

SHAPING OF A NATION: CATALAN HISTORY AND HISTORICITY IN POST-FRANCO SPAIN

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to provide fuel for the current debate on the meaning of the concept of collective identity and, in particular, the idea of 'living together' or national identity. In order to focus our analysis, we may begin by considering that the notion of identity - collective and more particularly national identity - is a problematical one and rather ineffective as a means of explaining certain social phenomena. By adopting this stance, our position is immediately set at a remove from that of the media and the political arena, where this idea causes a great stir in that it is presented as an evidence. On the contrary, for us, the question of identity is not a starting point but something which has to be questioned. In fact, it seems more useful to deal not with identity *per se* but with the processes of identification and the construction of an identity that is attained as a result of working towards that goal. In doing so, on the scientific plane, the primordialist model is rejected and particular value is placed upon nationalism, the ideological matrix of national identity. From this point onwards, special interest is accorded to the world of ideas and the efficiency of symbolical representations of the nation.

An etymological detour will shed some light on this idea. For example, it would appear useful to recall that symbols were originally 'a single object divided in two. The holders passed each part on to their children. Joining these two parts together once again (from *sumballein*, to bring together) helped the holders to recognize each other and substantiated the relationship of hospitality contracted earlier'¹. We grasp immediately the primary quality of the symbol, i.e. it forms a horizontal bond between contemporaries and a vertical link between generations. It is precisely this power which explains the central role of symbols in the process of construction of national identity. Attaching importance to symbols thus defined is therefore fully justified. The symbols confer substance upon abstract or absent objects by using linking signs which make the result comprehensible. This definition presupposes the intervention of different actors who, like true craftworkers, forge a national identity which may then be used as the basis for building a nation.

In order to highlight the various aspects, we shall concentrate on studying the role of one of these 'influential minorities' - to use Miroslav Hroch's expression - that of historians, in the creation of an image of contemporary Catalonia as a national collectivity². We shall endeavour to underline the links - conscious or unconscious, explicit and implicit - which exist between their scientific work and the current process of national (re)construction of Catalonia³ which, during the post-Franco era, became one of the 17 Autonomous Communities of the Spanish State. If we have paid particular attention to the role of history, this is because 'A sense of the past is something which makes us act in the present differently from the way in which we might otherwise have done. It is a device that is used against adversaries. This is an essential element in the process of individual socialization, maintaining group solidarity and establishing or contesting social legitimacy. Above all, the significance of the past is a moral, and consequently a political, phenomenon. It is always a phenomenon of the present'⁴.

First of all we shall trace the development of Catalan historiography from the perspective of historical sociology. The aim will be to bring out the close link which binds Catalan historiography to Catalan nationalism. More specifically, what we are dealing with here is the portrayal in increasingly nationalistic terms of a multi-faceted conflict which has always set Catalonia against the rest of Spain, and particularly against the political centre embodied by Castile and the capital, Madrid. We shall then stress the material conditions governing the symbolic effectiveness expected from the distribution of historical material. In this context, the institutional aspect is of fundamental importance. So, the existence of a 'meso-government' in Catalonia which derives from the Constitution of 1978 and the development of the State of Autonomous Communities have recently given a boost to Catalan historiography. The hoped-for effect is to reinforce the legitimacy of this 'meso-government' and the national aspirations of the catalanists which lead it since the Transition period. Following an approach which is more anthropological in nature, we shall finally describe cultural institutions and events: celebrations of Catalan historians and the new Catalan History Museum.

I. CATALAN HISTORIOGRAPHY MIDWAY BETWEEN HISTORICAL SCIENCE AND POLITICAL HISTORY

The distinctive feature of Catalan historiography is that it is highly politicized. It is part of a more general conflict in Spain which sets the centre against the periphery. Since

the nineteenth century, historiography has been conditioned by confrontations between Spanish- and Catalan-oriented ideologies. Catalan historians still stress this dimension today: '(...) one of the clearest objectives, established long ago, is to break with the pattern of mimetical repetition of the National History model. The myths and platitudes of Spanish national historiography (mainly centred on Madrid) should find a response in a balanced historiography, half-Jacobin, based on history which is essentially Barcelona-centred.'⁵ The difficulty arises precisely from the fact that Catalan historiography has tended to imitate Spanish historiography. This means that each has supported divergent political options (Spanish and Catalan nationalism), and they have therefore found it difficult to distance themselves from the 'exaltation of national power and national consciousness, which was undoubtedly the basic impetus of narrative-history and continues to be one of its main *raison d'être*.'⁶ In formal terms, they have resorted to mythical representations. 'One can never forget that myths, as explanatory stories, are also a mobilizing force. As well as contributing to the mental reconstruction of the political imaginary, they also contribute towards social restructuring.'⁷ In the Catalan case, one example is that the Middle Ages are constantly referred to as the Golden Age. This refers to a period when Catalonia was not yet a part of the Spanish state, which was still embryonic. The term myth may be regarded as admissible here because this period is idealized and the existence of a Catalan nation is implied. Yet, the reality embodied in this concept today is quite different from the reality to which it would have referred in that period. This is where national genealogy, so frequently manipulated by nationalists, shows its shortenings. Although their political aims are divergent, Spanish (mainly Castilian) and Catalan historiographies do have something in common: in its own way, each reproduces the centre-periphery model. It is only since the transition to democracy that Catalan historiography has attempted to practise scientific policentrism in a movement similar to the one prevailing in Spain as a whole. Yet, despite endeavours to develop a 'Girona perspective'⁸, for instance, the fact remains that historical output and Catalan nationalism still tend to be identified with Barcelona.

This is simply the perpetuation of a long tradition based on the model of nineteenth-century Catalan historiography. At that time, Catalan historiography helped consolidate nascent Catalan nationalism. In this respect, it is temporally, spatially and ideologically very close to others "national biographies"⁹ whose 'origins lie in the spiritualist ideal type which arose in the German domain',_ first with Leibniz and later with Herder. Like these biographies, it makes great strides when the masses began to be integrated in political life. This kind of narrative, which rests on collective identification with an individualized

national collective, is undoubtedly linked to a need for mobilization within the context of democratization. It is identified with the cultural movements of the *Renaixença* and Romanticism (in the nineteenth century), periods when the first general histories of Catalonia appeared first in Spanish and later in Catalan. Symbolically, the project of writing this history - whose aim was to appropriate both the past and the present and project them towards the future - using the term Catalonia as a frame of reference, and focus, and a popular language held in low esteem, was already the fruit of Catalan circumstances. In this regard, three great historical frescoes 'are all products of the ideological, cultural and political circumstances prevailing at the time when they were written.'¹⁰ These are the intellectual contributions of Victor Balaguer, Antoni Bofarull i de Broca and Antoni Aulestia i Pijoan. The latter were less prone to idealization and, as a result, they were harshly criticized for the comparative absence of Catalan nationalist sentiment reflected in them. In fact, they were more moderate than the former, which may explain why they have been passed down to posterity less frequently. Works of similar ilk followed, such as the syntheses by Francesc Carreras i Candi, Francesc Valls i Taberner and Ferran Soldevila. Between the end of the first World War and the early 1960s, Catalan historiography suffered under the Franco dictatorship. The only truly outstanding figure was Jaume Vicens Vives, who is often quoted by Jordi Pujol, the president of the Generalitat. It was after the death of Vives in 1960, when the Franco regime was undergoing a process of relative liberalization, that contemporary Catalan historiography developed. It was profoundly marked by the 'popular front' trend, which was both Marxist and Catalan nationalist in spirit. Historical innovation was curtailed first by the need for political struggle and later by the 'strong pressure to conform'¹¹ i.e. to follow the path of normative nationalist historiography. After the Transition, 'a great deal of the new nationalist and regionalist historiographic output went to extremes which were just as essentialist as those of Spanish nationalism. (...) They were used to justify regional political demands when the State of Autonomous Communities was being set up'¹². Since historiography torn between scientific and political imperatives such as the need to fight against neo-Spanish nationalism, which permeates one tend of Spanish historiography. Despite the end of the Franco era and the existence of greater pluralism, Catalan historiography remains militant because it is in fact immersed in the game of political trade-offs which has characterized the political game between the centre and the periphery since the Transition. This militancy compounded with the urge to show respect for a form of 'political correctness' on the part of any intellectual who wishes to be regarded as a leading figure in Catalonia. If the territorial distribution of power in Spain has changed, the relationship between history and politics and, more specifically, between

a body of clerks and hegemonic political actors remains constant. M.S. Darviche has clearly brought out the reciprocal interests which underpin this relationship: ‘A national biography never becomes THE national biography on the basis of the intrinsic strength of the ideology underpinning it, because another opposing biography based on an opposing ideology can always be set up in its place, but on the ability of that ideology to gain ground because it is a part of the rationale of state domination’¹³. In the case which concerns us here, it is the domination of a government improperly termed ‘intermediate’.

II. THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS GOVERNING SYMBOLIC EFFICACY

The Transition, which began in 1975 with the death of General Franco has subsequently permitted a historiography which defended the idea of a ‘Catalan differential fact’, to be circulated throughout Catalan society. This is linked to the existence of two new factors: the reappearance of an autonomous Catalan government and the fact that since the 1980s this government has been headed by nationalists belonging to the CiU coalition (Convergència i Unió) led by Jordi Pujol.

The Generalitat is the fundamental institution of Catalan autonomy, owing primarily to its symbolic resonance in the collective Catalan memory. The royal decree which re-established it provisionally in September 1977 summed up its historical importance as follows: ‘The Generalitat of Catalonia (is) an age-old institution which, for the Catalan people, is the symbol and recognition of their historical personality within the unity of Spain’¹⁴. Another important dimension is the institutional reality which it represents. Article 29 of the 1979 Statute of the Catalan Autonomous Community states that the *Generalitat* ‘comprises the Parliament, the President of the Generalitat and the Executive Council or Government’. It possesses responsibilities which are important in view of the room for manoeuvre they give to the political party in charge. Among the key areas, the following are particularly noteworthy for the politics of “symbolic recognition” of Catalonia: the field of culture (Article 9.4); ‘educational, cultural, artistic and charitable foundations and associations as well as other similar organizations whose main sphere of action is Catalonia’ (Article 9.24); ‘full responsibility for the regulation and administration of education in the fullest sense, at every level and degree, its methods and specialities (...)’ mentioned in Article 15. The Generalitat’s fields of action are not limited to these matters, however. Its regulatory powers (Article 1) and its executive role in the field of legislation adopted at state level (Article 11) should not be overlooked. Although they stress the limits of this statute, Arcadi Calzada and Carles Llorens recognize its

potential: ‘The most relevant point at this time is to establish just how useful the instruments available to us are for this task, i.e. how far it is possible to rebuild the nation within the framework drawn up by the 1978 Spanish Constitution and the 1979 Catalan Statute of Autonomy. (...) It is worth while to raise the question: just how useful is the solution designed within the legal framework? In which areas does the Statute allow us to proceed with national reconstruction, and to what extent? In a matter as important as language, for instance, the Generalitat possesses the tools necessary to design a policy which will lead to the re-establishment of Catalan as the specific language of Catalonia. The full responsibility granted in the field of education and the exclusive responsibility in the field of culture also permit ample work to be undertaken in the task of renationalization’¹⁵.

The second factor which may help to explain the flowering of history in Catalonia is related to a game which is more strictly political in nature. The Transition opened up a democratic space which allowed the dynamics of party politics to impose its own rules. This has led to a configuration of political subsystems characterized by competition between state-wide parties and other local parties. The weight of Spanish history has determined the unique nature of the Catalan party system. The political forces have been obliged to take up double stances: on the right/left axis and on the Spanish versus Catalan nationalism axis. *Convergència i Unió* - a coalition between the majority party of Jordi Pujol, *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (CDC) and Miguel Roca’s party, *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya* (UDC) - got most of the votes on this checkerboard for the last 15 years, at least in the regional elections, because the behaviour of the electorate changes depending on the nature of the consultation. This has allowed *CiU* to hold the majority in the Catalan Parliament since the autonomous elections held in 1980. Liberal in the economic sphere, though embracing the ideas of social justice and welfare, *CiU* nationalists are regarded by many as the heirs to Catalan nationalism forged in the nineteenth century. Their brand of nationalism is the continuation of one of the traditional intellectual movements in Catalonia: regenerationism. When Jordi Pujol declares: ‘We want to be key players in Spanish history’¹⁶, he is expressing the desire to intervene at the central level in order to modernize the State. This political project dovetails with the desire to ‘build the country’, i.e. Catalonia¹⁷. Pujol therefore recognizes the need for actions in favour of what political scientists call ‘nation-building’. Language and culture, the ‘backbone’¹⁸ of Catalan identity, are naturally the focus of particular attention. So the reinforcement of the Catalan personality - one of the priorities of the autonomous government - ‘requires from us, among other things, to contemplate widespread actions in

the fields of education and the media'¹⁹. In an internal party document, he sets out his framework for global intervention: 'Catalonia should remain a people. To achieve this, the first and main objective is to nationalize the Catalan people (i.e. to reinforce the identity, consciousness and national sentiments of the Catalan people and make them operational):

1. Strengthen the Generalitat, its image and the people's support for the institution.
2. Stress the policy of linguistic standardization and consolidation.
3. Strengthen all specific elements which are part of the personality of Catalonia (civil law, knowledge of history, etc.).
4. Reinforce all the factors which help to 'build the country'.
5. Direct the doctrine and actions of the government of the Generalitat towards Catalan integration.
6. Support all the elements which bind the country together.
7. Help create or preserve, a general climate in Catalonia which is positive in every sphere.'²⁰.

III. HISTORY IN THE COMMUNITY

It is, therefore, the decision-making power of the Generalitat, together with the electoral platform of CiU nationalists, albeit eminently political variables, which have allowed history to expand in the bosom of present-day Catalan society. The vectors of this expansion, or 'signs and networks of symbolic organization'²¹ which make up a nation are numerous. In the Catalan case, we could usefully deal with such varied topics as history teaching in Catalan schools²², statuary²³ and traditional holidays²⁴. They all allow us to confirm the hypothesis that these elements are being used strategically for political ends. We have, however, opted to concentrate on two other symbols of Catalan national tradition which are at the same time 'instruments for moulding the tradition itself'²⁵, namely, commemorative celebrations and the Museum of the History of Catalonia (MHC).

Among the various events commemorating people classed as famous are those commemorating professional historians such as Ferran Soldevila (1894-1971) or 'amateur' but equally patriotic historians like Angel Guimera (1845-1924) and Felix Cucurull (1919-1996). The Generalitat declared 1994 'Ferran Soldevila Year' to mark the hundredth anniversary of his birth. Celebrations were held throughout the year which

drew to a close with a solemn ceremony held at the University of Barcelona on 25 October 1995. Presided over by Jordi Pujol and the rector of the university, the posthumous tribute was strongly charged with symbolism on account of the place in which it was held, the auditorium -all the paintings representing outstanding events in local history and high points in Catalan resistance-; the people present -the dignitaries from the Autonomous Government- and the academic institution, as well as a huge representation from the scientific community of historians, and the general public, which filled the room to overflowing and the theatrical way in which the memorial service was staged. The staging of the event, the significance of the various contributions - first a speech from the authorities, then a lecture on the life and work of Ferran Soldevila, followed by a manifesto read by the historians to promote the teaching of Catalan history in schools - and the physical separation of the various categories of participants transformed the celebration in a civic rite. There was a clear demarcation between the audience and the dignitaries, similar to the set-up one might find at a Catholic religious ceremony. In what might be termed the choir, rows of professional historians sat on either side of a dais set up at the far end of the room where the political and academic authorities were seated. On the right, between the dais and these rows stood a large portrait of Soldevila, which truly inspired the gathering with its surprising presence.

Similarly, 1995 was declared 'Angel Guimera Year'²⁶ to commemorate the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his birth. This also gave rise to a number of celebrations, among them an exhibition and a closing ceremony also presided over by Jordi Pujol which was held on 25 October 1995 at the Ateneu Barcelones, another historic site of Catalan resistance. This closing ceremony, imbued with the same solemnity as the one described previously, was divided into important moments: the speech of Jordi Pujol flanked by the Catalan flag and a portrait of the dead man, the speech given by the President of the Ateneu, stressing the link between past and present and the relevance for the present time of Guimera's struggle in favour of the Catalan nation and language, the famous speech delivered by Guimera in that same place in 1895 (which was read aloud). The ceremony was closed by Jordi Pujol, who stressed that even those observers who were alien to the history would not be indifferent to the venue, so charged with historical memories.

The memorial service held on 4 February 1996 shortly after the death of the writer Felix Cucurull was similar to the above, with one outstanding feature which is worth stressing here. This time, among those attending the ceremony were representatives, and even leaders, of political parties other than CiU: ERC, representing leftist Catalan nationalism,

and IC-Els Verds, an alliance of Catalan communists and ecology groups. One of the speeches delivered by a historian is worth singling out because, basing her arguments on the exemplary figure of the 'great man', she stressed the present need to promote a national history of Catalonia in order to fight against Spanish nationalism.

Another event worth mentioning is the exhibition and the seminar held on november 1995 and devoted to the Valencian Joan Fuster (1922-1992)²⁷, an initiative of the Faculty of Science and Communication Studies at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). According to the booklet published at that time, Joan Fuster was to be celebrated as 'the inspiration behind so many literary, political, social and cultural initiatives'. Still according to this document, and in line with the tenets underpinning the tribute as a whole, Joan Fuster was described as "a vehicle of self-discovery for many of us. For that reason he was misunderstood and suffered bomb attacks, insults and aggression. The university community at the UAB has sought to recognize Joan Fuster's value as a researcher, his erudition and his socio-political significance, by opening up this exhibition to all who are curious about him'. He was also the subject of a lecture entitled 'one man, one country', which stressed his pioneering role in the definition of contemporary Valencian nationalism and his involvement in pan-Catalan nationalism - diffuse but real - centring on Catalonia. Despite the undoubted sincerity of the memorial, it is legitimate to state that it had a political dimension, all the more as Catalan nationalists are putting all their hopes for the (re)constitution of Catalonia as a nation in the University and youth in general.

These various facts would appear to give credit to the evolution which glory has undergone throughout the course of history according to Pierre Nora. 'Christian sacrifice gave way to patriotic sacrifice; spilling the blood of the nation at war becomes self-sacrifice for the sake of the nation in times of peace: from the Middle Ages to the present day, the focus of glory has twice been displaced.'²⁸. It has been both secularized and democratized. As a result of a phenomenon of substitution, glory is no longer the consequence of bowing to divine will but a heroic act carried out by a nation which is accessible to everyone. The situation currently prevailing in Catalonia is similar to Jean-Claude Bonnet's description of the transformations in discourse concerning the dead in France. According to Bonnet, in the eighteenth century: 'Everywhere a new edifying discourse was being imposed, which was targeted at a community outside the world of Letters, the community of ordinary citizens. This discourse was based on a utilitarian social ethic which replaced the old lament on the fatal outcome of all human endeavour

with a new capitalizing memory'²⁹. And he concludes: 'In its metamorphoses the discourse devoted to the dead is always the rite of the living'³⁰.

A visit to the Museum of the History of Catalonia helps to establish a striking parallel with Thomas.W. Gaehtgens's view of the history museum at Versailles. According to Gaehtgens, 'the order in which the pictures in the Gallery of Battles were arranged reveals that the basic aim is not to evoke the high points of the past but rather, at a given time, to show a certain number of past events which can justify the present political situation (...). By making the history of the country accessible to the people, Louis-Philippe aimed to put forward arguments in support of his own actions. Recalling the high points of the past should serve to unite warring parties. The programme of "national reconciliation" exhorted citizens to put the good of the nation before their own personal interests. The political nature of the History Museum did not escape Louis-Philippe's contemporaries, giving rise to comment'³¹.

If comparisons are odious because the contexts are different, a close study of the MHC can lead only to the conclusion that the museum is used in order to legitimize the ambitions, actions and accomplishments of CiU nationalists. The mission of the MHC - in the purest tradition of history as a form of public education - is to suggest which forms of behaviour are desirable and which are undesirable in this society. Moreover, when asked about the genesis and aims of the museum, the current President of the Generalitat, Jordi Pujol, did not conceal its political nature, declaring that he had 'taken up this idea after a visit to the museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv'. There he was inspired by 'the didactic formula used by the Israelis to transmit to the younger generations a sense of the enduring nature of the signs of identity of a people which have survived throughout its difficult history'³². Institutions of the same kind have therefore inspired his cultural policy. He pointed out that many countries have set up history museums, referring to the Smithsonian in Washington and history museums in Sweden: 'There is one such museum in every provincial capital in Sweden. These towns react against the ignorance of their history, because they think that it makes them vulnerable'³³. He stated clearly: 'Why a Museum of the History of Catalonia? Well, we hope that the people of Catalonia will know what they have been, and why, today, we are what we are and not something different'³⁴. In his opinion, a museum enables us to 'understand and assimilate the idea that a country is the result of a long chain of events, both good and bad, and helps us to love it'³⁵. The location of the museum, the contents of Catalan history exhibited there and the museum techniques used, all conform to this general line of action.

First of all, let us look at the location. Totalling 12,500 square metres, the museum occupies a whole wing of the Palau de Mar, a building which used to house old harbour stores. It is situated in the old port of Barcelona at the heart of a district which was given a new lease of life thanks to the considerable infrastructure put in place for the 1992 Olympic Games. In this regard, it symbolizes the past and what is often portrayed as Catalonia's 'Mediterranean vocation'³⁶. The MHC has received considerable priority investment (4,500 million pesetas, around 35 millions of dollars) from the Generalitat. The whole enterprise was co-ordinated by a person who was not an historian, and who is a CiU member of the Spanish Parliament.

The nature of the history being conveyed is reflected in the names given to the various rooms which make up the permanent exhibition at the museum: 'Foundations', 'The Birth of a Nation', 'Our Sea', 'On the edge of the Empire', 'The early stages of the Industrial Revolution', 'Steam and the Nation', 'The Electric Years', 'Destruction and Reconstruction', 'Heritage and the Future'. It is a history which follows a linear chronology and, in classic manner, portrays heroes and memorable events. Among the latter are the Catalan nation's battles for emancipation from Spain which, significantly, is referred to only in terms of the State apparatus and as an economic market. Catalonia, on the other hand, endowed with a strong personality and unity. The underlying historical model therefore favours a perennialist approach of the nation, which is described as constantly under threat of being absorbed and divided by the Spanish State. According to the works produced by professional historians both inside and outside Catalonia, it is true that the Spanish State wanted to put Catalonia in political subservience. However, since the presentation is one-dimensional, leaving no room for other complementary models and omitting certain facts, it is legitimate to see it as a partial and, consequently, incomplete history. One example is the description of Spain's colonization of America and how Catalonia was once again sidelined. As an isolated fact, this is true. However, later agreements were made with the monarchs to modify the original situation. And Catalans - or at least certain specific groups of Catalans - also benefited from the overseas territories. One may also be surprised to see that the colonization of America is mainly criticized because Catalonia was marginalized in the colonial process and not from a political/moral point of view for the exploitation of other peoples. Thus, the victim-centred discourse, so frequent in Catalonia, which goes hand in hand with the defense of national minorities in the world, has to be sharply relativized.

What we have, then, is the great romance of the Catalan nation and a history which, in its capacity as an official history, is more akin to what François Furet has called ‘narrative-history’ rather than ‘problem-history’³⁷. This is a political history which has been imposed on historical science under the weight of nationalism. According to the Valencian cultural entrepreneur Eliseu Climent: ‘Therefore the history propounded in this recreational-administrative atmosphere was necessarily more socially oriented than scientific or erudite in its intention’³⁸. Seen from this angle, we are better able to understand the strong emphasis placed on the formal representation of this history. Proud of having implemented a ‘new museum concept’ heavily dependent on the new technologies which thus attest to the modernity of Catalonia, the promoters of the MHC have seen their project as a way of allowing the living to experience the past. Breaking with the traditional concept of the museum as a guardian of the heritage, the MHC uses interactive techniques to fulfil its didactic mission. Once again, this leads to stress the material infrastructure itself, which is regarded as an integral part of symbolic efficacy. Among the techniques used is information technology. In every room there is a computer on which visitors can see map collections or chronologies which compare events in ‘Catalonia’ with the ‘rest of the world’. Similarly, mention may also be made of the photographic exhibition in the entrance hall, where the map of Catalonia is made with a series of identity snapshots of people living in the territory. However, the real innovation lies in the stimulation of the other senses and in the physical appropriation of what is depicted as the past. The visitor is invited to lift a medieval suit of armour or to sit at one of the school desks of the Republican and then of the Franco era. All this occurs in a noisy atmosphere with a sound track of speeches, war songs, etc. which creates a strange feeling which one feels until entering the room devoted to the Catalonia of tomorrow. Here, the visitor enters a kind of dark space-capsule lit only by television screens where images are projected at lightning speed. A bluish light emanates from the floor and the map of Catalonia appears. Visitors are encouraged to explore it with their own two feet. This recalls the fondness for excursions which has been a part of the ‘culture of Catalan nationalism since the nineteenth century’³⁹, because ‘building the country’ also involves being familiar with its topography and exploring it physically. Without wishing to plead in favour of an essentially intellectual approach to history, one is entitled to question the alluring virtues of these new technologies, or at least the use to which they are put. This brings to mind a remark made by Marcel Gauchet about Augustin Thierry, the author of *Lettres sur l’Histoire de France*, who ‘aimed to produce art and science at the same time’⁴⁰. ‘Let us say that the resources of art have allowed him to make good the shortcomings evident in this work of imprecise erudition.’⁴¹.

In this regard, we shall conclude this description of the MHC with the criticisms which have been levelled against it. Although Jordi Pujol has denied it, it is the political aim of this institution which has been brought into question since its premature inauguration. It was inaugurated in a rush at the time of the last general election, when many exhibits and frescoes were either incomplete or not yet in place. Entry was also free during the election period. The Autonomous Government was then the butt of the criticisms of the political parties, which accused it of electioneering. Pilar Rahola, the ERC candidate, expressed her indignation at 'Jordi Pujol's illicit use of institutions'⁴². She declared: 'I felt I was at a CiU rally instead of the inauguration of an institution which belongs to all Catalans and which has my support, but which should have been inaugurated next week [i.e. after the autonomous elections in Catalonia]'⁴³. For his part, Narcis Serra (a member of the PSC, the Catalan branch of the Spanish Socialist Party) denounced the fact that Jordi Pujol 'appropriates the heritage of Catalonia for the benefit of his own party'⁴⁴. Alex Vidal Quadras (the leader in Catalonia of the Partido Popular, the conservative party, who was replaced when this party made a pact with the CiU Catalan nationalists with a view to governing Spain) did not forgo the opportunity to point out that this inauguration 'was part of the typical nationalist strategy of reinventing history'⁴⁵.

The press, including those journalists from openly Catalan nationalist publications, could not suppress a certain irony in their comments on what should have been perceived as a significant event for the Catalan society. The following remarks describe the manichaean and redemptive trajectory followed by every visitor to the MHC: 'From flint tools to himself'⁴⁶ (describing Jordi Pujol) or 'from the jaw-bone of Banyoles to his proclamation as president in 1980'⁴⁷. In a more serious vein, the opinions expressed by professional historians, though varied, are more restrained and depend on their starting-point. As citizens, they are fairly unanimous in their attachment to Catalonia and their predominantly Catalanist political position. However, they appear to be torn by their professional allegiance. Josep Benet, Director of the Centre for Contemporary History, another body attached to the Generalitat, declared: 'They explained the project to me two years ago. I told them I had a different concept of what a museum of this kind should be. I was not in agreement with the project because I think this is not how things should be done in the historical field. I heard no more about it after that. It was an administrative decision'⁴⁸. Members of the general public representing different generations and from many areas outside Barcelona expressed their great satisfaction. Grandparents and parents, visibly moved, could be seen reliving episodes of their own lives and explaining

them to their children. As it is now included in the tour of educational visits, the MHC fulfils a role of secondary socialization and backs up primary socialization through the exchanges it prompts within the family circle. However, it has not been open long enough to enable us to know if the people will interiorize the image of the (re)constructed Catalan nation and the nation to be (re)constructed.

CONCLUSION

This study has enabled us to demonstrate the interaction between symbolic representations and collective identities. Above all, it has stressed how variable and flexible identities are, thus invalidating the essentialist thesis. As a result, it has led us to assess the contribution of the actors who forge the images creating realities, among them national realities. Did not Paul Valéry say that ‘the future, by definition, has no focal point. History provides the perspective’⁴⁹. This work prompts us to share the view of the American historian Paul J. Geary, according to whom individual, collective and historical memories (forged by professional historians) merge and reinforce one another. He states: ‘This dichotomy of memory/history conceals the fact that collective memory and history both have political aspects and pursue certain objectives. Historians have one aim, which is basically to forge the collective memory of professional historians and, in the final analysis, that of the society in which they live (...). All memories, whether “individual”, “collective” or “historical” are memories for something, and this political aim (in the broadest sense of that term)’ cannot be ignored⁵⁰. We shall conclude along with Maurice Crubellier that: ‘For a group, remembering means building a heritage of remembrances, valuing, and even overvaluing, certain prominent figures and events to the exclusion of others. It involves drawing selectively on the past and on the present which is in the process of becoming the past. It is to make a treasure house of models and lessons for future actions (...). To exalt these is to exalt oneself (...). The figures and events retained by that memory must be held to be real, but they need not necessarily be real. The criteria preached by historians, although they themselves adhere to them only in part, remain alien to the groups which remember. This is because the efficacy sought in the service rendered to the present is often diametrically opposed to historical rigour. Precise knowledge might curtail the zeal of followers. The usefulness of legends is recognized. Research which is too rigorous dilutes the contagious virtue of the model’⁵¹.

Notes

1. According to the definition of A. Bailly quoted by Louis-Marie Morfaux, 1980, p. 352.

2. This topic has also been dealt with in a study of another group of actors, the sociolinguists. See Cultiaux, 1996, a.

3. The use of parentheses is justified by the desire to distinguish our aims from those of the actors. The term 'reconstruction' presupposes support for the nationalist programme which holds that the Catalan nation once existed, was destroyed and, as a result, must now be rebuilt. This is an interpretation which may be upheld but which must not determine a scientific approach to the matter. We chose to resort to this device as a result of our awareness of the connotation attached to the use of words and their symbolic effectiveness in the scientific field and the political arena. We have thus tried to avoid the pitfall pointed out by Bernard Voutat 'because these (processes of mobilization) are underpinned by collective attempts to explain the meaning of the mobilization, historical or sociological explanations run the risk of becoming a direct extension of the militant categories of perception of the social world'. See Voutat, 1996, p.31.

4. Wallerstein: 'La construction des peuples: racisme, nationalisme, ethnicité' in Balibar and Wallerstein, 1986, p. 106.

5. Nadal and Farreras, 1990, pp. 5-6.

6. Furet, 1982, p. 75.

7. Girardet, 1986, p. 181.

8. To borrow the expression used by Nadal and Farreras, op. cit., p. 11. Girona is a large town in the northern part of Catalonia and the capital of one of the four provinces which make up the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. _Here we might quote as an example the birth of modern Greek historiography promoted by Constantin Paparrigopoulos which has become a truly 'historiocratic' national history (p. 301). 'In the context of nineteenth century Greece, history was the affirmation of an identity (...). The Hellenic context made romantic history the controversial response to various vital, and not purely intellectual, aggressions which cast doubt on the ethnic and diachronic identity of the Greek people' (p. 279). The author thus evokes 'the romantic wave which flooded Greece from 1850 to 1880 (p. 280). See Kohler in Espagne and Werner (dir.), 1990, pp. 279-309.

9. Darviche, 1994, p. 106.

10. Sobreques I Callico, 1990, p. 19.

11. Ucelay da Cal, 1990, p. 76.

12. Riquer I Permanyer, 1990, p. 100.

13. Darviche, M.S. op. cit. p. 109.

14. Martin, 1990, p. 56.

15. Calzada and Llorens, 1985, p. 37.

16. Fauli, 1988, p. 180.

17. The following hypothesis has been put forward and checked: this ambition for national (re)construction involved not just reparation for the distant and immediate past but was also an important tool in negotiations with the central government on territorial sharing of power. For this reason, this form of Catalan nationalism has been termed 'integrative differentialism'.

18. Pujol, 1995, p. 6.

19. Fauli, op. cit., p. 87.

20. J. Fauli, op. cit., p. 89.

21. According to Pierre Nora's definition of a nation in his scientific project set forth in *Lieux de mémoire*, it is 'not only a juridical concept or a territorial unit and a common desire to live together. It is not just the "rich legacy of remembrances" and the "everyday plebiscite" mentioned by Renan. It is the symbolic organization of a human group whose points of reference have to be rediscovered and their circuits lit up'. See Nora's introduction to the three volumes dealing with the nation in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, *La nation*, 1986.

22. Flipping through the school textbooks used for history teaching, one may be astonished to read the legend under a photograph showing a human skull from the paleolithic period, which is presented as that of one of the first 'Catalans'.

23. For information on this topic see Subirachs I Burgaya, 1980, 140 p.

24. A useful book for information on this subject is *Les festes populars* by Prat and Contreras, 1987, 167 p.

25. To quote Nora, 1986, Vol. 1, p. XVI.

26. A Catalan political figure also involved in cultural Catalanism. Following the trend common among his generation, in the nineteenth century he set down his own interpretation of Catalan history on a number of occasions. His political speeches are eloquent on this subject.

27. A committed man of letters, Joan Fuster provided his own interpretation of Catalan history and that of the *Països Catalans* (Catalan speaking areas). Like other intellectuals who wished to participate in the political struggle, in his capacity as an amateur as opposed to a professional historian, he also wrote his own history book. This vein of historical output should not be neglected insofar as the political effects it produces are similar to those of academic historiography.

28. Nora, 1986, Vol. 3, p. 9.

29. Bonnet in Nora, op. cit., p. 220.
30. Bonnet in Nora, op. cit., p. 239.
31. Gaehtgens in Nora, op. cit., pp. 160 & 165.
32. La Vanguardia, 1 March 1996, p. 40.
33. El País, Catalonia supplement, 25 October 1995, p. 11.
34. Ibid.
35. El País, Catalonia supplement, 25 October 1995, p. 13.
36. This aspect was not neglected when European construction was undertaken. In fact, there is fierce competition among the regions bordering the Mare Nostrum to present themselves in Brussels as the best interlocutor on matters concerning this area. In this regard, see Cultiaux, 1996, pp. 39-47, b.
37. Furet, 1982, p.73 & following.
38. El Temps, 4 March 1996, p. 80.
39. This expression is used by Marfany, 1995, 402 p.
40. Quoted by Gauchet in Nora, op. cit., p. 252.
41. Gauchet in Nora, op. cit., p. 252.
42. El País, Catalonia supplement, 20 January 1996, p. 13.
43. Ibid.
44. La Vanguardia, 1 March 1996, p. 40.
45. Ibid.
46. El País, Catalonia supplement, 1 March 1996, p. 13.
47. La Vanguardia, 1 March 1996, p. 40.
48. El País, Catalonia supplement, 29 February 1996, p. 9.
49. Quoted by Crubellier, 1991, p. 8.
50. Geary, 1996, p. 31.
51. Crubellier, op.cit., pp. 8-9.

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