

*Catalonia and Portugal: The Iberian Peninsula from the Periphery*. Ed. Flocel Sabaté and Luís Adão da Fonseca. Bern: Peter Lang, 2015. ISBN 978-3-0343-1650-7.

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The volume *Catalonia and Portugal: The Iberian Peninsula from the Periphery*, edited by Flocel Sabaté (University of Lleida) and Luís Adão da Fonseca (University of Porto), builds from a 2012 academic conference held in the Catalan city of Lleida under the auspices of the European Science Foundation project *Cuius Regio*, which focuses on the study of eight European regions, including Portugal and Catalonia. As Dick de Boer, the *Cuius Regio* project leader, notes in the volume's epilogue, Catalonia may be viewed as Portugal's "counterpart" or, I would add, its reverse image. Portugal and Catalonia occupy geographically peripheral positions on the Iberian Peninsula's Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. Their histories have been shaped in dialogue with, and opposition to, Castile and the Spanish kingdom that it came to dominate. Perhaps most notably, Portugal's restoration to independence in 1640 after sixty years of dynastic union under the Spanish Habsburgs coincided with—and benefited from—a contemporaneous, ultimately unsuccessful Catalan revolt against Madrid, the *Guerra dels Segadors* (1640-52). And while Portugal's rebellion against the Habsburgs resulted in independence, the Catalan conflict provided the Spanish crown with the impetus to further centralize authority in Madrid and strip Catalonia of its traditional privileges.

Given these similarities and differences, it makes a great deal of sense to offer side-by-side analysis of Portugal and Catalonia as European – and Iberian – regions. This is the stated—and achieved—aim of *Catalonia and Portugal*, which features twenty chapters on Portuguese and Catalan history, ordered chronologically from the eighth through the twentieth century, and divided more or less evenly between the two focal areas, with a slight preference for Catalonia. The editors suggest several structural comparisons between the Portuguese and Catalan cases, by pairing topically related chapters. For instance, Maria Cristina Pimenta and Vicent Josep Escartí analyze ideas of "Iberia" and "Spain" in early modern Portugal and Catalonia, and Maria da Conceição Meireles Pereira, and Giovanni C. Cattini and David Cao, examine the use of history in nineteenth century Portuguese and

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Catalan national discourse. Where the volume could have gone further, in my view, is in examining how the histories of Portugal and Catalonia have conditioned each other directly, as in 1640, or around the turn of the twentieth century, when Portuguese and Catalan Iberianists came into direct dialogue with one another.<sup>2</sup> Sabaté and Fonseca's introductory chapter, and especially Òscar Costa's contribution "Re-imagining the State: Pan-Iberianism and Political Interventionism in the Context of Catalan Nationalism," which skillfully analyzes the "Catalan gaze" toward Portugal in the context of nineteenth and twentieth century Catalan Iberianism, offer this sort of integrated analysis. However, these are exceptional cases.

Beyond these broad issues of comparison, *Catalonia and Portugal* makes a number of useful scholarly contributions. I should specify here that unlike many of the contributors to this journal, my training is in literature as opposed to historical studies, and my assessment may reflect this training. First, several chapters of *Catalonia and Portugal* demonstrate that what Sabaté and Fonseca refer to as the "social awareness" of Portuguese and by implication Catalan identity dates back to the late Middle Ages. This may seem an obvious point, but it makes for an instructive lesson for those of us trained in literature, and who work on more recent periods. In my field, a simplistic reading of influential texts on the birth of nationalism (see Anderson and Hobsbawm, among others) sometimes leads to the erroneous assumption that because the nation-state can be said to date from the nineteenth century, it follows that national feeling is an essentially "modern" phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> Fonseca and Sabaté note that, hundreds of years prior to the nineteenth century heyday of European nationalism, personal, emotive identification played a crucial role in building what, paraphrasing Anderson, we might term the Portuguese or Catalan "imagined communities." This sense of identification breathed life into the institutional architecture of the Portuguese kingdom and Catalonia's successive political configurations (County of Barcelona, Principality of Catalonia, Crown of Aragon)—so much so that, referring to Catalonia during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Sabaté and Fonseca write that "the Catalan nation referred to a shared cultural perception." Moving westward across the peninsula, they affirm: "There is also an evolution in Portugal where this 'sense of belonging' is reinforced throughout the ages [...] This feeling, which expresses a real belief, is, in its origins, a problem of the domain of the imaginary; that is to say, of the way we

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<sup>2</sup> See Thomas S. Harrington, "Catalanism in the Portuguese Mirror: Skirmishes between 'Unitarians' and 'Pluralists' for Control of the Movement (1900-1925)," *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 35 (2001): 257-80.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991); Hobsbawm, Eric. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." *The Invention of Tradition*. Ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

see.” In a separate contribution, Fonseca and Paula Pinto Costa provide evidence for an early awareness of Portuguese identity, and describe a vigorous debate that took place in Portugal between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, in texts like the *Livro Velho de Linhagens*, the *Crónica Geral de Espanha de 1344*, and the *Louvor da Hispânia*, concerning the degree to which Portuguese identity was conditioned by the Iberian whole.

Second, *Catalonia and Portugal* demonstrates that just as textual evidence of Portuguese and Catalan identity dates back centuries, so too does the debate between peninsular intellectuals on the extent to which these “peripheral” peninsular identities are compatible with the broader idea of “Spain”—a category that Castilian chroniclers would present as mostly or entirely synonymous with Castile. Fonseca and Costa argue that in the *Livro Velho de Linhagens*, a genealogical text probably written in the 1280s, and which describes the Portuguese nobility’s connections with Castile, Leon, and Galicia, “the Portuguese nobility and, through it, Portugal, is appointed—or better [said] *theorized*—a *Hispanic destiny*.” Yet they also cite the *Crónica Geral de Espanha de 1344*, which in the words of Luís Krus, evinces a “systematic hostility” toward the Castilian monarchy. It would be interesting to compare these documents, which present competing “Hispanic” and “national” visions for Portugal, with late nineteenth century pro- and anti-Iberianist texts, such as Oliveira Martins’ *História da Civilização Ibérica* (1879) and Tomás Ribeiro’s *Dom Jaime ou a Dominação de Castela* (1862), which engaged in a similar debate regarding what, for lack of a better term, we might describe as Portugal’s “Spanish-ness.”

In their chapters, Vicent Josep Escartí, Antoni Simon, and Eulàlia Miralles describe a similar debate occurring in Catalonia. Escartí, covering the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, cites the writer Joan Margarit i de Pau, whose *Paralipomenon Hispaniae* (1545) defines Spain in both geographic and political terms, and the Valencian writers Ausiàs March and Joanot Martorell, who in their poetic and prose works evince a “purely geographical acceptance of the word *Espanya*.” Simon compares a Catalan-Aragonese literary and historiographical tradition that “considered ‘Spain’ [...] a designation of origin that encompassed all the inhabitants and kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula,” and that thereby allowed for Catalan-Aragonese political separation from Castile, with Castilian attempts to assert their kingdom’s preeminence as what Gregorio López Madera would in his *Excelencias de la Monarchía y Reino de España* (1597) refer to as the “head of Spain.” And Miralles, in her fascinating chapter “National history, own language and otherness: Catalonia in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries” demonstrates how Francesc Tarafa in his volume *De origine ac rebus gestis regum Hispaniae liber* (1553), evidently eliding the issue of Portugal, adopts

a binary division of the peninsula into *Espanya citerior*, represented politically by the Crown of Aragon, and *Espanya ulterior*, represented by Castile. She also cites several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Catalan writers who affirmed the dignity of the Catalan language as the proper vehicle for what Cristòfor Despuig in the mid-sixteenth century described as the task of illustrating and defending Catalonia's "naturalesa pròpia." We may compare this sentiment with that expressed by the Barcelona poet and journalist Joan Maragall, who in his 1898 "Oda a Espanya" reflects on his decision to address the Spanish nation in his native Catalan and notes that, "[e]n 'questa llengua – pocs t'han parlat;/ en altra, massa."

Finally, the contributors to *Catalonia and Portugal* affirm the value, for those of us interested in analyzing the literary expression of Iberian identities, of adopting a broad definition of the category of "literature." Depending on one's period of focus, there may be solid historical reasons for taking this view. Writing on Catalonia in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, Miralles explains that she will analyze texts that are "literature in the broadest sense of the term, as understood by the men of these centuries: as a synonym of written culture and not only restricted to the field of creative literature as we understand it nowadays." As D.R. Kelley notes in his excellent study *The Descent of Ideas: The History of Intellectual History* (2002), this more expansive definition of literature as "the total accumulation of humanity's written remains" prevailed until the late eighteenth century. Further, there are specific benefits to focusing on what, risking anachronism, we might term literary non-fiction (treatises, chronicles, letters, essays, articles, speeches, etc.) in addressing some of the thorny but crucially important questions concerning the meaning of "Portugal" and "Catalonia" as categories, and their relationship to broader geographic and political ideas of "Spain" or "Iberia." These are questions that, for the most part, do not lend themselves to a lyrical poem or an allegorical novel.<sup>4</sup> As Escartí notes in his contribution, "if we want to find out the meaning of the concept *Espanya* in Catalan literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we basically have to look at historiography. This is where the best-known ideologues positioned themselves with the changes of focus for the application of a word to an entity that was defined to different degrees." His judgment seems broadly applicable.

In conclusion, *Catalonia and Portugal: The Iberian Peninsula from the Periphery* offers scholars a rich assortment of contributions that address several aspects and periods of Portuguese and Catalan history, from the Middle Ages to the recent past. The volume

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<sup>4</sup> Exceptions include Miguel Torga's collection *Poemas Ibéricos* (1965) and José Saramago's novel *A Jangada de Pedra* (1986).

suggests several fruitful comparisons between the Portuguese and Catalan cases, and makes a number of solid scholarly contributions.