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## Defending the Idea of Spain against Democracy in the Texts of Federico Jiménez Losantos

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## Defending the Idea of Spain against Democracy in the Texts of Federico Jiménez Losantos

H. Rosi Song

*[P]udiera haber sido patagón o samoyedo, pero, en fin, soy español, que no me parece, ni en mal ni en bien, cosa del otro jueves . . . Me interrogo—como incumbe a cada uno—para desentrañar el ser de España. Si este criterio es válido, y yo lo creo, nada que encuentre en mí podrá parecer, siendo tan español, intruso en el carácter de la nación.*

*[I could have been Patagonian or Samoyed, but, after all, I am a Spaniard, which doesn't seem to me bad or good, or something casual . . . I ask myself—as one should—to unravel the meaning of the essence of Spain. If this criterion is valid, and I believe it is, nothing that can be found in me, who is so Spanish, will seem intrusive in the nation's character]*

(Manuel Azaña, "Una Constitución en busca de autor"  
[A Constitution in Search of an Author] (1923))

FEDERICO JIMÉNEZ LOSANTOS, A UBIQUITOUS PRESENCE IN SPANISH media and public opinion, has achieved near celebrity status with the almost daily publication of his maverick columns in mainstream Spanish newspapers. His career in journalism, which spans over two decades, has taken him from media outlets such as *El País*, *Diario 16*, and *ABC* to, most recently, *El Mundo*, where he has been delivering his "Comentarios liberales" [Liberal Comments] since 1997. In addition to publishing many collections of essays, he has been a guest on political radio shows such as "El primero de la mañana" [First in the Morning] and "La linterna" [The Lantern], and has appeared on television programs on RTVE, Antena 3 TV, and Tele 5. Since 1999, he has been collaborating with the triquarterly digital publication *La ilustración liberal* [The Liberal Enlightenment], and in 2000 he launched a digital newspaper called *Libertad Digital* [Digital Freedom], for which he writes weekly and serves as an editor.

Throughout his career in journalism and writing, this public intellectual, former educator, critic, author, media professional, and po-

litical analyst has criticized both the political Left and Right (although more often the former than the latter) to defend "la idea de España" [the idea of Spain] from what he calls the totalitarian mechanisms that are threatening its existence.<sup>1</sup> He has been extremely critical, in particular, of the cultural policies of the governments of the various autonomous regions of Spain. He sees the educational system of Catalonia and the Basque Country as threats to the entity of Spain. According to Jiménez Losantos, the teaching of local languages and cultures responds to the nationalistic interests of the different regions that instead of working from a comprehensive approach to achieve a harmonious coexistence among the different cultures that comprise Spain, practice policies of exclusion that are divisive and harmful to the rest of the nation.

In a recent effort to defend his idea of Spain, he has published another collection of short essays entitled *Los nuestros* [Our People] (1999). This compilation is especially noteworthy given that the factual tone of his earlier journalistic pieces gives way to a fictionalized view of the country's history, which highlights what he calls the idea of the Spanish nation and the relation to its cultural heritage. With a clear intention to manipulate the frame of the debate surrounding the country's regional politics, Jiménez Losantos introduces in his book a national genealogy structured around brief fictionalized stories of its most distinguished citizens to illustrate the need to preserve the future of Spain as a nation. In *Los nuestros*, he expounds a questionable view of Spanish history, culture, and language that ultimately contradicts his advocacy of civil rights and individual liberties. Taking into account the Spanish state as it stands today amid the dispute surrounding the cultural rights of the autonomies, positions like that of Jiménez Losantos invite closer examination, especially when they seem to resonate with a large audience.

Born in Orihuela del Tremedal (Teruel) in 1951 to a family of educators, Jiménez Losantos moved to Barcelona in 1971 to continue his studies in Spanish philology, which he completed with a thesis on Ramón del Valle-Inclán.<sup>2</sup> Intellectually inquisitive, he engaged in various cultural projects during his youth in this Catalan city, participating in the creation of a Freudian society and becoming the first translator of François Lyotard's work into Spanish. He published the translation of *Discours, figure* [Discourse, Figure] in 1979. He was also the founding member, with Alberto Cardín, of *Diwan*, the acclaimed cultural magazine of its time. In 1978 his writing career took a fortunate turn when the publisher of the prestigious cultural journal *El Viejo Topo* [The Old Mole] awarded first prize for essays to his "La cultura española y el nacionalismo" [Spanish Culture and Nationalism].

When the same publisher considered printing his collection of critical essays entitled *Lo que queda de España* [What's Left of Spain], Miguel Riera, the principal editor, found the content of some of the essays highly controversial and turned it down. In 1979, the publisher of the competing cultural magazine *Ajoblanco* agreed to publish the compilation, and the first of many collections of Jiménez Losantos's essays appeared on the book market.<sup>3</sup>

Combining writing and politics, Jiménez Losantos ran in the Catalan elections of 1980 as a candidate for the Partido Socialista Andaluz (or PSA, the Andalusian Socialist Party) on a platform defending the cultural and civic rights of all Spanish immigrants. His political career came to an end when his party obtained only two seats, a number insufficient to have any influence in the government of the Catalan Generalitat. This short-lived political aspiration caused the eventual breakdown of his partnership with Alberto Cardín and *Diwan*, because Cardín was opposed to the endorsement of political campaigns in that publication. Parting with the journal, he began to write for *Diario 16*, where he signed the "Manifiesto de los 2.300" [Manifesto of the 2,300]. His signature attracted the attention of the members of the Catalan separatist group Terra Lliure [Free Land], who later kidnapped and shot him in the leg.<sup>4</sup> After the terrorist attack, Jiménez Losantos moved permanently to Madrid, where he has now become a regular pundit, appearing in a variety of Spanish newspapers, on television and radio shows, and on the Internet.

Jiménez Losantos's texts, journalistic and otherwise, are designed for the average citizen. They are clearly and succinctly written, amusing to read for their colloquialism and simplicity. Because they are ever-present in the public domain, this critic has become one of the most visible dissenting voices in Spanish media. His journalistic pieces, which follow Spanish politics as well as international affairs, are often picked up by foreign news sources, most notably by the Cuban American publication *El Nuevo Herald* [The New Herald] whenever this journalist harangues against the Castro regime.<sup>5</sup> His writing, once regarded refreshing for its nonconformist stance and use of slang and expletives, has also been the source of frequent controversies.<sup>6</sup> Along with his dismissive attitude toward contrary opinions, his sarcasm, and his scornful and personally offensive remarks, what is troubling in his writing are the sweeping generalizations he makes in order to hammer into the public consciousness his view of the uncertainties facing Spain in the future. A close review of his books and the texts he has written for newspapers shows a clear preoccupation with the idea of the nation of Spain and its relation to the Spanish language and culture. Jiménez Losantos believes this con-

nection to be absolutely crucial to the continued existence of Spain. He justifies his belief by attaching notions of origin and authenticity to Spain's cultural inheritance and the writing of its history. This perspective, as will become evident throughout this essay, proves to be ultimately incompatible with his belief in individual freedom and civil rights, as the two positions are inherently contradictory.

Jiménez Losantos's ideological evolution throughout the years presents an interesting transmutation: having run the full spectrum from Left to Right, he is today considered one of the most conservative political pundits.<sup>7</sup> In his own words, he is an ultra-liberal interested in individual freedoms, and he considers himself to be a direct descendant of late-nineteenth-century Spanish liberalism.<sup>8</sup> Associated with the resistance movements against Franco's regime, this intellectual, like many others, was once affiliated with the Left—even with the Spanish Communist Party (PCE). He broke ties with this party in the 1970s after his trip to China where he witnessed the suppression of individual liberties. The historical failure of communism, which he recognized after the collapse of the Soviet Union, reaffirmed his earlier conviction to break with this political ideology. He currently defines the political Left as an idea of the past still clinging to distant utopian aspirations, while being incapable of offering any social or economic alternatives that could bring real progress to the country.<sup>9</sup>

Having experienced this change of opinion, Jiménez Losantos identifies himself as an opponent of any political party or ideology that endangers personal freedom. His current attacks on politics, domestic or international, deal with all types of totalitarianism that, in his estimation, assault individual civil rights or what he has termed "cultural rights." He believes that individuals should have the opportunity to preserve his or her original cultural background. By shifting the terms from civil to cultural rights, Jiménez Losantos turns the defense of what can be considered an individual's inalienable rights to a criticism of Spain's current regional politics. Addressing the political efforts made by Catalonia and the Basque Country to implement the cultural tenets of their regions within their respective education systems, he condemns these measures for the potential they have to curtail the freedom of the individual. He uses as an example the case of immigrants to Catalonia from other Spanish-speaking regions of the country, who, without leaving the nation's borders, are nevertheless obliged to function in a different language. A closer examination of his criticisms, however, reveals that Jiménez Losantos bases his opposition to these policies more on political grounds. His opinion that these policies are a direct affront to the cohesion of the nation comes

from his belief that the compulsory use of different languages within the country will be disastrous for the future unity of Spain. He reckons that a common language shared by all communities is one of the most important elements to maintain Spain's national identity. He blames the regional politics that, in his view, are threatening Spain's future on the inability of the socialist government to recognize the importance of preserving the commonalities that exist between the different regions and cultures of the country.<sup>10</sup>

This criticism and concern for Spain are apparent in Jiménez Losantos's various collections of essays. In these writings he examines what he calls a particular idea of Spain and a particular idea of freedom to defend the preservation of the cultural legacy of Spain. The need for this defense comes, according to his viewpoint, as the result of the totalitarian practices of the Spanish socialist party (PSOE) and its president, Felipe González. His books, from *Lo que queda de España* (1979, 1995),<sup>11</sup> *La dictadura silenciosa. Mecanismos totalitarios en nuestra democracia* (1993), and *Contra el felipismo* [Against Felipism] (1993) to *Crónicas del acabóse. Contra el felipismo II* [Chronicles of the Limit: Against Felipism II] (1996), offer a description of purportedly anti-democratic policies that were put in motion beginning in 1982. Jiménez Losantos explains in his books how Spaniards reacted vigorously in 1996 against these practices by voting for the Partido Popular.<sup>12</sup> The criticism surrounding the politics of post-Franco Spain and the democratically elected socialist government of 1982 centers around three topics: what Jiménez Losantos calls "felipismo," nationalism, and "polanquismo." These terms refer, respectively, to the multiple financial scandals of the socialist government under Felipe González, the persecution of Spain and its language, and the limitation of freedom in the communications industry by the media and business mogul Jesús de Polanco.<sup>13</sup> His overarching concern, however, has to do with Spain and its future as a nation, where the only commonality that unites all communities is the Spanish (or Castilian) language. He believes that the inability of the government during the 1980s to recognize the importance of preserving a common heritage has been threatening the future cohesion of Spain.<sup>14</sup>

One of the pressing matters in the current politics of this Iberian country, as regional autonomies deal with their own cultural identities and the future of their own self-determining governments, is the relationship between the central state and its peripheries. This concern was evident in a recent issue of *Cambio 16*, where the question "What is Spain today?" was put forth in an editorial: "What do we call Spain? Is it a plurinational state? An autonomous state, comprising different nationalities and regions? A state without a nation? A nation

of several states? It is becoming more and more difficult to know where we stand.”<sup>15</sup> The texts of Jiménez Losantos hinge precisely on this apprehensive feeling that what traditionally was regarded as Spain, either in terms of history or of culture, is in dire need of revision or, even worse, no longer applies. He expresses this clearly in the introduction to one of his best-selling titles, *La dictadura silenciosa*, where he asks “¿Seremos capaces de reinventar, sin esperar a que lo intente el Gobierno, una España nueva y una nueva libertad?” [Will we be able to reinvent, without waiting for the Government to try, a new Spain and a new freedom?].<sup>16</sup> Despite the novel adjectives with which he chooses to present these concepts, an examination of his reasoning reveals that the “reinvention” of a “new Spain” and a “new freedom” can only come at the expense of putting into place old practices regarding issues of national identity. Jiménez Losantos recognizes that the regional governments have the freedom and the right to preserve their own cultural legacies, but he is convinced they should do so only while safeguarding the language of Castile and its culture that unites the entire nation. However, his argument to preserve these cohesive bases becomes problematic as he leaves unquestioned the origin of the primacy of the Spanish language and culture in the country’s history. Advocating a problematic concept of cultural identity, whose legitimacy rests overwhelmingly in its own historicity and a nostalgic view of yesteryear, he defends a hegemonic cultural legacy amid the new organization of states and powers that replaces past centripetal practices.

Postmodern theories have facilitated the understanding of our relationship with the past. As Linda Hutcheon has observed, postmodernism, in the process of studying the politics of representation and the writing of history, has helped us recognize culture as a product of representation and not a source of origin.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the theorization of the past from the post-colonial perspective, which looks critically at the articulation of national cultures and official languages, has enhanced our comprehension of how these discursive practices have been used throughout history as means of subjugation.<sup>18</sup> It has also helped us understand how concepts such as “tradition,” “truth,” and “originality” are used to shape our concept of an acceptable and “ordered” reality. As we attempt to recognize the mechanisms that are at work behind the articulation of concepts such as tradition and history, and the way authority becomes legitimized, post-colonialism offers a useful theoretical model to study modern nations as well. It is particularly relevant when analyzing Spain, which is currently struggling to find its “core” identity while mapping its future as a unified nation, and in so doing, is having to rely solely on its

history. By shifting our attention to the intention behind the discourses that seek to legitimize or authenticate notions of national identities, we are able to discern their correlation with foundational issues. This intent can be regarded as a conscientious effort to inhabit the collective imagination, creating an illusion of communal legacy that appeals to culture and tradition and the need for their preservation. Studies that address the concept of "nation" as a shared community, termed by B. Anderson an "imagined community" and shown by H. K. Bhabha to rely on a necessary fictionalization of the past, propose a critical angle from which to revise existing efforts to avow the idea of nation.<sup>19</sup> As the writings of Jiménez Losantos reveal, these endeavors, once closely examined, still operate with underlying assumptions about categories of cultural identity and values. They are assumptions that, while superficially embracing pluralism, ultimately perpetuate intolerant attitudes regarding difference.

The political period that began after the death of Franco and the end of his dictatorship in 1975, known as the Transition, and the later government of the PSOE under the presidency of Felipe González, was a critical time in the development of Spain's national identity. As the country rapidly modernized politically and economically while reintegrating itself into the European and international political arena through membership in the European Union and NATO, it became radically regionalized, experiencing a process of political devolution from 1978 to 1983 that moved the country quickly toward a form of federal state.<sup>20</sup> Beneath all these modernizing changes, however, it was evident that the political transition was not an easy period; nor was it free of controversy. As the attempt in early 1981 to overthrow the government revealed, the transition to democracy was not a move that pleased all sectors of Spain's social and military order. Referring to the coup led by Lieutenant-Colonel Tejero, Teresa Vilarós has pointed out that the political process of the Transition failed in its original purpose of serving as a social and political revolution, becoming instead a mere compromising pact between the Right and the Left.<sup>21</sup>

A sentiment of disenchantment settled in among Spaniards after the failure of the Transition to revolutionize Spain, with the international and national economic hardship of the 1980s as a backdrop. At the same time, negotiations between the central and peripheral states that questioned relations between national and regional identities also raised questions about the future of the country. The political and economic changes also resulted, as Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas observe, in new challenges concerning the effects of multiculturalism and ethnicities, not only within the different Spanish regions but also from the increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees arriving



from North Africa, Latin America, and, more recently, Eastern Europe.<sup>22</sup> Considering these circumstances, and factoring in the context of globalization, it is not surprising that Spaniards are having difficulties understanding their place, and their identity, within their own country and the world. It could be argued that Jiménez Losantos's criticism of Spanish politics is merely symptomatic of these issues. His writing of *Los nuestros*, in fact, could be seen as a conscientious attempt to provide the missing commonality between the different communities that comprise contemporary Spain.

Jiménez Losantos believes that it was during the period of the Transition that the foundations for the future degeneration of Spain were established. According to his analysis, the local governments, faced with the weakness of a newly elected socialist government, used the democratic Constitution of 1978, which granted the right to regional autonomy, to put into practice extreme measures regarding language and culture.<sup>23</sup> He claims the mandatory inclusion of regional languages within the education systems creates a situation that mirrors, in reverse, the discriminatory practices of Franco's regime toward Spanish speakers. According to him, the linguistic policies of the Catalanian and Basque nationalisms affect the lives of millions of people who will be condemned to second-class citizenship, but more important, the policies will have fatal consequences for the Spanish nationhood.<sup>24</sup>

Reminding his readers of the number of Spaniards who immigrate transnationally, Jiménez Losantos points out the injustice that is being done when the descendants of these individuals, without even having moved outside their own country, are obliged to learn and function in a language different from the one spoken by their parents. Furthermore, he suggests that by mandating that these people function in a language they do not know, they will be inexorably stigmatized and eventually face discrimination. In truth, however, his criticism of the linguistic immersion program designed by the Generalitat in 1994 has more to do with what he sees as an irreversible movement toward the loss of a collective national identity than with any actual discrimination that is practiced against, for example, non-Catalan speakers in Catalonia. Likewise, his worries about the creation of second-class citizens in the region has more to do with the consequent future handicap facing the descendants of these immigrants, who he fears may be unable to function in the rest of their own country, than with the possibility they will adjust to their new culture through their newly imposed educational system.

By offering documentation of the different pieces of legislation that foment the use and implementation of regional languages,

Jiménez Losantos claims to demonstrate that the apparent "pluralistic" ideology driving laws trying to balance official and regional languages is in reality only an illusion. In practice, he argues, they respond to nationalistic interests and are extreme in their application. He illustrates this point by offering the results of a survey commissioned by the newspaper *ABC*, which found that 91% of Catalan elementary schools do not teach anything that is Castilian.<sup>25</sup> Through an analysis of individual cases, consultation with specialists, and statistics on the shift in numbers between Castilian and other regional language speakers, Jiménez Losantos portrays a radical trend to impose and create a regional identity, even if that means suppressing part of the region's own history. As a key example, he refers to a brochure designed by the Generalitat introducing Catalonia to the rest of the world and distributed among international journalists in which there is no mention of Spain in any part of the region's history. He also complains about an advertisement for the 1992 Olympics, which, even though funded by the Spanish government and Spanish taxpayers' money, contained references to Barcelona and Catalonia but not to Spain.<sup>26</sup> What he wants to illustrate with these examples is how these practices threaten the future of Spain and its collective identity as a nation, and even more so when a common language that sustains its own existence is being driven out of study plans by "extreme" regional educational policies.<sup>27</sup>

The persecution being suffered by Spain's official language can be understood, according to Jiménez Losantos, as a reprisal from the political Left, based on the affiliation of Castilian with the Right, and therefore with Franco, that unavoidably surfaces when talking about the past 40 years of Spanish history.<sup>28</sup> It is his opinion that this blind hatred needs to be denounced, because the inability of intellectuals and politicians to unbind the idea of Spain from right-wing politics is endangering the future of the nation while they could be enabling its potential dissolution. Jiménez Losantos points out how the idea of Spain, ideologically objectionable due to its past political affiliation, cannot be embraced or even defended by the official government. Although his position has been harshly criticized or dismissed as unreliable overstatement by media outlets such *El País*, his arguments have connected with the Spanish public, as the success of his books and their multiple printings attest. *Los nuestros*, for instance, went through six consecutive editions in the year of its publication, and *La dictadura silenciosa* and the expanded edition of *Lo que queda de España* went through twelve and three printings, respectively, within the first months of their publication.

The relationship between the idea of "Spain" and the country's fascist past is, indeed, difficult to avoid, given the historical proximity of the term to its use by the Falangist party and Franco's dictatorship. One need only glance at the document "Fundación de Falange Española" [Foundation of the Spanish Falange] to witness an example of insistence on the idea of Spain as a unified fatherland and evidence of the desire to recover "el sentido universal de su cultura y de su Historia" [the universal meaning of its culture and history].<sup>29</sup> Under the leadership of José Antonio Primo de Rivera (1903–1936), fascism in Spain sought to employ the ideological framework of nationalism to enlist moral enthusiasm. In order to attain cultural and ideological hegemony over post-Civil War Spain, Francisco Franco (1892–1975) in turn adopted the idea of national unity and of traditional Spanish values as the foundation of his political cause. That this affiliation has influenced the shaping of later democratic governments is clear from the efforts they have made to achieve a clean break with the past while rendering obsolete any discursive markings or allusions that could remind the populace of past rhetorical practices.

Given this historical burden, Jiménez Losantos understands the need to disassociate the idea of Spain from this past. He argues, however, that the socialist government of Felipe González was unable (or unwilling) to accomplish this task, thus placing the future of the country in danger. It is for this reason that he makes an effort in his writing to articulate the basic features that define a nation and its identity and to promote the idea that, despite the political ideology or government of the moment, there are tenets that should remain essential and common to a specific group of people and location. For Jiménez Losantos, the importance of resisting the conflation of nation with politics—and, more specifically, of "Spain" with right-wing politics—is of utmost significance for the survival of the country. Distinguishing national identity from politics, he argues the importance of understanding the former as a product of a nation's culture and tradition that are fundamental to the comprehension of its history and the improvement of its future.<sup>30</sup> With the conviction that culture is made manifest in the fostering of its language and literature, he also believes that knowledge of that culture's history becomes indispensable to the effort to ground a civic conscience among its population:

No se puede tener una idea clara de los derechos ciudadanos sin conocer qué es y cómo se ha hecho la comunidad en la que uno vive, y eso es precisamente lo que viene sucediendo en España desde hace quince

años: se tergiversa la historia y no se respeta la lengua común, sin las que toda educación colectiva queda al aire.

[One cannot understand the rights of the citizens without first understanding what these are and how the community in which one lives was made, and that is precisely what has been happening in Spain for the last fifteen years: history is being distorted and the common language is no longer respected, and in the absence of this, all collective education is being abandoned.]<sup>31</sup>

Understanding and recognizing one's national identity has to do, in his estimation, with the embrace of its culture and the legacy of its literary tradition. For him, Spanish literature, backed by the "generous" tradition of Cervantes, "always" embodied a spiritual freedom (*Lo que queda* 159). He is the first one to denounce earlier abuses that were committed in the name of fanatical and excluding "españolismo" [Spanishness] because, according to him, this freedom needs to be protected and kept free of any material or ideological interest.<sup>32</sup>

The defense of Spain in the name of culture and tradition, however, should be questioned. Jiménez Losantos believes that difference can be achieved and embraced only when a common base is shared and acknowledged. In the case of Spain, the obvious element of cohesion is its language, which, vouchsafed by historical tradition and a rich cultural legacy, makes it "el único vínculo que permite re-llenar los soberbios baches históricos de la nueva nación" [the only bond that lets us compensate for the arrogant historical breaches caused by the new nation].<sup>33</sup> However, what becomes evident in this rhetoric is that the author fails to examine how this commonality is achieved. Culture and language are never gratuitous outcomes in themselves but the end products of the relentless practice of determinate social configurations that respond to the specific interests of a community or a nation. As Derrida has reasoned, language, in the form of monolingualism, is always colonial, because it "tends, repressively and irrepressibly, to reduce language to the One, that is, to the hegemony of the homogeneous."<sup>34</sup> But in Jiménez Losantos's view, a national culture, along with its official language, does not need to be questioned as much as it needs to be valued and preserved as a legacy of the past. Especially now when the linguistic, idiomatic, cultural reorganization, and the changes in the Constitution have caused a resurgence of nationalistic feelings and

[la] presión ideológica, harto primaria, del catequismo supuestamente progresista de los últimos tiempos está imponiendo—y, lo que es peor, acostumbrando para luego legislar—distorsiones gravísimas en el modo

de encarar la Historia y la Cultura de todos, repartidas cuidadosamente según el acta de bautismo de los protagonistas.

[The ideological pressure exerted by the supposed progressives of the recent past through their most basic catechism—and, what is worse, becoming accustomed later to legislate—is imposing serious distortions to the way we look at history and the common culture, distributed carefully according to the birth certificates of the culprits of these changes.]<sup>35</sup>

Although he seems to grasp the procedure that puts political ideologies into practice (“acostumbrando para luego legislar” [becoming accustomed later to legislate]), he chooses to ignore the process by which the “todos” [everybody] to which he refers have received the historical and cultural legacy he is so keen to preserve.

Even as Jiménez Losantos admits to past abuses and injustices committed throughout Spanish history, he believes that its heritage, which he defines as its language, should not be demonized for earlier sins but embraced as a surviving lesson from the past for the benefit of the present. However, he never acknowledges the fact that the conservation and continuation of this language was achieved only through the self-perpetuating process of its own institutionalization. The “national” interest that drives him to write his journalistic pieces and essays about the current state of Spain and its future is not, in truth, too different from the very nationalistic extremes he denounces. His take on history and national identity and his consideration of language as the core component of a nation shares the very impositional qualities that he denounces in the regional cultural policies. If the future of Spain depends on its language and its cultural tradition, these can be fully preserved only to the extent that they are endorsed and supported by the official and authorizing institutions of the nation, which in turn can be translated only into the imposition of a set of cultural tenets with the purpose of advancing their eventual naturalization.

Bestowing superior importance to the cultural characteristics of a nation by considering them the source of its identity, as Jiménez Losantos does, responds to what Anthony Smith would explain as the perennialist approach to the understanding of nation and national identity. Holding the idea of nation as the “bedrock of human society,” this perspective grants it a “primordial” natural order (which may need to be reasserted) as the result of “the power and enduring quality of the fundamental” cultural ties.<sup>36</sup> The perennialist perspective has contributed to fanatical stands surrounding the concept of nation because it upholds the notion of “our people,” a community

of any collective cultural identity that is seen to have survived throughout time immemorial.<sup>37</sup> History written from this perspective is often conflated with myth and “kernels of historical fact, around which there grow up accretions of exaggeration, idealization, distortion and allegory.”<sup>38</sup> This practice is certainly reminiscent of Francoist historiography, which David Herzberger had characterized as a glorious epic narration of the past, centering in the heroic figure of Franco the fulfillment of Spain’s historical destiny.<sup>39</sup> Although Jiménez Losantos is very critical of such practices and is the first to recognize the danger of extreme nationalisms, his essentialist view of culture and language is not very distant from the historical perspective of the perennialists. As an intellectual, he places value on the essence of culture, which he deems crucial to the perpetuation of Spain, for unless people assume “el hecho nacional-español como base o herencia del límite cultural que intentamos definir o incluso como clave esencial del pasado de esa cultura que hacemos o queremos nuestra” [the Spanish-national reality as the foundation or inheritance of the cultural limit we are trying to define or even as an essential key to the past of that culture that we make or want as ours)], there will be no future for this nation.<sup>40</sup>

It is from this perspective that Jiménez Losantos seemed to have compiled a chronicle of notable figures in the history of Spain and entitling it *Los nuestros*. Smith observes that intellectuals, as well as the wider stratum of the professional or intelligentsia classes, play an important role in the production of “mythistoire” and in the process of its legitimization, for as they become interested in rediscovering their past they reappropriate historically what has been traditionally handed down from generation to generation.<sup>41</sup> Through the narrativization of the past and the exaltation of its language, this process represents an evident interest in laying down the signs that “clearly [mark] off those who speak [the language] from those who cannot [because] it evokes a sense of immediate expressive intimacy among its speakers.”<sup>42</sup>

Echoing the beliefs of Manuel Azaña, a man he greatly admires, Jiménez Losantos looks for a way to discuss and uphold, simultaneously, the ideas of freedom and devotion to the Spanish nation. He appreciates the manner in which Azaña was able to define a way to achieve freedom for the Spanish individual without having to question his or her Spanishness or the future of Spain. Jiménez Losantos’s own writing can be interpreted as an effort to advocate the same ideas in the present. He has written, as mentioned earlier, that in order to save Spain, it was fundamental to assume “el hecho nacional-español” [the Spanish-national reality] as a base or cultural legacy that the

community could opt to appropriate as its own.<sup>43</sup> *Los nuestros* could be interpreted as his conscious gesture to provide proof and foundation for this cultural and historical base. What is interesting about his collection, however, is that it reveals the paradoxical nature of his understanding of Spain's cultural legacy: while he perceives it as a phenomenon that takes precedence over politics or any type of ideology, he regards it as a choice that a community can make about its past.

Jiménez Losantos's remark implies that the essential nature of a cultural identity is not given, it cannot be automatically granted; instead, a cognitive effort must be made to recognize and preserve it. The origin of culture can be seen as arbitrary when its components seem to fit a purposeful reading of history and reality. As Edward Said explains, the term/concept "beginning" signals simultaneously to the idea of a continuity that flows from its inception while challenging that same continuity because it is "a creature of the mind" and "something of a necessary fiction."<sup>44</sup> Building on this observation, H. Bhabha questions, for instance, the nature of the discourse of literary history, pointing out how this type of narrative seeks to establish its legitimacy as it progressively works to distinguish the past from the present in a process where the "authority of the past is finally authored (and authorized) in the present."<sup>45</sup> On the one hand, the ordering of the past from the present implies a historicist and teleological perspective that finds, in its chronological organization and writing, "an organic, progressive approximation of reality, the accuracy of reflection."<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the writing of the past "enables a perspective of essential order, coherence, culmination and Culture."<sup>47</sup> This "act of writing" establishes the possibility of offering a unified perspective of the past that can be used as a point of reference, either to emulate that past or to preserve it as part of a national inflection.

Jiménez Losantos's search for a sustainable Spanish identity that could uphold the idea of a unified nation is seen in his writing of *Los nuestros*. What he tries to offer in this collection are the stories of one hundred notable characters who played a significant role in the creation of "the entity of Spain." Originally part of a series called "Crónicas" [Chronicles], these noted biographies were first published in the Sunday section of *El Mundo*. They were designed to revive the liberal tradition of Spain by emphasizing its notion of individual freedom while providing a defense of the idea of Spain.<sup>48</sup> As the author explains it, given the lack of interest demonstrated by the official government to preserve the official culture and language, he published this compilation as a counteraction to its institutional passivity. Through a compelling and nostalgic view of the past, Jiménez Losan-

tos tried to reassert its validity. The chronological weaving of history in these texts can be interpreted as a conscious effort to unite the present by validating its past.

According to the author, when the *El Mundo* chronicles appeared, they became extremely popular and garnered an incredible response from the editorial board and the public. Jiménez Losantos interpreted the substantial feedback he received from his readers as evidence of the pressing need to talk about *Spain*. In the introduction to the compilation, he explains that the enthusiasm for these texts emerged from people belonging to the full spectrum of political ideology: from right-wing ideologues who wanted to read about heroic historical actions of individuals to leftists showing nostalgia for a “national component” in the current study of Spanish history. Both groups, he contends, coincided in their desire to “*leer historias de personajes nuestros*” [read stories of our people].<sup>49</sup> The concept of “ours” and “story” is emphasized in his introduction, where he presents the collection as a joint venture in which fiction is used to defend the nation. He claims that when the texts were published in the newspaper, they became something of a public exercise in the understanding of “History” and “Spain,” exploring what he calls the forgotten “Spanish dimension” in the study of the Spanish past. Through these chronicles he wanted to convince the public to see and comprehend Spain as a historical product that was intimately related to its individuals and not simply something entangled with politics.<sup>50</sup>

Blending the biographical element into the larger framework of Spain, Jiménez Losantos explains his desire to avoid discussion of the traditionally studied historical conflicts (topics of war and oppression, class tensions, regional rivalries, etc.) and to concentrate instead on the three main topics suggested by his readers: nation, individual, and narrative.<sup>51</sup> Armed with these paradigms, he delves deep into the past to move beyond the concept of nation to the myth itself. It is revealing how in “Argantonio. El mito real” [Argantonio: The Real Myth], before embarking on a narration about the first known king of the Iberian Peninsula, Jiménez Losantos chooses to start the story by recreating the mythical story of Spain, abandoned child and nursing animals included.<sup>52</sup> His emphasis on this “beginning” at the start of his compilation sets up the chronological ordering of his texts and the historical characters. The purpose behind this organization is to demonstrate how they all, at the end, shaped today’s Spain despite having belonged to different ethnic and cultural communities, different professions, ideologies, religions, and gender.

On the one hand, the narrative nature of these texts is acknowledged by Jiménez Losantos, who confesses that his view of history is



that of the aficionado, who is not interested in historiography so much as in seeing “la Historia como un río de orígenes remotos y subterráneos, nacido en las fuentes anónimas y en neveros lejanos más que en el bautismo institucional; *nos gusta* asomarnos a esa corriente alimentada por afluentes tumultuosos y regatos pequeños” [History as a remote and subterranean river of origins, born from anonymous fountains and far-away ice fields rather than from institutional baptisms; *we like* looking into that current, fed by tumultuous tributaries and small streams].<sup>53</sup> Employing the general “us” to show he is part of a majority, he expresses his desire to see in history “su fluir como el río que nos lleva” [its flowing, like the river that carries us].<sup>54</sup> In turn, the fluidity of the events of the past showed this novice historian that in each slice of history “[s]omos nosotros mismos, cuando los que nos siguen saltan sobre nuestro recuerdo para seguir su propio curso en la corriente común” [we are ourselves, when those who come after us will jump over our memories to continue their own course in the common stream].<sup>55</sup> He writes how he yearned to communicate through these texts the sense of continuity he felt when working on them, in communion with “el fresco río de España” [the fresh river of Spain] and the sense he had of being carried by its force.<sup>56</sup> Hence, it is not by chance that the title he chooses for his introduction is, appropriately, “La España que nos lleva” [The Spain that Carries Us].<sup>57</sup> From this perspective, individuals seem incapable of reacting to the power of history and its influences. Jiménez Losantos recognizes this powerlessness, but he accepts it because of the identity it gives him: “No sabría explicarme sin España. Tampoco quiero” [I would not know how to explain myself without Spain. I wouldn’t want to, either].<sup>58</sup> To embrace history and the idea of Spain, and particularly Spain seen from this perspective, becomes paradoxical for a man whose creed is “[detestar] cualquier idea de nación que pase por encima del individuo, de todos y cada uno de ellos” [to detest any idea of nation that surpasses the individual, each and every one of them].<sup>59</sup> When he holds the writing of history to be a necessary fiction for exploring the source of identity and cultural legacy that can influence one’s own self-identity, it is quite puzzling that he can make this perspective coexist with a universalizing and transcendental conception of the past.

If, as Hutcheon has argued, the postmodern position asserts that “[k]nowing the past becomes a question of representing, of constructing and interpreting, not of objective recording,” this endeavor should entail an understanding of its limitations as well as its power. Accordingly, the construction of the past cannot escape an examination of its intentionality, for “it is more an attempt to comprehend and

master it by means of some working (narrative/explanatory) model that, in fact, is precisely what grants a particular meaning to the past."<sup>60</sup> For Patricia Waugh, the consequence of this knowledge is:

History becomes a plurality of "islands of discourse," a series of metaphors which cannot be detached from the institutionally produced languages which we bring to bear on it. Alternatively, history is a network of agonistic language games where the criterion for success is performance not truth. The implication of this is that "truth" cannot be distinguished from 'fiction' and that the aesthetic has thus incorporated all.<sup>61</sup>

The intentionality of this construction, especially in those efforts dealing with the narration of a cultural legacy, a national identity, or even a history of national literature, is revealed by the post-colonial reading paradigm, which perceives in the imposition of such narratives a way of continuing the *status quo*. Commenting precisely on the importance attached to national culture, Frantz Fanon pointed out that making claims to a national culture in the past not only rehabilitates the nation to which the culture belongs but also "serve[s] as a justification for the hope of a future national culture."<sup>62</sup> Along the same lines, Bhabha has explained how organizing the past chronologically through narrative can be compared to "[w]riting as the filling of a gap," because it provides a "linear time consciousness . . . teleology and unity, progression and coherence" that gives the writing materiality, not as fiction but as a necessity.<sup>63</sup> Considering this intentionality, it becomes clear how Jiménez Losantos's effort to communicate a teleological sense of history prevails beyond the fictionality of his work. As Bhabha pointed out, these type of texts are ideological in nature because they deny their material and historical construction and "[t]heir practices can be seen as unmediated and universal because the unity of tradition lies in an absolute presence."<sup>64</sup>

The ideological imperative is obvious in Jiménez Losantos's *Los nuestros*. Even though he includes historical characters from both the Left and the Right to demonstrate the diversity of country's cultural and historical identity, the book cannot hide its essentialist view of Spain.<sup>65</sup> This becomes evident in the choice he makes for his final piece, which at the end, questions the ideological position of the book itself. The last text is a tribute to Miguel Ángel Blanco Garrido, a councilman from a small town in the region of Vizcaya who was kidnapped and later executed by ETA in July 1997. The Spanish public grew increasingly frustrated during the forty-eight hours that ETA gave the Spanish government to free incarcerated terrorists in exchange for the councilman's life. When the deadline passed and

Blanco's body was found on the side of a road, the public staged an unprecedented demonstration. More than five million Spaniards took to the streets to protest his death and to condemn terrorism.<sup>66</sup> The author selected Blanco as his subject because, for him, the young councilman represented better than anyone the average person: one of *us*, one of the many in Spain who wants only to "andar por casa, por la casa grande de nuestro pueblo, sin tener ni temer, sin morir ni matar" [go about in his home, the large home of our people, without wanting or fearing, without dying or killing].<sup>67</sup> Blanco's ordinary life and background placed him close to the people, making his perils identifiable with those of the community. That is why Jiménez Losantos described him as a martyr of the "fe española" [Spanish faith] and recognized his agony with that of Spain:

Porque durante dos largos, larguísimos días, España vivió la agonía de Migue como suya. Y cuando llegó su muerte, la vivió como si fuese suya, personal e intransferible. De ahí el llanto, el río inmenso de llanto que anegó la cara antigua y hermosa de la patria. De ahí los millones de personas que salieron a la calle a llorar su propia muerte y a agradecer a Miguel Ángel que hubiera muerto por ellos. Porque así se ha entendido y si no es así, no se entiende: el pueblo español ha sentido que Miguel Ángel ha muerto por todos los españoles. . . . Miguel Ángel Blanco no pertenece ya sólo a nuestra historia política sino a nuestra historia religiosa, si puede hablarse de religión en el sentimiento nacional. Unamuno, su paisano y maestro, diría que sí.

[Because during two long, extremely long days, Spain lived Migue's agony as his own. And when his death arrived, he lived it like it was his, personal and nontransferable. Hence the cry, the immense river of tears that drowned the old and beautiful face of the fatherland. Hence the millions of people that came out into the streets to cry their own deaths and to thank Miguel Ángel for having died for them. Because that is how this incident was understood; and if not that, it would not have been understood: the Spanish people felt that Miguel Ángel had died for all Spaniards. . . . Miguel Ángel Blanco no longer belongs only to our political history but to our religious history, if one can speak of the religion of national sentiments. Unamuno, his country fellowman and teacher, would have agreed.]<sup>68</sup>

This portrayal of Spain as a victim of terrorism, encapsulated in the tragedy of this councilman, cannot hide its emotional manipulation when the account of the fatal incident acquires religious connotations. If Jiménez Losantos denounced the conflation between history and politics, he, in turn, is guilty of conflating national history with religion. The author's account of Blanco's death borrows from the

story in the New Testament of Jesus and Lazarus, in which the former calls the latter from his death. For Jiménez Losantos, the death of Blanco was a call to Spain: "levántate y anda" [get up and walk].<sup>69</sup> In his interpretation, this call not only led to the massive protest that followed the assassination and triggered the dialogue that would bring a temporary cease-fire between ETA and the Spanish government but implied a call for action: a call to unite against those that attack "us," to defend what "we" regard as "our home." Rendering Blanco's murder and suffering as "ours" and presenting the conflict as an antagonism between aggressor and victim, the author makes it easy for readers to interpret this fable as a clash between "us" and "them." This separation further reinforces the existing division in Spain—a division that, in the end, the title of the compilation seems to address: "*Los nuestros*."<sup>70</sup>

As Jiménez Losantos sets the parameters of the debate surrounding regional politics from this perspective, several questions arise: if one can know who "us" is or what is "ours" by the language we speak and the culture we share, how do we define "them" or what is "theirs"? Moreover, what are the ramifications of the author's calls for the preservation of the common cultural markings, even as he opposes the vigorous implementation of the regional ones, if it is through these markings that a community can be defined? And even when he recognizes and accepts the right of the different autonomous regions to access and nurture their own cultures, how can this perspective be regarded as innocently inclusive, when what he proposes is to insist on continuing the markings of difference (i.e., the markings of culture or language)? How can this attitude fail to embody or perpetuate the expansive and compulsory nature of official institutions and culture? How do we reconcile personal freedom within this greater "us" without conforming to the larger and more general characteristics imposed on us, as individuals, by history? And finally, considering these issues, what is really entailed in upholding and preserving the idea of Spain when the proposed validity of this concept is conditioned solely by tradition and its own historicity?

The publication of the essays that constitute the collection *Los nuestros*, which appears in the literary career of Jiménez Losantos as an active gesture for counteracting what he sees as the gradual disappearance of Spain, reenacts the unavoidable essentialist gesture of nationalism, despite providing denial and criticism of such practice. The tensions in the current political situation in Spain are manifested in the relationship between the central state and the regional autonomies concerning cultural and educational policies. What cannot be ignored, however, is that these tensions respond to a desire to pre-

serve a certain way of life and to a particular idea about national identity and reality that finds its *raison d'être* in its own institutionalization and continuity. The foundational tenets of this identity, located in its culture and language, acquire transcendental significance in the texts of this writer, a transcendence that clouds our awareness of the imposed nature of these elements as they are assimilated into our perception of the concept and idea of nation.

Although Jiménez Losantos claims that the legacy of Spanish culture continues into the present and that this culture is what it is today because of its detachment from nationalist interests, it becomes impossible to distinguish between these two ideas within the framework of his argument. The signifier "Spain" is irrevocably associated with a geographical and communal context that is naturally inclined to preserve the very characteristics that are used to define it as a nation in the first place. It cannot be ignored that the success of his project, as he pursues the idea of "Spain," can only be measured by the continuation and preservation of the social and political conditions that correspond specifically to the preexisting boundaries he has set. Ultimately, the validity of his claim can be questioned because, despite its "inclusive" politics, the basis for a new idea of Spain still includes, rather than a simple expansiveness, a culture imposed by the past and the history of the population that produced it. What becomes obvious is that the layers of historical sediment that make up a particular culture should not be preserved just for the sake of continuity or its survival through the passing of time. Taking into consideration the interests and effort put into preserving it, the dynamics of power that contributed to its sedimentation should not remain uncontested.

Although we might agree with Jiménez Losantos on the necessity of the term "Spain" and recognize all the regions and cultures that constitute it, we should be aware of the fictionality of such formulation. In his effort to preserve the idea of a coherent nation, however, this author seems to willfully ignore this aspect of its articulation. Even though he correctly intuits that discussions around the concept or idea of Spain will be crucial for its future, should he participate in the mythical recreation of its particular inflections? There should be a recognition that upholding a set of cultural characteristics because it belongs to a majority will inevitably lead to the institution of systems of categorization, engendering policies that discriminate between the groups that belong to this majority and those who do not. Checking the pulse of the debate concerning the future of this country should always entail an awareness of what is really at stake when individuals and institutions search for commonalities between them-

selves and their nation, and should seek an understanding of the extent to which the values espoused are rather impositions than free choices.

## NOTES

The epigraph is contained in the first volume of a two-part anthology that includes the works of Manuel Azaña (1880–1940), the last president of the Second Republic. The anthology was edited by Federico Jiménez Losantos and published in 1982 by Alianza Editorial. The first part contains Azaña's essays, and the second, his public speeches. All translations in this essay are mine, unless otherwise noted. A shorter version of this essay was published in Catalan with the title "Revisar la historia, rescatar la cultura" in *El Contemporani* 28 (Jul–Des 2003): 67–73.

1. These are words that Jiménez Losantos uses to explain his position in his introduction to *La dictadura silenciosa. Mecanismos totalitarios en nuestra democracia* [The Silent Dictatorship: Totalitarian Mechanisms in our Democracy] (Madrid, Temas de Hoy, 1993), iii.

2. The biography of Jiménez Losantos offered in this essay is an amalgam of data culled from his book jackets and from the compilation by Corpus Ruiz posted on the Internet at [www.arrakis.es/~corcus/inicio.htm](http://www.arrakis.es/~corcus/inicio.htm).

3. The editors of *El Viejo Topo* deemed unprintable the following texts of the collection: "La mayor barbaridad" [The Biggest Atrocity] and "Escribir en castellano en Cataluña" [Writing in Castilian in Catalonia], which are harsh attacks on the linguistic policies of the Autonomy of Catalonia. Jiménez Losantos explains that the topic of "Castilian in Catalonia" has been taboo for a long time and in *La dictadura silenciosa* (161–62) recounts how editor Miguel Riera of *El Viejo Topo*, the leading left-wing intellectual magazine, backed out from the promised publication. Curiously, he reflects, it was an anarchist publisher, responsible for the publication of *Ajoblanco*, who ultimately agreed to publish his book criticizing the Generalitat (163).

4. Besides signing the much publicized manifesto against the standardization of the Catalan language in Catalonia's education system, Jiménez Losantos came to the attention of the terrorist group because of his harsh criticism of the cultural policies of the governments of Catalonia and the Basque Country. The document, known as the "Manifiesto de los 2.300" for the number of signatures collected, called for the equal rights of all languages spoken in Catalonia (specifically, Castilian) and argued for the recognition of immigration into the Catalan region from other Castilian-speaking parts of the country, including calls for the preservation of the immigrants' original language and culture. Published in January 1981 by *Diario 16*, it counted among its signatories Alberto Cardín, Carlos Sahagún, and Amando de Miguel. Jiménez Losantos writes in his book *Lo que queda de España. Con un prólogo sentimental y un epílogo balcánico* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1995) about the persecution he and the other signatories suffered after the publication of this document, which resulted in the departure of all 2,300 involved, and more than 14,000 Castilian-speaking teachers, from Catalonia.

5. Most recently, the case of Elián González, the Cuban boy who was returned to his father on the island, was the target of his criticism. See, for example, his article "Elián volvió a casa" [Elián Returned Home], published by *El Nuevo Herald* on 11 July 2000. Jiménez Losantos depicts the boy as the latest victim of Fidel Castro.

6. Characteristic of the belligerence in his writing is this comment regarding the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City by Muslim terrorists in September 2001: "Eso de que la pobreza la producen los países ricos es, insisto, una vieja majadería marxista-leninista que ahora se presenta disfrazada de conmiseración universal y que solo pueden creer los que íntimamente odian a los pobres, no a la pobreza. [Los] niñitos palestinos y los cabritos de sus papás que bailan celebrando la masacre de Nueva York viven de la limosna estadounidense y europea o de un salario israelí. Viven mal porque Arafat y sus colegas criminosos lo roban casi todo y no tienen las instituciones de Florida o Almería" [The notion that poverty is caused by rich countries is, I insist, an old Marxist-Leninist lie presented to us, at the moment, disguised as universal commiseration, and which can only be believed by those who secretly hate the poor, not poverty. The little Palestinian children and their bastard fathers who dance, celebrating the massacre in New York, live off of American and European charity or the wage of an Israeli. They live poorly because Arafat and his criminal colleagues steal almost everything and have neither the institutions of Florida nor Almería] ("¿Pagar al terror?" [To Pay Terror?], *El Mundo*, 14 September 2001).

7. It is interesting that Julio Rodríguez Puértolas portrays the ideology of Jiménez Losantos as neo-fascist in the first volume of his book *Literatura fascista española* [Spanish Fascist Literature] (806–9).

8. It should be noted that whereas liberalism is generally associated with the Left in the United States, in Europe it is linked with the political Right. Self-described liberals in the U.S. are generally cultural liberals who emphasize the importance of preserving civil liberties but who in economic matters believe in a relatively greater role for the State in the regulation of markets, as well for economic redistribution. Liberalism in Europe is economic liberalism, with a greater embrace of free-market ideology. This brand of liberalism is more akin to conservative libertarianism in the U.S., with its emphasis on economic, rather than personal, freedoms. Jiménez Losantos, proclaiming the right to cultural freedom for each individual, is definitely in support of unfettered markets and is ideologically aligned with the political Right.

9. His political disillusionment is explained in the introduction and the first chapter of *La dictadura silenciosa* (11–75). He does not spare harsh words when it comes to assessing the political Left in his other writings: "La izquierda ya no tiene un modelo político alternativo al del capitalismo liberal, tampoco tiene una alternativa clara e identificable al Estado democrático burgués, ni puede exhibir ninguna moral particular con pretensiones generales. Tras la caída del Muro, la izquierda sigue presumiendo del monopolio de los buenos sentimientos, es la conciencia autosatisfecha de la especie, la vanidad sin motivos y el orgullo ridículo, pero objetivamente no tiene ninguna alternativa económica, política o moral al liberalismo salvo perfeccionarlo y mejorar el funcionamiento de sus instituciones, que es precisamente la esencia misma de ese sistema, perfectible por definición" [The Left does not offer an alternative political model to liberal capitalism, has no clear and identifiable alternative to the democratic bourgeois State, and cannot even exhibit a particular moral position with some general pretenses. After the fall of the Wall, the Left, as the self-satisfied conscience of our species, continues to assume a monopoly on good sentiments, possessed of a vanity that is without motives and of a ridiculous pride, but, objectively, it does not offer any economical, political, or moral alternative to liberalism and can only perfect and improve the functioning of its institutions, which are precisely the essence of that system, improvable by definition] ("Lo abyecto" [The Wretched], *El Mundo*, 13 September 2001).

10. *Lo que queda*, 165.

11. *Lo que queda* was published in a revised edition in 1995 with the added subtitle “*Con un prólogo sentimental y un epílogo balcánico*” [With a Sentimental Prologue and a Balkan Epilogue]. In the new texts included in this new edition, a prologue and an epilogue, he restates his earlier opinions and suggests that time has proven him right in his criticism of the cultural policies of the autonomous regions, especially Catalonia.

12. *La dictadura*, viii.

13. *Ibid.*, iii. According to Jiménez Losantos, the degradation of democracy at the hands of the Socialist government revolved, among other things, around its financial scandals, as he demonstrates in writing about the Roldán, Filesa, GAL, Renfe, AVE, Intelhorce, BOE, Red Cross, and CESID cases, and about the blackmail and spying of the King (*Crónicas del acabóse. Contra el felipismo II*. [Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 1996], iv).

14. Updating this discussion, I would like to point out the current political debate surrounding the term “constitutional patriotism.” Adopted by the conservative Partido Popular as the perfect solution for the future of Spanish state, it emphasizes on the importance of the country’s cultural heritage to maintain a unified national identity. For an analysis of this debate, see Song’s “Cap una España unida: La producción del patriotisme constitucional” [Towards a United Spain: The Production of Constitutional Patriotism] in *Les mentides del PP* [The Lies of the PP] (Barcelona: Angle Editorial, 2003), 26–41.

15. From the editorial published on 12 September 1999 in *Cambio 16*, cited in Barry Jordan, “How Spanish is it? Spanish Cinema and National Identity,” in *Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies*, ed. Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas (London and New York: Arnold and Oxford University Press, 1999), 68. I borrow from Jordan’s own translation of the original cited in his article. Jordan’s essay explores, among others, issues regarding Spanish identity and the idea of the Spanish nation. The original editorial of *Cambio 16* reads: “¿A qué llamamos España?: ¿Estado plurinacional, estado autonómico, de nacionalidades y regiones, estado sin nación, nación de varios estados . . . ? Cada vez resulta más difícil saber donde estamos.”

16. *La dictadura*, viii.

17. Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989), 7.

18. For a brief introduction to the critical perspectives of post-colonial theory, see the introductory pages of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).

19. See Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 5, and Bhabha’s “Representation and the Colonial Text: A Critical Exploration of Some Forms of Mimeticism” in *The Theory of Reading*, ed. Frank Gloversmith (Norfolk, VA, and Totowa, NJ: The Harvester Press, 1984), 93–97.

20. Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 16.

21. Teresa Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto. Una crítica cultural de la transición (1973–1993)* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1998), 8–10.

22. Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, 16.

23. He understands the degradation of the government of Felipe González and the PSOE (with its multiple financial scandals and corruption) to have been part of the weakening process of the Spanish central government, which would result in its feebleness in dealing with cultural policies regarding the autonomous regions (*La dictadura*, iii–iv).

24. *La dictadura*, 13.



25. *Lo que queda*, 432. Jiménez Losantos refutes the assumption that the majority of people who live in Catalonia derive, in fact, from the region and its culture. He cites a survey to demonstrate that in fact, Castilian is spoken as a family language by 29.5 percent in the capital, compared with 47 percent who are Catalan speakers. He also notes that in the province of Barcelona, this difference increases, comparing 60.9 percent Castilian speakers with 38.5 percent Catalan speakers. He acknowledges that despite these numbers, Catalan is the language that is understood and used in social situations by 83 percent of the population living in the capital, even if only 19.1 percent can speak and write it, and 12.9 percent cannot understand it at all; compared with the provinces, where only 11.5 percent can speak and write it, whereas 68.4 percent can understand it and 31.3 percent cannot (*Lo que queda* 209).

26. *La dictadura*, 179–83.

27. *Ibid.*, 13, 145–83; and *Lo que queda*, 431–94.

28. He writes: “Pero no, todos los españoles ilustrados conocen de uno u otro modo el pecado: Franco hablaba castellano, la derecha ha hablado castellano estos últimos cuarenta años y como la izquierda no podía hablar lo que quería, su mudez simbólica condena a la lengua por fascista” [But no, all learned Spaniards, one way or another, recognize the sin: Franco spoke Castilian, the Right has spoken Castilian for the last forty years, and because the Left could not speak what they wanted to, their symbolical muteness condemns this language for being Fascist] (*Lo que queda*, 178).

29. Quoted in Stanley G. Payne, *Falange: A History of Spanish Fascism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 39.

30. This position has been analyzed as part of nationalistic discourse by Xosé-Manoel Núñez in his essay “What is Spanish Nationalism Today? From Legitimacy Crisis to Unfulfilled Renovation (1975–2000)” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 24: 5 (2001): 719–52.

31. *La dictadura*, 13.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Lo que queda*, 198.

34. Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prothesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 39–40. The relationship between the individual and his or her language is always complicated, especially in terms of how this individual takes possession of it: “Because the master does not possess exclusively, and naturally, what he calls his language, because, whatever he wants or does, he cannot maintain any relations or property or identity that are natural, national, congenital, or ontological, with it, because he can give substance to and articulate [*dire*] this appropriation only in the course of an unnatural process of politico-phantasmatic constructions, because language is not his natural possession” (23).

35. *Lo que queda*, 212.

36. Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (London: Polity Press, 1995), 5. Although the perennialist perspective, as explained by Smith, has been the source of ardent nationalist movements when its members saw themselves as victims who had been forced “to ‘forget’ their nation and its (usually glorious) history” and fought to recover its “natural order,” it has also been responsible for articulating and grounding the importance of cultural ties within a community.

37. *Ibid.*, 53–55.

38. *Ibid.*, 63.

39. David Herzberger, *Narrating the Past: Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 45.

40. *Lo que queda*, 166.

41. Smith, 65. Smith defines "mythistoire" as the representation of "an amalgam of selective historical truth and idealization [to] present a stirring and emotionally intimate portrait of the community's history, constructed by, and seen from the standpoint of, successive generations of community members" (63).

42. *Ibid.*, 66.

43. *Lo que queda*, 166.

44. Edward Said, *Beginnings* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 76-77.

45. Bhabha, 93.

46. *Ibid.*, 94.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Los nuestros. Cien vidas en la historia de España* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1999), 11.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*, 12.

51. *Ibid.*

52. This is the myth of Spain as rendered by Jiménez Losantos:

"Vivimos en un lugar de sol y sombra que los fenicios llamaron Ispania; los griegos, Hesperia; otros pueblos, Ophixia; los cartagineses, Iberia; y finalmente los romanos, de vuelta a los orígenes fenicios, Hispania, con elegante H latina que no oculta su significado de *tierra de conejos*; por cierto, mejor que Ophixia, que significa *tierra de serpientes*. Y este lugar, desde antes de ser España, que es el nombre que resume todos los anteriores, tiene, entre otros, tres reyes míticos: Gerión, Gárgoris y Habis. Gerión, según el mito griego, pastoreaba bravos toros y pacientes bueyes, era fuerte y rico, y vino a matarlo Hércules, que se quedó con las Columnas y con el Estrecho. Gárgoris, además de pastor, fue apicultor; descubrió la miel y con ella el vicio, porque tuvo con una de sus hijas un crío, obviamente incestuoso, llamado Habis. Arrepentido o avergonzado, pero políticamente irresponsable, Gárgoris dejó a su hijo en el monte para que las fieras proveyeran, pero unas ciervas, incomparablemente más gentiles que la loba que tuvo que hacer otro tanto con Rómulo y Remo, lo amamantaron. Este Habis, superado el pequeño problema de su crianza, estaba tocado por la mano de todos los dioses: se bañaba cubierto de tatuajes y no perdía los colores; seguía a los ciervos, sus parientes, corriendo por el monte; era sabio y siempre joven; la suerte sonreía a cuantos se le acercaban . . . Lo que ya realmente lo consagró en el emperio mediterráneo fue que acertó a inventar el arado, que, con el yugo de Gerión, hizo feraz y mítico el Jardín de las Hespérides, Hesperia, Iberia, Hispania o Ispania."

[We live in a place of sun and shadow that the Phoenicians called Ispania; the Greeks, Hesperia; other people, Ophixia; the Carthaginians, Iberia; and finally, the Romans, in return to the Phoenician origins, Hispania, with the elegant Latin H, that does not hide its meaning of *land of rabbits*; which is, by the way, better than Ophixia, which means *land of snakes*. And this place, before it was to become Spain, which is the name that summarizes all the previous ones, had, among others, three mythical kings: Geryon, Gargoris, and Habis. Geryon, according to the Greek myth, tended to brave and patient oxen, was strong and rich, and Hercules, who took possession of the Columns and the Strait, came to kill him. Gargoris, besides being a shepherd, was a beekeeper who discovered honey and with it vice, because he had by one of his daughters a child, named Habis. Regretful or embarrassed but politically irresponsible, Gargoris left his son in the mountains so the beasts would devour him, but some does, incomparably more kind than the she-wolf that saved Romulus and Remus, fed him. This Habis, having overcome the small problem of his upbringing, was touched by the hand of all the gods: he bathed, covered in tattoos, and didn't lose the colors; he followed the deer, their relatives, running around the mountain; was wise and always young; luck always smiled on those who approached him . . . What really consecrated him among the Mediterranean divinity was that he invented the plow, which, with Geryon's yoke, made fertile and mythical the Garden of Hesperidia, Hesperia, Iberia, Hispania, or Ispania.] (*Los nuestros*, 19-20)

53. *Los nuestros*, 13. Emphasis mine.
54. *Ibid.*, 13–14. He uses the title of the work of José Luis Sampedro to characterize his view of history.
55. *Ibid.*, 14.
56. *Ibid.*, 15.
57. *Ibid.*, 11.
58. *Ibid.*, 16.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*, 58, 64.
61. Patricia Waugh, *Postmodernism. A Reader* (London: E. Arnold, 1992), 6.
62. Frantz Fanon, "National Culture," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge: 1995), 154.
63. Bhabha, 97.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Among the characters he includes in his book are Francisco Franco, La Pasionaria, Manuel Azaña, and Manuel Machado.
66. The magnitude of the public outcry at the death of this town councilman played a role in the subsequent cease-fire between ETA and the Spanish government, which ended without solution to their disagreement in July 2000. Since then, ETA has returned to their attacks and has killed more than twenty people.
67. *Los nuestros*, 414.
68. *Ibid.*, 415–16.
69. *Ibid.*, 418.
70. Although Jiménez Losantos explains in the introduction to his book that the title is a private joke that refers to past political affairs and the induction of the ex-director of the newspaper *El País* into the Real Academia Española [Royal Spanish Academy], the use of this title offers an explicit message about the true discriminatory and arbitrary practice of history. In fact, the joke is wasted when readers who agree with the author's propositions look into the texts that constitute the book in search of the commonality that the critic has denounced as missing or on the verge of disappearance.

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