization'. National foods can appear in cases of 'gastrodiplomacy', a top-down gastronationalism strategy considered by Ichijo and Ranta (2016) in the case of Global Thai initiative.

Clearly, a connection with the past is a common feature in discussions about national cuisine. David Sutton (2001) considers the relationship between the senses and memory on the Greek island of Kalymnos, where food plays a leading role. He briefly discusses B. Anderson's theory of an imagined community, but finds it too limiting in a practical, emotional, lived sense. Inspired by Billig (1995) Sutton believes that something more embodied (i.e. food) is required to prevent people forgetting their national identity alongside many other shifting identities. Food creates memories that can be significant on an individual and regional level, which become national with travel, migration and interaction with non-Greek communities. His work is part of a corpus of 'anthropology of the senses', which has much relevance to the anthropological study of food. However, I have found it less useful for the study of Catalan gastrationalism. Based on the experiences of fieldwork, it appeared that shared senses, while important for the individual and familial experience of food, were less relevant in creating national identity affiliation.

Roland Barthes sees food advertising in France as showing clearly that 'food permits a person ... to partake each day of the national past' (Barthes, 1961: 27). This fact has come into sharp relief with the development of heritage cuisines, particularly as intangible heritage for humanity in recent UNESCO designations. According to Michael Di Giovine and Ronda Brulotte (2014), in the introduction to their *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*, food becomes heritage when it has the capacity to bind groups together in commensal spaces that may stretch across space and time, allowing groups to feel a connectedness with their ancestral past. The same could also be said of national foods. The commercial interests at stake in these designations should not be ignored, nor their ramifications at a governmental level. At the same time, most of these 'local foodways' (French, Mexican, Mediterranean) have international recognition and a tourist industry (downplayed during the nominations). Kim (2016) on Korean Kimchi, recognised as a UNESCO intangible heritage in 2013, has demonstrated that the food's association with Korea was a result of concerted efforts by the Korean government to 'establish *kimchi* as the embodiment of Korean culture and identity' (Kim, 2016: 40). Despite the application presenting *kimchi* as an ancestral, authentic product, the industrialisation of *kimchi*, and international competition with Japan and China, were crucial in *kimchi*'s development as a national food. Ichijo and Ranta (2016) have considered the role of national entrepreneurs in developing culinary imagined communities in regard to the British catering industry. Yet more interesting is their conclusion that these applications may be symptomatic of an underlying identity crisis.

Several contributions from Hanna Garth's (2013) *Food and Identity in the Caribbean* are also instructive. Schacht (2013) describes how the hardy

cassava plant and its fruit have come to symbolise the Makushi people of Guyana, as a ‘we food’. Cassava consumption differentiates Makushi from other Guyanese groups, indicating how foods can come to represent peoples symbolically. Considering Guyana more generally, Richards-Greaves (2013) describes how the Guyanese in turn claim difference from other Caribbean cuisines through their combination of spices and culinary procedures, the flavour of their food and the insistence on homegrown produce. This is also seen in Cuba (Garth, 2013b), where the emphasis is also placed on food grown in a particular region associated with its history (though ironically Cuba imports most of its food). Cuba has its own dish that represents national identity, the *ajiaco*, a stew that contains a variety of different ingredients that symbolise the Cuban people. In both Cuba and Guyana, the culinary *combinations* of food give dishes a unique, national character, even if their ingredients are foreign (a similar process occurs in Catalonia, which shares its ingredients with much of the Mediterranean, but has unusual food combinations – Vackimes, 2013).

Also in South America, Jane Fajans’ (2012) ethnography *Brazilian Food: Race, Class and Identity in Regional Cuisines*, considers how the regional interacts with the national, and the global, through cuisine. She describes the processes some foods have undergone to change from regional to national or global foods, or how others symbolically represent the nation itself (e.g. rice and beans as symbol of racial mixing). Inspired by B. Anderson, she underlines the importance of everyday foods as national foods, but also of foods eaten regularly on special occasions, e.g. *feijoada* for Saturday lunch: ‘*feijoada* is eaten by “everyone” at the same time on the same day, thus allowing everyone to embody and share its essence and identity’ (Fajans, 2012: 96).

*Feijoada’s* history as a poor dish, associated with slaves, also helped its status. However, the more complex class relations implicit in the historical consumption and preparation of this dish are de-emphasised, another common theme in the development of national foods. Fajans also considers the role of the restaurant industry in the preservation of regional cuisines, which has implications of class, self-consciousness and culinary evolution. Finally, she emphasises the important role that migration, internationalism and tourism have on the creation of different perceptions of the ‘national’.

Steffan Igor Ayora-Diaz’s (2012) work on cuisine and identity in the Yucatan provides a parallel with Catalonia. Both regions have a unique identity, the result of historical developments, and both see the imposition of a central Mexican or Spanish national identity as a homogenising, threatening and even neo-colonialist force, which attempted to silence regional differences, or co-opt aspects of regional cuisines to become national. In both regions, the regional elite in the nineteenth century had enough power and

resources to resist this force and assert their own heterogeneity, although support for separatism in the Yucatan withered, unlike in Catalonia. In the Yucatan, two forms of cuisine have resulted from this situation: the culinary and the gastronomic fields. In the first, there is an emphasis on cosmopolitanism, openness and the adaptation of different cultural traditions to local tastes, and this implies an inclusivity and progressiveness – a situation that is likewise idealised in Catalonia (which I discuss further in Chapter Three). The second is the gastronomic field, which was inspired by the dishes of local communities using local ingredients, creating a more restrictive, exclusive cuisine unique and one specific to the Yucatan, with specific rules, techniques and aesthetics. In this context, Yucatan identity and gastronomy served two purposes: ‘on the one hand, they underline the specificities of local culture and society and local–cosmopolitan relations, on the other, they affirm the Yucatecans’ opposition and resistance to central Mexican culture and power structures’ (Ayora-Diaz, 2012: 26).

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney’s *Rice as Self* (1993) follows the history of rice in Japan and its centrality in Japanese identity. Of particular significance is the image of the rice paddy and its landscape. Rice cultivation represents not just ‘our food’, but also ‘our land’, as well as the common theme of a glorification of rural life. Land and seasonality become connected with national identity through food and agriculture.

Finally, there has been an increased focus in recent years on gastronationalism in Israel. Yael Raviv’s *Falafel Nation* (2015) and Nir Avieli’s (2018) ethnography *Food and Power* both provide contrasting insights into the role of food in the development of an Israeli national identity over the last century. Raviv’s approach to both food and national culture as a process that is continually reforming and evolving is beneficial to understanding the intersection of food and national identity. Liora Gvion’s *Beyond Hummus and Falafel* (2012) focuses on how the Palestinian community in Israel uses food to assert their identity in contrast to the dominant, Zionist state narrative, a situation that in some ways (though not others) parallels that of Catalonia within Spain.

The presence of this newly emergent body of literature is a sign that the intersection of food and national identity is an increasingly relevant one in studies of food in society, identity politics and nationalism, particularly the everyday realities of nationalist movements. In all these examples, food provides a mirror through which to study national identities and surrounding issues. The relationship between the regional and national, urban–rural relations, the role of history and the idealisation of the past, the influence of governmental structures, the influence of globalisation and the creation of identity through difference are all factors that play into this topic, and will be relevant to the discussion in later chapters.

## **A Brief History of Catalonia**

There is a massive literature on Catalan history, and much work on Catalan identity has had a strong historical element to it. As a shared history is so central to contemporary Catalanism, it is sometimes difficult to separate objective history from nationalistic narratives (Bray, 2011). In the words of the anthropologist Gary W. McDonogh, ‘the development of historiography in modern Catalonia has reflected that of economic and political life’ (McDonogh, 1986: 33). The earliest document to refer to the Catalan people by name dates from 1117. The oldest written text to be written entirely in a recognisable form of Catalan dates from 1131. There is still uncertainty over the origin of the name ‘Catalonia’, but a popular view holds that it originates from ‘Gothalonia’, a reference to the pre-Islamic Visigothic period (Chaytor, 1933).

In 1137 Aragon was united with Catalonia through a dynastic union. Thanks to a flourishing empire that included at various times Sicily, Sardinia, Naples, Malta and parts of Greece, Catalonia–Aragon became prosperous through its principle port of Barcelona. In 1283, Pere III (who has the epithet of ‘the Great’ in Catalonia) officially instituted the Catalan Corts (or Court), by which his descendants would be bound. The Corts convened once a year, and in the mid-fourteenth century the Corts created a new governing body to act outside of usual sessions, the Generalitat, or Parliament.

Despite its position as one of the wealthiest countries in Europe at the time, this did not make it immune to the crisis of the late Middle Ages. In 1410, Martin I, the last King of Aragon of Catalan extraction, died without an heir. Many pro-Catalan historians have blamed Catalonia’s decline on the subsequent Compromise of Caspe, whereby the Castilian Ferdinand of Trastámara was elected to take the throne. The uneasy relationship between the Corts and their new rulers often led to outright revolt.

With the marriage of Ferdinand’s grandson, Ferdinand of Aragon, to Isabella of Castile (becoming the Catholic monarchs), the creation of a unified Spain began. In 1486, the year in which Columbus reached the New World, Catalan merchants were expelled from the Casa de Contratación in Seville, the commercial heart of the city that was soon to have exclusive rights over trade with the New World. This was to set the tone for the treatment of the Catalans where trade with America was concerned. Elliott (1963) takes the view that this exclusion was key to the continued presence of separate Catalan identity, as it officially encouraged a continued sense of difference.

As Catalonia’s splendour waned, so Castile’s grew, along with Catalan resentment. Catalans ‘felt themselves being gradually and irrevocably elbowed out of the many lucrative offices in the Monarchy’ (Elliott, 1963: 13). Still, towards the end of the fifteenth century, Catalonia saw some stability after

the turmoil of the previous hundred years, even if this came with a sense of dissatisfaction that increased as the decades continued. This eventually manifested in the Catalan Revolt of 1640–1659, against the Count-Duke of Olivares' overuse of Catalan resources in the war with France, also called the Reapers War. This conflict is now celebrated in Catalonia's national anthem, *Els Segadors* (the Reapers). The war concluded with the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659), ceding Perpignan (North Catalonia) to France.

In 1700, the last Spanish Habsburg monarch died without direct heirs, leaving the throne open to the French Bourbon Philip of Anjou (later Philip v). The Austrian Habsburgs and other European powers feared French dominance in Europe and challenged the Bourbon claim, precipitating the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714). Catalonia supported the losing Austrian faction, which accepted defeat in 1713. The Catalan armies continued to fight for another year, until 11 September 1714, when Barcelona surrendered after the gruelling Siege of Barcelona. The date is now celebrated as Catalonia's national day or *Diada*. The siege in 1714 has become a celebrated moment in contemporary Catalanism, and its tercentenary was commemorated in 2014. Today it provides an example of shared national myths that are 'common reference points which enable members of the nation to communicate more readily' (Hosking, 2016: 213).

As punishment for Catalonia's refusal to recognise him in 1713, Philip v abolished all Catalan institutions in the *Decreto de Nueva Planta* (1716), representing the end of a measure of independence from the absolute will of the Spanish monarch. The Catalan language was prohibited for official purposes, and later also in schools. Although these measures did have some effect, the process was hampered by the inherent weaknesses of the disorganised Spanish state, and many official documents were still written in Catalan into the nineteenth century. Catalan never stopped being spoken by the urban lower classes, or in the countryside (Keown, 2011b).

Following this defeat, Catalonia soon recovered and began a period of industrialisation that would reach its height in the next century. The end on the ban on trade with the Americas in 1778 led to a massive increase in the markets for Catalan products, most of which were textile-based. The Napoleonic Wars briefly halted growth, but afterwards industrialisation continued at a faster pace. Underpinning all these changes was the emergence of a wealthy and powerful industrial–commercial bourgeoisie, who became the new power holders in the region (Gary W. McDonogh charts the rise and fall of this social group in his *Good Families of Barcelona* (1986)). Eager to flaunt their new social prestige through cultural works, and in common with similar industrial elites at that time, this group would be essential to the development of nineteenth-century Catalan nationalism. Another consequence of the rapid industrialisation was the development of a large working

class composed of both native Catalans and immigrants (many from southern Spain), which mobilised rapidly (the first trade union appeared in 1840: McRoberts, 2001).

Catalanism was in no way a uniform phenomenon among the entire population. Catalan society during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was heavily stratified, characterised by great social inequality between the bourgeoisie and the working classes, and differing political opinions to match. It was in the latter group that anarchist and communist doctrines found fertile support. The nineteenth and early-twentieth-centuries produced a litany of violent protests from this group, culminating in the Tragic Week of 1909, where forced conscription for one of Spain's colonial wars set off a week of violent anti-militarist, anti-clericalist and anti-monarchist protests led by anarchist, republican and socialist groups.

It was the Catalan Renaissance (*Renaixença*), the nineteenth-century cultural movement that recovered Catalan as a literary language, which created the atmosphere in which Catalan nationalism was to flourish and provided the cultural foundation for a separate political existence (Balcells, 1996). As in other parts of Europe, the *Renaixença* was a literary movement, and the emergent Catalan literature implied dreams of independence, both political and linguistic. By the 1870s, everyday Catalan speech was acceptable in literature, but this highlighted the problems with a lack of standardisation and education in Catalan. Political autonomy appeared the best solution to achieve these goals. In brief, this concern over language was transformed into a distinct national and political identity in Catalonia.

However, there was a continued sense of political subservience in Catalonia at this time. Two of the main reasons why Catalan nationalism grew so rapidly were a slump in prosperity thanks to the loss of the Spanish colonies and markets, and anger at a political system that favoured Castilian speakers over Catalans (Cramer, 2000; McDonogh, 1986). While the Catalan Renaissance undoubtedly had a forceful effect, use of Catalan was heavily proscribed. For example, in 1862 Catalan was prohibited in documents drawn up by notaries, and in 1896 it was prohibited in telephone conversations (Hall, 2001).

1892 saw the founding of the first Catalan political party, the Lliga Catalana (Catalan League), which won an unexpected victory in 1901 (Brenan, 1990). In the wake of the break-up of the Spanish Empire, especially the loss of Cuba in 1898 (a key market for Catalan products), Catalanism seemed increasingly attractive to wealthier Catalans (Keown, 2011b). In the early-twentieth century, Catalanism found itself in a complex situation. Self-government (not actual independence) was at the top of the agenda, but Catalan politicians also had the dream of acting as role models for the modernisation of the rest of Spain (Keating, 1996). They attempted to promote

Catalonia as Spain's saviour – an idea that received short shrift in Madrid. In 1914 Catalonia was granted its own very limited self-government institution, the *Mancomunitat*.

Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923–1930) at first received strong support from the Catalan bourgeoisie. They hoped he would protect them from their own working class, who had made Barcelona a hotbed of left-wing factionalism (Brenan, 1990; McDonogh, 1986). It soon became obvious that Primo had no intention of honouring Catalonia's self-government, an embarrassment for conservative *Lliga*-based Catalanism that destroyed its credibility. The bourgeoisie realised too late that Primo would always have an ingrained mistrust of Catalans, even if they supported him.<sup>1</sup>

In April 1931, Francesc Macia (nicknamed '*L'Avi*', grandfather, in Catalan) of the left-wing *Esquerra Republicana Catalana* (ERC) proclaimed a Catalan republic. Three days later he arranged a deal with Spain's now republican government to settle for autonomy. In 1932, Catalonia gained its first statute of autonomy under the Second Spanish Republic, when the *Generalitat* was reinstated. This was not to last long, as the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) began five years later. The victorious Franco regime instituted a thorough repression of the Catalan language after the war, a fact that is essential to understanding the present-day importance of the Catalan language (Gore and McInnes, 1998; Llobera, 2004). Catalonia had aligned itself with the Republican side (the least centralist option), and in the eyes of many Francoists, to be Catalan was to be Republican.

Almost immediately, Franco's regime imposed linguistic restrictions on the use of Catalan, and by extension on Republican Catalan nationalism. All obvious linguistic manifestations of a separate Catalan identity, such as street signs, were removed and replaced (Gade, 2003). Public written and spoken use of Catalan was banned, books in Catalan were publicly burned and pulped, all Catalan publications suspended, and the Institute of Catalan Studies closed down. History books were rewritten to 'glorify centralism and devalue national minorities' (McDonogh, 1986: 35). Not only was Catalan completely banned in primary and secondary education, but Catalan school-teachers were transferred from the region and replaced by Castilian speakers. The consequences of these measures were clearly felt in the early post-transition years when most Catalan speakers could not write the language (Cramer, 2000). Catalans were urged to 'speak Christian', and 'stop barking', after Franco called Catalan 'the language of dogs' (Wardhaugh, 1987).

The attitude of most of the population was passive resistance (Hargreaves, 2000; Guibernau, 2004; Llobera, 1989). It was within family circles that reading Catalan literature took place, and many middle-class families preserved small Catalan libraries. More generally, it was in the family that Catalan lore, attitudes and customs were passed down (Llobera 1996).

The Catalan language was deliberately preserved as a ‘systematic resistance strategy’ (Guibernau, 2004: 63). Ironically, one of the effects of Franco’s repression was to make Catalan synonymous with freedom and rebellion. Some elements of Catalan culture were permitted in the later years of the regime but relegated to a folkloric curiosity. The term *folclórico* (folkloric) has a more loaded meaning in Spanish than its English translation, implying backwardness and irrelevance. Even today, there is still controversy about the UNESCO designation of *castells* (human towers) as folklore (Vaczi, 2016).

During the Franco years, another effective means of Castilianisation was to encourage the migration of Castilian-speaking workers to Catalonia in order to dilute the Catalan-speaking population. By the 1960s, Castilian-speaking migrants collected together in immigrant ghettos, where they had no need to speak Catalan or either linguistically or socially assimilate (Balcells, 1996). However, this had an unintended result: the speaking of Catalan took on an aspirational aspect; Castilian became associated with poorer, working class migrants, and Catalan with the wealthier, middle and upper classes, thus making it more attractive to second-generation immigrant families. An exception to this was amongst the very wealthy descendants of the industrial elite, who preferred Castilian in the home, in contrast to the Catalan of their recent ancestors, even while speaking Catalan in their workplaces (McDonogh, 1986).

In 1977, two years after Franco’s death, a million Catalans demonstrated peacefully in Barcelona in favour of autonomy on 11 September, Catalonia’s national day, proving that Catalan nationalism had not disappeared (contrary to the predictions of Hansen, 1977). Following the creation of the Spanish Constitution in 1978, Catalonia was given the status of an autonomous community, and the Generalitat was reinstated in 1979. Catalan was accepted as one of Spain’s six official languages. The Generalitat (mostly lead by the conservative, Catalanist *Convergència i Unió*, (CiU)) began a cultural policy of promoting Catalan culture to ensure its preservation. Another, more covert, political goal for CiU was to differentiate Catalonia from Spain and allow the party to control Catalan culture and identity (Cramer, 2008).

## **Catalonia Today, and the Origins of the Current Crisis**

Today, Catalonia is home to about 7 million of Spain’s 47 million people. As one of Spain’s wealthiest and most industrialised regions, at present it accounts for 19–20 per cent of Spain’s GDP and a quarter of the country’s exports (BBC, 2017a). Catalonia received 43.3 per cent of Spain’s foreign investment in 2003–2017, the highest of any Spanish region (Stothard, 2017). 2017 however saw a 40 per cent fall in foreign investment, most

noticeable in the latter part of the year (ACN, 2018a), no doubt due to the recent referendum. Economic disagreements, for instance the fiscal deficit between Catalonia and Spain (estimated at 8–10 per cent) have lent support to pro-independence sentiments. Catalonia owed about €72.2 billion (in 2016) to the Spanish government (Bosch, 2017), which would be problematic in the case of an independence vote.

The Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO) has monitored attitudes about Catalan identity and the political situation since 2005. These studies have shown a population where about half lean strongly towards a Catalan identity over a Spanish one. According to the most recent survey in 2016, 46.6 per cent consider themselves more Catalan than Spanish or just Catalan, 38.7 per cent equally Spanish and Catalan, and 10.9 per cent only Spanish or more Spanish than Catalan. This final figure has seen a dramatic increase since 2012, when it was just 5.8 per cent, suggesting a rise in pro-Spanish attitudes (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2016: 53), perhaps as a result of the polarising force of the pro-independence movement. Data from 2012 demonstrates that language has significant effects on self-identity, as the percentage of those identifying as only Catalan or more Catalan than Spanish rises to 75.5 per cent in respondents whose language of identity is Catalan (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2012: 38).

Since 2011, the CEO introduced questions on how respondents would vote in a referendum ('do you want Catalonia to become an independent State?'). The changing results over the last six years have shown subtle variations in support for the movement. In 2011, 43 per cent stated they would vote in favour, which rose to 56 per cent in 2013 (Cramerí, 2014). October 2012 until December 2014 saw a peak in support for Catalonia as an independent state (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2018), and 2014 also saw the highest self-identification as either only Catalan, or just Catalan and Spanish (55.3 per cent. Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2015: 56). By chance, this period coincided with my fieldwork, and may have been related to events in 2010, and the run up to the tercentenary in September 2014. Since 2014, the results on the independence question have been more mixed, suggesting a roughly even split between Yes and No. In October 2017, the CEO reported the highest support for independence since 2013 (48.7 per cent Yes versus 43.6 per cent No. Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2018: 11). The most extreme divergence was in January 2018, which showed that 54 per cent did not want independence, as opposed to 41 per cent who did, the largest difference in four years (*ibid.*). This is probably the result of the uncertainty caused by the political crisis.

There are three main pro-independence political parties in Catalonia today, the Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català (PDeCAT), which platforms as Junts per Catalunya (JuntsxCat, Together for Catalonia), a centre-right,

pro-independence political platform; Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, (ERC or Esquerra), a left wing, pro-independence party; and Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP, Popular Unity Candidacy), which is far-left and pro-independence. PDeCAT is a successor to the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC), which renamed in 2017 due to corruption scandals involving the founder, Jordi Pujol. CDC, in the form of *Convergència i Unió* (CiU, in coalition with the Democratic Union of Catalonia, UDC) was a force in its own right in Spanish politics, supporting state-wide ruling parties at national elections throughout the 1990s. Carles Puigdemont, who was President of the Generalitat during the 2017 crisis, came from JuntsxCat. Other parties primary in the political sphere include *Ciudadanos* (Citizens), a pro-unionist, centre-right Catalan party, as well as regional representatives of Spanish-wide political parties, the socialist PSC-PSOE, conservative *Partido Popular* (PP) and left-wing *Podemos*.

The main source of conflict between Catalonia and Spain today is the result of controversy over the Generalitat's 2006 Statute of Autonomy, which highlights most of the key areas of controversy in the relationship between Spain and Catalonia. It was intended to permit greater self-government, for example, greater control over judicial appointments, immigration and fiscal policy. Catalans were redefined as members of a nation, and Catalan given preference over Castilian.

The right wing *Partido Popular* and other bodies soon presented an appeal stating that 113 articles of the 221 in the Statute were unconstitutional. In June 2010, the Constitutional Court reached a decision in which fourteen articles were declared unconstitutional, and 20 altered. The alteration that caused the most anger in Catalonia concerned the court's decision that Catalonia's definition as a nation has no legal value, and it can only exist within 'the only and indissoluble unity of the Spanish *nation*' (Pericay, 2010; emphasis added).

Another important section the Court has removed refers to the money Catalonia transfers to other autonomous communities and the expenditure the Spanish Government makes in Catalonia. Conflict over financial issues has been a feature of Madrid–Autonomous region relations since 1979 (del Río Luelmo and Williams, 1999), and Catalonia has very little control over the funding it receives. Those seeking to change Catalonia's relationship with Spain, or end it altogether, have often brought up the economic argument. The 2008 economic crisis intensified these debates. Due to its comparative wealth in Spain (by GDP it is 22 per cent wealthier than Spain's average), Catalonia has a large fiscal deficit of 9.76 per cent (i.e. almost 10 per cent of earnings in Catalonia leave it and are not returned in public investment). This makes Catalonia one of the most heavily taxed regions in Europe (Gibson, 2010).

Following the ruling, a million and a half people joined a protest in Barcelona on 10 July 2010. Aside from fomenting independentist sentiments, the ruling had the effect of creating solidarity across political lines (Nationalia, 2010). All in all, the 2010 judgement only served to worsen a feeling of dissatisfaction with the central government, leading many to question the current model of autonomy. It should be said though that Catalonia has a high degree of autonomy, second only to Navarre and the Basque Country. The Generalitat controls environment, industry, agriculture, transport and commerce. Catalonia has its own police force, the Mossos d'Esquadra, which replaced the national police and Civil Guard in 2008. The Generalitat also performs a legislative function within Catalan Civil Law, which concerns mainly family and inheritance law (Mas i Solench, 1990).

In September 2012, Catalonia's national day (*Diada*) was the setting for a large-scale protest in favour of independence in Barcelona,<sup>2</sup> attended by about 1.5 million people, including myself. This event showed the clear shift towards pro-independence aims in contemporary Catalanism and emphasised raising international awareness. The Diadas of the following years played host to similar protests with inventive flair, such as a human chain across the Catalan coastline in 2013 (an act Vaczi (2016: 365) called 'ritual territorialisation'), or participants arranging themselves in a 'V' (for 'votar', to vote) across Barcelona in 2014.

As a reaction to the 2012 protest, the ruling President of the Generalitat, Artur Mas (CiU) announced a snap election on 25 November 2012 and platformed on an independence referendum. While CiU lost seats to the ERC, pro-independence parties made up half the Generalitat. Following a coalition between CiU and ERC, in January 2013 the Generalitat announced a 'Declaration of Sovereignty', stating that they would hold a vote on independence in 2014. The Spanish government rejected the proposal in April 2014, and Spain's constitutional court ruled the referendum to be unconstitutional in March.

In September 2014, Mas finally admitted that the referendum would be non-binding but would still symbolically take place. Once more, the Constitutional Court ruled this as unconstitutional, but an unofficial referendum went ahead. Results were 80 per cent in favour, although less than half of Catalonia's 5.4 million eligible voters participated. September 2015 saw new elections, with pro-independence parties platforming on a unilateral declaration of independence. This was to circumvent Spain's restriction on a binding vote, since it would represent a campaign promise. JuntsxCat (formerly CiU) and ERC (running jointly as Junts pel Si, 'Together for Yes') narrowly managed to gain a majority by forming an uneasy coalition with CUP, which has ended up pushing above its weight in terms of seats (CUP

has 10 seats, versus JuntsxCat 31 and ERC 26). CUP's refusal to back Artur Mas led to the election of Carles Puigdemont, former mayor of Girona, as President of Catalonia in January 2016.

The start of the current political crisis began in June 2017, when Puigdemont announced a referendum on Catalan independence for 1 October 2017, illegal according to the Spanish Constitution. Despite being blocked by the Spanish Constitutional Court, by late September it was clear that the referendum would go ahead anyway. In response, the Spanish Civil Guard initiated Operation Anubis, a series of raids on Catalan government institutions and arrests of Catalan politicians. 5000 members of the Civil Guard were dispatched to the region on 21 September in large ferries stationed at Catalan ports, a situation that seemed to many like an occupation.

The night before 1 October, to ensure polling stations opened, activists camped out in many overnight. The following day, as people attempted to vote, the Civil Guard tried to stop voters and forcibly closed polling stations, leading to violent clashes between protesters and police. This was in contrast to the Catalan police force, the Mossos d'Esquadra, who allowed polling stations to remain open, and which has led to investigations for disobedience, and charges of sedition against its leader, Josep Lluís Trapero Álvarez. 92 per cent voted in favour of independence, though turnout was only 43 per cent.<sup>3</sup> As a result of the referendum, the Catalan Parliament declared independence on 27 October 2017, with 70 votes in favour to 10 against (135 left the chamber before the vote). On the same day, the Spanish Senate invoked article 155 of the Spanish Constitution, which imposed direct rule over the region. The Catalan Parliament was dissolved, and Rajoy set new regional elections for 21 December. On 30 October, charges of rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds were laid against Carles Puigdemont and other Catalan politicians. Puigdemont fled to Belgium with four colleagues on the same day. On the 2 November, fourteen former Catalan politicians were called to Spain's supreme court to testify on their role in the referendum. All except Oriol Junqueras (ex-vice-President) and Joaquim Forn (ex-interior minister) were granted bail. The internment of these politicians pending a full trial (they were deemed a flight risk) followed in the wake of the publicised arrest of two prominent pro-independence leaders, Jordi Sánchez, the president of the Catalan National Assembly (ANC), and Jordi Cuixart, the president of Òmnium Cultural, on 16 October. The plight of the four prisoners has engendered a popular support campaign, symbolised by the wearing of yellow ribbons.

The December political elections ended in a stalemate, despite a record turnout (80 per cent). Catalan pro-independence parties (JuntsxCat, CiU and CUP) had the joint parliamentary majority at 70 seats (47.5 per cent of the popular vote), although the largest party (36 seats) was pro-unionist

Ciutadans. Puigdemont technically remained President, however a Spanish court ruled that he could not take up his office without returning to Spain, where he faced arrest. Eight of the elected officials in the new government were also either in exile or imprisoned. Finally, on 1 March, Puigdemont agreed to step down in favour of detained activist Jordi Sánchez, head of the ERC. On 21 March, Sanchez likewise dropped his bid, after the Spanish Supreme Court rejected his request to be freed to attend the investiture ceremony. The role was passed to Jordi Turull (PDeCAT/JuntsxCatalunya), who was also under investigation for his role in the referendum. His leadership bid on 22 March failed thanks to lack of support from the CUP, who felt his manifesto was not radical enough. The following day, Mr Turull and four former members of the Catalan Parliament were arrested by order of the Supreme Court of Spain, before another vote could go ahead. Many of these politicians had earlier been freed in November, but it was decided that they were a flight risk and should be remanded in custody. This brought the number to 25 separatists who had been charged with sedition, rebellion, embezzlement and other crimes relating to the referendum. This number was reduced to twelve<sup>4</sup> when the trial began in February 2019. The trial closed in June 2019, and at the time of writing a judgement was expected in October.

Puigdemont refused to return to Spain, claiming that he would not receive a fair trial. The Spanish government sent out a European arrest warrant for Carles Puigdemont and other politicians, which led to Puigdemont's arrest in March 2018 in Germany, where he was tried for rebellion and misuse of public funds. The former charge was dismissed; however, the latter was upheld, meaning he could be extradited. Eventually, Spain dropped the arrest warrant. A new President of the Generalitat, Quim Torra (also of JuntsxCat), took charge in May 2018, leading to the lifting of Article 155 in June. Torra is widely regarded as being even more separatist than Puigdemont. Meanwhile in Madrid, Mariano Rajoy's government lost power through a vote of no confidence from other parties, a result of his handling of the Catalan crisis, and political corruption. Socialist Pedro Sánchez, who took power in June, is more receptive to Catalan demands (support from regionalist and nationalist parties, including those of Catalonia, were instrumental to his power bid). Sánchez has even suggested a referendum on greater autonomy for the region (Stothard, 2018), although he gradually toughened his stance in 2019 (Hall, 2019).

The Catalan situation was one of the key issues in the Spanish general election on 28 April 2019. While Sánchez won the largest share of votes (29.6 per cent), at the time of writing he still needed to form a coalition government with other parties (including Catalan separatists) to form a majority and ensure his continued position as Prime Minister. Differences of opinion

on political solutions for Catalonia have become a source of contention in these talks (Mount and Hall, 2019). The ongoing trial in Madrid of the twelve Catalan separatist politicians and public figures for rebellion, sedition and misappropriation of public funds has further complicated negotiations. The defendants include four recently-elected Catalan MPs, who were suspended by the Spanish parliament's governing body in May 2019 (Mount, 2019), a move which caused anger in Catalonia. At the time of writing, there still appeared to be no solution to the deadlock. What is certain is that while the political crisis of late-2017 has passed, the uneasy relationship between the Catalan and Spanish central governments seems set to continue.

Catalonia historically had strong support for the European Union, with its emphasis on 'A Europe of the Regions' (Llobera, 2004). In practice, within the EU, national Spanish initiatives easily overwhelmed those of the regions, and there have been arguments suggesting that the European Community has had a negative effect on regionalisation (del Río Luelmo and Williams, 1999). Many Catalans in recent years have felt that the EU has failed to protect them (Strubell, 2008). This sense of disillusionment has turned to outright anger following the events of the 2017 regional independence vote, with the European Commission's statement that the Catalan crisis is an 'internal matter' for Spain (European Commission, 2017). Recent protests in 2018 have seen a more anti-European sentiment (including slogans of 'This Europe is shameful', shouted during March 2018 protests outside the offices of the European Commission in Barcelona).

During my last visit in January 2018, anger directed at European inaction was a common point of discussion. During a fundraising dinner I attended, the teenage daughter of one of the imprisoned politicians gave a speech in which she described her bewilderment that these events could happen in Europe. This disillusionment has been compounded by treatment of Catalan MEPS following the May 2019 European Parliament Elections. Three exiled politicians, (former President Carles Puigdemont, Toni Comín and Clara Ponsatí), had originally been banned from running by the Spanish Electoral Commission, but were later permitted to do so by a Madrid court. Puigdemont, Comín and jailed Oriol Junqueras were elected as MEPs. Controversy arose after Puigdemont and Comín were refused entry to the European Parliament (EP), ostensibly because Spanish authorities had not sent complete lists of elected MEPs (in an attempt to resolve the situation, all new Spanish MEPs were later refused entry). Oriol Junqueras was also refused permission by the Spanish supreme court to leave jail and travel to Brussels to take up his seat. In response to the perceived inaction of the European Parliament, in June 2019 76 cross-party MEPs called for more action to protect the rights of the three Catalan MEPs. At the time of writing, the impasse remained unresolved.

## Symbols of Catalan Nationalism

In this section, I will introduce and elaborate upon some of the crucial symbols of Catalan national identity. Being aware of these symbols is essential to understanding expressions of Catalan identity in everyday life, as they appear frequently in food-related discourse. This includes the Catalan language, national character, the Catalan flags (*senyera* and *estelada*), festivals and performances such as the *sardana* dance, *castells* and supporting Barcelona football club.

Language is a key symbol of Catalan identity. It is language that really separates Catalans from the rest of Spain (Cramerer, 2000; Balcells, 1996, McRoberts, 2001). It therefore sets identity boundaries, provides a historical link and continuity with the past<sup>5</sup> and is the foundation on which Catalan culture is based. Due to its immediacy in everyday life, the association between language and identity occurs not only in political and intellectual discourses, but also in the popular mind. Catalans will not consider another person to be truly Catalan unless they can speak the language, and are comfortable using it regularly (Hargreaves, 2000; Woolard, 1986; DiGiacomo, 2001). Catalan politician and architect of modern Catalanism Jordi Pujol took the view that those who speak Catalan, and who live and work in Catalonia, are Catalan. Language has also been key to the claim of Catalonia as an open nationalism, willing to accept those who make the effort to learn the language and integrate. Considering the high levels of immigration to Catalonia in the last hundred years, and the fact that these groups generally have a higher birth rate than native Catalans, language-based identity has been far more successful than one based on race or birth.

In Spain, there are now about 4 million native Catalan speakers. Current statistics show a very high level of Catalan awareness amongst the Catalan population. In 2011, 95 per cent of the population understood the language, while 73 per cent could speak it and 79 per cent read it. Only 56 per cent of the Catalan population can write the language, but this is still an improvement on 1986, when only 31.5 per cent could write it (Idescat, 2013).

Learning and speaking Catalan are believed to bring out the characteristics of the Catalan character, or *seny*, in an individual. Language, and *seny*, are seen as making up the *fet diferencial* that differentiates Catalans from other Spaniards (Hargreaves, 2000). It is characterised by a sensible, rational, down-to-earth attitude, a business-like and hard-working approach to life. This is often contrasted with the supposed character of Castilian speakers, who at best are alleged to be more superficial and impatient than the reserved Catalans, and at worst lazy, profligate and irrational (Smith, 1996). Catalans also tend to see themselves as better educated and having more in common with the rest of Europe (Wardhaugh, 1987; Gade, 2003).

A Castilian-speaking immigrant who learns Catalan demonstrates the ‘hard-working ambition and good sense that qualifies one as a genuine Catalan’ (Woolard, 1986: 63).

The flip side of *seny* is *rauxa*, a propensity to seek relief from social constraints by excess and lack of control. It is said that this propensity has created the wild creative talent evidenced by Catalonia’s many famous contemporary artists, such as Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, or Antoni Tàpies, and in the food world vanguard chef Ferran Adrià and his acolytes (*Seny* means that these artists can profitably make use of these creative outbursts).

*Seny* is the positive side to the perception of Catalans as stingy, mean and money-grubbing in other parts of Spain (Catalonia’s fiscal demands fit perfectly into this negative stereotype). So prevalent and widely accepted is *seny* in public discourse that a popular advertising campaign for the Catalan Banc Sabadell during fieldwork emphasised *seny* as a positive characteristic. More recently, the president of Banc Sabadell, Ana Botín, asked that *seny* should return to Catalonia in these ‘difficult times’ (El Nacional/Efe, 2018).

In contemporary Catalonia, there are two flags in use: the *senyera* and the *estelada*. The *senyera* is a simple design of four red bands across a yellow background. The *estelada* is a variation on the *senyera* with a blue triangle over the *senyera*, which bears a white five-pointed star (these two designs can be seen on the front cover). A variation of the *estelada* is a red triangle, instead of blue, which often represents left-wing political leanings. While the *senyera* represents Catalonia as a whole (it is part of Barcelona’s coat of arms), and the *Països Catalans*, the *estelada* is unequivocally associated with pro-independence Catalanism. The origins of the *senyera* are hazy, but the four-barred standard as a symbol of the Catalan kings was in evidence by the tenth century, thus coinciding with the mythical beginnings of Catalonia. The *estelada* developed in the early-twentieth century with the move towards pro-independence attitudes in Catalan politics, probably inspired by the Cuban flag.

The *senyera* is a ubiquitous symbol in Catalan everyday life. It appears on balconies, graffiti, and is present on the huge selection of Catalan-themed memorabilia. However, since my research began, the independentist *estelada* noticeably gained in popularity over the *senyera*. This may be because the *senyera* is shared with several autonomous communities that are better integrated into Spain (e.g. Valencia), and is part of the Spanish coat of arms from the Crown of Aragon (Balcells, 2008). The *estelada* is a much clearer symbol of deeply felt Catalanism because it has not been used to promote any agenda unrelated to Catalan nationalism. Indeed, it is telling that when I tried to buy a *senyera* at the end of my fieldwork in Vic, I was unable to find one. Shopkeepers no longer bothered to stock them, as there was only demand for *estelades*. This ‘war of flags’ has been recognised in international news outlets (BBC, 2017b).

The *senyera* and *estelada* also take pride of place at popular festivals. These events are a 'culminating moment for the expression of national identity. Local events, celebrations, folkloric, religious and even pre-Christian festivals acted as a catalyst of nationalist expression' (Conversi, 1997: 155). Festivities in Catalonia can be divided into two types: national celebrations shared across Catalonia, and the more local or regional events and festivals. There are three national days throughout Catalonia. These are St. George's Day on 23 April, St. John's Eve on 23 June, and the September *Diada* on 11 September. Saint George is one of Catalonia's national saints, alongside the Virgin of Montserrat, and his celebration is associated with roses (Catalonia's national flower) and books. St. John's Eve is celebrated throughout Spain but has been Catalanised with the *Flama del Canigó* (Flame of Canigó) that is ceremoniously carried from the Canigó mountain to the rest of Catalonia to represent solidarity amongst Catalan-speaking areas. The September *Diada* remembers a traumatic moment in Catalan history, the end of the Siege of Barcelona in 1714. There is some interplay between the national and the local in these events, as national celebrations are celebrated with a local interpretation.

Catalonia's regional festivals, in particular the Patum of Berga, have been the focus of folklorist Dorothy Noyes. Her main work, *Fire in the Plaça* (2003), provides an account of the unique Patum ritual in Berga, held on Corpus Christi. She draws attention to the way in which regional and location-specific cultural acts are incorporated into wider Catalan culture, and how issues universal to Catalonia are manifested in localised acts. The festival has changed over time, following the changes in Catalan society and politics since the 1970s.

The presence of flags was also noted in John Hargreaves (2000) detailed account of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, a seminal event in modern Catalan history. His work emphasises the important role that Catalan identity played in the run up to the games and the event itself. He exposes the national and international politics at play, a scene dominated by simmering resentment between the Catalan and Spanish authorities, which never erupted thanks to careful diplomacy. Despite claims that the games would lead to cultural homogenisation, he believes that they represented a triumph of Catalan culture, and that they led to the stimulation of both cultural and economic development.

One way that the organisers of the 1992 Olympics marked the event out as Catalan was by the presence of the *sardana*, Catalonia's national dance, in the opening ceremony. This circular dance is particular to Catalonia, and is often seen at Catalonia's three national festivals, and at other events with a strong Catalanist focus. It is regarded as a manifestation of idealised aspects of Catalan character and *seny*, for its calm, measured and precise movements, concentration and diligence (Brandes, 1990). The dancer must

count continually to remember which formula of steps to follow, which vary depending on each dance. As Noyes (2011a) remarks, the Catalans' stereotypical business aptitude carries on into perceptions of the *sardana*, as they count even while they dance. More recently, its form as a circular dance in which anyone can participate has made it a metaphor for inclusivity (Cramer, 2008). The *sardana* dates from about 1850, and the actual roots are unknown (Martí i Pérez, 1994), though it is reputed to originate from the staunchly pro-Catalan Empordà region in the north-east.

A further manifestation of Catalan identity are the *castells*, or human towers. Unlike *sardana* groups, which have seen reduced popularity amongst young people (ibid.), the *castells* have become increasingly popular in recent years. They originated in Valls, a town south of Barcelona, the point of origin of another now popular food event, the *calçotada* (spring onion eating). There are now many groups spread throughout Catalonia. Like the *sardana*, they too can be seen as symbolic of Catalan identity. Anthropologist Mariann Vaczi (2016), in her research on *castells*, described how the making of the tower, called *fer pinya* (making pinecone) is a metaphor for the resolution of political conflicts as participants come together in a shared enterprise. The construction of a tower requires mathematical precision and decision-making (again, manifestations of *seny*), and is open to anyone who is capable of forming part of the collective whole. Yet *rauxa* also plays a part in the creativity needed to construct truly difficult towers. The metaphor of *rauxa* is also appealing to *independentistes* who see too much *seny* and caution in Catalan politics. *Castell* building can 'condense the two faces of the Catalonian independence process' (Vaczi, 2016: 363). In 2010, the *castells* were also granted UNESCO intangible cultural heritage status, which has made them 'a desirable asset for a political movement that seeks to establish its authenticity' (ibid.: 356). *Castells* have also been used on food packaging to promote Catalan-made products.

When anthropologists have taken an interest in Catalonia, they have often focused on kinship. This has often been combined with studies of the home, which is unsurprising considering that the house is one of the most powerful symbols of Catalan kinship (Asano-Tamanoi, 1987; Bestard-Camps and Contreras Hernandez, 1997; Llobera, 1997). Joan Bestard (1990) is of the view that the emphasis placed upon the house is a result of the impartible inheritance practiced in Catalonia, an unusual practice within Spain. This distinctiveness led to the creation of a nationalist ideology called *pairalisme* in the nineteenth century, centred on the *casa pairal* (ancestral home), which was presented as the ideal for the foundation of the Catalan nation (Llobera, 1997, 2004).

It is therefore difficult to separate kinship studies by Catalan authors from nationalist texts. The Catalan case provides an interesting context for the

discussion of kinship and the early development of nationalist sentiments. Due to the focus on the house, regular commensality is a central element of *pairalisme*, and expresses the intensity of family relations. Even today, to live in the same house over generations is a source of pride, and it is still important to ensure family continuity (Bestard-Camps and Contreras Hernandez, 1997; Asano-Tamanoi, 1987). The related ideal of a self-sufficient household with its own garden (*hort*) is deeply rooted in the Catalan house (Robertson, 2012), and has been used in Catalanist political discourse throughout the twentieth century (DiGiacomo, 1987). In the nineteenth century, the rural ideal of the Catalan family and *casa pairal* was a political concept amongst elite, industrialist families (McDonogh, 1986). The family, and the *masia* (farmhouse) was a symbol of a unified, homogenous bulwark against Spanish centrism. Factory owners utilised the ideal of kinship structures and the Catalan house to give themselves a paternalistic role for their workers in new colonies (living complexes built around factories), to better control them. Thus, 'the colony became the *casa pairal* writ large' (McDonogh, 1986: 57), appealing to the workers' emotional and familial ties. The elite responded to popular unrest in the lower classes by promoting this conservative, sentimental view of the Catalan collective family and disciplined household, thus implying that social disorder was antithetical to being Catalan.

Territory and land also appear regularly in nationalist ideologies. As Llobera (2004: 48) perceptively points out, 'territory is perhaps one of the most concrete and important phenomena that exists for human beings'. Just calls this connection between nation, state and territory 'geographical circumscription', suggesting that 'the existence of a state presupposes the existence of its territory' (Just, 1989: 75). Catalonia is no exception. Balcells (2008) recognises several such sites of memory, including: sites associated with Barcelona's defeat in 1714; the Canigó mountain in France, associated with the *Flama del Canigó* events held every St. John's Eve; Montserrat, (literally 'jagged mountain') an eye-catching natural landmark that contains the sanctuary of the Virgin of Montserrat; the six-hundred-year-old Generalitat's Palace; and finally Barça's Camp Nou stadium and museum in Barcelona. There is no denying the importance of the FC Barcelona football club as a sign of national identity (Beary, 2011). Under the Franco regime, supporting Barça was a way of covertly supporting Catalanism (Ranachan, 2008).

## Food and Cuisine in Catalonia

Because food will be the focus of this book, it is useful to place a special focus on existing academic work on food and identity in the region, and the role of food in Catalan society. It is impossible to overemphasise the central

position of Catalan food and its associations in Catalan culture. In the words of Robertson in his fieldsite of Mieres:

Food is the essence of conviviality in Catalonia, and although its processes are so ephemeral, the sensual intensity of eating together has a binding power that is everywhere apparent in the social life of Mieres. (Robertson, 2010: 72)

Robertson sums up several features of the position of food in Catalonia here. Its association with conviviality and sharing is a powerful metaphor for togetherness. In a case of conflictual identity, it is the 'nostalgic enactment of identity through which the consumption of particular foods proves to be a powerful statement of identity and difference' (Roser i Puig, 2011: 231). MacClancy (2007) makes similar remarks about Basque cuisine, where food is mobilised to suggest a prestigious and distinctive culture. Cuisine becomes a national virtue, and eating in a local manner becomes a way of consuming history.

Following Franco's death, Catalans renewed their interest in gastronomy. Several writers, such as Robertson (2010), Noyes (2003) and Roser i Puig (2011), have found the experience of deprivation to be pertinent to the history of Catalan cuisine, thus linking food once again to memory. High levels of food awareness were maintained throughout the autochthonous Catalan population, and Catalonia prides itself as a country where locals know how to eat well. Visceral memories of past hunger sharpen the importance of food and create a connection with festivity, when food would be available. Noyes in particular draws attention to the importance of commensality in times of famine, when sharing food is a 'labour of love' (Noyes, 2003).

Robertson (2010) speaks of memories of the Civil War being mainly tied up with food. This time is known as the *misèria* (time of wretchedness), and some of his informants refused to speak of it because it was so painful. Post-war, the Franco government used hunger to control Spain's population, and the policy of autarky (self-sufficiency) to reward political loyalists (del Arco Blanco, 2010). According to Robertson, food was a constant subject of conversation amongst those who lived through this period. Indeed, food (or a lack of it) acted as a lens through which informants remember and interpret the past.<sup>6</sup>

The Catalan government also uses food to promote cultural nationalism, a common top-down strategy for government actors (Ichijo and Ranta, 2016). Actions of this kind go back to 1993, when cuisine was recognised as a part of popular and traditional culture to be protected under law (Llei 2,1993). The wording of the act recognises the importance of cuisine in Catalan culture, reasoning that 'Catalan society has been a protagonist of cultural evolution in the area of cuisine and gastronomy that has brought them to be considered as part of its immaterial heritage'.

According to Davidson (2007), food is a medium through which the Catalan government engages in a new relationship with the rural by officially denominating areas and the products linked to them. The government therefore acts as the protector of produce, place and by extension cultural patrimony. Taste has now been officially recognised to develop a government-sponsored identity, or as Davidson puts it, 'literally packaging a nation' (Davidson, 2007: 40). It is telling that Ferran Adrià, the head chef of former restaurant El Bulli, received the St George's Cross, the highest award for contributions to Catalan culture, in 2002. This illustrates the official recognition of cooking and cuisine as an important part of Catalan culture and expression (Roser i Puig, 2010). Chefs Carme Ruscalleda and Ada Parellada received the same awards in 2004 and 2016 respectively. From an economic perspective, the food and drink industry is also Catalonia's most important industry, employing 17.9 per cent of the region's workforce, and representing 19.8 per cent of industrial turnover (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2018). Catalonia was also European Region of Gastronomy in 2016.

Anthropologist Sophia Vackimes (2013) has considered the relationship between the Catalan *nova cuina* of molecular gastronomy, and national identity. She draws attention to the apparent contradiction between the hyper-modernity of the culinary techniques and the idealisation of tradition. She sees this as part of a clever marketing strategy on the part of the regional government and the chefs themselves. The ideal of the 'tradition of modernity', where the culinary creativity of Ferran Adrià and his fellow chefs are presented as part of a Catalan ideal for innovation stretching back into history, is simply part of this marketing appeal. This is part of a general trend globally to fetishise the local, one that began with the government promotion of *terroir* in France and is far from unique to Catalonia.

Like Davidson (2007), and DeSoucey (2010), Vackimes sees the Generalitat as one of the principal agents in this process, particularly 'by linking nature and the physical landscape with 'authentic products' and a creative 'native talent' (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012: 280 in Vackimes, 2013). Nonetheless, she concludes by criticising the Generalitat's implied hypocrisy in glorifying 'local foods' for political and touristic ends, while neglecting either agricultural producers, or those who experience food insecurity due to poverty.

However, despite these sentiments, she still focuses more on the world of Catalan *nova cuina* than on the everyday culinary reality of the average Catalan. The commonality of this approach is not surprising, considering the number of Michelin starred restaurants in the region (as of 2019, the region had 66 Michelin stars across 54 restaurants, about a quarter of Spain's total 284 stars in 209 restaurants), and the wealth of material on *nova cuina*. For instance, journalist Raphael Minder (2017), in *The Struggle*

for *Catalonia*, one of several works to appear in the last decade explaining the Catalan crisis, chooses to focus primarily on *nova cuina* in his chapter on Catalan cuisine. He places particular emphasis on the conflict between Ferran Adrià (of restaurant El Bulli) and another highly influential chef, Santi Santamaria (of Restaurant Can Fabes), the first Catalan chef to receive three Michelin stars.

Once close friends and stars of the Catalan restaurant scene in the 1990s, their relationships cooled as their cooking styles diverged, Adrià moving away from Catalan cuisine to focus on experimentation and new cooking techniques, whilst Santamaria championed local ingredients, Catalan staples and pro-independence politics. Their relationship never recovered after the *New York Times* journalist Arthur Lubow recognised Adrià (not Santamaria) as a leader of the Spanish and global new food movement in 2003. In 2008, Santamaria published *La Cocina al Desnudo* ('Naked Cooking'), a diatribe against Adrià's 'molecular gastronomy', which he implied poisoned diners. Their conflict became infamous in journalistic and culinary circles, and split Catalan restaurateurs into opposing camps. According to Minder, in the end Santamaria alienated even those chefs who supported his approach. Thanks to a more flexible approach, and training internships at El Bulli, Adrià has had a greater influence over the current generation of Catalan chefs. The controversy ended with Santamaria's death in 2011, although reverberations of their differing approaches still remain today.

A piece of recent work on food in Catalonia is a chapter in Di Giovine and Brulottes' edited volume *Edible Identities* (Garcia-Fuentes et al, 2014). The authors consider how the renovation of Barcelona's market halls is connected with the recovery of traditional Catalan cuisine. They also introduce several key concepts that are essential to understanding Catalan cuisine, such as the importance of regionality and landscape, and also claims of the loss of cuisine (even though recent trends suggest the reverse). The renewed interest in Catalan cuisine and culture from the 1980s onwards coincides with a gradual resurgence in interest in markets. The promotion of Mediterranean cuisine plays a part in this revival, as well as in tourism promotion strategies and immigration. What is most interesting for my research however is that Garcia-Fuentes et al recognise the importance of the market in Catalan social life, that despite their use in heritage promotion or tourism schemes and 'elite' cuisine, they are 'interwoven into the fabric of everyday life' (ibid.: 170). They are thus essential spaces of contemporary expressions of Catalan social and food identity.

A more recent take on Catalonia's position as a world centre of gastronomic excellence in restaurant cuisine comes from a 2016 study by the Universities of Barcelona and Girona into the concentration of Michelin starred restaurants in Catalonia. The report suggests that, amongst other reasons, Catalonia is at an advantage for the following reasons:

Catalan tradition and culture has always given a role of protagonist to cuisine, because the majority of celebrations are related to meals or with concrete dishes. Moreover, it must be highlighted that Catalan society is interested in gastronomy and that implies being mentally open to accepting dishes and new techniques that perhaps more conservative societies have not accepted in the same way. (Bernardo et al, 2016: 125)

Food is therefore a common subject of debate and conversation within the area. It is an important part of government policy, yet also a regular feature of the everyday discourse at the grassroots level, transcending the dichotomies of top-down/bottom-up view of food. Due to this widespread explicit recognition of the importance of food in Catalan social life, food is one of the most fruitful areas on which the researcher can focus to understand contemporary Catalan national identity.

## Research Methods

As an anthropologist, my main research ‘strategy’ or ‘methodology’ was that of ethnography. Fundamentally, that is living and experiencing the social reality that the researcher wishes to study. I lived for approximately 15 months in Catalonia, from June 2012 to September 2013. The first two months I spent in Barcelona, perfecting my Catalan and Spanish language, and preparing for the move to my main fieldsite, the town of Vic. I also followed this year-long stay with shorter research visits in the intervening years, the most recent of which was in January 2018.

For placing myself in the field, my main strategy was to learn Catalan to a high standard before entering the field. Both Noyes (2003) and Waldren (1996) found that speaking Catalan in their field sites was enthusiastically received. This is not surprising considering the important role of language in Catalan identity. In doing so, a researcher positions themselves as someone who was willing to understand and appreciate Catalan culture, and also implied a measure of *seny*.

In terms of the data itself (i.e. the discourse on Catalan cuisine and identity) there were two main factors that needed to be present. Firstly, Catalan informants needed to have a developed and extensive discourse around the notion of ‘their’ foods, foods to which they have attached their own identity (or ‘signature foods’, in the words of Mintz, 1996). Secondly, there must be unities in this discourse amongst informants, to provide a set of shared symbols and worldview (Guibernau, 2002). That is not to say that opinions should be identical between informants, and indeed one of the characteristics of cultural nationalisms is their multivocality (MacClancy,

2007; Bray, 2011). Despite individual nuances, there must be an overall set of themes and agreed parameters that define what makes Catalan food, or a Catalan cuisine. This must both be clear to the outside observer (i.e. the field researcher) and recognised by Catalans themselves, being both an emic and an etic category.

I aimed for as wide a variety of informants as possible (following MacClancy, 2007). The only criterion was that they considered themselves as ‘Catalans’, from informants who saw themselves as members of a unjustly repressed ‘nation’ that deserved independence, to others who identified as Spaniards living in the Catalan ‘region’. They can roughly be divided into three groups. Firstly, those who had careers or a strong interest in food (amateur and professional chefs, producers, restaurateurs, food writers, teachers etc.). Secondly, Catalan activists, be it in the pro-independence movement, pan-Catalan civil societies like the *Assemblea Nacional Catalana* (ANC) and *Omnium Cultural*, or in cultural activities such as *sardana* dancing, the *castells*, or *gegant* carriers (*geganters*). Finally, as in any fieldwork (Watson, 1999), the rest of my informants formed a nebulous group of friends and acquaintances that I came to know through the course of my stay. For the purposes of anonymity, I refer to most of my informants by first name only, making exception for well-known figures such as chefs or journalists (unless they requested anonymity for certain statements). Some informants saw the presence of an outside research as an opportunity to promote national rhetoric (both pro- and anti-Catalan), and such expressions may not reflect reality (especially in cases of claimed cultural distinctiveness – Harrison, 2003). But this is all the more reason to focus on such expressions, to better understand the national identity under study.

My main research method was the ethnographic interview. Ideally, I tried to carry out several interviews with each informant, and interact with them in everyday settings. I also used the technique of photo-elicitation in the latter half of fieldwork, normally in group interview settings, using images I had collected throughout fieldwork. These images were a springboard for discussion, or to clarify and probe attitudes about specific foodstuffs or aspects of culinary culture.

Outside of interactions with informants, written material on Catalan cuisine has also been essential. This includes cookbooks (which I discuss in detail in chapter one), newspaper and magazine articles, and occasionally blog posts. This selection of gastronomic literature has created a rich discourse on the subject, which many Catalans use to construct their own ideas about food.

A particularly useful source has been the magazine *Cuina*, Catalonia’s foremost Catalan-language food-focused publication (the editor, Josep Sucarrats, became a crucial informant). Other useful publications were

*Descobrir*, a Catalan travel magazine limited to Catalan-speaking areas, and *Sàpiens*, a Catalan history magazine, which promotes a decidedly Catalanist message (all three are owned by the same publisher, Sàpiens). I also used articles on food and other national subjects from popular newspapers in Catalonia, such as *La Vanguardia*, *El Periódico*, *Ara.cat* and *El Punt Avui*.

Participant observation was also a crucial research method for this book. This included eating with Catalans (and hearing what they said about their food), and cooking with them. Other participant observation included the *busca-bolets* (mushroom hunting), a central part of Catalan food-based identity, and the *matances de porc* (pig killings), where I helped with preparation of the carcass and participated in the meal afterwards. I also include experiences of festive days and events in participant observation. This included all of Catalonia's three major national days, experienced in both Barcelona and Vic, with a special focus on the role of food in these events. Other festive events that I observed were Catalan food festivals and specialist markets.

### The Fieldsite: Vic

In August 2012, I moved to the city of Vic, in the county of Osona, province of Barcelona. Vic is a small city of about 40,000 people, 70 kilometers north of Barcelona. I selected Vic for a number of reasons. It was recommended to me as a fieldsite by Catalan acquaintances, as Vic is regarded as one of the 'most Catalan' towns, a symbolic centre and historical bastion of Catalanism. It is associated with several important Catalan figures, including Catalonia's national poet, Jacint Verdaguer, the philosopher and scholar Jaume Balmes, and Bishop Josep Torras i Bages, who wrote *La Tradició Catalana* ('The Catalan Tradition') in 1892, the basis for conservative, Catholic Catalanism.

Its geographic location in the centre of Catalonia may also have contributed to this symbolic status. This location had practical advantages, as I could easily travel to other parts of Catalonia. Vic is fairly unknown to non-Catalans, so I had less concern with the effects of a large tourist industry on my research. Vic is, however, popular with tourists from within Catalonia, particularly the weekly market on Saturday in the central square (Plaça Major). There is also a smaller weekly market in the Plaça Major on Tuesdays, and another weekly market on Sundays in the Remei quarter (a working-class district across the river from the old city, with a high immigrant population), as well as an active calendar of annual markets. Markets are a site of 'traditional' Catalan sociality, and Vic has advertised itself as a 'City of markets', further strengthening its Catalan credentials (Congdon, 2015).

This climate was also another factor that, indirectly, brought me to Vic. It is a city known for its fog (*la boira*), a result of its location in the bend of a river. This has created a unique climate that is ideal for cured sausage production, particularly the Protected Geographic Indication (PGI) *llonganissa de Vic*. Much of Catalonia is famous for sausages (*embotits*), and as I will discuss in this work, they are themselves Catalan symbols. Vic's identity as a centre of production for this archetypal Catalan product reaffirms its reputation as a truly Catalan place. The sausage industry is also a testament to the importance of pig-raising to Osona's economy. This industry has even left Vic with a sensory footprint, the so-called '*eau de Vic*': a farmyard smell of the pig farms surrounding the city, mixed with a metallic hint from the slaughterhouses, first evident on arrival.

Agriculture and agro-food industries accounted for 3.8 per cent and 10.8 per cent respectively of Osona's workforce in 2008 (more recent, post-crisis data is lacking). The percentage of the population employed in primary industries, 4.3 per cent, is particularly high when compared to the rest of Catalonia (1.3 per cent) (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009). The importance of agriculture, and its rural ambience, means that Vic is often associated with the ideal of the *pagès* (tenant farmer), an ideal that is significant to Catalanism.

As Vic has such a reliance on the agro-alimentary industries and an international reputation for the PGI *llonganissa de Vic*, an initiative was also taking place during my fieldwork to recognise Vic as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy (it was ultimately unsuccessful). Vic University also was the first in Spain to offer a Masters in Communication and Gastronomy from 2006 (sadly, by my arrival it had closed due to low uptake numbers). Still, the candidature and the course showed an interest in food and 'gastronomic heritage' within Vic, another reason to locate within the city.

During my stay I lived in the Plaça Major (central square). I selected it for convenience, but soon realised that this was a highly emotive location in Catalan nationalism. I have already described the role of Vic as a symbolic hinterland, and to live in the very centre of that, in the Plaça Major, fortified my Catalan connections in the eyes of many informants. To use a popular food metaphor, it was said I was living in '*el rovell de l'ou*', the yolk of the egg, to describe how central this location was to contemporary Catalanism.

I also spent a few weeks (over several visits) in other parts of Catalonia, particularly the north-eastern region of Empordà (on the border with France), and the southern tip of Catalonia in the Ebro Delta (the so-called *Terres de l'Ebre*, Ebro Lands). This was on the advice of informants, to experience the contrast in Catalan regional food cultures. Empordà has also contributed disproportionately to Catalan cuisine itself and is the place where many of

Catalonia's food figures have chosen to open restaurants. This is probably due to the proximity to France and the popularity of tourism in the area.

## **Nationalism, Identity, Power: Definitions and Limitations**

The focus of this book is clearly on nationalism, but I have also introduced words such as 'identity', 'ethnicity' and 'tradition'. I prefer the term national identity to ethnicity, because I believe that the latter is not an appropriate word to apply to the Catalan people, who very clearly refer to themselves as members of a 'nation', not an 'ethnic group'. However, the word 'nationalism' (*nacionalisme*) is also disliked for its political connotations in Spain as another term for Francoism or Spanish nationalism. The word '*Catalanisme*' (anglicised to 'Catalanism') is more acceptable, although its most accurate translation is 'Catalan nationalism', because the word describes the ideologies behind Catalan nationhood. For clarity I will use both Catalanism and Catalan nationalism.

It is worth elaborating on the approach to identity taken in this book. It is a truism to say that national identities cannot exist outside of the people who have created them, hence the need to focus on the developers and practitioners of nationalisms. Identity here is a sense of affiliation and belonging that is grounded within those individual practitioners and performers of the nation, that is also essential for their sense of being within the world, and their interactions with it. In the literature on the study of everyday life in national identity, the role of performance has been given special significance. The work of Tim Edensor (2002, 2006) is useful here, inspired by the Butler's theory of identity performance. He has focused on how national belonging is perpetuated in everyday life, a space where 'national identity is continually reproduced, sedimented and challenged' (Edensor, 2006: 526). As he explains, 'performance continually reconstitutes identity by rehearsing and transmitting meanings' (Edensor, 2002: 69).

This approach also ensures identity is viewed as a dynamic. As national identity relies on repeated acts, not on an original copy, by its nature it is impossible to replicate these acts perfectly (Lavi, 2003; Edensor, 2002). For this reason, national identities are never static, but continually evolving and adapting to contemporary realities within communities. They are dynamic, contested, negotiated, continually in a process of reinvention and flux (Edensor, 2006; MacClancy, 2007). This is a point emphasised by Zoe Bray in her ethnography on Basque nationalism, such that identity becomes 'the product of a fluid and changing application of markers and boundaries by individuals in a constant process of identification and self-identification' (Bray, 2011: 217). Her conclusions are unusual but perceptive, as they

stress the individual experience of identity, whereas most work has so far stressed the collective element of nationalisms. Vaczi (2016) in her conclusions on the performative nature of *castells*, recognises the comforting role identity performance can play in times of geopolitical uncertainty. She also recognises that performing the nation can be a source of enjoyment. To view identity as dynamic and performative fits well with the ethnographic approach used in this book. This view of identity as continually changing may appear contradictory in light of the claims of many national ideologies to timelessness and permanence (Llobera, 2004). Hence the importance of questioning and examining such claims from a neutral perspective.

Identities are inherently relational. They are constructed in opposition to what they are not, even when cross-cultural similarities between opposing identities exist but are ignored or denied (Harrison, 2003). From the outside, it may seem as though there is one unified Catalan national identity. From the inside however, it becomes clear that there are many different shades of 'being Catalan' (revealing once more the usefulness of an ethnographic approach for understanding these movements). In other parts of Spain, Bray (2007) and MacClancy (1997) in the Basque country, and Medeiros (2013) in Galicia have recognised that there may be different versions of allegiance to a 'nation', from strong nationalists with political ambitions to 'non-nationalists' who show pride in symbols of Basque or Galician identity. There are rarely any illusions about local or political elites and their manipulation of these sentiments. In this regard Catalonia is not unique. During my fieldwork in 2012–2013, Catalans were aware that both the incumbent government and the opposition used Catalanist fervour to its own ends. There is a deep mistrust of the political class, even if they are Catalan (Crameri, 2014).<sup>7</sup> The result is that Catalanism is separated from politics in the minds of most informants. This may explain why Catalan nationalism has been such an enduring movement, because it has not been the exclusive preserve of a single political party or spectrum (Crameri, 2008). This is not a unique phenomenon to Catalanism however, as Billig (1995) has pointed out in examining other cases of banal nationalism.<sup>8</sup>

Catalan symbols are a source of pride, despite attempts to co-opt them for political gain. Vaczi (2016) has seen this trend in the *castell* groups, who avoid political affiliations, though they will perform for NGOs. Her research also demonstrates how Catalan symbols, such as the *castells*, can mean different things to different social groups or classes within the region, from conservative Catalans to lower classes and immigrants. By meaning many things to many people, national discourse can appear inherently contradictory. Edensor (2006) suggests that a problem with the continued focus on elite constructions of national identity means that it appears the masses are powerless to resist ideological messages given to them from above. However,

running with the notion of identity as inherently contested, performative and flexible, in practice those who employ these symbols in their daily lives also supply their meaning, which might be very different from their original connotations (Guibernau, 1996, in Edensor, 2006).

This point has complex ramifications for understanding power structures and relations in Catalonia. A Foucauldian view of the power dynamics is relevant here, most obvious in the fact that the Generalitat controls popular media (it owns the Catalan Media Corporation, which controls radio and television in the region), and the education system. Providing funding to city and town councils for use in advertising or cultural events that promote Catalan-ness is another way to subconsciously encourage identification. The Generalitat's policies 'reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies, and inserts itself into their very actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives' (Foucault, in Lukes, 2005; 88–89), to promote pro-Catalan behaviour and sentiment. It is difficult to say how much of the current political crisis has been the result of this covert signalling of Catalan difference over almost two generations. This is a situation that has often irked the central government, especially in education. To further complicate the situation, centrists inside and outside Catalonia manipulate perceptions of the Catalan government's attitude in their own power plays, both within the region, and at state level politics. One could also argue that the cultural ideal of *seny* versus *rauxa* is a hidden means of social control, as it encourages non-violence and conformity to Catalan institutions (Vaczi, 2016),<sup>9</sup> just as the nineteenth-century elite used the same ideology to control their workers (McDonogh, 1986).

However, most Catalans are aware that the Catalan local government-controlled media is promoting pro-Catalan discourse. They are also aware of the competing discourses from centrist and pro-Spanish media. Neither has managed to hide their own mechanisms, as Foucault believed power structures did. The views of Steven Lukes (2005) and James C. Scott (1990) are more interesting in the Catalan case. They demonstrate a more flexible, pragmatic approach to power hierarchies, and reactions to exertions of power. One could argue that Lukes's three dimensions of power are active in Catalonia, in particular his third dimension or ideological power. That most members of Catalan society '*consent* to power and *resent* the mode of its exercise' (Lukes, 2005: 150) is a more accurate description of what happens in the minds of Catalans. The level of resentment varies depending on where an individual stands on the spectrum of Catalan identity, from *independentista* to 'more Spanish than Catalan'. From a purely rational perspective, supporting Catalan nationalism opposes the interests of many of the region's inhabitants, due to the uncertainty and economic downturn engendered by independence politics in autumn 2017. Based on my fieldwork in January

2018, this may have created a situation of ‘latent conflict’<sup>10</sup> (ibid.: 28) within the region.

I should also make clear that I am focusing on how food is reflected in national identity. There are other identities on which I will not be able to focus due to the lack of space. One of these is gender, and the other is class. Both are themes that have been considered extensively in discussions of food (Counihan and Kaplans’ edited volume (2013) has addressed the former, whilst Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1984, 2010) has examined the latter, and Pratt (2003) has also contrasted nationalisms with class-based movements). Issues of gender are present in discussions of Catalan food, but they are not especially relevant to the present discussion of food’s relationship to nationalism. While I saw some examples of class-based attitudes perpetuated in Catalonia in a very few households, I cannot claim to have recognised a clear scheme of social classes into which my informants placed themselves. While a study of this situation in contemporary Catalonia may be interesting (updating the work of Giner, 1980 and Pi-Sunyer, 1974), I found it of little direct relevance to the two interlinked subjects under study, that of food and nationalism. Moreover, Llobera (2004) has suggested that an excessive focus on class and identity in Catalonia has clouded in-depth study of the region.

My intention has never been to create a description of Catalans’ everyday diet. My research focuses on the *discourses* about foods, and what foods mean, rather than nutritional content, eating patterns etc. I also do not have scope here to discuss the Catalan industrial food system in depth, nor Catalonia’s role in the global food system. I also focus little on the role of the Catholic Church in Catalonia. Llobera (2004: 17) considers a ‘strong Catalan “national” Church’ to have been essential to Catalanism. However, I did not find a strong connection between religious belief and a Catalan identity today, except in the secularised celebration of national saints’ days. While I would also have liked to consider the question of recent immigration to Catalonia, and its effect on food, I believe such a topic would be worthy of its own research project (moreover, I was unable to place myself in such a way to gather relevant data).<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Catalonia’s role as a very popular tourist destination is touched upon in the work, but is less of a focus here for reasons of time and scope.

I only focus on the Catalan Autonomous Community (CAC), an important delineation because this defines neither the borders of the Catalan language, nor of Catalan identity. Catalan is spoken in a larger group of areas called the *Països Catalans* (Catalan-speaking areas), which includes the CAC, the Balearic Isles, Valencia, Andorra, Roussillon (Northern Catalonia) and a small strip of Aragon (*La Franja*). According to the anthropologist Oonagh O’Brien (1994), who has extensively studied Catalan identity in French

Catalonia, the situation there is very different from the CAC. Abandoning Catalan and adopting French is essential for social mobility.

A current in Catalan nationalism has been the notion of a unified *Països Catalans*. The image of the *Països Catalans* is a popular motif on pro-Catalan and pro-independence memorabilia, much like Urla's (1993: 825) descriptions of the 'bounded visual image, detached and floating in space' in Basque nationalism, to both delineate a nation and act as a brand-like, personal logo. In Catalonia the discourse of the *Països Catalans* has often been used to show how these areas have been subjugated to the decisions of nation-state powers (Spain and France). Contemporary controversy has also revolved around whether 'Catalan' can be used to describe its dialects in Aragon and Valencia, heavily influenced by ruling political parties in those areas (CNA, 2015; Castelló and Castelló, 2009).

## Structure of the Book

The first chapter provides an overview of Catalan culinary literature from the medieval era to the present day. This will provide a history of Catalan cuisine and introduce some of the texts and writers who will feature in this work. It is also useful to consider how some of these cookbooks are perceived by Catalans today, and how they are used to construct contemporary culinary identity. Chapter Two considers the culinary aspects that make Catalan cuisine, including the primary sauces, and attitudes to 'signature dishes' (Mintz, 1996). In doing so I introduce many of the key concepts present in Catalan food-based identity and relate them to general attitudes about Catalan national identity.

In Chapter Three, I consider Catalan cuisine in various contexts. I discuss the campaign to recognise Catalan cuisine as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage, and the context of Catalonia's cuisine in the Mediterranean and *Països Catalans*. Within this chapter I will include an update on the role food has played in the current political crisis since October 2017.

Chapter Four provides an exploration of the gastronomic calendar, according to which each festive day has an associated food, and its connection with markets and seasonality in national identity. The discussion then progresses onto the place of landscape in Catalan gastronationalism, inspired by a Catalan saying that 'a cuisine is a country's landscape in a pot'. Finally, in Chapter Five I explore the controversies surrounding recently developed, explicitly Catalanist foods, which are associated with the three national days. I will conclude by summarising the main findings within Catalonia about intersections between food and nationalism, and also provide some more general methodological suggestions for studying the subject in other contexts.

## Notes

1. History would repeat itself again under Franco, as wealthier Catalans who aligned themselves with Franco (nicknamed ‘Catalans of the Eixample’ – DiGiacomo, 2001), in the hopes of protecting Catalan industries, found an inherent mistrust of Catalans.
2. I attended the three Diadas from 2012 to 2014, so can describe them from personal experience.
3. By contrast, average voter turnout for the region in the last ten years approached 70 per cent (Statista, 2019).
4. The defendants are Dolores Bassa, Meritxell Borràs, Jordi Cuixart, Carme Forcadell, Joaquim Forn, Oriol Junqueras, Carles Mundó, Raül Romeva, Josep Rull, Jordi Sánchez, Jordi Turull and Santi Vila.
5. Catalans are fond of referring to *la nostra llengua mil·lenària* – our thousand-year-old language (DiGiacomo, 2001).
6. In my experience, this claim that food is a popular topic of conversation is certainly true, though this applied to all generations, not just the older ones. I also did twice hear some mention of the *misèria* amongst informants who had lived through it, and in one instance this had galvanized the attitudes of these informants against Spain.
7. This is no doubt due to corruption scandals. One recently implicated Jordi Pujol and his family, one of the architects of contemporary Catalanism. The political fallout was so great that his party (CiU) was renamed, to distance the party from his legacy.
8. ‘If banal nationalism were only to be found in the words of politicians, it would hardly be embedded in the ordinary lives of those millions of people who treat the genus of politicians with cynical disdain’ (Billig, 1995: 94).
9. ‘Between the two polarities, one has to cultivate *seny* in order not to fall into *rauxa*, which makes *seny* popular instead of top-down repressive’ (Vaczi, 2016: 361).
10. ‘What one may have here is a *latent conflict*, which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the *real interests* of those they exclude’ (Lukes, 2005: 28).
11. Vic’s Remei quarter would provide an ideal site for this kind of study.