

**History Written by the Losers: History, Memory,
Myth and Independence in Twenty-First Century
Catalonia**

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The Catalan Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory titles its webpage “La memòria dels vençuts” (The memory of the defeated). Clearly aware of the adage that history is written by the victors, the Association seems to be stating a counter-claim: that memory, on the other hand, can never be taken away from the losers. As Joan Ramon Resina puts it, “losers cannot afford to forget. They need to brood over the past, on what went wrong and why, in the vain hope of standing once more at the decisive crossroads” (“Short of Memory” 88). However, not far below this title there is another statement that confuses matters: “Volem passar el full de la història però no el volem passar en blanc” (We want to turn the page of history but we don’t want to leave it blank). So, history is important after all, and it must be written by the losers as well as by the winners before the page can be turned. The supposed authenticity of memory must therefore be combined with the—again supposed—systematic rigor of history so that Catalonia’s “historical memory” may be properly “recovered.”

Historical memory “is a form of social memory in which a group constructs a selective representation of its own imagined past” (Boyd 134). This means that the fundamental property and purpose of historical memory is its role in creating and maintaining a sense of group identity and belonging. There is little wonder, then, that in situations where group identities are in conflict, historical memory becomes a major site of contestation. In the case of Spain, conflicts engendered by the Second Republic, the Civil War and the Franco regime are first and foremost phrased in terms of political differences: conservative/liberal, monarchist/republican, right/left—the perennial problem of the “two Spains”

**Memory and Its Discontents: Spanish Culture in the Early
Twenty-First Century**
Hispanic Issues On Line 11 (2012)

(Balfour and Quiroga). However, in the case of Catalonia and the Basque Country (above all) there is another conflict related to national identity: state/nation, them/us, majority/minority, sameness/difference. Historical memory therefore has another dimension in these “historic nations,” where it feeds into a continuous discourse of national legitimation. Again citing Resina, “such discourse inverts the order of memory and remembers the future, as radical thought has always done. It must recall a future of difference, of particularity exercised in the freedom of equal dignity and access” (“Introduction” 13).

In this essay, I will explore this specific aspect of contemporary debates on historical memory, taking Catalonia as a case study. Much of the interest in historical memory in Catalonia has been phrased in a very similar way to the rest of Spain: the need to acknowledge the horrors of the Civil War and its aftermath, the desire to excavate mass graves to give their occupants a proper burial and their relatives some sense of closure, the concern that forgetting the past in order to achieve an orderly transition to democracy might have proven counterproductive for Spain in the long run, etc. However, there is another aspect of the issue in Catalonia that is more endogenous and is closely related to the evolution of Catalan nationalism. This involves attempts to demonstrate Catalonia’s historical differences from the rest of Spain, to protest against historical injustices and/or the way in which these have been glossed over in contemporary Spain, and to legitimize discourses of sovereignty and/or secession.

A paradigmatic example of this would be the controversy over the Salamanca Papers, which has in many ways framed the current debate over historical memory in Catalonia. The papers belonged to the Generalitat de Catalunya during its operation in the 1930s and were seized by Franco’s forces. The information they contained was used to ‘incriminate’ individuals, who were persecuted as a result. Since that period the papers had been archived in Salamanca, and demands for their return to the Generalitat led to the Spanish government agreeing to do this in 1995. However, this was far from the end of the matter. The papers became a site of struggle over Spain’s identity as a nation: some claimed they were part of Spain’s historical narrative and that Salamanca was therefore an appropriate home for them, while others felt they belonged to Catalonia’s history as a ‘wronged people’ and that some symbolic restitution could be made for this wrong by returning them to their rightful owner. These tensions were manifested in street protests and political point-scoring (Anonymous). The key papers were returned a decade later after a committee of experts recommended the transfer, but continuing delays have meant that others remain in Salamanca. As Carolyn Boyd says, “the intensity of the struggle registers the degree to which history and historical memory are perceived to hold the key to collective identity and political justice” (137).

I base my understanding of the relationship between historical memory and national identity on the approach outlined by Duncan Bell in his article on “Mythscales.” Bell challenges the fundamental inaccuracy of the terms “historical” or “collective” memory, as of course have many others, but also specifically questions the way they have been deployed in the analysis of national identity. For Bell—and other advocates of the social agency approach he adopts—memory can only be individual, although it is of course “socially-framed” and can be shared during specific acts of remembrance (72). Furthermore, it is not transmittable between generations because true memory can only be based on lived experience (73). Once this clarification is made, it is necessary to find a new way of describing the other elements of what has hitherto been lumped together with individual remembering to form—supposedly—a collective and enduring historical memory.

Bell argues that as far as nationalist movements are concerned, what they term historical memory is often actually myth: “A story that simplifies, dramatizes and selectively narrates the story of a nation’s past and its place in the world” (75). The formation of such myths may be institutionally driven or take “multifarious subaltern forms,” but it is the interaction between these myths and individual memory (shared or not) that explains why this phenomenon has such power over our sense of national identity. Bell uses the term “national mythscale” to describe the resulting discursive construction, which is fundamentally narrative in character and has an important “temporal dimension” that reaches beyond the limitations of lived experience.

Analyzing cultural products in the light of claims about historical memory allows us to pinpoint the major narratives and reveal the methods by which national mythscales are constructed and evolve over time. As Jay Winter says, “collective remembrance is a matter of activity. Someone carries a message, a memory, and needs to find a way to transmit it to others” (qtd in Bell 61). Current activity by Catalan nationalists very much reflects this need, which is increasingly predicated on the desire to rouse support for the idea of Catalan independence. As we will see, cultural products are a key tool in the transmission of this message because they can potentially have a “particular resonance” within the national mythscale (Bell 75). However, as Bell points out, “myths do not simply evolve unguided, without active agency” (75). This essay therefore also highlights the role of particular groups and individuals—especially nationalist intellectuals (Guibernau 93–94)—in the production and circulation of ideas about the “historical memory” of the Catalans.

Background

There has been a growth in support for independence in Catalonia since 2005 that has taken many people by surprise. With the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC) leading the Generalitat and their partners the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) in power in Madrid, it appeared that this would be a less conflictive era than previously under *Convergència i Unió* (CiU, 1980–2003). However, the reality was that public support for independence grew markedly over this time. Official statistics reveal a jump in the numbers saying they would prefer independence to autonomy, federalism or the status quo, from 13.6 percent in June 2005 to 25.2 percent by the time CiU came back to power in November 2010 (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió “Baròmetre 1” 15; Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió “Baròmetre 22” 29). Surveys using different methodologies put support for independence much higher: as much as 50.3 percent in one case (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya / Instituto DYM 12). The reasons for this growth in support are complex and are not particularly relevant to the discussion here: recent studies are available that shed light on different aspects of the issue (Dowling; Keating and Wilson; Requejo). What is important to note is that while much of the pro-independence discourse revolves around economic and political arguments (e.g. the economic benefits of secession and the democratic deficit revealed by the Spanish state's attitude toward Catalan sovereignty), there is still a strong underlying current of cultural nationalism. Furthermore, this can trace its roots back through the Transition, the Franco regime, and the Civil War, to the early twentieth-century growth in Catalan regionalist and nationalist movements, and finally to the linguistic and cultural awakening of educated Catalans in the mid-nineteenth century known as the *Renaixença* (Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism* 25–27).

It was during the *Renaixença* that middle-class Catalans, partly inspired by the more historically-oriented versions of Romanticism, began to investigate Catalonia's past and recognize it as particular and under-explored (Marfany, *La cultura* 191–5). This was often expressed through literature, particularly poetry: the poetry competitions or *Jocs Florals* that were held from 1859 onwards often saw a large number of entries on historical themes, and even reserved prizes for works dealing with specific topics in Catalan history (Marfany, “Mitologia”). This rather amateurish enthusiasm (Marfany, *La cultura* 276) gave way to more systematic historical studies, although Catalan historiography has always been strongly linked to Catalan nationalism and therefore tends to have a political component (Cultiaux 132–4). A possible exception to this would be the work of Jaume Vicens Vives (1910–1960), who shifted Catalan historiography towards more questioning positions (Fradera). However, to this day “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 center and periphery since the Transition” (Cultiaux 134).

Since the late twentieth century, the methods by which historians (and pseudo-historians) can reach an audience have multiplied thanks to the Internet. Blogs, Web sites, YouTube, podcasts, etc. all provide cheap ways to spread both knowledge and commentary about any nation’s history to a potentially massive audience. While cyberspace may not be shaping up to be the utopia of expressive freedom that some had initially supposed, it is still true to say that the Internet allows the expression of alternative points of view and challenges to authority (Chadwick 2, 6). One example of this in the Catalan case is that separatist or other radical nationalist views have much more prominence on the Internet than in other spheres (Joan i Mari; Gordillo 96–97), which influences the perception of Catalan politics held by people who regularly encounter these kinds of webpages. The proliferation of sites discussing either historical memory or Catalan history *tout court* is of course related to this same desire for influence.

One example of this would be the association Institut Nova Història, which has a sophisticated website (www.novahistoria.org) and also holds talks and other live events. This association is run by a core group of four Catalans, two of whom have undertaken tertiary studies in history while another has directed film documentaries on topics in Catalan history (Institut Nova Història “Patronat”). Their ongoing projects in early 2011 included research on the “Catalan discovery of America,” the “hidden Catalan roots” of Miguel de Cervantes, and the “lost original” Valencian versions of *La Celestina* and *Lazarillo de Tormes* (Institut Nova Història “Projectes”). Another organization, the Fundació d’Estudis Històrics de Catalunya, has a section on its webpage specifically dedicated to “Memòria històrica,” on which it states

La historiografia oficial dels estats que han ocupat el nostre país ha anat fent desaparèixer o manipulant, segons ha convingut en cada moment històric, aquells fets o personatges de la nostra història que li eren incomodes per tal d’elaborar el seus projectes històric[s] uniformitzadors [. . .] la nostra voluntat és obrir una finestra a la restitució de qualsevol fet o personatge, de qualsevol època que hagi patit l’arbitrarietat de la historiografia oficial. (Fundació d’Estudis Històrics de Catalunya)

(The official historiography of the states that have occupied our country has either eliminated or manipulated—depending on what was most convenient at each historical moment—the facts and characters from our history that were uncomfortable for them, in order to carry out their own homogenizing historical projects [. . .] our desire is to open a window

for the restitution of any fact or character, from any era, that has suffered from the arbitrariness of official historiography.)

Those who are undertaking these kinds of “recovery” projects locate them firmly within the prevailing discourse of historical memory. However, they are better understood as revealing “the temporally and spatially extended discursive realm wherein the struggle for control of people’s memories and the formation of nationalist myths is debated, contested and subverted incessantly” (Bell 66). In order to illustrate this, this essay will now examine Catalan attempts to bring to light buried aspects of two particular periods in Catalan history: the defeat of Barcelona by Bourbon troops in 1714 and the political pacts of the transition to democracy after 1975. Clearly these are two very different phenomena, the first now firmly in the realms of the past, but the second still part of living memory for many Catalans. In both cases, the focus will be on how cultural products are being used to speak about these two eras and the messages nationalists are trying to convey in doing so.

The 1714 Siege of Barcelona

The “loss” that is referred to in the phrase “the memory of the defeated” certainly relates to the common perception that the Catalans as a people were collectively defeated at the end of the Civil War (because of the widespread support for the Republic in the region and Franco’s indiscriminate reprisals against Catalanists [Conversi 109–15]). However, for Catalan nationalists the idea of the defeat of the Catalan nation has deeper roots, in the War of the Spanish Succession and especially the siege of Barcelona of 1713–1714. Attempts by the organizations mentioned above to “recover” historical memory often revolve around the events before, during, and after this date because of its significance as a pivotal moment in Catalonia’s relationship with the Spanish state.

Catalonia’s national day—September 11—commemorates the end of the siege of Barcelona on that day in 1714. The date marks the fall of the city to the troops of Felipe de Borbón (Felipe V), the preferred candidate of France and Castile to the Spanish throne after the death of Carlos II. Barcelona and Mallorca were the only territories that had continued to resist after a chain of events that involved the defeat of their allies in Valencia and Aragón, the surprise installation of their preferred candidate the Archduke Charles of Austria as the new Holy Roman Emperor, and the subsequent withdrawal of the English, Dutch and Portuguese from the conflict. However, while this description of territorial divisions makes it sound as though there was a straightforward split of allegiances between the Crowns of Castile and

Aragón, this was not the case, and moreover the conflict had no separatist dimensions, since the matter at stake was who would be the best ruler for the whole of Spain (Fernández Díaz 78–80). On the other hand, it is true that the issue of respect for the institutions, traditional rights (*fueros*) and characteristics of the different territories of Spain was the main motive in the rejection of Bourbon absolutism by many residents of the Crown of Aragón (Albertí 44, 57–58).

The conflict gave Catalonia two important national heroes: Rafael Casanova (1660–1743), who led the defense of Barcelona and survived to tell the tale, and Josep Moragues (1669–1715), a general who was executed for his continued resistance. The first of these has become a national figure firmly associated with institutional commemorations of *L'Onze de setembre*, while the second is fêted by pro-independence movements for his willingness to fight to the end (Cramerí). The commemoration of the events surrounding the siege has been an important rallying point for Catalan resistance and remembrance since the late nineteenth century, especially during repressive regimes (Balcells, *Llocs de memòria* 86–161; Crexell). Despite the activities of these committed Catalanists, Francoist historical revisionism left many ignorant of these dimensions of the War of Succession, even in Catalonia itself. Furthermore, the teaching of Spanish history stressed the reign of the *Reyes Católicos* (Catholic Monarchs) as the period in which Spain became a single nation, thus disqualifying the notion that Catalonia could have had meaningfully distinctive institutions to lose in 1714. I have personally had arguments about this with Spaniards who completed most of their education during the Franco regime. It is therefore not surprising that Catalanists still perceive a need to put forward their own version of these events, and to stress their historical verifiability (Junqueras i Vies).

One specific manifestation of the desire to educate Catalans about the “true” story of the War of the Spanish Succession is a board game produced by the company Catimperium, whose website (www.catimperium.cat) carries the motto “Recordar per a tornar a guanyar” (Remember so as to win again). This small company in Terrassa, run by Francesc Castany, makes and sells Catalanist merchandise, including a range of T-shirts bearing pictures of scenes or people from Catalan history, such as the siege of 1714. The game, called “11 de Setembre Setge 1714,” carries the strapline “el joc on resistir és vèncer” (the game where to resist is to win), and has been described as a type of Catalan “Risk” (TV3). It comes with a pamphlet outlining the historical context of the game as well as its rules, and a bonus copy of a short history of that period (Catà and Muñoz). The game itself was designed by researchers working at the University of Barcelona, whose logo appears on the outside of the box. While obviously intended to be a fun activity, the game has a serious didactic purpose and also a proselytizing function.

This kind of didacticism can also be found in the numerous videos on the siege of 1714 that have been uploaded to YouTube, many of which are listed under the category “Education.” Some of these are unsophisticated and consist of little more than a succession of short texts, with or without a musical accompaniment. Some use a narrator who tells the story of the war over a series of pictures. Others are more professional videos, and in these cases it is often not clear whether these are original works or clips from commercial productions. As well as accessing these clips directly from YouTube, there are websites that embed them in their own pages, such as the site *11 setembre 1714* (www.11setembre1714.org/index2.html), which carries the motto “viurem lliures o morirem” (“11 Setembre 1714”) (we’ll live free or die). These clips in Catalan tend to stress particular aspects of the conflict—such as the harshness of the repression that was visited on the people of Barcelona after the siege—and gloss over others, for example by painting the conflict as a war of the Crown of Aragón against the Crown of Castile without mentioning that this division was far from straightforward. This selectivity is of course replicated in similar clips narrated from other points of view: a brief overview of the War of Succession posted by “artehistoriacom” fails even to mention the aspect of internal conflict and describes the war purely in terms of its European dimension (artehistoriacom). Following the links to the source of this video takes us to a website managed by the government of Castilla y León (www.artehistoria.jcyl.es/histesp/). Whether or not this provenance is a factor in the way the war is described, it does illustrate quite vividly the Catalans’ point that aspects of their history tend to have been written out of the historical record.

Although many of the videos are presented from the Catalan point of view in order to challenge the way that the history of that period has been portrayed by Spanish sources, in a few cases we see direct challenges to the Catalan versions. This is the case of a video titled “Mitología nacionalista—El 11 de septiembre” (Nationalist Mythology—September 11), uploaded on September 9, 2010 by “ciudadanos” (citizens). There is no doubt about the provenance of this clip, because clicking on “ciudadanos” takes us to the YouTube user page of Ciudadanos—Partido de la ciudadanía, a party formed in 2005 that describes itself as “non-nationalist” and takes particular issue with the linguistic policy of the Generalitat (Ciudadanos, “No al nacionalismo”). The two-minute YouTube clip has the specific aim of refuting the Catalan version of the events of September 11. The first part of the commentary (spoken in a strong Andalusian accent) goes as follows: “Esta es la historia de una mentira que empezó a contarse en el siglo diecinueve sobre algo que pasó en el dieciocho, que no pasó como dicen que pasó” (Ciudadanos, “Mitología nacionalista”) (This is the story of a lie that began to be told in the nineteenth century about something that happened in the eighteenth, that didn’t happen the way they say it happened). Later we

hear that the myth in question is based on the idea that “llegó un rey español que en realidad era francés e invadió Catalunya para prohibir a una sociedad analfabeta aprender en catalán en unas escuelas que no existían” (there came a Spanish King who was actually French and he invaded Catalonia in order to stop an illiterate society from learning in Catalan in schools that didn’t exist). The narrator then points out the contradictions in the myth of Rafael Casanova, who was not killed in the siege of Barcelona but eventually went back to a normal life, before quoting Samuel Johnson: “el patriotismo es el último refugio de los canallas” (patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel). Finally, the clip turns to party politics and the reasons why Ciudadanos is different from the other political parties in Catalonia.

The comments of the people who upload or view these videos are as interesting as the clips themselves. The “artehistoria” clip generated 278 comments (up to March 11, 2011), many of them referring to the failure to mention the internal conflict that was part of the War of Succession, as described above. The video made by Ciudadanos had received 212 comments by February 10, 2011, and, given the nature of the video, it is not surprising that these contain some heated exchanges. Two comments from opposing sides will give a flavor of the debate: “Por fin alguien empieza a desenmascarar a estos manipuladores nacionalistas. Viva España y Visca Catalunya lliure de mentirosos [sic]!!!!” (by “mferrezo”) (Finally someone is starting to unmask these nationalist manipulators. Long live Spain and long live Catalonia free of *liars*!!!!) (A subsequent comment by “Chronomatrix” points out that the Catalan for “liars” is actually “mentiders”); “Ostres quin vídeo més bó!!! Per penós, cutre i escandalosament esbiaixat” (by “JordiS3”) (Wow what a great video!!! Because it’s so terrible, sleazy and scandalously biased).

The prolific contributor “fandelacope” (fan of la Cope) has had most of his/her comments removed, but from those that remain we can infer that the username is not intended ironically, as they echo much of the anti-Catalan rhetoric of this media group’s radio programs. Interestingly, the comments do also contain a fairly detailed debate on the origins of the nations of the Iberian Peninsula, the historical relationship of the Crowns of Aragón and Castile and the point at which we might be able to speak of a united Spain.

Many of the debates generated by these kinds of clips are conducted in a mixture of Spanish and Catalan (often very poorly written Spanish or Catalan). The fundamental cause of disagreement is that the commentators have different views of history, or different levels of knowledge. Contributors categorically state the facts as they see them, and occasionally direct others to the history books to find out “what really happened.” When attempts to sway someone’s opinion have failed, the dialogues often degenerate into insults, the most common being that a rival contributor is ignorant or simply a liar. The vast majority of the comments reveal a very unsophisticated view of the limits of historical knowledge, as if history was

simply a matter of getting one's facts straight and not also a matter of interpretation. Very little mention is made of memory rather than history, and therefore comments such as this one posted by "spidermancat" at the start of his/her clip about September 11 are particularly noteworthy: "No hem desaparegut perquè som capaços de recordar" (We haven't disappeared because we are capable of remembering).

It is clear that these comments do not constitute a genuine dialogue; it would be extremely rare for someone to admit that s/he had changed his/her mind as a result of either the content of the video or the ensuing discussion. In this sense, what we see in the written responses is more of an attempt to justify and proclaim already-formulated notions of the particular national mythscape that provides a contributor's sense of historical truth. The videos about September 11, 1714 therefore challenge certain notions of YouTube as "a potential site of cosmopolitan cultural citizenship" (Burgess and Green 81), if by this we mean "the attempt to foster dialogue, complexity and communication in place of silence and homogeneity" (Stevenson 345).

The Transition

The fact that the Transition is part of living memory does not mean that it is any less problematic than the events of 1714. As Vincent Druliolle points out, "the memory of the Transition in Spain is an interpretative framework [. . .] a set of articulatory practices rather than of historical facts" (82, 79). As a result, the existence of historical documents that can still be verified by living participants in the events does not in any way lessen the potential for conflict over particular interpretations of the meaning of these events. Nevertheless, following Bell, we can say that there is an important difference here because of the presence of true individual memory of the events themselves, which can contest homogenizing myths coming from either Spanish or Catalan institutions (Bell 76–77).

As with the Civil War and Franco regime, Catalan nationalist perspectives on the historical memory of the Transition coincide in many ways with those expressed in Spain as a whole: the "pacto del olvido" (pact of forgetting) is questioned and its problematic or counterproductive elements exposed (Boyd 135–40). However, there is a different "pact" here that forms the basis for much Catalan complaint: the Constitutional settlement and the subsequent process of developing Spain's "State of Autonomies." The basis of this argument is that the Catalans—who voted in a clear majority to accept the Constitution presented to them in 1978—were fundamentally misled. They had been expecting that arrangements for autonomy would apply only to the "historic nations" of Spain, thus recognizing their right to differential treatment. In the end, with the

extension of autonomy to the whole of Spain and the implementation of “café para todos” (coffee for everyone) as a guiding principal for future negotiations, the element of differential treatment was severely reduced. This, argue many Catalanists, is a betrayal of Catalan goodwill in voting for the Constitution, and ultimately means that the Spanish state has reneged on a pact.

This point of view has often been expressed in books, articles and online, as well as in two recent film documentaries: *Cataluña-Espanya* and *El Laberint*. Isona Passola’s *Cataluña-Espanya* (2009), shown in cinemas, was explicitly conceived as a Catalan version of Julio Medem’s *La pelota vasca* (2003). *El Laberint*, directed by Jordi Mercader and shown on TV3 on June 10, 2010, had a similar format, but a more focused and “intellectual” approach. Both documentaries have a similar “talking heads” structure in which politicians, academics, businesspeople and others debate a series of questions related to Catalonia’s position within Spain. Both films were also subsidized by the Generalitat and carry the logo of its Departament de la Vicepresidència. Unsurprisingly, both put forward clearly pro-Catalan points of view.

One of the possible criticisms of this kind of documentary is that the director has designed it to give a semblance of objectivity while actually putting forward his/her own desired message. As Paul Ward points out, however, the very idea of objectivity in documentary-making is highly problematic:

The confusion here is between a supposedly ‘objective’ position that the documentarist takes in relation to their subject, and the idea that this somehow equals ‘neutrality’ or ‘impartiality.’ First of all, there is no such thing as ‘an objective position’ in the sense that it is often meant: that is, as a position that is somehow magically ‘outside’ the socio-historical context that it is depicting. Secondly, the assumption [. . .] appears to be that ‘neutrality’ should be the necessary aim of all documentaries and, furthermore, that by being perceived to be ‘neutral’ or ‘impartial’ [. . .] one somehow automatically achieves objectivity. (60)

On the contrary, “to remain stubbornly ‘impartial’ or ‘balanced’ in the face of clear *imbalances* in the real world is to actually misrepresent that world and the power struggles that go on within it” (Ward 61). Given that the directors of *Cataluña-Espanya* and *El Laberint* aim to correct an imbalance caused by the dominant Spanish myth of the Transition, we should not be too surprised that even when speakers present a range of different opinions, the effect is to build a coherent argument, both overall and within specific sections.¹ In both cases, the issue of the Transition arises

in the context of what had been the Catalans' expectations at that time and what has happened subsequently.

El Laberint concentrates its discussion of the Transition on the process of forming the *Estado de las autonomías*. This begins six minutes into the documentary and is divided into six basic sections (each containing more than one contribution) with the following overarching narratives:

1) The issue that was being addressed by the design of the State of Autonomies pertained to the demands of Catalonia, the Basque Country, and to a lesser extent Galicia. It had been supposed that whatever solution was found would involve a new form of relationship between these "historic nations" and the rest of Spain. No one realized at the time that it was actually the start of a process of turning Spain into a state with seventeen autonomous communities.

2) The demands of the Andalusian parties for similar treatment was the turning point: as the voiceover says, "el va capgirar tot" (this turned everything on its head). Xabier Arzalluz, ex-leader of the Partido Nacionalista Vasco, narrates his own direct experience of the political machinations that followed, and stresses the authenticity of his statements by adding "ésta es la verdadera historia tal como la vi yo" (this is the real story as I saw it).

3) Since matters seemed to be getting out of hand, a different idea became attractive to both the right-wing Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD) and the left-wing PSOE: that of "café para todos" (coffee for everyone) (a phrase coined by Andalusian politician Manuel Clavero Arévalo). The complete regionalization of Spain was used to stop demands for special treatment from spreading out of control.

4) The main exception to this was the *concierto económico* (economic agreement), by which the Basque Autonomous Community (like Navarre) retains all taxes collected in the region and then passes a proportion on to the state. It has subsequently been asked why the Catalans had not requested the same arrangement, but they were not focused enough on economic considerations at the time. Only four out of the twenty-one representatives who devised Catalonia's 1979 Statute of Autonomy were in favor of the idea. Now it is seen to be necessary by many Catalans.

5) For some, the *Estado de las Autonomías* represented a starting-point, whereas others regarded it as a definitive statement of the limits of regional autonomy. This split also reflected different views of the "pact" that had been entered into: either a pact to recognize that Spain was made up of regions and nations, or that it was a united nation.

6) The Catalan parties were conscious of playing a stabilizing role in the new democracy and therefore they were willing to hold back on more radical plans. It is true that Catalans voted "yes" to the Constitution with a large majority, but they thought they were doing so in return for a proper recognition of Catalonia by the Spanish state.

A total of eleven people are interviewed in this eleven-minute segment, including former Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar. This means that time is given to points of view that differ from the narratives above. However, the two voices that come through most strongly are those of Jordi Pujol and Xabier Arzalluz. Pujol has five interventions and the final word, while Arzalluz speaks seven times. Both men also explain their points at greater length than the other contributors. It is therefore not surprising that it is the point of view attached to the “historic nations” that predominates in the overall narrative.

The section on the Transition in *Cataluña-Espanya*, which is a little shorter at just over four minutes, also focuses on the problems caused by the decision to promote “café para todos.” In this case there is no attempt to introduce voices that dissent from the overarching narrative, which runs as follows:

1) No one had any idea at the time what the outcome of the idea of the *Estado de las Autonomías* would be.

2) The Catalans were rather naive in their negotiations on the Statute and settled for less than they could have received.

3) The generalization of autonomy to the seventeen communities was partly due to the fear of a military coup and went against the original spirit of the idea. Any hint of asymmetry was quashed even though it was justified.

4) Now regions like Catalonia that deserve more powers cannot have them because they would also have to be given to the other regions, even though those regions do not really need them because they do not have the distinctiveness that Catalonia has.

The strongest voice in this segment belongs to Miguel Herrero Rodríguez de Miñón, who is introduced in a caption as “Ponent de la Constitució de 1978 per UCD. Advocat de l’Estat” (Contributor to the Constitution of 1978 for UCD. Public Prosecutor).² It is this ex-UCD politician who states, in Spanish, “hay que volver a las raíces y permitir que se desarrolle una situación asimétrica, porque la situación española es asimétrica. Es decir, Cataluña es una nación, Madrid no lo es” (we must get back to the root of the matter and allow an asymmetrical situation to develop, because Spain’s situation is asymmetrical. That is to say, Catalonia is a nation, Madrid isn’t). Herrero also says that Madrid does not need the cultural autonomy Catalonia has because it does not have the cultural distinctiveness Catalonia has. These statements coming from a former right-wing politician, a “madrileño” (Madrilenian) (as he stresses during the clip), and one of the “Fathers of the Constitution,” carry a greater weight than similar statements pronounced by Catalans and make his contribution a crucial factor in legitimizing the pro-Catalan narrative.

In the cases of Herrero, Pujol and Arzalluz, their position as eyewitnesses to the events of the Transition is a crucial factor in giving

authority to their statements. This illustrates Bell's point that "memory can function in opposition to myth" (76). In this case, the myth that is opposed by the living memory of the three speakers is the Spanish myth of a united and coherent Spanish nation. Their memories directly address some of the "Spanish" points of view that the films are trying to refute, including the idea that Catalans voted for the Constitution and chose not to ask for a *concierto económico* because at heart they were happy as part of Spain. This is also an indirect challenge to the idea that the recent rise in support for independence is an invention of Catalan politicians and the media. On the contrary, their arguments suggest there is a specific failure at the root of Spain's democratic structure, dating from the Transition, which explains current Catalan frustrations.

Conclusions

Naturally, there is no strict separation between September 11, 1714 and the Transition in the Catalan historical narrative: both are part of the mythscape that helps to configure Catalan identity. Nor is there a clear line to be drawn between these events' roles in shaping myth (on the one hand) and memory (on the other), since the commemorations of *L'Onze de setembre* in 1976 and 1977 are actually a key part of Catalans' living memory of the Transition. The mass gathering in Sant Boi de Llobregat in 1976 was the first time a commemoration had been officially sanctioned after the end of the Franco regime, although it was not allowed to take place in central Barcelona. The following year, when Barcelona was the permitted venue, a supposed one million people took to the streets in a combined celebration, commemoration, and plea for Catalan autonomy.

Living memories of *L'Onze de setembre* therefore clearly function as a site of contestation against the Spanish mythscape of national unity, but they also help to create a new Catalan mythscape with the same unifying purpose. This can be illustrated by the fact that the significance of the 1977 event has now been linked in the Catalan imaginary to the estimated 1.1 million people who marched on July 10, 2010 in support of Catalonia's new statute (or, in many cases, under pro-independence banners). Before the second march, its organizers—and the Catalan media—explicitly made reference to the first, presumably hoping to generate greater participation by connecting the events of 2010 to those of 1977 (regió7). Both have now passed into the Catalan nationalist mythscape, helped in no small measure by the existence of people for whom the first event is still part of their personal memory: "Els marrecs que la van viure a coll-i-bé del pare o la mare i que ara, 33 anys després, la reviuaran amb el fill en braços" (regió7) (The kids who experienced it sitting on their father or mother's shoulders and who now, thirty-three years later,

will live through it again with their child in their arms). Such sentiments speak of continuity and of a history that shows present-day Catalans a model for how they should act (Smith 96).

The intertwining functions and parallel narrative structures of memory, history, and myth allow them to be deployed relatively seamlessly within any national project. However, Duncan Bell warns us not to be fooled into treating them as a single phenomenon, despite the “Promethean complexity” of the links between them (78). As we have seen in the above examples, the analysis of particular cultural forms can reveal some of the inner workings of this complexity—who is deploying memory, history and myth and to what end? Nevertheless, what an obsession with “historical memory” (in its most undifferentiated and subjective form) tells us about a nation’s present is just as important. In the case we have been examining it reveals the particular “struggles for recognition” of Catalans who feel marginalized as the result of the development of “norms of recognition” within the Spanish polity over which they have not had sufficient influence (Tully 86–89). The “arbitrary” nature of official history that is responsible for making the Catalans losers rather than winners is also seen to be responsible for those norms that are therefore in themselves arbitrary. The recovery of historical memory in the Catalanist context is therefore part of the process of justifying independence as a legitimate strategy, by demonstrating both the historical impossibility of dialogue with the Spanish state and, conversely, the possibility of a future Catalan state in which living memory, official history and the national mythscape are at last fully congruent.

Notes

1. See Cabeza San Deogracias and Paz Rebollo for a discussion of how this same kind of coherent message is achieved by Medem in *La pelota vasca*.
2. The clip is not an interview recorded for the purposes of the film, but appears to be an extract from a previously recorded television program.

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