

Historiographical Approaches to Iberian Multiculturalism and Castilian Imperialism during the Siglo de Oro

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The expansion of Rome beyond the Italic Peninsula and the policies of conquest and colonization practiced by the ancients were historical touchstones for many authors of the so-called Golden Age to reexamine the hegemony and Imperial legacy of Castile.¹ In particular, the bloody siege of the Iberian settlement of Numantia (Numancia in Hispanic letters) in 133 BCE by the Roman army was a pivotal event in Iberian history. Retellings of this siege and the Roman conquest of the Iberian Peninsula provided a lens through which writers might examine the strategies of imperial military powers, consider characteristics of the pre-Romanized Iberian tribes, analyze the behavior of captive civilians during conquest, and evaluate the human and economic toll of warfare. Although many Ancient Roman attacks were met with comparatively little resistance by the indigenous Iberians who lacked the military prowess of the conquerors, the blockade on the settlement of Numantia, located in the central peninsula near present-day Soria, continued for years and revealed weaknesses in the discipline and strategy of the Roman military.² The willingness of pre-Romanized inhabitants of the small settlement of Numantia to commit suicide rather than submit to the Roman Army is a gripping tale that continues to move readers today.³ Reassessing depictions of confrontations and other retellings of the conquest of Ancient Iberia by the Romans reveal approaches to historiography, multiculturalism, and

¹ In the late sixteenth century, reports arriving from the American continent and Castilian colonies were increasingly mixed about Imperial successes abroad. While conquest and colonization had seemed to go relatively smoothly in the first half of the century, epidemics, uprisings, constant economic challenges, and poor communication between the peninsula and the colonies led to growing concerns about the role of the Castilian Empire in the world, even as Castilian domination extended around the globe. In addition, several scholars have identified *La Araucana* by Alonso de Ercilla as a literary account that popularized questions regarding the colonization. See Barbara Fuchs' pivotal study in chapter 2 and Raúl Marrero-Fente, who examines the use of lament in Ercilla to highlight the pain and suffering of the Araucanian indigenous women. Barbara Simerka contrasts Cervantes and Lope de Vega's approaches to Castilian Imperial hegemony in chapter 3 of her monograph. Emilie Bergmann's study engages critically the theme of the epic vision of Cervantes in his representation of the events at Numancia.

² As Leonard A. Curchin explains, "the protracted war with Numantia remained an embarrassment to the Roman government...From the moment of [Scipio's] arrival the army in Spain felt his iron hand...When his troops were sufficiently toughened by deprivation and training exercises, Scipio began laying waste to the plains of the Arevaci and Vaccaei, gathering the ripe grain for his own force and burning the rest" (38). The conquest of the settlement of Numantia occurred over a twenty-year period (153-133 BCE). The intense blockade by Scipio lasted approximately thirteen months during 134-133. For a brief overview of the Roman conquest of Iberia, beginning with the first Punic Wars to the victory at Actium (approximately 264-31 BCE), see Simon J. Keay, 25-46. J. S. Richardson details the Numantian campaign under Marcellus and Pompeius prior to Scipio's successful defeat of the settlement (140-47, 150-52). Julio Mangas highlights significant changes in the Roman colonization practices during this period and Scipio's reorganization of the Roman army (see especially 18-24). See also Michael Dobson's study on the archaeology at the site that challenges the previous findings by Adolf Schulten, whose excavations from 1905-1933 remain the basis for historical approaches to Scipio's siege tactics.

³ Miguel de Cervantes' play *La Numancia* continues to inspire critical and popular interest, adaptations, and performances, including a 2007 adaptation by Japanese experimental theater company K+S+E+C at the Festival Internacional de Teatro Clásico de Almagro analyzed by Elena García-Martin.

imperial policies that remain fruitful sources for a better appreciation of these cultural values during the Golden Age and contemporary reactions to the hegemony of the Hapsburgs.

Perhaps the most celebrated depiction of the siege of Numantia in Iberian letters is Cervantes' *La destrucción de Numancia* (c. 1585), the author's most famous play and one that remains a source of critical interest partly because it avoids casting clear blame on either party as he includes scenes that attract the sympathies of viewers towards both groups.⁴ The work eludes clear interpretations of his perspective of the siege because the dramatic focus of the play incorporates scenes outside the city walls that depict interactions among legionnaires eager to see the city fall contrasted with domestic scenes that feature *numantinos* as they consider their fate should they fall to the Imperial army. The representation of the events inspires many questions: were the Roman soldiers overly harsh in their military strategy, provoking a massacre of Numancia's civilians, including women and children? Is collective suicide an appropriate response to avoid colonization by a technologically (and, most viewers of the Golden Age believed, culturally) superior power such as the Roman Empire in the second century? Is the mass suicide indicative of the barbarism of the *numantinos* or does it emphasize their humanity and universal desires for sovereignty and self-actualization? Such questions have inspired a great deal of critical interest in this play in the past several decades.⁵ In addition, the play serves as a lens to examine Castilian cultural values within a pan-European context. Sabatino G. Maglione, for example, explores the ways in which Scipio, the Roman military leader, fails to fulfill Machiavellian leadership ideals and thus unites the *numantinos* in their hatred of the Roman military leader.

While Cervantes has garnered much critical attention because of his sympathetic portrayal of the victims of Roman colonization, Bernardo José de Aldrete's *Del origen y principio de la lengua Castellana ó Romance que oi se usa en España* (1605) celebrates Roman colonization as the process by which Rome brought civilization to the Iberian heathens and, as such, he believes such episodes should be remembered with patriotism and unqualified glory. This linguistic historian was a canon at the Cathedral of Cordoba who imagined that God gave humanity language to create world unity that has been corrupted by the prevalence of sin in the world. In Aldrete's view, linguistic diversity and incomprehensibility between languages divide humanity and preclude a unified Christian utopia. The goal of Aldrete's treatise is to insist that Castilian is in a unique position to become an ecumenical language that will reunite humanity the

⁴ Cervantes' play is also known by the titles *Cerco de Numancia*, *El cerco de Numancia*, or *La Numancia*, but Cervantes himself refers to the play as the "La destrucción de Numancia" and many studies on the play in the past two decades have likewise used the title *La destrucción de Numancia*. See the studies by Alfredo Hermenegildo (104) and Aaron M. Kahn (119-20).

⁵ Frederick A. de Armas examines divergences from the expectations of Classical Tragedy in the divided sympathies with victims and victors. Tracy Crowe Morey considers the use of history, romance, epic, and verisimilitude, situating the play among others that feature sieges. Willard King examines the *Numancia* in light of Imperial policies during the Hapsburg dynasty. Since the publication of Barbara Simerka's pivotal study, critical consensus has signaled the ways in which Cervantes' play subtly undermines glorifying colonizing armies by highlighting the tragic plight of the victims of Numancia. The goal of this very brief summary is not to restate an exhaustive list of every major study on the play published in the last four decades but rather provide the reader with a brief summary of the variety of critical approaches for additional study and investigation. For readers interested in the historical sources available to Cervantes in the composition of the play, Schevill and Bonilla's now-classic six-volume critical edition to Cervantes' *Obras completas* details such sources and concludes that Cervantes relied primarily on popular retellings rather than a single historical source: "[Cervantes] no se cuidó de seguir ninguna historia fidedigna, sino más bien algún relato tradicional y popular" (Tomo 6: 58). See also George Shivers' examination of the historiographical approaches to the play.

world over. He writes his history of the Castilian language with this explicit goal in mind and the text is an oft-neglected study in Early Modern historiography that attempts to fit historical events with his thesis that Castilian was chosen by God to bring together the peoples of the world so that all may live in peace.

This work was published in 1605, in the midst of several serious challenges to Castilian hegemony that required the author to construct his narrative carefully to justify his belief that Castile enjoyed continued and definitive supremacy. He insists on Castile's sustained domination in spite of the difficult circumstances that threatened the empire at the end of the reign of King Phillip II and during the transition to the court of King Phillip III. Defeat by the English in 1588, uprisings and revolts in the Low Countries, economic crises and bankruptcy, and the propagation of the so-called "Black legend" led many contemporary accounts to question the continued supremacy of Castile.⁶ Reflecting on the hegemony of Ancient Rome allowed writers of sixteenth and seventeenth century to contrast the imperial legacy of the ancients with that of their own empire. Of course, such idealization of the past did not necessarily adhere to twenty-first-century expectations of historiography and historical accuracy. Indeed Aldrete's account is rife with anachronistic portrayals of the civilizing process, Iberian cultural values, and Roman policies.⁷ For Aldrete, as will be detailed below, anachronism is a primary technique employed to highlight the virtues of the Castilian people that he traces back to the pre-Roman Iberian inhabitants of the peninsula.

Del origen presents an analysis of the linguistic history of Castile and charts the grammar and word evolution from Latin to contemporary Castilian. In three books Aldrete discusses the Roman subjugation of the Iberian Peninsula, the colonization and development of Iberia under the Romans, subsequent invasions that led to the development of Castilian, and the conquest of the New World by the Hapsburgs. *Del origen* opens with a prologue directed to King Phillip III and contains an explicit discussion of Aldrete's purpose:

Dela diuerfidad dellas [lenguas] nacio la diuifion, enagenandofe los animos i voluntades delos que en la habla no eran conformes, i de aqui fe figuieron los odios i guerras, eftimando como por de diuerfa naturaleza a los que en la lengua eran diferentes. Para vnir, i juntar los que allí quedaron defunidos, i apartados fue por Diuina prouidencia elegida Roma, la qual dieffe al mundo vn language escogido, vna habla auentajada, que honrrada en la Cruz lleuaffe por todo el mundo este gloriofo eftendarte, i con el la lengua, que juntaffe los Reinos; domefticaffe los hombres, vnieffe los animos, i voluntades, defterraffe la discordia caufada dela diuerfidad, i hizieffe en la tierra vn retrato del cielo...Defta lengua escogida mueftro, que deciende la Castellana. (2-3)⁸

⁶ For an introduction to these events, I recommend the studies cited by J. H. Elliott, Henry Kamen, John Lynch, and James McDermott. The publication of Bartolomé de las Casas' *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* in 1552 has been credited as another source of the growing criticism against Castilian colonial policy as well. For recent studies on the use of the so-called "Black Legend" by British and Dutch critics of Spain, see Benjamin Schmidt. This list is not meant to be comprehensive but to provide the reader with a brief introduction to the vast bibliography about these topics.

⁷ As Simerka shows, the use of anachronism is an important technique in the representation of early modern historical accounts. Simerka examines scenes in which the *numantinos* and Romans agree to fight duels and argues that the chivalric virtues recognizable to Cervantes' audience at the end of the sixteenth century were entirely anachronistic to the military tactics of Ancient Rome (116-19).

⁸ All citations of the text taken from the facsimile edition and study by Lidio Nieto Jiménez. Vols. 1 y 2. Madrid: Clásicos Hispánicos, 1972.

His study builds around his basic premise that the world needs unification and that this must be carried out by abolishing differences among peoples that arise from linguistic divisions. According to Aldrete, the primary culprit in the breakdown of human relations is miscommunication among speakers of different languages. He believes that Latin was God's response to linguistic fragmentation throughout the world and he insists that Latin provided a solution to unite the world with Christian values, suggesting that linguistic unification on Earth could model that of the heavens. Aldrete believes Castilian the logical heir to the Latin of the early Christian fathers that, he claims, abolished discord and united mankind. As the above citation shows, Aldrete views diversity of many types, including linguistic, cultural, religious, or geographic, as a negative force in the world that should be eliminated for the prosperity of humanity. In addition to his limited appreciation of multiculturalism, Aldrete argues that a primary trait of the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, one he traces back to the *celtiberos* and other tribes who inhabited the peninsula, is their eager embrace of cultural conquest by Roman forces, even at the cost of their own existence. His treatise suggests that Iberians –whom he views as synonymous with Castilians– are uniquely poised to lead the world due to their willingness to put their own cultural identity aside for the benefit of the peaceful coexistence of the empire. While Cervantes uses the story of Numancia to reflect upon virtues of individual autonomy, resistance to hegemony, and loyalty to family and kin, intimating that these values might be traced back to the *celtiberos* who defied Roman conquest, Aldrete suggests that the virtues that he holds dear, particularly cultural homogeneity and the sacrifice of individual autonomy to institutional authority, are supposedly “Castilian” traits passed down from the earliest Iberian inhabitants.

Aldrete must go to some lengths to manipulate the representation of history to conform to his thesis. He bases his approach on the contradictory account he finds in Ancient Roman writer, Strabo's geographical description of Hispania:

Pero los Turdetanos, principalmente los que estauan junto al rio Betis, auian tomado las costumbres de los Romanos, i los mas fin auer les quedado memoria de la lengua de la tierra se auian hecho Latinos, i auian recibido por vezinos los Romanos, i a ellos les faltaua mui poquito para ser lo del todo. Lo mismo en las ciudades, que se acabauan de fundar, pex Augusta en los Celas, Augusta Emerita en los Turdulos, Cefar Augusta en los Celtiberos, i tambien en otras Colonias, que mostrauan aquella mudança de diuersa forma de republica. I que los Españoles que seguian esta forma de vida los llamauan Stolatatos o Togados. I en estos entrauan tambien los Celtiberos, que en vn tiempo fueron tenidos por los mas fieros, i inhumanos de todos los Españoles. (96)

Pero los vnos i los otros, i parte de estremadura, reinos de Aragon, Valencia, i Murcia, con toda el Andaluzia, i reino de Granada comprehendio fínduda en ambos lugares Strabon, i lo que dize de los de la Betica, dize de los Celtiberos, i de la Tarraconenfes, fi bien con palabras mas breues, pero conpendiosas, que los abraçan todo...[Con el cual parece] pues a los mas destos pueblos, i del resto de toda España les da nombres Latinos, en que claramente muestra la mudança, que toda España auia hecho acomodandose al vso Romano. (103)

These passages highlight Aldrete's goal to insist that, throughout the peninsula, indigenous Iberians almost universally welcomed the Roman invaders and their supposedly civilizing

influence. His anachronistic portrayal of the Roman conquest of Iberia forwards his political motivations to illustrate the Iberians' desire to form part of an empire connected with Aldrete's agenda to demonstrate Castile's continuation and expansion of this Roman legacy. He footnotes Iberian resistance to one sentence alluding to Celt Iberian savages: "que en un tiempo fueron tenidos por los más fieros, e inhumanos de todos los españoles" subordinated geographically and rhetorically to the other tribes that quickly assimilated to the culture of the conquerors.

Aldrete describes the indigenous Iberians as supposedly eager to learn Latin and insists that they nearly immediately forgot their regional languages in their embrace of Roman hegemony. Aldrete does not wax nostalgic about the cultural heritage lost when indigenous Iberians assimilated to the culture of their victors. In fact, his retelling insists that linguistic conquest is a natural process exemplified throughout history: "los Españoles como vencidos i rēdidos auian de dexar la lengua propia, i tomar la delos vencedores. Exemplo mui grande es, lo que pafsò en aquel pueblo Hebreo, que en la captiuidad de Babilonia perdio su lengua antigua, i aprendio la delos Caldeos vencedores" (138). Indeed, the history of the world, as Aldrete reports it, is a history of linguistic usurpation by the winners and accommodation by the vanquished parties. Far from lamenting the loss of ancient Iberian languages (or the indigenous languages of the Americas that likewise faced conquest by Castilian colonization), Aldrete sees linguistic conquest a necessary and desirable part of imperial unity.

He even connects linguistic domination with supposed proof of a broader ability to establish and maintain an empire. According to Aldrete, unlike those destined to enjoy imperial hegemony, the Visigoths did not provoke radical changes to the language spoken on the peninsula and therefore could not enjoy long-lasting supremacy. He admits that the Visigoths and Vandals were able to tear through the Roman Empire and enjoy temporary power in the wake of their destruction but he presents their ultimate demise tied to a failure to leave significant impact on the linguistic history of Latin. According to Aldrete, the arrival of these barbarians brought limited but deteriorating modifications to classical Latin:

Salieron mui mal con la lengua Latina esta gente, mas dada a las armas, que alas letras, i como los que entrauan de nueuo, vnas letras entenian por otras, juntaron los nombres Latinos con los suos, i fiendoles prolixa la declinacion de los nombres Latinos, i la variacion de los verbos por sus tiempos, contentaronse con vfar de los nombres Latinos, i dexaron la declinacion, la qual tomaron de su lengua. En la qual los nombres son indeclinables, i los casos se distinguen por los articulos, i preposiciones, como oi se vfa en la lengua Italiana, i Español, i abaxo mostrare. Lo qual es propio de la lengua setentrional...En los verbos figuieron las conjugaciones latinas en algo, pero totalmente perdieron la voz passiva...Aeste modo de hablar se acomodaron los Romanos; Italianos, Franceses, i Españoles, como en el que habluauan, los que tenian el gouierno, i señorio de la tierra, i a quien por su crueldad, i soberuia temian, i querian, fino de grado, alo menos por lifongearlos, dar les gufio, i contento. (153-154)

Aldrete insists that these uneducated brutes simplified the features of the language that they were intellectually incapable of mastering and that their influence was limited though decidedly negative. It is these violent Northerners who could not grasp the concept of declinations and thus, like their compatriots of "todas las naciones de aquellas provincias" introduced propositional phrases and the use of articles to the Latin of their realms. Aldrete is ambivalent about their level of influence during their limited tenure; while their modifications were restricted to specific linguistic features, he admits their presence did have long-lasting effects. He

attributes the permanence of the changes they introduced to the fact that they were the rulers of the land whose reign inspired fear in their citizens. Aldrete argues that the poor, unfortunate Romanized Christians could not convince these unlettered warriors to speak well because the foreigners were feared, thus Latin suffered its first modifications. Aldrete has hindsight on his side, for while he describes the changes the Visigoths made to the Latin of the late Roman Empire, he is of course preparing his reader for the eventual loss of the Iberian Peninsula to the Arabic invaders in the eighth century described in the following chapters. For Aldrete, once Latin is established –by God– as the language of Iberia, its gradual decline must be attributed to malevolent invading forces and with the introduction of ignorant brutes whose lack of sophistication in letters lead them to confuse the grammatical features of Latin and impose foreign linguistic features that begin the weakening of Latin in the peninsula.

The reminder of the foreign heritage of the Visigoths is another important feature of the above citation. His description of their vague Northern origins serves to underscore his belief that the groups that made significant modifications to Latin did not originally come from the Iberian Peninsula. According to Aldrete, the native Iberians longed to preserve the supposed purity of their (adopted) Latin language, but were powerless to prevent its destruction by unlettered foreigners. Not only does this sort of argument glorify the early inhabitants of Iberia, but it also demonizes the invaders and blames them for the supposed destruction of the language. The author even anachronistically asserts that the “Spanish” influence enriched Latin, citing Seneca, Martial, and other classical Latin authors born in the Iberian Peninsula as evidence that the “proto-Castilians” were language innovators: “España producía elocuentísimos oradores, y clarísimos poetas. Tanto se aventajaba en las letras latinas, que enviaba maestros a Roma, que enseñasen su juventud” (104). According to Aldrete, the glory of Classical Latin may be attributed to the august contributions of those speakers born in the Iberian Peninsula. Aldrete includes these anecdotes to reject the idea that Iberians corrupted the Latin language or were peripheral members of the Roman Empire. His narrative establishes a persuasive connection between Ancient Rome and the Spanish Empire of which he forms a part. For him, the eloquence and poetry of the Latin language have the early inhabitants of Iberia to thank, insisting that they were an integral contribution to the cultural hegemony of the ancient world, insinuating the similarly positive influence on the cultural superiority of Imperial Castile.

After reading such passages, one might be inclined to disregard Aldrete as merely a pro-imperial propagandist whose biased take on history attributable to his desire to glorify Imperial Spain and “whitewash” any potential failings of the Hapsburg dynasty. Nevertheless, Aldrete includes several passages that suggest that he recognizes that Castile is not a perfect colonizing power and he attempts to respond to potential critics. He admits, for example, that Castilian colonial practices in the mining industry have decimated indigenous populations in the Americas:

Muchos fueron los que confumieron las guerras, pero a lo que yo puedo conjeturar, no fueron menos los Españoles, que acabò i gastò el trabajo delas minas. Porque ñi en menos de sesenta años se confumieron todos los Isleños de aquella gran isla de Sancto Domingo, que eran en gran numero, i en las Indias Occidentales, que cõtienen en ñi tantas i tan estendidas prouinçias reinos i naçiones sin guerra en poco mas de cien años, que a que se descubrieron, van confumiendo lagente dellas confolo el trabajo delas minas de plata i oro, que no harian en España. (133)

He cites this example in his discussion of Roman conquest of Iberia, using the analogy of the harsh conditions in the Spanish colonies to suggest that it is likely that many of the indigenous Iberians also died during the Roman conquest, both as a result of war and as a result of the difficult conditions under which they were made to labor. This example is illustrative of Aldrete's historiographical approach, one that shifts between contemporary and historical models with little regard for analytical accuracy or precision in his comparisons. The goal is to highlight similarities between the challenges Rome faced in preparing the world for Christianity as likened to the opposition Castilians must overcome as they establish an ecumenical language and religion for the contemporary world. In Cervantes's retelling of ancient conquest, dramatic attention focuses on the tragic consequences of conquest, particularly for the women and children who suffer at the hands of the Imperial invaders. Cervantes thus emphasizes the humanity of the *numantinos* as he alludes to similar tragedies suffered by conquered peoples in Castile's colonies worldwide. Aldrete, in contrast, insists that these losses are validated by the larger project of religious unification under Christianity. He recognizes that linguistic unity can only come about through the destructive influence of political hegemony that will bring with it death and destruction for the vanquished. And yet he is decidedly ambiguous in his approach to the psychological forces of the colonized. Aldrete insists that the early Iberians could not wait to join up with the Romans and that forming part of an empire—one that Aldrete associates with Christian moral superiority—is so desirable that people the world over are equally willing to suffer possible personal hardships for the opportunity to do so. The reader is left to understand that Aldrete believes that poor conditions in the colonial mines may be overly harsh but indigenous peoples are nevertheless welcoming of the supposedly civilizing influence of Castilian hegemony.

Although Aldrete's under-examined political motivations serve as the focus of the present analysis, his contributions to the field of linguistics have long been admired by scholars. Amado Alonso considered Bernardo de Aldrete one of the founders of the discipline of Spanish philology.⁹ Vicente Lledó-Guillem even argues that the division of the field of Romance linguistics into two hierarchical groups by philologists of the nineteenth century is attributable to Aldrete's pervasive influence on the discipline.¹⁰ Indeed many of Aldrete's ideas about the history of Castilian serve as the methodological framework for claims about Spanish linguistics and philology by his successors in subsequent centuries. In 1726, the Real Academia Española, for example, cites Aldrete as an expert in historical linguistics in the *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana* and the entry in that edition echoes Aldrete's assertion that language evolution is a process of language corruption, whereby the imagined purity of the Latin of earlier centuries is negatively influenced by the (non-Christian) invading forces:

Los Christianos que antes havían vivido en ellos (debaxo del Domínio de los Mahometanos como queda notado) no havían perdido totalmente la Léngua que ufaban

⁹ Amado Alonso notes (93): "Aldrete tenía una mente científica poderosa, y en su libro admiramos las bases y primera realización satisfactoria de la gramática histórica y de la comparada, que sólo en el siglo XIX se ha desarrollado. En la historia de las leyes fonéticas se ha de dar a Aldrete un lugar de honor. En las historias de la filología no aparece el nombre de Aldrete, porque no es costumbre en quienes las hacen enterarse de la extraordinaria riqueza filológica de nuestro siglo clásico," text cited from "Ideas Lingüísticas de Aldrete," in *Del origen y principio de la lengua castellana o romance que oi se usa en España*, vol. 2: 33-34.

¹⁰ See also the study by Mark Johnson, which details Aldrete's contributions to the fields of Linguistics and Philology. Although the bibliography on Aldrete remains limited, other recent studies on Aldrete's text include those by Lucia Binotti, Kathryn Woolard, and Woolard and E. Nicholas Genovese.

en tiempo de los Godos; pero tambien la corrompieron, como los que estaban en los Domínios de Astúrias y Leon, y con la precisa comunicación con los Arabes tomaron muchas voces de su Léngua: y así quando se iba extendiendo el language de los Reyes de Leon y Castilla, se iban entrometiendo en él las palabras que habían tomado de los Christianos de la Léngua de los Sarracénos: al modo que se mezclan las aguas de los arroyos con las de los rios grandes, y forman con ellos un cuerpo, y una madre. (XLVI)

As this eighteenth-century text demonstrates, many of the arguments put forth by Aldrete create linguistic precedents that were used as the basis for subsequent arguments in the disciplines of Romance Linguistics and Philology, including the persistent claim that contact between languages is a corrupting force that forever modifies and changes communication. The idea that language is corruptible and that other factors can supposedly damage the imagined integrity of a language is a conception and methodological approach towards linguistic contact and change that continues well into the twentieth century. Rafael Lapesa, for example, includes in his *Historia de la lengua española*, a canonical work included in many “Introduction to Spanish Linguistics” courses during much of the twentieth century, the same suggestion of the supposed superiority of Latin, thus elevating the status of its descendent –Castilian– as well:

Entre las lenguas indoeuropeas, la latina se distingue por su claridad y precisión. Carece de la musicalidad, riqueza y finura de matices propia del griego, y su flexión es, comparativamente, muy pobre. Pero en cambio posee justeza; simplifica el instrumental expresivo, y si olvida distinciones sutiles, subraya con firmeza las que mantiene o crea; en la fonética, un proceso paralelo acabó con casi todos los diptongos y redujo las complejidades del consonantismo indoeuropeo. Idioma enérgico de un pueblo práctico y ordenador, el latín adquirió gracia y armonía al contacto de la literatura griega. Tras un aprendizaje iniciado en el siglo III antes de J.C., el latín se hizo apto para la poesía, la elocuencia y la filosofía, sin perder con ello la concisión originaria. (58)

Lapesa’s suggestion that Latin is somehow appropriate for Roman pragmatism is an argument proposed with some regularity since theorists have attempted to understand the essence of language and culture. In *After Babel*, for example, George Steiner points out the circularity of the argument that Latin was appropriate for the spirit and personality of the Romans and he contends that it only seems that way in hindsight: “Knowing the Greeks to have been one thing and the Romans another, we argue back to linguistic differences” (88). Lapesa also maintains the teleological argument that Christianity was a religion appropriate for spiritual conquest of the hearts and minds of the citizens of the Roman Empire:

Conseguida la unificación jurídica faltaba la espiritual. No bastaba el culto al emperador como símbolo de unidad suprema...El Cristianismo ayudó eficazmente a la completa latinización de las provincias. (65)

Lapesa insists that Christianity was a necessary component for the efficient and complete “Latinization” of the provinces of the Roman Empire, a spiritual conquest that complemented the legal unity of the Empire with a spiritual dimension that won the hearts of the conquered. This argument closely follows the idea established in Aldrete’s account that Christianity was divinely designed to allow the unification of the Roman Empire. The political perspective developed in Aldrete’s text, therefore, creates an argument for the supposed manifest destiny of Latin as the bearer of the Christian Word, which in turn leads to the divine necessity of Castilian to fulfill this

role after the fall of the Roman Empire. According to Aldrete, the imagined universality of Latin, and, by extension, its Castilian descendent, makes these languages especially appropriate messengers to unite people the world over under Christianity.

Clearly Aldrete's version of conquest and empire manipulates history to his thesis. His preoccupations with elucidating the contributions of the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula to the Roman Empire demonstrate his concerns with how the Castilian Empire would measure up to the perceived standards of *translatio imperii*. In the final section of the treatise, Aldrete imagines Castilian as the linguistic remedy for the division of Iberia, criticizing Catalan and Portuguese as mere copies of French tainted with Arabic. A significant part of his treatise is dedicated to demonstrating why Catalan and Portuguese, with empires that potentially rivaled Castile, were inferior languages incapable of an effective world empire, arguing that these languages lack a literary hegemony appropriate of an imperial power. This dimension of his argument is important because, according to Aldrete's prologue, the linguistic diversity of the Iberian Peninsula is the source for the division, the hatred, and the wars witnessed during this period. The author firmly believed that Castilian, as God's divinely-granted language, was to be the remedy for the misunderstandings caused by language barriers.

Aldrete's arguments about the supposed cohesion and superiority of Castilian to the other languages spoken in the Iberian Peninsula have echoes in twentieth-century scholarship as well. Ramón Menéndez Pidal suggests a similar argument in his *Orígenes del español*, published in 1926. As Steven Hess points out in "Castilian Hegemony: Linguistics and Politics in *Orígenes del español*," Menéndez Pidal's treatment of the linguistic hegemony of Castilian in the Iberian Peninsula ignores the other dominant Romance languages, Catalan and Portuguese, to promote the history of Castile as the history of Spain. Menéndez Pidal asserts the innovation and uniqueness of Castilian while describing the similarities between Galician and Catalan, finally suggesting that these last two are really just two dialects that are both in decline. This oversimplification, as Hess notes, reduces the challenge both Galician Portuguese and Catalan presented to Castilian hegemony of the peninsula.¹¹ Lapesa also discusses the supposed decadence of Catalan and Galician and emphasizes that these languages lack the robust literary tradition that Castilian boasts.¹² Lapesa, Menéndez Pidal, and Aldrete gloss over the literary traditions of both Catalonia and Galicia, ignoring their continued usage and importance.¹³ The

¹¹ Full citation reads: "One cannot ignore the early hegemony of Galician Portuguese in lyric poetry –ultimately the creation of another national and international language; nor can one discount the formation of Catalan under politically precarious conditions...Like Castilian, both Galician Portuguese and Catalan had their origin as local Ibero-Romance dialects; they also triumphed to become geopolitically and ethnically privileged languages which resisted the military, political, and cultural dominance of Castile throughout modern Spanish history" (Hess, 120).

¹² Lapesa's argument reads: "Durante el siglo XVIII y buena parte del XIX continuó, agravada, la decadencia del catalán; fuera de la conversación familiar y la predicación, contaba por únicas manifestaciones libros piadosos y coplas callejeras; aun más completa era la postración del gallego, convertido en dialecto vulgar...Sin embargo, la elaboración literaria del catalán, la menos sostenida y menos extensa del gallego, y los intentos de capacitar al vascuence como lengua de cultura, no impidieron que continuara la aportación de las respectivas regiones a la literatura nacional en castellano...Tampoco se ha detenido la progresiva castellanización del habla, especialmente en Galicia, Valencia y el país vasco...La vitalidad de la lengua española se revela no sólo en su creciente difusión, sino también en la fundamental unidad que ofrece, a pesar de usarse en tierras y ámbitos sociales tan diversos. Esta cohesión se debe principalmente a la robustez de la tradición literaria, que mantiene vivo el sentido de la expresión correcta" (463-5).

¹³ See also the study by Luis López in which he argues that such processes endure even in the twenty-first century by examining ideological presumptions that continue to emphasize the superiority of Castilian in linguistic and mass media reports that persist in marginalizing the other languages and dialects in the Peninsula.

author of *Del origen* also affirms the strong literary tradition of Greece, Rome, and Spain as evidence of their strength as empires.¹⁴ The politically-charged nationalism that motivated both Menéndez Pidal and Lapesa sees its roots in the seventeenth-century work by Bernardo José de Aldrete. In addition, Aldrete's treatise establishes an approach to the study of language contact and linguistic change that remains persistent through the twentieth century.

Ultimately Aldrete retells the story of Roman conquest as a violent process that forever shaped Iberian history. His use of history traces virtues of the Castilian Empire back to the indigenous tribes to highlight their supposedly eager embrace of the culturally superior Roman invaders. He suggests that Castilians are predisposed to recognize the need to sacrifice individual autonomy for the benefits of imperial hegemony, which he believes makes them particularly appropriate to lead a great empire. Although Cervantes shows audiences the human cost that military conquest involves, in the case of Aldrete, the complete assimilation of the early Iberian tribes to the Romans is presented as a beneficial step in the cultural development of the peninsula because, he believed, the Latinized Iberians went on to contribute productively to the Roman Empire and their descendants now spread the Word of God throughout the globe. Aldrete uses historical accounts to signal a cultural legacy of yielding to Imperial power that he posits as a fundamental aspect of Castilians more generally. His belief that dominant imperial powers can and should assert cultural *and* linguistic hegemony over their victors goes well beyond Nebrija's arguments that: "siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio" (Nebrija 3). Aldrete's premise is predicated on the assumption that might makes right and he justifies this argument by his conviction that Christianity will solve global ills. Although Aldrete's is a text that purports to tell the history of the language, Aldrete's view is one of many under-examined voices from the early modern period that allow us to better appreciate the ways that history has been read and repackaged by authors toward very different ends. Such reconsideration does not reduce the merit of these texts, but rather demonstrates that the compelling argumentation and nationalistic tendencies were established far earlier than previously assumed and highlight the achievement of writers, like Cervantes, whose works balanced challenges to the status quo while passing inspection by censors of the day.

¹⁴ Bernardo José de Aldrete mentions the literary tradition of these empires in the context of how to judge the end of an empire. For Aldrete, the waning of the literary usage signals the decline of the empire as well. This point is certainly worthy of further analysis but outside the scope of the present study and cannot receive more than a passing mention here.

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