

Chapter 6

Iberia

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In the beginning there is a paradox. While the term “Iberia,” which was coined by the ancient Greeks to name the peninsula and which apparently comes from a river named Iber, is widely used in the English-speaking academic world, this label has an exotic flavor to most Iberian intellectuals and academics. A detailed thematic search in the catalog of the Spanish National Library offers a first insight into this cleavage. If the term selected is “Iberian Peninsula,” several hundred titles match our request. However, if the term selected is “Iberia,” just 131 matches are registered. But almost 90 percent of them refer exclusively to the Spanish airline Iberia, founded in 1927.¹ The geographic term is only employed by some foreign companies for their branches in Spain and Portugal to make it explicit that these delegations are responsible for operations on the whole peninsula, as well as by some football clubs, which were mostly founded by British settlers during the first years of the twentieth century. Very few memoirs, novels, or even periodicals mention Iberia (or Iberian) in their titles or headlines. In short, the label is no commonplace in Portuguese and Spanish culture, and has given its name to very few literary, essayistic, or artistic works. Only one exception comes to mind: the suite for piano *Iberia*, composed between 1905 and 1909 by the Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz, which is considered to be his masterpiece.

In contrast, “Iberia” is a term primarily used by non-Iberian observers, even by well-informed experts on Spain or Portugal or both, whose main conclusion used to be that there was no Iberian identity whatsoever, but a number of Iberian identities merely united by geography and the outside gaze (Herr and Polt 1989; O’Flanagan 2008). As in the case of the Balkans, it can be affirmed that the outside gaze, particularly during the French Enlightenment and the romantic period, also reinforced the perception of Iberian space as

being a non-European, uncivilized, exotic border area between Africa and Europe. The travelers' accounts written by German, British, and particularly French intellectuals who visited the Iberian Peninsula beginning in the late eighteenth century emphasized the exotic character of the Iberian lands, as well as their extreme internal diversity, regarded as a complementary feature to that exoticism (Bradford 1809). Alexander von Humboldt's views on the Basques as a people invested with proto-democratic institutions had little to do with his perception of the "Arabic" South of Spain. The same could be said of other foreign visitors (Fischer 1799; Humboldt 1903, 224–300; Michener 1968). Some of them, particularly French romantic travelers of the 1840s,² selected a set of images corresponding to Southern Spain—flamenco dancers, picturesque bullfighters, the female stereotype of the Andalusian woman represented by *Carmen* (Prosper Mérimée 1847), which came to be considered representative of all of Spain, and even of Iberia as a whole. These icons were later adopted as an inverted mirror in self-portrayals by many Spanish writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as by official propaganda campaigns—for example, for the purpose of promoting tourism—although in this case the meanings ascribed to those images were conveniently resignified (Núñez Florencio 2001; Musser 2011).

The exotic and romantic icon of Iberian identity was extended throughout Western and Central Europe in the second half of the twentieth century and has displayed an enduring resilience. Although it was explicitly applied to Spain, its limits and nuances were extremely unclear, and on many occasions the stereotype was identified with Iberia as a whole. In fact, many travelers to Portugal used to note with great surprise "how different" this land was from what they had expected before entering it, as their previous image of Portugal was that of a country which was smaller and poorer, but also somewhat similar to Spain, while similar stereotypes were ascribed to the inhabitants of the two Iberian lands (Borrow 2006; Andersen 2007). French geographers and travelers seldom used the concept *Ibérie*. Something similar can be said of German travelers and geographers. They preferred the term "Iberian Peninsula" or simply referred to "Iberia" when writing about the ancient times of the Roman Empire.³

Internal (that is, Iberian) consumers have mostly used the term "Iberia" as a political, cultural, and geographic metaphor. Only Spanish and Portuguese historians of antiquity have consistently made use of the term as the best marker for the territory not yet conquered by the Romans, which then went on to be labeled "Hispania," the term coined for the peninsula by its new masters.⁴ The more abstract and fluid the term was, and the more imprecise its limits, the more useful and recurrent its use turned out to be in the sphere

of politics. In this latter case, the coherence and limits of the term “Iberia” were much less relevant than its ideological utilization.

The term “Iberia” is not in common use in Iberian languages for political, academic, or cultural purposes. However, the term “Iberian Peninsula” has enjoyed widespread use in such disciplines as geology, the natural sciences, and geography, in particular physical geography. This formula is, however, of merely geographic and/or cartographic compass. It has constituted, and still constitutes, a mosaic of different ethnic groups and languages. Two separate nation-states share its space, at least since 1640, as well as a microstate (Andorra) and a remnant of the British overseas empire (Gibraltar). At least five languages enjoying official status in their respective territories also share this space from the last quarter of the twentieth century (Castilian; Portuguese; Catalan in Catalonia, Valencia, and Andorra; Galician in Galicia; Basque in the Basque Country and Navarre; as well as English in Gibraltar). Despite its internal ethnic diversity, the Iberian Peninsula also tends to be regarded from the outside as a more or less wholly homogeneous unity, where a dominant ethnicity expressed in a world language (Spanish/Castilian) exists alongside a minor and subordinate element, also expressed in a world language of some lesser relevance (Portuguese). However, the rest of the components of the Iberian ethnocultural landscape (the Galician, Catalan, and Basque cultures, as well as other subnational and regional peculiarities and Gibraltar) have often been obscured, in spite of the visibility acquired by the Basque question since the 1970s, the architectural flavor of Santiago de Compostela as the final station of the Way of Saint James, or the important (self-)advertising role of the city of Barcelona for Catalan identity (Resina 2008).

The Iberian Peninsula is not, like the Balkans, an area where border regions and entire territories were transferred from one sovereignty to another, and therefore where conflicting national narratives over a same territory co-existed. The long-term stability of its internal frontiers since the late seventeenth century constitutes a European exception, as the Spanish-Portuguese border has been subject to very little modification since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the French-Spanish border was marked by the Pyrenees, with no changes since 1659. This fact did not prevent Iberian state-led nationalisms from claiming sovereignty over neighboring territories, nor from imagining one’s own national borders as being very different and larger than their present shape. But this irredentist imagination has played a minor role in modern Iberian identity politics (Núñez Seixas 2010a). However, the relationship of Spaniards and Portuguese to the cartographic representation of their homelands is very different. For most Spaniards, the geographic image simply overlaps with the Iberian Peninsula as a whole. For many Portuguese, on the contrary, the peninsular space is often regarded not as a comfortable

lap, but as a threatening territory where their small country risks disappearing, subjugated by the outstanding weight and dimensions of its Spanish neighbor—conversely regarded as a homogeneous Castilian ethnicity.

Iberianism as a political concept (*iberismo*) was employed by several political and cultural actors beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. It was a utopian horizon that accompanied federal Republican projects, workers' internationalism, substate nationalist projections of a new Spain (and consequently a new political structure of the peninsular space), and even monarchist projects (Catroga 1985; Rocamora 1994; Campos Matos 2007). Very diverse authors, from the revolutionary anarchists who founded the Iberian Anarchist Federation in 1927 (*Federación Anarquista Ibérica*, FAI),⁵ and the non-Stalinist dissident communists of the Marxist Union's Workers Party (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*, POUM) during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), to the Portuguese authoritarian monarchists after 1910, have echoed a rhetorical appeal to an Iberian unified polity. Nevertheless, in almost all cases, the term “Iberia” was used merely as a label of substitution, in order to avoid the words that were uncomfortable: the “Portuguese Republic” or “Spain,” depending on the respective objective they aimed at: an Iberian monarchy or a “Union of Iberian Socialist Republics.” The term “Iberia” was meant here to express a lack of satisfaction with the existing political regime in Spain, in Portugal, or in both nation-states (Duarte 2010).

When Was Iberia?

What are the main historical turning points of the conceptualization of Iberia as a common reality? There is no common pattern to be found among the diverse Spanish and Portuguese historical narratives. Spanish and Portuguese historiographies followed parallel paths from the late eighteenth centuries, but they simply ignored each other (Campos Matos and Mota Álvarez 2008; Núñez Seixas 2011). Therefore, the chronological points where a certain concept of Iberia as a so-called historical region emerges are in most cases vague and undefined. Nonetheless, some crucial moments have been outlined by historians, geographers, politicians, and opinion-makers, who also ascribed them different interpretations. Thus, a chronology of Iberianism can be obtained from different sources and includes the following historical turning points:

- 1) The ancient times are the sole period when the peninsula is indisputably considered to have been a unity. The Iberians are usually described in Spanish and Portuguese textbooks as the set of tribes and peoples that inhabited the peninsula before the arrival of foreign conquerors: the Carthaginians and especially the Romans, who launched the conquest of the Iberian territory

in the year 276 BC. Ancient Iberians were given great relevance in Spanish historical culture, as they were considered the first representatives of the Hispanic national character, although it was generally accepted that only the Romans gave them a sense of unity.⁶ The subsequent emergence of the Roman province of Hispania was the first expression of peninsular unity, as well as of historical and geographical distinctiveness. Hispania was not meant here to be a political but rather a geographical concept.

2) The Gothic invasions and the consolidation of the Gothic kingdoms began in the fifth century; they then merged into the first unified polity of the whole peninsula, the Visigoth kingdom, particularly after its conversion to Catholicism (and the abandonment of heretical Arianism) by the king Recaredo in the year 574 AC). This was seen by nineteenth-century Spanish historians as an important cornerstone on the way to peninsular unity, as well as proof of the intrinsically Hispanic character of the whole territory: even newcomers accepted the legacy of civilized Iberianness. Territory decisively shaped the Iberians' mind and their natural striving for unity. Peninsular unity was also a legacy from Greco-Roman culture. Catholicism, as displayed in the work of Saint Isidore of Seville, had acted as a unifying element favoring the fusion of Iberians and Goths with the civilization of the Romans.

3) The Arab invasions in the year 714 AC and the eight subsequent centuries of more or less forced and more or less peaceful coexistence of three religious confessions (Muslims, Christians, and Jews) on the peninsular soil were regarded from a more ambivalent angle. Spanish and Portuguese nationalist historiography in the nineteenth century coined the term "Reconquest" for the era to describe the steady process of southward expansion of the Christian kingdoms, which step by step gained terrain from the Muslim emirates and kingdoms of Southern Iberia. The process was supposed to have an end in January 1492, as the city of Granada surrendered to the Castilian queen Isabella.

4) The historical evaluation of the Middle Ages has been double-edged and contradictory. On the one hand, the "March to the South" of the Christian kingdoms has been interpreted as an endeavor guided by a common enterprise, that of reconstructing the lost peninsular unity inherited from the Romans and the Goths, and reinforced by the Christian faith. On the other hand, most Iberian national narratives place the origins of their nations precisely in this period, particularly in the Portuguese (and later Catalan and Galician) cases. The emergence of distinctive ethnicities, languages, and political communities after the multiplication of Latin romance dialects paved the way for the first proto-national polities. Therefore, the Middle Ages were also seen by the supporters of Iberian unity as a moment of success for the traditional defects they considered characteristic of Iberians: a pathological drive for individualism, only compensated by generosity, bravery, and disdain

of materialistic values. An expression of this exalted individualism had been Portugal's decision to go its own way, not counterbalanced by a parallel move toward dynastic unity, as had been the case for the Kingdoms of Aragón and Castile.

5) The Portuguese discoveries, as well as Columbus's discovery of America in 1492 and the subsequent overseas expansion of the unified Spanish monarchy, define a period that led to Iberian—particularly Castilian—imperial hegemony in the world for a century and a half. This period is mainly regarded by Spanish and Portuguese nationalist historians as the peak moment of historical grandeur. For Alexandre Herculano and his followers, the overseas discoveries of the fifteenth century also meant Portugal's liberation from Castilian hegemony. Several contradictions were underlined in this period, which is also regarded as the crucial moment when parallel lines of proto-national and territorial expansion were competing. As Spain (Castile and Aragón) was a part of the Habsburg Empire, one of these lines led toward Central Europe. The other led toward the Americas.

6) The second line of overseas expansion prevailed, and was overly emphasized by the nationalist historical narratives of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Iberian transatlantic empires had made an enduring contribution to world civilization, as they gained a set of new lands for the Catholic faith in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, and spread the Castilian and Portuguese languages.

7) The Napoleonic invasion of 1808 and the following Napoleonic (or “peninsular”) war, later renamed the War of Independence, were interpreted as the moment of the emergence and/or consolidation of modern Iberian nation-states, rather than an expression of genuine Iberian solidarity. In spite of the fact that the war was fought on Iberian soil, engaging soldiers from at least four nationalities (French, Spanish, British, and Portuguese), there is no common Iberian narrative of the conflict. Some contemporary poets referred to the “brave Iberians” who had expelled the French just as their ancestors had resisted the Romans, but “Iberians” simply meant “Spaniards” (Valvidares y Longo 1835). Portuguese and Spanish national historiographies regarded the conflict as the opposition of patriots to the French invaders (Alvarez Junco 1994).

8) The common imperial crisis of the late nineteenth-century affected Iberia as well. Beginning with the 1890 Ultimatum crisis in Portugal, as British pressure forced the Lisbon government to abandon its plans of forging a Portuguese South African empire by uniting Angola and Moçambique, and the 1898 crisis in Spain, as the country lost its overseas colonies after a short war against the United States, both countries were regarded by European public opinion as declining powers in the age of imperialism. As a reaction to

this, several supporters of the project of Iberian political union, which would enable a new Iberian confederation to play a more relevant role in international politics, gained renewed attention. Yet they were unable to surmount nationalist prejudices. While for the Portuguese any project of Iberian political union was suspected of being antipatriotic, Spanish intellectuals shared a tendency to regard Portugal merely as a part of Spain that had been unduly separated from the national core in 1640. When they used the term “Iberia,” it was just Spain (in some cases, ancient Spain) that was meant.⁷

This contradiction may be illustrated by the views on the concept of Iberian civilization that were held around 1900 by the Portuguese historian Joaquim P. Oliveira Martins and the Spanish Rafael Altamira. Both believed in the convenience of crafting a common narrative that would permit the declining Iberian powers to play a new role in the age of empire. They emphasized the distinctive Iberian contribution to world civilization and stressed the values that had oriented the imperial expansion of Iberian peoples in the past (that is, spiritualism, disdain of material benefits, purportedly generous treatment of subject peoples). According to this interpretation, Iberians had incorporated the Luso-Hispanic peoples of America, Africa, and Asia into a shared destiny. However, while Oliveira Martins advocated the recovery of the concept of Iberian civilization, his Spanish colleague opted for the term “Spanish civilization,” and stressed the transatlantic link to the Iberoamerican nations. Furthermore, both acted as national historians. While the Spanish national narratives (both liberal and traditionalist) had no real problem in adopting an Iberian vein, as Portugal was regarded as a prodigal son of Hispanity, it was more difficult for Portuguese historians to accept the Iberian dimension without betraying the main tenets of their own national narrative (Campos Matos 2009; Núñez Seixas 2010b).

9) The consolidation of enduring authoritarian dictatorships in the twentieth century (1926–74 in Portugal, 1939–1975 in Spain), characterized by their Catholic-traditionalist slant, and their survival after 1945, also led some social scientists to refer to a specific species of “Iberian Catholic fascism” or Iberian dictatorship as a peculiar and distinctive form of political regime (Loff 2008), which was sometimes compared later to the Greek military dictatorship, and even to some dictatorial regimes of Central and South America during the second half of the twentieth century.

The limited academic and journalistic emphasis on the Iberian dimension of transnational fascism has been counterbalanced by the striking differences existing between Salazarism and Francoism, as well as by the more pronounced overseas and imperial orientation of Portugal during this period. However, European social democracy, and in general terms the European left, regarded the peninsula as a whole, or at least to a certain extent, as part of a

no-less-vaguely defined “Southern Europe,” and envisaged a common path for achieving democracy for the whole area. But they were also aware of the fact that the political dynamics of Iberian paths to democracy could hardly be more different from each other. While a military coup in Portugal in April 1974 was followed by a period of revolutionary turmoil, a relatively smooth and consociational transition took place in Spain after the death of General Franco in November 1975.⁸

10) Finally, the period of democratic consolidation that peaked with Portugal and Spain’s entry in the EEC in 1986 was marked in both countries by a strong wave of Euro-optimism. It was regarded as the end of what had constituted Iberian exceptionalism until that moment: the sum of economic decline, authoritarian rule, and cultural backwardness. Joint participation in the EEC/EU also meant a substantial reversal of historical *othering*. “Europe” ceased to be an alien space located beyond the Pyrenees. The Iberian “others” during the 1990s and the twenty-first century became increasingly similar to most Western Europeans. Since 1986, both countries saw their cultural, economic, and political exchanges rapidly intensifying.

This fact has had little impact, however, on the historiographic level. Although academic exchanges between Spanish and Portuguese historians have increased substantially since the mid-1980s, joint research projects and historical meetings did not usually lead to a systematic comparison, even less to a transnational perspective, but to a juxtaposition of two narratives. Very few Spanish historians are acquainted with the basics of modern Portuguese history, and to a lesser extent something similar happens the other way round. Even less frequent are attempts at building an agreed-upon concept of Iberia as a historical region. More often than not, Portuguese and Spanish historians have only been forced to think about this when they have been compelled or motivated to place Iberian history in a broader context (Costa Pinto and Núñez 1997; Sáez-Arance 2003).

Iberian Metaphors

The geographical location of Iberia between Europe and Africa has also been the object of diverging historiographic and cultural interpretations of the Iberian space. These have depicted the Iberian territory as a place where different religious beliefs (Christian, Muslim, and Jewish) coexisted in harmony until the sixteenth century, and they have also presented it as a crucible—sometimes as a salad bowl—of different ethnic groups and cultures of both European and non-European character, from Southern European and Northern European origin. Later on, America’s so-called discovery and colonization during the early modern period also led Iberian historical narratives to stress

the role of the peninsula not only as a gateway between Europe and Africa, but above all as a transatlantic gateway between the old and the new world.

A similar metaphor was applied to the concepts of the Iberian “crucible.” The fusion of races and ethnic groups that occurred on the Iberian Peninsula was now extended to America and, to a more limited extent, to several territories of Africa and Asia (Goode 2007). The miscegenation that started in Europe in the early Middle Ages was then transplanted to America, and therefore the Iberian nations were also recreated and reproduced overseas in their racial and ethnic diversity. This representation, together with the common enterprise of extending the Catholic faith, tended to underscore the specifically “benevolent” character of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism. This was sometimes depicted by certain historians as a distinct pattern of Iberian colonialism, differentiated from the “racist” French, German, or British models. Yet this positive view also obscured the many dark sides of Iberian empires, such as violence, slave labor, and enforced cultural assimilation (Schmidt-Nowara 2006).

The Iberian Peninsula’s relative isolation from Western and Central Europe, sanctioned by the existence of the Pyrenees, also gave rise to very divergent reactions beginning in the late eighteenth century. Iberia was often regarded by traditionalists and counterrevolutionaries as a “bulwark” of Christianity and tradition against the perverse influence of the French Enlightenment, against revolutionary liberalism and the British tradition of rational thought, and against heretic doctrines and freemasonry. However, the peninsula was also portrayed as a premodern and exotic space, whose geographic isolation and eccentric location on the southwestern corner of the continent had prevented its inhabitants from joining progress and civilization, attributes that seemed to be proper to other areas of Europe. Iberia was not a land of passage, but a place where conquerors and invaders were forced to stop at the sea, once they found themselves unable to go any farther.⁹

While the first narrative depicted Iberia as a repository of the purest essences of classic heritage, Christian tradition, and even ancient European distinctiveness, the second interpretation portrayed the Iberian lands as the last refuge of ideological and cultural reaction, fanaticism, intolerance, and backwardness. Some of the main arguments that embraced Iberian (particularly, but certainly not only, Spanish) backwardness and barbarism were then forged and diffused. This was the case with the “Black Legend,” as well as the myth of the Spanish Inquisition as a long-standing characteristic of Spanish (and, by extension, Iberian) character. On the contrary, for progressive liberals and republicans alike, the Pyrenees were not a barrier against European influence, but a permanent and undeletable link with the continent and its intrinsic values (freedom, tolerance, modernity).

In practice, there were few alternative concepts that could compete with the prevailing Iberian notion of historical space. Iberia appears to be a natural entity, marked by clear-cut natural barriers: mountains, seas, straits, and rivers. It is a solid, concrete metaphor: a number of territories sharing some organic features, among them mighty rivers, which are seen as powerful backbones that create a sense of common destiny.¹⁰

Alternative supranational concepts of historical regions that may go beyond the Iberian space have barely been used in Spain and Portugal. Neither the concept “Southern Europe” nor that of “Southwestern Europe” has succeeded in Iberian historical narratives. The label “Mediterranean Europe” was also unable to tempt many Portuguese, Galicians, or Basques to become a part of it, as they have mostly defined themselves as Atlantic peoples. However, the Mediterranean dimension was much more comfortably accepted by historians and intellectuals from Catalonia or Andalusia, as their link to the Greek-Roman heritage was therefore emphasized. Yet there have been a few exceptions to this rule.

A first exception was the recurrent inclusion of Spain into the Southern European category by economic historians during the 1980s and 1990s, as well as by migration studies and, in some cases, by political scientists, who compared Spain with Portugal, Italy, and Greece. This was paradoxically related to the necessity to overcome some pessimistic paradigms of Spanish historical writing that had become a Spanish *Sonderweg* thesis. One of these referred to the failure of the bourgeois revolution. The other was the thesis of the failure of the industrial revolution. And a third, although more contested, paradigm that still endures is the thesis of the weak Spanish nation-building. Instead of looking at France and Britain as historical patterns of comparison, younger Spanish historians turned their eyes to Italy and the Mediterranean basin during the 1980s and 1990s. This trend was favored by the linguistic proximity to Italian and the attractive performance of Italian historiography in the 1980s. By making Spain more “Mediterranean,” inferiority complexes resulting from the persistent implicit comparison with the North should vanish.

However, the Mediterranean dimension stood in open contradiction with the Iberian paradigm. Given the fact that between Spain and Portugal there existed a clear imbalance of economic power, demographic dimension, and cultural influence, comparison with Portugal was considered an almost negligible endeavor by most Spanish historians. For some Portuguese historians, looking to Spain was also of little help, as it could only serve to reinforce a pessimistic view of their country’s economic performance in the modern period. As a parallel phenomenon, Portuguese historians have looked for commonalities with other purportedly Atlantic and Southern European countries, in order to place their country’s political and economic evolution in a wider

framework. Economic historians emphasized comparisons with “peripheral” Atlantic or Mediterranean countries, such as Greece or even Sweden (Lains 2003). Political historians have also attempted to place the Portuguese path to political modernization within the Southern European framework of early parliamentarianism and late social modernization (Tavares de Almeida, Costa Pinto, and Bermeo 2003).

Alternative constructs such as that of Hispanity (*Hispanidad*), until the 1980s, and Lusophonia (*Lusofonia*), until the present day, proved to be more successful. They were politically promoted in different periods—from the beginning of the twentieth century in Spain, increasingly invested with a Catholic-conservative meaning, and from the mid-1970s in Portugal, enhancing a linguistic and cultural character (Sepúlveda 1994, Castelo 1998)—and were intended as an alternative search for a cultural and “spiritual” empire. This would also serve to reaffirm the Iberian influence in world affairs. Both concepts followed parallel paths until the 1990s, as the terms “Iberoamericanism” and “Ibero-America” emerged. This was seen from the Spanish side as a necessity to overcome the authoritarian and traditionalist tones that the Franco regime had given to the concept *Hispanidad*. But it was also regarded as a necessary response to the spreading of the term “Latin America,” whose origins—which dated back to the mid-nineteenth century—were seen in the French, Italian, and British attempts at undermining the predominance of the Spanish language in the Americas.¹¹

On the Portuguese side, the motivation was different. The imbalance in size, power, and economic influence between the ancient metropolis (Portugal) and the former colony (Brazil) is so huge, that the invention of “Ibero-America” appeared as an efficient strategy to overcome that contradiction. This is perhaps the sole case where the term “Iberian,” though associated with the Americas, has experienced some success, at least in the diplomatic sphere. However, while more or less widely used in the Spanish and Portuguese public sphere, the term “Ibero-America” has not managed to impose itself in the Americas, where the term preferred by Spanish and Portuguese-speaking elites themselves continues to be Latin America. And it is used even less in the academic world, apart from several attempts at building transatlantic networks where Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American historians would collaborate in creating a common framework of transnational history. Their success (for example, in the domain of conceptual history) has remained limited so far, as the circulation of ideas in the Iberoamerican space has followed very divergent paths.¹² Moreover, the independent connections to other cultural and political areas (North America, Western Europe, etc.) were often more important than those established within “Ibero-America.” Apart from some segments of English-speaking academic Hispanism, one of the few ex-

ceptions is the German *Hispanistik* school, where the label “Iberoamerican history and culture” has been successfully used through the last fifty years to name a rather vague field of study embracing both Latin American and Iberian history.¹³

Not even substate nationalist narratives in the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia have been capable to fully overcome the Iberian frame of reference. Yet Catalan and Galician nationalists dreamed of *another* Iberia, one that would go beyond the existing nation-states and adopt a federal or confederal structure, based on the free association of the linguistic ethnonations of the peninsula (Martínez Gil 1997; Medeiros 2003; Núñez Seixas 2013). They attempted to establish an independent bridge between the Catalan, Galician, and Portuguese historical experiences (supposedly united by sharing a common enemy—that is, Castile), attempting to build a different Iberian perspective of shared history and culture. This perspective strives to be polycentric instead of binational, thereby giving a more complex but also more balanced dimension to the interplay of Iberian cultural spaces. It has also referred to Iberian culture(s) alternatively as an addition or juxtaposition of a number of cultural and linguistic domains: three in some versions—Portugal plus Galicia as a shared linguistic space, whereas Basque culture was simply left aside—or five, if Basque and Galician cultures are included as equal partners and not dissolved into the Portuguese and the Castilian cultural spheres.

During the period 1900–36, a vaguely defined concept of an Iberian literary sphere emerged among some Catalan, Galician, and Portuguese writers, with the support of a set of publishing houses based in Barcelona (Harrington 2005; 2010). An academic translation of these tenets may be found among some scholars from the field of Hispanic cultural studies in English-language academia, who have recently coined the term “Iberian cultures” as an alternative to “Spanish/Hispanic cultures” and “Portuguese/Lusophone cultures,” by broadening its scope and diversifying its content as well. This has been crafted as a new strategy to regain academic terrain and effectively compete with the greater literary and philosophical prestige of French and German culture, as well as a way of redefining the traditional hierarchies among the different cultural domains of the Iberian Peninsula (Resina 2009; 2013; Dougherty and Azevedo 1999). However, so far there have been no parallel attempts on the historiographic level to elaborate an alternative concept of a multinational historical region.

Deconstructing the Iberian Mosaic from the Periphery

The historical narratives emphasizing peninsular decline, which became characteristic of Iberian historiographies between 1880 and 1930, were always

flanked by alternative narratives that emphasized the glorious role of the Iberian lands in the past and the present in three respects: as a bulwark against non-European barbarians, as a crucible of different cultures and peoples (Romans, native Iberians, Goths, Muslims, and Jews) and as a gate of intercultural communication, both to the Arab civilization and, later, to the Americas.

However, these narratives were openly challenged beginning in the 1890s by the emergence of alternative national histories developed in Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia. These questioned the idea of Iberia as being a shared territory and/or a spatial “community of destiny,” and highlighted the peculiarity of each nation-state. The Iberian space seemed to them excessively dominated by a hegemonic partner, called Castile (or the Spanish-speaking lands), whose demographic over-importance remained unchanged. As an alternative, Portuguese national narratives, as well as substate nationalist narratives within Spain, preferred to look for “escape routes” from a geographical space that encapsulated the visibility of their respective national communities and isolated them from “Europe”—that is, Western Europe. Therefore, Portuguese imperial narratives focused on early modern overseas expansion, turned their back on the rest of the Iberian Peninsula and advanced the idea that Portugal was a progressive sailors’ and merchants’ nation that sailed the ocean to communicate with the outside world. It was not surprising that Portugal’s elites preferred to stress its historical and cultural links with Great Britain and other overseas empires. In the mid-twentieth century, the Portuguese New State under Salazar also embraced the self-definition of a “multicontinental” and Christian nation extending over three continents. This permitted Portuguese nationalism to imagine its homeland in terms of a great European power. Some propaganda posters of Salazar’s period put a map of Portugal, Angola, and Moçambique on the background of a European map, to conclude that “Portugal is not a small land” (Alexandre 2000).

In a similar vein, Catalanist historical narratives from the beginning of the twentieth century looked toward the Western Mediterranean as a new space of belonging. Apart from taking on the Occitanian writer Frédéric Mistral’s utopian project of a great Latin federation, Catalanist historians and intellectuals particularly highlighted the past heritage of the Catalan-Aragonese empire of the Middle Ages and historical cultural links to Southern Italy, Sardinia, and even Greece. Many elements were combined into this “Mediterranean imagination,” from music to history, and from architecture to archaeology. Therefore, the history and culture of the small Catalan-speaking community of the Sardinian town of Alghero became a privileged object of Catalanist attention. Similarly, the Roman archaeological sites of Empúries and Tarragona were celebrated as remnants of a period when Catalonia played a crucial role in the commercial routes of the ancient Mediterranean. Many Catalan

intellectuals wished to go northwards (to Paris) and eastwards (to Italy). The Principality of Andorra, however, the first state where Catalan was recognized as an official language, received little attention from Catalonia, in comparison with the frequent inclusion of the Roussillon (annexed by the French Crown in 1659) into the cartographic imagination of Catalan nationalists, as well as to the symbolic role played by the neighboring Occitanian culture since the end of the nineteenth century. Many Catalanist intellectuals thought of the French South as a natural area of cultural expansion, which linked them to the core of European culture (Rafanell 2006; González Vilalta 2006, 290–97).

This trans-Pyrenean solidarity had indeed very fluid contents, as the boundaries of “Occitany” or “Provence” were far from concrete. But this also permitted Catalanist intellectuals to combine their references to a new Iberia with a resurrected “Catalan Midi” as complementary metaphors. Portugal was imagined by Catalan nationalists in similar terms to Catalonia: a prosperous, entrepreneurial, and dynamic people concentrated on the coastal shores, but conditioned and pressed (and sometimes oppressed) by an inhospitable interior region, Castile. However, both Catalanists and Portuguese intellectuals ignored each other’s realities beyond the efforts of some minority mediators. Therefore, they were unable to understand the inner complexities of their neighbors. This was also common among Spanish travelers to Portugal in the nineteenth and twentieth century (Giner de los Ríos 1888; Calvet 1963).

Basque nationalist narratives looked to French Basque Country in search of a trans-Pyrenean space of communication that would enable them to jump over the frontier and find a direct connection with the European core. The image of their homeland accepted and propagated by Basque nationalists presented them as a small but proud people, unified in character and customs, who lived across two bigger and more-or-less oppressive states—a people whose spinal column would be the *muga* (border), which now became a symbol of linkage, and not of division. Therefore, the terminology set in motion by Basque nationalists tends to reflect this trans-Pyrenean character and avoids referring to Iberia. Instead, the Spanish Basque Country is alluded to as the “peninsular Basque Country” or “Southern Basque Country” (*Hegoalde*), while the French Basque Country is labeled the “Northern part” (*Iparralde*) or “Continental Basque Country.” Cartographic representations in textbooks and the arts have increasingly tended to depict a map of the Basque territories that consciously or unconsciously skips Iberia and emphasizes their character as lands of passage (Esparza 2011; Bray 2011).

However, professional historiography has barely followed this path. The historical narrative of the Basque Country often appeals to past and present parallelisms beyond the Pyrenees, particularly as seen from the Spanish side. But no systematic trans-Pyrenean comparison has ever been made, and de-

spite some unprofessional attempts made by certain Basque radical nationalist historians, the two sides of the Pyrenees have barely been integrated into a consistent historical narrative. There are a number of general histories of the Spanish Basque Country (some of them including Navarre), but very few serious attempts at writing a common historical narrative of all Basque territories on both sides of the frontier.¹⁴ In this respect, political and cultural imagination has gone far beyond professional historiography.

Finally, Galician nationalist historical narratives have stressed Galicia's transatlantic historic vocation as a land of mass migration to America, as well as its privileged link to Portugal and the "Celtic nations," forging an "Atlantic facade" of Europe. Diasporic imagination has played a major role here, by stressing the link between Galicia and Atlantic metropolises like Buenos Aires or Havana, where Galician immigrants set up dense networks of mutual-aid associations that shaped authentic diasporic communities, and where the legacy of Galician culture and the memory of self-government found shelter during the Franco years (Núñez Seixas 2002). However, no consistent historical narrative has been constructed beyond the specific field of migration studies. The same applies to the purportedly privileged relationship between Galicia and Portugal, as a means of consolidating an alternative Atlantic Iberia. Beyond the field of linguistic and literary history, it has proved impossible to reconcile Portuguese and Galician historical narratives, as the former intended to be self-sufficient and not integrated as a subordinate part into a "Lusitanian" story (Vázquez Cuesta 1995; Villares 2002). Iberianism is also seen in this case as a possible solution for the dilemma. But this view was never shared by Portuguese historiography.

Iberia: Geographically Obvious, Historically Diffuse

The natural borders of Iberia are an indisputable reality. This was a point of departure for variegated Iberian historiographies as well. However, and perhaps because of its being so blatant from the outside, Spanish and Portuguese historians have not felt obliged to further reflect on what is evident. Instead, they have preferred to concentrate on state-making and nation-building, as well as on the existing political borders and the extent to which the peninsula was a "natural" container of just one hegemonic nation rooted in geographical determinism and historical tradition (Spaniards), or a geographic limitation that had to be overcome (Portuguese).

The asymmetries between Spain and Portugal regarding their demographic size, political influence in the world, and economic development have also strongly conditioned the historians' different views on Iberia as

a historical region. Iberia was always a recurrent metaphor whose concrete meaning was liquid and versatile, but it has barely been the subject of any sophisticated historical narrative attempting to stress commonalities, apart from a generic awareness of shared territory, past grandeur, and modern decline and backwardness. And even these notions were only somewhat shared by Portuguese and Spanish historians, depending on the period and the area they analyzed. Portuguese historians tended to avoid the Iberian dimension, while Spaniards used “Hispanic,” “Iberian,” and “Spanish” interchangeably. The big Iberian brother identified the geographic label with its own political community.

The emergence of substate nationalisms on the Spanish periphery beginning in the end of the nineteenth century revitalized interest in the Iberian perspective on the part of some historians and intellectuals committed to the task of building historical narratives opposed to the Spanish one. Iberia was now regarded as a new metaphor signifying “multinational Spain,” in which Portugal continued to be an imagined partner rather than an integrated counterpart. Portuguese national history concentrated on the golden age of the early modern discoveries, the transatlantic empire, and later on Lusophonia as possible escape routes from a Castilian/Spanish-dominated Iberian space regarded not as a link to Europe but rather as an obstacle to be surmounted. Catalan historians frequently looked to the past in search of the Mediterranean dimension of Catalonia’s (in reality the Kingdom of Aragon’s) empire in the Middle Ages; they also emphasized Catalonia’s proximity to France and its origins as a part of the Carolingian empire, and emphasized the relevance of past cultural relations with Occitany. Meanwhile, Galician historians tended to stress the Atlantic character of a land of migration. They also referred to the Jacobean tradition (the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela) as a direct link to Central Europe existing since the Middle Ages.

Yet the external perspective on Iberia has tended to emphasize the compact character of that historical region. The real problem arises when trying to establish its common characteristics. Even the most enthusiastic supporters of an Iberian vision in the cultural and political sphere have failed to define the common traits of Iberian identity and culture, beyond the sharing of a geographical space. Perhaps its common link was the awareness of being a periphery of the European “center,” and therefore of being caught in a trap that almost everyone wanted to escape. This may be a paradox of Iberia as a political and cultural construct: social scientists, historians, and politicians as well have constantly tended to transcend geographical space and to assert that their nations and states belong to global areas, regarded as spheres of interaction that promise a better future.

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Notes

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1. The company, initially founded during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera as a private endeavor, was nationalized in 1944. The name was chosen to stress the patriotic character of the airline: see Vidal Olivares 2008.
 2. See, e.g., Gautier 1845. Nonetheless, this author differentiated between the “European” Northern Spain and the “African” South.
 3. There are just a few exceptions, such as Petitcolin 1899; the term “Iberien” has rarely been used in German.
 4. See Guzmán, Gómez Espelosín, and Guzmán Gárate 2007. An example of how the terms “Hispania” and “Iberia” are interchangeably used for referring to the origins of present-day Spain is Gómez Espelosín 2008. See also García Alonso 2008.
 5. See a later example of this “Iberianism” in Aláiz 1984.
 6. See, e.g., Eslava Galán 2004. Very few historical essays use the term “Iberia” as the place inhabited by ancient Iberians: exceptions are González Reyero 2010 and Berrocal, García Sanjuan, and Gilman 2012.
 7. See, e.g., the title of the tendentiously right-wing revisionist journal of history *Historia de Iberia Vieja: Revista de Historia de España*, founded in 2005.
 8. See, e.g., International Marxist Group 1975. In the United States an Inter-American Committee for Iberian Freedom issued the journal *Iberia* (later renamed *Ibérica: For a Free Spain*) from 1953 to 1975. See also Muñoz Sánchez 2005; 2012. The term “Iberian transitions” also applied as a model for understanding Latin American post-dictatorial transitions of the 1980s, in Warda (1996).
 9. See several examples in Alvarez Junco (2013).
 10. A good example is the literary metaphor used by the Portuguese Nobel Prize recipient José Saramago in his novel *A jangada de pedra* (1986, translated as *The Stone Raft* by Giovanni Pontiero in 1994), according to which Iberia had never been a part of Europe. Therefore, its best destiny would be to navigate inde-

pendently, like a boat that breaks free from the continent and goes west, like the lost Atlantis. See Archer 2010 and Saramago 1995.

11. The term was first employed at a public speech in Paris in 1856 by the Chilean philosopher Francisco Bilbao, as well as by the Columbian writer José M. Torres Caicedo. It was then spread by French diplomacy during the Second Empire, as Napoleon III invaded Mexico and attempted to establish a privileged relationship with the South and Central American Republics, replacing British, American, and Spanish influence. Later on the label “Latin America” became popular and extended itself as a term that did not include all Romance language-speaking American countries, but mainly Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America—thus excluding Québec or the French-speaking communities in other Canadian and North Atlantic territories, as well as Louisiana. Early in the twentieth century, the concept was also invested with socioeconomic and ethnic connotations. See Funes 2006.
12. See, e.g., from the perspective of conceptual history, Fernández Sebastián 2009; 2012.
13. E.g., the Berlin-based journal *Iberoamericana*, which publishes articles in Spanish, Portuguese, and English; or the Adelaida-based *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*.
14. Only some examples of nonprofessional historians (politically very committed to radical Basque nationalism) can be quoted, such as those who penned the *Historia de Euskal Herria*, 3 vols. (Tafalla 1997).

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