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Breaking and Setting the Pattern: European Influences on Early Catalan Nationalism

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Breaking and Setting the Pattern: European Influences on Early Catalan Nationalism

A thesis presented in Candidacy for Departmental Honors in

History

from

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

By

Gabriel Black-Planas

30 April 2024

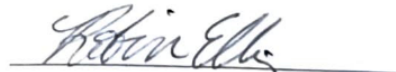
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Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, politics in the region of Catalonia came to be dominated by discourse that more assertively emphasized Catalans' cultural uniqueness within the Spanish state. The political tradition termed "Catalanism" was rooted in the successful revival of Catalan traditions and cultural practices that had occurred earlier in the nineteenth century, many of which were crucially centered around Catalonia's chief distinguishing element from the rest of the nation: their language. Between 1833 and 1866, Catalan had enjoyed a meteoric return to prominence in a process known as the *Renaixença*; following this, Catalan's champions came to feel threatened amid the homogenizing Spanish regime, and sought to shield their language from replacement by entering regional and national politics by the 1880s.¹ Catalonia had enjoyed a return to economic prominence in the same century, with Catalan industry far surpassing every other region of Spain, meaning that, while the emerging Catalan bourgeoisie was content to remain sidelined for some time as long as their economic interests were protected, a new class of industrialists and middle-class intellectuals had come to prominence by the end of the century. With the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1874, dissatisfaction regarding the infringement of the Catalan linguistic sphere and continued exclusion of Catalans from national leadership positions slowly fed the growth of parties and quasi-nationalist organizations dedicated to protecting the newly revived Catalan identity,

¹ Catalan equivalent to "Renaissance"- rebirth; Josep R. Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 17; Albert Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 25-27.

effectively transitioning Catalanism from holding purely cultural concerns to asserting a regional political will.

This political transformation must be contextualized by the fact that advocates of the Catalan language were highly conscious of the development of their European contemporaries. Besides wistfully remembering when Catalonia, as a crucial partner during the heights of the medieval Aragonese kingdom, had conquered much of the Mediterranean and spread its linguistic reach to Valencia and the Balearic Islands, as well as to parts of modern-day France and Italy, political Catalanists perceived that their industrial economy was more like those in Germany, Great Britain, and the United States than any other part of their own country. Even before Catalanism turned to outright independentism as a means by which to advance Catalan cultural and linguistic interests, they sought to reproduce the modernity they saw in Europe within their own region, in essence freeing themselves from Castilian cultural subjugation.² Thus, political Catalanism must always be judged by the context of European ideas of what constituted advanced civilization, political and cultural modernity, and how a modern Catalan nation could function within the declining Spanish empire.

In order to examine this phenomenon, I will thus trace the entry of European ideas into the discourse as Catalanism took on its overtly political character. Additionally, I will pay attention to what the specific trappings of a modern civilization were that Catalans valued abroad, and why they may have felt entitled to them within their own borders. Finally, I will examine the ironic but inevitable extension of cultural-political envy held by Catalanists; the idea of empire as a means by which to empower Catalonia. In service of investigating these areas of

² Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 58.

focus, I will be looking at contemporary political Catalanist newspapers, as well as Valentí Almirall's *Lo Catalanisme* ("Catalanism") and Enric Prat de la Riba's *La Nacionalitat Catalana* ("The Catalan Nationality"), two pieces noted for their significance and longevity.³ Throughout this piece, I will argue that Catalanists not only intentionally modeled their aspirations after European powers, but that they did so because they believed that there was a modernity that needed to be recreated in Catalonia to ensure its survival. For Catalanists, it was not enough to merely assert Catalan nationality; rather, despite all its contradictions, it was necessary to strictly adhere to European civilizational guidelines, either within the Spanish state or without.

³ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 64.

Chapter One: The Ideal Europeans

i. Introduction

In the wake of the Bourbon Restoration during the final two decades of the nineteenth century, Catalan industrialists became intensely aware of their lack of political power on the Spanish national level accompanying their significant economic weight. In spite of a general lack of support for Catalan economic growth from the Spanish center and a need for raw materials across the Iberian Peninsula, Catalonia had enjoyed steady industrial growth unseen in the rest of Spain throughout the nineteenth century.⁴ Though undeveloped by contemporary European standards, the Catalan economy still demonstrated relative strength by way of its output in the textile industry, becoming something of a salesmen to the rest of Spain.⁵ The importance of business leaders is evident in the broad role that the Catalan urban bourgeoisie played in often defining regional political trends, even prior to the development of left-wing nationalism.⁶ Desiring Spanish economic policies favorable to Catalan industry, bourgeois Catalans eventually came to throw their weight behind Catalanism, a novel ideology that served as a third way in a Spanish political landscape that was dominated by corrupt and gerrymandered Liberal and Conservative parties.⁷ Through political vessels like the *Lliga Regionalista* and Valentí Almirall, the “conservative” Catalanist outlook proved to irreversibly shift Catalan politics, eventually breaking the power of dominant autocratic monarchist parties.⁸ However, Catalanism and

⁴ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 19.

⁵ R. J. Harrison, “Catalan Business and the Loss of Cuba, 1898-1924,” *The Economic History Review* 27, no. 3 (1974): 431-432.

⁶ Angel Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism, 1770-1898* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 136.

⁷ Antoni Segura i Mas and Elisenda Barbè i Pou, “Catalonia: From Industrialization to the Present Day,” in *A Companion to Catalan Culture*, ed. Dominic Keown (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), 74-75.

⁸ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 58.

Catalan politics themselves fractured, with Catalanist parties absorbing contemporary ideological currents from outside of Spain into their nationalist aspirations.

Even before the development of regionalism or nationalism in Catalonia, concern about the future of the region as part of the Spanish state was evident among the Catalan political and business elite.⁹ One way in which this manifested was actually through a militaristic *Spanish* nationalism among conservative Catalan bourgeois elements that combined a natural gravitation towards protectionism beneficial to Catalan domestic-oriented business with a hysterical fear of neighboring European domination, even going so far as to prompt radical calls towards violent imperialism in Africa and the establishment of quasi-colonial links to Latin American nations in order for Spain to rekindle some lost imperial glory.¹⁰ Angel Smith goes so far as to assert that Spain's awkward lack of colonies among its peers was tantamount to a world-shattering paradox in its national character, especially after the loss of the Spanish-American War.¹¹ Thus, in this chapter, I will argue that, due to Spain's exclusion from the western European community and Catalonia's relatively high levels of industrialization compared to the rest of Spain, Catalanists looked abroad in order to ideologically emulate the rest of Europe as an expression of nascent nationhood, and as a way to conform to industrial-era and imperialist conceptions of civilized national development. The period covered will span between the beginnings of two political disasters for Catalans: 1874 to 1925, the beginning of the Bourbon Restoration to the dissolution of limited self-government upon the proclamation of General Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. The former brought Catalonia's discomfort within a corrupt, reactionary monarchy

⁹ Harrison, "Catalan Business and the Loss of Cuba, 1898-1924," 431.

¹⁰ Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism, 1770-1898*, 136-137.

¹¹ Angel Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," in *The Crisis of 1898: Colonial Redistribution and Nationalist Mobilization*, ed. Angel Smith et al. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1999), 153.

amid accelerating expressions of cultural expression to the foreground, while the latter prompted pointed acts of resistance against a belligerent state.¹²

During the tumultuous and multipolar epoch of New Imperialism throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Catalan leaders and Catalanist organizations were often influenced by contemporary European political trends and further worked to incorporate them into a Catalan and/or Spanish context. For instance, the Catalan political elite attempted to incorporate the left-right political divide within Catalanist voting options, implicitly acknowledged Catalonia's existence in a broader European political community; this was tantamount, then, to recognizing that there existed a civil society in Catalonia and Spain interested in absorbing novel political ideas from abroad that had to be reckoned with at an official political level.¹³ Benedict Anderson writes that European bourgeoisie developed a class identity by consuming the same print-media with the same attached ideas; around the turn of the century in Catalonia, print media and the ensuing collective consumption of ideas were oftentimes intensely focused on the goings-on of neighboring countries.¹⁴ However, this chapter will aim to go beyond reaffirming the existence of these surface-level links between Catalonia and Europe and establish causation. Catalanist leaders were not merely mindlessly mimicking politics that had found successes abroad in the hopes of boosting their domestic prestige, but rather viewed Europe (and, by extension, the United States) as an alternative source of political inspiration instead of Spain. The deeply felt sense of anxiety at the current conditions of the Spanish state gave way to explicit calls to militarily, economically, and even imperially

¹² Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 33-34, 86-87.

¹³ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 58-59.

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2016), 77; E.F.E., "Corrent Mon," *El Poble Català*, January 28, 1905.

modernize. For some nationalists of the *Lliga Regionalista* at the start of the twentieth century, imperial power was posited as a way to achieve true nation-state status.¹⁵ At first, conservative bourgeois Catalan businessmen did this with an ostensible focus on Spain as a whole, while later, autonomists and outright nationalists adopted these pushes for a more regional context. Catalanists and other modernizing Catalans thus deliberately moved to “civilize” their fledgling nation along western European lines, whether as a part of a larger national unit or by themselves.

ii. *Perceptions of Spanish Degradation*

Spanish intellectuals of the nineteenth century had the misfortune of witnessing their once-grand empire disintegrate in piecemeal fashion. The implications of the total loss of Spain’s imperial status were felt much more clearly by the end of the century. Smith and Emma Dàvila-Cox illustrate that, while more liberal forms of nationalism had predominated in the mid-nineteenth century, the new epoch of European imperialism at the close of the nineteenth century was infused with decidedly more conservative forms of nationalism.¹⁶ New Imperialism was thus spurred by the belief that European colonizing missions were justified by entrenched white supremacist racial hierarchies, as well as a need to undergo “civilizing missions” in non-European regions. It then holds that, if a formerly imperial nation was no longer able to undergo its “civilizing mission” abroad, this could be indicative of significant issues in the metropole. Elizalde further illustrates the perceived importance of a state’s ability to project imperial authority during the late nineteenth century, asserting that to be able to gain and control colonies meant that a country could not only defend itself, but that it pointed to health of the mother

¹⁵ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 58-59.

¹⁶ Angel Smith and Emma Dàvila-Cox, “1898 and the Making of the New Twentieth-Century World Order,” in *The Crisis of 1898: Colonial Redistribution and Nationalist Mobilization*, ed. Angel Smith et al. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1999), 1-2.

country's economy and populace.¹⁷ Elizalde's argument that imperial conquest of the period was closely tied to economic protectionism further explains Catalan business leaders' dismay at the loss of Cuba's captive export markets.¹⁸

The state of Spain's empire was widely remarked upon from abroad—a member of the community of European imperial powers was, after all, suffering an embarrassing setback from its elevated status. Most egregiously, British Prime Minister Gascoyne-Cecil infamously declared Spain a “dying nation” after the disastrous loss of Cuba, Guam, and the Philippines at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War.¹⁹ However, nowhere was Spain's loss of prestige and imperial status felt more acutely than in Spain itself. Spanish liberal intellectuals had felt a sense of crisis regarding Spain's future without its imperial addenda long before 1898, but the devastating result of the Spanish-American War meant a definitive end to Spain's claim to empire. Sensitive to the viability of their nation's future among a competitive European field, they fretted not only about Spain's obvious lack of ability to compete with imperial juggernauts militarily or economically—whose own empires were in the process of expanding rather than contracting—but also worried that the unity of the nation may be fundamentally threatened by internal or external stresses.²⁰ The anxiety over Spain's failure to continue conforming to Europe's standards was a process clearly recognized within and outside of the country, and the fact that this was viewed as catastrophic—with implications of a resulting loss of continued

¹⁷ María Dolores Elizalde, “1898: the Coordinates of the Spanish Crisis in the Pacific,” in *The Crisis of 1898: Colonial Redistribution and Nationalist Mobilization*, ed. Angel Smith et al. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1999), 128-129.

¹⁸ Harrison, “Catalan Business and the Loss of Cuba, 1898-1924,” 433.

¹⁹ Smith, Dàvila-Cox, “1898 and the Making of the New Twentieth-Century World Order,” 8.

²⁰ Smith, Dàvila-Cox, “1898 and the Making of the New Twentieth-Century World Order,” 8; Sebastian Balfour, “The Impact of War within Spain: Continuity or Crisis?”, in *The Crisis of 1898: Colonial Redistribution and Nationalist Mobilization*, ed. Angel Smith et al. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1999), 180.

national existence—lends credence to the view that the vitality of a European nation was conflated with its ability to sustain imperial activity.

In order to further understand the perception that Spain's status as a great power had been irretrievably lost, study of the nationalist fervor that arose in response to the Cuban Revolt and the Spanish-American War in 1898 is necessary. The emerging revolution in Cuba was met with massive popular demonstrations in the Spanish metropole, with huge crowds affirming the masses' commitment to Spanish imperial integrity forming even in Barcelona.²¹ Huge expressions of patriotism were motivated by a desire to defend Spain's imperial status against a novel threat, with Spanish nationalists' resolve strengthened by the American entry into the war.²² Spanish popular opinion, then, conceived of its potency as a nation in its ability to protect and maintain its overseas interests, and the United States intrusion was a direct assault on the nation's self-confidence. The fact that Catalan society was similarly swept up in the desire to protect its nation-state's imperial status—either through the pressure to conform alongside the rest of the Spanish public or out of genuine Spanish nationalist conviction—affirms that an acute sense of crisis would emerge from the fallout. As noted, the importance of imperialism to Catalanists was such that, seven years after the close of the war, some Catalanists called for the creation of Catalonia's own imperial sphere, an admittedly outlandish and unfeasible proposal that nevertheless reveals how critical imperial status was to many conservative Catalan leaders.²³ Smith additionally points out that prominent Catalanist publications that were allied with export-oriented bourgeoisie whose livelihoods were interlinked with trade with Cuba rallied to support the war effort, meaning that an even more Spanish-nationalist environment was fomented in

²¹ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 163-164.

²² Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 165.

²³ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 59.

Catalonia.²⁴ Though it may seem counterintuitive to assume that Spanish jingoism would sweep through a Catalan society that was increasingly trending towards regionalist assertion, we can make more sense of the transition when we interpret the former as helping create the conditions for the latter.

The ensuing collapse of the Spanish empire, underlined by the catastrophic losses of 1898, can thus also be understood as a critical factor in the development of political Catalanism. Barcelona's intellectuals were just as receptive to the dangers of imperial degradation as those in Madrid were. While intellectual Spaniards felt that their country was critically endangered and in need of revival, Catalanism as a political creed was strengthened after 1898.²⁵ From a practical standpoint, the dominant Catalan bourgeoisie—though far from secessionist at the start of the twentieth century—was bitterly disappointed by its exclusion from national political power during the mishandling of the Spanish-American War, pushing them closer to regional political assertion.²⁶ The Catalan bourgeoisie had much to complain about in their relations to the Spanish center—chiefly Madrid's inability and unwillingness to help the former further industrialize and its willful marginalizing of the Catalan language—but the final blow to Spain's empire pointed to a deeper-seated discomfort with belonging to a much-weakened Spanish union.²⁷ The loss of Cuba and the Philippines marked the loss of a fundamental aspect of civilization as it was understood in Europe at the turn of the century, and was a significant factor in aiding the ascension of political Catalanism among a fundamentally conservative and unadventurous Catalan bourgeoisie.²⁸ This can be understood as occurring due to squeamishness felt by Catalan

²⁴ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 164.

²⁵ Smith, Dàvila-Cox, "1898 and the Making of the New Twentieth-Century World Order," 13.

²⁶ Pierre Vilar, "Spain and Catalonia," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 3, no. 4 (New York: SUNY Binghamton, 1980), 549.

²⁷ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 19.

²⁸ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 43-44.

leaders not only at the destruction of lucrative export markets, but also by the loss of a potent national status marker, embarrassing in the eyes of their transcontinental community.

iii. Democratic and Legal Heritage

Complementary to perceptions of Spanish imperial degradation was the notion that Spain's political system was inherently antiquated because of its legal origins. Early romantic Catalan nationalism was often predicated on notions that Catalan and Castilian legal traditions were based on stereotypically virtuous and backwards values, respectively, with obvious implications for the perceived characters of the different peoples.²⁹ This, paired with the common liberal and leftist criticism of Spain's anti-democratic character that accompanied nationalist rhetoric in intellectual circles all over Spain, reflects a discomfort with the nation's legislative composition sharpened by its failure to function as a European imperial power.³⁰

A critical factor that differentiates Catalonia from many other European nations' intellectual currents was the sense of an ethnic "Other" that was to blame for the intrinsic rot in Spain's government, a bias backed up by Catalonia's growing legal historiography. Here, too, Anderson offers insight into modes of nationalist development in modern Europe; the creation of newspapers written in popularly spoken languages allowed for greater national cohesion, as people within a nation separated by regional linguistic variation could understand the same written language, and in turn came to follow the linguistic norms of whatever the dominant language variety used in official print-media.³¹ In Catalonia, we can observe a related but distinct process; though Spanish language newspapers dominated Barcelona newsstands into the 1920s,

²⁹ Stephen Jacobson, "Law and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe: The Case of Catalonia in Comparative Perspective," *Law and History Review* 20, no. 2 (Cambridge: American Society for Legal History, 2002), 331.

³⁰ Smith, Dàvila-Cox, "1898 and the Making of the New Twentieth-Century World Order," 9.

³¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 44-45.

the Mancomunitat government—a short-lived confederation of Catalan provinces—put heavy emphasis on investment into Catalan language periodicals from 1913 to 1923, thus ensuring a linguistically pluralist field in which multiple identities could crystallize.³² Using Anderson’s model, we can then expect that turn-of-the-century Catalan readers experienced belonging both to the Spanish and Catalan media spheres, meaning that, while they consumed the same writings and discourses as others throughout the peninsula, they were ultimately also part of an idea and information network that only Catalans were privy to. The mental separation that this separate ethnolinguistic identity allowed Catalanists can be understood as facilitating criticisms of the state of their nation without acknowledging their own fallibility, and that the status quo was untenable due to innate characteristics of “foreigners” with different attributes that were now manifesting themselves in legal and political ways.

This attitude towards the different imagined legal traditions between Catalonia and Spain can be seen in Catalan nationalist writings. For instance, the pro-Republican newspaper *El Poble Català* published a rather dramatically titled front page article in 1917 declaring that “Catalonia must save Spain”, with the article drawing a clear dichotomy between Catalan-style liberal democracy and monarchist tyranny.³³ Backing up the paternalistic attitude towards the state of the nation implied by the article’s title is a formulation of Iberia as consisting of various “peoples” (presumably ethnolinguistic groups) that contribute to this dichotomy, with Catalans being explicitly described as having been influenced by recent democratizing political trends in order to advance Catalonia’s civilization, all for the benefit of the Spanish nation. The text makes repeated reference to Catalans as a group that possess one single political will, with

³² Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 72.

³³ “Catalunya te de salvar a Espanya,” *El Poble Català*, November 2, 1917.

democratization and modernization ostensibly being popular wills. Though a flagrant and essentializing exaggeration, the Catalanist *Lliga Regionalista*'s invitation into the national government that same month finally broke the autocratic monarchist system that had stifled Spanish democratizing efforts previously.³⁴ By contrast, the article bemoans other Iberians' habit of falling under the sway of the supposed anti-democratic tendencies of the "Castilian spirit". This text is thus an example of popular literature that affirms extant biases held by contemporary Catalans that tie decadence and weak governance to an ethnic "Other", while Catalans are themselves held up as a group that is collectively receptive to democratizing trends from valued civilizations outside of Spain, and who therefore have a responsibility to advance the interests of the nation for the benefit of all of its constituent peoples.

A further way in which reformist Catalans expressed commitment to reform was by holding up the United States as the ideal of a republican democracy, in effect going beyond the comparison of Spain vs. Europe and treating the United States as an aspiration which the western world should like to emulate. Here, too, *El Poble Català* provides an example; in a December issue of the same year, a correspondent out of Washington, DC discussed the American entry into the First World War some seven months after the fact.³⁵ The article waxes poetic on the valor of soldiers who fight for causes that they believe in rather than for money, indirectly criticizing Spain's comparative lack of democracy. Moreover, the article shows appreciation for the United States' concern with economic and agricultural development that lies complementary to its military strength, comparing it favorably to "our Spain" and all European countries. Further praise for American-style democracy can be seen in Almirall's crucial work *Lo Catalanisme*,

³⁴ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 73.

³⁵ Ferran Capafons, "Des de Washington," *El Poble Català*, 4 December, 1917.

wherein the pioneering Catalanist specifically points to the ability of individual American states in asserting their own political wills without being swallowed up by the federal government as a virtue that should be emulated in any future desirable Spanish confederations.³⁶ These pro-American sentiments constitute more instances of Catalanist outlets of expression valuing modern military organization, industrial economic vitality, and the right to self-determination. The construction of the modern state is lauded and the semi-mystical life force of the American democratic spirit is credited for the United States' strength.

While Catalanists were often quick to laud the achievements and supposedly innate characteristics of the Catalan people that would allow them to force Spain into the twentieth century, it is important to note that the agricultural power centers elsewhere in Spain perceived the imbalance of power that this would have implied and resisted modernizing efforts by the Catalanist bourgeoisie.³⁷ Although criticisms of the Spanish state's legislative status quo were often justified, we can understand Catalanist political tracts that actively sought foreign sources of inspiration for the ostensible purpose of bettering all of Spain as promoting Catalan cultural and business interests above all else; in short, before Catalanist political goals were outright independentist, they were already seeking to expand Catalonia's cultural and economic breathing room, even if it impinged on other Spaniards' ways of lives and livelihoods and failed to accomplish stated goals of bettering the nation. In the nineteenth century, this can be best represented by the dissatisfaction Castilian and Andalusian agrarian interests felt because of the protectionism that Catalan industrialists consistently pushed for.³⁸ The desired modernization of

³⁶ Valentí Almirall, *Lo Catalanisme*, in *Valentí Almirall: Antologia de Textos*, ed. Josep Pich i Mitjana (Generalitat de Catalunya: Institut d'Estudis Autònoms, 2011: text first published 1886), 232.

³⁷ Harrison, "Big Business and the Failure of Right-Wing Catalan Nationalism, 1901-1923", *The Historical Journal* Vol. 19, No. 4 (1976): 902.

³⁸ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 19.

the Spanish state therefore centered on specific conceptions of societal, economic, and cultural organization that were distinctly Catalan in nature and benefitted Catalans over the other peoples of Iberia. In calling for modernization, Catalanists were not just seeking inspiration from abroad, but were melding it with their own ideas of Catalan cultural attributes to begin asserting their interests.

iv. Industrial and Economic Identities

Beyond a resilient cultural heritage that managed to avoid subsummation into the Castilian ethnolinguistic domain, Catalonia set itself apart by achieving a (relatively) successful industrial export-based economy in throughout the nineteenth century. Already in 1843, Catalonia was the only region of Spain considered to be comparable to European standards of industrialization.³⁹ While more recent scholarship has been less generous regarding Catalan industrial prowess—a lack of natural resources, lack of adequate markets within the Spanish empire before the 1880s, and general political instability in nineteenth-century Spain all limited Catalan industrial capacity—Catalonia was preeminent within Spain in industrializing, especially in the fields of shipbuilding, commerce, and textiles.⁴⁰ Indeed, as Catalan industrialists gained national prominence by the end of the century, rather than concerning themselves with political Catalanism, they initially influenced Madrid to introduce protectionist measures throughout Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, making up for Catalonia’s gap between western European and American textile industries and their own.⁴¹ By surveying Catalonia’s industrial background preceding and concurrent with the rise of Catalanism, it is evident that Catalonia’s

³⁹ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 21.

⁴⁰ Harrison, “Catalan Business and the Loss of Cuba, 1898-1924,” 432; Juan Díez Medrano, “Patterns of Development and Nationalism: Basque and Catalan Nationalism before the Spanish Civil War,” *Theory and Society* 23, no. 4 (New York: Springer, 1994), 552.

⁴¹ Harrison, “Catalan Business and the Loss of Cuba, 1898-1924,” 432.

industrialists were not only able to fuel their political influence via their economic clout, but that Catalonia was perceived to be closer to western European standards of industrial development than the rest of Spain.

Scholars dispute the role of industrialization in the development of political Catalanism. Accordingly, historians' understanding of the role of the bourgeoisie in shaping the character of Catalanism is also in flux. While Pierre Vilar and Jordi Solé Tura see Catalanism as fundamentally stemming from the Catalan bourgeoisie's dashed dreams of greater industrialization, other scholars contend that there must be a distinction made between the popular forms of Catalanism that took hold of Catalan civil society organically and the opportunistic bourgeoisie's appropriation of Catalanist trends for the purpose of breaking free from Spain's monarchist *cacique* system, the authoritarian nineteenth-century Spanish regime that systematically excluded the Catalan bourgeoisie from participation in its monarchist system of government.⁴² Prominent historians later in the twentieth century came to see Catalanism as an ideology spearheaded by working-class Catalans that was then co-opted by bourgeoisie elements in a bid for relevance amid *cacique* exclusion.⁴³ Regardless of which school of thought ultimately holds more weight, Catalonia's feats of industrialization are intrinsically linked with Catalanism. Simply put, Catalans were organized into economic units more similar to contemporary Western Europeans than other Spaniards; unlike elsewhere in Spain, Catalans owned much of the land that they worked and bequeathed it only to their eldest sons, creating larger economic conglomerates in the process.⁴⁴ Beyond the material effects of Catalanism coming to have big-money industrialist backers, identification with industrialist successes,

⁴² Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 22-23, 33.

⁴³ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 24.

⁴⁴ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 20.

conflicts with the Spanish state over economic issues arising from industrialization, and the unique labor dynamics of the only real industrialized region of Spain further led Catalanists to identify with Western Europe over their own nation-state.⁴⁵

v. *Catalonia in a Nationalist World*

In examining the formation of Catalan nationalism, Sabaté argues that Europeans have historically conceived of ethnic groups as “constituting culturally aligned nations.”⁴⁶ “Nations”, in this context, refers more to ethnolinguistic groups that have the potential for political cohesion rather than modern nation-states. Catalans then thought of themselves as a cultural “nation” in this sense, and, with the global spread of liberal nationalist ideas in the mid-nineteenth century, sought to protect their ethnolinguistic markers with aforementioned cultural activities and ensuing Catalanist political activity.⁴⁷ If we accept Anderson’s theory that the destruction of absolute monarchies and promotion of vernacular languages led to the creation of nation-states formed by ethnolinguistic groups, we can trace a clear link of influence between contemporary nationalist movements and Catalanism.⁴⁸ Through the promotion of cultural trappings deemed to be more Catalan than Castilian, alongside the common economic link of industrialization, Catalanists were not only being influenced by their global contemporary nationalists but were also actively seeking to create their own assertions of nation-state in Catalonia.

That modern nationalism inspired Catalanists and broader Catalan society is attested to by how easily nationalism was able to integrate itself into the Catalanist ideological sphere

⁴⁵ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 18-20.

⁴⁶ Flocel Sabaté, “Catalonia Among the Longstanding Regions of Europe,” in *Historical Analysis of the Catalan Identity*, ed. Flocel Sabaté, trans. Mary Black (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2015), 17.

⁴⁷ Smith, Dàvila-Cox, “1898 and the Making of the New Twentieth-Century World Order,” 2.

⁴⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 22.

during the first two decades of the twentieth century, as its proponents increasingly interacted with contemporary European nationalists. Stephen Jacobson asserts that “nationalism” was not only politically complementary to Catalanism, but that it was an accepted concept in earlier Germanic legal thought that promoted the strengthening of ethnolinguistic political power bases, further highlighting Catalanists eagerness to draw from what seemingly effective ideologies held sway with their European peers.⁴⁹ Catalan nationalists were not merely inspired by other European nationalists to adopt nationalism as a guiding principle, also adopting the specific types of political strategies used to define their movement. For instance, left-wing Catalanist and later President Lluís Companys incorporated the Irish nationalists’ strategy of identifying the struggle of agrarian workers with that of their own, and the Mancomunitat followed the trend set by Italian nationalist educational reformers in prioritizing Catalan language schooling.⁵⁰

The range of ideas and political trends that Catalanists adopted for their own designs varied greatly, with tendencies from left-wing nationalism to imperialist ambitions making themselves felt in turn-of-the-century Catalan politics. Vilar identifies four levels of Catalanism in Enric Prat de la Riba’s *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, a foundational Catalanist volume; while the first two levels—“provincialism” and “regionalism”—detail Catalonia’s political assertion within a Spanish context, the third level, “nationalism”, is described as the ability to shape the law.⁵¹ Ironically, the fourth and final stage is “imperialism”; in order for Catalanism to develop fully, Prat de la Riba is saying that the Catalan nation must have the ability to direct the lives of other peoples, in essence occupying the oppressive role for others that Spain currently occupies

⁴⁹ Jacobson, “Law and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe: The Case of Catalonia in Comparative Perspective,” 319.

⁵⁰ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 58-59, 79-82.

⁵¹ Vilar, “Spain and Catalonia,” 548; Enric Prat de la Riba’s name is sometimes spelled in the archaic Catalan “Enrich” - for continuity’s sake, he is exclusively referred to using the modern spelling here.

for Catalans. Prat de la Riba is therefore laying out a guideline for how successful European contemporaries have developed and appropriating it for a Catalan context, up to and including the adoption of imperial expansion. Vilar attributes Prat de la Riba's ideas to a desire for a return to free laissez-faire capitalism; while Catalonia's industrial past certainly influenced him, the inspiration from contemporary imperial states, however unrealistic, are undeniably the basis of his hopes for Catalonia's political direction.

Beyond political inspiration, Catalans clearly embodied a people who participated in the contemporary discourses of turn-of-the-century European civil life. For instance, modernism gained a significant foothold in the region, with architect Antoni Gaudí becoming perhaps the most notable cultural export of modern Catalonia, and embodying a cultural figure who not only took but also gave towards broader European art.⁵² When examining Catalanists' political activities, it can therefore be surmised that their adoption of broader European political strategies, their inspiration derived from contemporary nationalist and independence movements, and their pride for their domestic industry were not just emulations of successful countries' trajectories adopted for themselves, but also embodiments of what were perceived to be desirable civilizations among a people hungry for identification with culture outside of Spain, wherein they felt cut off from the rest of the Eurocentric world. Via deliberate adoption, Catalonia thus subtly interacted with other nations on its own terms, implying its own nation-status to replace the faulty Spanish one in the process.

vi. *Conclusion*

⁵² Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 44-46.

In a 1908 congressional speech lambasting Spain's historical failure to live up to its own democratic and economic aspirations, future left-wing nationalist Catalanist leader Francesc Macià criticized above all else the nation's failure to stay abreast of its European competitors.⁵³ Macià conceives of a brotherhood of European nation-states wherein, despite similar trials faced on a national level, Spain's competitors were able to forge export-oriented, militarily competent, and democratically sound political environments. The bluntly delivered message is that Spain's regime is at fault for its own people's suffering; unlike its competitors, it has not proven itself worthy of its implied shared Roman heritage, and Spain therefore deserves criticism on the international stage. Macià's vicious exhortation is perfectly representative of turn-of-the-century Catalanism's tendency to criticize its national state of affairs by anxiously peering about their continent and criticizing Spain's stunted economic, military, and political progress. Thanks to Anderson's description of middle classes of print-media readers that developed collective perspectives, we can better understand how mass newspapers like *El Poble Català* held the power to spread contemporary Catalans' views of glamorous European and American exteriors; authors like Prat de la Riba, Almirall, and Macià are then the expressions of leaders who internalized the admiration of the European and translated it into political will.⁵⁴

Amid a backdrop of superior industrial development, a romanticized legal heritage, and the integration into transcontinental artistic trends, we can thus see the explicitly nationalist elements of ideological Catalanism take root. The massive popular expressions of support for Spain during the 1898 war effort already demonstrate Catalans' desire to participate in a national project capable of sitting proudly among the "civilized" nations of the world, and the destruction

⁵³ Francesc Macià i Llussà, *Francesc Macià: Polític, Teòric, Agitador: Documents (1907-1931)*, ed. Josep M. Roig Rosich (Barcelona: Col·lecció Referents, 2010), 100-102.

⁵⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 77.

of imperial links to the New World are thus an inverse dashing of hopes complementary to Catalan industry's woes. Catalonia's European-like industrial economy and its rich legal history allowed for identification in civilization that lay outside of the Spanish state; a realization that the exterior may have been more similar than the increasingly alienating nation-state crept in. Nationalist texts' fascination with European civilization cyclically reinforced this connection, asserting that there was a "proper" system of governance, economic development, and military ability in civilized nations, and that—despite Catalans' ostensibly inherent values that conformed to these standards—the Castilian "Other" was thwarting their actualization.

The creation of an idea of Catalans as a unitary and cohesive ethno-political group by Catalanists can thus be understood as their desire to intentionally replicate the successes of more powerful countries outside of Spain. Overt and implied criticisms of the Spanish state delivered by praising the virtues of foreign nations that Spain lacked surfaced repeatedly in nationalist tracts and press, crystallizing ethnic differences into a model of Catalans and Spaniards into opposite political units, with the former drawing from the modern and the latter undesirably stuck in its ways. European nations and the United States were used as models for political, economic, and cultural organization because those conceptualizing of Catalans as a distinct group with a reformist political will felt that their supposedly innate and universal ethnic characteristics made them ideal candidates to step into the circle of truly civilized nations. By contrast, the rulers of the failing Spanish state were failing to grasp the world that they now inhabited, and that they should thus acquiesce to Catalan leadership—as demonstrated by alternating republican calls for a democratic confederation and bourgeois desires for a Catalan-dominated economic order—or cut the nation of Catalonia loose.

Chapter Two: The Destiny of Civilization

i. Introduction

If the process of transitioning from a purely cultural form of Catalanist activity to an ideologically motivated, if heterogenous, Catalanist political program is seen as one motivated by Europeanizing tendencies among the Catalan elite political and economic class, then it is necessary to explore what the conceptions of modernism on the European continent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were in order to further understand contemporary modernizing Catalanists' ideological influences. In order to delve into this vast and (admittedly vague) conception of societal progress that influenced such thinkers and activists, I will aim to analyze Catalan nationalist texts and contrast some of their complaints about Spain's perceived failures and contrast these primary sources with more modern secondary source critiques of programmatic and imperialist conceptions of modernity. To this end, I will conduct close readings of Catalanist tracts and newspapers, paying special attention to praise for foreign nations that doubly functions as veiled criticism of Spain. This is all in service of building a broad survey of the qualities various types of Catalanists prized in nations they admired, why they saw these as lacking in their own nation-state, and the future that Catalanists wished to bring about in their homeland.

The purpose of this chapter is to further advance my argument that Catalanists between 1880 and 1920 went beyond absorbing European discourses and in turn articulating them in a Catalan context. Rather, I argue that they were motivated by European ideals to *transition* cultural Catalanism into a politically oriented landscape. In this way, then, Catalanist thinkers

intentionally emulated Europeans in how they chose to define themselves, their ideals, and how the imagined nation of Catalonia would actually fit into the turn-of-the-century European continent. It is well-accepted by Catalan historians that European (especially nearby French) political goings-on are indispensable for understanding political Catalanism; Giovanni C. Cattini asserts that leading French political trends during the 1870s to 1900s are undeniably intertwined with contemporary Catalan thought.⁵⁵ Additionally, Catalans could tangibly see European ideals of progress already reflected in their own recent past, with the region's industrial development having closely resembled others' in Western Europe.⁵⁶ However, in analyzing some of political Catalanism's foundational texts, I hope to be able to extend this conception of Catalanism by demonstrating some degree of intent among the movement's ideological commanders. It is, of course, important to keep in mind that this era of political Catalanism encompasses myriad political currents that interpreted Catalan nationhood differently. For instance, some Catholic-based Catalanists were prone to denouncing perceived excesses of secularization, preferring instead to hold up an ideal of an agricultural Catalan society.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, in trying to examine a broader range of Catalanist primary sources, I hope to demonstrate some ideological consistency, at the root of which lies a tendency that presents undesirable Spanish *cacique* politics and aspirational, though heterogeneously defined, European civilizational progress as binary opposites.

The value of this chapter lies in an attempt to further define the feelings of loss, inadequacy, and even rage that motivated political Catalanism. Nationalist-inspired rhetoric and activism

⁵⁵ Giovanni C. Cattini, "The Advent and Politicisation of Distinct Catalan Identities (1860-1898)," in *Historical Analysis of the Catalan Identity Vol. 6*, ed. Flocel Sabaté, trans. Mary Black (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2015), 269.

⁵⁶ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 21.

⁵⁷ Cattini, "The Advent and Politicisation of Distinct Catalan Identities (1860-1898)," 288-289.

sprung up not only from legitimate economic and cultural gripes that Catalanists charged the Restoration regime with, but often more simply from an acute sense that Catalans were “missing out”. From obsessive study of the political milieu in Paris, Berlin, and London to ensuing emulation, Catalanists perceived a world that lay just beyond their grasp that appealed to them because of its relative modernity and stability. It was not enough to assert cultural uniqueness or even to proclaim a will to actual nationhood; rather, Catalanists perceived amid the environment of New Imperialism a division of nations into two binary categories, with the first including industrialized, imperializing, and culturally forward-thinking *European* powers, and the second encompassing the nations that became victimized by the first. Thus, by the end of this chapter I hope to demonstrate that Catalanists were fueled in their discontent and modernizing crusade by a perception that their homeland was entitled to the benefits that this conception of civilization afforded neighbors. The obvious conclusion, then, became that Catalonia would have to assert this right where Spain had become unable of doing so.

ii. *European Conceptions of Progress at the Turn of the Century*

The framing of Catalanist politics in a context of contemporary pan-European politics is well-established in Catalan historiography; indeed, Cattini notes that nineteenth-century Catalan politics can be interpreted as the application of European political solutions to Catalan problems.⁵⁸ Flocel Sabaté notes that, over a century before the period under examination in this project, Jean-Jacques Rosseau had already expressed that countries and nations ought to be harmoniously intertwined in order to better promote an ethnolinguistic-based “national identity”; earlier still, the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 cemented an ideal for national organization formed

⁵⁸ Cattini, “The Advent and Politicisation of Distinct Catalan Identities (1860-1898),” 269.

around such identities in the mind of forward-thinking Europeans.⁵⁹ It is within this ideological heritage, then, that ethnolinguistic-identity-based nation-forming could become an accepted form for cultural expression in Catalonia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By the 1910s, it had become acceptable to call for nationhood among political Catalanists, with a December 1917 edition of the nationalist paper *El Poble Català* (“The Catalan People”) plainly stating in a front-page article, *El nacionalisme és quelcom biologic. Es, a la vegada, la propia dinámica de la nacionalitat.* (“Nationalism is something biological. It is, at the same time, the very dynamic of nationality.”) This section, then, will examine the development of nationhood as the responsibility and destiny of ethnolinguistic groups, tracing Rosseau to the early twentieth century in Catalonia.

Benedict Anderson describes nationalists’ desire to align people’s national and ethnic identities as stemming from a modern conception that every person must hold their nationalism as a key identifying characteristic.⁶⁰ More importantly, the nationalist ideal as described by Anderson encompasses a conception of nationhood that is defined less by members’ similarity to fellow members of the nation, than by differences with members of other national groups, with group identities thus reinforcing one another.⁶¹ Anderson’s interpretation of nationalism is easily applicable in the case of Catalonia, with historians identifying language as the chief distinguishing factor between Catalonia and its Iberian neighbors, and the language’s staying power in the nineteenth century informing nationalist sentiment.⁶² Indeed, Almirall’s *Lo Catalanisme* built a conception of Catalan identity for his Catalan readership that specifically

⁵⁹ Sabaté, “Catalonia Among the Longstanding Regions of Europe,” 15.

⁶⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 5.

⁶¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 6-7.

⁶² Daniele Conversi, “Language or Race?: The Choice of Core Values in the Development of Catalan and Basque Nationalisms,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 13, No. 1 (1990): 50.

stressed how little they were like Castilians.⁶³ Accordingly, in his foundational 1906 Catalanist text *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, a piece that positions Catalonia's nationalist development within the programmatic tradition of more advanced European contemporaries, Enric Prat de la Riba describes the perceived loss of Catalonia's "personality of its own" with the systematic suppression of Catalan's public usage.⁶⁴ Anderson affirms the importance of nationalism formed thanks to a group's linguistic differences with its neighbors, explaining that the perception of a global landscape of different but "equal" languages amid the professional classification and standardization of vernacular languages reinforced contrasting identities.⁶⁵ Catalan historians observed this very same process within the Mancomunitat era, when the four provinces that make up Catalonia gained the consent of the Spanish parliament to form a confederation within the Spanish state to be headed by Prat de la Riba in 1914.⁶⁶ Lasting until the beginning of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in 1925, this was a period with relatively lax restrictions on Catalan political expression that saw Catalanists successfully begin to standardize Catalan—easing the language into business and government usage—and the transformation of Barcelona into a center from which the language could flourish throughout the Catalan-speaking parts of Spain.⁶⁷ Thus, in observing that the stirrings of nationalist organization in Catalonia arose in part in the pan-European nationalist mold described by Anderson—by describing how they were unlike Spaniards in order to describe what they *were* like—we begin to see emulation of the European nationalist blueprint.

⁶³ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 64.

⁶⁴ Enric Prat de la Riba, *La Nacionalitat Catalana* (Barcelona: Escola d'Administració Pública de Catalunya, 2007; text first published 1906), 14.

⁶⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 71.

⁶⁶ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 68.

⁶⁷ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 70.

Anderson further describes the crucial role of language in European nationalist patterns by explaining that European vernacular languages enjoyed heightened prestige when they began to be used in official contexts in lieu of traditional state and liturgical languages.⁶⁸ This phenomenon, too, was observed in other European countries by Catalanist reformers and emulated in Catalonia. Building on the eighteenth-century literary revival of Catalan, Catalans consciously transitioned the language to Mancomunitat government usage (though the Spanish Congress did not elevate Catalan to the same official status enjoyed by Castilian).⁶⁹ In the introduction to the 1902 Spanish-language edition of the 1886 Catalanist text *Lo Catalanisme*, Valentí Almirall explains to his new Castilian readership that the Catalanist political tradition reserves the right to use Catalan in its speakers' private and public lives, but that there was no will to dominate other regions of Spain by imposing Catalan on Castilian speakers.⁷⁰ In writing this, Almirall is affirming two of Anderson's described nation-building trappings; he is defining Catalans as possessing a group identity that is demarcated from other Iberians', and he is writing in favor of an official national structure that would neatly grant Catalans their linguistic fiefdom, while respecting the national structure of other groups. This is a more restrained vision of the desired role of Catalans within Iberia than Prat de la Riba's; Almirall and contemporaries felt that nations and their governments ought to affirm every territory's ostensibly natural linguistic makeup, rather than expand beyond them. Nevertheless, linguistic and ethnic makeups are still nuanced and overlapping anywhere, and Catalonia is no different. It is important to note that Almirall was not calling for Catalan to become the sole official language in Catalonia in this

⁶⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 70-71, 78.

⁶⁹ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 70.

⁷⁰ Valentí Almirall, "Pròleg de Valentí Almirall a l'edició castellana de 1902 de 'Lo catalanisme'," in *Valentí Almirall: Antologia de Textos*, ed. Josep Pich i Mitjana (Generalitat de Catalunya: Institut d'Estudis Autònoms, 2011: text first published 1902), 633.

tract, asking only for equal status to Castilian in private and public life. Indeed, historians have been loath to describe Catalanism as a whole as explicitly nationalistic prior to the 1890s; nevertheless, *Lo Catalanisme* is now regarded as an important milestone in imbuing political Catalanism with explicit nationalism.⁷¹ Almirall's instinct to classify peoples into administrative units defined by their mutual resistance to one another is nevertheless appropriate for Anderson's description of European nationalism.

Complementing Catalanist assertions of linguistic-national domains that they observed in European nationalist movements was the conception of structural rot at the heart of the Spanish state, preventing it from continuing to occupy a place of prominence on the national stage. With a path towards modernization described as similar to other Western European nations, it thus stands to reason that the contrast between their own progress—reflected in countries all around Catalonia—and Spain's perceived failure to stay abreast would alarm many in Catalonia.⁷² For Catalanists embarrassed by Spain's weakness compared to other European powers, Spain's continuous failure to *effectively* centralize was—perhaps somewhat counterintuitively—a disappointment. Catalanists' criticisms of Spanish corruption were certainly not unfounded, with the *cacique* system that ensured a far-reaching relationship between local elites and officials preventing the Restoration government from actually spreading its roots throughout the country.⁷³ Under this governing system, Spain was ruled by two monarchist parties—the Liberals and Conservatives—who tacitly agreed to each rule for a few years at a time before handing over power to the other; this system stabilized the state while stifling dissent and administrative

⁷¹ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 164; Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 76.

⁷² Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 21.

⁷³ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 156.

modernization.⁷⁴ The Spanish state preferred to delegate responsibilities, losing a debilitating amount of resources and ensuring that none but elites could participate in the regime's political life in the process, making it impossible to achieve the model of a centralized nation-state.⁷⁵

This type of structural critique can be observed in David Graeber and David Wengrow's observations that Western historiography has had a broad tendency of conflating "chaotic" periods of low central authority with an undesirable level of disorder, a near-barbaric quality that spells the death of civilization.⁷⁶ Perhaps even more relevant for recognizing rhetorical patterns in Catalanism is the timeline of western historiography that Graeber and Wengrow sketch, wherein they point out that European philosophers' tendency to assume that broadly applicable "origins of civilization" exist means that there is an inevitable conception of civilizations as having set progressions.⁷⁷ As such, historiography has then anachronistically applied this concept as a test for judging any civilization's merit.⁷⁸

That Catalans saw their state's resources squandered on inefficient and corrupt administration, witnessed a failure to properly bureaucratize the nation-state, and felt the sting of the loss of Spanish colonies all pointed to a chaotic state that had fallen off the metaphorical track. Indeed, Llobera notes that, starting in the eighteenth century, European ideals of political reform were seen as a threat to Spain's authority, leading to a "cultural domination" by Spanish authorities to halt their spread and further goals of centralization, much to Catalans' chagrin.⁷⁹ Thus, Spain's failure to properly evolve alongside its European neighbors despite its heavy-

⁷⁴ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 33.

⁷⁵ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 156.

⁷⁶ David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021), 380.

⁷⁷ Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, 60, 75.

⁷⁸ Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, 380-381.

⁷⁹ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 15.

handed centralization resulted in a political environment wherein Catalanists could see that they were receiving only the drawbacks but none of the advantages of modernization. The Restoration state had restricted Catalan as a minority language and had excluded Catalan elites from the *cacique* administration in favor of concentrating power only among the highest reaches of government and the corruption that sustained it; yet Spain had also squandered its resources and could hardly withstand any further pressure to its failing colonial empire, especially after 1898.⁸⁰ According to Graeber and Wengrow's model, then, the sorry state of affairs meant that Spain was, in Catalanists' eyes, centralizing *incorrectly*, something akin to a runaway train on the metaphorical railway to enlightened civilization. Political repression, the apparent illegitimacy of Spanish rule, and nearby European success stories created a potent state of tension.

The programmatic idea of civilizational development prominent in Europe then left Catalanists with much to desire. The comparatively high levels of industrial productivity, modernization programs that closely resembled those north of the Pyrenees, and susceptibility to Europeanist discourse led Catalanists to desire either a leadership role in the Spanish state or a greater degree of home rule, eventually extending to outright independentist sentiment. The idea of set civilizational progression allowed for a conceptual binary of nations' quality, with the widespread perception of countries as either dominating or dominated informing republican and Catalanist discourse; immediately prior to the Spanish-American War, Republican politicians went so far as to suggest that Spain needed to militarily strengthen in order to ward off impending colonization by imperial powers.⁸¹ The perceived zero-sum quality of geopolitics continued to steer the discourse well into the twentieth century, with a November 1917 edition of

⁸⁰ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 156.

⁸¹ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 168-169.

La Veu de Catalunya (“The Voice of Catalonia”)—the journalistic arm of the moderate Catalanist *Lliga Regionalista*—somewhat ironically including an article titled “Imperialist Catalonia”, with the article’s conclusion demanding Catalan leadership in Iberian politics so that they may “serve the high interests of humanity, guiding civilization towards backwards and unsophisticated peoples.”⁸² The ideal modernized power, then, was linguistically self-possessed, properly centralized and bureaucratized, keeping pace with other great powers, and fulfilling a perceived white supremacist duty to expand into weaker nations’ territories. Before 1898, a Catalanist living in Spain may have been embarrassed; afterwards, however, his exclusion from polite European national society became unbearable.

iii. *What is the Ideal?*

If there was a model of civilization that Catalanists felt drawn to and whose absence in the Spanish state they resented, closer reading of nationalist tracts is required in order to gain insight on *what* it was exactly that modernizing Catalanist politicians thought they ought to move their fledgling nation towards. In examining the role that modern-day Catalonia may come to play in a potentially unitary future European Union, Llobera points out that it is difficult to position Catalonia in relation to the continent because the continent’s geographic and cultural boundaries are difficult to define, and because there is no clear academic consensus on whether or not it is even appropriate to identify a transnational pan-European culture.⁸³ In the end, he accepts that shifting definitions, academic discord, and the undeniable heterogeneity of European culture point to the trickiness when arguing either for or against the existence of a unifying European culture; however, he notably introduces the sociological argument that, plagued by

⁸² Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 40; “Catalunya Imperialista,” *La Veu de Catalunya*, November 12, 1917.

⁸³ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 104-106.

nation-states and attached cultures in constant competition with one another, Europe has instead been united by its export of modernity.⁸⁴ Considering this, we must accept that there were certain traits that Catalanist writers perceived to be inherent in the modern European ideal that they wished to emulate, but that it would be inaccurate to say that there was a standard continental culture that existed for them to draw from. Rather, in order to understand Catalanists' modernizing aspirations, we must instead conduct closer reading of nationalist texts in order to build a working definition for this idealized group of cultural traits that they dreamed of and wrote about. To this end, I will analyze sections of the seminal works of Valentí Almirall and Enric Prat de la Riba, leading Catalanists of two different generations who used inspiration from European contemporary and historical nationalist movements to cast wide nets in Catalan discourse.

Returning to Almirall and *Lo Catalanisme*, we will first examine some passages therein that make explicit reference to what the early Catalanist prizes in other nationalist movements. Though the 1886 tract eventually made waves, it was relatively ineffective on Almirall's contemporaries because of its perceived secularism, and because Almirall presented his vision of a Catalan regionalist movement that needed bourgeois participation before the actual Catalan industrialists had become comfortable in abandoning their comfortable position within the monarchist regime in favor of regional power expression.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the work provides powerful insight on the sources of political inspiration that early Catalanists gleaned from neighboring countries. In fact, Almirall dedicates the entire final third of his book to this, titling the last part *Solucions Practicas* ("Practical Solutions"), systematically examining (and praising)

⁸⁴ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 106-107.

⁸⁵ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 36.

European and American contemporaries such as Great Britain, the United States, the German Empire, and Switzerland, before finally explaining outright how he believes these practical solutions can be used to positively reform both Catalonia and Spain.

In praising the British Empire, Almirall relates that the situation of the sympathetic Irish is ameliorated thanks to the fact that the Great Britain does not actually constitute a unitary state; rather, Almirall sees the Empire's constituent peoples as benefitting from British Common Law—what he dubs a *consueitudinaria* (“customary”) law, which he explains as allowing for broader autonomy and robust private property rights thanks to its relative flexibility.⁸⁶ Beyond this, he praises Common Law for being a *lley vivent* (“living law”), and expresses confidence that the Irish will eventually be able to assert their self-determination within a British legal framework.⁸⁷ Next, Almirall examines the then newly-founded German Empire, paying specific attention to how the federal and subnational governments share power.⁸⁸ In this case, Almirall waxes poetic on the harmonious blend of the medieval and modern in Germany; he describes the emperor as beholden to a constitution and various lesser regional rulers, yet sees his empire as being powerful enough to ward off the evils of feudalism.⁸⁹ Almirall complements his praise of Germany with an appraisal of Switzerland, a European nation whose history and geography are perhaps more relatable to his Catalan readership. Praising their steadfast commitment to democracy and self-governance, despite centuries spent sandwiched between Europe's Great Powers, Almirall explains how the republican citizenry and devolution of powers allows for a pluralistic state beholden to its constituents instead of unelected elites.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Almirall, *Lo Catalanisme*, 267.

⁸⁷ Almirall, *Lo Catalanisme*, 267, 275.

⁸⁸ Almirall, *Lo Catalanisme*, 278.

⁸⁹ Almirall, *Lo Catalanisme*, 282-283.

⁹⁰ Almirall, *Lo Catalanisme*, 309-310, 313.

When Almirall concludes his section on the merits of foreign European governance, he does so by prescribing all that he finds desirable in Europe for both his country and his nation, writing, *haurem de aplicar tot lo que deixem explicat y alegat á la organisació que desitjem pera la nostra terra* (“we will have to apply all that has been explained and alleged towards the organization that we desire for our land.”)⁹¹ In this, Almirall recognizes that there is no one standard form of European government, but still desires devolution and a strengthening of Catalan institutions within the Spanish state, regardless of whether it follows a German-style confederation-monarchy model or a Swiss-style republican one.⁹² Despite the many different forms of government available to hungry Catalanists seeking to emulate them in their resurgent nation, Almirall tellingly cherry-picks those that he feels can fit his idealized mold needed to revitalize Spain. His praise for British private property rights affirms Balcells’ characterization of Almirall’s pandering to the Catalan bourgeoisie, while his optimism regarding the Irish cause reflects a desire for a legal system that can adapt to changing political realities and accommodate the emerging Catalanist will.⁹³ Positing the German Empire as a potential model reflects a desire to decouple Spanish identity from Castilian identity, in effect imagining reverting Spain back to an ethnolinguistically heterogenous collection of kingdoms and principalities; his enthusiasm about Germany’s ability to combine an imagined medieval political order while thriving in contemporary Europe could have only pointed to Almirall’s wistfulness for a bygone Spain wherein Catalan-Aragonese rulers were on legal par with Castile’s monarchs. Finally, his description of Switzerland’s political system is obviously flattering in a Catalan context, with the strongly decentralized state and equal footing between the nation’s ethnicities again evoking

⁹¹ Almirall, *Lo Catalanisme*, 321.

⁹² Almirall, *Lo Catalanisme*, 326.

⁹³ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 36.

Catalonia's past strength within the Spanish union prior to the unquestioned dominance of Castile. When examining earlier traits prized by earlier Catalanists elsewhere in Europe, then, we can begin to look at Almirall's grocery list of modern trappings as a guide. Though Almirall certainly overestimated Ireland's ability to assert nationhood within the confines of the British Empire and underestimated the Prussian emperors' will to dominate the lesser princes and grand dukes that ruled the rest of Germany, his optimistic trailblazing in identifying desirable traits elsewhere and suggesting their applicability to Catalonia could have only crystallized Catalanists' desire to emulate Europeans.

Enric Prat de la Riba's 1906 *La Nacionalitat Catalana* deserves the same examination. Written twenty years after Almirall completed *Lo Catalanisme*, Prat de la Riba's work is politically bolder, referring to nationalism and imperialism explicitly as desirable vehicles for Catalanist assertion, and it reflects the author's role as a leading contemporary politician, with the author winning the presidency of the Barcelona Diputació one year after the essay's publication.⁹⁴ Unlike Almirall, Prat de la Riba mentions contemporary nationalities less as a way in which to make one-to-one comparisons with Catalonia, instead drafting a program of nationalist development that he feels necessary for Catalonia to assert its nationhood. Thus, by examining this text we can still glean what characteristics he values in contemporary Europe. Tellingly, in his section detailing the background of Catalan nationalism, Prat de la Riba posits various political solutions to achieve self-determination, but states that early Catalanists were motivated by protecting their culture and language as complementary to proto-nationalist pride.⁹⁵ This, then, is a Catalan people conceived of as one among many in modern Europe; Prat de la

⁹⁴ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 57, 59.

⁹⁵ Prat de la Riba, *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, 39-40.

Riba identifies that there is a body of literature, poetry, music, and so on that is inherent to them, and that their cultural expression must inevitably lead to political assertion.

Complementary to the actual content of Prat de la Riba's exhortation towards nationalism is his usage of the first-person plural form in tracing what he sees as Catalans' gradual acceptance of regional self-expression. This further lends itself to a portrayal of the Catalan national body as existing in a continuum of ethnic and political groups capable of intellectual exchange among one another; for instance, in describing the transition between what he sees as an innately felt national kinship and explicit nationhood, he writes, *Sentíem la Patria, però no trobàvem explicada la seva fórmula intel·lectual, Nació. Llegíem que era un organisme y aquesta metàfora que per tot arreu trobàvem precisava les nostres idees, ens marcava fortament la personalitat de la nació, com entitat absolutament separada y diferent, però no 'ns deya lo que cercàvem.* ("We felt the fatherland, but we could not find its intellectual form, the nation. We read that it was an organism and that metaphor in which we found precisely our ideas, it marked us with the personality of the nation, as an absolutely separate and different entity, but it did not tell us what we were searching for.")⁹⁶ Once again, Anderson's description of print media creating senses of nationhood via groups of bourgeois readers gaining a sense of kinship with those consuming the same literary output as them is vindicated.⁹⁷ In this case, this is done both in form and in content; Prat de la Riba's descriptions of Catalanists' absorptions of other Europeans' nationalist journeys is explicitly written as a group experience, by implication then raising Catalans to the same level of programmatic nationalist experience. In this passage, then, we can understand Prat de la Riba work as outlining Catalonia's nationalist education at the

⁹⁶ Prat de la Riba, *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, 47.

⁹⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 44-45.

hands of Europe, meaning that Catalans have a path set by their peers that Prat de la Riba's readership is meant to follow.

In both Almirall and Prat de la Riba's work, Catalonia is described as a national body that is somewhat akin to a waking giant. Increasingly aware of the world in which its homeland finds itself in, this metaphorical body of consciousness is realizing its homeland's precarious position. Made up of culturally inclined Catalanists slowly becoming aware of the necessity to politically arm themselves, the national body then begins to strive towards achieving European-inspired nation-state status. Almirall's highlighting of specific parts of modern European political organization reflects an experimental and hopeful approach to reconciling resurgent political Catalanism with the repressions of the Spanish state, whereas Prat de la Riba's more assertive writing from two decades later is a call for Catalans to take their rightful place alongside other successful European independentists. Nevertheless, both confirm a particular vision of modernity that they wish to implement in their homeland; however impractical, there is not only a will towards regional assertion, but a specific mold that they wish to fill.

iv. Conclusion

The conceptual binary of global civilizations, then, left Catalanists feeling excluded from the exciting and dynamic world order felt in turn-of-the-century Europe. Writers like Almirall and Prat de la Riba exemplify the disaffected discourse not only because of the simple fact that their works were broadly consumed and influenced Catalanists well into the twentieth century, but also because of how conscious they are of Catalonia's similarities to the shining world north of the Pyrenees. They are conscious of not only the present, but also the past when evaluating what political solutions will ease the plight of Catalans; Almirall's description of a decentralized German Empire as one of several potential organizational models to follow that could restore

Catalonia's previous medieval prominence within a de-Castilianized Iberian union, though unrealistic, points to a desire for parity between Spain's ethnic groups, while still maintaining economic and military competitiveness. On the other hand, Prat de la Riba's continual insistence upon Catalan's inherent and rigid cultural identity points towards a desire to build modern, nationalistic political structures to protect a reinvigorated awareness of Catalonia's medieval-rooted cultural heritage.

The two Catalanist authors can thus be understood to have been writing in favor of an idealized harmonious blend of the modern and the old; the modern political organization of decentralization, fluid legal heritage based on mutual respect between ethnic groups, and the involvement of an engaged bourgeois citizenry are posited as being able to shield the ethnolinguistic identities that they see as immutable from erosion. Certainly, the authors were correct in lamenting the stagnation and unfulfilled modernist reforms of the *cacique* system; however, as Llobera notes, it was also in significant part Catalonia's rising nationalism that prevented Spain's Restoration regime from effectively centralizing and building its industrial and political strength up.⁹⁸ Paradoxically, to some degree it was Catalanist modernizers' own fault that the Spanish state could not stay abreast of its contemporaries. Catalanists need then to be viewed not just as benevolent modernizers, wishing to raise up the competence of the entire nation, but viewing their desired leadership role as complementary to resurgent *Catalan* identity. Catalonia's relationship with the projection of its own power—up to and including imperialist designs—must then be examined more in depth in order to paint a broader picture of Catalanists' modernizing crusade.

⁹⁸ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 17.

Chapter Three: Catalonia's Complex Relationship with Empire

i. Introduction

If a nation's ability to impose its will onto others was a necessary component of civilizational aptitude for Catalanists gazing towards Europe for guidance, then the imperialist project can be understood as the greatest height that zealous Catalanists felt they should someday strive towards. Even if less conservative activists did not actively seek to pursue colonial conquests in a hypothetically independent Catalonia of the future, were squeamish at the idea because of Catalonia's own subjugation at the hands of Spain, or recognized the obvious impracticality of such designs, Spain's slow loss of empire was nevertheless troubling to them because of the implications of declining national vitality. The modernizing drive, though drawing upon only certain aspects that Catalanists valued as "modern" in contemporary Europe, would still have to eventually confront all aspects of colonizing civilization. At this point, Catalonia had had a long experience of both peripheral and direct colonizing in the Mediterranean and Americas. Nevertheless, the period of New Imperialism presented a different model; by concentrating industrial production, advancing their capabilities to wage war, and subjugating their colonial victims as more unified national units, modern European powers presented a different kind of imperialist enterprise that was bound to have attracted the attention of significant segments of the Catalanist body. By incorporating a model of nationalism that accounted for imperialist expansion, these writers moved one step closer to creating a more accurate Euro-centric nation-building ideal.

As discussed in Chapter One, the loss of Cuba in the aftermath of the cataclysmic Spanish-American War is a watershed moment, accelerating the dissolution of Spain's imperial status, and encouraging modernizing Catalanists in keeping their region competitive on the world stage. As such, we must consider Catalanists' attitudes towards the loss of Spain's empire doubly grave; not only was Spain incapable of keeping up with competitors in the new nineteenth-century period of European colonization, the nation had even lost the means to retain its traditional imperialist relationships. In order to complement our previous examinations of Catalanists' longing gaze outside of Spain, we must finally examine the logical end result of one belonging either to a superior or inferior civilization in a zero-sum world; according to this worldview, it was not merely enough to thrive within one's own borders, but a nation had to aggressively assert itself in order to stay afloat. To that end, I will explore the obliteration of Spain's colonial empire at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War and the ensuing disappointment at home and abroad, which granted Catalanists timely evidence of Spain's failure to adhere to European civilizational ideals. This frustration revealed a strong sense of disappointment emanating from Catalans' rebuke of the popular patriotic enthusiasm for the Spanish war effort that they had experienced, and a desire to avoid future humiliation.

Moreover, I will again analyze nationalist texts that deal with Catalanists' opinions on Spanish and Catalan imperialism in order to paint a more expansive picture of the movement's orientation towards Europe and its modern values. This will entail examining the nationalist thought expressed by newspapers that were tied to Catalanist parties like the *Lliga Regionalista* and revisiting Enric Prat de la Riba's writings to gain more of a read on the Catalanist temperature in the years following 1898 and the loss of Cuba, Guam, and the

Philippines. Chiefly, I will argue that imperialism formed an important part of the more conservative end of the political Catalanist ideology. Though the conservative Catalanist milieu examined herein is not representative of the more liberal Catalanist tendencies, the exalted status Prat de la Riba and the period of the *Lliga Regionalista*'s dominance occupies within the Catalanist pantheon justifies ample consideration. We can then begin to describe the type of national emancipation Catalanists saw in contemporary Europe more accurately, and what conclusions we can draw from an oppressed nation expressing conquering desires of its own.

ii. *The Road to 1898*

In relation to the development of political Catalanist consciousness, the Spanish-American War can broadly be understood as a watershed moment of Spanish weakness that granted bolder Catalanists potent ammunition to denigrate the nation's institutional weaknesses. Even prior to the entry of the United States, Spaniards and Catalans alike were thrilled to cheerlead departing troops, digesting and producing imperialistic rhetoric in a bid to ward off rebellion and American hegemony over traditional Spanish spheres of influence.⁹⁹ Thus, the Spanish authorities ambivalence towards patriotism and discomfort with popular participation in it clearly contributed to frustration with the state's hampering of the nation-building process. After a series of losses in Cuba, this became an even more toxic brew of outraged nationalism when it became clear to all that Spain was no longer able to protect itself. Recognizing the status marker that imperialism represented and fearing the organizational power of the populace that would inevitably be upset by its loss, the

⁹⁹ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 162-163.

Restoration government reacted to nationalist sentiment with apprehension by necessity, allowing for democratic opposition figures to exploit openings in the oligarchy. In much the same way, Catalanists quickly recognized the potential of offering their audiences an alternative form of patriotic expression that served both as a critique of the autocratic *cacique* system and a will towards Catalan institution and pride therein that would be capable of replacing abortive Spanish nationalism.

Because of its very nature, the Restoration regime had an obligation to remain stringently elitist if it wished to maintain its chokehold on government. Succeeding the short-lived *Sexenio Democrático* (“six year of democracy”), a rather tumultuous period from 1868 to 1874 that saw alternating republican and monarchist governments attempt to modernize and liberalize Spain, the Bourbon Restoration was the resumption of monarchist rule that passed the deposed Queen Isabella II’s son Alfonso XII the Spanish crown, extending the Bourbons’ reign until 1931, when Isabella’s grandson Alfonso XIII was himself deposed by the founding of the Second Spanish Republic.¹⁰⁰ The *Sexenio* ended up inspiring much enthusiasm for both a modernized nation-state and for federalist decentralization among Catalans, demonstrating already a penchant for reform at the highest levels of Spanish governance among the Catalan working classes long before 1898.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, the reformers in Madrid only disappointed Catalan aspirations for greater autonomy and modernity, and when the Bourbons returned to power, the conservative Catalan bourgeoisie quickly acquiesced to the familiar order, efficiently moving to silence Catalan autonomists in the process.¹⁰² The industrial leaders of Catalonia remained largely excluded from the new

¹⁰⁰ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 28-31.

¹⁰¹ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 29.

¹⁰² Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 33-34.

monarchist system, yet benefitted from the protectionist policies of a Spain that still held access to colonial markets. Conversely, the federalist activists in Catalonia who had misplaced their hopes for both modernization and autonomy in the six years of experimentation between Bourbon rulers fostered new political traditions from their disappointments, with Valentí Almirall notably becoming one of the first proponents of political Catalanism in the 1880s.¹⁰³ Rather than completely abandoning his earlier federalism, Almirall was novel in advocating for regional power that could be beneficial to both nation and region, meaning that he was able to marry his prior convictions to a recognizable desire for Catalan autonomy; it is important to note that, while he saw this as being possible in either a republic or a monarchist system, he appealed directly to the Catalan public, rejecting the elitist monopoly on power that had proliferated since the Restoration.¹⁰⁴ Thus, early Catalanism can only be understood as a reaction against the heavy-handed reactionary politics emanating from Madrid that stifled aspirations to participate in either modern nationalism or devolution to the regional level.

The system of *caciquismo* (*caciquisme* in Catalan) was thus designed to work as a dam against such popular will towards experimentation with more democratic means of government that threatened the elitist autocracy. The more practical reason for the introduction and application of this system was that the monarchy did not have the institutional framework to reach all corners of even the metropole—let alone the pre-1898 empire—and preferred instead to work with local elites who enjoyed large amounts of discretion in local administration in exchange for their fealty.¹⁰⁵ However, the Restoration

¹⁰³ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 35.

¹⁰⁴ Cattini, "The Advent and Politicisation of Distinct Catalan Identities (1860-1898)," 283.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 155.

rulers had never been comfortable with any popular participation in politics, meaning that quasi-feudal collaboration with landowners and bureaucrats was also ideologically appealing to them and assuaged their anxieties about the democratic uprising that had so recently displaced Isabella II.¹⁰⁶ The lack of nation-building and harnessing of nationalist energies conducted at the national level, then, stemmed from both practical and ideological considerations on the parts of the Bourbons. Hugh Seton-Watson's model of "official nationalism" addresses this phenomenon in part; Seton-Watson describes that nineteenth-century European monarchs began attempting to imbue their countries with rising nationalist enthusiasm, thus enjoying both the continuation of their reigns while being justified by the very popular energies that they had co-opted to paint themselves as the defenders and heroes of their nations.¹⁰⁷ Prior to the escalation of conflict in Cuba, even if the Spanish Bourbon monarchs had been aware of the legitimizing potential of popular nationalism, *caciquismo's* financial drain precluded any implementation of national development and homogenization.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the two Alfonsos could not bring themselves to treat their subjects as partners in any nation-building endeavors, instead maintaining the system of elite rule that would eventually foster the regime's inability to resist modern imperial confrontation.

iii. Witnessing Defeat

The outbreak of the Spanish-American War saw more impassioned professions towards nationhood from Spaniards, with a deluge of blunted nationalist sentiment from over two decades of *caciquismo* merging with a popular defense of imperial pride at the beginning of

¹⁰⁶ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 165-166.

¹⁰⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 86-87.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 156.

the Cuban Revolt in 1895.¹⁰⁹ Though the latter half of the nineteenth century had seen periods of Cuban unrest and revolt against Spanish rule, 1895 saw a marked escalation of fighting, resulting in a more profound emotional involvement for the Spanish public. In lieu of earlier nationalist development, this period saw strong expressions of faith in the Spanish Empire and faith in the war effort, with the transformation of national symbols into more explicitly imperialist emblems and the broad public participation in nationalist activities explicitly meant to evoke imperial Spanish strength on the world stage, such as bullfights and nationalistic musical productions.¹¹⁰ Though the war brought class hardships to the fore (especially as it progressed and it became clear to poorer families that their sons were dying for a hopeless war effort), it was a milestone in Spanish nationalism, transcending class and ethnic barriers.¹¹¹ Considering the enormity of this conflict for the development of popular Spanish nationalism, it thus becomes crucial to gauge the reactions of the Spanish public, the Restoration regime, and Catalans in response to the destruction of the Spanish Empire and the dashing of popular nationalism in order to explain Catalanism's later attitudes towards the role of imperialism in defining a civilization's worth.

In order to better understand the perspectives of the earlier Catalanists who witnessed the Cuban Revolt and subsequent Spanish-American War, it is worth delving into contemporary political newspapers and revisiting nationalist texts by those who were left deeply affected by the perceived calamity. First, two passages taken from the conservative Catalanist newspaper *La Veu de Catalunya* from two editions in 1898 reveal a sentiment that is equally as

¹⁰⁹ Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 162-163.

¹¹⁰ Javier Krauel, *Imperial Emotions: Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-Siècle Spain* (Liverpool University Press, 2013), 157; Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 164-165.

¹¹¹ Balfour, "The Impact of War within Spain: Continuity or Crisis?", 184; Smith, "The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain," 170.

concerned with the Spanish loss of empire as it is with autonomism. Both articles are titled *La Pau* (“Peace”), with the first having been written after the August armistice between Spain and the United States after it became clear that the former was no longer able to wage war on any of its fronts, and the second being released after the Treaty of Paris formally ended hostilities. The first article, while (perhaps somewhat ironically) welcoming the end of bloodshed, is resigned in its acceptance of American takeover of Spanish colonies, suggesting pessimism about the future of Spain’s international standing, despite the massive losses of manpower and resources that it had just endured in defending its hold over its empire.¹¹² The article ends by sardonically remarking that *[Espanya] es la eterna patria de D. Quixot, com á tal ha obrat sempre y com á tal obrará sempre*. (“[Spain] is the eternal fatherland of Don Quixote, functioning as it always has and always will.”)¹¹³ Though certainly less outraged than its later counterpart, this article nevertheless reveals an acceptance and lamentation on the part of Catalanists of Spain’s perennially directionless and newly subordinate role in global affairs, and can be understood to act as a prelude to Catalanist texts that more explicitly look to dominant imperial powers like the United States as nationalist models.

The second article from *La Veu de Catalunya*, written immediately before the conclusion of the war by a N. Verdaguer y Callís in December, consists of a more detailed excoriation of Spain’s weakness in global affairs, reading more as an editorial piece than a straight reporting of the armistice that ended the war and transferred Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines to United States control. Scorning the weakness of the Spanish state in its

¹¹² “La Pau,” *La Veu de Catalunya*, August 21, 1898.

¹¹³ “La Pau,” *La Veu de Catalunya*, trans. Francesc Planas Vilanova, August 21, 1898.

ability to wage war and the pitiful subversion of Spanish martial and honor-based values, the article frames the loss to the Americans as much more of an avoidable failure on the part of Spanish leaders rather than something inflicted upon the nation by more powerful outside forces. Ruminating on British Prime Minister Gascoyne-Cecil (Lord Salisbury)'s aforementioned description of Spain as a "dying nation," the article bitterly concludes that this characterization is indeed accurate, and that Catalanists have a responsibility to prevent Catalonia from sharing the same metaphorical death.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, Verdaguer y Callís seems to minimize the nationalist explosion that also swept through Catalonia just months prior, instead insisting that Catalans called for peace before the American entry; since Spain waited too long and was now forced in defeat to accept a humiliating loss of not just Cuba but all its remaining colonies, they foolishly allowed themselves to be dragged into a doomed conflict with a power that is implied to be innately more powerful. The positioning of Catalans as wise and measured in contrast to the ruling Spanish *cacique* elites that had just bungled the war and jeopardized their nation's survival then serves as an ideological precursor to Prat de la Riba's expressed ambition of a Catalan-led Iberian federation, some eight years before *La Nacionalitat Catalana* was published. The Biblically impassioned question, *¡Caíns! ¿qué n' heu fet dels vostres germans?* ("Cains! What have you done with your brothers?") is then a protest at the war's bloody cost exacted on the Spanish populace, while also serving as an accusation of incompetence that demands Catalans' voice be heard to avoid similar catastrophe.¹¹⁵ The criticism levelled towards both a misplaced eagerness to fight early in the war and the later surrender reflects disappointment in Spain's failure to

¹¹⁴ Smith, Dàvila-Cox, "1898 and the Making of the New Twentieth-Century World Order," 8; N. Verdaguer y Callís, "La Pau," *La Veu de Catalunya*, December 4, 1898.

¹¹⁵ N. Verdaguer y Callís, "La Pau," *La Veu de Catalunya*, December 4, 1898.

develop itself to the point where it might have been able to militarily compete with the United States, forcing the nation to betray its own people's martial ideals.

Even among the Spanish socialist opposition during the Restoration regime, there existed prior to 1898 a significant attraction towards “developing” Cuba, and criticism was directed against the State for its blatant disinterest in anything but economic exploitation of its colonies and inability to pursue any nation-building projects, had it even desired to pursue them.¹¹⁶ Throughout his praise for the supposedly enlightened imperialism of more advanced states like the United States and Great Britain, Prat de la Riba echoes a similar belief that colonizing nations had the ability and duty to impose European conceptions of civilization upon their conquered peoples, writing that *Els pobles barbres, o els que van en sentit contrary a la civilitació, han de ser sotmesos de grat o per força a la direcció y al poder de les nacions civilisades* (“The barbarian peoples, or the ones who move in the opposite direction of civilization, must be either willingly or by force subjugated by the direction and power of the civilized nations.”)¹¹⁷ However, unlike those distraught at the loss of Spain's opportunity to conduct this process in Cuba, Prat de la Riba does not grant Spain the ability to do this and expresses no wistfulness for the old Spanish Empire. Indeed, Krauel writes that Prat de la Riba held no positive associations with Spain's colonial endeavors or use them as a way to express enthusiasm for the future Catalan imperial projects that he envisioned; by excluding the Spanish Empire, he positioned Catalonia as belonging to the category of the United States and Britain, and able to follow the “direction of civilization.”¹¹⁸ As Catalanist thinkers moved away from the disappointment of 1898 and the ensuing exclusion from the

¹¹⁶ Smith, “The People and the Nation: Nationalist Mobilization and the Crisis of 1895-1898 in Spain,” 172.

¹¹⁷ Prat de la Riba, *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, 119.

¹¹⁸ Krauel, *Imperial Emotions: Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-Siècle Spain*, 149.

global imperial community, they began imagining Catalonia as being able to express its own colonial ambitions in the future to regain its own European-adjacent imperial status.

Examining these somewhat paradoxical sentiments is crucial to building a more complete understanding of Catalanists' complex relationship to empire, especially as it related to their European-derived ideological heritage.

iv. *Catalonia's Flirtation with Imperialism*

If nationalism was the mode by which Catalanists perceived Europeans to be thriving, then imperialism was the natural extension that the most successful among European nations achieved. As reformers looking to Europe for inspiration, writers like Prat de la Riba accepted Lord Salisbury's binary of nations being either "living" or "dying", and felt a desperate pull to be able to assert autonomy within their subjugated position by describing their homeland as belonging to the former category and even holding the potential to spread their advancement beyond Catalonia's borders.¹¹⁹ Imperialist Catalanism thus go far beyond simply placing Catalonia in the aforementioned metaphorical world of national units, instead stressing the perceived destiny of advanced industrial societies applying their national wills upon weaker ones. Paradoxical as Catalan imperialism may seem, this form of placing the burgeoning nation within an international context that realistically recognized the imperial world order of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and aspired towards this world's conceptions of modernity could logically only seek to recreate the imperial aspect of the modern national experience. Though not all Catalanists or modernizers during the turn of the century viewed imperialism positively, the imperial ambitions expressed by Prat de la

¹¹⁹ Krauel, *Imperial Emotions: Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-Siècle Spain*, 165.

Riba were genuinely popular across a variety of political persuasions.¹²⁰ As such, declarations towards imperial dreams can thus be understood as the most extreme form of Catalanists' European education.

Preceding Prat de la Riba's *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, controversial but impactful Catalanist writer Eugeni d'Ors suggested in 1905 that imperialism could be a useful tool for the Catalan national body to reclaim autonomy and its international standing.¹²¹ Prat de la Riba expanded on d'Ors' enthusiasm for Catalan imperialism and presented it to a far wider audience with his seminal work, dedicating his final body section to the virtues of imperialism and how they could benefit the region. Critically, Prat de la Riba handles the contradiction of an oppressed nation wishing for imperial status by referring back to the conceptual binary of nations and exhorting his countrymen to fight for their place in the sun among the world's dominant nations, writing, *Però la lluita, ja ho hem vist abans, és la lluita entre nacionalitats... entre la nacionalitat que mana, la que te l'imperium y les nacionalitat oprimides* ("But the battle, as we have seen previously, is the battle between nationalities... between the nationality that rules, the one that has *empire* and the oppressed nationalities.")¹²² For Prat de la Riba and his class of Catalanist, imperialism is then a valid method by which nations may express themselves, and Catalonia—as a future valid member of the international order of nation-states that has the right and responsibility to participate in global affairs in the same manner as every other country does—ought to accept it as the logical conclusion of its European-derived self-strengthening process.

¹²⁰ Krauel, *Imperial Emotions: Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-Siècle Spain*, 162.

¹²¹ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 59.

¹²² Prat de la Riba, *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, 116.

Prat de la Riba's enthusiasm for imperialism derives in large part from his interest in American-derived conceptions of individuality (declaring bluntly, *Siguem americans* ("Let's be Americans")) and the ostensibly benevolent ways in which modern imperialism could benefit the world.¹²³ His citing of ideas on individuality articulated by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Roosevelt and how they may pertain to empire affirms his commitment to a type of imperialism entirely different to that of the old Spanish Empire, implying a focus on enlightened rule and the development of capitalist industry instead of mindless colonization.¹²⁴ Krauel asserts that a commitment to this form of imperialism is an expression of pride for Catalonia, as Prat de la Riba forgoes comparing any future Catalan imperial projects to Spanish imperialism and the very recent disappointment of 1898, instead establishing that much of Catalan imperial identity has been forged in its resistance to Madrid's overreach rather than implying that it was in any way inspired by it.¹²⁵ Indeed, the author makes repeated reference to good versus bad forms of imperialism, by implication comparing Catalonia to the United States and distancing it from archaic forms of colonization by stating that a civilization must have both significant benevolent cultural strength and material prowess in order to constitute "modern" forms of imperialism.¹²⁶ As such, we can conclude that he is intensely aware of the modernizing desires of the audience that he is writing for, and wishes to assure them that the imperialism that he is writing about is fully compatible with nationalism, follows the civilization model of nations like the United States, and will be wholly unlike Spain's colonial disasters.

¹²³ Prat de la Riba, *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, 119.

¹²⁴ Krauel, *Imperial Emotions: Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-Siècle Spain*, 148.

¹²⁵ Krauel, *Imperial Emotions: Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-Siècle Spain*, 168-169.

¹²⁶ Prat de la Riba, *La Nacionalitat Catalana*, 121.

Balcells ascribes significance to the fact that d'Ors and Prat de la Riba published their tracts on imperialism prior to the First World War, meaning that modernizing European-minded readers were still largely receptive to writing that positioned imperialism as a force for good.¹²⁷ However, publications by the Catalanist newspapers *El Poble Català* and the Prat de la Riba-affiliated *La Veu de Catalunya* in late 1917 still retain the enthusiasm for imperially strengthening Catalonia that he expressed, demonstrating that this ideological mold was still viable in Catalonia a decade after *La Nacionalitat Catalana*'s publication. Like Prat de la Riba, the aforementioned November 2, 1917 edition of *El Poble Català* that demands Catalonia "save Spain" echoes Lord Salisbury in alluding to Spain as a "dead land" and calls for greater Catalan national leadership.¹²⁸ Only six days later, the same newspaper enthusiastically wrote that about the potential political influence pre-imperial networks of "Pan-Catalanists" in other historically Catalan-speaking parts of Europe and the Catalan expatriate activists in the Americas could have, connecting domestic Catalanist leadership to its international influence.¹²⁹ Two side-by-side articles from *La Veu de Catalunya* from the same month further assert Catalanist desire for imperialist leadership, with the former—aptly titled *Catalunya imperialista*—stating that, if Catalonia can begin to "awaken" the other peoples of Iberia, it will have completed its first successful feat of imperialism, while the latter calls for a new Reconquista—this time, instead of a physical reconquest, Catalanists saw their people as holding a responsibility to defeat Spain's ideological foes.¹³⁰

v. *Conclusion*

¹²⁷ Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 59.

¹²⁸ "Catalunya te de salvar a Espanya," *El Poble Català*, November 2, 1917.

¹²⁹ F. Pineda i Verdaguer, "Pan-Catalanisme," *El Poble Català*, November 8, 1917.

¹³⁰ "Catalunya imperialista," *La Veu de Catalunya*, November 12, 1917; "La nova reconquesta," *La Veu de Catalunya*, November 12, 1917.

The Catalanists sympathetic to newer forms of imperialism as a way to revitalize their nation thus saw their civilizing-imperialist potential not just among the other peoples of Iberia and Spain, but also as being eventually capable of spreading worldwide in imitation of the global powers they wished to become like. The disconnect between the type of individualistic, supposedly enlightened imperialism that writers like d'Ors and Prat de la Riba valued and the decrepit Spanish imperial grandeur of days gone by must thus be examined as two connected but distinct factors in developing conservative Catalanism's attitudes towards imperialism. To these ideologues surrounding the *Lliga Regionalista* and related strands of conservative autonomism, Restoration Spain had failed to develop their nation and to heed the advice of their more enlightened and European-adjacent Catalan subjects, leading them to squander any opportunities to also develop their former colonies and bring them into the fold of the civilized world. Krauel writes that Prat de la Riba reveals a deep commitment to a worldview wherein nations cyclically rose and fell, similar to Graber and Wengrow's description of Turgot's older and hopelessly biased civilization progression model; by refusing to comment on Catalonia's ambiguous historical role in the Spanish colonization of the Americas and the Philippines and prior enthusiasm for Spanish patriotic militarism, he is nevertheless refusing to grant them any credit as a previously grand civilization and instead focuses on Catalonia's own exciting future.¹³¹

Instead of indulging in any form of nostalgia for the old Spanish Empire, writers in the imperialist Catalanist tradition can thus be understood to be exhorting their countrymen to begin to take their political destiny into their own hands instead of continuing to conceive of Catalonia as necessarily attached to the Spanish state. Instead of continuing to hold onto the failed

¹³¹ Krauel, *Imperial Emotions: Cultural Responses to Myths of Empire in Fin-de-Siècle Spain*, 150; Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, 75.

promises of modernization and federalism from the brief *Sexenio Democrático* or the chance for imperial vindication during the Spanish-American War, Catalans should begin to offer other Iberians leadership, rather than continue to wait for reformist guidance from Madrid. The frustrations of *caciquisme* and continued exclusion from the global cohort of advanced nations provided Prat de la Riba and his colleagues a ripe environment for their message; beyond Prat de la Riba's election to the presidency of the Barcelona Diputació in 1907, when the Mancomunitat was finally incorporated in 1914, it was Prat de la Riba himself who led the commonwealth, and it was a close ally in the *Lliga Regionalista* who succeeded him in this capacity after his death in 1917.¹³² Prat de la Riba's pride in Catalonia as described by Krauel could begin to manifest when Catalans began looking to Europe and the United States as models of self-possessed units to emulate; that Catalonia was itself under subjugation mattered little. There was a specific form of national assertion that held captive the imagination of Catalanists, and the logical end result was an ability to express national will, even beyond one's own borders.

¹³² Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, 57, 68.

Conclusion

When examining how Catalanists borrowed from European contemporaries with the goal of strengthening their region's ability to assert autonomy and protecting the aspects of their culture that distinguished them, it would be easiest to conclude that turn-of-the-century Catalanists merely wished to subjugate both other Iberians and colonial victims. It is indeed true that the trappings of European modernity that Catalanists gave such reverence to and intentionally recreated within their own country made them susceptible to believing that they could benevolently lead a future Iberian confederation and head civilizing colonies worldwide better than Castilians ever could. Simultaneously, it is important to understand that it was the fear of falling behind in the international arena of imperialist nations and the resulting embrace of outside political inspiration that instilled such designs in Catalanists; in essence, in valuing the modern, Catalanists felt compelled to instill their nation with what they perceived as modern in "successful" states, even when unrealistic or inappropriate. Beyond the rhetoric of binary civilizations and the purported good that ostensibly enlightened colonization could bring, the loss of imperial status in 1898 alarmed Catalanists into more quickly accepting the modern form of national organization and empire that was embodied by the United States, complementing the proto-nationalism of Almirall and earlier cultural Catalanism and accelerating the Catalan will to nation.

The nation-building project in Catalonia was a flattering harmony of both the old and the new. Catalans could dig deep and recall their own foundational myths, as other European groups had, using modern print techniques to create increasingly homogenized masses of readers who could come to see themselves reflected in the parallel images of other national units that had

ascended to create national political entities, even though many of these (for example, the German Empire) were actually far from homogenous. The convergence of a reawakening knowledge of Catalonia's powerful medieval and cultural legacy, Catalonia's European-like industrialized economy, the awareness of new forms of unitary national organization that created nation-states more powerful than the Spanish kingdom, and the collective readership that Catalonia's modern conditions created gave rise to a deeply anxious milieu concerned with the country's future. That Catalonia's cultural output and industrialized economy resembled those of the European nations Catalanists so admired could have only pushed them to see themselves as having the potential to lead the peoples of Iberia more aptly than the feeble Restoration state.

Thus, what this European-derived modernization drive ultimately reveals is Catalanists' acute awareness of the past and future. While every country in the world was in some way affected by imperialism's reach during the epoch of New Imperialism, the tradition of Catalanism was determined to view it as a positive experience, retaining its pride in its older cultural roots but soundly rejecting old Spanish forms of societal organization. A weak military, inadequate economy, and hopelessly corrupt government left the Spanish state unable to remain relevant any longer, and the Restoration regime that had rejected the tepid democratic modernization of the *Sexenio Democrático* was unable and unwilling to draw in its people into its politics. Catalans, many of whom had been enthusiastic about the prospect of constructing a more unitary state during the Cuban revolt and Spanish-American War, clearly perceived the opportunity for alternative local forms of nationalism where Madrid had reacted in a lukewarm manner to nationalist passions. Catalanists offered Catalans an alternative, wherein they could still feel like they were one of the many European peoples participating in exciting nation-building processes, while also marrying this innovation to the rediscovered but familiar cultural

forms of the *Renaixença*. Perhaps the greatest success of Catalanism was then implanting the national conceptual binary into their region, wherein Catalan autonomism appeared to be modern and new, in contrast to degraded Castilian pretensions to greatness.

Hopelessly aware of the course of history, Catalanists wished to align themselves with the nations of Europe that were currently pursuing exciting and dynamic projects in nation-building, yielding economic and cultural output that far outpaced the Spain that had frustrated Catalans for so long. By drawing inspiration from contemporary European developments and Catalonia's own medieval greatness, Catalanists then hoped to have their time to thrive as well, reasoning that they met all the preconditions that other Europeans did to recreate their developments right at home. Moreover, Catalanists felt that, like their role model nations, greatness would ultimately have to be expressed by extending the national will to other peoples, in this case encompassing other Iberians and future colonial subjects. It was not enough for Catalanists to merely express their nationality; rather, they had to feel like they belonged to the dominant category of civilizations in the world at that time.

In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, Catalonia remains a part of the Spanish state, having succeeded neither in de-Castilianizing a hypothetical Spanish federation nor in becoming outright independent. However, the legacy of historical Catalanism lives on in parties that declare commitment to outright independence, with an actual declaration of independence having been given by the region's president in 2017, before the Catalan parliament was promptly dissolved by national authorities. Economic and linguistic concerns continue to fuel tensions, with the separate linguistic and economic environments in Catalonia and the rest of Spain rankling both Catalans and Castilians regularly. Nevertheless, for many Catalan independentists, inspiration continues to flow downwards from the rest of the European

continent, with a broad consensus existing that any future Catalan state ought to quickly rejoin the European Union.¹³³ Over a century after Almirall and Prat de la Riba wrote about the virtues of their northerly neighbors, Catalonia continues to look to Europe as a blueprint for the future, refusing the status quo once more.

¹³³ Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe*, 7.

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