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Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies

ISSN: 1470-1847 (Print) 1469-9524 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjil20

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To cite this article: Gregorio Alonso (2016) Corporations, subjects, and citizens: the peculiar modernity of early Hispanic liberalism, Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies, 22:1, 7-22, DOI: 10.1080/14701847.2016.1212973

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14701847.2016.1212973

Published online: 10 Aug 2016.

JOURNAL OF IBERIAN AND LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES, 2016
VOL. 22, NO. 1, 7–22
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14701847.2016.1212973

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OPEN ACCESS

Corporations, subjects, and citizens: the peculiar modernity of early Hispanic liberalism

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ABSTRACT

The varying degrees of political novelty and continuity brought about by the arrival of Hispanic constitutionalism are assessed in this article. It sheds light on the adaptations and the role played by pre-existing discourses and rituals in the articulation of the self-proclaimed "liberal" institutions, both in the Iberian Peninsula and in the new independent Latin American territories. The tensions between individualistic and collectivistic representations of political power are at the centre of the analysis. The text thus seeks to make an original contribution to current debates in historiography regarding the emergence of a liberal subjectivity in the early nineteenth century and its limits.

KEYWORDS

Liberalism; Hispanic world; modernity; collectivism; individualism

> The history of individuals can shake our received wisdom about the ensemble of behaviours and events that we consider to be collective. Yet at the same time, we can only study individuals through their interaction with social groups. (Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* (2013) [1989])

This article examines the individual and collective political representations formulated by early Hispanic liberals. The goal is to explore the degree of novelty of the proposals that set the foundations of liberal constitutional thought both in Spain as well as in the ex-colonies and new independent republics in America. The level of loyalty to pre-existing political legitimation and identification beliefs, narratives, and ceremonies will also be studied in order to provide a significant contribution to current debates in Spanish and Latin American historiography regarding the emergence of a liberal subjectivity in the early nineteenth century.

Despite the recent contributions by Larry Siedentop (2014), the arrival of modernity and the rise of individualism have traditionally been seen as coterminous by most experts and academics. The naturalized identification of human individuals, on the one hand, with all and each member of the community subjected to the Law, on the other, is a rather recent historical creation linked to the extension and consolidation of modern citizenship across the West after the American and French revolutions in the late eighteenth century. These convergent sources of collective and individual identification have been explored by scholars

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such as Pietro Costa (1994, esp. 66–9). The process of historical and constitutional definition of citizenship was a long one and, according to academics such as Alejandro Guzmán Brito (2002), it was only in the second half of the twentieth century when legal codes fully reflected such cultural and political developments. One of the most outstanding results of this politico-cultural process was the concession to individual human beings of the exclusive privilege of enjoying rights and duties as prescribed by Law (Brito 2002; Jiménez 2009; Rodríguez Moreno 2011). Underpinning the standard liberal-democratic formula that states "one person, one vote" there thus is a long history whose unfolding over the nineteenth century will be examined in this article within the context of the Hispanic world. Moreover, as shown by Domenico Losurdo ([2006] 2011), the different versions of Liberalism were based on the exclusive recognition of rights of the members of the white master-race, leaving Afro-descendants as well as indigenous peoples in the Americas outside the renewed political regime. In addition, Liberal nations were also Imperial nations and, as highlighted by Josep Maria Fradera (2015), the colonial territories would be run by "special laws" which did not fully coincide with the constitutional rulings enforced in the metropoles.

The first section of this article will thus shed light on the political and constitutional developments which set the grounds for the spread of liberal codes, practices, and ideas in the Atlantic Hispanic world during the so-called Age of Independence (1808–1830s). Secondly, the focus will be put on the Spanish Revolution starting in 1868 as a milestone in the aforementioned process of individualization of political subjects. The resulting constitution passed in Parliament in 1869 must be deemed as a watershed because it was only then that for the first time a bill of individual rights was incorporated into a Spanish constitution. The concluding remarks of this article will emphasize the kaleidoscopic and weak nature of civic subjectivity in the Hispanic world, the shortcomings of the teleological understandings of its emergence and consolidation, and the corresponding need for a more complex approach when it comes to defining overlapping human identities under the banner of the "modern subject."

The modern (individual) subject in recent Hispanic historiography

In a ground-breaking article published more than a decade ago, the influential Spanish historian José Álvarez Junco (2004) argued that modern political culture in modern Spain was cast in a framework of collectivist, rather than individualistic sources of ideological and political discourses whereby political agency and strategies were determined by the leading role constitutionally granted to collective entities, or corporations, such as the "nation" and the "people" (Álvarez Junco 2004).[1] Following Liah Greenfield's work (1992), Álvarez Junco argued that Spain's accession to modernity relied more on a "collective-authoritarian" notion of the political subject and power relations rather than on the "individualistic-libertarian" version prodiminant in the Anglo-American world. His assessment relies mostly on the lack of a separate bill of rights in most Spanish constitutions over the nineteenth century. According to Álvarez Junco, the specialized historiography had wrongly sought and found individualistic traits in Spanish liberalism. In his opinion, historians had understood liberalism as a local adaptation of a mixture of French revolutionary Jacobinism and Anglo-Saxon individualism. This misleading identification, he argued, constituted a major analytical and interpretative error because, on reflection and after a closer look at available historical evidence, "more continuity can be detected with the corporatist and collectivist-authoritarian thought

of traditional scholastics" in Spanish revolutionary politics and legislation than initially stated (Alvárez Junco 2004, 87). This was largely the case in the 1812 first Hispanic Constitution.

Other scholars have followed Álvarez Junco's lead and subsequently introduced new elements to the debate on individualism in modern Spain. For instance, María Cruz Romeo (2005) published an article the year after Alvarez Junco's where she revisited this very topic. According to Romeo, the process of adaptation and learning of modern politics in Spain was indeed determined by a collectivist approach that was, however, fully compatible with the constitutional declaration of national sovereignty and some degree of popular participation in politics. Romeo focused on the establishment of the liberal state and the actual articulation of political representation after the death of Ferdinand VII in 1833. Two decades after the passing of the 1812 Cadiz Constitution and despite several revolutionary episodes and legal adjustments, the leading role in the political world was a domain still reserved for local notables. The so-called *patricios* had the mission of becoming and acting as true and loyal representatives of their respective communities and of putting in place the necessary arrangements for guaranteeing the happiness of the nation. The defence of the legitimate heir to the throne, Isabella II, would become their most pressing objective during the political struggles in times of revolution and civil war against the traditionalist and anti-liberal Carlist faction between 1833 and 1839.

Thus, by focusing on both the actions and correspondence of the Progressive Liberal MP Ferrán Caballero, Romeo underscored the transformative impact that the liberal revolution had had as regards the configuration of socio-political leadership and the exercise of political influence. Although still within a sound monarchical setting, after the revolution it would be "talent, merit and hard work" instead of aristocratic descent which endowed distinguished individuals with the necessary power to participate and lead in public affairs. Romeo, however, also highlights Caballero's elitist understanding of society and his own role as a political representative. This Progressive *patricio* was openly opposed to contemporaneous notions of political pluralism and competition. Indeed he lamented the fragmentation of the Spanish people along party lines linked to the introduction of electoral competition in the race for power within the co-sovereign parliament. His rejection of pluralism thus understood, according to Romeo, stemmed from his own memories of the First Carlist war (1833–9) and the material and moral devastation that plagued the country during and after it. The Progressive myth of the unity of all Spanish liberals, despite divisions between Moderates, Progressives, and Radicals, was still powerful and influential even in the mid-nineteenth century when enough political experience that blurred that image was readily available (Romeo 2005, 130–2). Nevertheless, such political fictions of liberal unity proved to be particularly useful in times of transition and consolidation of a new political regime under an infant Queen Isabella II (1834–68) that stirred staunch resistance.

Along with Álvarez Junco, Romeo states that the automatic identification of modern notions of national sovereignty and popular participation in politics with a high degree of legally enshrined individualism needs to be re-framed when dealing with Spanish liberalism. Given the constitutional and electoral dispositions introduced by the 1812 Constitution, Romeo wondered: "Is this therefore a traditionalist, as long as it is alien to individiualism, conception of politics? What is 'liberal', then, about the representations of politics by the [Spanish] liberals?" (Romeo 2005, 133). She therefore advocates the revision of the historiographic understanding of Spanish liberalism in order to make a more nuanced and adapted use of analytical tools which are sometimes too dependent on current notions of

"individualism" and "representative government" taken from foreign examples. On this note, it is worth remembering that, unlike Jacobin versions of Constitutional practice, where departments were merely administrative units of a heavily centralized state, the three-tier electoral procedure introduced by the 1812 and 1837 Spanish constitutions sanctioned sites of freedom (i.e. parish, district, and province, respectively) to be protected and duly represented by the nation-state. National sovereignty was thus to be exerted "from the bottom" through them, in due correspondence with their corporative nature and respective functions. Besides, individual rights and freedoms were acknowledged by the Law for the enjoyment of single subjects only in their capacity as members of those corporations that articulated national representation (Vallejo 2006).

Another substantial contribution to the debate was made by cultural-political historian María Sierra (2009). In her view, Spanish liberalism proved to be largely reluctant to incorporate the individualistic tone of its foreign counterparts due to the perceived fear of anarchy. This is why, even in its most Progressive formulations, Spanish liberalism defended that suffrage must be enjoyed only by notable men and those capable of exercising it, i.e. the *patricios* (Sierra 2009, 67; Sierra, Peña Guerrero, and Zurita Aldeguer 2010, *passim*). Their political action would be determined by the need to overcome previous sources of collective and individual identification and foster the new ones based on national and constitutional beliefs. In fact, when examining the process, Spanish historian of political thought Javier Fernández Sebastián had argued that for early Spanish constitutionalism:

> the only existing bonds that linked Spaniards – a collective still conceived of as a multifarious whole made out of families, communities and socio-political bodies, by no means a group of individuals – were almost exclusively the shared Catholic faith and the loyalty to the sovereign. (Fernández Sebastián 1994, 57)

This assessment clearly relates to recent contributions to the debate on individualism and the Christian roots of modernity. According to Larry Siedentop, the doctrine of natural rights intertwined with secularist ideas in such a way as in modern times because, as he controversially argued, "Christian beliefs provided the ontological foundation for the individual as a moral status and primary social role" (Siedentop 2014, 355).

Also in the Hispanic world the Catholic culture that gave birth to such adaptations of modern political ideas inspired specific institutional frameworks and constitutional pathways. For instance, the Constitution in its infamous article 12 declared Spain's religion "shall perpetually be the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman, the only true religion." More importantly, in order to be properly proclaimed and implemented, the Constitution was to be read out in public during the Sunday mass by the highest member of the clergy working in each parish. Only then would it be legally binding for all members of the community. Through this ceremony, parishioners would cease to be subjects and be turned into newly born citizens. This modus operandi seemingly stands in stark contrast with the French constitutional precedents where citizenship acquired an individualistic stance. But these differences, however, remain only on the surface. As shown by Christine Guionnet for the July Monarchy, this holistic understanding of the electoral processes was also pervasive in the local electoral procedures observed in France (Guionnet 1997, 182, as quoted in Romeo 2005, 136). In very similar terms, Lucien Jaume has also emphasized the need for a more sophisticated and better-informed understanding of post-revolutionary French political thought and practice. Thus, when analysing the political discourses and electoral practices of mid-nineteenth-century France, Jaume found the image of the single individual as bearer of political and civil rights,

to a large extent, banished within that framework due to reasons of political expediency (Jaume 1997). For the Hispanic world, as will be seen in the next section, the political subjects had defended local liberties, privileges, and immunities with great zeal as they were the reservoir of true freedom. Those liberties were defined and enjoyed collectively, ascribed to the neighbourhood, and were to be exerted through the local parish.

The attempt of tracing the roots of the modern state within the actual establishment of the appropriate mechanisms of political representation, on the one hand, and the emergence of the individual as the sole protagonist of liberal political fictions, on the other, can be detected in thinkers as influential as Michel Foucault. Both phenomena were seemingly historically and politically interrelated. According to experts on the work of the French philosopher, such as Thomas Lemke, Foucault's focus on the process of *subjetivization* arose in light of a dual analytical concern:

> On the one hand, there is his interest in political rationalities and the "genealogy of the state", that he investigates in a series of lectures, articles and interviews. On the other, there is a concentration on ethical questions and the "genealogy of the subject", which is the theme of his book project on the "History of Sexuality". (Lemke 2000).

Therefore, by tackling the latter, specialized historiography might shed some new light on both issues and their manifold relationships.

Álvarez Junco has not been alone in recent years in pointing out the corporatist and collectivist adaptation of modern institutions in the Iberian and Latin American regions. For instance, when reflecting on the nature of the 1812 imperial Constitution of Cadiz, experts such as Roberto Breña have also shown reluctance to apply the label of "liberal" to refer to the first Magna Carta of the Hispanic world. Relying on Benjamin Constant and depicting individual rights as *sine qua non* for the existence of a liberal society, Breña also questions the "entity, homogeneity and social diffusion" of liberalism in the Hispanic world around 1812 on both sides of the Atlantic. Spanish reformists and the political opposition to monarchical despotism alike entertained liberal ideas to a limited degree only (Breña 2013, 199–211).

The recognition of individual citizens' rights was indeed scattered across a variety of articles in the constitutions and they were not grouped in a bill of rights in a constitution until 1869. The reasons behind this "fear of the individual" (Sierra 2009, 69) cutting across all ideological families of Spanish liberalism, on the other hand, have also been explored by experts in cultural studies such as Andrew Ginger or José A. Valero (Ginger 2008, 122–5; Valero 2013, 62).

The democratic paradoxes and Catholic foundations of Hispanic modernity

Álvarez Junco's dictum that the Spanish political imagination was determined and framed by collectivist notions stands at odds with the perceived idea, echoed by figures such as José Ortega y Gasset, that the Hispanic peoples had traditionally been "extremely individualistic" as he put it in *La rebelión de las masas* (1929) (Peris Suay 2014). That very year, the scholar Gwladys L. Williams devoted an article to trace and account for the features of what was called the "Spanish character" through its literary and artistic manifestations. Her paradoxical conclusions coincided with Ortega's evaluation more than could be expected:

> Spain is largely indebted to her individualism, moreover, for a trait that is similar, but not the same – her democratic spirit. Democracy, "the sovereignty of the people," is the natural attitude of a

> nation intensely individualistic, dignified, and at times excessively proud. This sovereignty of the people dominates every important phase of Spanish life, except the political! (Williams 1929, 558)

But there are some other shared points between these two authors as regards the archetypical Spanish character. Ortega and Williams shared not only the identification of the problem but also the diagnosis:

> Such a discrepancy may be due partly to the lack of interest in practical affairs that we have already noted in the Spaniard, partly due to the Spanish inability to organize or co-operate. Democracy, from the political viewpoint, demands a certain amount of co-operation. (Williams 1929, 559)[2]

In this sense, the birth of a historical variety of "democratic Spain and Spanish America" as a result of the arrival of Modernity first needed to acknowledge the characteristic ways in which citizenship and belonging were lived and imagined in the eighteenth century. As Tamar Herzog has argued, divine revelation, tradition, and human reason set the foundation of collective life and the Law (Herzog 2003, 164–70). Modernity had allegedly started in a rather colourful and promising manner for the Spanish Monarchy. Patriotic leaders and brave subjects had paved the way for the arrival of Modernity in their successful struggle against the occupying French troops since 1808. In doing so they proved that they knew how to collaborate and get organized. Despite Williams' wrong assumptions, not only did they win the war – with the generous support of the English and Portuguese armies – but, at the same time, they also established a Constitution through a Parliament democratically elected. However, they did so in their own way and their decisions did not follow the established US or French patterns. Thus, leading experts on the Cádiz Constitution such as Clavero, Garriga, Llorente, and Portillo Valdés have singled out corporatism, historicism, and de-centralized *jurisdictionalism* (or *regalism*) (Paquette 2005, 107–17) as the salient features of the first versions of Hispanic constitutionalism. These historians, however, regard those characteristics as not necessarily contrary to liberalism (Clavero 1991; Garriga and Lorente 2007; Portillo Valdés 2000). They have convincingly highlighted their liberalizing potential and their historical ability to ground modern institutions along with their long-lasting respect for values and institutions such as monarchical rule and Catholic intolerance. Both of these were to be subjected to deep reforms by elected parliaments in order to protect modern individual freedoms *as well as* the collective will for emancipation.

A host of European observers regarded the 1812 constitution as it best suited their political and ideological agendas. For some, such as the Italian and Portuguese liberals, it was promising and for others, including most European counter-revolutionaries, it was far too dangerous. As a distinguished representative of the latter group, the conservative Scottish writer Archibald Alison argued that the Cadiz Constitution "was evidently *in the highest degree democratical*" [*sic*] (Alison 1836, 280). The reasons for his assessment lay in the fact that "the Cortes was elected by *universal suffrage*; there was no upper chamber or House of Peers to restrain its excesses; it was alone invested with the right of voting the taxes, *raising the army*, and establishing its regulation." The democratic tenets of the Spanish Magna Carta were also highlighted by the fact that Parliament was set to "control and direct all the public functionaries, and its powers were enjoyed, during the period of its prorogation, by a *permanent committee*, which had the power at any time, of its own authority, to reassemble the whole body" (281).[3] Much has been written about issues such as the proclamation of national sovereignty, the introduction of freedom of the press and indirect universal manhood suffrage for free, peninsular, and literate men, and the abolition of the Holy Office of the

Inquisition by the Constituent Cortes. Despite the key relevance of these novelties in the political, legal, and cultural spheres, however, the Constitution indeed lacked an accompanying bill of rights. And so was the case in the constitutions and constitutional projects of 1837, 1845, and 1856. Despite this, the 1812 Constitution inspired the imagination of international political observers and set a precedent insofar as the ability of the Spanish people to come to terms with the challenges linked to the triumph of the French Revolution.

Some decades later, the Constitution deserved the praise of the German revolutionary Karl Blind, a republican and an exile after the 1848 German revolution. Blind stood at the opposite extreme of the political spectrum and he praised the Constitution for the same reasons for which Alison had despised it. Blind acknowledged the historicist overtones of the constitutional code and defined it as a unique mixture of influences inspired by "the early constitutions of the Spanish kingdoms which bore a representative character, arising partly from a democratic source," on the one hand; and an "'aristocratic parliamentarism', in the good sense" (Blind 1869, 566). But overall, the 1812 Constitution was "so large in its spirit, and *more liberal* than any of the then existing constitutions of the other countries of the Old World, England not excepted" (567).

However democratic and advanced it was considered by some, the 1812 Constitution, as well as the Progressive one of 1837, also introduced religious intolerance and declared Spain an exclusively Catholic nation. This religious pre-constitutional configuration indeed stirred debates across influential cultural and political circles even under the reign of Charles IV (1788–1808), in the period immediately prior to the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula. In fact, some recent research has emphasized the persistence of those debates in those areas of Spain put under French control between 1808 and 1813 and stressed the political influence of some of the figures who criticized religious intolerance in the press, such as José Marchena, or in literary works, such as José Fernández de Moratín (Fernández Sebastián 2011; Domínguez 2014). Despite their contributions most constitutionalist leaders would keep on defending the need for religious intolerance as an essential guarantee of political and moral stability in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Therefore, the comparative delay in the emergence of a self-constituted, isolated, and legally defined subject of individual rights, i.e. citizenship, on the one hand; and the preservation of religious intolerance in Catholic terms under liberalism, on the other, were not, and could not, be totally distinct historical developments. Both phenomena were framed in a given geographic and cultural area, the so-called Hispanic Atlantic, an identifiable and distinct region due to the official and imperial existence of a common sovereign, a shared religious faith, and a shared language. Indeed, once he read the final draft of the 1812 Cadiz constitution, the London-based Irish–Spanish writer and polemicist José María Blanco White exclaimed: "the Spanish people must be free in all but in their consciences" (Blanco White [1811] 1990, 142).

There were good reasons for Blanco's lament. The imperial crisis of the first decades of the century paved the way for the Catholic clergy to speak out and occupy a central position amongst the ranks of armed resistance against the Napoleonic forces in Spain (Alonso 2008). The same applies to the viceroyalty of New Spain, today's Mexico, when pro-independence groups started fighting against the Royalist armies right after the first news of the occupation of the Iberian Peninsula by the French troops and the abdication of the king reached there (Connaughton 2010). In both cases, the cultural, political, and emotional identification of the emerging nationality with its Catholic underpinnings carried out by the revolutionary

authorities proved pivotal. The overlapping religious and political identities of the subjects, citizens-to-be, coalesced and were cemented through a sophisticated set of politico-religious ceremonials and public rituals dictated by the Constitutions and the Law. Thus, in the Hispanic world not only were elections held in the local parishes but, even more importantly, the 1812 Constitution became enforceable only after high masses were celebrated and a solemn *Te Deum* chanted in each locality of the kingdom or republic (Spanish Constitution [1812], articles 40, 47, 58, 71, and 80).

These procedures do not fully correspond to the perceived image of liberalism and the exercise of power under constitutionalism either. On the one hand, the idea that the Law dictated and determined the very public existence of every single individual is severely challenged if its actual implementation hinged on the mediating powers of the Catholic Church. In that sense, in the last two decades there has been a historiographical debate on the nature and limits of the Catholic underpinnings of politics in both the newly independent republics as well as the metropolis (Di Stefano 2004; Eastman 2012; Fernández Sebastián 2011; Portillo Valdés 2010; Serrano 2008). The staunch resistance with which the Church received Constitutionalism has already been documented and well-studied by several specialists. Less has been said, however, about the widespread tendency among the ruling elites to rely on the Catholic clergy to educate citizens in Liberal values. The local parish was the chosen *locus* were local elections were to be held. Bishops were given the responsibility of monitoring the content of schoolbooks and school curricula in order to guarantee their compatibility with the inherited religious faith. These trends were homogeneous in most Spanish and Latin American legislation during the first half of the nineteenth century (Alonso 2014).

It was only during the so-called Democratic or Revolutionary Six Years (1868–74), which led to the proclamation of the Spanish First Republic (1873–4), that the advocacy for individual rights was first grounded on a truly egalitarian understanding of citizenship. This had become the norm amongst the Democratic and Republican sectors of Spanish politics in the 1860s. Both political parties embodied radical liberalism and shared their emphasis on the need for larger political liberties and more pro-active popular participation in local, regional, and national politics. The Republicans would also struggle for a change of regime that implied replacing Queen Isabella II for a Presidential regime (Thomson 2009). The political turmoil and sustained political experimentation that broke out after the 1868 revolution, on the other hand, gave way to the spread of a rather patriotic rhetoric which once more emphasized the collectivist dimensions of the Spanish political revolution. Its leading motto: "*¡Viva España con honra!*" (Long live Spain with honour!), meant a variety of things for different people and socio-political actors but it nonetheless put the *patria* at the core of the process.

After years experimenting on and expanding the meaning and content of constitutional definitions of freedom and independence, the forced abdication and subsequent exile in Paris of Queen Isabella II seemed to have opened the political window of opportunity for a fuller and more effective implementation of the liberal programme. Universal manhood suffrage, the question of who would become the head of state, and freedom of worship received much of the political attention of the Spanish Parliament over the fall and winter of 1868 and 1869. The staunch commitment to religious intolerance was firstly abandoned by Democrats and Republicans but even Progressive Liberals started to question its validity and wondered about its true impact on Spanish society. Moreover, they also began to accept

that it was a "natural right" and thus "non-subject to legislation" and "prior to the [1869] Constitution" (De la Fuente Monge 2001; Suárez Cortina [2012] 2013, 58–67).

Religious freedom took precedence in the political agenda of the left-wing spectrum of Spanish politics for the first time in a consistent and consensual manner. The revolutionary Manuel Becerra, a high-ranking freemason, Progressive Liberal MP, and Overseas and Public Works Minister-to-be, encapsulated these new views during the constitutional parliamentary debates during the winter of 1868–9. According to him, the right to religious freedom was plainly "the foundation of all other individual rights." The revolutionary frenzy provoked by the exile of Isabella II and the political opportunities that accompanied it were to be used to establish freedom, and this time in individualistic terms. Therefore, it was up to the Cortes to set a new ground where freedom and justice would blossom. This could only be achieved by a full-fledged recognition of individual rights. In Becerra's words: "If somebody were to ask me if I would be happy with a Constitution where only individual rights would be consigned, my answer would be: 'yes'. I care little about all the rest." Among these rights, he highlighted "male universal suffrage, a free press, free thought in all its manifestations and the right to peaceful meeting and association" (*Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes de 1869*, 9-IV-1869, 374).

Some months later, the Spanish Parliament passed the final draft of a new democratic 1869 Constitution whose article 17 included all Becerra's desired rights as well as articles that protected the inviolability of the household and citizens' rights against unlawful detention via habeas corpus. Thus private property, the free expression of ideas and beliefs, the right to legally participate in politics without fear of detention, and the other relevant political rights and freedom of worship were enshrined. The leading protagonist of the Magna Carta this time would be the individual. By the individual, those who were white, non-slave, and peninsular male adults were understood. This constitution was possible only due to the strategic Parliamentarian alliance of the Progressive, Republican, and Liberal Union parties that supported it (Serván 2005).

During the decades that preceded the approval of the 1869 constitution, however, every experience of freedom and resistance to alleged oppression had, since the French invasion starting in November 1807, been articulated locally, regionally, and nationally via juntas (Artola 1974; Moliner Prada 1997; Portillo Valdés 2012). Free individuals representing their families, parishes, deputations, provinces, and regions had gathered and organized themselves to exert national sovereignty and protect individual and collective dignity and rights. The importance of the *ayuntamientos* (municipal councils) in this process of the liberal revolution and their role as reservoirs of inherited freedoms can hardly be overstated. Since the 1830s, they were at the centre of the *Progresista* agenda and they took a central role in the revolution of 1840.

Some contemporary international political observers argued along similar lines three decades later. Karl Blind, in an article published by *The North American Review*, provided a substantial assessment of the 1868 "Glorious Revolution" where he examined its origins, development, and the challenges it faced. Blind revisited and reproduced the republican and democratic European interpretation of the political events that took place in the first half of the century. Spain was a comparatively backward country by comparison with its northern European counterparts due to the traditional misadministration of its vast resources by the Habsburg and Bourbon dynasties. They had plundered the kingdom's natural

resources, emptied the public coffers, and depopulated the country for the sake of keeping power in their hands:

> Royal and priestly absolutism, though weighing heavily on the nation, has not been able utterly to destroy the federative and semi-republican spirit, which has found expression in the particular ground-laws of various provinces in the *fueros* and the *ayuntamientos*. If you observe the Constitution, you are our rightful ruler; if not, not. (Blind 1869, 556)

That latter maxim encapsulated a very peculiar understanding of politics and Blind saw in it "a good substratum of democratic institutions." And he added:

> within the last ten or twelve years, the old historical principle of self-government has received additional support through a Republican propaganda actively carried on among the younger men of the learned classes, the students and young professors, as well as among the working-people and a considerable section of the middle class of the larger towns. (Blind, 1869, 556)

According to Blind, the sustained economic, political, and cultural transformations that had taken place in Spain since 1808 had laid the foundations for the emergence of a better-organized and actively mobilized critical mass of citizens who identified freedom with the establishment of a republic. Despite decades of Isabella's misrule, Blind argued, Spaniards under the age of 25 were better educated and harboured more progressive ideas than previous generations due to the introduction of an improved schooling system. The new political leaders took the opportunity to prove Karl Blind right and they complied with a pseudo-historical rule that he put forward in his personal analysis of the revolution:

> Wherever a people have not had the advantage of enjoying free political institutions for some time, there the initiative of energetic minorities, answering to larger currents of general, yet ill-defined tendencies, will always be able to achieve startling successes. (Blind, 1869, 576)

As a consequence of their actions and during heated public debates, a full-fledged version of Spanish liberalism, this time based on the recognition and preservation of individual rights, finally saw the light in Parliament. For the most ideologically advanced representatives of Liberalism, Spanish society and its people were by then ripe for the full enjoyment of the rights and duties of citizenship, now grounded on an allegedly more modern, individualistic understanding of the political and constitutional subject. Some scholars have even compared the 1869 constitution to the one of 1931, which proclaimed and introduced the Spanish Second Republic, as the two of them shared a "radically liberal" nature. In both "individual rights are the foundation and the goal of political power and not a mere granted concession" (Barrero Ortega 2006, 51).[4] Why did the subject of political representation shift from the collective to the individual?

The answer to this question needs to be sought in the ebb and flow of the political developments of nineteenth-century Spain. According to Karl Blind, two all-important processes had pre-dated this transformation due to the Spanish people's commitment to freedom:

> Within the last thirty-four years they have effected two great revolutions, irrespective of the one which has led to the ejection of the Bourbons, at once in a political and in a religious sense. Massive blows were struck against the Popish hierarchy by the revolutions of 1834 and 1854. At the same time a new educational system was introduced, which the Court and the Jesuit Camarilla no doubt did their best, or worst, to hamper in every conceivable way, but which yet has conduced to the imbuing of the rising generation with progressive ideas. It is just this young generation, which has grown up in the schools since 1854, that leans decidedly towards the 'Democratic,' or Republican, party. (Blind, 1869, 560)

As far as the well-informed and insightful Karl Blind was concerned, those individual rights and freedoms were to be treasured and sustained because the whole of the Spanish society had unfolded in modern directions previously not recognized by the Law:

> In a political sense, the Spanish Revolution may yet undergo many shocks and counter-shocks, but one thing is certain: that the days are gone by, when Spain, with all its successive Liberal risings, and with all the curbs that had latterly been placed upon the influence of the Roman Catholic clergy, could still be said to be in toleration of other creeds far behind Turkey. (Blind, 1869, 560)

Italian historian Alberto Banti has shed new light on the manifold manifestations of the entrenched and genealogically determined ways in which a sense of nationhood as love for liberty was displayed by pre-Unification Italian nationalist discourses. By focusing on literary and archival materials, Banti compellingly shows how the rhetorical construction of nationhood after the French Revolution succeeded in shaping the political imagination of previously unrelated subjects in the Italian peninsula. Assorted allegories of common descent were engrained in the patriotic recreations of the Italian nation-state and they resurfaced through several stages. Italy, thus, was depicted as an oppressed but re-affirming sacral community whose members were bonded by mythological, as well as real currents of descent. This idea of the nation as an extended family was indeed paramount for the aesthetics of the emerging Italian national literary canon. A national community imagined as a single family struggling for its freedom and common good was cast in a narrative of continued and shared sacrificial efforts. And so it was for its laws by which the rights attached to citizenship were to be denied to the host of neighbours born under and controlled by the occupying foreign powers. Besides, this sense of exclusiveness was to be shared by most emerging nations in Romantic Europe (Banti 2000, 2011).

As Álvarez Junco highlighted in his celebrated book *Mater Dolorosa*, similar notions of family lineage and kinship also set the scene for Spanish nationalistic discourses in the nineteenth century (Álvarez Junco 2001). However, the degree of success of their endeavour in terms of unity and homogeneity was rather limited by comparison with Italy. Beyond the perceived social and economic division between the north and the *Mezzoggiorno* of the country, Italian nationalists did not emphasize regional differences half as much as their Spanish counterparts did. In fact, it has been argued that in Spain the sense of national freedom developed to a great extent from the high degree of respect for regional and local autonomy.

Thus, for the duration of the Democratic Sexennium (1868–74), Spanish political leaders tried to advance the cause of liberty in tune with wider north European and North American trends. Legally acknowledged individual rights and freedoms finally incorporated freedom of worship and thus rid Spain of the shackles of a long past of religious intolerance. However, this religious freedom would be very short-lived and would be restricted and seriously constrained by the Constitution of 1876, by which citizens would enjoy freedom of worship exclusively in their own households. In this sense, classical English historiography would emphasize the idea that freedom in modern times necessarily involved the liberation of souls. Thus, in the inaugural event of the International Society for the History of Ideas, held in Cambridge in late 1960, Herbert Butterfield reflected on the religious origins of modern individualism and the corresponding extension of individual freedoms. In his view, the sixteenth-century Reformation had had an overall positive impact on the cause of freedom of European subjects. They aspired to achieve, and some of them enjoyed, a freedom which by definition needed to be rejected by oppressive monarchies and also threatened by the

tyranny of majorities and society alike. Religious competition stemming from the inner divisions within Christendom accounted to a large degree for the spread of religious competition that would lay the foundations for the emergence of modern "freedom of conscience."

Yet Butterfield also linked economic development to religious pluralism. He accordingly noted that freedom of worship might have caused chaos but it had also revolutionized the material world in a positive manner:

> If it (the Catholic Church) had succeeded in crushing Protestantism in the sixteenth century, Europe might have been more orderly, more unanimous in the faith, but the history of Spain suggests that it might have been less dynamic – enduring with the stillness that we associate (perhaps wrongly) with the Orient. (Butterfield 1961, 39)[5]

Having said that, however, Butterfield underscored once again the evil cultural and political effects of Catholic intolerance in the country and concluded that he was "not sure that absolutely inescapable economic necessities (independent of any constricting effects of Catholicism) provide us with the complete and sufficient explanation of the decline of Spain, after the glories of its Golden Age" (Butterfield 1961, 46). Under those circumstances, however, the alleged Spanish thirst for freedom had been historically preserved in the realm of literature and thus it can also be related to the reconstruction of the Italian nationalistic movement provided by Banti. For the Cambridge historian: "The Spain of Philip II, in spite of the Inquisition and the heavy hand of orthodoxy, blossomed into a wonderful literature, whose chief characteristic was its riotous individualism" (Butterfield 1961, 39). And it seems that this perception of Spanish freedom, as understood by Butterfield, as best represented and embodied by its literati had been popular in cultured British circles for longer than a century before his lecture. Already in 1824 the English traveller, politician, and translator John Bowring would describe Spanish literature as follows:

> The popular poetry of Spain is, however, especially interesting, because it is truly national. Its influence has, perhaps, served more than any other circumstance to preserve, from age to age, the peculiar characteristics of the Spanish nation. (Bowring 1824, vi)

Conclusions

This article has aimed to unravel the manifold relationships that link the emergence of constitutional modernity with the pre-existing body of ideas, institutions, and political rituals in the Hispanic Atlantic. It has shown that if the late master of historians and Latin-Americanist Françoix-Xavier Guerra was correct in saying that modernity "is above all the 'invention' of the individual" (Guerra [1993] 2009, 113), then the Hispanic world cannot easily be depicted as fully modern until well into the nineteenth century. Despite being intolerant in religious matters and with serious difficulties in having their individual rights fully and openly acknowledged by the main sources of legislation, the inhabitants of the Hispanic world were also perceived as democratic and individualistic. However, the nineteenth-century Spanish notion of collective political rights foreshadows, to a large degree, all-important debates on multicultural politics and moral philosophy which are outside the scope of this article (Addis 1999; Gilbert 2013; MacIntyre 1981; Ramet 1997).

On the other hand, any contemporary reading of the history of individualism in political terms in the first half of the nineteenth century in Spain needs to be framed in the complex network of texts, legal definitions, meanings, representations, and practices surrounding the individual, communities, and the emerging constitutional state. The religious vector that

crossed through them all can no longer be overlooked. Whereas in the last two decades some Spanish historians have stressed the historical adaptation of constitutional and liberal ideas carried out by the local elite through Catholic lenses and making use of ecclesiastical rituals, there is still a need for further research to ascertain the actual value of those convergent images of Spaniards as collectivists or individualists; authoritarian or democratic; lazy or creative. It is, however, largely beyond the length and depth of this brief text to reach a definite conclusion in such terms. This article will have achieved its objectives if readers were at least to partially question some aspects of their perceived knowledge of nineteenth-century Spaniards.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the corporative imagination of Spanish political leaders did not reach a definitive end after 1869. As shown by the works of Jesús de Felipe Redondo (2012), class definitions were also encapsulated in corporative terms and class conflict would largely be described and conceived of as a fight between "them" and "us" (for England, see Joyce 1994, 1–20). Corporatist thought, with a heavy presence of Christian beliefs, also inspired the reformist trends labelled as *krausistas* in post-1868 Spain (Capellán de Miguel 2006; Gómez Molleda 1996). Therefore, it can be concluded that victory is never final and that in successive stages of modernity individualistic values would be condemned to share their lot in Spain with inherited and re-enacted corporatist interpretations of the state, the community, and the subject. Ultimately, this article has attempted to show that mechanical and teleological identifications of modernity with the victory of individualism, more often than not, conceal the intricate tracks beaten by the advancement and consolidation of modern political ideas in a specific area of the Western world.

Notes

1. See also Cabrera and Pro Ruiz (2014).
2. See also MacKay (2006, 201–63) and Subirats (2001).
3. See also Berbel (2008, 227).
4. See also Maestro Buelga (1995).
5. See also Butterfield (1949).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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