

MICHAEL A. VARGAS

CONSTRUCTING CATALAN IDENTITY

Memory, Imagination, and the Medieval



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PREFACE

A series of accidents put me onto the path that resulted in this book. I expected to do one thing and ended up doing another. Sometimes it goes like that. A few details will help you appreciate what happened and why it matters to your reading of the pages that follow. Readers who wish to can comfortably move ahead to the introduction. Others will see that my purpose is to confirm a couple of points about what it means to do the work of exploring the past. This, I think, is the right prefatory material for a book about how Catalans put their past—real and imagined—to work in the present.

My first book put me into close contact with Catalan history in a surprisingly personal way. That book was about the breakdown of the Order of Preachers, the religious order called the Dominicans. The leaders of the Order's Province of Aragon—a territory nearly contiguous with territories controlled by the Prince of Catalonia—produced records of their annual organizational meetings throughout the fourteenth century. These were the subject of my study. Dominic of Calaruega began the Order in Languedoc around the year 1215 by gathering together a small group of men into an egalitarian campaign to preach in support of the Church and against heresy. By the decades on either side of 1350, however, the Order had become a large international organization, hierarchical and bureaucratic, and less morally upright than Dominic would have liked.

The records show the province's leaders struggling to correct and punish the bad behaviors and lax attitudes of rank-and-file members (called friars, or *fratres*, from the Latin for “brothers”). The friars' crimes and misdemeanors included drinking too much wine, stealing from each other

and from local townspeople, and threatening each other with knives and other weapons. In one memorable example, two men, Francesc Peyroni and Bartomeu Capit, got into a fistfight. They tore and punched at each other until Brother Peyroni hit Brother Capit so hard on the head with a rock that Capit lost the ability to speak.¹ Some of the men and boys burrowed holes through convent walls so they could spend nights in each other's private cells. Those who preferred the warmth of women snuck out of the house to spend the night hours cavorting.

The book, as it turned out, drew upon what I had learned in previous decades as a manager working inside organizations with serious leadership problems. It was not a deliberate choice, but it happened: As I tried to understand the corporate lives of those late medieval religious men, I found myself drawing from my own experiences in dysfunctional corporate environments. Historians had admitted before that the friars failed to meet our expectations of monkishness, but I found that those historians had been wrong to presume that the order's errant members were perverts unwilling to keep their vows. Every organization can have its bad apples, of course, but I recognized systemic dysfunctions that others, mostly historians from within Dominican ranks, had overlooked or ignored. Evidence of the institutional failings of the late medieval Order of Preachers was right there in the order's own records, misunderstood or overlooked for eight hundred years. I made sense of that evidence in part because my personal experience of the problems of governance in my own place and time opened the door to an interpretive discovery.

Beyond the recognition that discoveries often emerge in unexpected ways, one other thing about that first book is important to knowing how I got started on this present one. Among the organizational prejudices inside the Dominican Order's Province of Aragon in the fourteenth century was the privileging of Catalans over non-Catalans. Barcelona, then as now, was a large, cosmopolitan city, the most significant city in Catalonia. Its history dated back to Roman times; it was an intellectual center with a major university, and it had become the political capital to the most powerful lords in the region, the counts of Barcelona. Catalans saw themselves as special, and they made sure that others saw them that way, too.

Catalan friars got the best jobs inside the Dominican Province of Aragon, in part because they created the legal fiction whereby their votes counted for more than those of their counterparts in Aragon, Valencia, and other

¹Michael Vargas, *Taming a Brood of Vipers: Conflict and Change in Fourteenth-Century Dominican Convents* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 134–135.

parts of the province. If such a thing happened in the same way today, we would probably describe their presumption of superiority as ethnic or national bias. In fact, the Latin word used in the sources to distinguish Catalans from others is “*natio*,” the root of the words “nation” and “nationality.” I had before me very early evidence of Catalans shaping and asserting their identity.² This kernel of a question about the historic origins of present-day Catalan identity stuck with me, and eventually grew into this book.

That book about the breakdown of a religious order was fun to write. It won a prize and a little bit of recognition. After writing it, I arranged to spend a year in Barcelona on a research sabbatical—a year away from the responsibilities of university teaching and administrative service to focus on new research projects.

I planned to examine the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century correspondence between the count’s court in Barcelona and the royal officials, merchants, and military leaders who served the count in Sicily and Sardinia. It is an indicator of the strength of Catalan institutions in this period that Sicily and Sardinia, important in the politics and culture of Mediterranean affairs for millennia, had come under the control of the Catalans. The project would throw me headlong into the *Archivo de la Corona de Aragon*, the repository for the records of what was, from the twelfth century through the fourteenth century, the Crown of Aragon. (Later, I will explain some of the difficulties that come with speaking of a Crown of Aragon. This, when it comes, will involve describing why a single person held the title “King of Aragon” and “Count of Barcelona,” why the title of count was the more potent one, and why, for convenience, historians and others prefer to speak of “count-kings.” It will also help us to know how and why the city of Barcelona became the political center of several kingdoms and territories.)

Things do not always work out as planned. That project is worth doing, but my grand plan to complete it never came to fruition. What happened instead nudged me off my expected course and onto the one that resulted in this book. Several projects interceded. One had to do with a spectacular theft—or, one might better say, a spectacularly stupid theft.

²Francisco Elias de Tejada, *Las Doctrinas Políticas en la Cataluña Medieval* (Barcelona: Aymà, 1950), 21, makes the observation that Catalonia may have been the first to use the word “nation” to connote a political and territorial body rather than to describe a group of people according to its ethnic and/or geographic origins. See also, John Elliott, *Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 42.

In July of 2011, the *Codex Calixtinus*, a manuscript book dating to the twelfth century, disappeared from its locked cabinet inside the archive at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia, Spain. The manuscript was exceedingly valuable, and not only in monetary terms. Medievalists, abuzz on social media, described its disappearance as “the theft of the century.” Reuters reported “a major loss for Spain’s cultural and religious heritage.” Acknowledging it as a national disgrace, the Spanish newspaper *La Gaceta* said of the theft that it was “as if they had stolen the Declaration of Independence.” For years I had used translated versions of the codex in my undergraduate classes on medieval pilgrimage, and I happened to be in Spain when the theft occurred, so I took an immediate interest. I followed reports of the investigations undertaken by Galician police and Interpol. I grew especially interested in what meaning we should give to the sudden absence of such a treasure.³

Before the *Codex Calixtinus* was found in July of the following year, I began work on an article about the meaning of the loss of the manuscript as a heritage object of great significance. What did it mean, I asked, that the cathedral’s staff left so poorly attended a document so foundational to the stories and rituals at the heart of Spain’s national identity (the codex is the most prominent early document about travel to the tomb of Saint James, or Santiago, Spain’s patron saint)? Ultimately, a Spanish court convicted the cathedral’s former electrician, a disgruntled employee turned crook. It seems that, in addition to stealing the codex and several other priceless manuscripts, he also pilfered several million euros in small change from the cathedral’s donation boxes. The cathedral dean’s careless management of the manuscript and the coffers lost him his job; however, as a priest, he continued to claim a salary and pension in a Catholic Church that takes care of its own. I produced an article about the theft and its implications in a journal devoted to the study of heritage policy and law. The problem of the stolen text and the nabbed electrician, like the subject of the Catalan friars, turned my interest to the role played by the past in shaping present interests and identities.⁴

³For background on the theft and impressions about its meaning, see Michael Vargas, “Pondering Dysfunctions in Heritage Protection: Lessons from the Theft of the *Codex Calixtinus*,” *International Journal of Cultural Property* 21, no. 1 (2014): 1–21.

⁴A number of maps available online illustrate the network of routes on *El Camino de Santiago*, The Way of Saint James, e.g., Wikipedia, “Camino de Santiago,” accessed on November 8, 2017. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camino_de_Santiago#/media/File:Stjacquescompostelle1.png

The next series of strangely fortuitous accidents began when I arrived in Barcelona in August 2013 to begin my Fulbright studies. My sons were with me but not my wife, since she still had work to wrap up at home before joining us. We had planned to send the boys to a local school in which Catalan was the language of instruction, but they were scared, understandably, because they knew no Catalan. Reducing their stress meant spending time taking in the local teen-worthy entertainments, like climbing the high ropes course at the Bosc Urbà, the “urban forest”; riding the attractions at the top of Mount Tibidabo; and watching the Barça soccer team on televisions at the Chinese-owned restaurant down the street from our apartment on Avinguda República Argentina.

The office generously offered to me by Manuel Sánchez at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) remained inaccessible until the end of the summer, and, because time is a freer concept in Spain than in the US, indications remained unclear about just when the summer would end so that I could get down to business. Paperwork needed sorting out for the schools, for banking and utilities, and for government permissions of various sorts, but the workers in the various offices I needed to visit kept irregular hours in the dog days of August.

The icing on the cake of this apparent misuse of my time was La Mercè Festival. La Mercè is Barcelona’s big end-of-summer event held in honor, nominally, of one of Barcelona’s patronesses. The celebration offers two weeks of activities all over the city that annually renders Barcelonans and the hordes of late-summer tourists powerless against an onslaught of incredibly rich entertainments. Like all residents of and visitors to Barcelona at the time of the festival, I became a lamb to the slaughter of fun and frivolity. As my research time ticked away, I felt an increasingly urgent need to demonstrate that as a real historian I had no intention of wasting the resources of US and Spanish taxpayers.

The frustrating start to my research sabbatical confirmed something I had begun to learn while writing about the theft of the *Codex Calixtinus*, which is that the past can be surprisingly active in the present. Historians tend not to see the past in such present-focused terms. Sociologists, maybe, or anthropologists, think about how the past turns to ritual and memory in the present, less so historians, who want to focus on the accurate study, representation, and assessment of historical events separate from their applicability or meanings in the present. Nonetheless, I could no longer ignore the fact that what happened in the past, especially the medieval past, had real meaning for Catalans in their quotidian present.

The realization that the past has real value and potency in the present came to me in a way that is difficult for those of us raised in the US to appreciate. In the US, of course, as elsewhere, something from the past persists into modern times. Boston has its Old Ironsides, Faneuil Hall, and the Italian South End. Philadelphia has the Liberty Bell and legendary cheese steaks. The southern states have their longstanding feuds, such as the football rivalry between Georgia and Georgia Tech (dating to 1893), which they call “The Old-Fashioned Hate.” We all know about Rosa Parks, the assassinations of JFK and Martin Luther King. And there is 9/11—already receding far back in time from the perspective of my current students. All of these, in the context of what I knew about the *longue durée* of European history, represent a past of very short duration.

It has been said that Americans are a “notoriously unhistorically minded people.”⁵ If there is truth in the statement, evidence lies at least in part in the consideration that a couple of hundred years is not much time in which to develop an evocative past. From a comparative perspective, this point about the limitations of American historical awareness is important. About this more will be said, or at least implied, over the course of the book.

What I witnessed in Barcelona and environs was quite different from my experience as a historian living in the United States. I had been to Barcelona before, but only for short visits. I knew even from those excursions that Catalans could be notoriously proud of their past. I also knew that many of them felt wronged by the Spanish state of which they were reluctantly a part. Still, those slow and unsure first weeks of the long year of sabbatical research had begun to make apparent to me that the city’s history was playing itself out right in front of me. The people there performed their past, changing it and reinventing it in the act of performing it. And not only the people but also the geography of the city and its surroundings, the coast and the mountains, the architecture and monuments, museums and neighborhood festivals. The pitch and roll of political manifestations and even the soused tourists on the streets participated in the collective demonstration of past-in-the-present Catalan culture. Rocks and mountains, brick and mortar, food fairs and street events also acted as agents in a long argument between the identity of a people and the events of history imposed upon that people. Catalans have gained special skill at

⁵ For a variety of examples, see Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood, *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), cited at page 3.

holding onto their past and making it work for them as the world changes around them. And they do so, or so they would tell you, for good reason: Their survival is at stake.

I should say here that I am neither Spanish nor Catalan. As someone of Mexican-American descent, I have no personal stake in the efforts of some Catalans to separate from Spain. Rather, as a historian with a good understanding of Catalonia's medieval legacy, I had begun to see that the present in Catalonia is deeply rooted in a rich past going back more than a thousand years. This heightened sensibility of Catalans toward the past became all the more apparent as I traveled beyond Catalonia into others of Spain's autonomous communities. In Navarre and the Basque country, people share with the Catalans some durable antipathies toward Spain. In Castile, Andalucia, and elsewhere, I witnessed the prejudices held by non-Catalan Spaniards toward the Catalan people because of the ways historic differences have played out over time. This book attempts to show why it is that Catalans want to hold onto their past, actively doing so by putting it to work in the present. It also will indicate, if not in as much detail, why others in Spain want to prevent Catalans from accessing their past.

Before proceeding to a richer introduction of the themes of the book, I must offer some words of thanks. I remain especially grateful to Paul Freedman, Richard Gyug, Maryanne Kowalski, Martin Krieger, Daniel Lord Smail, and others who have guided me as teachers and mentors over many years. Alberto Lopez San Miguel, Executive Director, and Victoria Ruiz, Program Officer, of the Commission for Cultural, Educational, and Scientific Exchange between the United States of America and Spain, have my sincere gratitude for the attention they gave to my research, for helping to settle my family's domestic affairs in Barcelona, and for seeing various bureaucratic necessities through to happy conclusions. Jon Arrizabalaga, Investigative Professor at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas Institució Milà i Fontanals (CSIC-IMF), first entertained the idea of providing CSIC sponsorship for my visit. Thankfully, Manuel Sanchez, then-director of the CSIC-IMF, gave his consent and then showed me abundant generosity despite constrained budgets. Elena Pujol, Public Affairs Specialist, US Consulate in Barcelona, and Damià Perpinyà and M. Inmaculada Piquer Vives at the Departament d'Ensenyament of the Generalitat de Catalunya, introduced me to people who facilitated my research and brought me into contact with my first audiences on the topics presented here. Bruce Sillner, Dean and Director of International Programs at SUNY-New Paltz, made extraordinary

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New Paltz, NY, USA

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This book is about the use of the past, especially the medieval past, in present-day Catalonia. It is full of curious illustrations of a people, the Catalans, who draw upon their history with great sensitivity and imagination. The book's broader goal is to consider how we all use the past, and perhaps misuse it too, to confront the challenges of our present and future. I have no personal investment in Catalonia or Catalan history, although I have come to learn that their fascinating history makes a great case study for understanding how all of us put the past to work. The choice of Catalonia, at present a part of northeastern Spain, is strategic. Catalans have had powerful reasons over many centuries to ponder their past, and, because they possess a very long and rich history, they have gained considerable expertise at reshaping it to meet their needs.

At present, Catalonia is a part of Spain. "At present" is an important qualification. Catalonia has been Spanish for several hundred years, but it is equally true to say that there was a time before Spain, a time when Catalonia existed but Spain did not. Catalonia is in Spain's northeast, framed by the Pyrenees Mountains to the north and a long Mediterranean coast to the south and east. Aragon is to the west, and Valencia touches Catalonia at its southern border. At a bit more than twelve thousand square miles, about the size of the US state of Maryland, Catalonia makes up about 16% of Spain's landmass. With just over 7.5 million inhabitants, its population makes up about 15% of the total population of Spain. Despite Catalonia's relatively small land mass and population, the Catalan

economy is robust, producing about 20% of Spain's economic output. Barcelona, Catalonia's capital city, home to 1.5 million residents, is a center of European finance and business and one of Europe's premiere tourist destinations.¹

At the time of this book's publication, Catalonia has been making international news. Its leaders declared independence from Spain in October of 2017, following a plebiscite that the Spanish government declared illegal. Spain then jailed some of Catalonia's elected leaders, and the president of Catalonia's governing body, the Generalitat, went into a self-imposed exile in Brussels, Belgium. Why Catalans would want to leave Spain is a subject of this book, although such a question is not answered very well if one tries to go at it directly. It is said that Catalans are politically oppressed, or jealously guarding their economic vitality, or turning their youth into brainwashed zealots, or that half of the Catalan population are no better than lawless renegades. None of these explanations of present political circumstances gets us very far. The present situation in Catalonia is deeply informed by a very rich Catalan past and even more by the purposeful recollection of that past.

LEARNING TO POSSESS THE PAST

Let's set the scene with a curious activity witnessed in Catalan kindergartens. One of the first lessons Catalan children learn about their people and place is devoted to Count-King James I. Who is he, and why should he matter?

James was born in 1208. He came into his princely inheritance at the age of five, following the battlefield death of his father, Pere III. He inherited the prosperous Mediterranean County of Barcelona and several other counties. In these counties he was called "prince" and "count," like his predecessors. James also inherited the small, less prosperous, landlocked Kingdom of Aragon, in which territory he was called "king." During his first years as a child ruler, the boy count-king encountered the treachery of

¹ Readers might benefit by keeping an electronic device handy while reading this book, since we will often refer to online sites that offer evidence and illustrations of what we are exploring. At this point, for example, entering "Catalonia medieval map" into a search engine will help you gain a visual sense of Catalonia's geographic position in the western European, Iberian, and Mediterranean contexts. Depending on your degree of interest in the details, a comparison of several maps will demonstrate such things as the territorial construction of Catalonia over time, the region's major cities and towns, its physical geography and major landmarks, and so on.

his uncle and other regents who sought to steal his inheritance, but as he grew into a fearsome young man he surmounted their thievery and learned to wield his royal powers with formidable skill. History textbooks call him “the Conqueror” because he gained and consolidated through conquest lands along the Mediterranean coast, including Valencia and the Balearic Islands. These conquests set Catalonia on a course that made it an international power. James also patronized the arts and attended to the administration of law and order. Of special relevance to the value of the past in the present is the claim Catalans proudly make that James’s *Llibre dels Fets* (*The Book of Deeds*) is the first autobiography by a Christian king. James died in 1276.

(In a curious side note, James’s embalmed body was exhumed in 1859 from its burial crypt at the royal monastery of Poblet. A photograph taken at the time, available online, shows the damage done to his skull caused by a spear that hit him just above the eye when he was young. The wound had no apparent negative effect upon his attractiveness: He was married three times and took several lovers of high birth. He had at least sixteen children by the six wives and lovers of whom we know.)

Returning now to the youngsters and the little song they sing about the count-king’s significance as a legendary progenitor of the Catalan people.... Imagine a classroom of twenty or so six-year-old children. They have spent some days gathering up plastic swords and painting bright cardboard shields, which they now have in hand. And they are stomping to a tune as they march around their classroom. Their song “Jaume Primer Tenia Cent Soldats” (“James the first has one hundred soldiers [...] all marching in step”) tells the story of the faithfulness of those who stand by their count-king. Various “home-movie” versions of the kids in action are available online.²

For the children, performing their little in-unison march is surely a great occasion for play. But there is a lot of meaning embedded in what looks like simple good fun. The teachers clearly employ it as a tool for teaching a bit of history, although it needs saying—even if some readers find it obvious—that their teaching objective is broader. The performance is a purposeful rehearsal of Catalan collective awareness, a way to engage their pupils as participants in the Catalan identity of the teachers and parents. Parents, of course, are charmed by such exhibitions, although

²See, as one of many examples, CEIP San José de Calasanz, “Jaume Primer Tenia Cents Soldats,” 2008, accessed November 8, 2017. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2TkjG_L-FQ

their investment also goes beyond love for their own kids. As witnesses to the performance, the parents give tacit approval to their children's socialization. The teachers' ambitions, the parents' assent, and the children's playful reenactment all substantiate the political potency of the event. In total, it is a constructed consensus about the value of the past, renewed in the present, and put toward effecting a future purpose.

One example of the political meanings is as follows. "Jaume Primer Tenia Cent Soldats" is sung in Catalan, the language spoken by the Catalan people since its separation from other distinctive Romance languages more than a thousand years ago. Spanish governments from the eighteenth century until 1979 made it illegal to speak Catalan in public places like schools, and the central government at present continues to attempt to restrict its use. More on language in a later chapter, but consider this: Catalan is not one of the 24 languages officially recognized by the European Union (EU), although it is spoken by more people than speak fifteen of those other languages. The reason for the EU's displacement of Catalan is simple: Spain's obstinate refusal to allow the language to be accorded a status commensurate with the number of its speakers. Thus, in their act of reiterating the song, the children, the parents, and the teachers are participants in a history of acts of defiance against a Spanish state that has endeavored to suppress their language.

Beyond the significance of the historical personality of James I and the importance of singing a song about him in the Catalan mother tongue, the tune the children sing is borrowed from another nation that once upon a time acted rebelliously to gather its members under a banner of freedom. Americans will recognize the tune as the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," the patriotic song that recalls the persistence of post-Revolutionary unity beyond the hardships of the civil war fought within the United States of America. In the pages of this book we will encounter several examples of Catalans drawing heavily from American and English precedents as they recall and shape their own cultural identity. As one would expect, most lessons of Catalan collectivity are heard in Catalan (and almost never in Castilian Spanish, for reasons that will become apparent), but Catalans often use English because that language reaches the greatest number of external observers who might empathize and offer aid to the Catalan cause.

Socialization requires that societies make choices about remembering and forgetting. All societies ask their members to recall some elements of the past and ignore others. The example of children singing "Jaume

Primer Tenia Cent Soldats” illustrates how Catalans recall certain parts of their past in just the ways that can be most beneficial to them. The performance of the marching child conquerors also demonstrates why Catalan schools count among the most fiercely contested battlegrounds in the fight between Catalans and the foes of Catalan historical memory. Members of Spain’s governments, over several centuries, have shown that they would prefer Catalan children to learn different stories, an alternative set of facts and legends. Castilians would prefer that Catalans show themselves to be good Spaniards by, for instance, learning the story of Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, El Cid, who, according to Spanish lore, captured Valencia in 1096 as part a great Catholic Reconquest of Spain from the Moors. And Castilians want that story learned in Spanish (that is, in Castilian), not in Catalan.

(While El Cid was a real person, his reputation for Catholic and Spanish national zeal is overblown. He fought for and against Muslims, just as he fought for and against Christians. His reputation grew not because of his religiosity but because of his military and political sagacity. His pugnacity made him rich and famous. He gave no thought at all to Spain, since that political entity did not yet exist. In truth, he was a mercenary, looking for his own gain, which in his time came most effectively through territorial conquest, plunder, and extraction of tribute payments. “The Reconquest,” into which the myth of El Cid was first interpolated, is itself a turgid myth.)

We see in the activities of the child replicators of James’s story, and in the alternative tale about El Cid, evidence of what social theorists call social or cultural reproduction. Social groups create rituals and stories, which they habitualize through participatory endeavors. Such collective performances create social solidarity, in part by giving present value to a reimagined past.

What should we make of such efforts at indoctrination? My college students initially recoil at the thought of them, as perhaps some of my readers are now doing. However, I remind my students, and I’ll remind my readers as well, that we all have participated in similar training exercises. There is no getting around the fact that we all undergo this kind of social brainwashing (some theorists prefer to call it habituation). It isn’t all bad, of course. It makes sense that the parents and teachers of young children want to inform their kids about the history of the place where they live and the people who have shaped that place. Those of us living in the US want our own children to learn about Plymouth Rock and the pil-

grims' first Thanksgiving, the singular event that in our collective memory foretells the bounty in store for inheritors of the American experiment. We embellish Thanksgiving with stuffed turkeys and pumpkin pies, ignoring the fact that nearly half of the first arrivals of Plymouth died over the first winter. We want to instruct future generations about George Washington's leadership of our nation during its infancy. If Washington's story gets elaborated with details about cherry trees and wooden teeth, we might agree that there is no harm done, since the goal is to make an important piece of history stick in hard heads. And, most certainly, we want this done in English, not Italian or Polish or Cherokee or Catalan.

IDENTITY

Identity is an important subtheme of the book. We are all members of groups. It is common nowadays to refer to these as "imagined communities."³ What we mean by the term is that our various groupings, associations, and constituencies are held together by our ideas about what should hold them together and by the practices that put those ideas into action. Collective imagination and habitual cohesiveness provide much of the glue that binds. If that sounds circular, and a little bit fragile, so it is.

We all play roles in multiple identity groups. We take possession of a variety of identities at a variety of scales with various scopes of interest. Sometimes the intersections of these disparate identities are worth noting. Families are identity groups. Many Catalan families take weekend excursions, often to sites like the Romanesque churches high in the Pyrenees that have special prominence as symbols of Catalonia's medieval heritage. Family trips, then, are not merely recreational. They serve to consolidate the family group while also confirming Catalan identity. There is something powerful in the simple circularity of it: This is what Catalan families do when they want to signal to themselves and others that they are Catalan families. An outsider to Catalonia finds it odd and surprising to see so many of these kinds of convergences of activities that bring multiple identities into alignment. In Catalonia, neighborhoods can also share a strong sense of collective purpose. The practice in Catalonia of building human towers (*castells* in Catalan) is predominantly organized as a neighborhood activity. But there are *castellers* and observers of castle-building events in

³Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

neighborhoods all over Catalonia. These neighborhood activities are almost entirely independent of each other; nonetheless, they share a set of thoughts and practices by which their practitioners and audiences knowingly link themselves to the past, present, and future of the activity, which they see as distinctly Catalan. In this activity, neighborhood and nation are intimately bound together. We will see other examples.

The reality of identity politics is, of course, more complex than the charming picture of kindergarteners recalling their nation's history in song or neighborhood friends climbing upon each other's backs in a castle-building exercise. A voting bloc is an identity group, and voting blocs, as history routinely instructs us, can be unkind to those who espouse rival interests. In Spain, as in the US, the lines of political division drawn by dominant groups often do not readily fit the minority populations upon whom they are drawn. Religious groups are also identity groups. Christians, Muslims, and Jews have much in common, although it is more typical for religious affiliates to look for the characteristics that separate one religious group from another. No one disputes that we group the people around us by carefully calibrating the subtle shades of similarity and difference. Catalans are Catalans because they see themselves as such and build a worldview around who they think they are. But Catalans are also Catalans because others tell them they are different. Prejudices matter: They draw people together, and they also cause pain and division.

One more thing about identity: Theorists say it has a lot to do with memory. Just what constitutes a memory is not always easy to discern. Sometimes a memory is an accurate impression of what really occurred, but just as often it is a poor recollection or a total fabrication. Prejudices, as suggested above, are often little more than evocations of some partial or fictional memory. Memories link us in rich ways to perceptions of an ancestral past, a past that we did not live and, thus, technically speaking, cannot remember. Practically speaking, memories very often have little to do with what really happened long ago and much more to do with getting something going in the present.

MEDIEVAL AND MEDIEVALIZING

I assert in this book that to be Catalan is to be possessed by memories of the medieval past. What do I mean?

No academic semester has passed in recent years without several students in my introductory courses in medieval history insisting that the

fantasy drama television show *Game of Thrones* is, as they put it, perfectly medieval. The Harry Potter books and movies, too. Those of my students who are gamers can easily name a dozen or so video games that have “crusade,” “stronghold,” “knight,” or some other medieval-ish reference in the title. Medieval-themed restaurants invite patrons to eat with the hands while watching make-believe jousts and sword fights. Modern popular culture in Catalonia, as in Spain, the US, and elsewhere, is full of references to, semblances of, and often grossly inaccurate reflections upon the medieval period. Catalans enjoy engaging in this kind of trivialization of the medieval past; like others, they do it mostly as a kind of make-believe pursued for entertainment purposes. Academic books, journals, and conferences in Catalonia as elsewhere are devoted to cataloguing and scrutinizing examples of medievalizing in movies, television, novels, and so on. We will identify some of this academic literature when we need to. But let’s be clear that this book is neither about the ways that a medieval imaginary gets concocted nor a contribution to the academic study of medievalisms.

Here I am interested in something much richer, which is that to be Catalan is to be deeply invested in an imagined medieval inheritance. Some Catalans consciously, explicitly, and expressly lay claim to that inheritance, as, for example, when they declare that “Catalonia is not Spain.” Other Catalans enjoy their inheritance in ways that are unconscious and implicit. For many, the medieval past—real or imagined—is at the core of their national and personal identities even if they have never stopped to consider it. The complications that come with the claim that Catalans are possessed by their medieval past need some sorting out in the coming pages.

NATION AND NATIONALISM

Given the subjects mentioned so far, this book must necessarily consider a cluster of questions around nations and nationalism. The academic discourse about nationalism is fraught with contentions and disagreements. Is nationalism a feature of the nineteenth century or is it something broader that takes in histories and cultural characteristics reaching farther back in time? Do laws determine a nation; or borders drawn on maps; or blood, ethnicity, or ancestry? Are nations made and unmade in the crucible of historic events, such as wars and conquests, in which one group is subsumed into another? Can alternate readings of history produce counter-

definitions of nation and nationality that allow for sub-nations, nations within a state, stateless nations, peripheral nations, banal nationalism, or nations that are composites of nationalities?

Those who know Catalan history have a keen appreciation of the limits of this discourse. Catalonia is among the outliers, an example of places where the available answers to these questions do not easily fit. Montserrat Guibernau's robust assessment is an example: "It is my contention that such a distinction [between the concepts of nation and state] is crucial to understand why, for example, a nation lacking or having lost its political institutions may survive for relatively long periods of time or why an occupied nation, having its economy, legal rights and mass public culture in the hands of the invader, can still be called a nation."⁴ Her claim here is that, regardless of the changeability or even conquest and obliteration of institutions of state, a people's recognition of its corporate identity as a nation persists.

Words are important here, but let's not get carried away. In what follows, I will use the words "nation," "nationality," and "state," but readers should appreciate that my usage often overlooks important subtleties. I don't want to quibble with academics every time I use a loaded word. When it is important to do so, we will want to unpack the layers of meaning and depth of disputes.

SPAIN AS A CONSTRUCTION

We can call Spain a nation-state, since that is how the Spanish Constitution describes it and that is how it is recognized by international convention. Many theorists, and a lot of Catalans, disagree, insisting that Spain contains more than one nation group. Some even have a hard time referring to Spain as a state. There once was a Spain that was a republic, and a very different Spain that was a dictatorship, and a still different one today that combines the institutional elements of constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy, and at least a little bit of old-fashioned autocracy. And, of course, Spain did not exist as a political unit before the late sixteenth century.

Spain's topsy-turvy history is especially problematic and especially relevant to the lessons in this book. For several hundred years, Spanish mon-

⁴ Montserrat Guibernau, "Anthony D. Smith on Nations and National Identity: A Critical Assessment," *Nations and Nationalisms* 10, no. 1–2 (2014): 125–141, at 130.

archs attempted to impose notions of a single Hispania, but the guiding unitary principles they sought to impose never seemed especially convincing beyond the court. Around 1900, a group of Spanish intellectuals called the Generation of '98 asserted that there was no Spanish nation. And that was before a devastating civil war and forty years of dictatorship. Today, Spain presents itself as a democracy, but some observers have good cause for calling it a failed state.

Spain, baffled by its own history, has never arrived at convincing answers to some basic questions. To ask what Spain is puts the country's legitimacy at risk; to fail to ask is to ignore dangerous historical precedents. This puts present-day Catalans in the middle of a historical mess, a clutter of questions about who they are and who they might become. If not Spanish, if never really Spanish, then what? Some details will arrive later, but for now it will help to establish three things about Spain.⁵

First, Spain, is a construction. In that regard, it is like the US, Nigeria, and Iraq—countries with delimited boundaries, recognizable central governments, and other generally accepted attributes. What does it mean that Spain and other states are constructions? States do not appear, whole and complete, in a single divinely inspired moment. Despite what coins and flags and politicians might say to the contrary, God's part in the emergence of states is not grounded in evidence. People make and remake their states by arguing about the powers and meanings of the places they inhabit and the institutions they inherit.

Second, as a construction the Spanish state is unfinished. Whether observers choose to see it as a work in progress or a failure of social engineering depends upon whether they judge the community as sufficiently and successfully imagined. Regardless of opinions about the nature of change, it is indisputable that the political, legal, and institutional composition of Spain has changed and will continue to change. Franco believed that he was fixing the brokenness of earlier republican constructions of the Spanish state. After his demise, Spain undertook a reconstruction called "the Transition," which brought the country out of dictatorship into modern democracy under a constitutional monarch. Such nation-state reconstructions occur quite often.

Third, as states go, Spain has had an especially rough time, both of holding its constructions in place and of effecting useful reconstructions.

⁵J.N. Hillgarth, "Spanish Historiography and Iberian Reality," *History and Theory* 24 (1985): 23–43, is still an outstanding presentation of the problem.

To put the sharpest point on it, we can say that even the problem of when Spain became Spain is a matter of critical debate. Some observers claim that Spain was born in a magnificent Reconquest, when Christians retook lands taken from them in the Muslim invasion of 711. Others point to the joining of crowns and territories in the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1469. Some will say that Spain became a modern nation-state when it produced its first republican constitution in 1873. Others insist that Spain was never so unified as it was under Franco. Many researchers, and a lot of Catalans, insist that the arguments are so strong against any consistency in what we might call Spain that the real question is whether modern Spain should be considered a nation-state at all.

CATALANISM AND SEPARATISM

Most Catalans insist that they belong to a collective that is distinct from other political communities inside Spain. Many of them use the word “nation” when drawing the distinction, although the word is not really vital, since it merely points, insufficiently, to a cultural complexity that no single word can capture. The distinction refers in part to a place—Catalonia—although there are other factors like language and history, as we will see, that contribute. Some Catalans extend their understanding of the Catalan nation in a way that goes beyond present territorial conceptions. They speak of the *Països Catalans*, which refers to those territories populated historically by speakers of Catalan (in addition to present-day Catalonia, these lands include Valencia, the Balearic Islands, parts of southern France, Andorra, the easternmost fringe of Aragon, and parts of Sardinia). Language is important, as we will see in an entire chapter devoted to how it can be used and abused to make or break the Catalan imagined community.

I will also use the term “Catalanism” when I want to point directly to the political implications of the difficult relationship between Catalonia and Spain. Rather than offer a definition of Catalanism at this point, I would prefer to let your understanding of it evolve as you read. For now, here is the gist of it: Spain is a political entity that has, mostly by historical accident, controlled Catalan territory for about five hundred years; and, yet, Spanish governments have historically treated Catalans as not fully part of the Spanish polity. Catalans, for their part, are legally Spanish, but they make the claim, based on their history and cultural memory, to being something else. Catalanism is the name given to the Catalan side of this

political entanglement. It implies political action in a defense of Catalonia against a perceived threat, and a desire to reclaim political autonomy or create it anew. Specialist researchers argue endlessly about whether Catalanism is a form of nationalism. It is hard for outsiders to read the statement graffiti-scribbled on walls everywhere in Catalonia—"Catalonia is not Spain"—as anything but a nationalist declaration of independence.⁶ But the distinction matters little to most Catalans, who appear to agree with what the writer Quim Monzó has said on the issue: "I'm not nationalist, or any nonsense like that; the thing is, I'm not Spanish."⁷

I assert in these pages that Catalans have developed a keen sense of the depth and value of their past, and they have done so as a matter of cultural survival. On the one hand, this makes them different from other groups. A half-millennium of cultural distress, at least as it has become deeply rooted in Catalan collective experience, has sharpened the construction of Catalan habits and symbols, rituals, myths, and historical narratives to knife-edged utilitarian precision. On the other hand, the desire among many Catalans for increased political and cultural autonomy is not in itself unique. The political confrontation between Catalans and Spain operates in a comparative context of separatist battles.

A great number of peoples, groups, and political parties around the world have mobilized in recent years to seek greater autonomy or outright separation from the states of which they are presently part. Inside Europe, one of the most prominent has been the Basque National Liberation Movement. The Basque separatist party ETA engaged in armed and political conflict against Spain from 1959 to 2011. Despite the end of armed conflict, many Basques in Spain and France continue to support greater autonomy. The Northern Ireland Conflict, a low-level guerilla war fought from roughly 1968 to 1998, ended in what is called the Good Friday Agreement, although it has roots in a long history with tensions that are not entirely resolved. In France one can count a great number of separatist groups that have their own distinct histories and traditions, including the Basques, the Provençals, Alsatians, Bretons, Corsicans, and more. Catalonia is often compared to Scotland, Greenland, and Québec, territo-

⁶ Readers curious to encounter some of the myriad examples of its uses can type "Catalonia is Not Spain" into a search engine.

⁷ Reported in Matthew Tree, "Catalan Language Literature: What's Going On?" in *What's Up with Catalonia?* ed. Liz Castro, ed., (Ashfield, MA: Catalonia Press, 2013): 147–152, at 152.

ries that currently belong to the states of, respectively, the United Kingdom, the Kingdom of Denmark, and Canada. As in Catalonia, large percentages of the populations in these places are currently seeking greater levels of autonomy or outright independence. The Québécois and the Catalans have two things in common that others may lack. The first is a large population size relative to the states to which they are attached. The second is that both are relatively prosperous, contributing an outsized amount to the state's economic output.

Take note of an important caveat: In what follows, I mostly speak of Catalans as a single social reality, as in “This book is about Catalans.” It is incorrect to assume, however, that Catalans are all of one mind, cookie-cutter copies of each other. Catalans disagree amongst themselves about many things. Some Catalans by birth and ancestry choose not to share in what most would describe for themselves as normatively Catalan. There are class and regional divides. Catalans resident in Barcelona and its suburbs are sometimes viewed as having interests significantly different from Catalans who reside in cities, towns, and rural areas beyond the reach of the metropolis.⁸ Moreover, Catalan, like American, is not a race or ethnicity—Catalan socialization cannot fall back on those simple devices. It is not even the case, for instance, that all Catalans belong to families whose ancestors have roots in Catalonia. Catalonia has a long history of welcoming immigrants. Most succeed in assimilating, although not all immigrants assent to becoming Catalan.

This book explores the fabric of the past—the history and legends, symbols and rituals—that, according to a great majority of Catalans, binds them together. Not every thread of that fabric touches every Catalan, but the weave and woof are very strong, capable of accommodating and stabilizing a great deal of diversity.

HISTORIANS AND OTHER AGENTS OF HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

Writing a book about the uses of the past, about how history is repurposed for the present and future, puts a historian like me in a difficult spot. Historians spend a lot of time in archives or with our heads in the books.

⁸ Presentations of these internal distinctions include Rosa M. Bosch et al., *Jo No Soc de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2000), and Gregoria Morán, *La Decadencia de Cataluña: Contado por un Charnego* (Barcelona: Debate, 2013).

We aspire to undertake our research objectively, to recover truths about the past, and to write faithfully about our discoveries. Our profession is sometimes called a “noble dream.” It is a dream because it never gets fully realized, for a couple of reasons.

The first is that the past is, as David Lowenthal put it, a foreign country. Historians, like tourists on holiday, are interlopers in a place they can never quite know as fully as they would like. As hard as we try, we can never fully know the past as it was really lived because we cannot live it. To draw upon another metaphor, doing historical work is like looking into a dim and distant mirror. The image might tell us something about ourselves, but it lacks the sharpness and vivid colors we so much want it to reveal.⁹

The second reason that the noble dream goes unrealized is that the past is not only a thing to be known but also something to be used. Historians may want to represent the past as far away, dead and gone, recoverable only as an academic exercise, but non-historians routinely put the past to work in their own lives, and they do so whether historians like it or not. The fact is that all of us, historians and non-historians alike, play active roles in determining what from the past gets recalled and given value in the present. Historians have honed their skills of discernment about the past, and their work should be valued for what it is. Nonetheless, we might benefit from acknowledging that much of what we call history is really the outcome of individual and collective actions upon the past, purposeful recollections, and reconsiderations. Although I was trained as a historian, I have come to recognize that professionals have a lot to learn about how history gets made and used.¹⁰

Catalan historians know that they live in a world in which the past has important implications for how they live in the present. Catalonia has a long tradition of producing historian-politicians like Victor Balaguer, who

⁹ Charles Beard, one of the first presidents of the American History Association, took up the problem of history as a noble dream in an essay published in 1935, “That Noble Dream,” *The American Historical Review* 41 (1935), 74–87. For a more recent assessment, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Also see David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), and the introductory remarks in Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Alfred P. Knopf, 1978).

¹⁰ A quick and useful introduction to the nature and problems of historical work is J. Llewellyn and S. Thompson, “Problems of thinking about history,” *Alpha History* (blog), accessed August 14, 2017, <http://alphahistory.com/problems-of-history/>

in the middle of the nineteenth century wrote one of the first Catalanist histories. Albert Balcells, Albert García i Espuche, and Jaume Sobrequés i Callicó are contemporary historian-politicians who advance Catalanist objectives. They are excellent historians—they do their homework, which is to say that they ask good questions, they carefully search for facts, they assemble the evidence into plausible narratives, and they write with clarity and brio. Nonetheless, they want the past to serve the interests of Catalans in the present and future. We will learn more about these advocate-historians. For now, the point to be made is that their activities complicate the impression of detached study that is a source of the historical discipline's legitimacy. Let's not presume that historians are immune from the human creative impulse to give the past purpose.

LOOKING AHEAD

The first of this book's two sections describes some of the component parts of Catalan collective memory. I call these component parts of the Catalan story an inventory. The inventory includes important personalities, some of whom, like Wilfred the Hairy, are real but mythologized, while others, like Sant Jordi, are pure legend but made very real in the ubiquity of the stories told about them. The inventory also includes a supply of key events. Examples include the death of Martin the Humane in 1410, the bombardment of Barcelona in 1714, and the celebration of the first modern Jocs Florals in 1859. In addition to significant people and signal events, various symbolic items and activities also trigger memories, stir emotions, and rouse slumbering Catalan imaginations into action. Thus, the red peasant cap called the *barretina* and the popular dance called the Sardana have their place in the inventory. The mountain monastery of Montserrat, the ruined castle at Quermançó, and the Drassanes shipyards number among sites and places that also count as part of the inventory. The inventory of Catalan connections to the past is so vast and varied that we can do no more here than point to a few of the most prominent and representative examples. I have done my best to choose examples that will give you the closest approximation of Catalan lived experience.

The second section of the book looks at how the inventory gets put to work. Our purpose in this section is to see how meaning is made as Catalans reconfigure the parts according to changing circumstances. Three chapters—Decadence and Renaissance; Medievalizing and Modernizing; and Fighting Words—treat important conceptual continu-

ities or recurrent themes in the shaping of Catalan collectivity. Decadence and renaissance are weighty concepts because they give meaning to significant events in the Catalan self-referential story and because they signify modalities of self-discovery. Catalans have done an exemplary job of rehabilitating the medieval artifacts in their midst, modernizing the art and architecture and other artifacts of Catalonia's medieval material culture. Catalans also actively medievalize modern elements of their material culture when doing so suits the purpose of contributing to the Catalan story. Because the Catalan language is of paramount significance from a number of perspectives, an entire chapter is devoted to how the Catalan language contributes to the meanings Catalans make for themselves.

In the book's epilogue I look deliberately at recent events and then prognosticate about the next steps in Catalonia's future. Whether we will ultimately judge as truly historic Catalonia's declaration of independence from Spain, which occurred on October 27, 2017, is determined in part by Catalans' corporate assessment of their past, although judgment remains partly contingent upon what will occur in the years to come. Similarly, we continue to judge the quality and character of Spain. The state's recent actions against its own citizens—violence against those Catalans who tried to vote and the repressive jailing of Catalonia's legally elected representatives—remind us of Spain's historically poor reputation as a viable state. That reputation will continue to be measured as much by what has already happened as by the course corrections Spanish leaders may choose to take in the future. The epilogue imagines some possibilities.

Inventory

Catalans know their history. Or, at least, they think they do. They can recite the heroic deeds of their national leaders. The intercessions of Santa Eulalia, Sant Jordi (Saint George), and others of their saints remain familiar to them. Some can name the ancient seafaring merchants who built durable economic foundations and embedded notions of entrepreneurial vigor deep into the Catalan collective psyche. Others remember the statesmen and artists who carried forward into their own times the weight and meanings of the past through their speeches, poetry, and paintings. Catalans see around them what their predecessors built upon the landscape, the artifacts of a built environment that grounds them in a place with a past. Many Catalan traditions, such as the Corpus Christi celebrations, are of long and distinguished provenance, while others, like singing “Els Segadors” and building human castles, although of more recent vintage, have become vital additions to an imagined inheritance. If you are unfamiliar with these examples of Catalan history and heritage, keep reading and all will become clear. The point to remember at present is that, to many Catalans, the constancy of their reflection upon the past is time-honored. Their keen attention to the past is one of the things that make them Catalan.

The interesting thing about the relationship the Catalan people have with their past is that they have come to store it in collective memory in bits and pieces, ready for reassembly in a variety of configurations. They have gained considerable skill at storing the components because theirs is a unique and complicated history that does not fit the standard narratives

of national trajectories. In the following chapters, I argue that the bits and pieces of the Catalan past work like an inventory. Catalans understand their past not so much in the form of a completed narrative as in the form of a puzzle of interchangeable parts. Their story can be reconfigured and told in many ways. The Catalan past is adaptable to the needs of the present. In contrast, the standard American or Spanish narratives seem overly scripted, more than a little brittle.

The notion that collective memory operates like a stored inventory has precedents in the work of theorists like Eric Hobsbawm, Pierre Nora, and others.¹ “Inventory” seems to be the right word because, as those theorists suggest, the parts comprise the entirety of the Catalan collective memory. They include bits of history and true stories about the past as well as myths and legends. Narrative threads, interpretations, and arguments have their place in the inventory, but so do presumptions, fictions, and falsehoods. “Inventory” is a word that takes account of the reality of historical reconstruction, which is that the true and the untrue, history and legend, are accessible and available for mixing up and mixing into an ongoing social construction about the meaning and use of the past, with the result that what matters is not whether something is accurate, in the sense of historically veritable and verifiable, but that it can be made into something productive.

Let’s consider a related metaphor. When I was young, a family friend taught me to remember always to choose the right tool for a job.

¹The French historian Pierre Nora, describing modernity’s insistent present-orientation, finds it difficult to organize a history that offers continuity into the future. As he sees it, “this inability to anticipate the future puts us under an obligation to stockpile.” The best we can do is to gather into collective mental storage those parts of the past that we hope future generations will find useful. Pierre Nora, “Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory,” *Transit* 22 (2002): 1–8. Available through Eurozine.com, accessed November 9, 2017. <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2002-04-19-nora-en.html>. Michael Schudson, “The Present in the Past Versus the Past in the Present,” *Communication* 11 (1989): 105–113, describing what he calls “the structure of the available pasts,” suggests that the ability of individuals and collectives to bend the past to their will is limited by the shape taken by the materials bequeathed to them. Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Rogers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 1–14, at 6, talks about rituals, folklore, and symbolic associations as components of the “well-supplied warehouses” that are the stuff of traditions and, at the same time, the materials from which new traditions are made. Or, as Patrick Hutton puts it, “imagination and memory deal in images that are interchangeable.” Patrick Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), xxiii.

The Catalan inventory can be compared to a toolkit, where various parts of the past lie in storage, like tools ready to be put to work. Not all of the available tools may be set out and available for use at any particular moment. Some tools rarely get taken out of storage, although they remain available just the same. A convenience of the metaphor is the implication that, despite the fact that there is a right tool for any particular job, there remains the possibility of using old and unusual tools in new and unanticipated ways. Depending on conditions at any given moment, maybe it is easier to dispense with the protrusion of a nail with the butt of a screwdriver, because it is already in your hand, than with the hammer that may take time to retrieve from storage. Warehoused memories permit that kind of creative exploitation.

The chapters in this book's first part describe some of the contents of the inventory, some of the tools Catalans use in constructing their past. For convenience, I will describe the contents as if they are stored in compartments. The second chapter identifies the major events that have shaped Catalan history. These events mark time but also signal certain moments of interpretive power. The third and fourth chapters identify some of the remarkable people and personalities—real, fictitious, and in-between—who have their place in the collective imagination of the Catalan people. The fifth chapter examines important places. The chapters in the first part of this book are descriptive; that is, they identify items in the inventory that get used in the work of constructing Catalan identity. Later, in the book's second part, we turn our attention to what it means to construct and reconstruct an imagined past from an inventory of parts.



CHAPTER 2

Events and Accidents

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, artists and intellectuals, politicians, business leaders, and others worked vigorously to give weight and substance to assertions of Catalan identity. They embellished the folklore and traditions, promulgated the history and myths, and built up the physical infrastructure we recognize as distinctly Catalan. Many eminent Catalan researchers have seen in the work of the nineteenth-century actors the beginnings of Catalanism.¹ I agree that Catalanism gained strength and took on an apparent political trajectory by the mid-1800s, and from that perspective the manifestation of Catalanism shows similarities with efforts inside many modern states to strengthen national identities. Still, Catalanism owed a great many of its energies and outcomes to earlier developments unique to Catalan history. Catalans recognized themselves as Catalan, and made special claims about their place in the world, well before the nineteenth century period when the various “-isms”—nationalism and Catalanism among them—got bestowed with their names. Rather than considering Catalan self-recognition to be a modern phenomenon (modern, that is, in the way we refer to the

¹E.g., Albert Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996); Llorenç Prats, *El mite de la tradició popular: els orígens de l'interès per la cultura tradicional a la Catalunya del segle XIX* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1988), and Josep M. Pujol, *Three Selected Papers on Catalan Folklore*, ed. Carme Oriol and Emili Samper, (Tarragona: URV, 2013). Balcells is a historian; Prats is an anthropologist specializing in Catalan folkloric traditions; Pujol was a philologist and specialist in Catalan literature.

nineteenth-century as modern), we would learn more by recognizing it as an array of expressions of an identity that has evolved over many centuries and that continues to evolve.² Regardless of what date we might want to point to in declaring the beginnings of modern Catalanism, it is a fact that the evidence we would gather makes reference to a distinctly medieval Catalan inheritance.

THE MEDIEVAL ROOTS OF CATALANISM

The medieval inheritance of the Catalan people gets recalled directly, proudly, and often. Jordi Pujol posited very clearly that the Catalan personality is “the fruit of [...] the contributions of the medieval period: territory, language, culture, proper institutions. The Generalitat we have reestablished today is from the fourteenth century and therefore our current autonomy has a link to our medieval past [...]. It is something that comes from the profundities of the past.”³ Pujol’s voice was important in its time. As President of the Catalan government from 1980 to 2003, he helped lead the Catalan people through their first efforts to reassert autonomy in the period of the post-Franco democratic transition.

A medieval inheritance is so near the heart of Catalan identity that it has become a “standard plotline,” as Matthew Tree discovered over many years of living among Catalans.⁴ The medieval elements of the plotline go something like this: Catalonia—and the essential freedoms of the Catalan people—dates back to the ninth century. By the twelfth century, the medieval ancestors of modern Catalans had created forms of popular sovereignty that put them at the vanguard of the most civilized forms of law and government. By the fourteenth century, theirs was a precocious nation—one whose people and institutions were smart, progressive, enterprising, and democratic. Despite the great diversity of its political and social orientations, Catalan identity remains firmly tethered to a medieval inheritance, especially as regards its language, its *seny* (common sense), its business

² Among those who point to factors earlier and later than the typical nineteenth-century frame of reference, see Agustí Colomines “What is Catalanism and What Does It Advocate?” *Catalan Views Online* (blog), March 2011, <http://www.catalanviews.com/content/what-catalanism-and-what-does-it-advocate>, accessed on September 5, 2017.

³ Cited in Désirée Kleiner-Liebau, *Migration and the Construction of National Identity in Spain* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2009), 180.

⁴ Tree, “Catalan Language,” 150.

acumen, and its popular traditions of community solidarity and *pactisme* (shared decision-making).

The narrative can also be pitched in economic terms, as the Catalan economist Joan Canadall does in the following way: “For centuries, Catalonia has been an industrially dynamic territory, graced with modernism and development [...]. As long ago as the thirteenth century Catalonia has enjoyed moments of stunning commercial success driven by the astute development of whatever advance corresponded to the era [...]. The Catalan nation has always been the business and industry axis around which Spain has prospered. This is our tradition, passed down from our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.”

These medieval lines of the Catalan narrative serve as nothing less than an implicit social contract. One can find the narrative reiterated in all kinds of media produced for diverse audiences. One of the most precise presentations of the narrative was produced recently by the former lieutenant mayor of Barcelona in a prefatory statement to a book devoted to cultural tourism for internal Catalan consumption.⁵ Beyond repetition by and for Catalans, in recent years the tenets of Catalonia’s intimate association with its medieval past have reached audiences on the international stage.

Whether to deem the medieval connection true or false does not concern us at the moment. What matters is that, for many Catalans, the story produces visions of a past that require political action in the present for the purpose of creating a very different future. To put a finer point on it: Catalans hold their medieval past close in memory because they want back the liberties they believe were taken away from their ancestors by a belligerent Spain.

Two truths hold Catalans fast to their medieval past. First, Catalonia reached the zenith of its territorial elaboration in the medieval period. The collective interests that became a distinctively Catalan culture emerged and were consolidated in that long period. Only later did political accidents and dynastic hubris interrupt medieval Catalonia’s cultural splendor and progress. Catalonia’s fall from the heights of international prominence came at the threshold of modernity.

⁵ Joan Canadall, “The Catalan Business Model,” in *What’s Up with Catalonia?* Ed. Liz Castro (Ashfield, MA: Catalonia Press, 2013), 197–200, at 198. Alfred Bosch and Josep Melero, *Ruta de Les Llibertats, passejades per la Barcelona èpica* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2007), 5.

Second, events of the early modern period carved a clear break in Catalan collective memory between the perceived advantages of the medieval past and the costs of present subjugation. By the sixteenth century, just as other nations were becoming states, the Catalan people, at least according to the way the historical drama is told, felt preyed upon by a colonizing Spain.

THE NATURE OF EVENTS

Some historians say that the base element of history is the event. From one perspective this seems true enough: Things happen, and we choose to record those happenings so that others can recall them at some later time. But events are less tangible than the people we touch and the earth on which we stand. The thing that makes an event is not that it is remembered in its physicality nor even that it happened—boom—deposited in time. People say that the birth of Jesus was an event; but we do not customarily think of every human birth as an event. Why not? We give occasions importance—earthquakes, political revolutions, elections, coronations, etc.—when we know what to do with them, when we see meaning in their occurrence, or when what happens later gives them value. Occurrences become events when we store them in collective memory, having figured out, at least preliminarily, why we should want to store them.

Events always come to us as interpretations, mediated by interpreters. Events are weighted, which is to say that we learn to recognize one as more important than another. To call something an event is to problematize it, to wrap it in a context.

THE LIST

In what follows we focus on those events that are the most prominent ones for Catalans, the ones that they have over the course of time routinely, continuously, and conspicuously considered the most significant and meaningful. These are the ones that mark out the paths taken by all the writers of all Catalan general histories.

Our goal in what follows is simply to offer a list, and it need not be a long one. I offer a few cursory notes about a few of the listed items, but there is no need for detail at this point. Each item on the list will be taken up later as part of our ongoing discussion. I anticipate that your under-

standing of the importance of each (that is, your appreciation for how Catalans value the importance of each) will develop over the course of your reading, as you encounter it in its various interpretive contexts.

Histories of nations often begin with the historically most significant personages recognized as the chief agents of change, or, as is also common in national histories, with the geographies that are sometimes said to determine the character of a people. It might seem like an odd choice to start with events. My thought is that you might like to have the following list as a reference, something you can turn back to occasionally, when, for example, you want to place in context one event among others that constitute the structure of the Catalan narrative.⁶

897	Death of Wilfred “the Hairy”
1035–1076	Ramon Berenguer I becomes Count of Barcelona [His effective assertion of territorial integrity and legal authority consolidates Catalonia as a political entity]
1137	Marriage contracted between Ramon Berenguer IV and Peyronella of Aragon [Their successors are recognized as count-kings, until the death of Martin I]
1154–1196	Alfons I of Catalonia (Alfonso II of Aragon) consolidates as Catalan territories lands in what is now southern France
1192	The first Catalan parliament, the <i>Corts</i> (fully formalized by 1283)
1213–1276	Reign of James I, Count of Barcelona and King of Aragon [His conquest of Majorca initiates the Catalan Mediterranean expansion. He cedes Languedoc to France in the 1258 Corbeil Treaty]
1265	Barcelona’s Consell de Cent achieves its formal structure as a municipal government. In its original composition, it is led by three counselors elected by one hundred “proven men” (<i>probi homines</i>)
1283–1323	The Kingdom of Sicily and Sardinia, the Duchy of Athens, and the Duchy of Neopatras come into the political orbit of the Catalans
1283	Confirmation and promulgation of the first Catalan Constitutions
1350	Black Death; plague outbreaks recur in later years
1359	Peter III (Peter IV of Aragon) formally approves the constitution of the Generalitat, government by assembly in association with the Count of Barcelona
1410	Death of Martin I, the Humane [His death ends the five-hundred-year dynasty that began with Wilfred the Hairy]

⁶A useful resource for those who would like a more detailed chronology is Helena Buffery and Elisenda Marcer, *Historical Dictionary of the Catalans* (Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2011). The Dictionary includes one of the most extensive recent bibliographies. Lluïsa Montfort, *1001 Curiositats de Catalunya* (Barcelona: L’Arca, 2011), counts among the many offerings in Catalan—I call them inventory books—that offer numerous bits and pieces of the Catalan past in more or less chronological order.

- 1412 The Compromise of Caspe ends rule by the line of Wilfred the Hairy and gives Catalonia to the Trastámara branch of the Castilian ruling family
- 1462–1472 Catalan Civil War
- 1462–1485 War of the Remences
- 1469 Marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile
[Ferdinand becomes King of Aragon in 1479]
- 1492 Columbus locates the New World, initiating Spain's empire
Jews expelled from Spain
- 1522 Carlos I of Spain (Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor) denies Barcelona's merchants the right to trade in the Americas
- 1640–1652 The Revolt of the Catalans (also called The War of the Segadors)
- 1659 Treaty of the Pyrenees
[Catalan territories north of the Pyrenees are ceded to France. Thereafter, the French government restricts Catalan language and culture in these territories]
- 1705–1715 War of Succession
[The armies of Bourbon King Felipe V defeat the armies of the Archduke Charles of Austria, whom the Catalans supported]
- 1714 September 11, Capitulation of Barcelona
[This follows a fifteen-month siege and then the bombardment of the city by the troops of Felipe V]
- 1715–1719 Imposition of the Nueva Planta decrees in Catalonia, Mallorca, and Sardinia
[These decrees suppress the Catalan Constitutions and restrict use of the Catalan language; Catalan universities are forced to close]
- 1768 Teaching the Catalan language in schools in Catalonia is prohibited
- 1794 Teaching the Catalan language is prohibited in traditionally Catalan-speaking territories inside France (*Catalunya Nord*)
- 1810–1820 Loss of most of Spain's empire in Latin America
- 1833 Bonaventura Aribau publishes "Oda a la Pàtria"
- 1850 Restoration of Jocs Florals in Barcelona
- 1871 First publication of the Catalanist journal *La Renaixensa*
- 1879 First daily newspaper in Catalan, *El Diari Català*
- 1898 Spanish-American War
[Spain loses last major colonies, Cuba and the Philippines]
- 1923–1930 Dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera
[The Jocs Florals and other cultural traditions are suspended; the Catalan Mancomunitat (established Commonwealth government) is abolished by Primo de Rivera; restrictions are tightened against speaking Catalan in public venues and teaching the language in schools]
- 1936–1939 Spanish Civil War

- 1939–1975 Dictatorship of Francisco Franco
[Catalan speech, teaching, and cultural activities are severely repressed, especially through the 1950s, followed by some loosening of restrictions]
- 1963 The civic association Òmnium Cultural initiates a campaign to promote Catalan language and culture
- 2006 Catalan Statute of Autonomy approved by Catalan voters
Granting of .cat domain name
- 2009–2011 Unofficial referendums in several Catalan towns on Catalan independence
- 2010 In February, Spanish Supreme Court nullifies key articles of Catalan Statute of Autonomy
[This event, not the financial crisis that began two years earlier, precipitates the recent series of manifestations against the Spanish government. In June, approximately 1.5 million people in Barcelona demonstrate against the court's ruling. Protestors chant "*Som una nació*" and "*Tenim el dret de decidir*" ("We are a nation" and "We have the right to decide")]
- 2014 November 9: Non-binding self-determination referendum is held throughout Catalonia.
[Approximately 40% of eligible Catalans participate (a relatively high mark for Spanish elections, about equal to the average turnout for American midterm elections). An overwhelming majority (80.8%) of respondents indicates their preference for an independent Catalonia]
- 2017 May: Artur Mas, President of the Catalan Generalitat at the time of the 2014 referendum, is tried in Spain's Supreme Constitutional Court for civil disobedience and perversion of justice for permitting the 2014 referendum.
October 1: Catalans attempt to cast votes in a binding referendum (called the 1-O) on separation from Spain. Forty-three percent of voters participate, with 92% of votes cast in favor of independence. The legality of the vote is disputed by the Spanish right-wing Partido Popular (PP) government and voided by the Constitutional Court. Spanish President Mariano Rajoy sends in the Guardia Civil, a paramilitary police force, to disrupt voting, intimidate voters, and confiscate ballot boxes. Although the brutality of the guard forces is well documented, the European Parliament pleads that it has no part in the internal matters of one of its member states
October 27: The Catalan Generalitat declares Catalonia a Republic. In the days that follow, the Spanish government asserts its authority under Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution to disband the Catalan government. It then arrests several Catalan government officials. Carles Puigdemont, the Catalan president, goes into exile in Brussels, Belgium. Rajoy calls new elections for the Generalitat for December 21
December 21: Elections in Catalonia register a significant loss for Rajoy's Partido Popular. Pro-independence parties, in total, return to about the same proportion of seats they held prior to Rajoy's dissolution of the Catalan government following the 1-O
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CHAPTER 3

Princes and People

LEGENDARY LEADERS

Stories about the origins of Catalonia often begin by extolling the virtues of Wilfred the Hairy. Wilfred holds a prominent place in the inventory of Catalan collective memory, right at the intersection of truth and fiction.¹

Let's begin with the facts: Wilfred (*Guifré el Pilós* in Catalan) first comes to our historical attention as an overlord of Visigothic extraction controlling, from 870, the Carolingian counties of Urgell and Cerdanya. By 878 he also had possession of the counties of Barcelona, Girona, Besalú, and Ausona. He died in 897 defending Barcelona against the army of the Muslim Qasi rulers of Zaragoza and Lleida. Historians have discovered a

¹ The Wikipedia entry “Wilfred the Hairy” (as of December 2017) tells you that “Wilfred remained obscure” until the British historian Richard Southern mentioned him in *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953). That means only that he remained obscure to English-language historians. Kids trained in Catalan schools have long known Wilfred's place in Catalan history and lore, drawing upon at least 150 years of sustained work by Catalan historians and literary specialists, who draw from texts that include the twelfth-century *Gesta Comitum Barchinonensium* and the fourteenth-century *Crònica de San Juan de la Peña*. For overviews of historical study of Wilfred and his application to Catalan identity, see Miquel Coll i Alentorn, *Guifre el Pelos en la historiografia i en la llegenda* (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1990), and Magí Sunyer, *Mites per una nació: de Guifré el Pèlos a l'onze de setembre* (Vic: Eumo Editorial, 2015). The tales are told online, of course, for example on travel blogs like Ashley B., “History and Legends of Barcelona: Wilfred the Hairy,” *shbarcelona.com* (blog) accessed on May 1, 2017, <https://www.shbarcelona.com/blog/en/wilfred-the-hairy/>

great deal about Wilfred, his family, his administrative skills, and his military exploits. We know, for example, that Wilfred and others encouraged a shift in the meaning of the title “count.” It had been a title of administrative-military authority deputed to regional warlords by the Carolingian Franks, although the decline of the Carolingian empire strengthened the independence of those war leaders in frontier zones like those south of the Pyrenees. By Wilfred’s time, and in part because of his actions, the title was becoming heritable, a change that over the long term facilitated the aggregation of Barcelona and neighboring counties into what would become the Principate of Catalonia.

The real Wilfred succeeded in three ways. First, in the last years of Carolingian empire late in the ninth century, initially as a lieutenant of Charles the Bald and then in the service of Louis the Stammerer, he defended and repopulated the frontier zone between Carolingian Francia and the Iberian Moorish Emirate of Cordoba. Second, he drew together under his leadership the counties that under his successors would become Catalonia, thus initiating the most durable hereditary dynasty in medieval Europe, a line of Catalan rulers in direct descent that lasted from the ninth into the start of the fifteenth century. Finally, he founded the monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll, a site that became central to the shaping of Catalan identity and is today one of the most prominent features in the Catalanist landscape.

The Wilfred of legend has even greater claims to a pre-eminent place in Catalan collective memory. His mythic ingenuity made Catalonia an independent nation. What is more, he shed his own blood to give Catalans their national heraldic symbol, most visible as the flag, the *Senyera*. Poets and writers, not only those of the nineteenth-century Catalan Renaissance, *La Renaixença*, but also earlier generations of storytellers and chroniclers, took a particular interest in celebrating, elaborating, and exaggerating his life and death, so that from some fragments of truth have grown much useful fiction.

Paul Freedman has helped us identify two separate threads in a fabric of legends about Wilfred. Catalans I have talked to typically conflate some elements of the two folkloric traditions, as I will suggest below. Importantly, Freedman’s study reminds us that accounts such as these typically arise in the context of factional disputes within a society and that they sometimes cover over deep social rifts. So, for example, a fifteenth-century manuscript indicates that Catalonia’s medieval peasants, Christians, were enjoined to generations of servitude because of the cowardice of those

living in the time of Charlemagne. Those Christian peasants, according to the text, should have aided the Frankish king in his efforts to liberate them from Muslim overlords, but they failed to do so out of fear. The legend of the cowardly peasants appealed to intellectuals, members of landed elite families, in early modern Catalonia. However, because it runs counter to the interests of modern democratically minded Catalans, there is little interest among Catalans in recalling the story nowadays.²

Of the two story threads that lead us to Catalan heraldry and, ultimately, to the flags waved during mass demonstrations held in Catalan cities in recent years, the first tells the story of the rise to power of the young Wilfred. It indicates that his moniker “the Hairy” derives from Wilfred’s return home after a long exile. He was exiled, according to the story, because he murdered the murderer of his father—a vengeance killing. He had changed much from the experience of his long exile, and, because he was an outlaw, he had to make his return in secret to reclaim the rights to lordship lost at his father’s death. Still, upon his return home his mother recognized him immediately. As her fictionalized voice tells us from that time long ago, she knew something about her son that remained unknown to others: He had hair where other men do not (your guess is as good as mine about what she saw and where upon him she saw it). By the late seventeenth century, collectors of such stories recognized that this one was a concoction, a fable meant to confirm emotional connections between a people, a place, and a past. Of course, that did not at all reduce its usefulness as a compelling and curious vehicle through which Catalans could learn about personal and corporate identity, defense of lineage, Christian virtue, the hero’s journey, and the reclaiming of lost rights.

The story of Wilfred’s exile and return to reclaim lost rights is not the most important instance of Wilfred mythology. A more significant legend about him has to do with Catalan heraldry, the elements of color and line that became the essential symbol of Catalan nationality, the Catalan flag called the *Senyera*.

The myth of Catalan heraldry goes like this: The Christian Frankish descendants of Charlemagne had nominal control of the frontier areas managed for them by Wilfred and others, but they had begun to lose their

² For background on the earliest elaborations of the history and legend of Wilfred, see Paul Freedman, “Cowardice, Heroism, and the Legendary Origins of Catalonia,” *Past and Present* 121 (1988): 3–88; and Jaume Aurell, “From Genealogies to Chronicles: The Power of the Form in Medieval Catalan Historiography,” *Viator* 36 (2005): 235–264, esp. 242–245.

grip on this so-called Carolingian March, in no small part as a result of incursions by Muslim attackers. Wilfred, as a regional count in the service of the Frankish monarch, prepared to engage in battle against his Muslim foe and called upon the Frankish king for aid. Wilfred engaged his foe before the king arrived. When the king finally did appear, Wilfred lay bleeding, having suffered a grave wound to his chest.

The story up to this point has some basis in fact. Wilfred's expansion of his territory, building fortified towers deep into contested territory in the County of Ausona, drew a response from the Banu Qasi rulers of Zaragoza and Larida (present-day Lleida in Catalan). In 884, Ismail ibn Musa repelled an attack by Wilfred's troops at Larida. The great historian Ali ibn al-Athir described the battle, correctly it seems, as devastating to the Christian side. In 897, Ismail's successor, Lubb ibn Muhammad (d. 907) attacked Barcelona. Wilfred died as a result of that encounter.

In the fabled account, blood poured from Wilfred's chest as the king approached him. The king is Charlemagne in some tellings, Louis the Pious or Charles the Bald in others—in actuality, all died before Wilfred's time. Regardless of which king stands in, the story has it that he felt the sting of shame at arriving late to the encounter. In astonished admiration of Wilfred's selfless defense of his Christian people, the king made a decision in that moment to give the frontier region in perpetuity to Wilfred's successors. This, according to Catalan collective recall, is the moment of Catalonia's independence. The king signaled the perpetuity of his compensatory gift by plunging his hand into Wilfred's bloody wound and drawing it over the count's golden shield, thereby creating the symbol of the newly independent lands. These are the alternating crimson stripes on a yellow background that have since the thirteenth century been the official Catalan insignia, borne on coats of arms and on the *Senyera*.

Pere Anguere identifies one of the single most important attributes of the story when he says, "the origin of the story is lost in the clouds of time." Unlike the flags of France and Spain, England and Italy, and even the Basques, whose histories are solidly known, the history of *les quatre barres* ("the four bars" in English) is mysterious. As such, it remains open to storytelling.³

The purpose of this book is to look at the relationship between the past and the present, how past truths and historic legends come together to

³ Pere Anguera, "Las Cuatro Barras: de bandera a señora," *Jerónimo Zurita* 82 (2007): 253–272, esp. 255–256.

feed expectations and incite actions in the present. So let's take note here of how Wilfred's history and lore do this kind of present-day work. First, recognize that the story of Wilfred's sanguineous encounter with his king, like the story of the discovery made by his mother, is wonderfully cinematic. The authors who developed the myth over many retellings elaborated a tale with such sophistication that it has become easy to let it play in our heads as if it were real. Many collective memories share this quality, impressing images upon individual minds in a way that makes the past, or invented past, seem vivid in the present. Depending upon the imaginative and creative abilities of the individual receiving the memory, the scene may seem to come to mind in full color, complete with central and peripheral details. And still, importantly, despite the substance with which it meets its audience, it remains open to the layering of additional subtleties of detail. In this case, for example, readers might envision what Wilfred wore as he lay dying or hear in their own heads whatever grand and prophetic advice he gave to his son, Wilfred Borrell, about the future of the Catalan nation. Such personalized, imaginative contributions to the detail of such stories is important because they suggest how anyone might contribute at the intersection of history and myth in a way that links one story to another or associates some bit of fiction to a moment of truth, thus drawing from one context to create value in a very different context.

The story of Wilfred's death makes the national flag, the *Senyera*, the most immediate and visible of Wilfred's gifts to the Catalans. The *Senyera* is the sign of Catalan solidarity. It is ubiquitous. It is flown on public occasions in public venues. Of course. But beyond anything that Americans would understand as typical opportunities for flag waving, even perhaps at their peak in the days after 9/11, the *Senyera* hangs over balconies and flutters from car windows; it gets displayed prominently inside shops of all kinds and sizes; and it appears, as if spontaneously, hoisted at concerts, fairs, street manifestations, soccer games, and all manner of events big and small. That the real Wilfred had nothing whatsoever to do with the invention of the *Senyera* is well understood; that point is hardly worth uttering. What matters is that a grain of truth about a potentially symbolic life has been confabulated into a story that conveniently connects a real man's life to fictions about that life and then to a national symbol. Two important realities, a ninth-century count and the later appearance of the Catalan insignia, find their nexus in the Catalan consciousness through a set of fictions. Fiction is the transmitter, in this instance, that builds memory across the synaptic space between the truths.

As the official flag of Catalonia, the *Senyera* has dimensions and colors—four red stripes on a yellow background—that are established by custom and law. Nonetheless, Catalans have created several unofficial means of displaying the national colors. The flag that sets a white star within a blue triangle over the red and yellow bands, called the *Senyera estelada* (the starred *Senyera*) or *Estelada blava* (the blue *Estelada*), has become an ever-present sign of the *indepentistes*, those who seek to regain independence from Spain. The *Senyera estelada* dates from the beginning of the twentieth century, having its origins with Catalan activists and exiles in Cuba during that country's fight for independence, first from Spain (1898) and then from the United States (1902). Some Catalans began to use it as a protest symbol in the late 1970s as the weaknesses of Spain's transition to democracy were becoming increasingly apparent.⁴ Of more recent vintage is the *Estelada vermella*, the red-star flag. Its appearance dates to the years around 1970, when the *Partit Socialista d'Alliberament Nacional dels Països Catalans* (in English: the Socialist Party for the National Liberation of the Catalan Countries) decided to change the colors of the independence flag to red, in keeping with the party's Marxist-Leninism influences. Independentists, whose politics favor workers and the left, display the *Estelada vermella*. There are other versions. The Barça soccer club, the RCD Espanyol soccer club, and the supporters of other sporting groups display spin-off flags, shields, banners, logos, etc., sufficiently disguised to meet the needs of purportedly apolitical sport-entertainment while being easily read by Catalanists as coded support for the cause.

The diversity of Catalan flags attests to the heterogeneity of internal Catalan politics, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, the abundant displays of red and gold bars in all their variety (or blue and gold in the case of Barça and others) confirm shared sensibilities. This is important enough to put another way: Not all Catalans, not all people living in Catalonia, agree to follow an independence-seeking political script; nonetheless, most Catalans, including immigrants into Catalonia, participate in one or more forms of flag waving in support of Catalan unity. Catalans can pick whichever flag they choose; each is different, but each is Catalan.

This is as good a time as any to devote a few lines to the transfigurations of *les quatre barres* beyond flags and flag waving. The red and gold bars

⁴For more detail, see Joan Crexell i Playà, *L'origen de la bandera independentista* (Barcelona: Edicions El Llamp, 1984).

have taken on many guises for use under a plethora of conditions by varied constituencies. Nowadays they adorn everything from government buildings to baby pacifiers as a sure sign that the Catalan people will not subordinate their identity, their economy, and their history to the authority of Spain. They also decorate tourist memorabilia, like flip-flops, t-shirts, and coffee cups—one of the many ways in which Catalans remind visitors that, from the Catalan perspective, Spain is different, alien, elsewhere. In recent years, the *quatre barres* have taken on another guise, the one depicted on the cover of this book. One need not carry a flag to demonstrate a commitment to Catalonia. Nowadays, one merely needs to raise four fingers into the air. The gesture returns the signal directly to its source—the story of a king recognizing Wilfred's independent spirit by drawing his four blood-stained fingers over the count's shield.

Our discussion of Wilfred seems to have taken a direction only tangentially related to where we began. I ask readers that you allow these divergences. It is sometimes the case that we need to follow the lines of logic that connect a bit of fact here to a bit of fiction there through a great tangle of mythification. To get back onto our principal path, then, which is to identify some of the important personalities Catalans recognize as part of their collective inventory when they want to ground present aspirations to the medieval past, let's turn to Wilfred's successors.

Credit for the territorial expansion of Catalonia and for the consolidation of a Catalan people with distinct cultural attributes, including language and visionary government, is owed especially to three medieval successors of Wilfred the Hairy: Count Ramon Berenguer I (1023–1076), Count Ramon Berenguer IV (1114–1162), and Count-king James I (1208–1276). Each is an essential figure in the inventory of Catalan inheritance.

Ramon Berenguer I, called “the Old,” inherited only a portion of the counties held by his weak father, Berenguer Ramon I. However, being the oldest and arguably the most ruthless of the three surviving sons, he convinced his brothers to relinquish their land rights. He also got many others of his powerful rivals in the Pyrenean region to recognize his comital overlordship. Through these acts, Ramon Berenguer I defended a conception of territorial integrity, the nascent idea of an inalienable consolidated Catalonia that could be passed down through the generations, and he confirmed the position of the County of Barcelona as the most important of the Catalan counties. In addition to these significant accomplishments, he acquired the Languedocian counties of Carcassonne and Razès and took

control of additional Occitan estates by marrying Almodis, the Countess of Limoges. Thus he made Catalonia into a trans-Pyrennean state, which it remained until 1659. What happened to the lands north of the Pyrenees in the seventeenth century is cause for terrible resentment for Catalans, who have made it part of their practice to argue that many occupants of the lands in what is now southern France are culturally and linguistically Catalan. Many of those residents of southern France agree. I will return later to a discussion of what happened to the *Països Catalans*, as the Catalan territories beyond present-day Catalonia are called, and of what happened in 1659, a year that is crucial to the proper understanding of Catalonia's crises in the pre-modern period.

Beyond territorial gains, Ramon Berenguer I also extended the institutional scope of the counts of Barcelona by blunting the powers of ecclesiastical officials and the landed warrior-nobles, bringing them under his influence in a series of formal meetings. These were councils of peace and truce, among the first on record, through which he intended to normalize relations among warring rivals and give churchmen a part in the management of the warrior ethos. Ramon Berenguer and his wife Almodis, confirming their roles as joint sovereigns, called on the attendees to cobble bits of custom (like rules for feuding and ordeals) together with elements of ancient Roman law, like reverence for a powerful prince (*princeps*), in ways that workably reordered society to make it a bit less anarchic, more hierarchical, and more open to the unifying influence of Christian institutions. The legislative work begun by Ramon Berenguer and Almodis would later be enlarged and promulgated as the *Usatges* by their grandson, Ramon Berenguer IV. By the thirteenth century, the legislative councils they initiated as peace and truce councils were formalized as a parliament called the *Corts Catalanes*.

Not all Catalans know Ramon Berenguer I and Almodis at this level of detail, but they do know that the two are part of their memory inventory. This is certainly true if only because an image of the powerful couple from an early manuscript of the *Liber Feudorum Maior*, one of the legal texts they inspired, has many opportunities to burn its impression into the minds of most Catalans. It has become a go-to image for illustrating the political brilliance of early Catalan leaders and is often used in situations in which contemporary commentators want to make quick visual reference to the insightful government of their medieval forebears.⁵

⁵ E.g., Jonathan Jarrett, "Almodis, by Tracey Warr: A Review," *A Corner of Tenth-Century Europe* (blog) June 13, 2014, <https://tenthmedieval.wordpress.com/tag/almodis-de-la-marche/>

The great grandson of Ramon Berenguer I and Almodis was Ramon Berenguer IV, born in Rodéz, a castle town northeast of Toulouse, now in France. The territorial gains made by his predecessors and his own prodigious military and political skills made Count Ramon Berenguer IV extraordinarily powerful, to the extent that he found himself in the advantageous position of marrying into royalty. Encroachments by Castile's King Alfonso VII upon the Kingdom of Aragon provided the impetus. King Ramiro of Aragon asked Ramon Berenguer for aid in the defense of Aragon, and he offered his daughter Peyronela as reward and compensation.

If the following details about the context of the marriage seem fantastic, they only substantiate the aphorism that truth is stranger than fiction. Early chroniclers refer to Peyronela's father, Ramiro, as "the Monk." The second son of Sancho Ramiro, King of Navarre and Aragon, Ramiro was placed as a boy in the custody of a Benedictine monastery and trained to be a leader in the Church. He became an abbot and bishop. Ramiro's older brother, Alfonso, became King of Aragon at the death of their father. Alfonso became for chroniclers and historians "Alfonso the Battler," not only because he doubled by force the land base of Aragon but also because he was pugnacious to a fault. It was said about Alfonso that he liked war better than he liked his wife. That wife, Urraca, waged war against him with her own army on more than one occasion. She was a better propagandist than he. Some of her supporters left as innuendo in their accounts that he preferred his horses to the company of women. In any event, Alfonso died in battle without giving issue to an inheritor.

The succession crisis that followed Alfonso's death was settled by drawing Alfonso's brother Ramiro the Monk away from his ecclesiastical responsibilities. The barons of Aragon, including members of the Knights Templar, made Ramiro their king and then quickly got him married to Agnes, daughter of the powerful duke of Aquitaine. Soon she gave birth to a daughter, Peyronela. Thereafter, Ramiro retired again to monastic seclusion. Agnes returned to France to look after the political ascendancy of her sons by an earlier marriage.

The potential heir's gender presented a bit of a problem. Women could enjoy substantial powers in their own right, but they could not be kings, and the Aragonese barons needed a king if for no other reason than to quell their own infighting. They resolved the gender problem by negotiating terms of marriage. Ramon Berenguer IV, Count of Barcelona, made himself available, and terms were agreed to.

The marriage was contracted in 1137. Peyronela had not yet reached her second birthday, and Count Ramon was twenty-three. By the terms of the contract, Ramon, already the ruler of Barcelona and other Catalan counties, immediately became the *de facto* ruler of the small and land-locked Kingdom of Aragon. The marriage was consummated fourteen years later, in 1151. It resulted in six children. The eldest surviving son became Alfonso II, King of Aragon, and Alfons I, Count of Barcelona. (You might notice that from here on, some of the count-kings are numbered differently for the Aragonese and Catalan realms: Alfonso II of Aragon is Alfons I of Barcelona; Pero III of Aragon is Pere II of Barcelona; and so on.)

We might recognize something about ourselves in considering this curious marriage. Our book is about how Catalans and others make use of their past. When we use the past we tend to get started by looking at it in one of two ways. One of the directions we commonly pursue is to look to the past with a sense of nostalgia, usually as a way of regaining something lost. Alternatively, we look to the past to explain why we are better off now than they were then. Many Catalans, it seems to me, tend toward the first usage of the past, while it seems to me that the second had become, until quite recently, part and parcel of the story of American exceptionalism. Be that as it may, the motives that carry us in either of these two directions are selfish. And the result is almost always ahistorical fallacy.

The marriage of the young man, Count Ramon Berenguer IV, and the infant, Peyronela of Aragon, seems odd to us now but would not have seemed out of the ordinary among elite families in Europe in the High Middle Ages. This should remind us that in many ways the past is so different from the present that neither the nostalgic-past nor the improved-present comparisons are really workable. It often has very little meaning to say that the lives of those people in that past time were either better or worse than our own. That seems especially true when we compare ourselves to medieval Europe's rulers and the members of its ruling military and ecclesiastical estates. Instead, it makes better sense to admit that they experienced the world in ways that we simply cannot fully understand. I find it hard to fathom what it would have meant to me when I was 23 to marry a two-year-old child. To them it was just part of the art of the deal.

As a count and proxy king, Ramon Berenguer IV put himself to the work of crafting institutions of state fitting to the different territories over which he was lord. His most exemplary contribution is the promulgation of the *Usatges*. This was the full flowering of the legal compilation initiated

by his great grandfather one hundred years earlier. The *Usatges* became the fundamental law of Catalonia, remaining so until the Nueva Planta decrees imposed in 1716 by Felipe V, the Bourbon monarch of Spain. The *Usatges* continues to count among the seminal books of European law, and it remains a main source of Catalans' assertions that their predecessors conceived some of the earliest forms of democratic government.⁶

James I, "the Conqueror," who reigned as Count of Barcelona and King of Aragon from 1213 to 1276, added the Muslim strongholds of Majorca and Valencia to Catalan dominions. Majorca and Valencia were significant prizes. As the largest of the Balearic Islands off the northeastern Iberian coast, Majorca's conquest meant that James seriously diminished Muslim control of the western Mediterranean. Valencia, the richest and most populous kingdom on the peninsula at the time of the conquest, brought substantial wealth to its Christian king and the barons and merchants who helped him acquire it. Each kingdom was of the utmost strategic importance at a time when economies rose and fell on their access to Mediterranean shipping routes.

James, born in 1208, became king as a boy, following the death of his father at the Battle of Muret in 1213. The mythic embellishments of James's life story began in his own lifetime and from his own person in the form of an autobiography—the first autobiography by a medieval king. This *Book of Deeds*, or *Llibre dels Fets*, confirms much of what we know in fact about James from other sources.⁷ But it is also a singularly brilliant piece of propaganda. In it he recounts the burdens of coming of age as a child sovereign, when the Templars imprisoned him in their fortress of Monzón for his own good—protective custody, we'd call it—and when his uncle, who was his regent, did everything in his power to exploit the royal patrimony for his own profit. James's book extolls his virtues as a man of deeply held Christian convictions, but one who, despite his Christian tears and prayers, finds significant roles for Jews and Muslims in his court and negotiates with them honestly and fairly. He remarks on his skillful performance at arms, including telling from the perspective of an old man how he, as a youth, demonstrated to the older and distinguished nobles in his

⁶ Donald J. Kagay, *The Usatges of Barcelona: The Fundamental Law of Catalonia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) is the best overview in English.

⁷ Damian J. Smith and Helena Buffery, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon. A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Llibre dels Fets* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003). This is an excellent translation, and a fantastic reading experience for anyone who wants a first-person account of the life of a medieval king.

company how they should kill a man. His book is especially useful for scholar-specialists in the strategy and tactics of thirteenth-century warfare. He tells us how he regularly got the best of those barons who sought to gain some advantage over him. And he brushes off the consequences of his many sexual exploits. Modern politicians can still profitably learn from his expertise in the art of political spin and self-aggrandizement. James's self-styled story is that of a lost child become warrior prince, clever and brash.

James was a long-lived ruler, like his peers Louis IX of France (1214–1270), the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250), and his nephew, Alfonso X of Castile (1221–1284), to whom he gave in marriage his daughter Violant. Militancy was a principal characteristic of sovereigns at this time of local land grabs and international crusades, as it had been in the preceding several centuries. Nonetheless, during the period of James' tenure, the warrior-leader ethos had begun to give way to a reliance upon institutions of governance that went beyond personal rule. James consolidated the place of law and political culture in constructing the social order. He strengthened the roles of courts and court officials. He also drew upon the emergent powers of a growing merchant class to build an economy that could tame a powerful class of landed warrior barons. James convinced these barons (his main competitors for a monopoly of force), along with the urban patriciate, merchants, and artisans, to enter into an alliance, which, although unsteady, successfully employed negotiation and legally binding processes that, in effect, created the Catalan nation.

In addition to all of that, James, by all accounts, was charismatic and good looking—remarkably lean and tall (one hand higher than the tallest men of the time, according to Desclot), with long wavy red hair. Speaking of good looks, a photo of the mummified head of the count-king James I is available on the internet. Upon his death in 1276 at the age of 68, James was buried in the crypt of the Cistercian monastery of Santa Maria de Poblet, in the mountains north of Tarragona. After James was laid to rest there, the monastery became exceedingly important as the royal pantheon for the count-kings. It is now a United Nations World Heritage Site, visited by over 200,000 people annually. When the monastery underwent renovations in 1856, James's body was exhumed and the headshot photo taken. Of course, many years elapsed before the count-king's post-mortem visage, embalmed and gruesome, found its way onto the internet.⁸

⁸ An image of James's embalmed head, from the photograph taken at the 1856 autopsy originally published in Joaquim Miret i Sans, "La Cabeza del rey Jaime I de Aragón," *Revue*

Of more importance than the good looks of the count-king James I is how he measures up as an exemplar of the period in which he ruled, a time across Europe of fantastic developments in literature and law. Romance languages, among them Catalan and Occitan, gained their first foothold in writing as a result of the early efforts not only of clerics attempting to expand the reach of Christianity but also of the great troubadours and jongleurs such as Bernat de Ventadorn, Bertran de Born, and Raimon de Miraval. Among the most revered items in the canon of Catalan literature are the philosophical novel *Blanquerna* by Ramon Llull; *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*, the composite name given to a group of four biographical and historical chronicles written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by or about the Catalan counts (James's *Llibre dels Fets* counts as the first of the four); the love poems of Ausiàs March; and *Tirant lo Blanc*, written by Joanot Martorell and published in 1490. *Tirant lo Blanc* inspired Miguel de Cervantes directly and was an indirect influence upon Shakespeare.

As regards law, James was close to a number of the leading lawyer-thinkers of the thirteenth century. Here I will name only Saint Ramon de Penyafort, a Dominican friar still revered as the patron saint of lawyers. Ramon became the chief confessor and legal adviser to Pope Gregory IX, in which capacity he wrote the book of canon law called the *Decretales Gregorii IX* or the *Liber extra*, which remained, from its publication in 1234 into the twentieth century, the standard reference and principal text regarding the law of the Catholic Church. Penyafort served James I as a legal adviser and personal religious confessor, a relationship made difficult by James I's many infidelities.

A well-known miracle story that emerged early in Dominican circles has it that James once threw Ramon overboard in the middle of the Mediterranean sea because the Dominican friar refused to absolve the count-king of the sins of his most recent dalliance. To escape a sure death by drowning, Ramon used his blackfriar's cloak as a sail to glide over the water back into the port of Barcelona. The image of Ramon surfing the Mediterranean is a common one, having appeared on street placards and postage stamps.

Hispanique IX (1902): 216–219, is available as part of the Wikipedia entry for “James I of Aragon,” accessed November 1, 2017, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Momia_Jaume_I.jpg. For recent DNA reports and a contribution to the added mystery of a second body in James's tomb, see *Elmundo.es*, “Podría deberse a la profanación de tumbas de 1837 encuentran dos cráneos entre los restos del rey Jaime I el Conquistador,” May 29, 2001, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2001/05/28/ciencia/991060994.html>

Ramon's sarcophagus is one of the most elaborate among those on display in the side chapels of Barcelona's cathedral (near the principal doors, to the right). He also has a street named for him in the "Jewish Quarter" of Barcelona's Barri Gòtic, where it was once among his pursuits to convert Jews to Catholicism.

Ramon de Penyafort's most famous encounter with Jewish interlocutors is the Barcelona Disputation of 1263, a debate that he organized with the approval of the count-king James I. The Disputation pitted a Christian convert from Judaism and young Dominican friar by the name of Pablo Christiani against the esteemed Barcelona Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman. In documents produced after the fact, both sides claimed to have won.⁹

Ramon has become symbolic of the intersection in the medieval imaginary of royal and papal politics, jurisprudence and legal writing, faith, miracle, and the saintly life.

NAMING THE STATE AND ITS RULER

Any discussion of Catalonia's maturation in the late medieval period gets complicated by competing efforts to understand the special circumstances that arise when describing a set of counties that never had a king. We might as well explain this now to get it behind us.

By the fourteenth century the successors of Wilfred the Hairy ruled over a collection of territories. The territories included, in addition to the counties recognized as the Principate of Catalonia, several kingdoms: first, the Kingdom of Aragon (added by Ramon Berenguer IV's marriage); then, the Kingdom of the Balearic Islands; and, a few decades later, the Kingdom of Valencia (brought by the conquest of James I). Later still, the Kingdom of Sicily, the Kingdom of Sardinia and Corsica, and the Duchy of Athens came into the Catalan orbit over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Catalonia was always the political and economic powerhouse of the compositio (only the most retrograde conservative Spaniards, super-prideful Aragonese, and the absolutely uninformed argue against what

⁹Robert Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond, The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), and Alex J. Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). A graphic history has recently been published by Nina Caputo, *Debating Truth: The Barcelona Disputation of 1263* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

generations of historians have established as fact). Catalonia—with the port city of Barcelona—was the political center of this conglomerate. As a matter of political and economic practicalities, the title of “count” often conferred greater authority and honors to its holder than that of “king.”

It gets more complicated. Thorny problems arise from the unusual composite of kingdoms and counties constructed by Ramon Berenguer IV and his successors. The barons of Catalonia recognized Ramon Berenguer IV as *princeps*, a prince, the first among equals. On Catalan soil, they insisted, he was not a king. Meanwhile, in Aragon, his successors were kings. The reason for this discrepancy is that the powerbrokers of Aragon and Catalonia, although they disagreed about many things, agreed on one point: In each territory different rules applied, in keeping with the laws and traditions established in each locale. While they did not employ our modern concepts and vocabularies, they recognized that cultural differences like language, history, and law moved the two political arenas along separate trajectories. Pierre Villar, Thomas Bisson, and Michel Zimmerman (none of whom, we should mention, are Catalan), among others who have studied the evidence carefully, agree that the titles accorded to the sovereign appear as both symptom and confirmation of these distinct historical paths. At its origins, the nomenclature problem derives from the evidentiary fact of the special legal, political, and social achievement that by the twelfth century had already distinguished Catalonia from its neighbors.¹⁰

How should we describe this uneasy conjunction of kingdom and counties? Until recently it had been standard practice among historians to use the term “Crown of Aragon” when referring to the composite. Many historians nowadays are wary of the formulation because it appears to affirm the incorrect assumption that “king” had a place superior to “count” in the everyday logic of the composite’s powerbrokers. An alternative is to call the construct a Catalan-Aragonese empire because Barcelona’s business interests dictated the economic pace of the whole and the counts of Barcelona managed the majority of their most significant political business from inside Catalonia, but this has been received as equally awkward. Should we, then, call it the Crown of Aragon or the

¹⁰ Pierre Villar, *La Catalogne dans l’Espagne moderne* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1962); Thomas N. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Michel Zimmerman, *En els orígens de Catalunya. Emancipació política i afirmació cultural* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1989).

Catalano-Aragonese empire, or something else? As is often the case among historians, what one calls something often has to do with which side one wants to choose in an ongoing historical debate.¹¹

And what to call the leader? It took many centuries for medieval kings to rise beyond the dangerous job of war-band leader to the position of autocratic monarch. Most historians of the Middle Ages confirm the general weakness of kings until the mid-thirteenth century, meaning that they find no discomfort in admitting that counts, dukes, and holders of similar titles sometimes equaled or bested kings in powers and authority. Applying the consensus to the Catalan case, most historians who study the region in its medieval period favor a nomenclature that puts Catalonia ahead of Aragon. Thus, historians writing in English have tended to call those who controlled the composite of kingdoms and counties we call Catalonia count-kings. Count first; king second. The usage is odd, but accurate.

Bernat Desclot, the fourteenth-century chronicler of the count-kings up to the time of Count Pere IV, offered sufficient confirmation of this usage. We know that Count Ramon Berenguer IV did not apply to himself the title of king. When asked why he continued to style himself Count of Barcelona after marrying Peyronela, Desclot reports that he said: "I accept the damsel, albeit I wish not to be called king as long as I live. For now I am one of the greatest counts of the earth, and if I were to be called king then I would not be among the greatest but rather the least of them."¹²

It is fair to argue, however, that Ramon Berenguer and his successors could not style themselves kings when in Catalonia because the barons and merchants of Catalonia would not have allowed it. Those participants in law, order, and economy had their count, whom they recognized as a prince, but they insisted that he was not a king. In Catalonia, moreover, rules applied that kings, at least in principle, would not permit. The count, for example, must submit himself to the practice of pactism, coming to decisions of state in accord with the interests of those he served. Decision by fiat did not fit the Catalan model of governance. At its origins, the nomenclature problem derives from the evidentiary fact of the special

¹¹ For a well reasoned, albeit strongly partisan perspective, see Caius Perellada i Cardellach, "*Corona d'Arago*," *denominacio impropia de l'Estat catala medieval* (Barcelona: Rafael Dalmau, 2002).

¹² Jaume Aurell i Cardona, *Authoring the Past: History, Autobiography, and Politics in Medieval Catalonia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), does an excellent job in his chapter on Desclot to lay out that chronicler's position with respect to titles and status.

legal, political, and social trajectory that by the twelfth century had already distinguished Catalonia from its neighbors.

It seems fair to carry forward a general point here. The logic of some disagreements about the past makes it difficult not to take sides. Moreover, divisiveness about how to name and describe the things we disagree about strengthens the way we remember them. Collective memories compete with each other, getting shaped and reified as groups with differing identity constructs choose to extol one interpretation while disparaging another.

THE FALLEN AND THE FORGOTTEN

It should come as no surprise that sovereigns appear prominently in the inventory upon which Catalans draw to connect their present to the past.¹³ Their biographical details fill textbooks and general histories, having been the stuff of collective memory and historical reconstruction for generations. We should want to dig deeper. We would do an injustice if we did not go further to explore the creation of useful memories that reach farther down into the social hierarchy. At issue here, in fact, are claims to the early development of Catalan democratic traditions. As some say, “it’s in the DNA of our cultural institutions to collaborate with everyday citizens.”¹⁴

Many Catalans assert that contemporary Catalan distinctiveness has its roots in a social order that required the prince and his barons to respond to the needs of others. The traditional antidotes to privilege, according to customary descriptions, have to do with the economic vitality of the merchant class, the political and spiritual powers of the ecclesiastical estate, and the willingness of freehold farmers, servile peasants, artisans, and others to rebel and revolt. Historians attribute James I’s military and diplomatic successes in the thirteenth century to the alliances he built with Catalan merchants whom the barons would have preferred to contain and coerce. Alfons IV “the Magnanimous” permitted peasants to form a political guild—he permitted them, in modern parlance, to unionize. The

¹³For a recent study of the changing appreciation of medieval monarchs in the construction of Catalan identity through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Daniel Wimmer, “Catalonia: Medieval Monarchs Testifying for Democracy, Nation, and Europe,” in *Transnational Histories of the ‘Royal Nation’* ed. Milinda Banerjee, Charlotte Backerra, and Cathleen Sarti (London: Palgrave, 2017).

¹⁴Alex Hinojo, “Yet another Wiki?” in *What’s Up With Catalonia*, 135–138, at 137.

brother and successor of Alfons, Joan II, sought the support of peasants against the landed nobles who had risen up against him to protect their customary arbitrary impositions upon serfs. The War of the Remences, a complicated set of troubles spanning two separate events in 1462 and 1485, made a bloodbath of the extremely nasty relations between serfs and their violent landlords. It was only partly a peasant rebellion, since conflict at the upper echelons of society was the incipient cause; nonetheless, it does serve Catalans as an example of a common presumption that among Catalans even the voices of the lowly get heard. The Sentence of Guadalupe, issued by Ferdinand the Catholic in 1486, outlawed some of the most severe abuses of landlords. The Catalan Revolt of the 1640s, a most savage combination of class warfare, anti-Castilian revolt, and international war, offers another example of the fortitude of the peasantry against their social superiors and will be discussed in some detail later.

In the context of these actions by princes and their people, Otger Cataló, Count Arnau, and Pau Claris deserve brief mention. Otger and Count Arnau are pure myth. Pau Claris, who served for a time as the President of the Catalan government, the Generalitat, was real flesh-and-blood, although over time he has been raised in Catalan collective memory to legendary status. The stories told about all three help us discern how narratives get framed at important moments of transition.

Otger Cataló is nearly as well known as Wilfred the Hairy and James I. Like those historical figures, he counts among the ancestor-protagonists credited with shaping and defending Catalan identity. But, unlike those others, Otger is an invention. No matter that he is entirely fictitious, since, as a site promoting regional tourism puts it, Otger is “a mythic symbol of the resistance of the country against Saracen domination.”¹⁵ He is honored as the first Catalan to mount a Catholic defense against the Muslim advance of the eighth century. He is also the man who gave his name to the Catalan state and people, according to another incorrect collective memory.

The source that first mentions Otger by name is the *Històries e Conquetes dels Reis de Aragó e Comtes de Barcelona*, which dates to the year 1438. The text takes its place among efforts by Catalan nobles in the fifteenth century to bolster their claims to hereditary rights by recalling the support

¹⁵ “Otger Cataló i els 9 Barons de la Fama,” *Vegueries.com* (blog), accessed on November 9, 2017, <http://www.vegueries.com/ca/festes-folclore/otger>: “Otger Cataló és un símbol mític de la resistència del país a la dominació sarraïna.”

their ancestral lineages gave to the counts of Barcelona.¹⁶ The *Històries e Conquetes* was not an early call to Catalan democratic nationalism. Instead, violent by the nature of their customary exploitation of an agricultural economy, the barons created the story of Otger for the purpose of consolidating their political clout against the increasing political and economic potency of the urban merchants favored by the count-kings. From the perspective of the late medieval military class, the story of Otger reminds Catalans that they need their warrior barons.

Speakers of the Catalan language used the words “*Catalunya*” and “*Català*” to describe a place, a people, and a language as long ago as the late-eleventh century. Still, the derivations of the terms remain unclear.¹⁷ Generally speaking, cloudy etymologies such as we have here become useful for those who want to make meaning out of mystery. By the fifteenth century, the story Otger Cataló gave the Catalans the explanation they needed. He became their namesake. While it is certain that Otger Cataló is the source of the national patronymic in myth only, stories about him continue to have potency. The twentieth-century folklorist Joan Amades i Gelats can be included among others, like the nineteenth-century historian-architect Victor Balaguer, who have retold the Otger story to suit the purposes of modern Catalan identity building. Otger has gained renewed relevance in recent decades because of his utility to the tourism economy. Some early texts tell us that Otger was from Ripoll. A small town and seat of the Comarca of Ripollès in the province of Girona, Ripoll is home to one of Catalonia’s most important medieval monasteries, the Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll. Tourism promoters in the Ripollès have very happily claimed Otger as their own. They encourage Catalan tourists, those who have some awareness of their myth-history and are eager to learn more about it, to visit Ripoll.¹⁸

¹⁶ Pere Tomic, *Històries e conquetes dels reis d’Aragó e comtes de Catalunya*, Biblioteca de Catalunya, Ms. 258.

¹⁷ Various online encyclopedias offer weak etymologies, which, lacking more thorough research than is available at the time of this writing, should not be trusted.

¹⁸ Arnau Urgell, “El Ripollès redescobreix el mite d’Otger Cataló,” *Naciodigital.cat*, March 3, 2012, accessed on December 1, 2017, <http://www.naciodigital.cat/elripolles/noticia/17566/ripolles/redescobreix/mite/otger/catalo>. Sant Joan de Les Abadesses, which claims to be the epicenter of the Count Arnau legend, has turned the legend into a cultural attraction. The town has held more than twenty consecutive annual week-long cycles of conferences, presentations, and performances related to the legend. The schedules of some of the most recent sessions of the annual event can be found online by searching *Cicle de Representacions del Mite del Comte Arnau*.

Otger stories take their place among competing assertions of the legendary origins of the Catalans. Competing tales include those about Count Arnau, who has played the negative counterpart to the good Count Otger in stories told since at least the later Middle Ages.

In Catalan tradition Count Arnau (*Comte Arnau* in Catalan) stands in as the quintessential high-ranking evil-doer, the bad-guy noble. The first stories about him appeared in the area around Ripoll in the fifteenth century, at the very time that *remença* peasants were succeeding in their efforts to confront the *mal usos* or bad customs imposed by their overlords. By the nineteenth century, when the great folklorists and compilers such as Pau Pifferrer, Marià Aguiló i Fuster, and Manuel Milà i Fontanals got hold of the tales about Arnau, the various stories and song cycles had congealed into a narrative that has Count Arnau eternally culpable for two great sins. One includes the lecherous acts he perpetrated upon an abbess, the leader of a community of nuns. The other is the rapacious treatment of his vassals and serfs.

As the stories have it, God is sometimes on the side of the poor and meek. Count Arnau must pay an eternal punishment for his malice. He forever rides his black horse among the undead, he and it wrapped in a consuming fire and chased by demonic dogs who bite the count as he flees the flames that burn him. Josep Pla, Joan Amades, and others, by updating and maintaining the popularity of the legend in recent years, have made sure that Count Arnau continues to carry out his penance.¹⁹

Unfortunately, although not unsurprisingly, God does not always deliver the justice that peasants, even those of some means, might expect or deserve. Many documents recorded in Catalonia from the eleventh century through the end of the medieval period demonstrate this with special clarity. One described by Paul Freedmen in his *The Origins of Peasant Servitude in Medieval Catalonia*, illustrates how the freeholder of a family estate, Arbert Salamó, was eventually forced to comply with the demands of Ramon Bermund, the local baron bad guy, that Arbert pay Ramon for

¹⁹The literature in Catalan on “Comte Arnau” is abundant, ranging from literary analyses to children’s books and from anthropological studies to theatrical and musical adaptations. Among the more serious historical treatments are Josep Romeu I Figuers, *El comte Arnau: La formació d’un mite* (Barcelona: Ayma, 1947), and Francesc Riart I Jou, *El castell de Mataplana i del Comte Arnau: una història i llegenda singulars de la Catalunya medieval* (Barcelona, Signament, 1999). Josep Pla called the Count Arnau story “the greatest myth in Catalan literature,” although others would argue that the Wilfred the Hairy, Otger Cataló, and Sant Jordi myths are contenders.

his protection and lordship, whether he wanted it or not and despite Arbert's appeal to God through an act of bodily ordeal. Arbert, a free man up to that point, became in that moment someone less than wholly free.²⁰

While the legendary comeuppance of the antihero Count Arnau has a natural charm and efficacy, we can tell another story that required some serious spin before its real-life protagonist, Pau Claris, could become a national hero.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, Catalonia found itself in a squeeze between the Castilian king, who had dominion over the Catalans, and the French kings against whom Spain was at war. Pau Claris, born in Barcelona in 1586 into a powerful bourgeois family, grew up in the period of these antagonisms. He received a doctorate in civil and canon law and entered into a career as a churchman. Although he lived at a time when many educated Catalans like himself adopted Castilian Spanish as the language of their work, he swam against the mainstream of Castilianization. He lobbied for legal recognition, sometimes successfully, of Catalan as the language of the Church in Catalan lands. In 1626 he gained election to the Catalan Corts, the parliament, and in 1632 he found himself raised to the presidency of the administrative arm of the Catalan government, the Generalitat. By 1640, Castile was at war against France, and Catalonia went to war against its Castilian sovereign. Catalans, with Pau Claris as their representative, rejected Castilian efforts to fight its war on Catalan turf, initiating what is alternately called the Catalan Revolt or the War of the Segadors (the Reaper's War). It is in this context that Claris becomes one of Catalonia's national heroes.

The events of the 1640s began as a popular revolt against the unlawful quartering of Castilian troops in Catalan homes, but it triggered events to which Claris, a member of the political elite and by no means a populist, had to respond. In 1641, he declared Catalonia independent of Spain on assurance that the French would offer protection. But the French reneged. Then in February of 1641, on the very day Pau Claris fell gravely ill, a French commander entered into Barcelona to wrest control of the government. A week later, Claris died, perhaps of poisoning.

²⁰ Paul Freedman, *The Origins of Peasant Servitude in Medieval Catalonia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 100. One can read Freedman's translation of the document in Olivia Remie Constable, *Medieval Iberia: Documents from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 311–312.

In Catalan memory, two events get conflated here to make Claris into a hero. The first is the fact that he declared Catalonia independent of Spain. The second is that some of the interests he found himself supporting were those of the majority peasant populace. In hindsight, dependence upon France assured that the declaration of independence from Castile would fail, and while he was politically savvy enough to draw support where he could get it, including from the *remença* peasants, Claris's interests and allegiances really lay fully with Catalan elites. Despite these truths, the spinning of his record as a man of the people faithful to the Catalan nation began early and continues into the present.²¹

Claris remains a bit outside the frame of this chapter. The other key figures mentioned here were medieval princes. Claris's place is problematic because the story of medieval Catalan achievements turns tragic at the approach of the modern age. The line of descent of the Catalan counts that began with Wilfred the Hairy ended in 1410 with the death of Martin the Humane. Martin's death opened the way to a number of devastating accidents. It is as if the Catalan nation and Catalan national history entered into a coma. Alive, but dormant and unconscious, Catalonia needed more than a few medieval princes to wake it up. The story of Pau Claris became one note in the register of the clarion call that in recent generations has urged the Catalan spirit to wake up.

²¹ John Elliott's *The Revolt of the Catalans* still offers the most significant study of Pau Claris in English. Peter Sahlin, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), does a fine job of describing Claris's role in the context of Spanish and French relations. The general interest magazine *Sapiens* has published several articles in recent years on Pau Claris, including Jaume Grau, "Pau Claris: Una vida amb misteris," *Sapiens* 121 (2012): 54–57. The article by Jaume Grau is part of a special edition entitled *Els grans herois de la nostra història. Dotze personalitats que han marcat el rum de Catalunya al llarg dels segles* (*The Great Heroes of our History. Twelve Personalities who Marked the Course of Catalunya over the Centuries*). The twelve personalities discussed there are Wilfred the Hairy, Ermesinda of Carcassonne, James I, Ramon Llull, Peter the Ceremonious, Pau Claris, Josep Moragues, Antoni Gaudí, Francesc Macià, Lluís Companys, Pau Casals, and Mercè Rodoreda. Notice that of these twelve, five are medieval, two represent the period of the 1640s to 1714, and five are notable figures of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



CHAPTER 4

Patrons, Protectors, and Creative Defenders

You know by now that this book is not a standard political or cultural history. My goal is to reflect upon the relationship between the past and the present. This chapter, like the previous one and those that follow, identifies a part of the inventory of persons, places, and events—either true or mythic—that Catalans bring to the shaping of their collective memory. The inventory is enormous, so I point only to some of the most commonly recycled and reused items. The second chapter identified a few of the most important events in Catalan time, among them the death of Martin I, the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catalan Revolt of the 1640s, and the capitulation of Barcelona to the forces of Felipe V on September 11, 1714. The third chapter conjured the spirits of several great political leaders, men like Wilfred the Hairy and the count-king James I. We also explored the utility of the mythic figures Otger Cataló and Count Arnau. That chapter made explicit a couple of general truths about making the past useful, including that the collective remembrance of national heroes implies the operation of countervailing stories about antiheroes and villains. We focused not on a real villain but on the legend of antihero Comte Arnau, although we just as easily could have pointed to Felipe V or Francisco Franco, for whom Catalans have no fondness.

This is the second of two chapters that introduce important person-ages. The previous chapter focused mostly on political leaders. In this chapter we turn our attention first to heavenly helpers and then to Catalans

who, having captured the powers of a particular muse, turned their creative efforts to the defense of Catalan interests.

EULALIA AND MARY

On February 12, Barcelonans celebrate the feast day of their patroness Santa Eulalia. Barcelona's cathedral, The Cathedral of the Holy Cross and Saint Eulalia, is named in her honor. According to her hagiographical accounts (the stories of her martyrdom and miracles), Eulalia was thirteen years old when she was killed, after a series of thirteen tortures, during the fourth-century persecutions of the Roman Emperor Diocletian against Christians. Legend has it that Eulalia's captors rolled her down a hill in a barrel filled with knives, plucked her breasts from her body, and executed her on an x-shaped cross. Finally, they decapitated the mutilated body and threw it into the street. Thereafter, a dove flew from her severed neck and a purifying snow fell (in Barcelona!) to cover her nakedness.¹

(A quick aside: While snowfalls in Barcelona are quite unusual, I was witness to one in March of 2010. It was reported as the heaviest snowfall in 25 years. Where I was in the Sarrià-Sant Gervasi neighborhood that meant about two inches, barely enough to cover the body of the stuffed toy bear deposited upon a balcony of an apartment building opposite my window. I do not mean to diminish the unusual nature of the snow that year: Nearly 150,000 students stayed home from schools; 200,000 city residents lost power; and thousands of people had to be rescued from the roads and spent the night in local shelters and hospitals. Numerous serious accidents occurred on Pyrenean highways. This is enough to point out a fact about the tenacity of stories: The rarity of some real occurrences gives them a special potency when they become details in our telling of past events. In the case of the legend of Eulalia's murder, we see in a rare snowfall a miraculous sign of God's favor.)

¹ An internet search for information on Eulalia will provide useful background, including photographs of her sarcophagus, located in the crypt of Barcelona's cathedral, which illustrates the story of her trial and martyrdom. Those wishing to read in Latin the early accounts of her death published by the Société des Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. 2 (1658), 576–580, can find them online at several locations, for example, by clicking the tab labeled “Société des Bollandists: Acta Sanctorum” at the *Documenta Catholica* website: <http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/>. Ángel Fábrega Grau, *Santa Eulalia de Barcelona, revisión de un problema histórico* (Rome: Iglesia Nacional Española, 1958), studies the hagiographical problems associated with Eulalia.

Eulalia's historicity is uncertain. The first hagiographical accounts appeared centuries after her death. Curiously, those accounts have her undergoing the same unusual tortures as another martyred Eulalia, Eulalia of Merida.² Merida, in the southwestern quadrant of the Iberian Peninsula, is close enough to Barcelona that stories of the two women could have crossed paths over the centuries, but it is far enough from Catalonia that the two legends could coexist each in its own locale without one becoming a threat to the operation of the other.

Not that the duplication of hagiographic elements matters. The possibility that the story of the Barcelona Eulalia might be a neat fiction or may be conflated with events that happened to someone else far to the west has never really bothered Eulalia's religious devotees. After all, what Pope John Paul II said applies here. When asked whether the bones in Compostela in the Spanish state of Galicia are really those of Saint James, "the brother of the Lord," he replied that what matters is not a scientific measure of authenticity but the reports that the saint's bones help do intercessory work the faithful seek from their saints.³ Just as Eulalia's Catholic enthusiasts have no need of proofs that conform to the methods of modern forensics, so it is that her persecution-era backstory is of little interest to the secular fans of the extravagant party she brings when her feast day comes around each winter.

We would expect Eulalia's feast-day celebrations to have changed over the centuries. Through the Middle Ages, Eulalia's feast was at the top of the roster of Barcelona's religious celebrations. Like other important days in the liturgical calendar, it provided an opportunity for nobles, burghers, and leading artisans to join churchmen in parades to display their status and wealth. It offered occasion, too, for rural peasants, middling artisans and tradesmen, and day workers and servants to avoid the obligations of daily life. We know that many in all social ranks overate and consumed alcohol to excess on saints' days. We also know that days like these often

² "St. Eulalia of Mérida" Catholic News Agency online, accessed November 9, 2017, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/saint.php?n=79> is an example—based in this instance on the classic *Butler's Lives of the Saints*—of the many ways to tell a tall tale as if it is true. I mean no disrespect to Catholic apologists—to note that a story is untrue is not the same as counting it meaningless; however, it is worth reminding readers that not everything presented as fact has been confirmed as factual.

³ An interesting discussion thread about the claims to the authenticity of James's bones and miracles can be found here: <https://www.caminodesantiago.me/community/threads/are-st-james-relics-really-held-in-santiagos-cathedral.11158/>

ended in fights, some of which were well planned and sanctioned by political elites as part of ongoing efforts to consolidate social boundaries.⁴ In the anticlerical period of the nineteenth century, many of Barcelona's occupants gave less attention to Eulalia's feast, and, during the period when Franco tried to link Catholicism to other facets of the ideology of fascist unitary Castilian Spain, Barcelonans muted the annual celebration. Recently, since Franco's death, Eulalia has regained her place in the hearts of Catalans, although religious fervor has diminished in favor of a modern secular version of medieval festival pursuits.

Since the 1980s, the feast of Saint Eulalia—La Laia, as it is now called—has become a series of parades and popular street-festival activities sponsored by the city government, the *Ayuntamiento*. The celebration is one of Barcelona's biggest civic events. In recent years, it has grown a bit overcrowded with tourists, despite which it maintains a semblance of its charm as a festival meant mostly for natives who are glad to have their own mid-winter vacation from the tourist throng. The *Ayuntamiento's* publicity is subtly coded to permit a reading of the festival as a confirmation of Catalan identity especially open to the city's younger crowd. The 2014 version of the website for the event, no longer available online, described Eulalia as "the symbol of solidarity for our city, the defense of justice, and the promise of youth."⁵ Although it is always difficult with these kinds of events to know precisely what remains from a much earlier time, it is certain that some aspects of the contemporary celebration date to the eighteenth century or earlier, and there remains something vaguely medieval about the whole affair.

Most activities attached to La Laia occur in the streets and public squares. These include parades through town of a *geganta*, a model of the saint of giant proportions. The twenty-foot tall Eulalia puppet is supported on the shoulders of someone completely invisible under her garments, who makes her walk and spin and dance through the crowds lining the parade route. Eulalia is accompanied by other *gegants* (James I and his wife Violant usually join her) as well as by *capgrossos* (bigheads), and by

⁴David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), esp. 127–230, identifies a number of interesting examples.

⁵The most recent edition is *Festes de Santa Eulalia*, <http://lameva.barcelona.cat/santa-eulalia/>, accessed on October 15, 2017.

musicians playing *grallas* and other traditional instruments.⁶ There is no reason to doubt the existence of medieval precursors of today's celebratory parading figures made of wood and cloth, paper and leather.⁷

Other activities, like the actions of the popular fire runners—the *carrefocs*—also resemble something vaguely medieval. The fire runners are a kind of anarchic mass of noisy youths, dressed as devils, who beat drums, explode fireworks into roiling fires, and make the air thick with red, choking smoke. The aim is, perhaps, simply to have a good time, although some say that the devils should remind us of our humanity and impending morbidity, like images of the *danse macabre* seen in the years following the late medieval Black Death. Human castles, built by teams of *castellers* who support each other on their shoulders up to a height of nine or ten persons, have also become a symbol of time-honored solidarity. They appear during La Laia, and on many other occasions.

In recent years the annual castle-building competition at Tarragona has attracted thousands of attendees who wave the *Senyera* and unfurl banners that read “Catalonia is Not Spain.” Castle builders, like those who carry the giants in parades, are supported by the musical accompaniment of *grallas*, double-reed woodwind instruments of “ancient” origin. On the whole the *gegants*, the *carrefocs*, the *castells*, and the *grallas* appear vaguely reminiscent of medieval antecedents. But such vagaries are not trivial. For example, to signal the importance of the castle-building heritage, and thus also to encourage its contribution to local identity and tourism, in 2010 UNESCO declared the building of *castells* by *castellers* an example of intangible cultural heritage.⁸

Eulalia held a singular pride of place as Barcelona's patroness until the sixteenth century, at which time she had to make room for the growing influence of a co-patron, *Mare de Déu de la Mercè* (Mary of Mercy). The

⁶ An online search using the words “Eulalia” and “*geganta*” will bring up images as well as videos of the various street events in which they participate. On the *gegants* see Jan Grau, “Els Collectius de les figures de la festa” in *Tradicionari 4: La Fiesta*, ed. Joan Soler i Amigó and Josefina Roma i Riu (Barcelona, 2005): 89–97.

⁷ For discussion of a range of free-time events and festival activities in Catalan-speaking lands through the Late Middle Ages into the early modern period, see the papers in Maria Barceló and Bernat Sureda, ed. *Espai i temps d'oci a la Historia, XI Jornades d'Estudis Històrics Locals* (Palma, Majorca: Institut d'Estudis Balearics, 1993).

⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Intangible Cultural Heritage: Human Towers,” accessed on November 11, 2017, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/human-towers-00364>

growth of this particular Marian devotion became a special project of the religious Order of Merced, founded in Barcelona in the thirteenth century after the Virgin Mary reportedly paid separate visits to Ramon de Penyafort, his pupil Pedro Nolasco, and King James I, indicating to each that she wished them to found a religious order to take on the work of ransoming Christians taken captive in wars against Muslims.⁹ In any event, the encroachment of Mary onto Eulalia's festival turf is said to have resulted, depending on the telling, either from a plague of locusts that befell the city of Barcelona in 1687 or from a drought in the same period lasting several years. The event, whichever it was, tested Eulalia's competence; prayers seeking her intercession were ineffective. Once the insects departed or the rain came, the Consell de Cent (the city's governing body at the time) credited the improved conditions to Mother Mary, and they named La Mercè a co-patroness of the city. Pope Pius IX ratified La Mercè's patronage in 1868. All of this might be explained as a shift in the capabilities of miracle-working heavenly powers; however, one might also explain Mary's success as the result of some convincing preaching by the city's Mercedarians and their Dominican allies, expert preacher-politician-propagandists who knew how and when to say the words that got things done.

By the twentieth century, the festival in September called La Mercè had grown huge, becoming Barcelona's biggest party. One result, according to common civic scuttlebutt, is that Eulalia is in such a jealous snit that she tries each year to bring rain down upon the festival-goers. Despite the perennially cloudy forecast, La Mercè is a grand opportunity for Barcelonans to celebrate their medieval past by bringing out the *gegants* of real and legendary medieval figures, lighting the *carrefoc* devil's fires, and showing honor to their co-patroness in religious processions, the building of human castles, and so on.¹⁰ The Mercè is also an important tourist spectacle and, not so paradoxically, an opportunity for the many Barcelonans who suffer *turismofòbia* to breathe a collective sigh of relief. The event signals the end of summer and a reduction in the hordes of "*sol y playa*" tourists.¹¹

⁹James W. Brodman, *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain: The Order of Merced on the Christian-Islamic Frontier* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

¹⁰Dani Cortijo, "La Llegendra de Santa Eulàlia, La Patrona Oblidada," [Altresbarcelones.com](http://altresbarcelones.blogspot.com.es/2011/02/la-llegenda-e-santa-eulalia-la-patrona.html) (blog), February 13, 2011, <http://altresbarcelones.blogspot.com.es/2011/02/la-llegenda-e-santa-eulalia-la-patrona.html>. José María de Mena, *Curiosidades y Leyendas de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1990), 91.

¹¹Some events even poke a fun farewell at tourists. A light show on the façade of the Ajuntament in the summer of 2013 had as its theme a surreal "love boat" full of Ken and

LA MORENETA AND SANT JORDI

Beyond the confines of Barcelona, Catalunya has both a national patron and a national patroness. The patroness is a manifestation of the Mary called Our Lady of Montserrat. Her sculpted image is the black Madonna, La Moreneta, honored in the Benedictine Monastery tucked into the imposing Montserrat Mountains about thirty miles northwest of Barcelona.¹²

The affection among many Catalans for La Moreneta and the mountainscape where she lives runs very deep. The very real attachment of both to Catalan nationalism is easily measured in religious writing, tourist guidebooks, Catalanist blogs, and everyday conversation, and in this case, as in others, the intersection of local tourism, medieval religious and cultural heritage, and national politics cannot be easily disentangled. To take one example, in February 2014 several thousand pilgrim hikers and bikers climbed the mountain to celebrate, under the guidance of Our Lady of Montserrat and her monks, the 45th Renovació de la Flama de la Lengua, that is, the 45th annual event in commemoration of the contribution (symbolized by a flame) of the Catalan language to Catalan identity.¹³ The event is explicitly religious, beginning with a mass, and also profoundly secular, culminating in the political act of symbolically renewing and strengthening the Catalan language.

People travel for sport and pilgrimage to attend the Renovació de la Flama ceremonies devoted to the renewal of the flame, and thus participate

Barbie vacationers sailing out of the harbor. Franc Aleu, “Increible viatge a la Lluna,” accessed November 11, 2017, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EsSp_qmeBM

¹²Official descriptions of the Madonna’s blackness insist that she is not of African origin, nor that the wood from which her face and hands are carved is especially dark, but rather, that, since she was created in Jerusalem “at the beginning of the religion,” she has “simply darkened over time.” [Montserrat-tourist-guide.com](http://www.montserrat-tourist-guide.com) “Why is the Madonna Black?” accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.montserrat-tourist-guide.com/en/attractions/black-madonna-montserrat-spain.html#madonnaBlack>. I’ll report here, tongue in cheek, that recent intelligence disputing the claim that La Moreneta’s dark features are due to her age comes in the form of a *caganer*, a typical “pooper” used to decorate Christmastime manger displays. For a peek at the Madonna’s black backside, see “La Moreneta ‘caganer’: los obispos critican que se utilice la imagen de la virgin,” November 11, 2013, accessed on November 1, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.es/2013/11/26/moreneta-caganer_n_4343810.html

¹³For an example of excursionism to Montserrat as politics, see the promotional website [Flamallenguacatalana.com](http://flamallenguacatalana.com) “45 Renovació de la Flama de la Lengua Catalana,” November 26, 2014, accessed November 12, 2017, <https://flamallenguacatalana.wordpress.com/>

in a long tradition of a particularly Catalanist form of hiking and sightseeing, called *excursionisme*. As a movement devoted to experiencing Catalan heritage, *excursionisme* dates to the middle of the nineteenth century. Today there are several hundred excursionist groups throughout Catalonia. They directly recall the activities of the architects, historians, geographers, and others who initiated the practice during the nineteenth-century Catalan *Renaixença*.¹⁴

Catalonia's great patron, the corresponding male figure to Catalonia's patroness, is Sant Jordi. This is the same St. George who has a long tradition of saintly contribution to medieval military successes in several countries, including England. He is the patron saint of England, Portugal, Romania, Malta, and elsewhere, in addition to Catalonia. While there is absolutely no veritable evidence about his life, longstanding legend has it that he served as an officer in the army of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, converted to Christianity, and was martyred in 303 for refusing to deny his adherence to Christ. Christians in the West celebrate his feast day on April 23; Eastern Christians celebrate him on May 6, according to the Julian calendar. Many churches in Europe, the Balkans, the Levant, South America, and elsewhere celebrate his military zeal, and he appears in the iconography of many nations, cities, military institutions, and religious organizations.

The most typical images of Sant Jordi identify him as the dragon slayer, an iconographical tradition that emerged in the eastern Mediterranean as early as the tenth century. Probably introduced to Western Christians by Crusaders returning home after time in the Levant, the story of St. George and the dragon was popularized especially through the work of two thirteenth-century Dominican friars, the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais and the *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine.

What matters to Catalans is not reverence for him elsewhere but his enormous influence inside Catalonia. His cult inside Catalonia has been active since at least the fifteenth century, emerging especially strongly at the very time when Catalonia's influence began to wane in comparison to

¹⁴ Books published about the excursionist movement have become very numerous. Among important recent contributions, see Carles Albesa i Riba and José Luis Infesta Pérez, *125 anys d'excursionisme a Catalunya* (Barcelona: Infesta, 2001), and, on the role of clerics in initiating and magnifying the relationship of excursionism to Catalanism, Joan Cervera i Batariu, *Clergues Excursionistes* (Montserrat: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2004). For an early contribution to the academic study of *excursionisme*, see Albert Balcells, *L'escoltisme català, 1911–1978* (Barcelona: Barcanova, 1993).

its powerful neighbors Castile and France. Thus, through the early modern period and into the present, the good-against-evil story of Sant Jordi and the dragon, or *drac*, has remained a key metaphor for the plight and hope of the Catalan people. To put it in terms recognizable to medieval followers of saints' cults: Sant Jordi is alive and active in the present, defending his followers against their greatest foes—the threats to their national identity. Catalans brought up in contemporary secular society see the story of Sant Jordi and the *drac* as a delightful fiction; nonetheless, they continue to permit it to carry extraordinary symbolic force for historical change.

Stories of Sant Jordi as a dragon slayer are of late provenance, as are his claims to be the patron of lovers. A festival in Jordi's honor is celebrated annually on April 23 throughout Catalonia. It is a day for lovers. Men give roses to the women they love, and the women respond with the gift of a book (of course, that puts too much of a traditionalist's perspective on it since, nowadays, people give books and roses to whomever they please).

One would be terribly wrong to think that there is nothing special about a day devoted to the sale of roses and books; in fact, it is one of the most beloved of Catalan holidays. It is also a remarkable opportunity for the mixing of cultural and political referents. Bean counters estimate that, taking the average of recent tallies, Catalans share six million roses and 400,000 books during La Diada de Sant Jordi. As for the books, sales for the day range between 10 and 30% of annual book sales in Catalonia. A great number of the books—perhaps it goes without saying—are in Catalan and on Catalan subjects. In recent years, books on Catalan cuisine have been in vogue, although popular histories remain especially prevalent. The most extraordinary thing about the celebration is that almost no one is absent. School is out, and businesses shutter for the day. The crush of crowds in the streets is phenomenal, beyond what is typical even of Barcelona tourist traps at peak summer season. It is, very simply, a day to be outdoors, enjoying the first blush of spring with family and friends.

Sant Jordi is one of the most ubiquitous figures in Catalan imagery. He appears as a staple icon in the decoration of Catalonia's medieval churches. The Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya usually has on view several altar panels illustrating his battle with the beast. He is equally prominent in the work of modern artists. In fact, the images of Sant Jordi that attract the most eyeballs—viewed by tourists, most of whom do not even know whom they are looking at—are the appearances of Sant Jordi in the work of Modernist architects. For example, the façade of the Casa Ametller, one

of the principal buildings of interest on Barcelona's Passeig de Gràcia, standing next to Antoni Gaudí's Casa Batlló, features a whimsical relief of a spry Jordi engaged in combat against his legendary foe. It is sculpted by the most famed of the Catalan Modernist sculptors, Eusebi Arnau.¹⁵

Antoni Gaudí, like many of the other modernists, was fascinated by his nation's medieval past and took up medieval symbolism explicitly to fan the flames of Catalan identity. Architectural historians have concluded that Gaudí brought Jordi and the *drac* into the designs of each of his buildings in recognition of the prominence of this core Catalan symbol. The wrought iron gate he designed at the entrance to his father's estate takes the form of a dragon. The gables on the roof of the Casa Bellesguard serve as the eyes of a three-headed serpent covered in roof-tile scales.¹⁶

The Casa Bellesguard is worth exploring for a moment. From his youth, Gaudí took great personal interest in the location because of its historical significance. What he saw there upon his first visits were the remnants of the foundations of a palace built by Martin the Humane, the last ruler of the great medieval Catalan dynasty. Gaudí was so impressed with the site's symbolic potency for the resurgent Catalanism of his time that he set out to find a patron willing to buy the site and then hand it over to him to build upon. What he designed and built there was completed by 1909, when he was still in his formative years as an architect. It is a lovely little neo-Gothic single-family castle, a medievalizing gem with some hints of the Modernist elements that would become characteristic of Gaudí's mature work, for instance, the use of colored tiles, the stained glass, and the pinnacle cross. Also characteristic of Gaudí were an excess of creative care and patience, which drove his clients to impatience, and overspending. The patron at the Bellesguard house, Jaume Figueres, died before Gaudí finished the work, and his widow, Maria Sagues Molins, never got to live in the house due to Gaudí's unending fuss over the details. She ultimately had to sell the house to avoid bankruptcy.

Sant Jordi and the *drac* have been so ubiquitously Catalan that their absence, at least on one occasion, caused a stir. During preparations for the 1992 Olympic Games, public protests ensued when organizers chose the abstract dog-like Cobi as the promotional mascot for the games over the Catalan *drac*.¹⁷

¹⁵ An internet search for "Eusebi Arnau Sant Jordi" will uncover a great number of images. It is worth your while to take a look.

¹⁶ Fernando Garcés, "La 'Cebolla' del genio," *Clio: Revista de historia* 152 (2014): 12–15.

¹⁷ John Hargreaves, *Freedom for Catalonia: Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity, and the Barcelona Olympic Games* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 63–64.

Myth-history is flexible, accommodating new characters and giving old ones fresh opportunities to meet the needs of changing times. An example, since I have just mentioned the 1992 Olympics, is the attention given to Luci Minici Nadal Quadroni. In the mid-1970s, Frederic-Pau Verrié, director at the time of Barcelona's local history museum, Museu d'Historia de la Ciutat, made an unusual discovery in the course of his review of some of his museum's Roman mortuary inscriptions. An inscription indicated that Luci Minici from Barcino (Roman-era Barcelona) was a winner in the first-century B.C. in the ancient Greek games—forerunners of the modern Olympics. Was he an athlete? No. He was a statesman, a wealthy military officer and senator. The truth of the matter appears to be that, as was customary in his time, he took credit for the win of a charioteer because he was the athlete's patron, the one who paid for the horses and chariot.

The rediscovery of Luci Minici came at a propitious moment. He came to be celebrated as “the first Catalan Olympic athlete” just in time for planners of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona to create sculptures and name roads in his honor. For a time, Wilfred the Hairy and Otger Cataló had to give over space in the collective imagination for the newcomer, one who, it turns out, is much older than they are. Time will tell if the mythic potential of Luci Minici endures, or if he will be resurrected and recycled only very occasionally as need arises.¹⁸

Readers getting lost in the details might like a summary reminder that we have been opening a view onto a very extensive inventory of Catalan remembrances that connect the past and present. I have pointed to real-life figures of mythic importance, to legendary origins and stories of heavenly protection, and I have indicated how festivals and civic activities, commemorative locations, and streams of collective consciousness invite Catalans to recall in very particular and endlessly interconnected ways the history of their people and place. I have also suggested that contemporary Catalans make good creative use of these facts and fictions, not only to remind themselves of their past but also to activate the power of the past in the ongoing construction of their cultural distinctiveness.

¹⁸ Pablo Gargallo produced a sculpture of Minici for the entrance of the Olympic Stadium on Montjuïc. Ramon Balús i Juli, “A Frederic-Pau Verrié, recordant el nostre amic Luci Minici Nadal,” in Joaquim Garriga et al. eds., *A Pau Verrié* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'abadia de Montserrat, 2005), 27–32. For additional background, see also José María de Mena, *Curiosidades y Leyendas de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janes, 1990), 22.

FROM “ELS SEGADORS” TO “DIGUEM NO!”

It is by no means forgotten in national lore and history that the Catalan past has included moments of bloody resistance. Indeed, the Catalan national anthem, “Els Segadors” (the Reapers), has its basis in a hymn that recalls the revolt of 1640–1659, which began when peasants refused the order of King Felipe IV’s lieutenant, the Count-Duke of Olivares. What Catalans refused was Olivares’s requirement that they quarter in their homes, at their own expense, members of his Castilian army, a soldiery the Catalans knew to be rapacious thieves, in part because their king routinely failed to pay them.¹⁹

“Els Segadors” is itself an interesting example of the transformation of transformative myths. In 1882 the great Catalan philologist-historian Manuel Milà i Fontanals produced a collection of *Romances Catalanes*, which, in addition to a version of the story of Comte Arnau, included a seventeenth-century hymn recalling the peasant revolt against the seigniorial estate called the War of the Remences. In 1897 Emili Guanyavents reconfigured that hymn into a transcendent poem about the defense of the Catalan homeland. Francesc Alió composed a musical anthem fitted to the words in 1897. The anthem is similar in tone and construction to other national anthems composed in the years of nascent nationalism (these include “God Save the Queen,” dating to around 1750; “La Marseillaise,” made the official song of the French Republic in 1795; and “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which by 1899 had become an official anthem in use by the American Navy). Although “Els Segadors” dates to the years before 1900, it only became the official anthem of Catalonia when the Catalan Parliament declared it so in 1993. The decision may seem belated, although maybe the better word is “overdue.” We need to recall that the Spanish-American War, two dictatorships, and a civil war—all occasions for the repression of Catalanist sentiments—occupied most of the period from 1897 to 1993.

I have been witness to the mystical attraction Catalans have to “Els Segadors.” Its unannounced performance at the conclusion of a concert by the Symphonic Band of Barcelona that I attended in September 2013 brought attendees to their feet. I should have known that the concert

¹⁹ Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans*, esp. 387–416. J. Sanabre. *La acción de Francia en Cataluña en la pugna por la hegemonía de Europa, 1640–1659* (Barcelona, Librería J. Sala Badal, 1956). Also Paul Freedman, “The German and Catalan Peasant Revolts,” *American Historical Review* 98 (1993), 39–54.

would be an identity-confirming experience since its featured performer played the *tible*, a double-reed instrument that dates back at least to the seventeenth century. Catalans say that the *tible*, the *gralla*, and a few other instruments are born of medieval antecedents, and are national instruments unique to Catalonia.

As the rendition of “Els Segadors” began, some of the concert’s attendees recognized the moment as their cue to unfurl their heretofore hidden *Senyeras*. As the orchestra played, the assembled crowd burst into loud and joyful song, waving their flags over the balconies and in the aisles as they sang. They followed the performance by giving vigorous applause to their own collective contribution to affective politics.

I happened to be at that concert with my son, who had yet to be initiated into the fever-pitch demonstrations of Catalan identity. He was spending a few weeks with me in Barcelona on his summer vacation. On the way to the concert, I offered to buy him a soccer jersey of his choosing. He chose the red one and promptly put it on (that red one would be the jersey of the Spanish national team, which is sold to tourists in most Barcelona souvenir shops in place of the Mexican sombreros tourists used to buy there in great numbers). I confess that at the time I thought it was not the best choice to permit him to wear it to the concert, but he persisted and I relented. We then went to meet the conductor of the orchestra, a man highly regarded not only as an esteemed musician but also as a promoter and defender of the place of Catalan music in the construction of Catalan culture—the Barcelona Symphonic Band, by the way, has its own historic connections to Catalan distinctiveness dating back to its origins in 1886 as the city’s Municipal Band. The conductor of whom I speak, Salvador Brotons i Soler, took one look at my son’s attire and exclaimed with burning eyes and a strained smile, “We don’t wear that here!” He was, let’s say, gracious but direct, firmly committed to the normative expectations of his orchestra and its audience.

Salvador Brotons is a distinguished composer-conductor. He has directed many important orchestras in Germany, Venezuela, the US, South Africa, and elsewhere. He is principal conductor of the Barcelona Symphonic Band and music director and conductor of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. He has written over one hundred works, mainly for orchestra and chamber orchestra. He has good reason to defend and promote the Catalan creative spirit. Spanish governments after 1714, especially the government of Francisco Franco, accused those who performed Catalan music of sedition, like those who dared speak the Catalan language

in public. He is also a recent exemplar in a very long line of poets, musicians, painters, and other artists who put their creative talents to the defense of a special reading of the Catalan past.

The potency of “Els Segadors” puts it outside the mold of a traditional cultural history, and beyond what would appear in an archive-based, narrative account of past events. “Els Segadors” has its place in this chapter because it offers a few lessons about the fluid space between the past and present—not quite history, not entirely belonging to the present. First, the anthem brings into memory for Catalans a particularly important set of heroes (not only Catalan peasants in the fifteenth century but also those of the seventeenth century) and villains (not only the landed barons of the fifteenth century but also Spain’s King Felipe IV and the Count-Duke of Olivares). Second, we see that it does its work through performance and in connection with the use of related symbols like the national flag, which, as we have learned, has its own intimate connections to other truths and fictions about the medieval past.

Catalan music, like all else Catalan, looks to its medieval antecedents. There is a manuscript of devotional music, called the *Llibre Vermell de Montserrat*, produced by monks in the fourteenth century at the monastery of Montserrat for use in the liturgy. As it turns out, it is one of the most important records of music and musical notation from the Middle Ages. That it is Catalan is incidental, except, of course, to Catalans, who count it as one of the many direct links to their ancestors. In the early seventeenth century, Joan Pau Pujol wrote early examples of polyphonic music, some of which he dedicated to Catalonia’s greatest defender, Sant Jordi. Again: The ancestral font can be dipped into with any number of very different cups. Young musicians can be drawn to a recognition of Catalan distinctiveness by following the paths laid out for them by their musical forerunners. Those brought up in families who hold to Catholic traditions can come to Catalanism by way of Montserrat. Others might start learning to read by picking up one of the many children’s books that tell the story of Sant Jordi. And, along any of these paths, the initiates may come upon a point of intersection with another of the paths.

A twentieth-century musician who comes to mind at this point is Pau Casals. Not only was Casals the premier cellist of the twentieth century, but he also became an impassioned ambassador of Catalan music in the period of Franco’s dictatorship. When Casals performed his last Barcelona concert in 1939 he announced that he would not perform again in Spain while Franco remained in power, nor even in countries that supported

Franco, and then he left his native Catalonia to go into self-imposed exile in Prades, France. He made no exceptions to his vow not to perform in countries that supported the despot, except once, when he performed at the invitation of President John F. Kennedy, who bestowed upon Casals the Presidential Medal of Freedom (despite the US government's tacit support for the dictator, Kennedy's conferral of the award upon Casals was an obvious, albeit indirect, snub of Franco).

Casals spoke about the medieval roots of his musical efforts when he addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1971: "I am a Catalan. Today a province of Spain. But what has been Catalonia? Catalonia has been the greatest nation in the world. I will tell you why. Catalonia has had the first Parliament, much before England. Catalonia had the beginning of the United Nations. All the authorities of Catalonia in the 11th century met in a city of France, at that time Catalonia, to speak about peace. Eleventh century! Peace in the world and against, against, against, war, the inhumanity of war. This was Catalonia."²⁰ We might be glad that Casals was a cellist rather than a historian, given his foreshortening of the truth; nonetheless, we must take account of his recognition of the close relationship between music, politics, Catalan identity, and his conception of the medieval past.

I could offer similar vignettes of other artists, poets, and musicians from more recent decades to illustrate continuity in the perceived value of the medieval past, a medieval past explicitly drawn upon to defend contemporary Catalan creative and political engagement. Among visual artists, Santiago Rosiñol, Ramon Casas, Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, Antoni Tàpies, and many others belong in this context.²¹

²⁰ An excerpt of the speech can be viewed here: "Pau Casals United Nations Speech – 1971," accessed November 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hChcJAh5N0>. Michael Eade, *Catalonia: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 32, offers additional context and a somewhat edited version of the speech.

²¹ Salvador Dalí is not mentioned here because he is a controversial figure with respect to Catalanism. It is certain that he loved that part of northern Catalonia, especially Figueres and Cadaques, where he spent his life. But he also sought and exploited the fawning praise of Francisco Franco. Many knowledgeable art-world observers also suggest that, especially past the years of his prowess as a leading surrealist, he was more showman than artist of creative substance. By midlife he seemed to enjoy his own money-grubbing circus antics. Counted as evidence for this, beyond calling himself a "madman" in his own self-description, is that he signed tens of thousands of sheets of blank print paper for large sums without apparent regard for whatever image might later be printed on them. That Dalí failed to make useful

The Valencian Joan Fuster i Ortells and Salvador Espriu are always the first to be named among twentieth-century Catalan poets. Mercè Rodoreda is often cited first among novelists. Among musicians, Lluís Llach, Mara del Mar Bonet, and other members of Els Setze Jutges played key roles through the 1960s and 1970s in bringing Catalan music to international attention despite the efforts of Franco's censors. Ramon Pelegrero Sanchis, known more simply as Raimon, born in Xàtiva, arrived in Valencia in 1961, where he came under the influence of Els Setze Jutges. He adopted Catalan language and culture as his own and became an advocate for the Catalans as a people willing to stand against tyranny. Seeing the world through his eyes, you might view the history of the Catalans as a precursor, a model, for the principled dissent that young people were bringing to their demands for social change in Raimon's time.

Franco's government tried to buy Raimon off, if only he would sing in Castilian. He did not comply. Franco's censors then forbade him to sing his most famous song, the one that almost as soon as he wrote it became a Catalan national song of protest, "Diguem no!" ("We say no!"). Between veiled references to the violence and legal fallacies of Francoism, the chorus runs, "No. I say no. Let's say no. We are not part of that world."

As James C. Scott pointed out in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, there are always ways to confront autocrats, blowhards, and extremists who might happen to run a government.²² At the close of each of Raimon's concerts through the 1970s, his audiences took to singing "Diguem no!," beginning quietly and ending in a roar. Because he was not leading them in song and he was not doing the singing, he infringed no laws. Franco's censors could not stop him from doing something that he was not doing. Meanwhile, the song the censors tried to quiet grew louder in Catalans' minds and on their lips.

There is more to learn than we can cogently pack into a couple of chapters like this one. Still, I think that we have moved our project forward at least a little bit. We now know that understanding how Catalans use their past requires us to take account of some potent leaders, fictional characters, and real-life superstars who worked in defense of the Catalan cause.

for the Catalan cause the attention he had gained on the world stage is a cause of sadness for some Catalanists.

²² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), opens with the following Ethiopian proverb: "When the great lord passes, the wise peasant bows deeply and farts."

Perhaps it seems an odd choice to readers to combine in this chapter and the last both real and imaginary figures of importance to Catalans. I could have separated the veritable figures from the legends, but that would not have presented “truth” any better. The truth is that real and fictional, history and imagination cannot be so easily separated in the Catalan collective memory. And, of course—to be bold about the comparison—the same holds for other identity groups in the US and elsewhere.



CHAPTER 5

Castle, Coast, and Cathedral

Approaching it from any direction, one encounters the “serrated mountain,” Montserrat, as a series of stunningly massive uplifted rocky peaks, rounded at their tops from erosion and jutting out of the surrounding low-lying valley through which flows the Llobregat River and its tributaries. The highest peak, St. Jeroni, at 4055 feet above sea level, stands three thousand feet above its surroundings. Geologists worldwide know Montserrat as one of the treasures of their stone science. But it is also an awe-inspiring place, an utterly impressive ribbon of rock that is often partly shrouded in ethereal fog or that sometimes seems from a distance to rise above a seabed of clouds filling the valleys below it. It is on many lists of the world’s most sacred sites.

Montserrat has roused the mystical sensibilities of Iberian peoples for millennia. Prehistoric inhabitants left artifacts, and their bodily remains, in the mountain’s many caves. Legend has it that the Madonna, that is, Mary, the mother of Christ, made an appearance there to shepherds around 880. Other seekers, according to tradition, discovered a gift that she left for them in a cave—La Moreneta, a gift in her image—for which they built a shrine devoted to her reverence and honor.

Conditions on the mountain can be forbidding, perfect for hermits, who, in the early Christian centuries, practiced self-denial in imitation of Christ. Christian ascetics built hermitages in the crags and caves on Montserrat well before the time of Wilfred the Hairy. Into the tenth and eleventh centuries, the special Marian geography had drawn together so

many recluses that they formed a monastic community. In the eleventh century the abbots of the monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll (about 60 miles to the north) imposed the Benedictine Rule upon the community and turned their political and religious energies toward making the place a formidable center of Marian devotion. Pope Leo XIII confirmed Our Lady of Montserrat as the Patroness of Catalunya in 1844. By the 1870s, Jacint Verdeguer's poem, "L'Emigrant," referring to Catalonia as the "fatherland of my heart" and addressing Montserrat as a "hermitage suspended in heaven," became a powerful ode connecting the mountain and the monastery to Catalan cultural and political renewal.

Montserrat the mountain, Montserrat the monastery, and the image of Our Lady of Montserrat, La Moreneta, in its vestibule behind the monastery's principal altar, became a generalized notion—Catalan Montserrat.¹ Of greatest importance for our purposes is the position occupied by this holistically conceived Montserrat as one of the principal focal points of Catalan identity. Two things are most phenomenal from this perspective. First, to speak generally, Montserrat, as a place that resounds with cultural significance, illustrates the importance of place, land, and landscape to the maintenance of Catalan cultural identity. It serves as an important example of a general phenomenon: All cultures, all nations, plant some of the roots of their collectivity into important places, significant sites that take hold of the imaginations of their people. Second, and more directly connected to a main thread of this book, is Montserrat's prominence as an example of the relationship modern Catalan identity has with its medieval past. Montserrat resonates with connections, real and imagined, to the medieval.

Montserrat—the holistically conceived totality of it—continues to attract visitors as it has for centuries. Now they appear as religious tourists, day-trippers from around the world, and serious hikers. Montserrat has nearly ascended to the top ranks of European sites attracting visitors who seek to combine religious and touristic experiences, not far behind Rome; Santiago de Compostela; Fatima in Portugal; Lourdes in France; and Armagh, where St. Patrick established his bishopric, in Northern Ireland. To attract and accommodate visitors, the monks have now so grossly overbuilt their monastery that it feels oddly like a Catholic Disneyland,

¹Josep María García Fuentes, "Dissecting Montserrat: On the Cultural, Religious, Touristic, and Identity-Related Construction of the Modern Montserrat," in *Tourism, Religion and Culture: Regional Development through Meaningful Tourism Experiences*, ed. Ana Trono (Lecce: Congedo Editore, 2009), 239–260.

complete with trolley rides, chicken fingers and fries on the cafeteria menu, free boys' choir concerts, Japanese and Russian tourists wielding selfie sticks, and long queues waiting to climb the stairs to touch the image of the Madonna.

Much of the Catalan landscape holds similarly broad powers. The places most admired by Catalans as especially Catalan are now also the places most sought out by tourists. This is problematic. For instance, by 2013 the crush of the crowds at Park Güell required municipal leaders in Barcelona to begin issuing timed tickets, at a cost, not only to tourists but also to Catalans. Even residents of Barcelona had to plan and pay in advance if they wanted to visit what they previously considered their local municipal park.

This chapter acknowledges the contributions places make to the inventory upon which Catalan identity builds. It takes account of a few, only a few, of the most significant landscapes, sites, and environments that connect Catalans to memories of their collective past and offer grounding for their present self-understanding. An appreciation of the power of place will help us to understand why many Catalans refuse to see themselves as Spanish and instead want to lay claim to what is, for them, distinctly Catalan soil. Before the examples, however, it is best to lay a brief foundation in abstraction and theory for those who want it. I should say, too, that this chapter has its accomplice in the chapter in Part II of this book that treats Catalan efforts to medievalize and modernize. This chapter identifies some components of the inventory. That chapter shows how the inventory gets put to work to construct and reconstruct meanings.

MEMORIES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Half a century ago it was common to think of the landscape as something acted in and acted upon by humans: We do unto the land, not the land unto us. At that time, people learned to appreciate the significance of ancient cultures by measuring how much and how well they built their monumental architecture. What mattered were the character, quality, and durability of the impositions past generations made upon the physical environment.

Nowadays, such an understanding of human spatial relations, as important as it still is, barely scratches the surface of what we know is a much deeper relationship between people and place. Catalans experience places,

as we all do, in ways that are material, symbolic, and functional.² Catalan geography, like any cultural geography, is a kaleidoscope—incomplete, contextual, constantly in motion, rich with interpretive and even contradictory possibilities.³ In recent decades, theorists have given a lot of thought to how landscapes, spaces, and locales contribute to the development of cultures. More particularly, we now think that spatial considerations are integral to our understanding of how a culture imagines and constructs itself; the environment shapes cultural memory.

Cognitive scientists have located spots in the brain that appear to fasten to our emotional states the places we inhabit and the places we imagine as habitable. All memories, it appears, exist at the nexus of spatial and emotional cognition. As Nathan Wachtel puts it, “the preservation of recollections rests on their anchorage in space.” Or, as Kevin Keogan suggests, landscapes act as a “storehouse” for collective memory. From this perspective, we put our memories in a place, we deposit them there, so that, if and when we return to that place, either physically or in a frame of mind, the memory can be recalled.⁴

²I am following here the formulation found in Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–25.

³Without any effort at comprehensiveness, I suggest the following for useful overviews and serious reading about cultural geography, imaginary cartographies, and the relationship of place and memory: M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), esp. “Part III: Spatial Practices”; Steven Hoelscher and Derek H. Alderman, “Memory and Place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship,” *Social and Cultural Geographies* 5 (2004): 347–355; John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: Norton, 1995); Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, eds., *Constructions of Race, Place, and Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); David Lowenthal, “Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory,” *Geographical Review* 75 (1975): 1–37; Edward Said, “Invention, Memory, and Place,” *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 175–192; Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977). A useful overview is provided by Kelly Baker, “Identity, Memory and Place,” *The Word Hoard* 1 (2002), available online, accessed November 1, 2017, <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/word-hoard/voll/iss1/4>

⁴Nathan Wachtel, “Memory and History: Introduction,” in *History and Anthropology* 12 (1986): 207–224, at 216. Kevin Keogan, *Immigrants and the Cultural Politics of Place* (El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2010), 62.

Social theorists refer in a variety of ways to the relationship between landscape and identity. They speak about the construction of place, or they may use terms like “place attachment,” “landscapes of the mind,” “sites of memory,” and so on. What seems intuitively clear is that certain places have special significance to us as individuals and collectives. Beyond intuition, researchers confirm a two-part operation: We construct ourselves as we construct the places we inhabit; meanwhile, the places we inhabit are informing us about who we are and how we might reconstruct ourselves.

The goal here is not to be heady or esoteric. Rather, we need to know that there is much to consider when we admit that landscapes are more than the natural spaces we inhabit. For illustrative purposes, let’s consider how it is that places complete memories. Festivals and fairs, pageants and parades, civic ceremonies and commemorations are social rituals, performances that carry out cultural practices *in situ*. American readers will appreciate that whether we watch Fourth of July fireworks at home or at a public park the place dictates some of the requirements of the performance, for instance, the quantity and explosiveness of the fireworks. We also imbue with value locales such as national landmarks and heritage monuments. Those of us living in the US have in mind examples that are particular to our own inheritance: Thanksgiving at Grandma’s house, Disneyland, Ground Zero, the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, Mount Rushmore, Yosemite, a ballgame at the local little league field, and so on. These places shape our understanding of Americanness.

Some places have exaggerated or deeply problematic symbolic meanings. In the US, the fact that the southern states are dotted with monuments to confederate memory continues to stir discord rather than unity. There appears to be some similarity between the monuments to the losing side in the US South and the monuments in Catalonia to Pau Claris and others who led the losing side in revolts and rebellions against Spain’s various governments. But we should be careful about the apparent equivalency. It is not merely a case of two losing sides in wars each refusing to admit defeat. The Confederacy aimed to perpetuate a way of life based on slave-holding. By the 1860s societies worldwide acknowledged as immoral the practice of buying and selling human beings. Confederate leaders were fighting for a morally bankrupt cause. Catalans are not like that. National unity in the US after the Civil War has been constructed upon the moral high ground that puts post-Confederacy dissenters in the position of sore losers with poor skills at moral reckoning. In this case, the nation-state is right. Conversely, Spain has shown itself historically to be victorious but

immoral. As will be discerned in later chapters, Catalans have routinely, albeit not without reverses, put political dialogue and institutional fairness ahead of autocratic, obdurate violence.

Let's move from abstractions to examples in the Catalan environment. Recall that my purpose in these next pages is simply to identify a few of the most significant places and in situ moments that help comprise the inventory Catalans draw upon to shape and reshape their identity. It seems obvious, and perhaps needless to say, that the majority of Catalans (including those who have immigrant backgrounds) could never think of the Camp Nou Stadium, or Montserrat, or the bridge leading into Besalú, or the ruins of Quermançó Castle as English, or Italian, or Spanish. These places are consummately Catalan. Still, it is part of our project here to understand what it means to speak of such places as consummately Catalan. Catalans, as I have been arguing throughout this book, are very good at calling upon their past, especially their medieval past, because they have a special need for it in the present. Thus, it makes sense that they would show some expertise at deriving historical meaning from the places they inhabit. In showing how they do that, we will learn something about the good and bad ways in which other identity groups, including our own, imagine, create, and make use of special places.

FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA

To give some order to the great number and variety of historically resonant places in Catalonia, it makes the best sense to start broadly, with sites that reach back into the most remote recesses of collective memory, and then proceed to those places in the human-built environment that have been claimed or reclaimed as culturally relevant. Starting in this way, let's begin with an exploration of the mountains, valleys, and coast of Catalonia, asking what it means that some of the most basic features of the physical landscape have become indicators of Catalan cultural distinctiveness.

Catalans recognize the Pyrenean Mountains as the greatest signifier of the first moments that distinguish Catalans from others. Wilfred the Hairy was mentioned in the third chapter as the legendary ninth-century founder of Catalonia. In the centuries around Wilfred's time, the Pyrenees served as a geographic boundary between lands to the north under Frankish-Carolingian domination and those lands to the south, which, although nominally part of the Carolingian empire, remained beyond effective imperial control in a period of damaging Viking and Muslim raids and

internal political instability. Local elites took governance and military leadership into their own hands. Wilfred, for his part, repopulated the Catalan Pre-Pyrenean valleys. He and his successors defended those reclaimed lands, which became the first of the Catalan counties that ultimately became an independent Catalonia. It is still the case, from a cultural perspective, that a rich supply of tenth- and eleventh-century Romanesque hermitages and monastic churches is to be found in the mountain valleys Wilfred resettled. These became the religious sites most frequently visited from the nineteenth century on as part of the excursionist movement that connects Catalanist ideology to the Pyrenean landscape.

It is not necessary to dig too deeply into the details of history to appreciate that the Pyrenees offer one way of imagining Catalonia taking shape in time and space. Viewing the Pyrenees from afar, one appreciates how geography and historical circumstance conspired to impose the mountain range as Catalonia's northern border. In Catalonia, the average height of the Pica d'Estats, Pic Verdeguer, and over a dozen other peaks in the mountain ribbon climb to about ten thousand feet (the highest Pyrenean peak, Aneto, at just over eleven thousand feet, is in Huesca, Aragon, not in Catalonia). On the other hand, it is worth remembering, as Catalans do, that the border is porous. The Pyrenees were never impassable. In the Middle Ages, shepherds, merchants, heretics in hiding, and others made use of several mountain passes. The Pyrenees descend onto a coastal plain that extends to La Jonquera and Portbou on the Catalan side and Le Perthus and Cerebre on the French side. The plain served as a transit route for European peoples all the way back to the Paleolithic, and, before national borders, mobility was always quite free. Catalans recall the permeability of the border when they want to encourage those who reside on the other (French) side to see themselves as compatriots in a struggle to define cultural Catalanism. Much of the territory that was once part of a greater Catalonia—the *Països Catalans*, as they are called—is now part of the extreme southwest of France. Residents there, many of whom continue to speak Catalan or its close relative, Occitan, continue to see themselves as Catalan in origin and culture. In their view, the mountain panorama recalls Catalan roots on both sides of the border.⁵

⁵ Alexander Alland, Jr. and Sonia Alland, *Catalunya, One Nation, Two States: An Ethnographic Study of Nonviolent Resistance to Assimilation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), identify the similarities and differences in the people living in two neighboring communities, once part of greater Catalonia, that became divided by French and Spanish territorial treaty boundaries in 1659.

Like their close connection to their northern borders, Catalans' mental maps of their nation's western and southern boundaries also take shape at the conjunction of geography and historical circumstance. The boundary between Catalonia and Aragon came as the result of conquests in the first decades of the twelfth century. The great Ebro river, which up to that time effectively separated Muslim and Christian kingdoms, was breached nearly simultaneously by Alfonso the Battler of Aragon and Prince Ramon Berenguer IV of Catalonia. Thereafter, topographical limits mattered less than cultural ones. In fact, while a line drawn on maps has separated Aragon and Catalonia for centuries, the cultural boundary between Aragon and Catalonia continues to be rather fuzzy. The demarcation line runs right through a valley on both sides of which the rural population continues to speak Catalan. Over many centuries, language, culture, and commerce have bound people together despite the line mapmakers drew to separate them.

Catalan identity is also fixed to impressions of coastline and sea. The Mediterranean pervades Catalans' sense of who they are. Catalonia's two largest metropolises, Barcelona and Tarragona, took on their primacy as coastal military and commercial ports under the Romans. Tarraco, modern Tarragona, was the first Roman settlement on the Iberian Peninsula. Tarragona's Roman amphitheater, in a comparatively great state of preservation and situated to enjoy an impressive view of the Mediterranean, continues to serve as a reminder of the city's ancient past. By the mid-eighth century, Tarragona had become a border town under the Umayyad Caliphate. The count of Barcelona Ramon Berenguer III seized it in 1117 and brought it into the Catalan orbit. By that time, however, Barcelona had overtaken Tarragona in size and prestige. One can read in the pages of James I's *Llibre dels Fets* and in the later books of the *Quatre Grans Cròniques* how the count-kings drew Barcelona's seafaring merchant class into an alliance that made that city the dominant one in the whole composite of a Catalan empire as it spread beyond Iberia into the Mediterranean. Into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Catalan merchants and *almogàvers* controlled major seaports across the Mediterranean as far from Barcelona and Tarragona as Sicily and Athens. Catalans make an awareness of this Catalan Mediterranean empire a core part of their cultural self-knowledge.

If the foregoing depiction of the Catalan expansion sounds too ideal, too clean, it is because Catalans have tended to forget that their cultural claims on the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, and other places came as a result

of conquests that compelled in- and out-migrations. Residents of modern Alghero in Sardinia (now part of Italy) speak Catalan. Why? Because when the city's occupants rebelled against the administrators imposed upon them by the fourteenth-century Pere III (Pero IV of Aragon), the count-king's forces slaughtered many of the inhabitants and he thereafter made it a policy to move native Sardinians out, repopulating the city with Catalans, including many who were unscrupulously militant, or trouble-makers and undesirables of various kinds.

Beyond the pride Catalans take in the fact that their ancestors once controlled a vast empire of profitable seaports, the deep connection between Catalans and the sea is signaled in a variety of seaside landmarks, heritage sites, and historical tall tales. All are ever-present in Catalans' mental landscapes.

One such site is the *Basilica de Santa Maria del Mar*, built in Barcelona's Ribera neighborhood over the course of the fourteenth century at what was then the water's edge. Its financing came from seafarers, who wanted to offer thanksgiving to their patroness, Mary Mother of God, for their recent financial successes and to provide themselves with a self-congratulatory reminder of their corporate maritime and mercantile wealth. Alfons III of Catalonia laid the cornerstone.

The site is easily linked to other sites and memories by a strong connective tissue of imagination and political action. In 1907, Ramon Casas painted an important occasion in the history of the basilica. *The Corpus Christi Procession Leaving the Church of Santa Maria del Mar* depicts a dreadful scene from 1896. A throng of people, including girls dressed in the bride-white gowns worn for their First Communion, is shown parading out of the church and onto the street just moments before an anarchist's bomb explodes and kills twelve. In the decades on either side of 1900, anarchism found fertile ground in Catalonia, due in part to the frustrations, especially the economic injustices, of a rapidly developing industrial economy. But anarchism was also a symptom of a Spanish state convulsed by its own political failures.

The cemetery belonging to Santa Maria del Mar, located across the street from the east-facing door to the church, has its own important Catalanist significance. The cemetery took in the bodies of many of the people killed when the Bourbon King Felipe V destroyed the Ribera neighborhood at the end of his siege of Barcelona in 1714. The number of the cemetery's occupants grew when nineteenth-century urbanization required the closing of several other urban cemeteries. In 1980, in a period

of post-Franco Catalanist exuberance, the cemetery was covered over and remade as an urban plaza, called El Fossar de les Moreres, dedicated to the memory of September 11, 1714 (the day that ended the massive bombardment by Felipe's forces). September 11 was first celebrated as the Catalan National Day in 1886, was suppressed during Franco's dictatorship, and has returned with renewed vigor as a celebration of Catalan aspirations every September since the dictator's death.

More connective tissue.... In 2006, Idelfonso Falcones published the novel *La Catedral del Mar*, which became a best-seller in its Castilian original as well as its Catalan and English translations (*L'Església del Mar* and *The Cathedral by the Sea*). The rags to riches adventures of its protagonist, Arnau Estanyol, and the operations of the ever-mythologized Inquisition, are set against the enormity of the task of building the late-medieval basilica. The basilica is still an active church, although first communicants and wedding couples must put up with the unending throng of tourists, sometimes barefoot and clad in bikini tops. The tourists' interests usually do not go much beyond having a look at the *bastaixos*, the stevedores depicted on the principal doors (self-referential emblems put there by the men who financed and built the church); admiring the pretty gothic image near the main altar of Mary with a model barque at her feet; and enjoying a respite from the noise and heat outdoors with a retreat into the cool cavernous interior, with its narrow nave, high thin columns, and ribbed vaults.

The Catalan connection to the coast is aroused at other sites, too. Another is the great Benedictine monastic refuge of Sant Pere de Rodes, on the Cap de Creus peninsula in Catalonia's far northeast. A few miles south of the French border, the Cap de Creus is a harsh, wind-dried, stony outcropping of a peninsula, of about 75 square miles. Its daunting natural conditions and impressive view over the Mediterranean Sea made it an exquisite refuge for ascetics. Evidence of a monastic community there dates to the time of Wilfred the Hairy. A castle and small town grew up alongside the monks as their settlement became an imposing monastery. The castle, the town, and the monastery have been in ruins since the seventeenth century, which means that the site was ideal for idealization. The Romantics added it to their repertoire of sites that evoked the decrepitude and decay of the Catholic Church. It reminded *Renaixença* artists and poets of the sturdy independence of the Catalan people during the halcyon days of Catalonia, before their nation's diminution by Spanish and

French monarchs. It continues to be a favorite point of reflection for painters and other artists. Dalí, Miró, Picasso, Andre Breton, Marcel Duchamp, and later Albert Ràfols-Casamada are among those who drew inspiration from the area as they lived for some time in Cadeques, the town on the small bay at the furthest reaches of the Cap de Creus. The impression left by the physicality of the Cap de Creus is such that even the Nobel prize-winning Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez drew upon the devilishly strong and desiccating wind, the Tramontana, blowing down from the Pyrenees onto the cape's rockscape, as the title and subject for one of his stories.

The essential connection between Catalans and the sea, documented at these and other sites, has maintained its vitality even through recent centuries when urbanization, industrialization, global tourism, and other factors have dramatically changed the coastal landscape. Another important site is the Drassanes shipyards, now the Museu Marítim de Barcelona. I will give the Drassanes more attention in the chapter that looks at the ways some sites have been rehabilitated to activate their Catalanist potential.

Beyond the coastline, the Catalan landscape considered in its totality is often associated with the medieval rural past. Conceiving of it in this way, Catalans reserve part of their mental storage for images of those Catalan peasants who in bygone times occupied the river valleys and mountain foothills. The sturdy productivity of these peasants, who raised the livestock and grew the crops that fed Catalans over the generations, is recalled in several popular activities. In the spring, festivals celebrate the arrival of *calçots*. If they aren't grilled on an open fire, wrapped in newspaper, and served with a Romesco, they are mere bulb onions, not *calçots*. On other occasions, like the numerous local medieval fairs, it is essential that local vendors sell Garrotxa cheeses, Butifarra, and Fuet. Even better if the sellers wear the traditional peasant caps called *barretinas*, which Catalans consider typically medieval and typically Catalan.

At Christmastime parents take their children to visit the *Tió de Nadal*—the Christmas log—in the same way parents used to take their children to sit on Santa's lap at shopping malls in the United States. The *Tió* is a big piece of cut wood, propped up on one side so that a cut end points toward viewers. That end has a face painted upon it to look like a ruddy peasant. It sports a *barretina*. By tradition, children wrap the log in a warm blanket and feed it so that, when the time is right, it will dislodge a Christmas gift from its back end (when it is sometimes especially constipated by an exces-

sive load of gifts, the *Tió* needs to be whipped with sticks to release its goodies).⁶

Speaking of dislodging, the fructive inheritance of peasants is also celebrated in the Christmas season with what are called *caganers*, literally, poopers. Typically, these little peasant figurines are made of wood, ceramic, or plastic; they wear *barretinas* and white shirts like those depicted in painted images of Catalan peasants going back to the seventeenth-century; and they squat with their little black pants pulled down to reveal their bare butts in mid-act of defecation. Many Catalans assert that no Christmas nativity scene is complete until it has a *caganer* hidden in its landscape, doing his private business away from the crowd huddled around the baby Jesus. In 2005, a controversy arose in Barcelona when the city mounted its principal nativity tableau without a *caganer*. Important modern personages have appeared as *caganers*, including Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis, Superman and Batman, Barack Obama and Queen Elizabeth II. The Madonna of Montserrat is also depicted with exposed buttocks, much to the displeasure of some bishops.

Carved images of supposedly medieval Catalan pooping peasants are extant from the seventeenth century, so the tradition has had some longevity. Why does it persist? Several motives are ascribed to the *caganer* tradition; the most commonly recited explanation is that the toy droppings symbolize the good harvest that comes from working in well-fertilized soil. There are other explanations. It is not problematic that the image of a seventeenth-century pooping peasant is imagined as medieval, placed in a setting meant to recall the birth of Jesus, and imparted with luck-bringing agency for moderns. The strongest traditions retain their potency by changing with the times and joining disparate parts and meanings, while feeding a deeply human need. In this case, the tradition connects Catalans to a historical geography about their peasant past, a past that leaves little deposits—signs that it is still fertile in the present and future.

FORTITUDE AND FORTUNE IN *LA MASIA*

We could take a more serious path from modern Catalan's recollections to the reality of the rural past by discussing the tradition of the *masia*. A *mas* or *masia* is a Catalan rural family farmhouse, usually substantial in size and

⁶Typing "Tió de Nadal" into a search engine will result in colorful images and descriptions as well as examples of the "shit log" song customarily sung by children at Christmastime.

isolated from the structures of other families. *Masies*, which are typically built of rough and cut stone, have some part of their origins in the *villas rusticas* built by wealthy Romans, although the *masies* are much more modest. Those built prior to the sixteenth century tended to face into the sun, and have slate roofs and arched entranceways. The typical design has two floors, following a plan that put stabled animals in a cellar on the first floor, along with farm equipment, work tools, and the kitchen. The upper floor had sleeping quarters as well as a central room, the *sala*, where the family gathered for conversation and to engage in household tasks like weaving. These were multigenerational homes. Family members and worker-dependents resided there. They were costly constructions, often built up over many generations.

Masies are associated with peasants. These are not the speechless and brutishly poor peasants depicted in, for example, *The Name of the Rose*, the movie in which Sean Connery starred as a monk-detective trying to foil the work of evil inquisitors. We often think of medieval and early-modern peasants as poor farmers, and most often this holds true as regards Catalonia. To the contrary, *masover* peasants were proprietors, sometimes of substantial means.

John Elliott called the *mas* “Catalonia’s principal characteristic, and the hallmark of its individuality.”⁷ As he saw it (and others agree) the *mas* played an important part in Catalonia’s system of rural wealth management, central to the system of medieval and early modern inheritance practices that distinguished Catalans from others on the Iberian Peninsula. Catalan farm families who had the wherewithal to do so practiced primogeniture. This means that at the death of the householder, the property remained intact, devolving to the first-born son or the most reliable heir. By contrast, Castilians divided their properties among many heirs. Over a few generations, the Castilian system of partible inheritance of land assets left even the wealthiest farm families impoverished and beset by jealous squabbling. This is one reason why baronial families and leaders of the Church enjoyed such overwhelming dominance in Castile. When a farmer’s small plot grew too small to produce a crop sufficient to feed the family, the local baron or bishop bought it up at a bargain price, adding it to an ever-expanding aristocratic treasure, and then usually leased it back to the farmer, who became a tenant.

⁷ John Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans*, 30–40.

In Catalonia, inheritance of the entire *masia* permitted non-aristocratic farm families to build and maintain wealth over generations. As Elliott put it: “In a sense the *masia*, the solid symbol of the family’s property and status, was more important than any of its occupants. One generation of *masovers* succeeded another, but the *masia* remained, solid and immutable, an entity in its own right.” It is not without some justification that the *masia* has entered Catalan collective imagination as one of many examples of the special financial proclivities of the Catalans.

The word “*masia*” moves the minds of present-day Catalans in many directions. Nowadays many medieval and early modern *masies* have been renovated for use as restaurants, bed and breakfast sites, restaurants, and tourist information centers. They are prominent features of the tourism and entertainment landscape. The best of them have become luxury homes.

The *masia* is also a staple cultural icon appearing in films, novels, and paintings. A painting of pivotal importance in the career of Joan Miró, called *La Masia*, is an illustration of his childhood home. He wrote at length about the nine-month gestation of the work, describing how difficult it was to paint an image that would capture the details of a place so personal and so potently Catalan. Antoni Tàpies purchased a *mas* at Campins in the 1960s and worked there for much of his active life as a painter until his death at the age of 88 in 2002. Tàpies, who counts among the most Catalanist of Catalan painters, made the *masia* in which he worked very explicitly a part of the influences upon his artistic work. His name, from the word for “wall,” like the wall of his *mas*, became a principal symbol in his work. His paintings are, after a manner of speaking, wall-sized paintings of wall-like images: blood-stained and graffiti-scribbled walls; walls cut, scratched, pocked, as if by knives and bullets; walls thick with paint as if encumbered by time. One of the most famous is *Pintura Romànica i Barretina* (1971), depicting a wall with a *barretina* tied by a cord that hangs from the top of the image. His painting called *L’Esperit Català* (1971) and his homage to an important Catalan republican political leader, *Campanys* (1974), are exemplary of his bold depictions of Catalanist enthusiasm.

La Masia is also the name of a residence and school attached to the youth development league of the Barcelona Football Club. Sergio Busquets, Andrés Iniesta, Lionel Messi, and Xavi Hernandez, among other Barça greats, had their start as students at La Masia. To be one of Barcelona’s best footballers is to appreciate the resonant history of the *mas*.

CHURCH AND CASTLE IN SPACE AND TIME

Talk of Tàpies leads to a discussion of Romanesque churches. “Romanesque” refers to the architectural, artistic, and sculptural features associated with monasteries, churches, hermitages, and other ecclesiastical buildings built in the tenth to twelfth centuries, before the Gothic inventions. We cannot say that Romanesque churches are inherently Catalan, since they were built throughout Europe. However, whereas Romanesque buildings are now rare in most of Europe, they can be found in abundance in Catalonia. The Catalan Pyrenees were spared the most destructive effects of modernity—rapid population growth, urbanization and industrialization, and war, all of which contributed to the disappearance of most of Europe’s Romanesque stock. Moreover, just when other regions of Europe turned against the remnants of their Catholic past, the ecclesiastical structures dotting the pastoral Catalan countryside were coming to the notice of Catalan geographers, historians, and other participants of the excursionism movement within the Catalan *Renaixença*, including Jacint Verdaguer and others who linked the Romanesque to a deep appreciation for Catalan identity.

In recent decades, many Romanesque buildings in the landscape of the Pre-Pyrenean foothills have undergone restoration to increase their availability for public viewing. Many, like the Romanesque churches of the Val de Boí, have been entered onto the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) list of heritage sites and various other rosters of architectural assets.⁸ In Catalonia, as elsewhere, many of the most significant artifacts from inside the churches were removed long ago to the homes of robber-baron collectors like the Rockefellers (The Cloisters Museum in New York, financed by the Rockefeller family, is a major repository).

Among the exemplars of Romanesque art and artifacts that have not been expropriated are frescoes and other extraordinary items on permanent display at the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC). The MNAC is one of the most significant repositories of Catalan historical memory and, as such, is beloved by Catalans. It is in this context that I mention Antoni Tàpies because he explicitly connected his own work and

⁸United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, World Heritage Convention, “Catalan Romanesque Churches of the Vall de Boí,” n.d., accessed November 1, 2017, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/988>

his Catalanist sensibilities to what he saw in MNAC's holdings. This is made plain in an exhibition called "A Visit to the Romanesque. In the Company of Antoni Tàpies," produced by MNAC in conjunction with an exhibition by the Tàpies Foundation in 2013–2014 entitled "Tàpies from Within." The museum presented a series of notes and placards upon which the curators used the painter's own words to illustrate "how Romanesque art was one of the underlying art forms in the training, inspiration and sensibility of Antoni Tàpies." A focal point of the exhibition, and the illustrative item for the exhibition's publication, was the painting *Pintura Romànica i Barretina*, mentioned above, that looks like a wall with a red peasant cap suspended by a rope from the top of the painted frame.⁹ In 2016–2017, the MNAC offered an exhibition similarly examining the influence of Catalan Romanesque upon Picasso.¹⁰

The Catalan landscape and the Catalan collective imagination are also filled with Gothic cathedrals and monasteries. Each of Catalonia's major cities has its cathedral located where it is visible from a great distance—on a hill, precipice, or promontory. In Barcelona, Tarragona, Girona, and elsewhere, Christian builders chose to construct their most significant edifices directly over pre-existing Roman structures, which themselves were positioned upon the most impressive promontories. It is unfortunate that we cannot offer space here for a detailed discussion of the unique history and charms of each. In general, they were, and are, imposing and impressive structures filled with artifacts that resonate in the Catalan collective memory. They continue to play a part in the social order, even if the part played is somewhat different than it was several hundred years ago.

Church buildings still serve as focal points of the most important social activities. First communions, weddings, and burials happen there. The Sardana is danced in the plaza out in front, and the local band plays there, too, on important days of celebration. In large towns like Vic and small towns like Súria, the medieval *casc urbà*, the collection of buildings of medieval origins with the cathedral at its core, is the excuse the town needs to organize a local medieval fair. Medieval fairs in the US (where there is no actual medieval history) are occasions for fun and games, make-

⁹Information about the exhibition and an image of the painting can be found at Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, "A Visit to the Romanesque in the Company of Antoni Tàpies," 2013, accessed November 1, 2017, <http://www.museunacional.cat/en/visit-romanesque-company-antoni-tapias>

¹⁰Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, "Romanesque Picasso," 2016, accessed November 1, 2017, <http://www.museunacional.cat/en/romanesque-picasso>

believe Renaissance dress-up, and beer-drinking to excess. These are characteristics of the medieval fairs at Vic and Surià as well, although those Catalan towns add traditional elements—food, music, clothing, etc.—for which the fairs’ promoters assert a local, Catalan, and distinctly medieval provenance.

Many bridges and walled exteriors are part of the physical and mental geography of Catalonia’s so-called “medieval” towns. One of the most impressive bridges is at Besalú. In the early medieval period the town grew to importance as the capital city of the counts of Besalú, and by the twelfth century, in a period of fantastic growth in the number and size of European towns—Europe’s first period of rapid urbanization—Besalú prospered as one of the largest towns in the region around Girona. Construction of the bridge built across the Fluvià River attests to the town’s strength. Since the Fluvià is quite wide and forceful where it encounters Besalú, the bridge needed to facilitate the considerable traffic in goods and people in and out of town while also overcoming the stresses put upon it by the river. As a result, in its original High Medieval design the bridge is very large, arranged with massive arched supports anchored to rock protuberances at the river bottom. Later builders placed gated watchtowers, not at each end of the bridge as might seem typical of such urban-access bridges, but nearer the bridge’s center point. In addition to the bridge, various other of Besalú’s features remain from centuries ago—the layout of streets and plazas, the remains of churches and other civic edifices, and some elements of the town wall. These remain amenable to those who are ready to mentally relocate themselves to a reimagined medieval Catalonia. Just inside the town, and adding to its medieval mystique, are evidentiary remains of the large Jewish community that prospered there for several centuries.¹¹

Like many towns that gained wealth and prominence in the Middle Ages, the political and economic value of Besalú diminished in the early modern period. The town languished until, in modern times, appearing to some as if it were a place where time had stopped, it suddenly took on a new importance, especially for local and international tourism, and was symbolized most by its bridge. Besalú is now regarded as a well-preserved “medieval” town.

¹¹ Martí Gironell i Gamero, “A Magical Journey Through Jewish Besalú,” June 22, 2014, accessed November 1, 2017, <http://www.gotosefarad.com/a-magical-journey-through-the-jewish-history-of-besalu/>

The Pont de Pedret, which crosses the Llobregat in the Berguedá region is another example of a bridge connecting the present to the medieval past. The prominence of this “gothic” bridge has increased with the resurgence over the last century of the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. The Pont del Diable, or Devil’s Bridge, at Martorell is another example. As you might expect me to point out, there are many of these bridges throughout the Catalan lands that draw people’s attention back to the medieval past. Catalan day hikers, weekend travelers, and history-buff excursionists can count such bridges in the hundreds, and local tourist and excursionist associations have organized them into various tourist routes, the *rutas del ponts medievals*. My goal, to say it again, is not to be comprehensive but to illustrate with a few examples one category in the memory inventory—bridges—that remains open to exploration and exploitation by Catalans who use the past to direct their thoughts and actions in the present.

Castles are perhaps the quintessential reminder of things medieval and of medieval things Catalan. From where I write here in the US, our movies continue to tell us that castles are those places from which damsels seek rescue or where a defensive enclosure protects people of one nation or religion as they fight against another. The truth is somewhat different. Medieval castles, most especially those in Catalonia through the peak period of the nation’s expansion, had a more mundane purpose: to establish the dominance of a lord over some chunk of turf worked by peasants. The first object was to exploit peasants for profit. Notions like chivalry, governance, judicial authority, and the defense of one people against others were afterthoughts or secondary considerations. I say this to point out that castles in Catalonia, over the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and beyond, were as ubiquitous as banks and box stores are today and, so to speak, served much the same purpose, which was to make wealth for already rich men.

The Catalan countryside is littered with the remains of castles and stone towers. Reputable sources have documented over one thousand.¹² Many are difficult to find at the top of their little hills in the middle of nowhere; but they do not go unnoticed. Any excursion into the Catalan countryside brings a great number of them into view.

¹² One among the many general-interest websites that offer photo archives of a great number of castles and towers is [Salillas.net](http://salillas.net), “Castells Medievals,” last modified August 21, 2016, accessed on November 1, 2017, <http://salillas.net/castillos/index.htm>

One of the best known is Quermançó, on a hilltop above the town of Vilajüiga in the province of Girona. The counts of Empúries had the castle built by 1078. It remained in more or less continuous use until Napoleon's troops, who used it as a bunkhouse and weapons depot, set off explosives that blew it up as they withdrew in 1814. It has been in ruins ever since. Frankly, the details of its actual history are not especially relevant. In its present state of dilapidation, the castle is not spectacular; however, it becomes apparent seeing it even in its present condition that it was once an imposing presence at the entrance to the narrow mountain pass that connects Llança and other coastal towns with the fertile interior valley north of Castelló de Empúries.

The modern relevance of Quermançó comes mostly from the fact that it was a favorite castle of Salvador Dalí. The surrealist depicted it in many of his paintings treating medievalizing nostalgia, memory, desire, excess, and ample distortion, all of which, in one way or another, are themes of this book. Castles played a key role in Dalí's conception of time as persistent and fleeting, here and gone. Quermançó Castle holds special interest because Salvador Dalí made it central to his own special nostalgia for the medieval weird and wild. He talked of turning it into a giant pipe organ or of drawing visitors to see elephants in the dungeon, but he mostly used it in his paintings as a sign that the past is always reconcilable to the present when dressed in mystery and half-truth.

A few of Catalonia's castles have undergone rehabilitation or reconstruction so that they operate now as luxury residences and hotels. Cardona Castle may be the most impressive fortress in Catalonia. From its imposing mountain perch, counts and castellans once commanded the resources of the rural enclaves in the valleys of the Cardener River and its tributaries. Wikipedia, tourist guidebooks, and Catalan popular histories call it "a ninth-century castle," going so far as to tell readers that it was built by Wilfred the Hairy. While Wilfred played a part in locating a tower on the site, what he built would seem puny and insignificant compared to what is there now. Various building campaigns by the viscounts of Osona and then the powerful counts of Cardona, and later addenda made even into the Napoleonic period, have changed Cardona beyond anything that would be remotely recognizable to Wilfred. Location and imagination are all that link this composite of castle-building architecture spanning more than half a millennium to its current use. In recent years Cardona Castle has been so spruced up that it is one of the premier sites in a string of luxury Parador hotels. For several hundred Euros you can stay in a very well

appointed room quite unlike the dank, greasy, sulfurous place it was before. Nonetheless, Cardona Castle is so dramatic and imposing when observed even from great distances it is no wonder that it looms large in the Catalan imagination. Remember, too, that a place like Cardona Castle grew large because of its importance as a place from which to exploit local resources and gain strategic advantage over competitors. The Siege of Cardona in 1711 was decisive in the history of the War of Spanish Succession. When the Bourbon side finally took the castle, it meant that Felipe's troops had successfully cut off Barcelona from the rest of Catalonia. Some locales call up mixed emotions.

Two castles bring especially nasty memories to the minds of Barcelonans. At the southwestern edge of Barcelona, overlooking the harbor, is the hill of Montjuïc. It offers a panoramic view of the city, and it looks out over the Mediterranean. In an era when hilltop outlooks and strong walls defined urban military defensive tactics, the mountain was an obvious point of observation and protection for the city. With the advent of cannons, however, Montjuïc's proximity to the city became a potential threat. At the Battle of Montjuïc, in January of 1641, during the Catalan Revolt, a Catalan army with French assistance successfully repelled forces sent from Madrid. In this instance, Catalans won the battle but lost the war. By the turn of the century the roles had decisively reversed. In 1694, an English force working for the Spanish Hapsburg king gained control of the site and strengthened it, and over the next century English, Spanish, and French forces added new layers of bulwarks and battlements, constructing a castle capable of dominating the increasingly unruly residents of the city. Then came the War of Succession, during which Barcelona became a military target, as a result of which Montjuïc became the site from which bombs rained down on the city in 1705 and again in 1714. Spanish forces bombarded the city from Montjuïc again in 1842 and 1843, when Isabella II felt the threat of an insurgency begun by Barcelonans, and once again in 1856 to restore a conservative liberal government under her monarchy after two years of a raucous attempt at rule by progressive liberals. Thereafter, and especially during the Spanish Civil War, Montjuïc became the site of a series of nefarious activities, including tortures and assassinations, by parties aligned with and against Catalanist causes.

Montjuïc Hill now bustles with the varied recreational activities of locals and tourists. In preparation for the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition, much of the area at the top of the hill was cleared for development. The Palau Nacional, the Estadi Olímpic, and several other landmarks

built at that time remain in use and have become important cultural institutions. The Palau Nacional, for example, currently houses the MNAC, which not only is the major repository for Catalan art but is also one of the premier museums in Europe for the display of Romanesque church art. The old Estadi Olímpic was renovated for the Barcelona Olympics of 1992, at which point it was renamed Estadi Olímpic Lluís Companys. These and many cultural institutions and sports facilities on the hill are linked to each other by a series of beautiful parks and gardens, biking trails and footpaths. Montjuïc is one of the principal destinations for the millions of tourists visiting Barcelona. But for Catalans, Barcelonans in particular, the castle still looms large as a symbol of historic attacks upon the city's residents.

Many Barcelonans consider Montjuïc odious—a place to be hated. Why that is can be made resoundingly clear. Lluís Companys, the man in whose honor the Olympic stadium is now named, is one of Catalonia's preeminent heroes. Companys was the President of the Catalan Generalitat, from 1934 through the Spanish Civil War. He declared Catalonia an independent republic just as Franco's coup d'état began. He was exiled to France, captured by German Nazi agents, and sent to Madrid, tortured and given a one-hour trial there, and then returned to Montjuïc castle where he was shot dead by one of Franco's firing squads. It remains the case that he is the only democratically elected president of a European state to have been executed while in office.

The other hated fortress in Barcelona's past was called the Ciutadella. Immediately following the Siege of 1714 (when Felipe V's army bombarded the city from Montjuïc), the Bourbon king ordered the construction of this second urban fortress on the opposite side of the city. The enormous complex was built on the plan of a five-pointed star-shaped base reticulated to present an impregnable façade. At the time of its construction the Ciutadella was the largest fortress in Europe and could house as many as eight thousand troops. In an urban setting like that of Barcelona, such an enormous complex could be built only by destroying homes, which the king's builders appeared to have done without any thought to the long-term damage it would do to the relationship between the king and the people of Barcelona. A substantial part of the Ribera district was destroyed, leaving homeless the neighborhood's inhabitants. One of the largest and most beautiful female monasteries in the city, the Monestir de Sant Antoni i Santa Clara, was destroyed. Taken together, Montjuïc Castle and the

Ciutadella made it absolutely clear that the people of Barcelona had no choice but to capitulate to the demands of the King of Spain.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Spain's empire had fractured; its sources of gold and silver and its international markets were in decline. Catalonia had become Spain's industrial engine. In addition, new modes of political and economic coercion had replaced the kind of direct force from castle strongholds applied by the early Bourbon kings. In this context, the mayor of Barcelona received permission to have the Ciutadella destroyed to clear space for what would become the 1888 Universal Exposition. The Exposition had the result of bringing Barcelona into the limelight of international affairs. It also left the city with the beginnings of the Parc de la Ciutadella, which ultimately became a lovely residential park and a major tourist attraction. The castle no longer exists, but its memory resounds loudly in the park's geography, in its name, and in the many markers, history books, and guides. A stroll through Ciutadella Park, pleasant as it may be in one respect, is an opportunity to recall an aspect of the ugly treatment of the Catalans by their own Spanish overlords.

We have only begun to take an accounting of Catalonia's cultural and political geography. The inventory is vast, and its full potency would take more pages to fully illustrate. But we must move on.

Making Meaning

The first half of this book demonstrated that the Catalan people possess a collective memory, an inventory of recollections that they call upon in purposeful ways. The array of resources for building up that memory—the inventory—is quite varied. I have tried to illustrate the variety by pointing to several loosely conceived containers for sorting the parts: historical verities; concocted myths and legends; meaningful people, events and places; and activities, performances, and objects that aid in recollection. I have offered some illustrative examples while admitting along the way that these examples should not be confused with a comprehensive tally.

Catalans have created a core narrative that defends medieval origins, that posits an essential pre-modern entrepreneurialism, and that recalls a precocious political heritage at the forefront of modern European democracies. From that core derive spin-off secondary and tertiary narratives, a fractal-patterned array of storylines that get reworked and recombined to suit the needs of the ever-changing present. While storytelling is a fundamental characteristic of humankind, I agree with Peter Burke and others who admit that some groups appear keener to remember the past than others.¹ The Catalan people have more than a thousand years of experience at telling themselves the tales that have shaped their identity. And they have gotten pretty good at it. Americans, by contrast, have a much

¹Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 53–56.

sparser storytelling past, and their thinner narrative thread typically centers around notions of American exceptionalism (an exceptionalism that the economic and political realities of recent decades have begun to challenge). At the heart of this book is my belief that American readers, and others, can learn about what history is, what collective memory is, what it means to tell meaningful stories, and to what purposes stories can be put, from taking account of the Catalans' long record of sustaining their culture by doing these things.

The following chapters move beyond documenting the contents of the memory catalogue to studying many ways the inventory is assembled into interpretations. In general terms, these chapters are about how the resources available to memory construction get turned into ways of seeing the world. Before we push on, it will be useful to identify a couple of the notions that provide some directions for the path ahead.

First, it is an uncomfortable truth about the workings of collective memory that it directs us in ways we do not always control. People and their memories are engaged in a conversation. There is a logic to this conversation between memories and people, a set of operations philosophers and social theorists call a dialectic. Catalans, as we know, rework the component parts of their collective memory. It may be less clear to readers, and so I need to point it out, that the parts also operate upon Catalans.

Catalans make their inventory of memories into something new when they contribute to the inventory by, for example, producing a book, a painting, or a musical composition, or by asserting a political position, attending a church service or a regional festival, and so on. Such acts may have outcomes that are willed and purposeful, determinately sought out and achieved. This book's title, *Constructing Catalan Identity*, suggests that the stories Catalans tell are functional, purposefully built. But it isn't always that way.

On the other hand, some stories get told (or, to put it more broadly, memories get recalled and actions get performed) by a means akin to muscle memory. Catalans, like all people, sometimes act without thinking, or, maybe it is better to say, act without being fully aware of what they are thinking. They act upon the stories in their heads without even knowing that they are doing so, and without taking full account of the implications. Having internalized or naturalized their corporate self-assessment, they do not consciously attend to the possible meanings and outcomes. With this in mind, *Constructing Catalan Identity* is also about how Catalans

participate unwittingly in their own remaking. Catalans themselves get reconstructed by their own actions. Like the Catalans, all of us undergo change through the process of reminding ourselves of who we are.

Specialists argue about the exact mechanisms and media by which social memories are stored, recalled, and put to work. Historians, like anthropologists and other social theorists, used to presume that a few experts in remembering—prophets, wise men, historians—had unique access to the memories of human groups. We now know that acts of social recollection are more broadly distributed than that. No single individual, professional caste, or disciplinary contingent is the repository for the collective memories of complex societies.

The cognitive neuroscientist Merlin Donald has made some sense of the difficulty by observing that social memory is analogous to cloud computing. It seems that we store and recall information on “the cloud” as if by magic, although beyond our perception a network of hard storage devices is at work. The memories of our social groups, he suggests, are permanently stored in our various externalized media—writing, visual images, architecture, and the other things we make and use to communicate to each other.² Donald’s analogy seems workable, but only to a point. He does not take sufficient account of the extreme malleability of collective memories nor of the human propensity to recollect in partial and erroneous ways. Unlike stable storage in the cloud, social memory is more akin to what happens by the end of the kids’ game “telephone,” when what the last person recalls turns out to be very different from what the original speaker intends.

Cognitive scientists would also tell Donald that each new observation of the external media reconfigures our hard-storage brains. Events tweak our neural structures so that gaining new memories always means losing or reshaping old ones. The computer analogy points to another significant problem: We know the dangers that arise when our corporate memories get purposefully spun, manipulated by pundits and ideologues. The storage inside our heads is constantly open to hacking.

²Merlin Donald, *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 308–323. Donald’s analogy has its usefulness, although there are good reasons to argue against his view that “the memory system, once collectivized into the external symbolic storage system, becomes virtually unlimited in capacity and much more robust and precise.” Most researchers in memory studies see collective memory as porous, imprecise, and malleable in ways that make it far from precise.

Leaving these matters to experts in cognition and memory construction, what matters to me as a historian is that we admit the following about how we store, retrieve, and interpret the past: (a) Perfect accuracy of storage is impossible; (b) accuracy of recall is not always a priority; (c) memories, even the faulty ones, get put to use; and (d) propaganda and prejudice play their part in storage, recall, and interpretation.

The following chapters explore the meanings and purposes of the stories Catalans tell about themselves. Chapter 6 focuses on two recurring themes in the histories of Spain and Catalonia—*decadència* and *renaixença*. Decadence and renaissance are interpretive schemes, meaning that they make sense of large concentrations of data. They are also moral frameworks, tools by which to measure the character of individuals and collectives who take positions in ongoing arguments about the success of Catalan self-awareness. Chapter 7 looks at examples of medievalizing and of modernizing. Catalans have succeeded at turning an array of sites and events into occasions for creating value for a perceived medieval past. Similarly, when certain people, places, and objects are brought forward from the past for reconsideration, they are modernized, made useful for the present as past-oriented reflections upon the present. Chapter 7 explores the meaning that comes from this back-and-forth dance between the present and the medieval past. The eighth chapter looks broadly at how Catalans communicate their historicized sense of self in the assertions they make about their Catalan language. We also examine in this chapter how Catalans exploit various media—print, internet, exhibitions and conferences, performances, etc.—to promulgate messages to diverse audiences.

We end with an epilogue, in which I attempt to take a position about the confounding present-day circumstances in which Catalans find themselves. That the Catalan people have come to know themselves so well means that they have brought upon themselves an existential crisis. The crisis will almost certainly be resolved to their benefit. But how long will it take, and at what cost? Moreover, when Catalans do succeed in resolving the current political crisis, they will be changed by that future outcome they have created. What then?



Decadence and Renaissance

The Principality of Catalonia, with its political center in Barcelona, enjoyed a period of cultural and economic vitality in the Late Middle Ages when it was at the head of a mighty Mediterranean empire. That empire came to an end. Instead of prosperity, Catalonia's early modern period—from the death of Martin the Humane in 1410 through the war that ended with the bombardment of Barcelona by Felipe V's troops in 1714—left a record of distress and destruction. Our list of events in the third chapter identified some of the most difficult occurrences—the Civil War begun in 1462, the Catalan Revolt of the 1640s, and the War of Spanish Succession. What interests us in this chapter and those that follow is not the evidence of actual events but, rather, the ways that the Catalan people have managed their interpretations of events. If you were to ask a Catalan on the street to characterize those pre-modern years, as I have done, he or she would likely respond by turning to a single word: “*Decadència*.” “Decadence” is a vague term, which, as it turns out, is what makes it useful.

Decadence describes social conditions that have moved away from a zenith toward what gets read as a nadir. As a concept that attempts to perceive evidence of disorder and decline, decadence has a long provenance. Montesquieu used the term to describe the waning of the Roman Empire. Nietzsche drew on it freely, mostly to decry various forms of moralizing and to encourage doubt about the efficacy of religion. Decadence reaches across the full range of political philosophies: While Lenin saw in the decadence of elitist capitalism a harbinger of a future

glorious communism, Jose Ortega y Gasset applied the notion of decadence to the ignorance of mass politics. Decadence has been called a “theory of history” applied to general features of the rise and fall of nations and empires. A subject of recent research among historians and others is the relationship between medievalism, nationalism, and decadence in the modern historiographies of many European states.¹

When we talk about decadence we usually assume some sort of human failing; it is not merely about abstract systems and institutions in decline. Ultimately, decadence has overtones of moral degeneration. When things go wrong, people are to blame. Thus, the utility of decadence as a conceptual tool has much to do with how it helps those who employ it to identify and blame purveyors of disorder.

Decadence also has a bright side. It introduces and substantiates the possibility of regeneration. In Catalan historiography, decadence came to an end in an important moment of rebirth Catalans call the *Renaixença*. In its narrowest interpretive frame, this Catalan Renaissance is associated with a revival of arts and letters, although it soon got attached to a broader appeal for political and cultural rejuvenation, and thus to the powerful changes in the direction of cultural identity and civic engagement that we now refer to as Catalanism. Many of the most potent political associations, social rituals, and civic events that fuel the fires of today’s Catalanism first emerged or gained momentum in the period of the Renaissance. We have already identified many examples, and this chapter will look at others. The streetscapes and museums of Barcelona and greater Catalonia offer evidence of exemplary buildings, spectacular paintings, and other artifacts that remind Catalans and visitors to Catalonia to value the *Renaixença* as an impressive period of cultural reinvention. This is certainly the case if we admit that Catalan Modernism, that cultural movement whose greatest exemplar was the architect Antoni Gaudí, is a direct successor to the *Renaixença*.

The existence of a period of revival and reinvention has been essential in permitting Catalans to point back to a positively imagined medieval. In comparative context, looking through the luster of renaissance into and past the dullness of its period of decadence, Catalans can see the medieval

¹ The literature on decadence is immense and varied. For concise introductions, see Neville Morley, “Decadence as a Theory of History,” *New Literary History* 35 (2004): 573–585; Mary Gluck, “Decadence as historical myth and cultural theory,” *European Review of History* 21 (2014): 349–361.

history of their place and people with special fondness. The impoverishment and dislocation of early modernity make the medieval look healthful and stable, full of sustaining instructions for the present. Of course, the medieval period was never so sublime, just as the early modern period was not as dark as Catalans have at times wished to portray it. But no matter the facts, these characterizations have tenacity because they do needful work.

A note about moment and momentousness: In the historical self-awareness of the Catalan people, the terms “decadence” and “renaissance” refer not only to cultural trends at two distinct periods in time but also to two opposing perennial realities. Decadence, then, now, and always, explains those things that obstruct the full positive elaboration of cultural, political, and economic institutions. Renaissance and modernism, then, now, and always, imply the restoration of past glory, or, at the very least, a significant improvement upon a past reality. To decode the generalizations in their Catalan applications: Decadence has come to stand in for the essence of a failing, autocratic Spain, the perennial enemy other; renaissance and modernism, on the other hand, have become the measure and method of an ever-renewing spirit, always restoring the Catalan people to their highest aspirations.

DECADÈNCIA: A MALLEABLE CONCEPT

Decadence found its way into the discourse about Catalonia in the late eighteenth century as a way of explaining an apparent decline in the use of Catalan as a language of literature. Catalans today argue that “decadence” is a word that no longer applies to Catalonia and, they say, it never did apply. What used to look like Catalan decadence was merely fallout from the bombastic actions of a decadent Spain, the detritus left behind by Spain that it took Catalans some time to clean up.

In the High and Late Middle Ages, Catalans, writing in their own mother tongue, produced some stellar examples of European literature. Among the outpouring we include the *Quatre Grans Cròniques*; the lyric poetry of the Occitan/Catalan troubadours; and the great works of Ramón Llull, Francesc Eiximenis, and Ausiàs March. These works had influence. We know from his own words, for example, that Miguel de Cervantes acknowledged as an important influence Joanot Martorell’s *Tirant lo Blanch*.

But the politics of language usage turned against the Catalans. After 1410, and especially after the ascension of Ferdinand and Isabella, Catalan

elites, seeking to maintain their privileges, found in the use of the Castilian tongue a way to draw themselves closer to their Castilian monarchs and the Castilian court in the hope of receiving some of the benefits of empire. By the time of the great literary successes of Spain's *Siglo de Oro*, Catalan writers in the Principality of Catalonia saw it as an imperative to write in the dominant language—Castilian—of the emerging Spanish state. We have here the beginnings of what generations of scholars reported as the decadence of the Catalan language. Catalan had lost its place, not only as a leading language of literature but also as a language of government and administration. From the sixteenth into the start of the nineteenth century, Catalan elites and intellectuals turned their attention away from their native Catalan and toward the ascendant language of Madrid.

By about 1800, Catalan philologists and historians took notice of the shift, although they did not immediately know what to do about it. Among the earliest of these were Antoni de Capmany, Pau Piferrer, and Manuel Milà i Fontanals. These were politically conservative men, defenders of the Spanish nation. Capmany's major work of Catalan maritime history, his *Memorias Históricas*, is sometimes taken to be the first modern history of his native Barcelona. But Capmany wrote his *Memorias* in Madrid, while employed as the secretary of the Royal Academy of History there; and he wrote in Castilian (Spanish), not in Catalan. Milà i Fontanals, who lived in or near Barcelona for his entire life and worked for most of that time as a professor of literature at the University of Barcelona, also wrote predominantly in Castilian, and on Castilian subjects.

These men did not have as their intention the revival of literary Catalan, nor did they seek to advance anything like modern political Catalanism. Some intellectuals in their generation even appeared willing to declare Catalan a dead language. Piferrer's collections of medieval folklore serve as an example of an effort to take account of Catalan only as a language of purely historical relevance to the world of letters. Intellectuals in a later generation, late nineteenth-century Catalan writers who had turned more explicitly toward a Catalanist ideology, were not entirely sure how to deal with these predecessors. While some saw them as the initiators of a literary revival, others believed that the early generation had suffered from "an excessive worship of the past [...] converting literary Catalanism into an archeological resurrection."²

² Jaume Brossa "Viure del Passat," in *L'Avenç* 4, no. 9 (1892): 257–264, "L'excessiu culte al passat que s'apoderà del regionalisme esterilitzà tota concepció moderna, convertint el catalanisme literari en una resurrecció arqueològica."

Despite the intermediate skeptics, modern Catalans hold these three men in the highest esteem as forerunners in the restoration of literary Catalan. The praise is not entirely unwarranted. Capmany, Milà i Fontanals, and Piferrer looked back to identify the “classics” of Catalan medieval literature, and in doing so they unleashed an interest among elites in the language and literature of their forefathers. But it makes little sense to imagine them holding Catalanist views or advancing a Catalanist agenda. To put it simply, they took their place in a generation of Catalans on their way to becoming Spaniards. Their native language, Catalan, had waned as an important language of literature, law, and public discourse. In wondering why that was they looked to rediscover their past, but they had no intention of initiating a revolution.³

Those who took note of the decline of the Catalan language were followed by others who talked of decadence as a means of understanding not only literary developments but also economic and political change in early modern Catalonia.⁴ By the last decades of the nineteenth century, theorists had settled on a more comprehensive explanation of what happened in earlier centuries. This is how they assessed the situation:

When the profits of Castile’s overseas adventures went to Madrid, Seville, and Cadiz, Catalans lost the mercantile and administrative advantages they had possessed in medieval times. Whether by fault of bad judgment or the affliction of limited choices, Catalan intellectual and economic elites began to shun their own native language, speaking and writing in Castilian Spanish as a way of competing in a society given over to an increasingly deliberate and unavoidable process of Castilianization. Decadence was no longer applicable to literary decline alone but also to the arenas of politics, economy, and public administration. Catalonia in the early modern centuries had succumbed to the Castilian state.

Explanations of Catalonia’s early modern decadence that included economic and political factors held their appeal, for intellectuals and the

³ Angel Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 25. Although Capmany was conservative and wrote in Castilian, his prejudices included the view that Catalans were more industrious than Castilians. Castile, he argued, had entered into decline as a result of the preeminence of aristocratic values and the disdain for manual labor. He excluded Catalonia from this malaise.

⁴ Josep R. Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 70, asserts that two views of Catalan recovery of the past were running parallel to each other. One aimed to illustrate the roots of the Catalan popular conscience, the other aimed to show the limitations of Castilianization.

Catalan public alike, until late in the twentieth century. Into the 1950s and 1960s, some historians, Jaume Vicens Vives and Pierre Vilar among them, saw it as a goal of their own work to supply evidence that would confirm the widely held view that Catalonia had suffered from literary, political, and economic decadence in the early modern period. The new methods of their historical materialism drew them toward a deeper appreciation of structural and institutional factors, which in turn required that they attend to the broader context of the Spanish empire, which, of course, by their time had fallen away. This led them to identify two directions of inquiry, which their successors advanced with great rigor: They identified some unpleasant dysfunctions in the operation of the Spanish empire, and they also saw asymmetries in the relationship between Spain and its parts, Catalonia among them.

Catalan decadence was becoming its own cottage industry, with scholars turning their attention to understand the timing and extent of Catalonia's crisis within the Spanish state. This led to some sharp disagreements. Claude Carrère asserted that Catalonia's decline culminated in the Catalan Civil War, while Mario del Treppo argued, to the contrary, that the Civil War initiated the period of decline.⁵ Then Nuriá Sales, under Vilar's tutelage, produced a very detailed treatise in 1989, *Els Segles de Decadència: Segles XVI–XVIII*, in which she offered an exhaustive account of the full range of demographic, environmental, economic, political, and social-structural concerns that contributed to Catalonia's decline over three centuries. Her assessment was at once an extraordinarily rich confirmation of Catalonia's disabilities and an admission of the explanatory weakness of decadence. Sales demonstrated that the numerable contingencies, exigencies, and accidents of Catalan history remained well beyond the ability of individuals and groups in those centuries to fully comprehend or correct. She also demonstrated, perhaps not fully aware that she was doing so, that decadence was an ill-fitting conceptual imposition upon

⁵ Claude Carrère, *Barcelone: Centre économique à l'époque des difficultés, 1360–1462* (Paris: La Haye, 1967); Mario del Treppo, *I mercanti catalani e l'espansione della Corona d'Aragón nel secolo XV* (Naples: L'arte tipografica, 1972). Also Carme Batlle i Gallart, *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV* (Barcelona: CSIC, 1972). On the evolution of the term "decadence" in its application to literature and culture in Valencia, see Vicent Josep Escartí, "Nota Sobre La Decadencia," in *Les Lletres hispàniques als segles XVI, XVII i XVIII*, ed. Tomàs Martínez Romero (Castellón de la Plana: Fundació Germà Colón Domènech, 2005), 59–72.

the past, an interpretation too easily used as a crutch, an overly simple frame for such a complex web of evidence.⁶

Into the 1990s, then, it seemed that decadence had been applied to every aspect of early modern Catalan life in such a way that it had lost much of its conceptual grip. This raised a serious concern: Perhaps nineteenth-century theorists had shown themselves to be crude and unfair in blaming their predecessors for what Catalonia had suffered in previous centuries. Important reassessments followed. Joan-Lluís Marfany has recently argued, for example, that the elaboration of the story of decadence by nineteenth-century writers was self-serving. After all, he claims, the literary and scholarly careers of the revivalists—those engaged in advancing the notion of a *Renaiçença*—had the most to gain as the view took hold that they were the champions of a Catalan language their predecessors had failed to defend.⁷

In recent years one of the most significant changes of direction in the application of decadence to Catalan affairs has been undertaken by Albert García i Espuche. We will assess his contribution after a quick detour meant to widen our field of vision. Having taken account of a broader perspective, we will see that over the time when Catalonia was being released from the conceptual grip of decadence evidence that Spain was a decadent nation was growing deeper and more convincing.

The notion of Spanish decadence has a long history. It has its origins in the Black Legend, the assortment of stories told by French and English writers in the seventeenth century, which aimed to show the ineptitude and cruelty of the Spanish empire.⁸ The Black Legend had much to do with envy and prejudice, of course, but it also held truths that stung Spaniards. Into the nineteenth century, Spanish observers of their own nation's history saw clearly enough for themselves the ample evidence that Spain was losing ground against competitor nations, that its failure to make the progress others were making toward modernity had to be blamed, at least in part, upon the political and cultural incompetence of its

⁶ Núria Sales de Bohigas, *Els Segles de la decadència: segles XVI-XVIII* (Barcelona: Ediciones 62, 1989).

⁷ Joan Lluís Marfany, "Minority Languages and Literary Revivals," *Past and Present* 184 (2004): 137–167, at 139.

⁸ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity*, 70, puts it succinctly: "By the second half of the eighteenth century, Spain appeared to foreign observers as a lazy, impoverished, brutish country, inhabited by fanatics. Spain was seen as a decadent nation that had not managed to preserve past glories, and that had made poor use of a vast and rich empire...."

leaders. The intellectual cadre among Spaniards who witnessed the outcome of the Spanish-American War, called the Generation of '98, took an especially defeatist view of their own nation. They began to admit the existence of a "Spanish problem."⁹ By their time, Spain's decadence was confirmed not only by the loss of its last major colonial possessions but also by its persistent economic maladies and several failed experiments in democracy and political reform.

By the mid-twentieth century a very rich line of research was shifting the focus of blame away from the Catalans themselves and toward what is sometimes generally called "the problem of Spain." English and American historians took the lead in studying Catalonia's place within a broader context of the Spanish empire's demise. John Elliott set the terms of the debate, which John Lynch, Carla Rahn Phillips, Richard Kagan, Henry Kamen, and others then entered into.

In his *The Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain*, Elliott went to great pains to treat the relationship between the Catalans and the Spanish state in a balanced way. Both entities suffered from a range of structural constraints that their leaders could not see clearly. Both had leaders who led their people into error, leaders who encouraged a dysfunctional relationship of the Catalan part to the Spanish whole. Still, it is abundantly clear that the Spanish monarchs and their representatives, such men as Gaspar de Guzmán, Count-Duke of Olivares (the favorite adviser and minister of King Felipe IV), had many opportunities to do better than they did. Olivares failed to take account of the clear evidence of his own folly. In the end, Elliott confirmed the view, already held by generations of historians and philosophers, that the Castilian monarchy's own failings brought Spain and its empire to ruin. It was an unfortunate but inevitable consequence, according to Elliott's discovery, that Castile's ruin meant that Catalonia was ruined too.¹⁰ The importance of contributions like Elliott's is that they explicitly link Catalonia's condition to the maladies and malevolence of historical Spain. It is an important accident that studies by French, English, and American scholars saw publication at the very time when Catalanism was growing as a powerful political force. In effect, Elliott and others from outside Catalonia confirmed, albeit without explicitly saying so, and probably without intending to do so, that one remedy

⁹ Martin Blinkhorn, "Spain: The 'Spanish Problem' and the Imperial Myth," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (1980), 5–25.

¹⁰ Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans*, 523–534.

to Catalonia's ills would be to decouple the Catalan nation from the nation-state of which it was a part.

Modern Catalans have made this evolving view of Spanish decadence part of their vocabulary. Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, for example, has put it in the context of relations among EU states and the nations internal to those states: "Catalonia, at this decisive moment in which it is carefully reevaluating the newly failed Madridian centralism, is paying attention. In fact, everything that works right now in Catalonia is tied to the Europe of small efficient states, while that which is not working is still tied to constant, decadent centralism."¹¹

Albert García i Espuche, like Tremosa i Balcells and others, has recently moved the discourse about decadence into a very different place from where it began. García i Espuche is a remarkably prolific scholarly author. Of equal significance, however, are his efforts as a public historian with a substantial public persona. He has curated several dozen museum exhibitions, appeared extensively in documentaries and on television, and was the first director of one of Barcelona's newest and most important cultural establishments, El Born Cultural Center. In all these efforts he has shown himself to be a singularly potent contributor to Catalanism.

In 1998, he published *El Siglo Decisivo: Barcelona y Catalunya, 1550–1640*.¹² In it he argued that civic leaders undertook "decisive" changes in those crucial years, changes that strengthened the economy and put Catalonia on the path of progress, industrialization, and modernization. His analysis suggested that almost nothing in Catalonia could be described as decadent. *El Siglo Decisivo* became the precursor to a series of books and public exhibitions through which García i Espuche advanced a radically new and timely perspective: If Catalonia was free from the stigma of decadence for the period from the mid-sixteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century, and to the contrary found herself enjoying the fruits of modernity, then the real moment of change was the devastation brought upon Barcelona and Catalonia by Felipe V in the early 1700s. Only the vile decadence of the Bourbon monarchs (and, by implication, their dictatorial successor, Francisco Franco) could account for Catalonia's diminished status as a modern nation. In a sudden historiographical turn, fault for the

¹¹ Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, "The view from Brussels," in *What's Up with Catalonia*, ed. Liz Castro (Barcelona: Catalonia Press, 2013), 59–66, at 63.

¹² Albert García i Espuche, *Un Siglo Decisivo Barcelona y Catalunya, 1550–1640* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998).

ugly relationship between Catalonia and Spain falls squarely upon a decadent Spain.

This brings us a long way from where we started. We began with Catalans blaming Catalans for abandoning their mother tongue and have now come to a point where only the Spanish state is to blame. What is consistent in these interpretations of the past is the term “decadence,” although the word’s meanings and what it points to have changed substantially.

We can say much more here about the shape that decadence has taken in recent years. El Born Cultural Center (*El Born Centre de Cultura i Memòria*) has become a focal point of Catalanist activities in Barcelona. It has been the staging ground for some surprising events, including an exhibition of Franco-era sculptures that ended in the decapitation of a sculpture of the dictator. Beyond El Born, an outpouring of popular histories in recent years, such as Dani Cortijo’s *Històries de les Història de Barcelona* and Lluïsa Montfort’s *1001 Curiositats de Catalunya*, assemble their colorful series of pleasant and engaging historical snippets to advance an agenda that is, if not overtly anti-Spanish, at the very least supportive of Catalanist claims irreconcilable with the Spanish unification (Castilianization) efforts undertaken by central governments in Madrid.¹³ Jaume Sobrequés and other intellectuals cum political leaders have directed a potent propaganda machine, generating images of a Spain that is still decadent, that still inflicts wounds upon itself as it continues to force Catalans against their will to stay within its occupying orbit.¹⁴

¹³Dani Cortijo, *Històries de la Història de Barcelona* (Barcelona: L’Arca, 2010); Lluïsa Montfort, *1001 Curiositats de Catalunya* (Barcelona: L’Arca, 2011).

¹⁴Among his most contentious projects, see especially Jaume Sobrequés i Callicó and Lluïsa Duran, *Vàrem mirar ben al lluny del desert: actes del simposi “Espanya contra Catalunya: una Mirada històrica (1714–2014)”*, celebrat a Barcelona el 12, 13 i 14 del desembre de 2013 (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya: Centre d’Història Contemporània de Catalunya, 2014). This is a record of the proceedings of a conference coinciding with the 300-year anniversary of the termination of the Catalan Constitutions. The event brought leading Catalan politicians, historians and others together to discuss a history of three hundred years and more of Spanish repression against Catalonia. Outside the meeting place, the Institut d’Estudis Catalans, attendees were met with a horde of well-organized pro-Spanish state protesters. Spanish press mounted an attack against the symposium, about which Sobrequés wrote in Jaume Sobrequés i Callicó, *Espanya contra Catalunya: crònica negra d’un simposi d’història* (Barcelona: Editorial Base, 2014).

LA RENAIXENÇA AND *CATALANISME* AS INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS

The Catalan Renaissance, *La Renaixença*, is said to have been a period in which Catalans vigorously explored their past and constructed their present identity as a nation. Catalan history books say it begun around 1830 and ended by absorption into other cultural movements at the start of the twentieth century.

Observers used to say that at its origins the Catalan Renaissance was a purely literary movement, begun by Castilian-speaking intellectuals of Catalan origin who were drawn to two things: the nationalist, nativist, and atavist impulses of European Romanticism; and a deep longing to revive their mother tongue. In other words, at just about the time that Capmany, Milà i Fontanals, and Piferrer gave notice to their peers that Catalan language and letters were in need of renewal, poets and other writers got to work to make the fix. This view, which is still the most commonly held one, oversimplifies. In recent years, discussions of the Catalan Renaissance have begun to acknowledge that even the earliest proponents had broader aims. They looked back to their medieval past with purpose: to uncover and celebrate their cultural roots, to identify the distinctiveness of that culture, and, finally, to confirm and then encourage the political potentials of Catalonia as a distinct nation. Regardless of uncertainties about how to describe its origins and impacts, *La Renaixença* clearly means more for Catalans today than a few patriotic poems. Catalans hold firmly to their belief in the Catalan Renaissance as an essential Catalan cultural good, a revivalist movement that gave birth to a perennial revival: Catalanism.

Catalanisme, which is what we have come to call the multifaceted political movement that is a continuing part of the Catalan story, is said to have emerged from within the Renaissance. Political scientists and historians of the nineteenth century assert that Catalanism was entirely a creation of nineteenth-century nationalists and that it emerged as a political movement separate from the Renaissance in the decade or so before 1900. This, too, oversimplifies (sometimes observers of the nineteenth century see a few trees without bothering to notice that they part of an ancient forest). We should not assume that the Catalan Renaissance was born all at once, whole and complete. It evolved, emergent and changing. Similarly, the Catalan political projects that became Catalanism developed along pathways full of ambiguities, uncertainties, and changes of direction. These disagreements came into focus in the nineteenth century, and the names

and labels we use now got put to them at that time, but they had earlier origins in the real circumstances of a deeper Catalan past.

To illustrate: The phoenix, the mythic bird that regenerates itself by rising out of a fire, has become one of the icons most often associated with the Renaissance. To say this, however, is to introduce an anachronism. The phoenix first appears in reference to the Catalan Renaissance on the masthead of the magazine called *La Renaixença* (on its first issue published in 1871). The curious point here is that the magazine, the phoenix imagery, and the name given to the cultural movement all date to this moment. That is, the movement that supposedly began in the 1830s was not called the Catalan Renaissance before 1871. The name postdates the movement it names by nearly half a century, which means that people, say, in the 1850s, were in the middle of something as yet unnamed. Naming practices are often like this—the name given to a historical movement nearly always postdates the occurrences being named. Names are interpretive devices, often applied to past events as a way of making sense of them. The problem is that the name usually comes with a temporal frame as well—Catalan Renaissance, 1830 to 1900. The name and the frame are inventions that most often the people in the middle of the thing do not know.

CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES IN *LA RENAIXENÇA*

Like decadence, “renaissance” is a malleable concept, one reshaped by changing circumstances. It is my experience, from conversations with scholars, artists, and politicians, as well as many workaday friends, that Catalans still hold tightly to the oldest and most stable explanation of the Catalan Renaissance as an effort by elites to revive Catalan as a language of literature. They offer that explanation first, with their most full-throated endorsement. But they also have imbibed the new, so they inevitably add that the Catalan Renaissance eventually came to include political activism. The following statement by Albert Balcells is typical of the view that political Catalanism followed a literary revival: “No one disputes the role of the *Renaixença*, that is, the recovery of Catalan as a literary language, in creating the atmosphere in which Catalan nationalism was born.”¹⁵ Without

¹⁵ Albert Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 25. The rich complexity of nineteenth-century Catalan politics is the subject of Jordi Casassas i Ymbert, *Intellectuals, professionals i politics a la Catalunya contemporània*,

wanting too much to overturn that consensus, it is worth testing whether the literary and political strands of the Catalan Renaissance emerged simultaneously from a single very dynamic field of opinion and discourse.

In the years around 1800, as we have already seen, Catalan intellectuals, recognizing that their mother tongue had fallen into disuse as a language of high culture, looked back to the Middle Ages to remind themselves that Catalan was once a language of law and letters. Spanish governments, especially after 1714, discouraged and even prohibited the use of Catalan in the public domain. Catalan remained the language of rural Catalans and held its place as the language used in the home even in Barcelona and other urban places. In Catalonia, as elsewhere in Europe, those who could read and write often did so in a multilingual context. The bilingualism, or diglossia, of educated Catalans put them in an unusually dissonant language community. They assimilated into Spanish society, purposefully doing their public, political, and intellectual work in Castilian because that was the language of business and administration inside the Spanish empire. But they could not dispense with a deep connectedness to their native tongue, even as the Spanish state worked to diminish it. Bonaventura Carles Aribau, Jacint Verdeguer, Joan Maragall, Joaquim Rubió i Ors, and Víctor Balaguer are among those most remembered for their efforts to link Catalan language and identity to a territory and a medieval tradition. We credit them with taking up the challenge of restoring Catalan as a language of modern substance equal to the languages of other nations.

Bonaventura Carles Aribau serves to illustrate the standard argument, and its counterpoint. He was born in Barcelona in 1798 and moved to Madrid in 1826 having already participated in a range of important activities as a politician and journalist. He mostly wrote in Castilian, the language in which he was educated, the language of the society in which he was upwardly mobile (as was characteristic of well-educated persons in his day, he also wrote in Latin and Italian). It is notable that as publisher of the Library of Spanish Authors, beginning in 1846, he published not a single author in Catalan. Nonetheless, in 1833 he wrote a poem in Catalan, "Oda a la Pàtria," motivated by little more than an antiquarian's zeal. The poem's importance was not immediately recognized, in part because he

1850–1920 (Sant Cugat: A. Romero, 1989) and Josep M. Fradera, *Cultura nacional en una societat dividida: patriotisme i cultura a Catalunya, 1830–1868* (Barcelona: Curial, 1992). Angel Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism*, offers a very helpful description of nineteenth-century Catalan viewpoints.

wrote it in a contrived, archaic Catalan that differed from the Catalan of everyday speech. Within a few decades, however, it had become fundamental to a reawakening of the Catalan collectivity. Despite precedents, such as Pau Ballot's *Gramatica i Apologia de la Llengua Catalana*, it is referred to often nowadays as the first product of the *Renaixença*. Aribau obviously intended to exult the former high position of the language, but, more than that, he sought to glorify Catalonia's medieval past, including its troubadours, its seaborne empire, and its great kings.¹⁶ In looking back fondly to the imagined medieval greatness of the fatherland, Aribau staked out a political position: Catalans who succumb to Castilian cultural and political pressures may lose more than they gain.

From one perspective, Aribau's nostalgic recollection takes its place as an indicator of a mid-century literary revival, but there are other ways to imagine what Aribau and his peers were up to. Remember, for example, that he was older than Piferrer and Milà i Fontanals, not a member of the subsequent generation. Josep Llobera has asked an important question that leads us to consider an alternative. "Romanticism has often been defined in terms of its strong sense of history (particularly of medieval history), its emphasis on popular poetry and its focus on the natural community." And, as he says, the Catalan Renaissance is said to be an outgrowth of European Romanticism. And yet, he continues, "the question of why there was a specific Catalan Romanticism, rather than a general Romantic movement for the whole of Spain, remains unanswered, unless we bring to the fore the question of the 'nationalist potential'."¹⁷ Llobera's query about nationalist potential requires us to imagine the activities of Aribau and friends in a setting that is more complex than the literary revival explanation allows. Perhaps the Catalan Renaissance was a political movement from the start.

¹⁶ Especially useful here is Magí Sunyer, "Medieval Heritage in the Beginnings of Modern Catalan Literature, 1780–1841," in *Editing the Nation's Memory: Textual Scholarship and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Dirk Van Nulle and Joep Leerssen (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 169–184.

¹⁷ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity*, 74.

THE LONG VIEW: CATALONIA AND THE “SPANISH PROBLEM”

Recall from the opening pages of this book how I learned that Catalan members of the late medieval Dominican religious order recognized their Catalan *natio* as something that set them apart from others. They wanted privileges as Catalans beyond those accorded to non-Catalans. The fourteenth-century Catalan friars, taking advantage of their distinctiveness, demonstrated the “potential”—to use Llobera’s word—for what eventually became a Catalan national self-recognition.

Catalan elites in the seventeenth century acted upon this potential, too. It is a central theme of John Elliott’s *The Revolt of the Catalans*, brilliantly demonstrated in evidence, that in the years leading up to the cataclysm of the 1640s Catalans knew they were different. They tried to defend their distinctiveness while also following an assimilationist strategy whereby they might take advantage of opportunities to integrate Catalonia into the Spanish state. The difficulty they faced was existential. They had seen many times before the failure of their most sincere efforts to bind Catalonia more fully to Spain. They could not escape attachment to their native Catalan land, language, and people; and yet, they could not easily detach themselves from the Spain of which they were a part. When they tried to break away, they were forced back into an unworkable union. Then came the events of the early 1700s, including the siege and bombing of Barcelona by its supposed sovereign. Although overlooked by those who want to isolate the Catalan Renaissance from its broader context, that trauma was not forgotten in the nineteenth century.

The disaster that befell Spain in the decades around 1800 confirmed that the state’s relationship with Catalonia going forward would be, at best, dysfunctional. The Peninsular War, 1808–1814, began when Napoleon Bonaparte’s army traversed Spain to attack Portugal. Having defeated the Portuguese, the French army took up residence inside Spain, becoming an occupying force. In 1808, the Bourbon King Ferdinand VII abdicated, and Napoleon installed his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne.

Hoping to gain the favor of the Catalan people, Napoleon reversed previous prohibitions against the Catalan language, even permitting, in 1810, the newspaper *El Diario de Barcelona* to switch its language of publication from Castilian to Catalan (it changed its name, too, to *Diari del Govern de Catalunya y Barcelona*). The lieutenants running his propaganda

machine asserted that Napoleon would help Catalonia to be reborn from its ashes, although, as Robert Hughes put it, “nobody in Catalunya appears to have believed this overture from the spider to the fly.”¹⁸ Many sectors of Catalan society rebuffed Napoleon’s overtures, actively thwarted Joseph’s weak government, and also battled the conservative forces of counter-revolution allied with the exiled Ferdinand. As in the years around 1640, Catalan lands became the locus of a war fought on multiple fronts. In the midst of the political vacuum that the conflict created, liberal political leaders from across Spain gathered at Cadiz to consider an alternative government. Catalan representatives had hoped that this assembly would recognize Catalonia’s historic rights and privileges, but to no avail. The Constitution of 1812, Spain’s first “liberal” constitution, created a singular and centralized republic without safeguards for Catalan distinctiveness. The Catalans had lost again.

Antoni de Capmany (1742–1813) acknowledged the disaster as it unfolded. In 1808, he called on Spaniards to resist the French, but he did so by explicitly naming the distinct nations (*naciones* is what he called them) that comprised Spain—“*Aragoneses, Valencianos, Murcianos, Andaluces, Asturianos, Gallegos, Extremeños, Catalanes, Castellanos.*” In the same years, he called the Castilians “idle” in comparison to the economic dynamism of the Catalan bourgeoisie. He tried to be a good Spaniard, but he held longstanding and increasingly well-founded pro-Catalan prejudices.¹⁹ Antoni de Capmany’s writings are testimony to an unfortunate reality: History was proving Spain’s incapacities as an empire and as a nation-state. He inferred, then, that Catalan decadence might be a consequence of Spanish debility.

We must add to the evidence of Spain’s internal crises evidence of the dismemberment of its empire. Spain came into possession of Louisiana in 1762 when the French King Louis XV ceded it to Spain’s Charles III in the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau. Napoleon recovered the vast expanse of land for France in 1800. The US president, Thomas Jefferson, saw this as a threat. In an 1802 letter to the US Ambassador to France, Jefferson observed that Spain’s “feeble” administration of the territory did the US no harm, but that an aggressive France was more dangerous. Because three-eighths of the exports of the states passed through New Orleans, he

¹⁸ Robert Hughes, *Barcelona* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 206.

¹⁹ Antonio Capmany, *Cintinela contra franceses: La arenga patriótica más importante de 1808* (Madrid: Encuentro, 2008).

said, a comparatively stronger French government could not be allowed to assert itself in the territory.²⁰ Under pressure, Napoleon sold the territory to the US in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.

Continuing along the road to disaster and dismemberment, the Spanish fleet was destroyed at Trafalgar in 1805. In 1806, the English invaded the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata in the southern cone of Spanish South America. Napoleon sent his forces into Spain in 1808. Thereafter, Spain quickly lost its imperial grip. From 1810 to 1829, rebellions overtook the Viceroyalties of New Spain, Granada, Peru, and Rio de la Plata in the Americas until these broke apart and fought Spain in wars that resulted in the creation of independent nations. Spain sold Florida to the US in 1819, but maintained a weak hold on Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines until the Spanish-American War of 1898.

Spain was falling apart, and Catalans knew it. The empire's disintegration contributed to the frame of mind of the earliest participants in the Catalan Renaissance. As members of an educated class of aspirants, historically minded and politically astute, Aribau and the other leaders of the Catalan Renaissance felt the pain of the disasters that had befallen Spain in their adolescence. They also recognized the improving condition of Catalonia's economy. Political potential was activated not only by Spain's declining prospects in the world but also by Catalonia's simultaneous industrial expansion.

Catalonia's role in the industrial revolution justified Antoni de Capmany's observation about the comparative vitality of Catalonia. When King Charles III finally lifted sanctions against trade with the Americas in 1779—he was so hungry for resources that he overturned centuries of restrictions—Catalan exports of fortified wine, textiles, shoes, and other goods immediately increased. In 1790, a carpenter from Berguedà, Ramon Farguell, invented a spinning machine that made Catalonia an early center of mechanization. By 1800, the textile industry alone employed as many as eighty thousand workers in and around Barcelona. Catalonia's population grew in these years. Rural peasants, becoming more mobile, left homes to find work in Barcelona, Sabadell, Terrassa, Mataró, and other industrial centers. El Vapor, Catalonia's first steam-powered factory, opened in 1832, and Joan Güell i Ferrer (father of the future patron of Antoni Gaudí) opened another, El Vapor Vell, in 1840. Spain's first steam

²⁰ Charles Cerami, *Jefferson's Great Gamble: Jefferson, Napoleon, and the Men Behind the Louisiana Purchase* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2003), 57–58.

railroad came into operation by 1847. It was a Catalan undertaking, operating along the coast between Barcelona and Mataró. By this time, Catalonia was second only to England in its manufactures.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Spain's disorder and Catalonia's progress made increasingly apparent the waning of a viable relationship. The repertoire of the *Renaixença* accommodated the new reality. Historical accounts routinely mention the *Jocs Florals*. These were literary contests, believed by literary elites to have been annual Catalan literary festivals established in the Middle Ages. Antoni de Bofarull and Víctor Balaguer renewed the tradition in Barcelona beginning in 1859. The Jocs Florals are usually mentioned as an example of the renaissance of Catalan literature, but within a few years they became no less than an annual public staging of Catalan civic pride with *pàtria* as their first theme. They were a call to Catalan national identity just as much as the Diada Nacional de Catalunya, Catalonia's National Day, which Catalans began to celebrate in 1886.

A SOCIAL PROJECT

That civic elites paid the bill for popular activities with broad public appeal, like the Jocs Florals and La Diada, does not dismiss the fact that these annual events became a way for rural and urban working-class Catalans to see themselves as participants in the project of reclaiming and celebrating Catalan identity. Once unbound from its origins as an intellectual endeavor initiated by elites, the appeal of a cultural renaissance quickly metamorphosed into an expanding network of popular identity-building pursuits.

Here is one example among many of the social transferability of the spirit of Catalan rebirth. Jacint Verdeguer, now regarded as one of Catalonia's greatest poets, won the three principal prizes offered at the Jocs Florals in 1880. Of course, he was a member of a literary elite, although two additional aspects of his biography deserve notice. The first is that he was a priest. His writings about the monastery of Montserrat helped to substantiate the growing solidarity of the Catalan priesthood with Catalanism, in part by conditioning the populace to see the history of Catalan Catholicism as distinct from that of Catholic Spain. He also wrote "La Barretina," a poem that made that everyday peasant's cap into a symbol of the perennial importance of the peasantry in defining and protecting

the national character. One of the most frequently reproduced images of Verdaguer shows him wearing a *barretina*.²¹

Verdeguer's priestly interest in Montserrat and in the Catalan peasantry is intimately connected to another pastime of relevance to an expanding array of renaissance offerings: *excursionisme* and *muntanyisme*—the practice of taking day hikes or camping expeditions. It had already become a regularized activity by the 1850s, first undertaken by geologists, geographers, historians, and folklorists, often to places of special connection to their growing appreciation of the Catalan past. Those places of past-present interest included the monastic ruins and hermitages that dotted the Catalan landscape. By 1876, a "Catalanist" excursionist association had taken root in Barcelona, l'Associació Catalanista d'Excursions Científiques.

Nowadays, a federation of excursionist groups, Federació d'Entitats Excursionistes, organizes year-round events throughout Catalonia specifically billed as Catalanist. One of the most important is held annually at Montserrat. This is the day when climbers, hikers, day-trippers, bicyclists, and motorcyclists join Montserrat's monks to celebrate the Flama de la Llengua Catalana, the annual lighting of a flame memorializing the renewal of the Catalan language.

My point in all of this has been to show that the earliest agents of the *Renaixença* had more in mind than the task of restoring a language. By Verdeguer's time, civic leaders, political and business elites, and workaday Catalans could draw upon an extensive array of activities to demonstrate their distinctly non-Spanish nationality. By the mid-1800s, the Catalan collective had bound itself to an outpouring of poems, novels, and theatre pieces, folklore, symbols, and traditions. In addition to the story of Wilfred the Hairy's death as the origin of the *Senyera*, other important myths got elaborated, most in ways that linked them to real or imagined medieval traditions. Martí Riquer and Llorenç Prats have lead scholarly efforts to illustrate this mythification of the Catalan past and its usefulness to the Catalanist political agenda.

²¹ For background on this seminal figure, see Isidor Cònsul, "Jacint Verdaguer, the Poet of the 'Renaixença,'" *Catalonia* 17 (1990), 13–15; John Etherington, "Nationalism, nation and territory: Jacint Verdaguer and the Catalan Renaixença," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33 (2010): 1814–1832; Francesc Xavier Altés i Aguiló, *Jacint Verdaguer i Montserrat* (Montserrat, L'Abadia de Montserrat, 2002).

Recall that it was not until the arrival of the magazine, *La Renaixensa*, in 1871, that the word “renaissance” became the retrospective label for what had been underway for many decades. By the time it was called a renaissance, the rebirth of a collective Catalan identity had moved well past literary endeavors to become fully integrated into the fabric of Catalan culture and politics.

More examples could be brought forward to demonstrate the activation of a renaissance in a range of fields. In architecture and urban planning, for example, we could discuss the work of Antoni Rovira i Trias or his rival Ildefons Cerdà. Rovira i Trias designed several of the large and now famous brick and iron-framed market centers in Barcelona, including the Mercat del Born (1876) and the Mercat de Sant Antoni (1879). He also designed several buildings at the location of the former Ciutadella fortress when it was remade as Barcelona’s first urban park. Ildefons Cerdà designed the initial plans for what became Barcelona’s Eixample neighborhood. The 1888 Barcelona Universal Exposition also played an important part in bringing Catalonia’s Renaissance to the attention of an international audience.

Detailed discussion of these and other examples would rapidly bring us into a discussion of the emergence of *Modernisme*, the successor movement to *La Renaixença* that gave us Antoni Gaudí’s Sagrada Família, Lluís Domènech i Montaner’s Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, and great hordes of tourists gawking upwards from Barcelona’s Passeig de Gràcia at the Modernist exemplars that line the “block of discord.” They would also confirm that Modernism has taken shape for Catalans as a remaking of the Renaissance into a perennial revival. Catalan Modernism exists in reference to the Renaissance. It looks back to revival, builds upon the idea of revival, and carries forward the symbols and values of revival. Evidence of Modernism is also part of the fabric of everything that Catalanism has become in the present. Perhaps the preeminent sites in the Catalanist landscape are the medieval ones like Montserrat, Romanesque churches and Gothic cathedrals, bridges and castles, and so on. But the medievalizing projects of the Modernists take a very close second place. The next chapter will illustrate how medievalizing and modernizing, like decadence and renaissance, play their part in the interpretive apparatus of Catalan identity.



Medievalizing and Modernizing

We saw in the last chapter how decadence and renaissance animate the conversation between past and present in Catalonia. Decadence first emerged among Catalan elites as a way of explaining a certain feature of the past—a decline in the usage of the Catalan language in the arenas of business, politics, and the arts. Thereafter, decadence remained a notion flexible enough to accommodate changing interpretive needs, so that at present some Catalans apply it to all the bad that Spain did and can do to Catalonia. The notion of *La Renaixença* emerged to describe a literary revival. Over time, the contours of that sharp definition got bent to fit various ideas of rebirth applicable to all that is good about Catalans and Catalonia's prospects. Together, the two terms “*decadència*” and “*renaixença*” operate on Catalans like the two strands of recombinant DNA—neither is functionally whole without the other, the component parts of one correspond to those of the other, and both have been and will continue to be adaptive to environmental changes.

This chapter explores additional ways that the present-in-the-past/past-in-the-present relationship gets activated, managed, and exploited. The examples in this chapter focus mostly on the built environment, the roads, bridges, and buildings that perpetuate a sense of the medieval. Readers should keep in mind that these structures, beyond their own physical presence, serve a range of activities from attending urban medieval fairs like those at Súria and Vic, to looking out from a car window at the Montserrat mountains or the castle ruins of Quermanço, to throwing

eggs at a statue of Francisco Franco on exhibit outside El Born Centre de Cultura i Memòria. In other words, the sites mentioned here do performative, presentational, and didactic work. What holds these varied activities together is that they occur on turf that is recognizably Catalan. This chapter is about the relationship that develops in time between a land and the people upon it, the activation of a symbolic terrain that makes Catalan collective experience appear continuous and ageless while it changes with the times.

Beyond broadly demonstrating the construction and reconstruction of Catalan identity in the physical environment, this chapter draws specific attention to medievalizing and modernizing, both of which have become meaningful strategies employed in making spaces distinctly Catalan. Each plays two roles. Just as much as either medievalizing or modernizing can apply to the changes made to features of the built environment, each also shapes the cognition of Catalans, how they think about the relationship between land, landscape, and people. Moreover, the physical and cognitive operations occur at the same time. For instance, there was more at stake in the rebuilding of the bridge at Besalú, after its destruction during the Spanish Civil War, than the mere reconstruction of a road over a river. Yes, the bridge moves people across the Fluvià, but it also moves them in and out of the past, into and out of what people call a “medieval” city. The two movements—the quotidian, physical means of crossing, and the way in and over a conceptual threshold—happen together in relationship with each other.¹

SEEING LIKE A TOURIST

No matter how much they might crave authenticity, tourists visit a place for too short a time to really get to know it. Encountering evidentiary gaps in, say, a tour guide’s narrative, tourists tend to accept the scenario as more complete than it really is, or else they put their minds to the work of imagining missing details. Despite their best intentions, tourists go to and return from a place that remains foreign, and, often enough, part of what they take away from the place is of their own invention.

¹ For the history of the transformations of the bridge, see José María Corominas Planellas and Jaime Marqu  ez Casanovas, *La Comarca de Besal  * (Gerona, 1976), 53–56, and illustrations 4 through 8.

Historians and other professional explorers of the past have come to admit that their experience is like that of tourists. David Lowenthal made that admission in *The Past is a Foreign Country*, following on L.P. Hartley's observation about the past that "they do things differently there." Like tourists, historians have limited time and energy to devote to our explorations. When we attend to the past we try to stay long enough and want to show enough interest there that we can learn some small part of the unique characteristics of the place and people being visited. What we learn is not entirely wrong, but neither is it completely accurate nor entirely correct.

These problems of limited attention and deficiencies in historical reconstruction apply not only to tourists and historians but also to everyone who swims in the stream of time. Catalans, when considering their own past, suffer the same fate as tourists and historians. Their local schooling and engagement in civic affairs teaches them more of their own history than outsiders can take in on a short holiday and more than historians can absorb in a lifetime of specialized reading; nonetheless, their knowledge remains incomplete. Even in one's own land, the past remains less than fully comprehensible.²

Barcelona's "medieval grandeur," tourist guides tell us, "left the city with one of the most impressive and varied Gothic building legacies in all Europe."³ Of course that is correct ... sort of. Let's wander through a few examples of Barcelona's architectural heritage, as if from the perspective of a tourist, beginning with those features of Catalan space most obvious to visitors. This excursion will introduce us to modernizing and medievalizing trends in Catalonia, and it will show us how these trends bind Catalans to each other even when they are confronted by ambiguities and contradictions.

Most of the many millions of annual visitors to Barcelona (32 million, according to the municipal tally for 2016) spend much of their time in what is called the Barri Gòtic (gothic quarter) or the Ciutat Vella (old city). Nearly every visitor to Barcelona passes through this nucleus of the

²There are at least three factors at work. First, human beings, always short on time, cannot possibly get to know the entire array of innumerable texts and artifacts that constitute their culture, which is always growing and changing. Additionally, because of their awesome subterranean complexity, we mostly ignore the symbolic and conceptual foundations of our lives. Moreover, despite power in numbers and the ever-improving artificial intelligences we create, our corporate powers of awareness, like our individual ones, also remain deficient.

³Damien Simonis, *Lonely Planet: Barcelona* [advertised as a special "Architecture section – from Gothic to Gaudi"] (Oakland, 1999), 10.

city that still shows evidence of more than two thousand years of continuous habitation. It is plainly visible on maps of Barcelona and on images such as those produced for Google Earth as two sets of ring roads emerging from the water's edge at the base of the broad coastal plain below the Collserola Mountains. The smaller circle corresponds to the walls of the ancient Roman colonia of *Barcino* (it presently follows the Carrer d'Avinyó and Carrer de Banys Nous to the southwest, wraps around the plaza to the north of the cathedral, and then completes its circuit in the maze of pathways near the Via Laetana). Visitors see a few small fragments of the Roman wall when they enter the plaza in front of the cathedral. The second, larger line identifies the walls built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries after a population explosion, begun in the twelfth century, spilled out over the Roman perimeter (by the mid-nineteenth century, these walls had been destroyed and replaced by the Rambla, the Ronda de Sant Pere, and the area now occupied by the Ciutadella Park). Within this line is the part of town that tourist brochures call medieval Barri Gòtic, although there are vestiges of the medieval past in other parts of the city as well.

Surely medieval Barcelonans did not refer to their town as a "gothic quarter." How then did it come to be called that? The Barri Gòtic got its name through a process that has its own interesting history.

Agustín Cócola Gant and other modern scholars have linked the revival of medieval historic centers in Barcelona and elsewhere inside Catalonia to the coincidence of two events.⁴ One was the Catalan *Renaixença*, which purposefully addressed the nineteenth-century present by reference to the medieval past. The other was the emergence of a tourist market hungry for a reimagining of the long ago and far away.⁵

A quick presentation of the evolution of the notion of Barcelona's gothic goes like this: By 1879, the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner had proposed some medievalizing enhancements to the Barcelona streetscape, which a poem, written by Jacint Verdeguer in 1883, confirmed as full of creative potential. Later, in 1911, politician and writer Ramon Rucabado and the architect Jeroni Martorell first proposed the concept of the "Barri Gòtic" in writing and in street plans. Rucabado and Martorell did this as part of an effort to give an identity to that part of the

⁴ In Catalonia, these old town centers take a variety of names: *barri gòtic*, *case urbà*, *case antic*, *ciutat vella*....

⁵ Mariona Nubials Sanjust, *L'ús de l'espai públic als centres històrics. El Barri Gòtic de Ciutat Vella, Barcelona* (Barcelona: Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2012).

city that best reflected an ancient medieval heritage, a heritage that in those years tourism promoters and urban planners were beginning to learn how to monetize. The idea began to take shape in the form of an urban redevelopment project late in the 1920s when Joan Rubió i Bellver took it upon himself to restore the Casa de Canonges and other buildings near the cathedral. In the same period, he designed the famous Pont del Bisbe, the bishop's bridge, a small neo-Medieval footbridge that passes over the Carrer del Bisbe to connect the Casa de Canonges to the seat of Catalan government, the Palau de la Generalitat.⁶

Some of what tourists see in the Barri Gòtic is very old, but some of what visitors encounter only looks old, or is a composite of new and old parts. Without an expert's awareness of the details and timing of the structural changes to streets and façades, distinguishing the old parts from the newly-made-to-look-old is a very difficult task. Even more discouraging, from the perspective of a historian, is that the oldest and most authentic artifacts often go unnoticed by all but the most astute observers.

In the Barri Gòtic visitors are drawn into narrow cobbled streets, which guidebooks explain have taken the names of important medieval saints like Saint Ramon de Penyafort, lordly families like the Montcadas, and guilds like the *argenters*, *carders*, and *teixidors*. These dimly lit and winding paths open up onto urban squares, at the location of a small parish church, for example, or at an intersection that provides a refuge with a few benches, a fountain, and perhaps a historic marker. Regular auto traffic is not permitted on many of the roads, although occasionally a taxi or service vehicle is seen. The labyrinthine and pedestrian nature of the streetscape, here in Barcelona's Barri Gòtic as in other Catalan towns with pre-modern histories, is quite unlike what most of us are used to in our workaday gotta-get-somewhere experience. They produce in visitors the look and feel of a real elsewhere, of a real experience of another time and place. Barcelona, being on a coastal plain, is relatively flat, but in other Catalan towns founded, like the capital, two or more millennia ago, the old city centers were built into mountainous terrain. In Girona, pedestrians encounter a streetscape

⁶Agustín Cocola Gant, "The Invention of the Barcelona Gothic Quarter," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 9 (2014), 18–34. Josep Maria Garcia Fuentes, "On the Creative Interpretation of the Past: Barcelona's 'Barri Gòtic'," in *Chronicity: Sensitive Interventions in Historic Environment* ed., Dimitra Babalis (Florence: Alinea, 2011): 37–39, admits that it is difficult to define Barcelona's gothic quarter because it is neither fully authentic nor completely fake. It is something in-between. For a popular approach, see Cortijo, *Històries de les Històries de Barcelona*, 210–211.

where the cobbled, twisted paths end abruptly at their junctures with banks of steps that climb to the houses on the hills.

Any short list of Barcelona's most visited sites includes several "gothic monuments," among them places tourists recall by name and can identify in photos: the cathedral dedicated to the martyr-saint Eulalia, the church of Santa Maria del Mar, the church of Santa Maria del Pi, and others. Few visitors know by name several others of the sites they regularly encounter—the Saló del Tinell, the Casa Padellàs, and the complex of other buildings surrounding the Plaça del Rei are examples. As they walk past those places, they know that they are taking in some part of Catalonia's medieval heritage. How do they know? There is a good deal of evidence, beyond the fact that maps and guidebooks tell them so. They can see with their own eyes that inside the old part of town the streets are narrower and the buildings more densely constructed than outside. They can also notice a difference in construction materials, large cut-stone blocks in the older structures rather than concrete or glass and steel. Certain stylistic features also indicate the presence of the medieval—the "coronella" windows on the Carrer de Pietat side of the Casa dels Canoniges, the merlons on battlements along the Carrer de Paradís, the heavy street-side wooden doors framed by rounded or lancet stone arches. A section of the Barri Gòtic is also recognized as a "Jewish Quarter," with several informational signs set up by the Museum of the History of Barcelona (MUHBA) offering a few details of historical fact.

It is common knowledge that these tourist-grabbing structures are really medieval. Common knowledge, however, is often wrong, a widely but incorrectly held combination of partial truths and wishful thinking. What tourists who take a stroll through the Barri Gòtic do not know—and in my experience do not care to know—is that seeing the medieval there requires them to overlook a variety of memory-enhancing gestures. On the one hand, such expressions as "medieval grandeur" and "impressive [...] building legacies" evoke a desired "medieval city" that is not really there. On the other hand, what matters above all else is not whether observations are real or true, but how untruths or recycled half-truths get put to work.

To add emphasis by repetition, I'll say again that what holds for tourists applies equally to researchers and to the Catalans themselves—we all succumb to the best and worst of imagination and sentiment. Once evoked, the idea of the medieval city can carry a lot of imaginary weight, permitting its own special utility with considerable variety and subtlety. This is

the case for tourists, but it is no less true that the supposed medieval landscape is a feature in the Catalan collective imagination.

Tourism in Catalonia has a long history. Benjamin of Tudela, the twelfth-century writer of one of Europe's earliest travel itineraries, took special note of the cosmopolitan and commercial energies of Barcelona after he passed through: "It is a small and beautiful city, located on the coast [...]. Traders with their merchandise come to it from all over, from Greece, Pisa, Alexandria, the Holy Land, and from coastal Africa."⁷ Francis of Assisi is said to have visited Barcelona on his pilgrimage journey to Santiago de Compostela in 1214. These men, of course, would not have called Barcelona a medieval city, since they lived in the time that was not yet called medieval. Cervantes enumerated Barcelona's charms in his *Don Quixote*, from 1605, which situates itself right at the moment when distinctions between medieval and modern were beginning to gain some traction.

Washington Irving, writer of the *Tales of the Alhambra* (1832), also found Barcelona charming, nothing like "the naked desert which surrounds Madrid." "I am delighted with Barcelona," he wrote. "It is a beautiful city."⁸ Irving was among the leaders of a Romantic reimagining of the perceived contradictory splendors and decadence of the medieval period. It is likely that what he deemed beautiful we would now call decrepit. The medieval infrastructure of Catalonia's cities and towns at the time of his writing was populated by the working poor, many buildings remained in a state of dilapidation following decades of war, and members of the merchant and rentier upper classes preferred to live away from the congestion and squalor that medieval places represented. There was not at that time much investment in the medieval. Indeed, it seems probable that, like many Romantics, Washington Irving used the word "beauty" as a synonym for "decadence." It was only later that the medieval imaginary got its modern luster in building renovation programs. In Barcelona, the Romantics' strange mixing of sentiments for and against the medieval may have fueled the tourist boom that began perhaps as early as the 1888 Universal Exposition—and certainly no later than the 1929 International Exposition. But tourists learned to want more than sentiment. They

⁷ Marcus Nathan Adler, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1907), 1.

⁸ Washington Irving, *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, vol. 3, ed., Pierre M. Irving (London: Richard Bentley, 1863), 285.

wanted amenities and conveniences, which eventually meant cleanliness, efficiency, service, and, ultimately, luxury—all elements that had to be applied, like a patch, to whatever could be counted as medieval remnants.

To be clear about a couple of points: First, the trends addressed here apply to towns big and small throughout Catalonia. The medieval fairs, most of very recent vintage, in places like Sùria, are examples both of recreative medieval performance and of giving modern visitors the amenities they demand. Another example is the former Cardona Castle, which, as I mentioned before, is now a luxury Parador hotel offering its occupants the finest modern conveniences in a setting that produces a medieval mystique by cloaking an old stone skeleton in the soft flesh of modernity. Second, the medieval awakening begun in the nineteenth century, the desire shared by urban planners and tourists to reimagine the medieval scraps of a place, occurred across Europe; it was not germane only to Catalonia.⁹ A well-researched example is Mussolini's effort to give an urban facelift to towns like San Gimignano. While San Gimignano's urban towers top the list of the most characteristic and celebrated features of Italian medieval townscapes, in actuality they were reimaged and rebuilt to suit the needs of a 1930s Fascist society.¹⁰ A quaint town in the Basque region of Spain, Laguardia, is another example. Laguardia has been so whitewashed and polished that it seems to me that what "magic kingdom" is to Disneyland "medieval" is to Laguardia. To my tastes, Laguardia seems a bit repressive in its perfectly enjoyable touristic overachievement of *Hispanidad*.¹¹

Street names would appear to be a simple and prominent feature of medieval places, but, if Barcelona is any indication, street naming patterns offer their own complicated histories of change. By this point readers are

⁹ Patrick J. Geary and Gabor Klaniczay, eds., *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in 19th Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013) is one among the many examples in the growing field of research into how the builders of European nation-states purposefully medievalized the landscape.

¹⁰ D. Medina Lasansky, "Urban Editing, Historic Preservation, and Political Rhetoric: The Fascist Redesign of San Gimignano," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63 (2004), 320–353.

¹¹ An old but apt article on the purposes given to medievalizing places like Laguardia by members of the Spanish Falange before and after its integration into the Franco regime is Bailey W. Diffie, "The Ideology of Hispanidad," *The Hispanic American Review* 23 (1943), 457–482. Interestingly, while this article would once have been read as a holdover from the polemics of the Black Legend, it fits very well today into the new historical thinking about the failures of democracy in Spain.

likely ready to follow me in presuming that the guild- and trade-related names of roads in the Barri Gòtic possess their own histories of imaginative reconstruction. It would not have been until far into the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries when the various guilds established themselves on the streets that eventually took their names. Even then, users of Barcelona's streets had little to no use for street names, since the city's smallness of scale still permitted personal acquaintance to matter more than any bureaucratic efficiency brought by street names and addresses. Notions like "you want the third house after turning left at the Casa Padellàs" prevailed until well into the fourteenth century, according to Daniel Smail's exemplary analysis of similar trends in Marseilles. At that time, notaries recording land sales invented street names after seeing the need for more detail in the recording of deeds.¹²

Although we have no detailed histories of the naming patterns of two streets in the westernmost quadrant of the Barri Gòtic, what we do know about them is instructive. The two roads, Carrer de Sant Domenec and Carrer de Sant Ramon, are among the narrowest and most circuitous roads in the gothic quarter. They belong to what is now referred to as the Jewish Call, the part of the quarter occupied by Jews since the first medieval centuries. But the names Dominic and Ramon refer in this case to two early thirteenth-century leaders of the Dominican Order of Preachers, a Catholic religious order devoted, alternatively, to converting Jews to the Christian religion or subjugating them to Christian authority. These are not names Jews would have given to the roads on which they resided. Rather, these names, among the earliest we have, indicate control of contested turf. Whenever these two roads got their names—whether it was in the fourteenth century or, more likely, much later—the naming act occurred as a kind of colonizing imposition, an effort to reclaim for Catholicism a part of town that had been given over to Jews. Then, as later, street names served political ends.

Barcelona has undergone at least three renaming revolutions since 1714 (one Bourbon, another Francoist, and another during the post-Franco transition), each of which used the new street names symbolically to promote one view of the past over another. A few details demonstrate that it is even more complicated than that. A feature of the period of the nineteenth-century *Renaixença*, in a time of rapid industrialization and

¹²Daniel Lord Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies: Possession and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

population growth, was the destruction of Barcelona's medieval walls for the creation of a zone called "the Eixample" (the expansion). The early Catalan poet and politician Víctor Balaguer produced the plan for the street names given to that part of the city that extended beyond the Eixample into the older center. The names correspond to regions linked to Catalonia's territorial conquests—Carrer d'Aragó, Carrer de Valencia, Carrer de Mallorca, Carrer de Rosselló, etc.—and also to leading figures in the history of Catalonia. Of special note are roads named for leaders of medieval conquests and adventures, such as Carrer de Roger de Flor (1268–1305); roads recalling figures important in early Catalan fights against Castilian hegemony, such as Carrer de Pau Claris; and roads dedicated to leaders in the period of Catalan revival in which Balaguer himself was a participant—Carrer d'Aribau, Carrer de Balmes. In the period of the dictatorship of Juan Primo de Rivera, as well as in the period of Franco's dictatorial rule, many of these roads were renamed to correspond with the broader trends of "Spanish" history—Carrer de Pau Claris became the Via Laietana, recalling the ancient road's Roman inheritance. The road now called *Avinguda Diagonal* took the name *Avenida del Generalísimo Francisco Franco* from 1939 until 1979 (it had been renamed as many as five times from the 1880s until Franco's time).

The material reality of the streets has changed, too. Although the streets of Barcelona's gothic quarter appear old because they remain cobbled rather than paved, they are, in fact, quite regularly newly cobbled. The new cobbles represent oldness.

These several paragraphs about street names and the ways that roadways evoke the past, while not at all exhaustive, point to an apt generalization: We tend to simplify very rich historical realities. Perhaps there is only so much information our tiny brains can handle, or maybe we just like being fooled. What is clear enough is that we cannot know as much as we would like to know, so we leave it to experts, to the imagination, or to whim and circumstance to tell us what to focus our attention upon and what to ignore. This feature of our thinking—as I have been at pains to point out throughout this book—is a key element in the conversation between past and present.

As change processes go, street naming patterns are hardly as complex as the changes made to the buildings constructed between the streets. I have already revealed the secret about Barcelona's Pont del Bisbe, the bishop's bridge. It presents itself as a Late Gothic structure, one of the many architectural features contributing perfectly to Barcelona's medieval splendor.

But it is a fake, plain and simple, part of a twentieth-century architect's personal plan to realize an elaborate series of neo-Gothic recreations in the area. A few additional examples will illustrate the audacity and inventiveness of some significant medievalizing efforts.

The Casa Padellàs is an example of the creative engineering of a medieval space, this one a productive transfer rather than a from-scratch invention. The Casa Padellàs is a residence typical of those built around 1500 by Barcelona's wealthy urban families. When first constructed, the stone façade was plain and unadorned, pierced only by a few simple rectangular stone-framed windows, with a rounded-arch stone portal opening into an interior courtyard. The original exterior was not especially impressive, which is the way its occupants wanted it. Whatever might have seemed luxurious or ostentatious about such homes was kept to their interiors. For centuries, from the thirteenth straight through to the nineteenth, Catalans remained especially circumspect in the design of their buildings, deliberately choosing not to conspicuously consume and display.

There are historical reasons for this circumspection in medieval Catalan building, connected to rhetorical battles inside the Catholic Church about building design that moved Parisians in one direction and Barcelonans in another. Around 1200, Peter the Chanter's complaints against superfluity in Paris's architecture fell on deaf ears. Notre-Dame Cathedral is the result. In the same years, simplicity was becoming a way of life among the burgher class in Languedoc and the Catalan littoral. The differences between the two approaches had at least a little to do with the rising tide of heretical dissent in the south directed in part against ostentatious displays by potentates of the Catholic Church. My own view is that in later centuries, too, the owners of homes like the Casa Padellàs believed that decorated exteriors would make these urban palaces targets for the very frequent popular urban rebellions. Beyond provoking resentment, displays of wealth contradicted standards of civic decency.

Over the centuries, Casa Padellàs belonged to several important Barcelona families, until, in the eighteenth century, it came into the possession of the Padellàs family from which it takes its present name. The families who owned it did what people do when they move into a new place. They changed it, usually by a combination of adding and subtracting decorative and functional elements. Renaissance motifs were added to some of the windows. Occupants in the eighteenth century added more windows at the highest register.

Casa Padellàs was acquired by the city of Barcelona in 1928, which leads us to the most important feature of the building's history: the fact that it was relocated from its original site on Mercaders Street to its present location on the southern side of the Plaça del Rei, near the cathedral and other Gothic structures. Although it seems nowadays a rather unimpressive example of Late Gothic urban architecture, it was an important enough reminder of the gothic past in the early decades of the twentieth century that Barcelona's city fathers saw fit to conserve it. Not coincidentally, its purchase for conservation purposes occurred in the same year as the construction of the Pont del Bisbe. The move from Mercaders to Plaça del Rei was performed with the painstaking care for which archeologists are renowned—stone by stone—in 1931.

The relocation and reconstruction of the building exemplify how easily we can be taken in by an act of creative repurposing. In its present location Casa Padellàs faces into a flat pedestrian plaza free of any landscaping greenery that might soften the power of the hard stone. An assemblage of other stone structures built for a variety of purposes over several hundred years—the Saló de Tinell, the Palau del Lloctinent, the Mirador del Rei Martí, and the Capella Reial de Santa Àgata—flanks the plaza patio. The resulting assemblage of heterogeneous architectural forms is, let's say, hard, disorienting, and mysterious—just what planners likely hoped would engage tourist aficionados of an unspecified medieval past and Catalans eager to look back. The Casa Padellàs, despite its lack of charms and despite its roots as a rich man's home, has become an exemplar of the Barcelona government's efforts to create an official popular medievalism.

What we have in Barcelona's gothic quarter is much less a collection of medieval structures than an infrastructure we have learned to read as medieval. The most sensational example is the façade of Barcelona's cathedral, which looks medieval but is not (a fact tourist guides and Catalan school textbooks ignore). The cathedral do-over is an example of early and successful efforts to encourage Catalanist sentiment and influence the tourist experience by means of some expensive fibbing in stone and glass.

By the late nineteenth century, the austere aspect of Catalan churches so much in evidence today at Santa Maria del Mar had fallen out of fashion. The highly embellished French Gothic looked more medieval and was

far more popular than the far simpler Catalan Gothic.¹³ Thus, in the years around 1900, two architects, José Oriol Mestres and August Font i Carreras, agreeing that Barcelona Cathedral's Catalan Gothic was much too plain to attract attention like that given to Notre-Dame, gave the cathedral a facelift in the Parisian style.¹⁴ The architects were both part of a group of intellectuals and elites, including Antoni Gaudí, who read the crumbling medieval building stock around them as a rich foundation upon which to promote Catalan distinctiveness to both Catalans and outsiders. But make no mistake: What is now distinctively Catalan about Barcelona's cathedral was borrowed from France, and the façade of Barcelona's cathedral may look medieval, but it is not.

Beyond the part played by the cathedral's facelift in conjuring an exquisitely fake medieval sensibility, it is a reality that the resurfaced church is now a setting that moves visitors and Catalans alike to imagine themselves in a medieval space energized by present circumstances. The false front creates real opportunities. As Cocola Gant and others have described it, the cathedral is without question at the center of Barcelona's urban evolution. A decrepit and largely forgotten urban center in the early nineteenth century has become the internationally known Barri Gòtic. Its historic resonances have shifted from an aged and uninteresting part of a factory town into a national symbol and, ultimately, into an international visitor's theme park. The Plaça de la Seu, the public square in front of the cathedral, has considerable importance now as a civic space. It is home on Thursdays to a "gothic market," a regular assortment of stalls selling antiques and miscellany. Saturdays bring to the same square aficionados, sometimes numbering in the several hundreds, of the Sardana, a dance popularized in the nineteenth century and then promoted as Catalunya's national dance with medieval origins. On any odd day one might find in

¹³ Much of the impetus for the style shift is due to Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. The notes taken by the French architect during his creative restoration of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris had become standard reading in Catalan architecture schools by the late nineteenth century. For some background, see Josep Maria Garcia Fuentes, "Barcelona's Gothic Quarter: Architecture, Ideology, Politics," in *Architecture RePerformed: The Politics of Reconstruction*, ed. Tino Mager (New York: Routledge, 2015): 35–53, at 37.

¹⁴ Juan Ainaud, José Gudiol, and F.-P. Verrié, *Catálogo Monumental de España: La Ciudad de Barcelona* (Madrid, 1947), 43–88, illustrates the very regular changes to the structure and its decoration. On the modern façade, see Juan Bassegoda Nonell, *La Catedral de Barcelona: Su Restauración, 1968–1972* (Barcelona: Editores Tecnicos Asociados, 1972). August Font i Carreras also designed the Arenas Bull ring, now a shopping mall with an observation tower overlooking one of Barcelona's historically important transportation hubs, Plaza España.

the square a musical or theatrical performance, a workers' union manifestation or a political rally, the beginning of an auto or foot race, or some other spectacle. These are all part of the lived experience of Barcelona residents, and they thus work to remind Barcelonans in small everyday ways of the lively history of the place where they live (it helps that underground rapid transit can get one from anywhere in the city to the Plaça de la Seu in a matter of minutes). The plaza's activities are also part of what makes Barcelona interesting to visitors. Any one of the myriad everyday events in Barcelona has the potential to draw visitors into a deeper appreciation for the Catalan past. Such occurrences are also cumulative, as will be suggested in the examples that follow. Once evoked, the medieval imaginary carries a lot of weight for Catalans and their visitors, permitting connections to Catalanism of considerable variety and subtlety.

Evidence of medievalizing is easy to find in cities, towns, and villages throughout Catalonia. Girona and Besalú are famous for their reconstructed medieval walls, bridges, and Jewish quarters, which have been sold to locals and tourists as the real medieval thing. In many smaller towns the *casc urbà* or central district formerly enclosed by medieval walls has been entirely reconstructed for the purpose of awakening local spirit and attracting visitors. The monasteries of Ripoll and Poblet, Pedralbes, Sant Cugat and Sant Pere de Rodes, the castles of Quermançó and Cardona, although they are hardly what they were centuries ago, similarly get represented as medieval in their essence and meanings. As Anna Castellano pointed out in her description of changes at the Royal Monastery of Pedralbes, and architectural historians well know about the other sites, much of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reconstruction of these places was "idealized."¹⁵ Reconstructive work in recent decades indicates that we still want our idealizations. What matters, despite their creative reimaginings, is that these places stand in for the "rediscovery" of a once-real medieval heritage.¹⁶

¹⁵ Joan Martorell i Montells (1833 to 1906) took charge of the monastery's recovery in the mid-nineteenth century: "Following postulates dictated by Viollet-le-Duc in France, and the spirit of the Catalan Renaissance. The intention was to reassess monuments from the past and return them to their period of maximum splendor, often idealized." Anna Castellano, ed. *El Monestir de Pedralbes: La Recuperació d'una Joia de L'Art Català* (Barcelona: Institut de Cultura, 2003), 61.

¹⁶ Pere Freixas, Josep M. Nolla, Lluís Palahí, Jordi Sagrera, Marc Sureda, "La Catedral de Girona. Redescobrir la Seu Romànica: Els Resultats de la recerca del projecte Progress (Girona: Ajuntament de Girona, 2000) emphasizes the "rediscovery" of the Romanesque

It is a sad truth that several structures, far more impressive from a historical perspective than the ones we have spoken of, go largely unnoticed by tourists and Catalans alike. One is the monastery-church of Sant Pau del Camp, located in a seedy section of the Raval neighborhood just outside the tourist precincts and just beyond the quotidian geographies of everyday Barcelonans. It is the best-preserved Romanesque structure in Barcelona, with elements that date back to the Visigoths. A funerary inscription found inside the monastery suggests that Wilfred II, son of Wilfred the Hairy, may have been its founder; certainly, it dates to no later than 977. The troops of Al-Mansur sacked the monastery in 985. At that time, and until the expansion of Barcelona's walls in the fourteenth century, Sant Pau del Camp was, as its name suggests, in a field outside the city. A volunteer docent at the monastery once begged me to bring people to the site because, as she put it, "No one comes here." The unfortunate take-away is that we seem to like the make-believe medieval better than the real thing.

It may seem that I have taken a cynic's view, although that is not my intention. Instead, my goal is to make apparent the great deal of space that exists between former and present realities, not to judge them but to acknowledge the creative potential applied to some constructively reimagined places. It is obvious, of course, that most structures built in the medieval period, including the most significant buildings, no longer exist. Beyond that, anything remaining from medieval centuries will have had to endure a half-millennium and more of alterations. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, very dramatic population increases, the social and cultural dynamics of mobile populations, and the physical and technological changes brought upon urban places have made the few structures that do survive real exceptions. There is ample room to celebrate efforts to hold on to the few remnants of the medieval inheritance. Despite the medievalizing makeovers and the ease with which we sometimes overlook the real thing in favor of the reinvented, we should applaud the many wonderful projects undertaken by Catalans to restore and recognize whatever from the medieval past remains in the present built environment.

elements hidden under layers of Gothic and later additions. For the complexities of the restoration processes at the monastery of Poblet, see Joan Bassegoda i Nonell, *Història de la Restauració de Poblet: Destrucció y Reconstrucció de Poblet* (Barcelona: Abadia de Poblet, 1983).

PUTTING THE OLD TO WORK IN THE NEW

In the previous pages we looked at examples of medievalizing—projects that reconceive structures for the purpose of enhancing an imaginary medieval. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to identify a few examples of modernizing—projects that save the medieval by giving it an explicitly present-oriented purpose. The distinction to be drawn between medievalizing and modernizing is not a critically important one; in fact, all of the examples described in this chapter involve both medievalizing and modernizing to some extent. In the end, both get to the same result since both draw the attention of a community back to what it perceives as its roots and both make the past useable in the present. There is value, nonetheless, in considering the directionality of the creative reimagining of these sites. We should recognize a difference between, on the one hand, emphasizing the medieval in a place (often by creatively inventing it), and, on the other, rehabilitating a medieval shell to suit a modern purpose.

One of my favorite examples of adaptive reuse that made way for a little bit of history is the Mercat Santa Caterina, just across the Via Augusta in Barcelona from the cathedral plaza. The location of this marketplace served as a focal point for trade and exchange well before the Romans arrived in Iberia, so the present use of the space tells an interesting story of continuity over several millennia.

The Mercat underwent a very lively renovation in 2005 that made it another of the city's architectural jewels. The architects in charge of the project kept parts of the nineteenth-century façade. But their roof design is the essential contribution. The stunningly attractive new canopy evokes the colors of Gaudí's tiles laid upon an undulating surface reminiscent of the Mediterranean's waves. It borrows its form from Gaudí's timbrel vaulting techniques.¹⁷ It is still a working market, with the added amenity of a couple of stylish restaurants. Of interest to us is the little space toward the back of the building. In contrast to the bustle of the market, the space behind, managed by the multisite MUHBA, is a quiet unadorned area where visitors will not see much except for some ruins underfoot.

¹⁷The firm that directed the project, EMBT Architects, produced several promotional and preparatory videos, including: EMBT, "Mercat Santa Caterina Barcelona," June 2005, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Yx3BRN9A3I> and EMBT, "EMBT Architects – Mercat Santa Caterina," May 27, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIn7sT0I5rg>, both accessed on November 1, 2017.

The Dominican religious order, which tended to control marketplaces across Europe, built their convent on the site of this marketplace in the thirteenth century. At that time the market was located just outside the old city walls, although explosive population growth at the time meant that this area had become one of Barcelona's new, crowded, extramural neighborhoods. Anticlerical riots in the 1820s forced the friars off the site, after which it was given over for a short time for use as a parish church. A new market dedicated to Santa Caterina was opened in 1845. During the market's restoration, archeologists uncovered the foundations of several phases of building of the medieval convent. Fortunately, the architects, Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue, worked with MUHBA so that the museum could treat the ruins as one of their multisite displays.

The mini-museum behind the market stalls is an archeological zone where one can look down, below floor grade, into the remains of the Dominicans' medieval convent and church. Materials available in several languages at the site tell about the social dominance of the Dominicans, including their control of the market space in the time of Barcelona's medieval heyday.

The present market retains the name of its medieval antecedent. Santa Caterina was the name of the sainted patroness of Barcelona's medieval Dominican friars. They named their convent Santa Caterina, and the market was, by association, called Santa Caterina's Market.¹⁸ An important medieval marketplace has been remade as a modern attraction with a little bit of its medieval past put on display. At the Mercat Santa Caterina, as at many other sites in and outside Barcelona, the medieval and the modern operate all at once and in reference to one another.

Another creative rehabilitation that purposefully protects the medieval past and puts it on display is the medieval shipbuilding factory called the Drassanes, at the end of the Rambla nearest the portside monument on which stands the statue of Christopher Columbus pointing out to the sea. The Drassanes was the shipyard that built the crafts used first by Catalan merchants and later by seafaring *almogavar* soldiers to power Catalonia's late medieval Mediterranean expansion. By the late fourteenth century it

¹⁸ On the first Dominican and Franciscan convents in the city, see Juan Ainaud, José Gudiol, and F.-P. Verrié, *Catálogo Monumental de España: La Ciudad de Barcelona* (Madrid, 1947), 93–100. The Monestirs.cat website offers discussion about architectural changes since the thirteenth century with illustrations and images, *Monasterios de Catalunya*, "Dominicos. Convento de Santa Caterina," accessed November 26, 2017, <http://www.monestirs.cat/monst/bcn/cbn02scat.htm>

had grown to become a series of massive vaulted gallery warehouses, designed in the secular Gothic style, for building galleys and for storing rigging, shippers' supplies, and ship-making materials. The largest and one of the last war vessels powered by men at oars was built here. This was the *Real*, the flagship of John of Austria, half-brother of King Felipe II of Spain. The *Real* became the leadership vessel in the armada that destroyed the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.¹⁹

The successors of King Felipe II suppressed Barcelona's maritime dominance, after which the cavernous shipbuilding facilities languished and decayed. The buildings became barracks for troops, an artillery-making factory, and a sometime jail for Catalan enemies of the Spanish state. Ownership was restored to the city in 1930, but the Civil War and the sour economy of the first decades of the Franco era prevented any action toward restoration and reuse. Finally, after decades of archeological exploration and reconstructive work, the Drassanes reopened in 2014 as a marvelous museum, the Museu Marítim de Barcelona. The installation of the new Museu Marítim in its old medieval shell after a long and unfortunate period of misuse and deterioration is a restoration in the very best sense of the word. The museum, dedicated to the history of ships and shipbuilding, gives special attention to its own former importance as a medieval shipbuilding site and to Barcelona's past as a major European seaport. The museum's prized object is a full-size replica of John of Austria's warship *Real*. The replica was built in 1971 as part of the four-hundred-year commemoration of the events at Lepanto.

The Museu Marítim is not among the sites most frequented by either residents or visitors to the city. Most people going to the site either have a coffee or a little something in the outdoor café or take their lunch in the nice interior restaurant. I admit that the museum's holdings do little to capture my imagination. Despite greater interest in the food than in the ships, the investment of time, money and energy has resulted in an impeccable addition to Barcelona's cache of public-space jewels. The Drassanes serves as an exemplary physical record of Catalonia's medieval grandeur. Why? For the millions of people who walk past, peek in, or have a meal there (that is, for those who know the place even though they do not pay

¹⁹ Dinner, anyone? AZ Cátering company made this enticing clip in preparation for an event inside the museum: *Drone You*, "Clip promocional para AZ Cátering en el Museo Marítimo de Barcelona (Drassanes)," March 26, 2016, accessed November 13, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ff4GUActZPs>

the entrance fee to view the displays), it is immediately apparent that the building's current use is especially fitted to the purposes for which it was originally built some seven hundred years ago. The Museu Marítim evokes important imaginative connecting associations between Barcelona's past and present.

The space that now houses Catalonia's national library, the Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya, remains as cavernous today as when it was built to serve as Barcelona's principal hospital, the Hospital de Santa Creu, at the start of the fifteenth century. It continued to serve this function until it merged with other regional hospitals around 1930, at which time it moved to the larger space, designed by the Modernist architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner, that became the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau.

Perhaps it is unfortunate that libraries are no more attractive tourist destinations than hospitals. On the other hand, those few scholars and others who know of the place find it to be a refuge, where they can go to read and do their research within the quiet cavern of medieval pointed diaphragm arches. It is an environment that is at once beautiful, grand, and severe—a lovely design, sturdily built, although a little disconcerting to imagine as a hospital in which the large interior spaces would have echoed with the sounds of great numbers of sick and dying. In another way, too, this is no ordinary library. Initiated as an extension of the work of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, the library's mission is to collect, care for, and disseminate Catalonia's print and electronic media heritage. The library performs its Catalanist function within a uniquely Catalan space.²⁰

The best-known examples of building projects that integrate medievalizing and modernizing tendencies are those built by Modernist architects and craftsmen in the decades on either side of 1900. I have not offered any detailed study of Modernism in these pages because it is such a well-known phenomenon. The uninitiated will find ample information and images online using "Catalan Modernism" to begin the search. The Sagrada Família, the project that Antoni Gaudí, the best known of the Modernists, worked and reworked from 1883 until his death in 1926, receives over three million paid visits each year.²¹ Park Güell, which nowadays is intimately associated with Gaudí, has become so impacted by tourist visitors

²⁰The library has recently expanded beyond its walls through a variety of international associations, including its international partnership with Google Books Library Project.

²¹Gaudí died at the age of 73, in 1926, hit by a streetcar and left to die by people who mistook him for beggar.

that to reduce traffic there Barcelona's municipal authorities have recently turned to making locals pay to visit what until a few years ago was a neighborhood park.²² There is little need here to say more about Gaudí or his Modernist projects since interested readers will find ample material on line and in print confirming his inventive integration of medieval aesthetics and modern methods joined to his fervent support of the Catalanism of his time.²³ Although the names of other Modernists are not so easy for non-Catalans to recall, readers should know that Gaudí did not work in a vacuum. The several Modernist buildings on the Passeig de Gràcia offer a dense illustration of the medievalizing and modernizing palette employed by Gaudí, Domènech i Montaner, Puig i Cadafalch, Josep Vilaseca i Casanovas, and the many others involved in the movement. The training, ingenuity, and aspirations of the Modernist architects and artists whose buildings are now iconic made medievalizing tendencies into key components of their new-century modern artistic vocabulary.

I have some trepidation about ending this chapter with reference to the Modernists since there is a tendency for non-Catalans to presume that the interest in making modernity from the remnants of Catalonia's medieval past is a feature only of the periods of the *Renaixença* and Modernism. I hope to have convinced readers that this is not the case. Efforts to medievalize modern structures have deep roots and continue into the present. I hope, too, to have convinced readers that the desire to find a place for historically important medieval structures in the modern Catalan environment is also ongoing.

An illustrative example with which to end is Domènech i Montaner's Hospital de Santa Creu i Sant Pau, north of the Sagrada Família along Avinguda de Gaudí. The complex served continuously as Barcelona's principal center of medicine and medical research from the late 1920s into the 1990s, after which most of the medical facilities moved to a state-of-the-art complex constructed nearby. After a renovation costing over 100,000,000 dollars, the hospital grounds reopened in 2014 as a cultural center and a "space of memory" (a museum, performance, and exhibition space devoted to remembering aspects of the past important to Catalanist

²²Thomas G. Beddall, "Gaudí and the Catalan Gothic," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 34 (1975), 48–59. Viviana Narotsky, "Selling the Nation: Identity and Design in 1980s Catalonia," *Design Issues* 25 (2009), 62–75.

²³For one among many studies of Gaudí's politics, see Juan José Lahuerta, *Antoni Gaudí, 1852–1926: Architecture, Ideology, and Politics* (London: Phaidon Press, 2003).

ideology). The complex looks back and moves forward in time: The tiled murals that face the Carrer de Cartagena look back to the medieval past by depicting important events in medieval Catalan history; present use intends to project the historic Catalanism of Modernism's medievalizing to an audience of Catalans and tourists who might learn to appreciate modern Catalan identity and support modern Catalanism.²⁴

²⁴The official website *Fundació Privada Hospital de Sant Pau*, accessed November 13, 2017, <https://www.santpaubarcelona.org/en/>, offers a history of the site, a description of the recent renovation and current uses, along with high-quality photographs of Lluís Domènech i Montaner's stunning creative accomplishments.



CHAPTER 8

Fighting Words

Language ranks high among the everyday anxieties and aspirations of many Catalans. This chapter is about what it means to Catalans that the language they speak is a contentious subject. More broadly, this chapter is about what the Catalan language contributes to how Catalans identify themselves as a collective defined by a medieval past. Catalans speak Catalan, a language of medieval origin that is not and never has been the same as Spanish. They speak Spanish, too, although some of them would prefer not to be pushed into doing so against their will.

The health of the Catalan language has historically been taken as a measure of the vitality of Catalan culture. Some Spaniards, Francisco Franco not the least among them, worked to rid Catalans of their language as a way of successfully weakening and destroying their culture. Those efforts have largely failed. Despite five hundred years of attacks and antagonisms, the language has survived and, despite setbacks and complications, even thrived. This book is not about the survival of the Catalan language but, rather, it is about the uses of the past to create a viable Catalan present and future. Perhaps this amounts to the same thing. Many Catalans believe that their language is the single most important aspect of their culture, the thing that above all else binds them to their past and enables them to envision a future as a cultural collective.

This chapter begins with a short history of the rise, decline, and renewal of the Catalan language, including a summary demonstration of how Spanish governments since the close of the medieval period have sought

to repress it. I will remark only a little on the fact that the French government also launched a campaign against Catalan speech among the people living in those parts of France that were once within the ambit of medieval Catalonia. I then turn to the varied ways in which Catalans protect and promote their mother tongue. "Mother tongue" may not be the right choice of words here since many Catalans were born elsewhere but have become Catalans because they live in Catalonia and have adopted its culture, including the language, as their own. This survey of how Catalans protect and promote their language takes in language education as well as quotidian choices made over which language, Catalan or Spanish, to use on the street and in political discourse. We will consider the use of the media and the effects of slogans and propaganda both in support of and against the use of Catalan. In total, the project of this chapter is to investigate the varied ways in which Catalans hold their language in special reverence because its continued use is a demonstration of who they consider themselves to be as a people with a pre-Spanish history.

WORD THEORY

Several thoughts about the nature of language are worth raising at the outset. The first has to do with the emotional and functional aspects of language.

We tend to think of languages in functional terms. They are utilitarian, used for the purpose of communication. Catalan is, like all languages, a means of communication. It gets used, like a tool, to get things done. But languages are more than that, of course. They also carry an emotional charge; they cast an emotional hold on their speakers. It is something of a problem that both academic and popular discussions about language usage often conflate the emotional and the instrumental aspects. We will do better to appreciate the depth of emotional attachment to a language as something distinct from its everyday utility to convey information. Most Catalans feel something more or different about who they are when they speak Catalan as compared to when they speak Spanish (some Catalans born outside Catalonia, who learned Spanish or another language as their first language, may be exempted from this generalization).

Catalonia is currently a fully diglossic society, meaning that most Catalans speak Castilian Spanish and Catalan. The war over language being fought in Catalonia is not merely about choosing a language for

basic communication. Catalans speak Spanish to get things done in a Spanish state. Many of them would prefer not to.

Nation-states have made it part of their task to fortify “national” languages by breaking the emotional attachment to “competitor” languages. Nation-states typically accord status to these competitors only as “minority,” “dialect,” or “non-native” languages. The US has demonstrated a good deal of success in the diminution of competitors to English. Although it is a land of immigrants, it routinely falls to the bottom of lists of nations where multilingualism is encouraged (the fact that Spanish is spoken by a very substantial proportion of the US population is generally ignored, for example, by state and federal education policymakers). Since the early nineteenth century, France has largely succeeded in eliminating Occitan, Franco-Provençal, Basque, and Catalan as rivals to French (most of the people whose forebears used to speak these languages now speak only French, or French and English, French and German, and so on). It is worth wondering why language and education policies emanating from a series of Spanish governments over many centuries have failed at the task of linguistic unification, or, at least, why they have not seen the success witnessed in France and the United States.

There is also the question of the extent to which language is an essential aspect of culture. Does language count as just one alongside many measures of culture and cultural transmission? Or, alternatively, is language so important that a culture fails to exist absent its principal means of expression?

The question of language survival in relation to cultural survival is related to another set of questions about the relationship of language to national identity. There are groups, according to some researchers, who assert a strong ethnic component. “Ethnic nationalism” is a label commonly applied to such groups. Other national groups do not lay claim to ethnic, indigenous, or nativist traditions. Catalans, most researchers confirm, typically describe themselves in non-ethnic terms. Some theorists call Catalanism a form of “civic nationalism” to distinguish it from ethnic nationalism. Other theorists dispute the appropriateness of the “ethnic” and “civic” dichotomy.¹

¹ For Catalonia’s fit in the academic debate about nationalisms, see Montserrat Guibernau, “Anthony D. Smith on Nations and National Identity: A Critical Assessment,” *Nations and Nationalism* 10 (2004), 125–141.

It may be that Catalans cling to their language because other qualifiers of national identity, like ethnicity, do not work for them. Non-ethnic nationalism has double-edged implications in the Catalan case. Catalan society has shown an openness to immigrants, including both economic migrants and ex-patriots who have chosen to leave their home countries because they prefer to live in Catalonia. Catalonia also has a recent history extending back at least to the 1992 Olympic Games of accommodating millions of foreign visitors annually. Catalonia's openness to others appears to have contributed significantly to Catalans developing an identity free of ethnic qualifications. In comparative terms, we see very few instances inside Catalonia of the kind of exclusiveness associated with states built upon ethnic identity.

Because Catalans are relatively free of ethnicity as a basis for identity, language is an especially potent, and thus problematic, factor in identity management. Openness, accommodation, and hybridity have put a measurable strain on those aspects of Catalan culture that appear most traditional. The Franco dictatorship encouraged immigration from Castilianized Andalusia into Catalonia as a means of undermining the foundations of Catalan identity, including language. It is hard to assert the operation of an ancient identity at the core of Catalan culture in the face of the region's dramatic demographic changes, some brought about by processes of globalization and others imposed by Spanish policy. A point to be made here is that to break the bond between a language and the people who speak it might also mean the breakdown of other manifestations of their heritage.

Another area of context takes account of evidence, now emerging from empirical studies, that languages shape cognition. There is much we do not know about, for example, how Spanish-only speakers differ in their thinking, because of their language orientation, from those who speak principally Catalan or who are fully diglossic, equally capable in Spanish and Catalan. Still, evidence is growing that one language, like Catalan, can represent and produce patterns of thought that manifest very differently in another language, like Spanish. These cognitive effects can encompass a range of very basic human concerns from spatial and temporal awareness to ethical decision making.² From this perspective, Catalan words like "*seny*" or "*pactisme*" may be more than ideas represented by words; they may be states of mind, in which case they shape the thinking and behavior

² For interesting examples, see Lera Boroditsky, "How does our language shape the way we think?" *Edge*, November 6, 2009, https://www.edge.org/conversation/lera_boroditsky-how-does-our-language-shape-the-way-we-think

of Catalans in ways that Spanish speakers in non-Catalan Spain do not share and may not fully comprehend.

Underlying much of this chapter are even broader questions about the relationship between individual cognition and social action. Although these questions are not specifically or directly about language, I might as well devote a few sentences to exploring synchronicity as an aspect of them here. It remains true regarding synchronistic behavior, as is true about language more broadly, that there is much to speculate about, much we do not know. The questions raised by considering it here should make us contemplate the potential costs of restricting the use of the Catalan language.

Some human interactions draw individuals into moments of significant communal experience. Just to make it obvious, think about a time when you were in the presence of many people you did not know but with whom you acted in unison. When I was young, Fourth of July fireworks displays in the US exemplified for me that kind of social synchronicity—as much as the explosions in the sky mesmerized me, I was equally wowed by the linked oohs and ahs of the crowd. I remember a palpable shared stir of patriotism, and I noticed that it felt to me both comfortably familiar and oddly unsettling that a crowd of strangers exclaimed in unison. There are small examples of this kind of synchronicity, as when someone's yawn becomes contagious, and big examples, including the hand clapping transition shift from chaos to shared rhythmic pulsation that declares a concert audience's enthusiasm for a performance. Perhaps you have participated in a moment of social sync at a major sporting event upon seeing a memorable shot or score—"and the crowd goes wild!" The point here is that there are moments when we do things alongside others doing the same thing, when it is unclear to us who is leading and who is following (in fact, the question of who is leading is often moot in these instances, since the divide between self and others momentarily disappears as the crowd acts in unison). Watching the Sardanas danced in public squares on warm summer nights in Catalan cathedral squares, one senses that the experience of the dancers fits this context. For a few hours, individuals from various walks of life become a Catalanist social organism.

Some examples of social synchronicity are potentially troubling. Being a medieval historian, I favor, as an unfortunate example, the moment when Pope Urban II initiated a history of crusading during the speech he made in Clermont in 1096. About two-thirds of the way through his discourse, according to testimonies, the audience erupted into spontaneous

shouts of “God wills it! God wills it.” The question here is whether the synchronous display of social enthusiasm reported by chroniclers was staged, that is, preplanned and initiated by a few supporters planted at the back of the crowd. Skilled politicians know how to play a crowd, and Pope Urban, if nothing else, was a skilled politician. It states the obvious to recall that staged social synchronicity contributed to what gave Hitler’s Nuremberg rallies their charge.

We need to be careful about what I am suggesting here. Let’s take an example of participatory Catalanism exhibited by supporters of Football Club Barcelona: the booing they sent up when Spain’s national anthem played at Camp Nou Stadium before the Copa del Rey final in May of 2015. The very vocal disaffection demonstrated by Barça fans at that time showed them at their most synchronous. Maybe Barça’s management team encouraged this potent social theatre, with consequences for Spanish national politics; however, it is doubtful that Barça’s managers stage occasions for Catalanist fervor in ways that look spontaneous but actually have something in common with those who ply the back rows at political rallies. Still, Barça’s slogan, “*Més que un club*” (“More than a club”), gives tacit support to the enthusiastic partisans who wear *barretinas*, wave *Senyeras*, and declare on placards, “Catalonia is not Spain.” The performance certainly seemed spontaneous, in which case it would be difficult to call anyone to account for the insult to Spain’s national pride. Nonetheless, in the example of the Copa del Rey of 2015, Spain’s anti-violence commission fined Barça 66 thousand euros for the non-violent, albeit noisy, collective protest of the crowd.³ Sometimes, propagandistic manipulation can so deafen individual consciousness that social coherence morphs into something ugly. Some participatory experiences, however, like the displays at Camp Nou, bring into effect moments of social harmony that appear to be positive, or, if not fairly deemed entirely positive, then at least creative examples of free expression. The line between negative rabble-rousing and positive communal sync may not always be clear. In this particular instance in 2015, Spain, with its monopoly on law, justice, and appeal, got to determine where to draw the fine line between the two courses. The danger in that must be recognized. Spanish governments that seek to suppress Catalan speech have it as their intention to diminish occasions for Catalan

³ Ian McCourt, “Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao fined for fans booing Spanish national anthem,” July 28, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2015/jul/28/barcelona-athletic-bilbao-fined-booing-anthem>

synchronicity with the end goal of imposing upon the Catalans the Spanish language, and with it, the weaker myth of Spanish unity.

THE CATALAN LANGUAGE FROM BIRTH TO MATURITY

Catalan emerged as early as the ninth century as an outgrowth of Vulgar Latin. It did so as a distinct variant on the Gallo-Romanic group of languages, along the Occitano-Romance branch that comprises Occitan, Provençal, and Catalan.⁴ To be clear on a critical point about root and branch: Although both share Latin roots, the Gallo-Romanic language group that includes Catalan is separate from the Ibero-Romance group in which Castilian (Spanish) fits. Put another way: Catalan is not a variant of Spanish.

Some antagonists assert that Catalan derives from Spanish. They point to lexical and phonetic similarities and a smattering of cognate verbs found in the two languages. But this is not evidence for the descent of one language from the other. It is not surprising to find evidence of confluence. After several thousand years of side-by-side coevolution, and five hundred years of subordination of Catalan to Castilian intrusion, we should expect evidence of confluence. But descent is another matter. In a similar context, words we use in English like *moustache* and *restaurant* show Norman-French influence—a result of the confluence of Old English and Old Norman in the time of the Norman Conquest—but they do not lead us to deny the earlier derivation of English from the North Germanic language group. In fact, empirical analysis continues to demonstrate that Catalan is more closely related to Italian than it is to Spanish.⁵

The emergence of Catalan is about coterminous with the release of the Catalan counties from Carolingian jurisdiction; in other words, the first

⁴The Spanish philologist Ramon Menéndez Pidal (1869–1968) claimed that Catalan belonged to the Ibero-Romance group of languages, but that was a long time ago, when politics counted for as much as science in the discussion of language origins. Only the most zealous Hispanophiles agree with him now.

⁵Philologists and linguists agree: Catalan is not a variant or dialect of Spanish. If politicians and others in Madrid, or people with whom you communicate, say otherwise, they should not be trusted on the matter, since it is likely that they speak from the point of political bias rather than informed science. The truth of the matter is easily accessible in numerous academic studies and, for those disinclined to depth of detail, also on Wikipedia websites and elsewhere. The relevant chapters in Martin Harris and Nigel Vincent, *The Romance Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), are a profitable place to begin an inquiry.

evidence of spoken Catalan appeared at about the time that Wilfred the Hairy gained control over the counties of Urgell, Cerdanya, Barcelona, Girona, Besalú, and Ausona. Inhabitants of the neighboring counties of Pallars, Ribagorça, Empúries, and Rosselló, on both sides of the Pyrenees, were also speaking the new language. By the eleventh century, according to philologists and linguists, Catalan vernacular had grown sufficiently stable that elements of it had begun to appear in writing within Latin-based texts. The *Memorial de Greuges de Ponç I, Compte d'Empuries, Contra Jofre, Compte de Roselló* (*The Memorial of Complaints*), is an especially important example because of its antiquity—the text appeared in the decade of the 1050s. It offers complete sentences in Occitano-Romance entirely distinguishable from Latin. In those years Ramon Berenguer I and Almodis were making Barcelona the principal county among the associated Catalan counties and promulgating the earliest version of the *Usatges*. The manner of Catalan then spoken is sometimes called Old Catalan or Old Occitan. Specialists agree that Old Catalan and Old Occitan diverged before 1100. Features of both languages offer evidence of the divide. For example, Catalan never underwent the vowel shift /u/ to /y/ that became apparent in Occitan. This linguistic evolution is evinced in the *Cançó de Santa Fe*, written between 1054 and 1075; in lines of Catalan interspersed between lines of Latin in the *Greuges de Guitard Isarn, Senyor de Caboot* from around 1090; and in a manuscript of the *Homilies d'Organyà* dated nearer to 1200. Following this early stabilization and standardization, Catalan had by the thirteenth century become a unique language with its own distinct variants in Valencia, the Balearics, and (after 1372) Alghero, clearly distinguishable from the other Gallo-Romance and Occitano-Romance languages that are its family relations.⁶

Catalan enjoyed an exemplary course of development as a literary language. The Catalan language expanded in written form with the conquests of the Catalan royal dynasty and the commercial interests that helped to facilitate those conquests. Let's recall two moments in that territorial expansion. Ramon Berenguer IV (c. 1114–1162) inherited Barcelona and other counties in Old Catalonia. He thereafter entered into an agreement

⁶ Josep Moran and Joan Martí Castell, *Estudis d'història de la llengua catalana* (Montserrat: La Abadia de Montserrat, 2004); Joan Martí Castell, *Els orígens de la llengua catalana* (Barcelona: Ediuoc, 2001); Lluís Gimeno Betí, *Aproximació lingüística als inicis de la llengua catalana, segles VIII al XIII* (Castelló de la Plana: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I, 2005); Arthur Terry, *A Companion to Catalan Literature* (Martlesham, Suffolk: Tamesis, 2010).

to marry the infant queen, Peyronella of Aragon, which brought a kingdom into the Catalan orbit. All the while he engaged in wars against Muslim *taifa* kings to the west and south, through which he gained control of what is often described as New Catalonia (the region between the Llobregat River, just south of Barcelona, and the Ebro River, at the northern limits of territories claimed by the Muslim King of Valencia). James I (1208–1276), Count of the Principality of Catalonia and King of tiny landlocked Aragon, added the Kingdoms of Valencia and the Balearics to his lengthy list of titles, which included claims to the territories of Roussillon and Montpellier, now belonging to France.

The comital court in this period was, as Donald Kagay has said, “a remarkably literate environment.”⁷ Ramon Berenguer I promulgated the earliest versions of the *Usatges* in Latin rather than Catalan, although we also see in his time that the *Homilies d’Organya*, exemplars of the *greuges* and oaths mentioned earlier, and a fragment of the *Forum Iudicum*, attest to some of the earliest writing or translation of full texts in Catalan. The court of Ramon Berenguer IV produced the versions of the *Usatges* that became the standard law code of Catalonia, and very quickly numerous Latin and Catalan manuscripts appeared, coinciding with the period of the great troubadour experimenters in the vernacular. During the reign of Alfonso I, son of Ramon Berenguer IV, Catalan troubadours showed an interest in bringing legends from overseas into the orbit of the Catalan language. Guiraut de Cabrera’s *Ensenhamen*, from about 1170, shows that the author knew the stories of Arthur and Gawain as well as the tales of Tristan and Isolde. By the time of James I, much of the regular correspondence at court, as well as notarial records of legal transactions of the everyday sort, like wills and testaments, were recorded in Catalan.

In the generations after James I, Catalan reached its peak as a literary language. James, as mentioned, mounted successful conquests against the Muslim kingdoms of Majorca (1229–1231) and Valencia (1232–1238). To do so he had to gain the support of Catalan and Aragonese barons, whose general bellicosity had previously worked against his interests. He also gave incentives to Catalan merchants, mostly Barcelonans who traded in sea-borne goods. During this period in which James built a Catalan state, Catalan was becoming a language of record alongside, and even supplanting, Latin; it was used in oaths, contracts and wills, chronicles, science and philosophy, and troubadour and religious story and song.

⁷ Kagay, *The Usatges of Barcelona*, 27.

Compiled under James's rule was a compendium of maritime law, which, in the time of his son, became the *Llibre del Consolat de Mar* (*Book of the Consulate of the Sea*). Giving security and order to sea-borne trade, and taking account of a long history of law of the seas, the *Llibre del Consolat de Mar* permitted the Catalan merchant expansion that made Catalonia a Mediterranean empire. Translated from Catalan into many languages, it became a basis of modern international maritime law. James's court also produced a book of proverbs, maxims, and philosophical tidbits, the *Llibre de la Saviesa* (*Book of Wisdom*), which drew for help on men in his court who translated into Catalan original sources from Hebrew and Arabic.

Among the activities for which James is best known, and one that gave the Catalan language a significant push toward its literary maximum, is his autobiographical account, the *Llibre dels Fets*. Working alongside the king as he dictated, scribes composed this first-person colloquial narrative—probably the first autobiography produced by a medieval king. Many researchers view the book as an explicit defense of Catalan identity. It is a principal resource for our understanding of love, honor, and law in late medieval Iberia, as well as Christian idealism, Christian-Muslim antagonism and cooperation, military strategy and tactics, and much more. In one of its classic scenes (it is written in a way that today we could rightly call cinematic), James tells us of an event early in the Majorca campaign, when he was still quite young, when his nobles could be disparaging of his abilities but nonetheless needed his nominal leadership in order to prevent feuds amongst themselves. After an arduous oversea voyage, and after the first skirmish against the Majorcans was successfully concluded without him (because his nobles refused to permit him to leave his ship), James gathered a few men and horses and rode toward a group of combatants. The result was that one of his leading nobles was nearly killed. The king showed himself to be a foolhardy youth, but eager for the fight. His nobles rebuked him but nonetheless applauded his pugnacity.⁸ He also tells about the injury he sustained when a crossbow bolt pierced his helmet, entering his forehead just above the left eye, evidence of which is visible in the photos taken at his body's exhumation in the 1850s.

Discussion of James's military campaigns leads us to a prominent example of the convergence of the long-gone past and the all-too-present, as well as the relationship of verbal and non-verbal in the construction of

⁸ Damian Smith and Helena Buffery, eds., *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon: A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Llibre dels Fets* (Burlington, Ashgate, 2003), 84–85.

Catalan identity. A group of mural paintings, preserved and prominently displayed at the MNAC, depicts James and his army at various stages of the Majorca campaign. The mural was produced for the ancestral home of the Caldes family in Barcelona in the years between 1285 and 1290 in what is called by art historians the Linear Gothic style. "Linear" refers to the narration of an event over a series of related mural paintings. This set of murals counts among several preserved examples from the period, all produced to relate in visual form the stories told in James's *Llibre dels Fets* and in the *Crònica de Bernat Desclot*. Over 800,000 people each year, many of whom are international visitors, view the murals at the MNAC, which are held to be among the most significant examples of European narrative painting in the High Middle Ages. If those viewers are paying attention at all they are impressed by the imagery depicting a distinctly Catalan history, which includes images of the *Senyera* and uses a color palette that draws heavily upon the flag's crimson and gold. Murals produced in the same years for the Palau Reial Major and the Saló Tinell, both prominent tourist attractions in Barcelona's Barri Gòtic, also offer a visual retelling of the Catalan-language chronicles. In the thirteenth century, these examples of writing and visual arts drew readers and viewers into a Catalan imaginary. They do the same work in the present.

The two texts on which these murals are based, mentioned above as the *Llibre dels Fets* of James I and Bernat Desclot's *Crònica*, are the first two of the famous *Quatre Grans Cròniques Catalans*, the *Four Great Catalan Chronicles*. James' autobiographical account dates to the period before his death in 1276, with some later additions. Desclot's account, published in 1288, narrates the exploits of the Catalan kings from Ramon Berenguer IV to Peter the Great, the son of James I. The third product in this series of literary histories is the *Crònica* of Ramon Muntaner, redacted before 1328. Muntaner was soldier and commander in the naval force of almogavar mercenaries, called the Catalan Company, who, under the leadership of Roger de Flor, expanded the reach of Catalonia across the Mediterranean. Catalan merchants and the count-kings of Catalonia and Aragon gained, at least indirectly, from the activities of the Catalan Company. The last of the four great chronicles, the *Crònica* of Peter the Ceremonious, survives in two redactions from 1383 to 1385. Written by Peter's court in an autobiographical style, this account illustrates an important shift in the production of courtly histories, away from tales of chivalric exploits, military conquests, and knightly deeds and toward the explicit use of chancery records to document the public nature of private and public events in the king's life.

An excellent recent book by Jaume Aurell confirms an important point about the biggest arguments I advance in this book. Historians hold up these chronicles as stellar examples because of the insights they give us into medieval governance, law, social relationship, and like matters. Aurell demonstrates that the writers of these texts engaged in their own efforts to make the Catalan past productive in their own times. Contrary to the false claims of those who hold that Catalan identity is something new, dating to the eighteenth century, and that Catalan derives from Castilian, these texts demonstrate explicit and early efforts to shape Catalan identity. Moreover, they do so by using the past as a tool, productively employing it to shape the present and future.⁹

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries mark the high point of Catalan literary culture. Some of the greatest writers of the period, often mentioned in discussions not only of Catalan literature but of late medieval writing more generally, are the Majorcan Ramon Llull, Bernat Metge, Ausiàs March, and Joan Martorell. Ample and easily available biographies exist for each of these writers.¹⁰ Ramon Llull deserves additional discussion in order to demonstrate his influence beyond Catalonia and especially to bring attention to his novel, *Blanquerna*, which literary scholars (and not only Catalan ones) say is of a quality that puts him on par with Cervantes and Shakespeare, or better, since he preceded them by 250 years, as their antecedent. Very abundant documentation of the use of Catalan as the principal language of government, administration, the church, and family records also dates to this period, as is plainly evident to anyone who visits l'Arxiu Històric de Protocols de Barcelona, the archive that is part of the Col·legi de Notaris de Catalunya, the notarial college in Barcelona. In the interest of not overtaxing readers, I will omit discussion of these Catalan legal records, although historians in the know count them among the richest records from anywhere in the late medieval period.

Llull (c. 1232–c. 1315) was a polymath—troubadour, philosopher, theologian, politician, mathematician, mystic, novelist—who wrote in Latin, Arabic, and Catalan. He produced important writings contributing to mathematics and computation. He wrote a manual on chivalry (*Llibre de l'Orde de Cavalleria*), and he wrote and revised a book on discerning

⁹ On this point, see the introduction to Aurell, *Authoring the Past*.

¹⁰ The Wikipedia page “Medieval Catalan-language writers” lists these among over thirty poets, chroniclers, and writers in other genres. Helena Buffery and Elisenda Marcer, *Dictionary of the Catalans*, offers entries for each.

religious truths by use of reason (*Ars Inveniendi Veritatis* and *Ars Magna*), which he and others used as an aid in projects to convert Muslims to Christianity. Some scholars contend that his writings against Judaism advance the first elaboration of a policy culminating in Spain's expulsion of Jews. He died at the age of 82 after being stoned by a crowd of Muslims angered by his efforts to convert them.

Despite his ardent efforts to convert Jews and Muslims, Llull was not well liked by members of the Dominican religious order. In 1376, the inquisitor Nicholas Eymerich condemned one hundred points postulated in Llull's writings. Pope Gregory XI condemned twenty of Llull's books. Despite these threats to his posthumous reputation, the Franciscan religious order, recognizing Llull as a tertiary (non-clerical and unofficial) member of their order, claimed him as a martyr and oversaw the process by which he was beatified in 1847. The research council of Spain, the CSIC, has as its logo an image depicting the tree of science Llull describes in his *L'Arbre de Ciència* (*The Tree of Science*). An institute in Barcelona established in 1990 bearing his name is dedicated to studies in the Lullian Humanistic tradition. The Institut Ramon Llull advances Catalan language studies and Catalan culture, and is especially focused, following the tradition of Lullian proselytizing, on the promotion of the Catalan language outside Catalonia.¹¹

The work for which Lull is best known is the novel *Blanquerna*, about a hermit of that name. After learning not to follow the example of his worldly father, Blanquerna refuses marriage to become a monk. He rises through the ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to become abbot and then pope, all the while interacting with people of various social ranks, from prostitutes and young maidens, to common thieves and merchants, to powerful churchmen and emperors. Blanquerna meets a jongleur, a "wise fool," by the name of Ramon, who instructs Blanquerna on how to properly reform the Church, which he ultimately does as pope before retiring again to the hermetical life. As a hermit, Blanquerna writes a book entitled *Llibre d'Amic e d'Amat* (*Book of the Lover and the Beloved*), a novel inside a novel, in which he offers a method others can follow for contemplating God. I provide this summary of the rather complicated plot in

¹¹To view the CSIC logo and examples of the council's latest science research see: *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas*, accessed on November 23, 2017, <http://www.csic.es/>. The English language homepage for the institute is *Institut Ramon Llull: Catalan culture abroad*: <https://www.llull.cat/english/quisom/quisom.cfm>

evidence that *Blanquerna* stands as the first major novel in the Catalan language and one of the earliest and most advanced exemplars of full-length narrative fiction in Europe. It is well established that Miguel de Cervantes derived pleasure and inspiration from Lull's *Blanquerna* and also from Joanot Martorell's *Tirant lo Blanch* (Lull's is often called the first literary work in Catalan, and Martorell's is said to be the first modern European novel; each is seminal even if one disputes their primacy).¹²

ON THE CATALAN LANGUAGE IN THE CASTILIAN STATE

With the death of Martin the Humane in 1410, the dynasty that had directed Catalonia's fate since the ninth century came to an end. What happened as a result changed not only the political and territorial trajectory of Catalonia but also threatened the health of the Catalan language. Before Martin's death, the rulers of Catalonia were Catalans who spoke Catalan. After Martin's death, the rulers of Catalonia were of Castilian, French, Dutch, or German background, but mostly Castilian, who, regardless of their principal language, sought first to protect the interests of Madrid and Castile to the detriment of those of the Catalans.

Language is one of the most obvious indicators of distinctiveness. It is inherent in the history of state-building efforts that governors encourage unity rather than diversity by limiting the access of diverse internal population groups to what they consider their distinctive attributes. Thus, we would be surprised not to see Spain's kings and dictators making the Catalan language a principal target of policy and force. Many commentators have described in detail with what enmity Spanish governments over several centuries treated the Catalan language as one of the holdout attributes of an obstinate population. My aim here is to summarize this research rather than to offer a novel analysis.¹³ I will emphasize one point, however,

¹² Germán Bleiberg, Maureen Ihrle, and Janet Pérez, eds., *Dictionary of the Literature of the Iberian Peninsula* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 357–360, one among the many concise overviews of Catalan literature that confirm the singular importance of Lull and Martorell. Steven Moore, *The Novel: An Alternative History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 129–130, acknowledges the primacy of Lull (including the possibility that Lull's self-references to his other literary works may make it the earliest example of product placement); nonetheless, he also admits that its five hundred pages of Christian extremism mixed with Sufi-influenced displaced eroticism make for tedious going, “a real martyrdom to read.”

¹³ Overviews of the problem in English include Miquel Strubell and Emili Boix-Fuster, *Democratic Policies for Language Revitalization: The Case of Catalan* (New York: Palgrave

that some others have been reluctant to state unequivocally: Whereas policies aimed at diminishing all but the “national” language have largely worked elsewhere (in the US, France, and England, for example), Spain has not succeeded in eliminating Catalan. The survival of the Catalan language is one among many indications of the failure of the Spanish state to achieve a unitary nationalism. This is not per se a demonstration of the stubbornness of the Catalans but, rather, a demonstration of the failure of force as Spain’s most compelling tool of social cohesion.

A review of several important periods in the relationship between the Catalan and Castilian languages illustrates one of the ways structural disabilities emerged in the long-term relationship between the Catalans and non-Catalan Spaniards. An appreciation of the chronology strengthens the reasons why contemporary Catalans want to recall the medieval legacy of their language as a singularly important component of Catalan identity in the present.

First, the accomplishments of Ferdinand and Isabella—notably, of course, the discovery of New World riches, the expulsion of Iberian Jews, and the conquest of Granada—gave intellectuals attached to the royal court occasion to elaborate the foundation myths of a Spanish Empire. In the sixteenth century, writers produced mythical histories establishing the roots of Hispanic culture. These include stories about Pelayo, who saved a Catholic Visigothic remnant in northern Iberia from the Muslim invasion of the early eighth century; Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, El Cid, which emerged from a troubadour fantasy to become the most potent national legend of Reconquest of Spanish lands from the Moors; and Santiago, Saint James, whose corpse found its way to Iberia to be discovered at a propitious moment and who became Spain’s Catholic patron saint. At their core, each of these narrative constructions served in earlier incarnations as Castilian generative legends before being promulgated as the core legends of the whole of Spain. Spaniards, who so love to criticize the origin stories of the Catalans as fable and invention, should recognize their own origin stories as equally fanciful, as national myths must inevitably be.

Macmillan, 2011); Alain-G. Gagnon, *Minority Nations in the Age of Uncertainty: New Paths to National Emancipation and Empowerment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Maria Areny, Pere Mayans, and David Fornies, eds. *Catalan: The Catalan language in education in Spain*, 2nd ed. (Ljouwert, Netherlands: Mercatur European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, 2012). Examples of specialized research are listed in the bibliography.

Scholars have uncovered a pattern of thought that emerged as these myths developed. Promulgators of the myths sought to impose the view that Spain was the heart of the Empire and, importantly, that Spain was an extension of Castile. Madrid's influence as the political capital of empire grew with Castile's expanding influence as the empire's cultural and administrative heart. Moreover, because Cadiz, an Atlantic port, became the entrepôt for the people, goods, and bullion transported to and from the Americas, the value of Mediterranean port cities like Barcelona and Valencia consequently diminished in the minds of Iberians. This pattern of thought, with its consequent shift in economic orientation, took root among political and cultural elites in Catalonia as elsewhere.

Second, the pressure brought upon elite members of Catalan society to acquiesce to the new logic of Castilian empire had two opposing effects. On the one hand, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries educated Catalans began to conduct their work in Castilian, mostly because that is what was required by the norms of elite conduct as dictated by Madrid's aristocracy and by a system of advancement based on patronage. Linguistic assimilation was not in itself especially problematic, in part because the normalization of Castilian as the language of government and business did not imply any weakening of the institutions of the Catalan *pàtria*. On the other hand, despite reserving their native language for private use in conversation among family and friends, Catalan elites did not abandon their foundation myths, familial customs, and social traditions, nor did they lose their collective memory about the value of their own unique government institutions and constitutional privileges. A language shift among learned and ambitious upper echelon Catalans alone was not enough to make the Catalan population un-Catalan. They did not abandon their appreciation for their legends and traditions. The Catalan intelligentsia continued to value the Constitutions, the Generalitat and the Barcelona Diputació, and the perceived historic value of political pactism. When the Count-Duke of Olivares explicitly asserted in 1624 that King Felipe IV should be the King of Spain rather than the king of disparate kingdoms, the dissonance between linguistic and political practice became very real for elite Catalans. Most problematic was that Olivares carried out his centralizing and unification strategies with such tremendous insensitivity that elites and others in Catalonia shared the sense that their king had betrayed them. Quartering troops in their homes while refusing to visit them to hear complaints and renew privileges—in other words, the king's failure to observe basic responsibilities to his subjects—was more than Catalans could stomach.

The threat to core institutions of family and government, not disabilities placed on the use of the Catalan language, led to the revolt of the Catalans begun in 1640.

An especially grim period followed their defeat in 1714 at the end of the War of Succession. King Felipe V confirmed his victory by destroying Barcelona's Ribera neighborhood and building upon the rubble the largest military deployment center of its time, the Ciutadella fortress. He also fortified the castle on the hill of Montjuïc and imposed a military regime to administer the city. To put it plainly, he ruled his own people by pointing guns to their heads.¹⁴

In 1716, Felipe V imposed his Nueva Planta decrees. These abolished the Catalan Constitutions and thus reduced the historic relationship of sovereign and people to a simple demonstration of royal will. The Nueva Planta also imposed a tax burden, without representation or remedy, that crippled the Catalan economy. As Nùria Sales and others have pointed out, private contracts, educational and technical materials, and religious tracts continued to see publication in Catalan, but the new laws brought dramatic and negative local effects upon the language. Catalan universities were closed, except for a highly controlled new school in the tiny royalist town of Cervera, thus removing fertile ground for dissent. In 1715, even before the imposition of the Nueva Planta, José Patiño Rosales, one of the king's chief agents in Catalonia, ordered that no one should permit books published in Catalan to be used in the schools. Castilian remained the language of Catalans in Madrid, although Catalans became less numerous there, since positions in royal administration and enterprises connected to the court and government, both in Madrid and in Catalonia, turned increasingly to the hire of Castilians over Catalans. All the while, the Castilian language infiltrated politics, business, culture, and the Church in Catalonia as it did in Galicia, the Basque region, and elsewhere on the peninsula. After reforms in Puigcerdà in 1717, for example, municipal administrators there switched the language of record from Catalan to Castilian. In general terms, Felipe V initiated nearly three hundred years

¹⁴ Because Felipe V similarly abused the people in and around Valencia, the Almodí Museu Municipal in Xàtiva displays a portrait of him upside down. For a recent press report confirming that, despite recent efforts to turn it around, the painting will remain "*boca abajo*", see Antonio Vico, "Xàtiva manendrà al primer Borbón boca abajo," *Infolibre.es*, June 4, 2014, accessed November 30, 2017, https://www.infolibre.es/noticias/cultura/2014/06/04/xativa_mantendra_primer_borbon_boca_abajo_17839_1026.html

of policies aimed to weaken and destroy evidence of Catalan difference, including the distinctive language of the Catalan people.

Most Spaniards do not appreciate what a crucial moment this was in Spain's history. Prior to the War of Spanish Succession, Catalans, like others on the peninsula, recognized the authority of their king and their place as his subjects, even if they sometimes showed anger when the king did not observe their rights. They were also learning, as were the populations of other evolving nation-states, that accepting the symbols, structures, and language of the unitary state had its benefits. As Peter Sahllins pointed out in *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*, the reforms Felipe V imposed upon the Catalans were more ambitious, but ultimately less effective, than the centralization projects undertaken in France in the same period.¹⁵ Why is that? There is a valid argument to be made, in retrospect, that Felipe V's choice to show brutality and vengeance rather than a modicum of concern for the special history of the Catalans cut short in Catalonia the process he most hoped to carry out. He is reviled in Catalonia for his barbarism, but he could just as easily be despised because his policies ruined any possibility of success in the creation of a unified nation-state.

While educated Catalans recognized Castilian as the language of state, other Catalans did not share the linguistic path taken by those from leading and socially mobile families. Peasants in rural Catalonia and workaday Catalans in the cities continued to speak Catalan in their homes, and for them Catalan continued to be the language of daily affairs. They did not take much notice of the supposed decadence of their language in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, since they continued to speak it just fine. And in the eighteenth century they were still sufficiently disengaged from affairs of state that they took little notice of the intrusion of the Castilian language into government and administration (although it is certain that they could identify the source of the economic burdens imposed by Madrid). In the period of the nineteenth century *Renaixença*, when Catalan elites came to recognize the absence of their mother tongue in the administration of their society, the raw material upon which they relied for their project of language restoration was all around them. The stories, myths, and popular activities they explored in their writings, and the language that grounded it all, had been kept alive for centuries not by elites

¹⁵ Sahllins, *Boundaries*, 126.

but by the rural peasants and urban artisans and workers who constituted the majority of the Catalan populace.

The third period in our chronology of the relationship between Catalan and Castilian begins in the latter half of the eighteenth-century. The Catalan economy experienced sustained and rapid growth after 1760 even as Spain was descending from the apogee of its empire. In Catalonia, land under cultivation and yields of cereals and other basic foodstuffs increased. Peasant producers, no longer bound to the land as their medieval predecessors had been, became relatively productive and prosperous (it is one of the fibs of Catalanist appeals to medieval democracy that Catalans often forget the sorry plight of the peasantry when that peasantry was ruled by Catalans before the 1486 Sentence of Guadalupe). The newfound freedom of movement enjoyed by peasants in the eighteenth century meant that those who could not prosper moved to the towns, which increased the urban workforce in ways foundational to Catalonia's early industrialization. In the 1770s, King Charles III removed customs barriers and export prohibitions, in part so that he might enjoy new sources of tariffs and tax revenue. This was a boon for Catalan merchants and industry. The sale of wine, spirits, almonds, and other agricultural goods rose, as did the production of paper, iron, and more. The production of stamped and printed textiles expanded rapidly. The events of the preceding century—the defeat of the Catalans in the 1640s, the territorial division of Catalonia as a result of the 1689 Treaty of Pyrenees, the devastation brought upon Barcelona and the Catalan countryside by the War of Succession—destroyed the economy for a time. Thereafter, however, a recovery and reinvigoration occurred that equaled the decisive economic expansion Albert García documented for the hundred years before the 1640s.

For a few decades, the newly favorable economic conditions effectively blunted the animosity and resentment built up over centuries.¹⁶ Businessmen were happy to draw themselves into Madrid's orbit. Barcelona's Junta de Comercio, a merchant association founded in 1763, taught its engineering courses in Castilian. Many Catalan intellectuals encouraged assimilation. Ramon Llätzer de Dou asserted in the 1770s, for example, that Castilian was the language of the educated and therefore better than Catalan for promoting commerce and confirming Spanish

¹⁶Pierre Vilar and his followers have amply demonstrated that many Catalan intellectuals embraced the Spanish nation, and in the eighteenth century even began to refer to the Castilian language as "Spanish."

patriotism. Antoni de Capmany wrote appreciatively of the Bourbon reforms that facilitated Catalan trade. Catalans wrote histories of Spain and produced Castilian-Catalan dictionaries for the purpose of expanding the reach of the Spanish national language.

Catalan elites increasingly spoke and wrote in Castilian, but they remained emotionally bound to their heritage language. I mentioned Antoni Capmany, Pau Piferrer, and Manuel Milà i Fontanals, the men who, despite their conservative support for centralization efforts, initiated the earliest literary, historical, and anthropological investigations of Catalan culture. They are now hailed as progenitors of the Catalan *Renaixença*. The same elites who had entered fully into Spanish national life, men such as these, were at the same time building up private libraries showing their keen interest in the Catalan past. Just as important were the political implications of the broadening economy and expanded participation in and expectation of democratic political processes. Across the whole of the nineteenth century, a middle class, if that is what we should call it, began to assert its own interests with and against the elites. Catalonia's merchants, bankers, and businessmen built closer relations with workers and peasants as the philosophical underpinnings of liberalism became manifest in democratic processes and institutions. Future events would make it obvious that what all sectors of society shared in general terms, even if they disagreed on particulars, was a conception of the value of recalling Catalonia's medieval past and the utility of that past for shaping the future.

The discordance we have discussed—the simultaneous movements toward and away from more intimate attachment to the Spanish nation and a national language—was never harmonized. In the period up to 1800, as before, the Spanish government failed to take advantage of the opportunities open to it to strengthen local ties to the nation-state. In the next century, Spain lost its hold on empire, vacillated between conservative and liberal, monarchical and representative governments, and felt the depth of social inequalities linked to, on the one hand, residual aristocratic pretensions and the leaden backwardness of agricultural penury, and, on the other hand, the costs of industrialization in the cities and suburbs of Catalonia and the Basque country.

The complexities of Spain's economic and political dysfunction in the nineteenth century have been extensively studied by historians and will not be reviewed here. With regard to the place of the Catalan language in the period, let's reiterate what I have previously said, which is that many

researchers have wrongly presumed that Catalan nationalism, including the fight in defense of the Catalan language, is a phenomenon of the nineteenth century. Nationalism, as we ordinarily define it, arrived alongside conservatism, liberalism, capitalism, socialism, communism, imperialism, and so on (in the great period of nineteenth-century “-isms”). But, as we have seen, this is merely giving a name to a certain construction of sentiments and institutions of more ancient provenance. Catalans knew themselves as a nation, partly because they possessed a language distinct from others, long before the nineteenth century.

We cannot leave this history of the Catalan language without describing what occurred under the Franco dictatorship after Spain was plunged into civil war. Franco’s regime showed extraordinary brutality to the Catalans and their language. This holds especially for the dictatorship’s first two decades. Almost immediately after Franco’s victory, posters in Castilian appeared in Catalonia that read, “Speak the language of Empire” and “Don’t Bark; Speak Castilian” (these mimicked posters put up by the French state in the nineteenth century in the Catalan- and Basque-speaking regions of that country).

The details of Franco’s active abuse of his own people, declared a cultural genocide by some, are well documented. The bombing of Guernica in the Euskal Herria in April of 1937, seared into memory by Picasso’s rendering of the event, preceded a similar aerial bombardment of Barcelona a little less than a year later. Immediately upon taking control of Catalonia, Franco’s regime burned hundreds of thousands of Catalan books and toppled statues of Catalan national figures. It removed street signs, posters, and advertisements in Catalan. Immediate dismissal from employment became a penalty for speaking Catalan in the workplace. Teachers loyal to the regime took up teaching positions as Catalanist sympathizers were removed from their posts. The regime removed over one hundred professors at the University of Barcelona and prohibited the teaching of Catalan language, history, and culture. Display of the *Senyera* was forbidden. Dancing the Sardana was among activities considered suspect. In 1940, after Nazi agents in France captured the exiled elected president of the Catalan Generalitat, Lluís Companys, they returned him to Spain, where the unelected dictator Franco had a firing squad shoot bullets into him.¹⁷

¹⁷Daniele Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), 111–113; Joan Benet, *Catalunya sota el règim franquista*, vol 1 (Paris: Edicions

The Franco regime could not sustain its actions intended to eradicate Catalan language and culture. Two hundred thousand Catalan exiles almost immediately began an active response. Catalans living outside Spain celebrated the Jocs Florals from 1946 to 1953. Some exiles secretly returned to Catalonia, where they joined students, youth activists, singers, and poets in clandestine efforts to write, publish, sing, and speak in Catalan in direct contradiction of the regime's prohibition. Franco was at his cruelest when working to impress the Nazis, but by about 1960, he had begun to submit to the pressure brought by post-war Western powers to appear somewhat less dictatorial. His anti-Catalan sentiment never abated, but he needed to surmount the isolation imposed upon him, and he needed the hard currency that an increase in tourism could generate. The *Òmnium Cultural*, so much in the news in recent years for promoting the separatist cause, was founded in 1961 for the purpose of promoting Catalan language and culture. The *Nova Cançó*, New Song, movement began publishing phonograph records at the same time. In 1964, a group of about three thousand activists celebrated the first Diada, the Catalan National Day, despite the threat, which was realized, of arrests and fines.

Franco intensified centuries of anti-Catalan policies with demonstrated brutality and an effectively coercive institutional apparatus. Following the lead of earlier monarchic and dictatorial autocracies, Franco opted to solve social problems by applying force, which, as before, proved damaging to the Catalan language but, ultimately, was futile as a tool for destroying Catalan identity. Catalans responded to the regime's efforts, and, by the time of Franco's death and the democratic opening that his death seemed to permit, they were poised for yet another revival of their language and culture.

BORDERS AND IMMIGRANTS

Although Spain's recent governments are not as overtly autocratic as Franco's, the threat to the Catalan language continues. Spain's weak state institutions, including the Constitution first elaborated in 1978, have permitted Madrid-centered Spanish governments to continue to play political games at the expense of Catalan language speakers. The PP, the conservative party outgrowth of Franco's government apparatus, which has gov-

erned Spain for most of the post-Franco period, is the chief agent of manipulations here, although Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) governments also incur blame for a fair amount of deceit and hypocrisy. In fact, the two parties, although they pretend to take up the space at the ideological extremes of democratic politics (one on the right and the other on the left), have often worked together in recent decades in a power-sharing relationship, and have done so by maintaining the political interests of Madrid's political elites, including perpetuating a Francoist conception of a unitary, republican, Madrid-centered political order rather than maximizing the potentials of the diversity of Spain's provinces. This applies to taxation, budget and spending, and infrastructure as well as to language.

Many researchers have addressed Spain's contemporary linguistic battles, so I need not elaborate here beyond offering the following observation. On the one hand, the Catalan government has adopted a policy of "linguistic immersion" since 1978, making Catalan the primary vehicle for teaching in schools as a means of bringing it into parity with Castilian as the primary language of the nation-state. On the other hand, in a 2012 interview broadcast by *Telemadrid*, Jose Ignacio Wert, the Spanish Minister of Education, Culture, and Sport, was asked specifically whether Catalonia's education system was leading young Catalans to favor separatist views, to which he answered: "what we want is to Hispanicize Catalan students."¹⁸ It has been the policy of post-Franco democratic (so-called) governments in Spain to diminish the ability of Catalans to speak a language that will put them out of step with a unitary Hispanicized culture.

Recent conservative governments in Spain have shown great skill in practicing their political deceptions against the Catalan language, most especially in their support for anti-Catalan or even xenophobic causes. Examples include the Battle of Valencia and the holdover campaign known as *Blauverisme*. The "Battle of Valencia" is the name given to a series of activities carried out by far-right anti-Catalan activists in Valencia in the decade after Franco's death. Ostensibly, the effort was meant to create and elaborate symbols of Valencian identity, although scholars have clearly

¹⁸ On the indoctrination thesis, see Germà Bel, *Disdain, Distrust, and Dissolution*, (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2015), 7–10. For very thorough histories of the Catalan language, see Esther Gimeno Ugalde, *La identidad nacional catalana, Ideologías lingüísticas entre 1833 y 1932* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2010) and Antoni Ferrando Francés and Miquel Nicolás Amorós, *Història de la llengua catalana* (Barcelona: Editorial UOC, 2011).

seen in it the intention to draw Valencia into the Spanish rather than the Catalan cultural orbit. The culture war under which this battle was fought is now waged by *Blauverisme*, a movement that has the participation of members of the regional and national governments in Valencia and Madrid. The principal target of the *blaveros*, or blue shirts, is the Catalan language. The other great target of blaverism is the pan-Catalanist ideology of the *Països Catalans*, developed by Joan Fuster, which seeks to defend Catalan identity within the territories (whether in various regions of Spain, or in France or Italy) where Catalan speakers live. The language spoken in Valencia is clearly a dialect of Catalan according to all reputable linguists (according even to the body officially charged by the Valencian autonomous community with regulating the language, the Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua). In recent years spurious academic papers and press reports promulgated by *blaveros* have so deliberately misrepresented reality that more than half of the Valencian people consider Valencian a separate language. Donald Trump and the Russians did not invent the idea of concocting fake news to achieve political ends.

Factions within the government of the autonomous region of Aragon have similarly denigrated the Catalan language. The easternmost edge of Aragon, at its boundary with Catalonia, is an area called the “strip” or Franja de Aragón, occupied by people who have traditionally spoken Catalan (approximately sixty thousand Catalan speakers out of the total Aragonese population of 1.2 million). The Statute of Autonomy of Aragon recognizes both Aragonese and Catalan as official languages of the autonomous community. Since 2009, however, Aragonese governors have passed laws giving a new legal name to Catalan with the aim of making it seem not to be Catalan, and thus, to make it go away. In recent incarnations, Catalan has been renamed Lapao (*Lengua Aragonesa Propria del Àrea Oriental*—The Aragonese Language Belonging to the Eastern Area) and Lapapyp (*Lengua Aragonesa Propria de la Àreas Pirenaica y Prepirenaica*—The Aragonese Language Belonging to the Areas of the Pyrenees and Pre-Pyrenees). Most citizens of Aragon and the major Aragonese and Spanish national press agree with linguists and academics that the effort is malicious and spurious, an example of nothing more than spiteful conservative politicians, backed by hired-hack propagandists, investing huge amounts of time, money, and energy, which could be devoted to better purposes. Plain and simple. Each time the government of Aragon has surreptitiously pushed through one of these nefarious laws it has, upon becoming public, been repealed as a result of significant and

immediate public pressure. Even the right-leaning national daily *El País*, after a failed effort to impose one of these acronyms in 2015, mockingly reported that “the language that they speak in the Franja of Aragon will stop being called Lapao and will return to being what it always has been, Catalan.”¹⁹

One significant point of change since Franco’s time is how much more non-Spaniards know now than they did in the past about Catalan language and culture. Franco succeeded, if nothing else, in limiting Spaniards’ knowledge about one of the most populous and economically potent regions of their nation-state. But a globalized economy, the migrations of Andalucians and other Spaniards into Catalonia, international events in which Catalonia and Barcelona have been featured (such as the 1992 Olympic Games), and the immediate reach of electronic media has changed that. Catalonia is on the world stage now.

It is worthwhile to take a measure of the Catalan language in the comparative context of other languages spoken in the European Union. Some ten million people speak Catalan (I have seen recent estimates in a range from 9.5 to 13 million). Catalan is the first language for approximately half of those speakers; for the others, Catalan is a second language. The EU recognizes 24 official languages. The number of Catalan speakers is larger than the number of speakers of fifteen of those languages. That is, there are more Catalan speakers than speakers of Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Slovak, Slovenian, and Swedish. Catalan, nonetheless, is not counted among the EU’s recognized official languages. It is a “semi-official” language, along with five others: Basque, Galician, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh. Beyond Catalan, among those others with semi-official status, Basque is the largest, with something less than 600,000 speakers. Without intending to denigrate Basque speakers, let’s be clear: The population of Catalan speakers is much greater than the small populations that speak the other languages on the semi-official list. Indeed, in the words of the linguist Martin Harris, “it is difficult to point to any language in Europe which has not become the official language of a nation-state which is as strongly placed as Catalan today.”²⁰

¹⁹ Camilo S. Baquero, “Aragón deregará la ley que denomina ‘lapao’ al Catalán,” *El País*, September 3, 2015, accessed on November 24, 2017, https://elpais.com/ccaa/2015/09/02/catalunya/1441222176_869761.html

²⁰ Martin Harris and Nigel Vincent, *The Romance Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 13.

On the face of it we have a terrible inequity here, one permitted by a EU that fears raising the ire of the political class in Spain, one of its weakest member states. It is one of many inequities and asymmetries that quite clearly indicate the degree to which Spanish governments continue to perpetuate such falsehoods as saying that Catalan is a “dialect,” or a “minority” or “regional” language of little consequence. It should be added that the French and Italian governments also have an interest in maintaining solidarity with Spain, in perpetuating the myth of the minority status of Catalan, since there are large Catalan-speaking populations in those countries.

As damaging as the foregoing examples of attacks on the Catalan language have been, the greatest threat to Catalan was never the array of explicit prohibitions and restrictions advanced by Spanish monarchs and dictators over several centuries. Immigration has posed a danger far greater. And it still does.

Barcelona, a Mediterranean coastal entrepôt, has a long history of attracting newcomers. Moreover, Catalonia’s position at the point of access between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe has given it a rich demographic history. The interior has traditionally absorbed fewer migrants than the coast. Many Catalans have made it part of their identity to draw two conclusions from these bits of geographic destiny. First, they say that as a people they are habitually accommodating of others, and, second, they identify themselves not on racial or ethnic terms but on the basis of other cultural attributes, language foremost among them. Jordi Pujol, President of the Generalitat from 1980 to 2003, made this explicit when he defined as a Catalan anyone who lives and works in Catalonia and feels connected to the country.

In the decades from about 1550 to 1620, Barcelona’s population grew rapidly, partly as a result of inflows from France. John Elliott pointed out that by about 1600, 20% of Catalonia’s male population came from the Occitan-speaking region of France. The period of Catalonia’s rapid industrial development in the nineteenth century brought Catalan-speaking migrants from Valencia, the Balearic Islands, and Aragon, as well as Castilian-speaking immigrants from elsewhere in Spain. By 1900, the population of Catalonia was nearly two million people; as a percentage of the total population, immigrant numbers were still relatively small, less than 5% in 1900 according to some estimates. A generation of immigrants generally known as *murcianos* (because a large percentage of them came from the Spanish region of Murcia, south of Valencia), entered Catalonia in the

years just before the Civil War. The Civil War, as might be expected, put a temporary stop to the flow of immigrants. Many researchers have observed that immigrants in these migratory waves tended to integrate well and relatively quickly, for two reasons. Catalan speakers, in addition to their own language, also spoke the language of the newcomers, so there was no strictly enforced cultural or linguistic barrier for migrants making a new home in Catalonia. In addition, Castilian-speaking migrants found support alongside working-class Catalans in political and neighborhood associations and in the Church. Whether or not the migrants quickly learned the local language, these institutions facilitated their social integration and provided them with the opportunity for linguistic integration.²¹

In the period of the Franco dictatorship, nearly 1.5 million immigrants came to live and work in Catalonia from Andalucia, Aragon, and elsewhere in Spain, increasing the population from 3.2 million in 1950 to 5.6 million in 1975. In the year of Franco's death the immigrant population of Barcelona reached 39% of the total population. Immigrants in this wave were mostly Castilian-speakers from Andalucia and others of Spain's poorer agricultural regions, who moved into the industrial belt around Barcelona to look for work. As Montserrat Guibernau has pointed out, they tended to have little education, and, after years of Francoist propaganda about Spain's unitary national culture and homogeneity, they arrived without an awareness of the cultural and linguistic diversity of Spain's populations.²²

Immigrants in this wave were difficult to integrate. Catalonia lacked an immigration policy and had few government structures capable of accommodating the extraordinary numbers. Many of the immigrants came of age in conformance with the centralist politics of Franco and rebuffed suggestions that they should learn Catalan or adopt Catalan ways. Recall that in these years, too, Catalan was a prohibited language in the workplace. On the whole, however, most immigrants recognized a degree of democratic acceptance in Catalonia and, in time, saw the value of accommodating themselves to Catalan society. Montserrat Guibernau, Daniel Conversi, and others have identified several alternative political and ideological responses to the challenges of immigration in this period,

²¹ Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain*, 190–191.

²² Montserrat Guibernau, *Catalan Nationalism: Francoism, Transition and Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2012), 67.

including a variety of Catalan race-based nationalism that had a hold, then as now, only among a very small Catalan conservative fringe.²³

In his reflection on who counts as a Catalan, Jordi Pujol intended to recall Catalonia's heritage of inclusiveness, although his response was also part of a political effort to ameliorate concerns about the immigration boom occurring during his time as president. Since the 1980s, and especially in recent years, very large numbers of new immigrant populations have added considerable complexity to the language issue. In 2000, foreign nationals resident in Catalonia accounted for 2.9% of the total population. By 2011, 12% of the total population of Catalonia was composed of immigrants. In 2000, to put it another way, 125,000 households in Catalonia had foreign members, representing just over 5.4% of total households, but by 2014 the number had tripled to 411,700 households, amounting to 14% of total households with foreign members.

The overwhelming majority of immigrants into Catalonia in recent decades is from Latin America. Ecuadorians have been the largest group in recent years. They speak Spanish, which presents issues of one kind in a region where Spanish, along with Catalan, is one of two nationally recognized languages. The question is whether these newcomer Spanish speakers can fully assimilate into Catalan culture by learning to speak Catalan. There is considerable reluctance to learn the second language when one already knows the other language in the diglossic environment. On the other hand, the Catalan government and outreach organizations offer considerable support to learners of Catalan, who, by acquiring some Catalan language proficiency, open themselves to more opportunities for social satisfaction and work advancement.²⁴ Many immigrants and visitors to Catalonia who invest in the language report that for those who already speak Castilian learning Catalan is not difficult and that Catalans are eager to show appreciation for the effort.

In addition to Latin Americans, people come in very large numbers from elsewhere. Romania, Morocco, and Great Britain, in that order, are the largest contributors of immigrants who speak neither Spanish nor Catalan. According to recent statistics, Rif-Berber, Moroccan Arabic, and Urdu are the most common foreign languages spoken in Catalonia. In Catalonia, as has occurred on a global scale, recent immigration has radi-

²³ Guibernau, *Catalan Nationalism*, 189–191.

²⁴ On interesting comparisons between the Catalan and Basque situations with respect to immigration and language, see Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain*, 188–189.

cally altered the urban landscape. Recent reports have suggested that recent immigrants from outside Spain account for 24% of the population of the town of Vic.²⁵ Inner-city neighborhoods have seen Catalans move out to make room for Latin Americans, who in turn have moved as populations from North Africa, China, and elsewhere have moved in. As government agencies and newspaper reporters have concluded, the rapid increase in numbers of the non-Spanish-speaking immigrant population raises its own set of questions and problems, as does their tendency to establish themselves in sub-communities in which they find themselves cut off from the broader Catalan community.

SHOULD THEY SPEAK CATALAN?

Jordi Pujol said that language was and is a measure of the success of the relationship between Spain and Catalonia.²⁶ Politicians do not always get things right, neither do historians and other academics; but in what he says about the Catalan language, evidence suggests that Pujol is correct. This is so not merely because Catalans want to speak Catalan, but because the Catalan language is central to a Catalan identity deeply rooted in a pre-Spanish existence. The Catalan language has been on the front lines in the battle to defend Catalan culture from a hegemonic imperial Castilianization project. Since the 1500s the Castilian side has had the upper hand. Law, administrative policy, the police power of the state, and demographic factors have given the Castilian side an outsized asymmetric advantage. But Catalans have not yet given up their fight. They may even win the five-hundred-year battle to return to their roots. In fact, spoken and literary Catalan is stronger now than it ever was in the medieval years, at least if measured by the media output in Catalan and the number of speakers. But it is not a language free from the threat of extinction.

²⁵Stephen Burgen, "Immigration complicates Catalonia's separatist picture," *The Guardian*, November 20, 2012, accessed November 24, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/20/immigration-complicates-catalonia-separatist-picture>; Gemma Pinyol-Jiménez et al., *Report on the Integration of Immigrants in Catalonia 2015*, (Generalitat of Catalonia, Secretariat for Equality, Immigration and Citizenship, 2016), accessed on November 24, 2017, http://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/web/.content/03ambits_tematics/05immigracio/dades_immigracio/informe_integracio/2015/EN_Informe_integracio-immigracio-2015.pdf

²⁶Reported with commentary in Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain*, 172.



CHAPTER 9

Epilogue: In an October of Another Year

I began to write this final chapter on October 1, 2017, the day Spain's Guardia Civil beat and shot Catalans because they tried to express themselves by voting. It is broadly known that Catalonia's elected representatives approved the referendum before Spain's Supreme Court acted in concert with the ruling PP government to stop the vote by suspending the question of its legality. It was widely reported by Catalan and international media, although largely ignored by Madrid's press, that the millions of Catalans who sought to vote did so peacefully, and that millions stayed home for fear of attacks upon them by their own government. Most of the nearly nine hundred Spanish citizens in Catalonia who were hurt had their empty hands raised as heavily armed forces in riot gear beat them with batons. One unfortunate gentleman lost his eye and underwent reconstructive surgery to the bones of his face after being hit by a rubber bullet shot from a police cannon. We should note two additional details: First, Catalan law makes the use of rubber bullets inside Catalan territory illegal; and, second, the Spanish national police did not present search warrants, which they are required to do under Spanish and Catalan law, when they entered public and private facilities to commandeer ballot boxes, damaging those spaces and causing physical harm to their occupants. These are facts, albeit facts that some people refuse to acknowledge. The Spanish foreign minister, taking a line out of Donald Trump's playbook, called

reports of these facts “fake news” and said that he was in possession of “alternative facts.”¹

What occurred on that day came as the culmination, although not as the conclusion, of a history, and a historicizing past, that takes us back many centuries. To complete the trajectory of this book, let’s see what we can learn from examining the recently interrupted plebiscite and its aftermath.

I began this book by making it clear that I am not a Catalan and have no personal investment in the success or failure of the Catalan story. My tradition is the one shared by American historians who try to do their best to understand the past as it was, although, as I have illustrated in this book, historians like myself need to learn more about how the past continues to work upon the present and imposes itself upon the future. Moreover, I have tried to defend against the intrusion of my own prejudices into my professional work. On that point, I must admit that I have failed. To watch police dressed like Darth Vader’s stormtroopers push women down stairs and beat with clubs the ribs of men whose arms are raised, to see them crack the skulls of senior citizens, is more than professional objectivity should overlook.

Following the Referendum, and with little room to maneuver in finding a diplomatic solution, the Catalan Parliament declared independence on October 27, 2017. The Spanish government, fulfilling its publicized threat, immediately seized control of Catalonia’s institutions of government. The Spanish government also forced a repressive fearfulness upon the Catalan people when it encouraged and facilitated counterdemonstrations, some

¹ Human Rights Watch monitored the events surrounding the Referendum and produced a video of scenes from that day: Human Rights Watch, “Spain: Police Used Excessive Force in Catalonia,” October 12, 2017, accessed November 24, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/12/spain-police-used-excessive-force-catalonia>. The Spanish Foreign Minister, Alfonso Dastis, called the photographic and video evidence “fake news” and spoke of “alternative facts” in an interview with the BBC; see James Badcock, “Spanish Minister: Police Violence videos against Catalonia referendum supporters are ‘fake news’,” *The Telegraph*, October 22, 2017, accessed November 24, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/22/spanish-minister-says-videos-police-violence-fake-news/>. On the banning of rubber bullets in Catalonia, and calls by the EU and United Nations to outlaw their use elsewhere, see Irene Baqué, “Catalan police banned from using rubber bullets,” *The Guardian* (April 30, 2014), accessed November 24, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/30/catalonia-police-banned-rubber-bullets>

headed by bands of young fascists.² The elected President of the Catalan government, Carles Puigdemont, forced to flee trumped-up sedition charges, found exile in Brussels.³

I do not know if Catalonia's declaration of independence will ultimately be fulfilled. It seems unlikely that a lasting separation will occur in the short term. Speaking as a moral being, however, I must admit that it appears to me as though the Catalans have won a significant moral battle. I can also say with a high degree of certainty, speaking as a historian, that Spain will eventually cease to be Spain as we know it. The same fate—the significant change that always comes with time—will eventually befall all nation-states, even if it remains pure conjecture what the change will be and how and when it will happen.

We do not know the place of the Catalans in the next world order. Still, as we have learned in these pages, drawing from the past to speculate upon the possibilities of the future is an essential aspect of the human endeavor, a necessary part of opening the imagination to the possibilities of change. Let's finish up by engaging in a little soothsaying.

BEFORE OCTOBER 1

If nothing else, the evidence amassed in this book tells us that current events in Catalonia emerge from a long past. After centuries of independent development, Catalonia got drawn into the Castilian orbit by the electors at the Compromise of Caspe in 1412, following the death of Martin I in 1410, when those electors chose the Castilian Ferdinand of Antequera to rule Aragon and the Principate of Catalonia. Their decision was a difficult one. Many historians, having recognized that the electors had no good options, relieve them of blame for future events. Still, the

² Maya Oppenheim, "Catalonia: Fascists caught making Nazi salutes during anti-Catalan independence protest," October 30, 2017, accessed on November 24, 2017, *The Independent*, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/catalonia-independence-fascists-nazi-salutes-anti-catalan-protest-barcelona-a8027111.html>, and Emily Retter, "Hundreds of thousands march in Barcelona in Favour of Catalonia staying in Spain – but violence breaks out and thugs give Nazi salutes," *The Mirror*, October 29, 2017, accessed on November 24, 2017, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/march-barcelona-favour-catalonia-spain-11431482>

³ Lauren Cerulus, "Catalonia crisis hits home in Belgium," *Politico EU*, October 30, 2017, accessed on November 24, 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/charles-michel-theo-francken-catalonia-crisis-hits-home-in-belgium/>

choice of Ferdinand initiated a cascade of consequences that grew increasingly threatening to the cultural integrity of the Catalans. Within two generations of the ascension of Ferdinand of Antequera, in the reign of Ferdinand II and Isabella of Castile, the notion of a unified, centralized Spain had taken root as a goal of royal policy. Later monarchs each believed himself to have employed the policies that successfully confirmed Spain as a unified nation, policies that limited the cultural expression and political prerogatives of separate territories. Each ruler, in turn, blinded by a false impression of his own success, failed to heed the signs of distress. Elliott dubbed this “an instinctive wish to Hispanicize, which in reality meant to Castilianize.” And addressing the obstinacy of Olivares in the face of efforts by the government of Catalonia to negotiate, he says, “Once again the complete inflexibility of the ministers of Madrid and their apparent blindness to the effects that their actions produced in Catalonia, had led to results directly opposed to their own best interests.”⁴

We know in hindsight that Spanish monarchs held onto a spurious dream, often confusing unity with the forced, sometimes violent, pacification of disobedient parts. As is demonstrated by the War of the Segadors, the War of Succession, and the many political, cultural, and social developments before, during, and after those outbreaks of violence, Catalans demonstrated, as Basques, Galicians, and others have also done, that they remained unconvinced that Spanish sovereigns had in mind the best interests of their subjects. During a few years of economic promise, as we have seen, some Catalans made efforts to assimilate—to Castilianize—but, in general and over the long term, most held to the ancient fabric of language, law, culture, and religion, as well as to the family and political institutions their progenitors had built up over centuries. In those several hundreds of years, as now, the memory of an honored Catalan past offered protection against the violence brought by Castilian overlords.

The modern era has shown no better promise for a united Spain. Catalans confirmed their willingness to embrace the new directions in which Europe was moving. While the economy of Catalonia moved toward capitalism, industrialization, and liberalism, no doubt suffering some of the attendant social costs of modernization, much of the rest of Spain remained stuck in a pre-modern economy fixated on the servitude of peasant farmers to exploitative, status-craving elites. In the nineteenth century, the dissolution of empire and the breakdown of republican

⁴ Elliott, *Revolt of the Catalans*, 15 and 355.

experiments strengthened local identities and further weakened the potential for Spanish unification. Then into the twentieth century, generations of contests between conservatives and liberals in Spain's centralist politics, Primo de Rivera's bungled military revolution, the terrible Civil War, and finally the long ugly period of the Franco dictatorship demonstrated that Spain's varieties of repression will not deter the Catalans from their course of justice.

The foregoing merely repeats what we have already come to understand in earlier pages, which is that current events have a long past. On the other hand, in the context of our desire to understand the events of October 2017, many observers would prefer not to have to go so far back in time to tell a story of current import. Can we tell the story from a more recent starting point? In the next few paragraphs we will review the typical ways of doing so. They all fall short. Ultimately, we need to account for the longer past. Failure to do so risks overlooking crucial episodes that play into the calculus of contemporary political choices.

A common present-focused framing of events begins with the death of Franco in 1975, which opened up an opportunity for a shift to democracy, in what was then called "the Transition." That opportunity appeared to be the long-sought break from the past, a new beginning. But the Transition was contentious. Catalans, along with Basques, Galicians, and others, sought degrees of autonomy that Madrid's political core rebuffed. Instead, Madrid's political and economic classes pushed a plan to recentralize. The Constitution of 1978 recognized Spain's regions as autonomous communities, but it failed, purposefully, to adequately define the nature and extent of autonomy. The regions wanted clearer delineation; Madrid refused. Some say that these democratic contests in the post-Franco period unleashed Catalan nationalism.

In the hindsight of just a few years, the period of the Transition appears very much in continuity with the past. The party that ruled Spain for much of the period since Franco's death, the PSOE, initially embarked on a program that included the right of self-determination in Catalonia. In 1976, the party even declared that all nationalities and regions within Spain retained the right to break away from the Spanish state.⁵ The 1978 Constitution shut the door on such a possibility.

⁵ Sebastian Balfour and Alejandro Quiroga, *The Reinvention of Spain: Nation and Identity Since Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 72–76. Paul Kennedy, *The*

In the 1980s and 1990s, as Spain sought to integrate itself into the European system, which was then moving toward the establishment of the EU, the PSOE remade itself. The party changed its form and objectives from a Marxist party in support of workers, which included taking account of the distinctive regional interests of working groups, into a social-democratic party, drawing upon the model of electoral politics in Germany and elsewhere. Along the way, PSOE leaders put into effect a sorely needed modernization plan for Spain. We now know that many of these party leaders used modernization efforts to line their own pockets with kick-backs and fees from international financiers, builders, and investors.

The PSOE ultimately lost power to the PP, the conservative party that remains the offspring of the ruling elites who governed Spain under Franco. The leaders of the PP and the PSOE soon thereafter came to an agreement. The two parties each had engaged in the recent history of corrupt dealings with international corporate capital, and each adopted a managerial approach to governance on behalf of financial elites. Having so much in common and so little reason to permit alternatives, the leaders of both parties agreed to collude, in what media and academic specialists call the PP-PSOE duopoly.⁶

The sharing of the spoils of government required both parties to adopt unequivocally the mantle of unitary Spanish nationalism. By “nationalism” in this sense we mean the hegemony of powerbrokers in Madrid and Castile against the interests of Spain’s distinct regions and diverse peoples. What was good for the two parties’ elites—and, by the way, also good for the royal family (which Franco reinstalled and emasculated)—got sold to the Spanish populace as a plan for economic development in the people’s interest. In recent years, both parties have exploited their centralist instincts by, for example, conspiring to impose restrictions on Catalonia’s educational and other institutions. Following the Catalan Referendum of October 2017, the PP invoked Article 155 of the constitution, which permits the state to take control of an autonomous community that acts

Spanish Socialist Party and the Modernisation of Spain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁶For background and examples, see Paul Heywood, “From Dictatorship to Democracy: Changing Forms of Corruption in Spain,” in Donatella Della Porta and Yves Mény, ed., *Democracy and Corruption in Europe* (Washington: Pinter, 1996), 63–84; Hayley Rabanal, Belén Gopegui: *The Pursuit of Solidarity in Post-Transition Spain* (New York: Tamesis, 2011); Ricard Zapata-Barrero, *Diversity Management in Spain: New Dimensions, New Challenges* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

against state interests. The PSOE was complicit when it could instead have participated in a political solution short of the so-called nuclear option. Given the entrenched interests of the PP-PSOE duopoly, it is likely in the short term that both parties will continue to restrict displays of Catalan cultural and political distinctiveness.

We might want to begin to tell the story of recent events with the death of Franco, on the assumption that his death brought an opportunity for change; however, to start here merely confirms the points of continuity between the collusive two-party politics of the post-Franco period and a much longer history of repressive central Spanish politics. From this perspective, the vise that had squeezed the Catalan people for hundreds of years simply changed its form. Whether Spain is a monarchy, a dictatorship, or a tightly controlled corporate feudalism cloaked in the features of democracy (with the electoral sanction of undemocratic parties), the results for Catalonia appear not to change.

Centrist economists as well as economists who have an interest in promoting a stable Europe tell the story of modern Catalonia's fate in a different way. As they see it, Catalans get uppity when the economy goes south. Following a long-established pattern of prejudices, they say that the Catalans, being relatively rich in a relatively poor Spain, are selfish and do not want to share their abundant resources with the whole. This is very ancient coinage. In the early 1600s, Don Pedro de Toledo reasoned against measures that might improve Catalan trade, saying, "the better off they are, the less obedient they will be."⁷ Catalans, so say the economists, do not like it when a financial decline or an economic recession forces them to pay a higher percentage of their resources to prop up the social safety net that costs more when bad times bring more people elsewhere in Spain to rely upon it. Because it is so easily digestible, the press often adopts this line of argumentation without thinking it through.

Here is what the press, especially the financial press, overlooks when lapping up this simplistic argument. Even if some evidence supports the view that economic and financial crises boosted the momentum for Catalanism—say, in the middle of the nineteenth century, or in the 1930s, or again as a result of the very consequential international recession of 2008—such a mercurial political response to economic affairs would only be, at most, a partial and insufficient explanation. Catalanism has surged in good times as well as bad. The assertions of Catalan pride in the period

⁷ Cited in Elliott, *Revolt of the Catalans*, 248.

of the 1888 Universal Exposition in Barcelona occurred in a time of rapid wealth creation in Catalonia. The identity and promotional battles fought between Spain and Catalonia in the lead-up to the 1992 Barcelona Olympics occurred during a time of substantial economic growth for the entire Spanish state.⁸

In the months before and after the events of October 2017, there were many reports of banks and other businesses fleeing Catalonia. Those businesses, it was said, feared being tied to an independent Catalonia that would be rejected for membership into the European Union. Some companies did leave, although much of the talk was spurious (the argument had more to do with the politics of international finance than it did with the financial health of Catalonia). In the end, such scare tactics did not dissuade Catalanists and likely will rile them even more. Plenty of evidence amassed in this book demonstrates that Catalans would separate from Spain if they could, regardless of current and changing economic conditions, since theirs is, and has been, a fight in defense of culture, and, moreover, a culture that shows a history of economic endurance.

Economic distinctions clearly count among the cultural factors that drive Catalanism; however, on-the-ground evidence in Catalonia indicates that economic circumstances are not the most important drivers of the desire for change. Having considered and found wanting two sets of presentist arguments put up against Catalan independence, one political and the other economic, we are in need of a richer analysis of present conditions that puts the Catalan past to work.

THE FICTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

Catalans make a different kind of argument when explaining current events. Above all, they recognize the consistency of a Catalan identity. They recognize themselves in the centuries-long conjunction of people and place, language and tradition, law and social fabric. They would tell you that it looked to them like their cultural distinctiveness might be recognized and protected by other Spaniards within the parameters of a post-Franco constitution of a modern democratic Spain. By 2010, however, it had become clear that the constitutional opening for the expression of regional differences had failed.

⁸ See especially chapters 4–6 in Hargreaves, *Freedom for Catalonia*.

The most difficult questions facing Spain in the process of framing its 1978 Constitution had to do with the relationship of the Spanish whole to regions like the Basque Euskal Herria and Catalonia, which sought to maintain their cultural distinctiveness. The rival parties among the constitution's framers agreed to give ambiguous answers to these questions, leaving the details to be worked out later. Thus, in its second article, the constitution promotes both "the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation" and "the right to self-government of the nationalities and regions." It establishes Spanish as the official language while recognizing regional "language modalities" as co-official. In practice, the constitution advanced false premises—Spain had never been an indissoluble unity nor entirely a nation with a single language. In effect, the post-Franco construction of Spain has put "nation" at odds with "nationalities" and established a state language while giving an ambivalent nod to "language modalities" that seem to be not quite full languages.⁹

Catalans drafted and approved a Statute of Autonomy as part of the process of identifying and putting into effect the powers of governance and administration devolved to the regions by the constitution. The statute was ratified by the Spanish senate and made law in 1979. That Catalonia's statute was one of the first of what eventually became nineteen such statutes granted to regional communities and two cities in Spain is a critical detail.

At the beginning of constitution-building discussions, Catalonia was granted autonomy on the basis of its distinct history. From the very first conversations in the post-Franco environment, that is, Catalan difference had broad acceptance and was not in itself controversial. Over time, however, autonomy statutes became a way for other regions and cities to game the constitutional system, a way to draw upon state resources for the benefit of the locales. Through the 1980s and 1990s, a regulatory arms race among statute seekers unleashed two forces against Catalonia. The first was that non-Catalan Spaniards insisted that Catalans should receive no status, privilege, or benefit not also accorded to others. For some that meant that the Catalan language should not be permitted as a language of

⁹ According to Craig Murray, historian and former member of the British Foreign Service, the expression of "indissoluble unity" in the constitution is "plainly mad." Craig Murray, "Suspending the Catalan Parliament, Spain Destroys the EU's 'Rule of Law' Figleaf," (blog) October 5, 2017, <https://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2017/10/suspending-catalan-parliament-spain-destroys-eus-rule-law-figleaf/>

public discourse because it sets Catalans apart. The second was that the political forces in support of the centrist conception of indissoluble unity sought to reestablish the political and economic dominance of the center against the peripheries.

Remember that our present objective is to examine various ways of putting recent events into the context of short history rather than a centuries-long one. From the perspective of Catalans who tell the story of contemporary troubles in recent-history terms, the real seed of the current troubles between Catalans and the rest of Spain is the treatment of a revision to the Catalan Statute of Autonomy. Catalans drafted revised statutes in 2005, as was incumbent upon them to do. The Spanish senate ratified them with some changes, and those changes were then approved by a referendum of the Catalan people in 2006. The PP, in the minority at that time—perhaps with the complicity of the PSOE political leaders who ratified the statutes in the senate—lodged a complaint against the statutes with the Supreme Court. The court, packed at this point with unity ideologues from the two national parties, sat on a decision until 2010.

The court released its judgment in June of 2010. That judgment included the court's own rewriting, a presumptuous intervention, according to many observers, of fourteen articles of the statute and interpretative positions on 27 more articles. The most contentious reworking of the statute eliminated the use of the term "nation" to describe Catalonia. The court also weakened articles that accorded increased powers to Catalonia over the use and protection of the Catalan language.

Political maneuvers in Madrid that amounted to no less than a new wave of "soft power" state repression thwarted the constitution's democratic potentials, Catalans would say.¹⁰

This was the turning point. The last straw. Catalans, angered by the deviousness of the politicized court, read the ruling "as an act of contempt against the will of the Catalan people expressed by its parliament and its referendum."¹¹ They immediately took to the streets in massive demonstrations. By September 1 of that year, the Catalan National Day, the

¹⁰ Sebastian Balfour, "Catalonia and Spain: Will the referendum on independence go ahead?" August 1, 2017, The EUROPP blog of the London School of Economics, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2017/08/01/catalonia-and-spain-will-the-referendum-on-independence-go-ahead/>

¹¹ Argelia Queralt Jiménez, "The Catalan Question and the Spanish Court," *Verfassungsblog: On Constitutional Matters*, October 14, 2014, <http://verfassungsblog.de/catalan-question-spanish-constitutional-court/>

number of Catalans participating in protests reached into the millions. On every Diada since, Catalans have mobilized in similarly large numbers to demand that their corporate voice be heard. Once again, Spain inflicted a wound upon itself. Catalans had, up to this point, attempted to participate in efforts to construct a fledgling democracy that would respect a new experiment in a democratic Spain while also respecting regional differences. Polls show that in the years before 2006 most Catalans did not support the notion of holding a referendum on independence. After 2010, the polls began to show a dramatic shift. As it turns out, Catalans did not like it when their state divested them of their vote.

WHAT NEXT?

We cannot know what the future holds, but we can make some informed guesses. Having learned something about what the past contributes to the present helps us gain confidence in our speculations. To engage in some informed guesswork, I want to end by referencing a book by Germà Bel that recent events have made especially pertinent. *Disdain, Distrust, and Dissolution* illustrates very well that the range of options is quite limited, and it tells us why.¹²

Bel has spent many years studying the nature and efficacy of infrastructure investments and interregional budget and finance transfers in Spain. It is apparent that his research has left him frustrated by policies that, from a nation-building perspective, seem committed to taking the least efficient and least effective path. Instead, many of the policies he has studied seem intended to maximize opportunities for gain by political and financial elites at Spain's center at the expense of the regions.

To take as an example the building and financing of free and toll roads, high-speed rail, freight rail, and airports, Bel has shown that the most consequential projects purposefully draw revenues to Madrid. These same projects burden Catalonia and other regions at the Spanish periphery with financial and other costs. The projects, as is attested by numerous press reports and independent analyses, have been poorly planned, poorly developed, dangerously leveraged, and sometimes left incomplete or without sufficient budget mechanisms for maintenance. Moving beyond the transportation sector, he found similar anomalies in education policy and other arenas. For instance, in 2013 the Spanish government advanced an

¹² Germà Bel, *Disdain, Distrust, and Dissolution* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2015).

Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE in its Spanish acronym). This law emerged as an outcome of the Spanish court's 2010 manipulation of Catalonia's Revised Statute of Autonomy. Recall that, as discussed above, all legitimate electoral processes had approved the statute before the courts intervened to rewrite it. The LOMCE required the Catalan government to pay the cost of education in Spanish for any family in Catalonia who requested it. It would be one thing to impose such a law on the basis of fairness if it were to be similarly enforced in all of the autonomous regions to defend the rights of minority languages against the regional majority language. But that was not its intent. It did not demand that speakers of Catalan or Valencian in the Valencian autonomous region (where Spanish is the principal language of instruction) be accorded an education in the language of their choice. The reason, says Bel, is obvious: "as in any colonial cultural system, the central government promotes the interests of its culture and language, and ignores those of natives with different languages and cultures."¹³ Spain's twenty-first-century education policy is, as Bel and many others see it, an example of the nation-state's ongoing conquest of Catalonia.

A most striking part of Bel's study is the evidence he presents about stereotypes. The research he reviews here, ranging from Francisco Rodríguez Zanabria's landmark study from 1963 to the surveys conducted by José Luis Sangrador García in 1981 and 1994, as well as the evidence going back as far as the sixteenth century provided by John Elliott and others, demonstrates a remarkable consistency on one point: Non-Catalan Spaniards do not recognize Catalans as Spaniards.¹⁴ Generally speaking, Spaniards believe that Catalans are more like other Europeans than they are like Spaniards. Specifically, non-Catalan Spaniards see Catalans as more like Germans than even French and Italians, who, Spaniards agree, are more similar to themselves than Catalans are. The details are stunning. All groups from all regions within Spain agree that Catalans are not like the rest. Various "Catalan" attributes, such as competence, practicality, and individualism, are viewed as the antithesis of the sociable, passionate, and noble person a Spaniard sees when looking in a mirror.

Spaniards do not see Catalans as members of their state community. And Catalans, as we know, do not dispute that, even if they have tried to find a place for themselves within the Spanish enterprise. So be it. The

¹³ Bel, *Disdain, Distrust, and Dissolution*, 79.

¹⁴ Bel, *Disdain, Distrust, and Dissolution*, 21–45.

long and short of all of this is that Bel, rightly it seems to me, has recognized that the real problem is that history has impressed itself upon both communities in a way that severely limits the options. Distrust and distain have become integral to the relationship between Spain and Catalonia, to the point where reconciliation is improbable, no more likely than dissolution of the Spanish state.

Spain's constitution does not permit votes against the integrity of Spain. From this legal perspective, the referendum of October 2017 was illegal. It is sometimes said that because Catalans ratified the 1978 Constitution they must now live with it, like it or not. But two considerations about law and lawmaking are worth noting.

First, because there is no effective means of challenging the feature of the constitution that prohibits (albeit, only implicitly) a vote against the present constitutional order, and because the Spanish government got into the habit of resorting to the imposition of law rather than dialogue, Catalans have been left with no recourse but to become lawbreakers. In this respect, Spain is like an abusive parent who puts a piece of candy in front of a child and then tells her, "Don't eat it or else!" In fact, the candy on offer, what Catalans desire but find unattainable, are the basic democratic principles of free elections and democratically negotiated solutions.

Second, legal scholars acknowledge as a rudimentary point that it is not always fruitful to prosecute laws when the context of those laws puts them beyond the parameters of normative expectations. What is normative in most democracies is that citizens have a voice in the shaping of their social order. Spain's recent interpretation of its law does the opposite. The law makes a plebiscite illegal. Catalans, asserting a basic democratic principle, voted anyway, thus becoming lawbreakers. A reader might at this moment want to recall other notable lawbreakers—the operators of the Underground Railroad in the nineteenth-century US and freedom riders into the American South in the 1960s, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and many others.

The EU is in a bind here, and we should all take note of their response, or lack of one, to the current crisis. Before Brexit—Great Britain's vote to secede from the EU—Catalans enjoyed the encouragement of many parts of Europe for their campaign to either pressure Spain to improve its democratic institutions or to permit Catalans to vote on alternatives. After all, the countries that joined the EU in 2004—the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia—did so after breaking away from previous national or international

constructs. Nonetheless, despite Europe's general supportiveness before Brexit, Britain's vote to leave the EU, as well as the election of Donald Trump in the US, has frightened EU decision makers into a position that is submissive to Spain's position. Europeans took a turn toward imposing Spanish antidemocratic unity even at the cost of their own liberal diversity. Lovers of freedom and democracy should fear what this may portend.

Finally, Spain's constitution, a weak compromise insufficient at its origins, had to be elaborated by a battery of institutions, norms, laws, and administrative rulings that activate it and put it into effect. In the Spanish case, that elaboration of the constitution since 1978 has only aggravated its original weaknesses. Now the constitution threatens to reveal itself as a platform for dictatorship disguised as democracy, not an opening to the effective, just, and equitable democracy Catalans had hoped it would be.

The words of the Spanish President Mariano Rajoy are telling. In a speech on October 27, just as he was promoting counter-Catalan demonstrations in the streets of Barcelona and threatening to charge the Catalan President with sedition, Rajoy said that his interest is in listening to all Catalans. We have reason to doubt the sincerity of his words, since that certainly was not his intention leading up to the referendum he refused to allow. He insisted that there exists within Catalonia a "silent majority" that he must protect against obstructionist Catalanists. Evidence for that silent majority has not materialized. One pro-Spain assembly of perhaps 300,000 sponsored by Rajoy's government on the day after President Puigdemont declared independence does not compare with several manifestations of more than a million people over successive years in support of the Catalan cause. Moreover, the elections that Rajoy forced upon Catalans after invoking Article 155 of the constitution backfired badly. Pro-independence parties won the majority of seats in the Catalan Generalitat in the special election held on December 21, 2017. The PP had its worst showing ever. As in the US in the period of Nixon and again from the 1990s, and as we remember about Russia in the period of the rise of the Bolsheviks, it is more likely that "majority" is a code word signaling the combativeness of a potent minority, usually a conservative and well-financed one. In this case, the potent minority inside Catalonia takes its cue from the majority of Castilianized Spaniards who simply do not want Catalans to survive as a significant group within their ranks.

Germá Bel seems to have it right when he suggests that the dissolution of Spain is the likely result of Spain's distrust of the Catalans and Catalans' distrust of Spain. But what kind of dissolution will it be?

My guess is that only two things stand in the way of Catalonia's separation from Spain. One is the time between now and the absolutely certain eventuality of something different in the future. In time, Spain will eventually not be Spain. But, then, pondering that circumstance leads us to wonder whether Catalonia will still be Catalonia. It is worth wondering to what Catalans will give their allegiance when that new era emerges. The other possibility—an especially unpleasant one, but, looking back over Spain's past, equally potent—is that Spain's five-centuries-old policy of soft genocide will succeed perpetually.

Along the way, and beyond the two apparent obstacles, one can envision many alternatives. There is no reason, for example, why the present king of Spain cannot suggest that those living in his dominions return to a situation that in the past had some advantages. Like the medieval count-kings, Felipe VI could choose to rule his Spanish subjects as king, within Spain's constitutional limits, while permitting the Catalans to regard him as their prince, according to a different set of constitutional limits. Who would imagine such a thing? Most likely not the king. After all, Felipe Juan Pablo Alfonso de Todos los Santos, King Felipe VI, was named by his father in honor of the first Bourbon king, Felipe V. Felipe V did little to gain the respect of the Catalans of his time. It is doubtful that Felipe VI will do otherwise today.

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