

Introduction

The Nation and Its Metaphors

Javier Moreno-Luzón and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas



For some years now, culture has retained a central place in the immense territory occupied by nationalism studies. Though earlier examples can be found, the works that have exerted the greatest influence on specialists in these fields appeared during the 1980s, an authentic incubator of groundbreaking research. Among the authors who paved the way for studies such as those distilled here, two at least should be mentioned. In 1983, Benedict Anderson published *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. This author examined nations as modern cultural artefacts that emerged at a specific point, were transformed and under certain circumstances acquired extraordinary strength. His most prominent thesis defined the nation as an ‘imagined community’ capable of integrating very diverse individuals, even those unknown to each other. This type of political community is conceived as fraternal, limited within specific territorial borders and inherently sovereign: free to govern itself. In 1984, the first of the seven-volume *Les lieux de mémoire* (Realms of Memory) began to appear under the guidance of French historian Pierre Nora.¹ These books examined the trajectory of some key elements in French identity: physical and figurative places where ‘national memory’ crystallized. The inventory – coloured in a certain essentialism – included commemorations, festivities and rituals, emblems and historical personalities, books, monuments and museums, buildings and laws, landscapes, cuisine, concepts, mottos and leitmotifs. Where history intersects the living reality of a nation, these may undergo alteration and reinterpretation but remain resilient over time.

These foundational perspectives have been criticized but still inspire historians and social scientists interested in the inherently interdisciplinary field of nationalism, where many others have also made

significant contributions, emphasizing the importance of not losing sight of the political character of nations, which are unintelligible apart from state action and the interests and strategies of nationalist elites inside and outside of government.² Culture does not consist of a coherent, harmonious whole; it is negotiated and disputed by opposing sectors of the public sphere. Multiple and at times paradoxical combinations can occur in the extremely complex processes that shape identities and identification, whether collective or individual, territorial or otherwise. Later on, Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) drew attention to the ubiquitous gender dimension in nationalist discourses and constructions, outlining how these were affected by the roles of men and women. Significant horizons also open for the researcher when exploring popular culture and daily life. There, nationalism is reproduced through various means and penetrates worldviews through conscious or semi-conscious mechanisms. Along these lines, sociologist Michael Billig (1995) coined the term *banal nationalism*; it has since been applied to analyse almost everything, from sporting events to commercial brands. Recently, the spotlight has shifted away from elitist initiatives and focussed predominately on ordinary people, local contexts, civil society and grass-roots movements to explain the rise, development and spread of national identities, even when confused with nationalism.³ Similarly, abundant perspectives have emerged that emphasize the variable territorial geometry of all collective identities.⁴

Recognizing the cultural nature of nations necessarily leads to the analysis of symbols and symbolic practices. Here, we can even discover a feature common to both representatives and successors of the interpretative schools that have traditionally divided academic circles. The ethno-symbolist school, represented mainly by Anthony D. Smith, includes symbols among the long-term resources that guarantee the transition of ethnic groups into nationalities.⁵ However, even modernist approaches that ascribe contemporary origins to nations – such as that of Anderson – recognize the importance of symbols as representations and projections of essential values in the construction or reconstruction of the imagined communities known as nations.⁶ In reality, Nora's *lieux de mémoire* were simply nexuses or multiform symbolic spaces, condensers of meanings and emotions. Symbols appeal to sentiments but also represent a rational appeal that nationalists develop and use to serve their diverse aims. National symbols thus acquire at least five primordial functions: they condense elements of shared ideology by simplifying it, thereby creating a degree of unanimity but also dissent in their spheres; they establish group identity markers, for internal and external use; they create emotions and connect people with

collective identities; they sometimes serve as an effective community cement that overcomes social divisions; and, finally, mere sight or evocation of them can move people to action.⁷

This volume does not incite the search for, or defence of, national essences. Rather, it examines the vicissitudes of the Spanish national identity and its core of symbols and symbolic practices, which have been subjected to very diverse interpretations by multiple actors throughout the twentieth century. Resisting the tendency to define the contours of a supposedly timeless and metaphysical 'Spanish being' or *Volksgeist*, we search for what it meant to *be Spanish* in the past century, as a constructed identity. Consequently, the use of the word *metaphor* in the book's title refers to very diverse twentieth-century expressions of 'Spanishness'. We do not attempt to construct a Spanish version of *Les lieux de mémoire*, nor is this collection of essays comparable to more exhaustive thematic compilations on other state – or stateless – nationalisms and national identities: including German, Italian, Swiss, Basque or Flemish cases.⁸ Furthermore, this volume does not emphasize the images or visual aspects of comparative national iconology.⁹ We have simply selected – while acknowledging the debatable nature of our selection – some elements that to us seem indisputably relevant to Spanish nationalist imaginaries. Here, we encounter a parade of historical myths, official emblems such as flags and hymns, the republic and the monarchy, the role of gender, religion and language, and the symbolic dimension of the former empire in the Americas. Special attention is given to mass culture in the twentieth century, which became a crucial nationalizing element through sports, music, tourism and the Spanish national metaphor par excellence, bullfighting.

This volume focuses on a cultural history of politics while exhibiting the distinctiveness of each author. The work goes beyond describing the formal features of symbols or places of memory, which are not here considered static, perennial or an expression of the intrinsic continuity of nations. Rather, the authors look at the metaphors within their contexts, spaces and interactive dynamics, analysing their political and social uses as well as their conflictive, changing meanings. Among the very diverse actors addressed we find state and political parties, intellectual elites, all sorts of associations and specific enterprises, including those of emigrants established far from Spain. Here also, we avoid any historiographic exceptionalism, a feature that has characterized a great part of twentieth-century historiography on Spain. Far from any Iberian *Sonderweg*, the Spanish case was not anomalous within the European context; it was conditioned by factors also present in neighbouring areas. As in other places, various versions of hegemonic

nationalism – liberal and traditionalist, republican and conservative, centralist and regionalized – clashed in Spain. However, ‘Spanishness’ was forged in a way that was less frequent in Europe but not singular: in the heat of constant struggle with sub-state nationalisms, notably the Catalan, Basque and Galician movements. One cannot be understood without the other; each fed the other’s flame. From this emerges a complex and fascinating narrative of the Spanish twentieth century.

The century opened with abundant angst among Spanish political and intellectual elites regarding national identity: its content, its potential and its diffusion. The colonial Disaster of 1898 – the loss of Spain’s last overseas colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines) after a short war with the United States – marked a decisive turning point in the history of Spanish identities. This launched a phase of identity shipwreck that was to continue throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century. During this phase, renewed forms of Spanish nationalism assumed the task of regenerating the homeland, deploying multiple tactics to counter the rise of sub-state nationalisms. José Álvarez Junco describes how intellectuals in this setting searched incessantly for the national spirit – or Spanish *Volksgeist* – in a history with *the nation* as a living, enduring organism and the main actor. While musicians, painters and architects searched incessantly for a genuine Spanish style, many thinkers sought the keys to the present somewhere in the past, hoping to discover there the origins of *el problema de España* (the problem of Spain) and its possible solutions. This essentialist question remained fashionable at least until the 1960s. Inmaculada Blasco Herranz shows how regenerationism diagnosed the homeland with a loss of virility and fostered the eventual political participation of women, though their role was limited to that of mothers and educators of patriots. In turn, the State launched into various strategies of nation-building guided by the military and the monarchy. As in other European countries, the Crown spearheaded national renewal. In Spain, however, the king would ultimately trespass constitutional limits, as Javier Moreno-Luzón explains.

From 1923 on, the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera set in motion much more intense and repressive policies that were linked to Catholic reactionary nationalism and sought to re-nationalize the country. Emerging symbols of the alternative nationalisms were repressed and Spanish symbols were repeatedly promoted and exhibited in all sorts of patriotic ceremonies. Under this military regime, the celebrations of 12 October as the *Día de la Raza*, or Day of the [Hispanic] Race, reached their maximum expression. Marcela García Sebastiani and David Marcilhacy describe how this holiday became official in 1918

after decades of propaganda by Americanist associations succeeded in convincing almost everyone of the need to prioritize the Americas in the Spanish imaginary. Both variants of this durable, multifaceted myth – the Catholic traditionalist and the liberal-democratic versions – survived until the end of the twentieth century. In the 1920s also, mass sporting events such as football arose as a projection of nationalist sentiments. Alejandro Quiroga identifies how these impulses converged in a series of narratives that oscillated between exaltation of Spanish fury as proof of its masculinity and courage, and lament over the cursed fate of the nobleman. After 1898, harsh critique was levelled against another great popular spectacle, bullfighting, as a symptom of Spanish backwardness. However, Rafael Núñez Florencio argues that it encapsulated what many perceived as the supreme art and symbol of a nation where life and death were tangled in a reckless game.

In 1931, the official discourse of the Spanish Second Republic replaced the monarchic emphasis on religious and imperial traditions with features of another form of *españolismo* that had also been distilled in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ángel Duarte expands on how being Republican was a way of being Spanish. The Republic was identified with Spain and the nation with the people: a nation composed of free and virtuous citizens. This language remained operative even though the new democratic system lacked both efficacy and the time needed to establish its patriotic symbology.

The 1936–39 Civil War exacerbated various Spanish nationalist expressions and the violent clashes among them. It also revealed the high degree of nationalization that had been achieved in the first third of the century. This was not the first time Spanish history featured intense political mobilization. After a civil war and extensive repression of any suspicious exhibition of sub-state national identities, in its first two decades, the Franco dictatorship reproduced many of the renationalizing initiatives of Primo de Rivera. These were radicalized and inserted in a fascist-rooted narrative about a new beginning. In the realm of linguistic policy, with the turn of the century the Castilian language became the essential Spanish identity marker. The various Spanish nationalist currents felt that the nation should have a single language for administration and education. Regional languages were considered national heritage that could be preserved in the private sphere as folklore and in certain literary genres. Xosé M. Núñez Seixas describes how Francoism carried these postulates to their full legal consequences, though inherited contradictions persisted. Nationalist use of culture by public authorities even extended to music, where Francoist folklore turned regional songs and dances into a collective expression of the Spanish

people. According to Sandie Holguín, this acted as both a unifying barrier against infectious foreign rhythms and a channel for projecting the image of Spain – spiced with flamenco and *canción española* – to the outside world.

The nationalizing and propagandistic push of Francoism reached such remote locations as Equatorial Guinea. However, public authorities did not succeed in controlling the complex culture that took hold with the accelerated economic development that began in the 1950s. Not even the Catholic Church remained untouched: though a pillar of the regime, and though Francoist religious revival presented itself as the return to the authentic Spain, Mary Vincent explains that the Church remained universal and plural. Significant currents within the Catholic Church embraced left-wing movements and were cordial to sub-state nationalists. According to Eric Storm, one of the main indicators of cultural change derived from mass tourism was an overhaul of the promotional image of Spain, which until then had been sold to travellers as an ancient culture of monumental cities. The touristic explosion imposed sun and beach, bullfights and *tablaos flamencos*. Romantically rooted exoticism remained, though spiced with touches of modernity. The new cinematographic *españoladas* declared that it was possible to be modern and also Spanish, as prohibitions on alternative national symbols relaxed with the decline of dictator.

After the death of Franco in 1975, the transition to democracy brought decades of nationalist rhetoric to an end. Youthful Spain aspired to a place among the democratic States of Europe and reformulated its symbolic representations, giving new meanings to old emblems. The Crown again embodied the aspirations of national renewal: the new monarch willingly ceded political power to retain a ceremonial role, while also acting as the definitive guarantor of the democratic system. Meanwhile, 12 October became an itinerant festival of Hispano-Americanism until it was declared the National Holiday. Extensive preparations for the fifth centenary of the discovery of the Americas in 1992 marked the apotheosis of modernity. The red-and-gold standard was reinvented as the *constitutional flag*. Though its legitimacy remained doubtful for Francoist opponents and those who remembered the Republic, the emblem endured in poor but invincible health and fared much better than the national anthem, as Javier Moreno-Luzón and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas analyse in their joint chapter. For the first time, a certain consensus arose around Spanish symbols that could be used without recurring to repressive threats. Secularization also extinguished the old cultural war between clerical and anti-clerical positions. Night life re-energized the capital, which

had been devastated by speculation, as the Madrid *movida* took hold and updated clichés such as bullfighting and folkloric music. Finally, as the resurgence of sub-state nationalisms that first stimulated the creation of the State of the Autonomies became consolidated, it generated a renaissance of Spanish nationalism, which had hit a low point in the 1970s and 1980s. Demand for the normalized presence of national symbolism set the stage for a clash, the effects of which have only intensified in the twenty-first century.

This volume is one of the main results of two research projects financed by the government of Spain between 2009 and 2015: *Imaginarios nacionalistas e identidad nacional española en el siglo XX* (HAR2008-06252-C02) and *La nación desde la raíz. Nacionalismo español y sociedad civil en el siglo XX* (HAR2012-37963-C02). After bringing together specialists from diverse locations and institutions, hotly debated papers from two colloquia in Madrid and Santiago de Compostela became chapters. Prior to this, the outcomes of these two projects were published in Spanish in two volumes: *Ser españoles*, eds Moreno-Luzón and Núñez Seixas (2013), and *Imaginarios y representaciones de España durante el franquismo*, eds Stéphane Michonneau and Núñez Seixas (2014), along with a dossier edited by Moreno-Luzón (*Imaginarios nacionalistas españoles en el primer tercio del siglo XX*, 2013) in the Spanish journal *Hispania*. We would like to express our appreciation to all the participants in these collective works and to Berghahn Books, with particular thanks to Scott Eastman and Vicent Sanz for their interest in launching with this volume a new series, Studies in Latin American and Spanish History. The *Hiwis* of the chair of Modern European History at the Ludwig-Maximilians University (Sabina De Luca, Lisa Leuschel, Sarafina März and Emanuel Steinbacher) provided great assistance in formatting the final bibliography. We hope that these essays may somehow invite a bit of reflection and rationality on topics that so often unleash passions.

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Notes

1. See Nora (1984, 1986, 1992–94)
2. See e.g. Özkirimli (2000); Kolár and Rezník (2012). Breuilly (1985).
3. See e.g. Van Ginderachter and Beyen (2012).
4. Augusteijn and Storm (2012).
5. Smith (1999, 2009).
6. Marsland (2001).
7. See Casquete and Mees (2012).
8. See François and Schulze (2002), Isnenghi (1996, 1997a, 1997b), Kreis (2010), De Pablo et al. (2012) and Simons et al. (1998).
9. See Beller and Leerssen (2007).