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## Nationhood as Practice and the Modernity of Nations: A Conceptual Proposal

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### Abstract

This article revisits the debate on the modernity of nations considering recent critical approaches to national phenomena. It proposes an alternative model that addresses the existence of empirical evidence about nations before the 19th century without erasing key changes in the history of nationhood, such as the rise of the principle of national sovereignty. The model draws on existing literature and a corpus of British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese ego-documents from the Age of Revolutions. The study of patterns of usage of national languages in these life narratives supports the abandonment of the premodern/modern antinomy and the implementation of a more complex account. The proposal distinguishes republican, genetic, nonpoliticized ethnotypical, politicized ethnotypical, liberal, romantic, biological, cultural, and democratic forms of nationhood. It then develops the genetic and the ethnotypical forms using source materials and readdresses the issue of “modernity” in the light of this evidence.

**Keywords:** historical narrative; nationalism; national identity; nation-building; theories of nationalism

On September 20, 1792, France’s revolutionary army changed the course of the War of the First Coalition by defeating the Prussian forces at the Battle of Valmy. Reportedly, in a critical moment the Alsatian commander François Kellermann shouted, “*Vive la Nation!*” The battle cry had a massive appeal, and the French soldiers, singing “*La Marseillaise*” and “*Ça Ira*,” “fought with an enthusiasm and determination not seen on European battlefields for generations.” As is widely known, the writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a remarkable example of that intellectual generation bridging *Ancien Régime* Enlightenment and the new romanticism, witnessed the event. He is believed to have said, “Here and today a new epoch in the history of the world has begun, and you can boast you were present at its birth” (Doyle 2002, 192–193).

The notion of “modern” as a radical state of novelty and progress is a very influential historical perception that, as too did the idea of “nation,” engulfed Goethe’s generation and helped it and its descendants to navigate the trying and interesting times that they had to go through. However, this feeling was not new (“modern” had been used in other moments, such as the Renaissance), and nor was it as radical and objective as these two words suggest. In fact, the previous 100 years of tormented intellectual history have been shaped by the long process of coming to terms with “modernity” and its troublesome, multifarious legacy.

What has traditionally seemed clear among those who believe in “modernity” as both a real structure and a valid analytical framework is its inextricable relationship with the idea of “nation.” It was not by chance that “nation” and not anything else—apart from, one might suppose, the sounds of people dying, crying, or cursing—was the word that could be heard across Valmy’s fields. In this article, I address the persistence of the “modernity” narrative in nationalism studies, its implications

for the debate on the origins of nations, and propose an alternative model based on ego-documents. First, I contextualize the debate and point out the theoretical and historiographical trends on which I draw, especially those which privilege understanding national phenomena as “practices” rather than as “things.” Second, I outline my conceptual proposal for the history of nationhood and then develop the different forms of nationhood as they relate to the issue of the “modernity” of nations. Finally, I cover the limitations of the proposal and the challenges ahead.

### Theoretical Legacies and Shifts

As is the case with any intellectual endeavor, the formation of nationalism studies as an interdisciplinary field in the 20th century cannot be detached from its context, especially its concern about “modernity.” Modernization theories and “modernism” as an overarching ideology had key roles in both nationalism and analysis of it (Conversi 2012). The introduction of postmodern approaches in the 1990s was not completely transformative vis-à-vis the different orthodoxies that had been established in the 1970s and 1980s. However, it started a long and unfinished process of theoretical change that allowed a deeper and wider implementation of more general critiques of the narrative of modernity. These critiques conceptualize “modernity” as a specific mental framework rather than as a neutral unconscious premise.

A major axis that has structured the traditional debate since the 1970s and still holds firm today is precisely the controversy over the origins of nations. Despite the influence of postmodernism, postcolonialism, and other strands of critical theory (Gunn 2006) that have been trying to move the field toward a research question focused on how nations function as a social phenomenon (regardless of their origin), a question preoccupied with when nations came about still shapes our conceptual framework.<sup>1</sup> The idea that understanding the nature of something is inevitably linked to knowing about its inception has retained its appeal. The well-known classification that Anthony Smith (1971, 1998, 2009) developed over several decades crystallized into some sort of standard according to which the main opposition was between those who, on one hand, thought that nations and modernity appeared at the same time and evolved reciprocally (Smith called this group the “modernists”), and those who, on the other hand, rejected the premise that a distinction must be drawn between premodern and modern nations. The latter have been described as “primordialists” or “perennialists” (Hoppenbrouwers 2007; Jensen 2016; Reynolds 2005).

Smith’s “ethn-symbolism” is usually presented as an intermediate path between modernism and perennialism. It holds that nations developed from ethnic groups through processes of “re-creation” rather than ones of “invention.” An *ethnie* or ethnic group is defined as “a named and self-defined human community whose members possess a myth of common ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of common culture, including a link with a territory, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the upper strata” (Smith 2009, 27). We can compare this to Smith’s definition of nation: “A named and self-defining human community whose members cultivate shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or ‘homelands,’ create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and standardized laws” (Smith 2009, 29). Here the nation’s only essential divergences from the *ethnie* seem to be the “distinctive public culture” (but we might ask how we can define and recognize such a thing) and the observance of “standardized law,” which inevitably relates to politics. Thus, even though Smith’s cultural approach labors to detach nation-building from state-building, his attempt at finding “objective” differences between nations and ethnic groups ends up leading us to a point where modernists gain the upper hand.

As refreshing and valuable as Smith’s work was, owing to its integrating ancient, medieval, and early modern evidence into the discussion and because of its questioning the modernism that has traditionally dominated nationalism studies, his limitations related to reification and conceptual imprecision have not gone unnoticed (Özkirimli 2003). Smith’s ethn-symbolism therefore broadened the field but did not generate a real paradigm shift.

This stalemate situation has several implications regarding biases and methodological impasses, and it can be encountered in every social science interested in national phenomena. However, it is particularly detrimental to history as a discipline. Setting aside the fact that almost every classic proposal for a grand “historical narrative” regarding the antiquity of nations lacks systematic primary-source-based historical research (*Imagined Communities*, Anderson 1983; *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner 1983; *The God of Modernity*, Llobera 1994; and *The Construction of Nationhood*, Hastings 1997, primarily consider nationalism in the abstract and draw on empirical evidence only very lightly), the work of most historians has not precisely stood out for its conceptual precision either. Historians’ research contributions range from envisioning national phenomena in ancient times via an approach that presents those phenomena as being essentially little different from those encountered in the “modern” era (for example, Gat 2013 or Roshwald 2006, among others) to using ill-defined concepts such as “prenational” and “protonationalism” for everything that *might seem* to amount to nationhood but *cannot be* so because of modernist definitions of what “modern” nations are (Hobsbawm 1990, 14–45).

Of course, one could argue that the key problem might lie in defining what a nation is in order to ascertain the appropriate analytical concept to be applied to empirical sources (in this case, the historical record). Hence, depending on how we define a “nation,” we may be able to locate them in one moment or another. But even if we accept that this is the case, identifying a conceptual conundrum never guarantees that we will find a solution to it, for the conceptual conundrum may have been arrived at because of a flaw in the approach taken to arrive at it. How can we hope to know how and when a given phenomenon—in this case, nationhood—came to be if the analytical concepts that we deploy to describe it were established before our analysis even began and came about on the basis of a normative premise that responds to a perceived need to explain a contemporary form of that phenomenon—nationalism, as opposed to those concepts’ being established during the analysis, without teleology or prejudice?

Once scholars accept the intersubjective nature of nationhood and its historicity, the main debate becomes one of how to manage the inevitable overlap between analytical concepts and the words used by people from the past. Therefore, the strongest case against “modernism” has not come from debunking the idea of “modernity” itself; the importance of the fundamental and multifaceted changes that have taken place across the world during the last 200 or 250 years is still generally acknowledged. It has rather come from arguments that assert the existence of “multiple modernities” (Ichijo 2013) and a substantial continuity between “premodern” and “modern” forms of nationhood. The Age of Revolutions, the period running from the second half of the 18th century to the first half of the 19th, in which national imaginations incorporated the idea of popular sovereignty, is usually identified as the watershed moment between those two forms.<sup>2</sup>

Some scholars defend an apparently Solomonic solution: the wide use of “nation” and other kindred terms before the 18th century might prove the existence of nations before modern times, but nationalism is exclusively modern (Smith 1998, 97). However, this position in itself does not provide any better conceptual precision beyond a self-referential understanding of our concepts of analysis. If scholars’ empirical grounding does not take into account the actual changes or continuities that the idea of nation and the meaning of the words used to express it have undergone, decisions about ancient, medieval, and early modern evidence (such as that put forward in Ballester Rodríguez 2010; Bell 2001; or Hirschi 2012) will rest on Byzantine discussions about what a *real* nation is and how important the criterion of national sovereignty is.

Moreover, this “old nations/new nationalisms” thesis is not widely accepted. For example, working with primary sources to consider the Dutch case, Philip Gorski (2000) thinks that there was a form of modern nationalism in the 17th-century United Provinces. Gorski stresses the importance of particular genealogies, since some situations can provide highly ancient nationalist discourses (which he equates with “a discourse that invokes ‘the nation’”), while in other cases the discourses may have emerged at a much later point.

Modernist authors tend to dismiss the empirical evidence put forth by perennialists, arguing that although the term “nation” appears, it must mean something else, something different. John Breuilly’s (2005) response engages with the actual interpretation of the sources and tries to accommodate them in the modernist framework. He ends up accepting the existence of national identities before modern times because there were some societies that were already experiencing a process of modernization (such as Dutch society in the 1600s). Premodern national identities may nonetheless have been socially limited to “elites,” or they might on an ideological level not have been defined in conflictual terms, or they may have lacked a specific political function. Breuilly (2005, 83–85) considers the modern meaning of “nation” to correspond to “a society” whose collective will constitutes the legitimate source of power rather than to a complementary instrument used by an authority that is already legitimized by other means.

According to Breuilly (2005, 69 and 93), “Perennialists have jumped from apparent national identity processes identified in fragmented discourses to construct an overcoherent idea of the nation.” He then stresses the need for research to be conducted on “processes of producing national identity which go beyond demonstrating that ‘nation’ and cognate terms are found in texts.” Thus, “the recurrence of particular words in premodern and modern discourses does not establish significant similarities or continuities between those sources. Similarities in the functions of the words are what matter.” Undertaking research on such a basis would, according to Breuilly, support the thesis of the modernity of nations.

Joep Leerssen and Caspar Hirschi, both critics of traditional “sociostructural” modernism, engaged in a lively polemic that focuses specifically on interpreting the meaning of the body of words associated with nationhood (Grosby, Leerssen, and Hirschi 2014). The aforementioned work by Hirschi (2012) is one of the landmark perennialist monographies. He argues that there was a German nationalism in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance and that it derived from the intellectual consequences of the political decomposition of the Roman Empire. Leerssen accuses Hirschi of confusing “tradition” and “recollection” and committing a retrospective anachronism due to Hirschi’s use of overly broad definitions.

Besides the different conclusions reached by these authors whose works were published after the 1990s, there is a further issue hovering over all of their contributions: it seems that the actual reconstruction of the past is supposed to take place after pre-empirical normativity has been eliminated and once the issues of what people from the past thought of nations and how that thinking changed over time have been studied. And it is here where the old debate over the modernity of nations intersects with new approaches in nationalism studies, including the “groupism” critique (Brubaker 2004) and the whole subfield of “everyday nationalism” (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). In this sense, the main theoretical shift affects the very nature of how we think nationhood works—and therefore the research questions themselves. In so doing, changes that enhance individual agency, uncover methodological nationalism, and define nationalization as an inherently contentious and intersubjective process rather than as a top-down/bottom-up process of social communication can be redirected toward new methodologies and sources. In a nutshell, we could characterize this theoretical shift as a move from an ontological approach to a phenomenological one. “Ontological” means that nations are taken to be “things existing in the world” as collective and distinctive subjects and that nationalism is their expression or maker. “Phenomenological” means that nations “happen” instead of “are,” that nationhood is situational (Brubaker 1996, 13–22), and that it will therefore always depend on the agents embodying it and their contexts.

There are several possibilities and methodological limitations of using ego-documents for producing a conceptual history of nationhood as a phenomenon, as well as for investigating the “functions,” as Breuilly puts it, of national languages (see Archilés 2013; Moreno-Almendral 2018a). This phenomenological turn, which also inspires ethnographic work and biography, has many implications for both history and other social sciences (Molina Aparicio 2013). However, the important point here is its applicability to the debate on the modernity of nations.

## Conceptual Overview

Drawing on some moderate and nuanced perennialist, ethnosymbolist, and modernist positions, especially the work of Joep Leerssen (2006), I will propose a model of analytical concepts that is mostly based on existing historiography and patterns of usage within a corpus of 170 British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese memoirs, journals, diaries, and travel books written from the 1780s to the 1830s.<sup>3</sup> Given the traditional modernist framework, the period (the Age of Revolutions) and the cases (the four most important 18th-century Atlantic monarchies) constitute excellent cases in point.<sup>4</sup>

Table 1 expresses the diverse composition of the corpus. Having had a professional link with the army or identifying as a woman are relevant and relatively easy criteria. “Elite” and “noncentral area” belonging are much more problematic. Nevertheless, I have included them owing to their importance in the top-down, center-periphery, modernist literature.<sup>5</sup>

This proposal comes from a re-elaboration of my PhD work, which originally distinguished five usages of the word “nation” that can explain the semantic changes and continuities during the Age of Revolutions: genetic, nonpoliticized ethnotypical, politicized ethnotypical, liberal, and romantic. Inserting the period in the entire history of nationhood, we could add another three: cultural, democratic, and biological. I have also included another ancient and well-known idea of community, which had a critical importance in the development of the liberal and democratic forms of nationhood but was not usually expressed by the word *natio* or its derivatives. I call it the “republican” idea of nationhood, though it could also be characterized as “protorepublican,” since republicanism is very alive in some versions of modern and contemporary democracy.

As this article tackles the debate on “modernity,” and because “liberal,” “romantic,” “cultural,” “democratic,” and “biological” forms of nationhood are covered much more comprehensively in general surveys (for example, Hastings 2018 or Kramer 2011), I will not focus on those forms. Instead, I am more interested in how Europeans on both sides of the Atlantic arrived at them. (I can say nothing about the applicability of all this to non-Western societies.) There are evolutionary relations between the different concepts, but, as we shall see, these relationships must not be understood in absolute, causal, and exclusive terms. I am also aware of the problems bound up with the ethnic/civic divide (as these are described in Brubaker 2004, 132–146, or in Calhoun 1997, 86–92), but I nevertheless find it instrumental in mapping the concepts as outlined in Figure 1.

In ancient and medieval times, the idea of “nation” emerged as a kind of soft taxonomic *gens*. Within my classification system, the genetic concept expresses an asystematic and potentially cumulative adscription that is based on an assigned space or breed of origin, with “origin” usually understood as “birth” and “adscription” as an external classification. It encompasses, for instance,

**Table 1.** Corpus structure by key composition criteria.

Corpus structure										
	British		French		Spanish		Portuguese		TOTAL	
#	47	28%	45	26%	45	26%	33	20%	170	100%
E	23	49%	28	62%	27	60%	23	70%	101	59%
M	18	38%	20	44%	10	22%	5	15%	53	31%
NC	18	38%	31	69%	28	62%	18	55%	95	56%
F	6	13%	6	13%	4	9%	1	3%	17	10%

#: number of ego-documents; E: elites; M: military; NC: noncentral areas; F: women

Cases express vital trajectories within their specific political frameworks. The classification does not presuppose a national allegiance. Percentages are rounded and calculated over the corpus total. Percentages in italics are calculated over case totals.

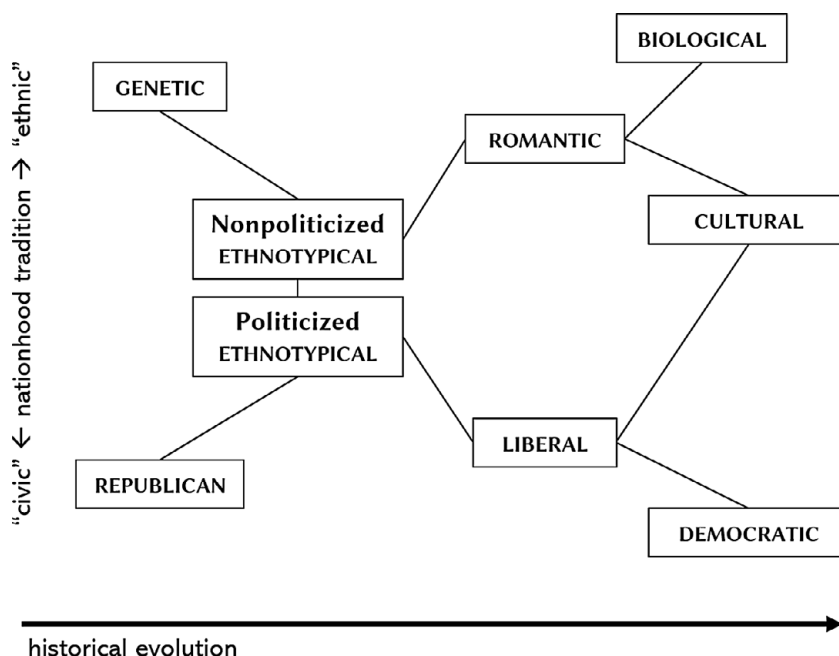


Figure 1. Overview of the conceptual proposal. The “historical evolution” line does not express proportional chronological progression.

the *nationes* of merchants in port cities and of clergymen in Church councils, or the student groups in traditional European universities, such as the *universitas ultramontanorum* of Bologna and the universities of Paris, Oxford, Salamanca, Padua, or Prague.

The republican concept, meanwhile, stems from the Greek *πόλις* and the Roman *civitas* to express a political community (usually a small one) that is made up of “citizens” (*cives*) and has an irreducible core of equal rights and duties. This core does not exclude devices of inequality, but it was quite operative in some city-states until most of them disappeared during the 19th century. As Leerssen (2006, 82–92) insightfully points out, Rousseau’s revolutionary idea of popular sovereignty cannot be understood without consideration of his experience in one of these city-states, namely his Swiss hometown of Geneva.

By the early modern era, genetic and republican notions of nationhood were still in place, but some sections of their semantic fields were evolving. The result was the appearance of ethnotypical concepts. Leerssen’s (2006, 17) definition of “ethnotypes” is “commonplaces and stereotypes of how we identify, view and characterize others as opposed to ourselves.” The systematization that took place between the 16th century and the 18th based on imagined stereotypes cannot come as a surprise, since the utility of every idea about groups is limited if no supposedly collective traits that draw boundaries between different groups exist. The nonpoliticized ethnotypical concept is based on the systematic division of mankind into a set of groups or “nations” that are supposedly endowed with collective leanings of different types, within which there is usually a psychological component—the “national character.” This conceptualization of the group is more discrete (that is, groups’ boundaries are more clearly defined), and the composition of a given group is more dependent on the supposed actual traits of its members than it is within genetic conceptualization of nationhood. During the Age of Revolutions, the word “race” was not yet completely detached from the semantic field of “nation,” and therefore it used to make an appearance in connection with these two modalities.

The politicized ethnotypical concept merges the nation as a “national character” with the idea that the ensemble of the kingdom’s corporations and bodies constitutes before and with the king a

political community endowed with a constitution, corporative rights, and liberties. In the more Enlightenment-influenced versions of this concept, subjects become citizens without sovereignty, and the links between them are defined in terms of patriotic love and “public spirit.”

The breakup of the *Ancien Régime* monarchies and the opportunity opened up by revolution provided a radical change of context, for which new political concepts were necessary. Drawing upon strands of republicanism and radical democracy (in France, at least), the first liberal revolutionaries transformed the politicized ethnotypical concept and resignified the terms “constitution,” “liberty,” and “rights” via the mediation of historicist arguments, which had been partially obtained from previous ethnotypical forms.

The result was the liberal nation, which theoretically was the sovereign assembly of citizens projected on the kingdom or the entire polity. In practice, however, many 19th-century liberals ended up developing a distinction between “full” citizens and other members of the community who did not have an “interest” in political rule over the nation: poor, women, children, nonwhites, migrants, and so on. As former French treasury minister François Mollien (1837, vol. 3, 469) wrote in his memoirs: “Within the French nation strictly speaking we can include neither that portion of proletarians who, due to the brutalization of their way of life, have excluded themselves from it nor the young people in its schools who are its hope but not yet a part of it.”<sup>6</sup> This multilevel nationality/citizenship divide created some paradoxical spaces and has generated a variegated literature covering its theoretical and practical implications (Fradera 2015; Herzog 2003).

The romantic nation, conversely, is concerned originally and primarily not with politics but with cultural dynamics (Hutchinson 2013; Leerssen 2014). Evolving from the ethnotypical “national characters” in the context of the early 19th century, it is imagined as a timeless collective spirit that results from a perception of traditions that have become sedimented over time and that overpower any circumstantial “general will” that present-day members of the nation might have. In the romantic nation, historicism reaches its peak, and the past becomes a preferential object of cultivation for the purpose of optimally deploying and fulfilling the preexisting national spirit.

These five concepts (or six, if the “republican” notion is included) were operative during the Age of Revolutions and brought about a transition toward more contemporary linguistic usages. The democratic nation stems from radical liberalism and some branches of the socialist tradition, and it is defined by an affirmation of real sovereignty and unfettered, equal, and effective rights. The cultural nation develops romantic genuineness and independence from existing polities by claiming a “historical tradition” and a “distinctive personality” that are usually presented as a “national fact.” The concept of cultural nation would eventually buttress “the principle of nationalities,” which would have quite political implications in the 20th century. The framing of the biological nation is a little more complicated, but I understand it as the product of a merger between the irreducible moral uniqueness of the romantic tradition and positivism, racialism, and, sometimes, even social Darwinism. Here the nation is not only a set of individuals objectively differentiated by culture but also a distinctive organic division of humanity of the kind inherent in the *völkish* doctrines of the “Aryan race” and the “German blood” of the Nazis (Hastings 2018, 178–182).

### Genetic Nationhood

The most ancient meaning of the word *natio* and its derivatives corresponds to what I have called the “genetic” concept. As is widely known, this meaning has little to do with how modern nationalists would define their nations. This loose, nonexclusive, and highly variable idea of people of “common origin,” with “origin” understood as “birth,” was still very much operative in the 18th century. It is a recurrent presence in my corpus, especially in French, Spanish, and Portuguese accounts and among subjects who were socialized before the revolutionary waves.

For example, French diplomat Jean-François Bourgoing (1748–1811) wrote in relation to his travels in Spain that, “The French of Cadiz make a up a national body [*un corps de nation*] which has its assemblies and prerogatives” vis-à-vis the locals (Bourgoing 1789, vol. 2, 191). Similar usages are

found in the writing of Claudio Conceição (1811, 11), a Franciscan friar born in 1772—“[She was] of the Hebrew nation [*hebrea de nação*]”—and in that of João de Souza (1735–1812), another friar, who served as a translator of Arabic in a Portuguese diplomatic mission in Africa. Upon its return to Europe, the legation had to go into quarantine in Marseille. On August 13, 1786, after being released, he wrote in his diary:

Marseille is the most flourishing city in trade, since it has everything [commercial goods] from the Levant, Africa, America, and the Barbary regencies. Here one can see people from every nation: Turks from the Levant and the Barbary regencies; Moors from both coasts of Africa; Greeks from the Levant and the Archipelago Islands; and Levantine and African Jews; and the most civilized nations are not absent. Everybody from the aforementioned nations lives according to their respective religions and dresses as they do in their countries. (Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, COD 8543, 30v)

In the genetic concept, the spatial and social limits of the alleged group are often blurry and quite arbitrary. The belonging relation seems accumulative, especially when it overlaps with more complex ideas of nationhood. For example, the priest Raimundo Ferrer, who was born in Barcelona in 1777, wrote in the diary that he kept during the Peninsular War about a man named “Don Joseph Canton, *Milanés de nación* [of Milanese nationality],” who had been jailed (Moliner Prada 2010, appendix I–II, 340). Elsewhere, he distinguishes “Italians” from “Neapolitans,” as well as “Bavarians” from “Germans” (Moliner Prada 2010, appendix I–II, 50; VI, 61), although in other contexts he only speaks of “Italians” and “Germans” (Moliner Prada 2010, appendix IX, 300).

In this regard, the British part of my corpus seems somewhat distinct, as it is difficult to find clear-cut genetic usages within it. British political culture’s semantic evolution appears to have happened before that of continental Europe took place, likely as a result of the region’s civil wars during the 17th century and of the parliamentary system that was subsequently established there. Thus, nations as “communities of birth” usually encompass notions of space and distinctive traits, and this brings them closer to the ethnopolitical meaning. For instance, the Anglican minister Joseph Townsend (1790, 90) adds an identification with territory when he makes the comment that the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659) established “the most natural of all boundaries, the ocean alone excepted, between two great commercial nations.” Years later, the writer Elizabeth Spence (1809, vol. 1, 56–57) narrated her travels throughout England and Wales. She opines that the inhabitants of Monmouthshire did not see themselves as Welsh, and in the course of doing so she affirms that they do not like “strangers” and defines this as “a trait of nationality.” She also points out that both the Scots and the Welsh “have pride of ancestry, and a frank hospitality, which, I am sorry to remark, although with more ability, is less common amongst our [English] nation.”

The declining tendency of the genetic concept is not exclusive to the British, although the different chronological patterns suggest that the decline occurred earlier among Britons than it did among the French, and that it in turn came about earlier among the latter than it did among the Spaniards and the Portuguese. Despite his genetic usages, Ferrer also displays ethnotypical and liberal concepts of nationhood, especially when he is talking about his own nation, Spain. One fellow Catalan, the nobleman Rafael d’Amat, who was born in 1746 and was thus one generation older than Ferrer, retains the idea of a “Catalan nation” at the same time as he also makes it clear that he is Spanish. Sometimes, he even uses the expressions “our Spanish and Catalan nation” and “the Spanish and Catalans” (*els espanyols i catalans*) as though they were compound nouns, while at other times it seems that he considers them to be separate entities. His diary entry on the Battle of Trafalgar combines a national concern with more prosaic worries and provides interesting materials for reflection in relation to more composite nations:

November 11 [1805] ... What we see happening today is very painful: so many errors and confusion all throughout our Spanish and Catalan nation [*en tota nostra nació espanyola*]



*i catalana*], and recently the ruin and loss of our people and fleet in naval combat, akin to another Battle of Lepanto, which was so unfortunate for us in the Ocean Sea, seven leagues away from Cadiz; misfortunes never come singly and there is no joy for the Spanish and French sailors, and [there was] safety for the English, even though things were not easy for them either.

This horrible news has lasted as long as it takes for a pig to die, which is not more than three days, but with this experience, being things as they are, we do not have God's blessing. I fear for other disasters in Spain. Let us pray for them not to happen. Amen. (Amat 1994, 126)

As can easily be deduced, ambiguity of meaning is one of the main problems with these sources. Every analytical framework is a simplification that should be understood as a map rather than as a set of silos. Once the idea of nation has been established as a group of common origin, pressure for a semantic evolution based on supposedly shared characteristics of the group is likely to develop. Amat's fragment reveals a transitional position toward ethnotypical forms of nationhood, according to which nations are allotted a territory and a sort of collective agency.

Sometimes, contemporaries even showed a certain awareness of that semantic change and complexity and wrote in their ego-documents about it. Highly transcultural contacts are prone to generate situations favorable to the use of national languages. One of the most important expeditions that the Portuguese Crown undertook in its American possessions produced the Luso-Brazilian naturalist Alexandre Ferreira's *Viagem filosofica*. In this account of the travels that he undertook between 1783 and 1792, he describes his experiences with indigenous tribes and reflects on the word "nation" in terms of the different ideas behind it:

In no way should we understand the term "nations of Indians" as ["nation" is understood] in Europe. The European that reads or hears that this or that river is inhabited by so many nations will deceive himself by thinking (which I do not) that some of them are, for example, like the Germans, the French, the Portuguese, etc. They are not even that portion of the dwellers contained in the smallest province of these kingdoms.

People use the term "nations of Indians" for societies that are so small and insignificant in number of members that sometimes they hardly surpass three hundred, four hundred, or six hundred souls. It is astonishing that some groups that are so small span across spaces that are bigger than the biggest kingdoms of Europe. Hence, they must divide their families into little tribes to be able to survive, such is their way of life. (Ferreira 1972, 98)

### Ethnotypical Nationhood

It should be noted that Ferreira equates "nations" with "kingdoms" in the European context. As I previously mentioned, one of the most popular modernist tenets rests on an identification of nationhood and nationalism and puts forward politization as a defining factor. Here I argue that traditional ways of understanding the transition from genetic meanings of "nation" to liberal and romantic ones—premodern/modern nations and protonationalism/modern nationalism—lack nuance and can sometimes lead to utterly distorted interpretations of sources that obscure the very process of their creation. The appearance of the notion of national sovereignty was not the first moment when the idea of nation adopted "political functions," to use Breuilly's terms. Rather, there were other political meanings that predated the Age of Revolutions and upon which that doctrine was built. The analyzed ego-documents suggest that most contemporary individuals were socialized in those meanings and used them to try to understand the major political changes that their world was going through.

These alternative meanings form what I have called "politicized ethnotypical nationhood," which draws on ancient and medieval ideas of political community related to classical republicanism.

In the political history of the West, the practice of these ideas revolved around the experience of city-states and local government, as well as around relations between the “king” and the “kingdom” in feudal Europe and, later, in the so-called “absolutist” states. However, these ideas alone would have been unable to be transferred from small communities in which almost all interactions occurred on a face-to-face basis (clans, villages, and cities) or from the corporatist and hierarchical *Ancien Régime* institutions to the massive, more or less horizontal, imagined community that has usually been defined as the “modern nation.”

The origins of that “modern nation” are where the two types of ethnotypical nationhood come together. As my corpus starts in late 18th century, further research would be required to pinpoint the exact causal relations between the idea of nations as peoples with distinctive characters and traits (the “nonpoliticized” concept) and that of nations as peoples with institutions and a perception of a public sphere (the “politicized” concept). However, I believe that distinguishing the two forms is the key to bridging the divide between genetic and republican nationhood on one hand and liberal and romantic nationhood on the other, as well as to understanding what was available to be transformed and/or adapted in the minds of political actors in geographical and temporal contexts such as Philadelphia in 1776, Paris in 1793, Cadiz in 1812, or Lisbon in 1822. In other words, personal experiences during the Age of Revolutions reveal ways of “talking with the nation” (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 540–542) that suggest that the period was lived as a point of arrival as much as a point of departure in relation to the issue of nationhood, and also that the key to understanding the intersection between these two points is the ethnotypical meanings of “nation.” Focusing too much on national sovereignty as an all-encompassing fundamental rupture without devoting attention to how that principle could be formulated and whether it was the dominant idea of nation in contexts different from high politics would obscure this.

Among the nonpoliticized usages, we can still find an overlap between “nation,” “people,” and “race,” notions that in the 19th century would be filtered into separate semantic categories or revamped as what I have called the “biological” concept of nation. The newspaper editor and author Frederick Bayley (1830, 426–427) wrote a book about his years of adolescence and young adulthood in the British West Indies, where his father, a soldier, worked in the colonial administration. When commenting on the slaves there, he states:

We all know that as great differences exist between the minds and dispositions of men as between their stature, their features, and their general appearance; but we know also that every race of people has its peculiar characteristic. The Spaniards are proud and haughty; the Dutch obstinate and phlegmatic; the Italians polite and *plein de ruse* [shifty, crafty]; the French lively and volatile; the Irish warm and impetuous; the Scotch cool and persevering; while the English, to include *multum in parvo*, are all John Bulls; yet I can find no characteristic for the negroes, nothing that will apply to all, unless it be the undisputed possession of flat noses, thick lips, a skull that might well resist a blow from the iron hammer of a London blacksmith, and the patronage of a certain invisible little devil, who is always about their persons, contriving, with most praiseworthy perseverance, to instigate them, whenever an opportunity offers, to put their hands to mischief.

As is apparent from Bayley’s racism, “nonpoliticized” means that the defining axis of the belonging ties are not political—that is, the community is not a political body. However, this does not imply an absence of politics from the context, the consequences, or even the contents of these ties. Ethnotypical definitions of national characters are frequently shot through with contemporary transnational metanarratives and tropes in which power and conflict are inherent. That of “civilization/barbarism,” deeply intertwined with the very Enlightenment idea of “modernity,” shaped 18th- and 19th-century usages (Andreu Miralles 2016; Thom 1995). “An Englishman accustomed to the neatness, & convenience of the Inns in his own Country, and to the civility which is universally found, will require a little time to reconcile himself to those He will find abroad,”

painter Joseph Farington (1978, 22), who was born in 1747, would write in his diary in 1793. Almost a decade later, after a trip to France during the Treaty of Amiens period, he reflected on how that experience had solidified in him the belief that the English nation, due to the superiority of its traits, was effectively at the apex of the hierarchical classification of ethnotypical nationhood:

I felt on my return a difference the most striking; it was expressed in everything; and may be explained by saying that it was coming from disorder to order; from confusion, to convenience; from Subjection to freedom.... All appeared appropriate and substantial, and every Man seemed respectable because his distinct & proper Character was consistently maintained. — What must be the nature of that Mind that would not feel grateful that it was his Lot to be an Englishman; a Man entitled from Birth to participate in such advantages as in no other Country can be found.

Such a State for Man must naturally have an influence upon the Manners of the people [sic]. It certainly was manifest to me that the difference in the deportment of the English when compared with the French, is as great as the Causes which produced it. I could not be insensible to that air of independence bordering upon haughtiness, which is manifested in the English Character, but is little seen among the people I had left. Wealth, and Security, and the pride of equal freedom, together habituate the mind to a conscious feeling of self importance that distinguishes the people of England from those of other Countries. — But if this effect is produced, if there is less of what is called the Amiable, it is amply made up by a quality of a much higher kind, which is integrity, that is a word which the English may apply to their Character by the consent of the whole world more universally than any other Nation that exists in it. (Farington 1979, 1914–1915)

Certainly, by 1800 the belief that national characters and the political organization of the community were somewhat related was well established and often expressed independently from the idea of national sovereignty. “It seems to me that the national character of the French has been altered since the Revolution,” the young warehouse owner and future radical member of Parliament Richard Potter would write in an 1803 diary entry. This means that “from a volatile people, subjected to their rulers, they have started being a nation that protects their liberties.” However, he laments, “At this moment the French government [Napoleon’s government] is as absolute as in the time of the kings” (London School of Economics Archives, Special Coll Misc 156, vol. 3, 130).

Of course, ideas of politicized ethnotypical nationhood could be phrased in other terms. In British political culture, where the relationship between the two ethnopolitical concepts seems to have come about earlier and been closer, “country” and “land” were among those terms. The shepherd John Clare ends his short autobiography by referring to French revolutionaries in the following terms: “May the foes of my country ever find their hopes blasted by disappointments and the silent prayers of the honest man to a power that governs with justice for their destruction meet always with success” (Robinson 1983, 26).

In the French, Spanish, and Portuguese cases, the derivatives of *patria*, which were originally employed in both republican and genetic usages, are the most common alternatives to the use of “nation” as a term that describes a kingdom as a body endowed with political and sociocultural distinctiveness. In the case of Portugal, the word *reino* (kingdom) is often used.

In some of their forms, politicized ethnopolitical ideas of nation only differ from liberal ones in the respect that sovereignty is not included in the equation, either because the subject does not intend to affirm that his or her nation is or should be the ultimate source of political power or because he or she opposes the principle of national sovereignty as a political stance. My proposal implies that, without ethnotypical nationhood, liberal revolutionaries would have been unable to develop and socially extend their Rousseauian nation of citizens, and counterrevolutionaries and Restoration regimes could not have developed their forms of hybridism as they did (Caiani 2017). According to this interpretation, the Age of Revolutions may have been a moment of “transition” and not merely one of “invention.”

Additionally, my proposal suggests that primary sources that contain patriotic language and claims to the nation and that were authored by conservatives and traditionalists before, during, and after the revolutions can no longer be suppressed in academic discussion, dismissed as mimicry, or construed as superficial rhetoric that was ancillary to “old” or “antimodern” ideas of religion and absolute monarchy. An idea of a nation with a preexisting personality, rights, and constitution was claimed by individuals with opposing political views and life experiences. Given the context of political intensification that prevailed within the Age of Revolutions, the same words were used both to develop revolutionary liberal meanings and to fight or tame them.

Of course, the process of revolution that began in France in 1789 (*vid. Sewell 2004*) provides a good example of that situation. “The king’s letters patent commanding the convening of the Estates General are from the month of January 1789,” the Jacobin lawyer André Mercier du Rocher (1989, 38) would recall in his 1794 memoirs. “Through those letters,” he continues, “the Monarch promised to return the French nation’s ancient rights to it; this was an acknowledgement that [the nation] had been under tyranny for roughly two hundred years; and it was an admission that [the king] was himself a usurper of those rights.” According to the author, that promise “warmed the hearts of all the French.”

The implicit idea of sovereignty might be interpreted as a historicist *ex post facto* projection (even though the time gap is only five years), but the same contents of a preexisting community of the French, endowed with political entity and agency, can be found in the writings of anti-Jacobin soldier Mathieu Dumas (1839, vol. 1, 425). He was born in the same year as Mercier (1753), and his late memoirs depict the revolutionary moment of 1789 as a happy convergence of the personal and public realms. His second child had just been born, and, together with “his friends and army colleagues,” he had “the best hopes for a better administration of public affairs. The upcoming meeting of the Estates General seemed to make France reborn under the rule of law [*faire renaître la France à la vie des lois*].” He adds: “I took a great deal of interest in the issues discussed during this great event. I was glad of being in a position where I could fully enjoy this big spectacle and see the sealing of the alliance between the authority of the prince and the liberty of the nation: *principatum et libertatem*. Those were the best times of my life.” Those Latin words come from Tacitus (2014, 41), who was among 19th-century nationalists’ favorite classical authors and who wrote, “*Nerva Caesar res olim dissociabiles miscuerit, principatum et libertatem* [The emperor Nerva was able to blend things once irreconcilable: power and freedom]” (*Agr.*, 3). Here “power” implies “of the king” and “freedom,” “of the kingdom.” Altogether, this particular combination frames a nation without sovereignty.

Along these lines, even the refractory clergyman François Molin (born in French Savoy in 1752) would use this idea of France as a collective political actor. It is interesting that Molin’s allegiance to Frenchness is inconclusive, in the sense that sometimes he speaks of “the French” in third person, especially when referring to revolutionary armies. He also seems to imply that the world he is living in combines the Christian ecumene with a mosaic of nations that, at least in the case of France, match with political entities. This issue is apparent when he reacts in his diary to the “kidnapping” and imprisonment of Pope Pious VI in 1798–1799: “He was transported as a criminal guarded by gendarmes and soldiers as far as Valence, where he died as martyr of the modern philosophy.” Molin (2008, 240–241) depicts the pope as a sort of Jesus Christ in describing his last words, recounting how the pope told the archbishop of Corinth to advise his successor “to forgive the French as I pardon them with all my heart.” He comments in quite a rueful and outraged tone: “What thought can one have about such a death! The sovereign of the Christian Church dead in prison in the most Christian Kingdom [*le royaume très chrétien*],<sup>7</sup> and those who took him from jail to jail were his own children. Oh, France! What a crime you have committed! [*Quel est ton crime!*].”

### “Modern” Nationhood

Liberal and romantic usages constitute a minority in my empirical evidence, and they are often dissociated from everyday situations. The reasons why this is so depend on the individual and the case.

The subject might not have had that meaning in his or her mind (my corpus ends in the 1830s, so further research could shed more light on this issue), or he or she might just as well have felt that it was inappropriate for the context or the message.

As I have already mentioned, the liberal concept stems from applying a radical reading of the republican legacy to politicized ethnotypical forms of the nation. Arguably, this reading was initially undertaken by individuals who had an equally radical and subversive ideological profile and who were often shaped by opportunistic or troublesome personal situations that were always facilitated by the crisis or breakdown of prerevolutionary monarchies. It cannot come as a surprise, then, that even the most politically involved British individuals prefer politicized ethnotypical meanings. The few cases of discussion of national sovereignty are worded using the term “people,” as is typical in the English political vocabulary: “Laws must be such as are made by the whole commons, the whole people of England, . . . not the laws that are made by the few, for the partial and unjust benefit of the few, at the expence [sic] and cost of the whole” (Hunt 1820, 504–505). Conversely, cases of less gradual paths toward the liberal state, such as France or Spain, problematize citizenship through the issue of sovereignty a lot more.

The evolution of romantic nationhood out of the nonpoliticized ethnotypical concept is much harder to track within the corpus. The idea of the nation as a sort of collective, all-pervasive spirit that can also be embodied by very particular and personal things or experiences (a landscape, a building, a piece of music, and so forth) seems the best distinguishing criterion. For example, this can be found in the merchant Robert Semple’s (1807, vol. 2, 223) description in his travel book of how the contemplation of Greek ruins produced a much greater sense of pity in him than did Roman ones. “The modern German, or Gaul, or Briton, ascends the Capitol with a kind of triumph; or at least views the wide-spread ruins with a quiet melancholy.”

There is no doubt that extending the chronological scope of my sources into the 19th century would help to illuminate this part of the argument, but my main points still stand. Applying the metanarratives of modernity and tradition to the history of the national idea by talking about “protonationalism” or “modern forms of nationhood” is misleading and unnecessary.

It is misleading because it distorts historical data by applying to the sources a simplifying dualistic pressure, and this produces a view of the actual process of conceptual evolution that is very far from nuanced.<sup>8</sup> It is also misleading because it is teleological, as it construes historical evolution on a retrospective basis and favors a biased selection of evidence that is focused on groundbreaking, disruptive, and visionary accounts such as those of Goethe.

In my view, it also perpetuates the shortcomings of an ontological approach to nationhood. Of course, the social-constructionism advocated by modernists is the opposite to essentialism. However, this spirit seems to clash with the way some modernists tend to assess historical evidence. As it usually implies a progressive, directional, and sometimes even accumulative illusion of nation-building, it gives little leeway to the equivocal, the contradictory, or the polycentric. Instead, it sets a pre-decided standard of “modern nationhood” and measures the voices from the past according to it. Such standard is facilitated by the persistence of that ontological approach to the process of nation formation (for example, as in Hobsbawm 1990, 9–10).

Additionally, it is unnecessary because there are alternative ways of accounting for the remarkable set of changes and continuities that have taken place over recent centuries. These alternative ways may also provide a better understanding of forms of nationhood such as those promoted by some of the 20th century’s authoritarian regimes—Franco’s and Mussolini’s Spanish and Italian nationalisms, respectively, for instance. These would not meet the “modern” requirement of liberal national sovereignty and thus would not be “nationalisms” or express a “genuine” national identity according to the classic modernist criteria that are applied to the 18th and early 19th centuries.

My proposal aims to provide a better solution to these problems. By introducing politicized and nonpoliticized ethnotypical forms of nationhood as ideas that predate and survive liberal revolutions and stressing the plurality of life experiences, it differs from common modernist accounts of “invention” as driven by top-down elite manipulation and one-size-fits-all concepts of “nation” and

“nationalism.” Instead, it opens a way to integrate pre-19th century sources and postrevolutionary displays of nationhood that ignore or reject national sovereignty in a much more complex analytical narrative of conceptual evolution that, at least for the cases discussed, should not start in 19th-century liberal and romantic nationalisms.

Assuming the influence of the context and the importance of the changes that occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries keeps a constructionist approach and rejects perennialist and ethnosymbolist notions of continuity based on “traditions” and lingering cultural “cores” or legacies. By looking for changes in “the functions of the words” at a microhistorical level and by being much more specific about definitions and particular variations, one can detach from Anthony Smith’s macrohistorical work of ethnogenesis and nation formation. In this sense, my proposal is not necessarily a case against modernism as a whole, but against the particular (normative) way in which some modernists construe the history of national phenomena as mere reflections of structural changes and assume the narrative of modernity as an overarching, valid device for interpreting evidence.

That being said, the proposal hereby explained is not without limitations of its own. Some of these relate to as-yet unresolved matters, and others involve issues that I have intentionally set aside for the sake of concision.<sup>9</sup> Regarding the former, there are two problems that exist in the “premodern/modern” model and that to some extent subsist in mine: evidential ambiguity and conceptual reification. First, there are many usages of national languages (“nation,” “national”) or demonyms (“Spanish,” “Welsh”) that cannot be assigned to any form within the model because the meaning of them cannot be worked out. Thus, any attempt to dig into the semantics will be completely frustrated, and the dangers of extrapolation arise. The problems of indifference and social extension also still exist. The latter is especially evident when sources from lower-class groups are scarce or inexistent (even including middle-class individuals, the figure for nonelites in my corpus does not attain 40%). Arguably, here we are in an “absence of evidence/evidence of absence” situation. I could claim that my corpus suggests that nationalization in genetic and ethnotypical forms reached beyond intellectual or political elites even before liberal revolutions. I could defend that cases such as John Clare, François Molin, or Claudio Conceição are not exceptions in this matter, but this would always be a debatable point. However, such a limitation is not exclusive to the history of the Age of Revolutions, but affects every historical research in different degrees, as well as every present-day politological/sociological/anthropological study concerned with feelings and perceptions.<sup>10</sup>

Second, I have already mentioned that the model should be used as a map rather than as a set of silos. The outlines previously drawn do not rule out certain implicit ideas of “regimes of nationhood” and “evolution” that clash with the fragmentation, hybridity, and overlapping found in the sources.<sup>11</sup> A subject can use different concepts of nationhood in the same ego-document with no apparent causal or chronological pattern. Depending on their authors’ contextual profiles, sources produced well into the 19th century can display genetic usages. Nevertheless, the main poles of meaning and their relations still make sense. Of course, if a research question other than that of origins and evolution (such as ethics or social extension) is formulated, the map required might be different. Equally, new research focused on evidence from eras subsequent to the Age of Revolutions might modify the categories from the model that historically emerged after the “liberal” and “romantic” concepts did. Finally, more attention to the burgeoning debate on nationhood within empires and nations as empires (Judson 2016; Miller and Berger 2014), which is well established for Eastern Europe, could also affect our understanding of nationhood within these Atlantic monarchies.

## Conclusion

This article has sought to revisit the old debate on the modernity of nations in the light of recent theorizing about nationalism. Most of the advances in nationalism studies during the last decades were made by moving from the question of “when?” to that of “how?” and thus evaded the issue of origins. Nevertheless, the analytical conceptualization of the continuities and changes in the

cognitive organization of human diversity is still an outstanding and relevant issue. The modernity of nations debate not only shapes the history of nationhood but also provides key information about the very nature of national phenomena (relation between discourse, context, and performance; variance, change, and stability; misunderstandings and conflict).

Regarding the stalemate between modernism and its critics, we should never conflate a research question with an underlying problem. A failure to reach agreement after a long discussion does not diminish the importance of the problem itself or the need for a satisfactory solution to it. In such a situation, the reasonable path seems to be to reframe the question asked.

It must be conceded that decentering the debate has helped a lot. Postmodernism's theoretical disruption has entailed a shift from an ontological approach ("nations as things") toward a phenomenological one ("nationhood as practice"). In my case, embracing this shift was complemented by a dissatisfaction with both classical modernist and perennialist positions on the interpretation of evidence from the 18th and early 19th centuries. Drawing on these two elements and on certain critical positions within ethnosymbolism and modernism (Joep Leerssen, Rogers Brubaker), I have proposed a model based on the abstraction of patterns of usage in ego-documents, a source suitable for reconstructing the rich and fragmented landscape of personal experiences and their complex dynamic worlds. To be more specific, I used a corpus composed of 170 memoirs, diaries, journals, and travel books that were produced between the 1780s and the 1830s by British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese individuals from different backgrounds. Most of them are middle- or high-class people who tend to be those presenting the most elaborated, abundant, and lengthy reflections about their nations. All of them are Westerners, belonging to the four most important polities in the Atlantic world at the time. The corpus does not sufficiently cover the subalterns within those states' borders. Non-European dwellers of America, Africa, Asia, or Oceania are not considered. Something similar can be said of Eastern Europe. A comprehensive global history of national phenomena is yet to be written, perhaps because "nationalism in its European development and profile cannot be easily compared to processes of state- and nation-formation elsewhere in the world" (Leerssen 2006, 19). Logically, different individuals can produce different concepts and patterns of usage. Hence, this model does not intend to be universally applicable whatsoever.

The Western European-based patterns expounded in this article (republican, genetic, nonpoliticized ethnotypical, politicized ethnotypical, liberal, romantic, biological, cultural, and democratic) overlap and become hybridized. They cannot cover every manifestation of nationhood. Further research is certainly needed, but the model overcomes the premodern/modern simplification by introducing the ethnotypical forms of nationhood (the "national characters" of the nonpoliticized notion and the "polity without sovereignty" of the politicized version). My proposal holds that these forms were operative before, during, and after the liberal revolutions and played a key role in the rise of the liberal and romantic forms. Thus, the too-often-neglected transitional parts of this process can be rightfully elucidated without denying the dimensions of it that involved ruptures.

**Acknowledgments.** The author would like to thank Professor Mariano Esteban de Vega for his support and guidance as his PhD supervisor, and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

**Financial Support.** This research was funded by HAR2017-87557-P research project (Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness).

**Disclosure.** Author has nothing to disclose.

## Notes

- 1 There are several surveys of theories of nationalism. A popular one is Özkirimli (2017).

- 2 Other authors have kept the idea of “modernity” but are much more flexible regarding the chronology and the nature of those modernization processes. See the works of Liah Greenfeld (1992) and Miroslav Hroch (1985, 2015).
- 3 As Brubaker (2004, 31) points out, there is gap between the realm of “practice” (the words used by our subjects in their social life) and the realm of “analysis” (the words we use to understand our subjects). The fact that “nation” is inevitably both a category of analysis and practice puts a strain on this gap. Given the nature of national phenomena (perceptions, identities, and the practices based on them), my historical approach hinges on using categories of practice as evidence for the inductive construction of categories of analysis. These categories are those that form our model. Of course, this inference must be drawn from a diverse pool of sources and never assume the nationalists’ language at face value. In my view, such a management of the relation between analytical concepts and the concepts of contemporary people is a fertile path toward a history of “nationhood as practice.” In this case, the “practices” that answer to the phenomenological approach are the autobiographical acts generated by individuals “talking the nation” in their life narratives (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 538–542).
- 4 Apart from Leerssen’s work regarding the “ethnotypical nationhood” concept, previous works on the Spanish case by Fernández Sebastián (1994) have also been relevant for the development of the proposal.
- 5 Elites are considered to be recipients of a university education, those who held medium- or large-sized fortunes, businessmen, and/or mid-level or senior state officials. The “noncentral area” criterion includes individuals who have not been raised in England, Île-de-France (or its nearby departments), Castile, and the Lisbon area. The collection of the sources in different archives and libraries was made randomly in the first instance, but subsequently applying the mentioned shaping criteria.
- 6 English translations from French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin are mine.
- 7 The title *christianissimus* had been linked to the kings of France since the Middle Ages. *Ancien Régime* France’s kings used the titles *sa majesté très chrétienne* or *le roi très chrétien*. This treatment would eventually be extended to the kingdom (Beaune 1985). Molin seems to use it as part of a politicized ethnotypical idea of the French.
- 8 Of course, lack of nuance is not exclusive of one particular theory. Perennialist authors are usually and rightfully criticized for perceiving nationalism everywhere every time. Examples are the Middle Ages “nationalism” of Hastings (1997), which would not be substantially different from that of the 19th and 20th centuries, and the pervasive “political ethnicity” of Gat (2013).
- 9 I have not put forward a more comprehensive coverage of differences between cases and the comparative implications thereof; the sources’ methodological problems in terms of the issue of “personal experience”; the reasons why memoirs, diaries, and travel books but not other kinds of ego-documents were used; the place afforded to the concept of “nationalism”; and the role of conflict, contact, and internal cleavage. The complete study can be found in Moreno-Almendral (2018b).
- 10 Ferran Archilés (2013, 114) approaches this problem with the Borgean story about an empire where the science of cartography had become so advanced that they ended up crafting a 1:1 map. There were no representativeness issues, but the map was useless.
- 11 Here I use a broad idea of “concept,” understood as a word that is endowed with an abstract meaning. Keeping the same set of words (“nation,” “national,” etc.), I monitor variations in the different ideas that individuals appear to express with the same word. In this sense, my approach would be closer to the *Begriffsgeschichte* than to the Cambridge School, although the limitations in the contextualization are often imposed by the nature of the sources. In no case should concepts be construed as independent from the individuals that think and perform them.



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**Cite this article:** Moreno-Almendral, R. 2021. Nationhood as Practice and the Modernity of Nations: A Conceptual Proposal. *Nationalities Papers* 49: 12–29, doi:10.1017/nps.2019.114