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IBERO-AMERICAN INTERSECTIONS:
Constructing (Trans)National Imaginaries
in Spain and Latin America, 1898-1938

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish,
The University of Auckland, 2009
Abstract

This study explores the ways in which Spain and Latin America have represented each other culturally, and the so-called singular cultural space of Ibero-America, through essays and travel narratives produced between 1898 and 1938. In particular, it reflects on the supranational contexts in which (trans)national identities are negotiated and defined. Intellectual representations of Argentina and Mexico are offered by three Spaniards: Miguel de Unamuno, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez and José María Albiñana Sanz. From the other side of the Atlantic, imaginative constructions of Spain are provided by five Latin Americans: Rubén Darío (Nicaragua), Alfonso Reyes (Mexico), and Manuel Ugarte, Ricardo Rojas and Manuel Gálvez, all from Argentina.

Spain’s newfound interest in its former colonies after 1898 was orchestrated in official circles through the ideology of hispanoamericanismo. As Spain’s postimperial project, intent on national regeneration and securing renewed influence by proclaiming the allegedly shared spirit uniting all Ibero-America, it sought a cultural reassertion of Spain’s hegemony. In contrast, while Peninsular regenerationists looked to rekindle their nation’s authority, the emergent hegemony of the United States drew Latin American intellectuals towards Spain. In consideration of their renewed mutual interests, this contextualised study traces what I deem are reciprocal gazes projected back and forth between Spain and the Americas, given that each is drawn to the other so as to reassess postimperial/postcolonial realities.

Although the Peninsular writers analysed in this study showed little faith in the rhetoric of hispanoamericanismo, I argue that their individual and national aspirations in Latin America are equally evident of Spain’s postimperial inability to approach the former colonies without reviving its imperial myths. In contrast, the recourse by Latin American intellectuals to Spain allows for an often overlooked opportunity to map the cultural significance that the ex-Metropolis held for them, articulated in response to the threat of US cultural and economic neoimperialism and what were perceived as the ill effects of modernity.
For Luisa and Luca,
and in loving memory of my father, Owen
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“El pintor que quiere retratarse, tiene que ver su imagen reflejada en un espejo.
Algo semejante les sucede a las naciones. Para conocerse, no les queda otro recurso sino mirarse en estos espejos lucientes y claros—los escritores de fuera—.”
(Pardo Bazán 313)

“La práctica de la idea de nuestra renovación tiene un precepto máximo: el viajar.
Reformarse es vivir. Viajar es reformarse.”
(Rodó, Motivos 412)

“A manera de ejercicios espirituales, al americano debiera imponerse la meditación metódica de las cosas de España, y al español la de las cosas de América.”
(Reyes, “Ventana” 572)