■ *Kathryn A. Woolard*
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Is the Past a Foreign Country?: Time, Language Origins, and the Nation in Early Modern Spain

Theorists such as Benedict Anderson have associated the development of a historicized sense of time, in contrast to an atemporal messianic time, with epochal social changes, in particular the emergence of the nation. This article discovers the two contrasting senses of time in a 17th-century controversy over the origin of the Spanish language. The competing views of the past in the Spanish debate underpinned different visions not only of language but of humanity, progress, and nation. Anderson's claims about historicism and the origin of the nation construct are reconsidered in light of this case. It is argued that, pace Anderson, national consciousness was present in early modern Spain, and it rested on messianic as much as historicized time.

The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.
—L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*

The past is never dead. It's not even past.
—William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*

The two epigraphs that introduce this article reflect two contrasting conceptualizations of the past in relation to the present, and thus of history and of time itself. Such a dichotomy between distinct notions of time has repeatedly been invoked by scholars to characterize modernity in contrast to the premodern or nonmodern, and specifically to capture epochal changes in European art and literature, historiography, and social and political life. Benedict Anderson's influential book *Imagined Communities* (1991) provides an evocative summary of the recurrent contrast between these two conceptualizations of time. To explain the historical emergence of the idea of the nation, Anderson blended concepts from the work of Eric Auerbach (1952, 1953) on the history of art and literature with the cryptic categories of time used by Walter Benjamin in his impassioned critical essay on the philosophy of history (1968). Anderson brought the two authors' contrast sets together in a brilliant sweeping gesture and cast a historicized sense of "homogeneous empty time" as a foundational condition whose emergence in the modern period made it possible to "think the nation" (1991:22).

This article brings these concepts of history and the past to bear in the study of linguistic ideologies. It identifies two such contrasting views of the past specifically in relation to conceptualizations of language, in a conflict of linguistic ideologies in late 16th- and early 17th-century Spain that had far-reaching social and political

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repercussions. The highly politicized dispute that I discuss here hinged on the very question of attributing historicity, as opposed to timeless essence, to the Spanish language.

Work in linguistic anthropology over the last decade has shown that linguistic ideologies are never just about language, but rather also concern such fundamental social notions as community, nation, and humanity itself (see, among other sources, Woolard 1998 and other contributions to Schieffelin et al. 1998). This is especially apparent in ideologies of linguistic origins. Within the public arena, representations of the history of languages often function as Malinowskian charter myths, projecting from the present to an originary past a legitimation of contemporary power relations and interested positions. (Or, we might prefer to say, projecting from the past a legitimating selection of one from among contending centers of power in the present). Foucault observed that early 19th-century philologists such as Jacob Grimm not only historicized language, but also linked it to the conception of humanity and human freedom. Because of these linkages, Foucault wrote, philology was to have "profound political reverberations" throughout the century that followed (1970:290–291).

I argue here that the historicization of language indeed had such profound political reverberations, specifically in relation to consciousness of nation and national belonging, at least two centuries earlier than the conventional dates given for the phenomena of historicism and nationalism on which Anderson depends. Identifying a significant form of linguistic nationalism in the early modern Spanish case, this article responds to Anderson's claims that the concept of the nation as a way of imagining community emerged only in the late 18th century, and in the Americas, not Europe. It also questions Anderson's assertion that the imagining of nation depended crucially on the conception of "homogeneous, empty time" and could not have happened within the previous frame of "messianic time."

Anderson's book is a landmark in the study of nationalism; its inspired title alone has shaped most of the discourse on the topic in the last two decades. His revisionist account of the relationship between language and nationalism, giving preeminence to print forms, has become part of the linguistic-anthropological discourse on nationalism and identity (for a critique, see Silverstein 1999). However, the grand historical and geographical sweep of Anderson's trendsetting thesis obscures important problems in the dating and nature of the phenomena he discusses. In particular, Anderson rejects political science's definition of nationalism as a political ideology. Yet contradictorily, his account of nationness depends on an unquestioning acceptance of the periodization that this same conventional political science wisdom gives for nationalism thus defined.

Whether or not my arguments against Anderson's thesis prove persuasive, I hope to make a more general point in this article, about understandings of periodization itself. Ideologies, worldviews, mentalities, and discourses are often painted as pertaining to entire eras rather than social actors. It can be valuable to characterize historical periods by their dominant ideologies. However, it is another matter to treat these dominant ideologies as the sole relevant ones. When periodized worldviews or discourses are taken not as broad-stroke caricatures but as sequential monoliths of thought, with abrupt clean ruptures between them, we miss the important fact of conflict between competing conceptualizations—of language, of time, of community, and so forth—in any given era. Periods are not all of a piece, and social and political significance is lodged not only in unspoken consensus but also in the fragments and conflicts, as this study of two views of language and history in early 17th-century Spain will illustrate (see also Blommaert 1999).

The controversy that provides the empirical core of this article arose at the end of the 16th century and concerned the historical origins of the Spanish language (or Castilian or Romance; the terms were used interchangeably in this period). One side argued that Castilian was derived from Latin; the other vehemently rejected such origins, claiming that Castilian had been created by God at Babel and brought to the Iberian Peninsula by Noah's offspring after the Flood, long before the Romans

arrived. At the base of the dispute were two distinct approaches to history. No mere matter of succession and mutation of forms, the attribution of historicity to the Spanish language, with its implications of inconstancy, corruption, and human invention, was treated by the opposition as the highest insult to the Spanish nation. The controversy was immediately recognized to have political, social, and religious significance, and was followed by leading grammarians, humanist scholars, literary stars, the hierarchy of the Church, and the Spanish royal court.

Types of Historical Time

Before turning to a detailed consideration of the specific historical case, we should establish the categories at issue. What, to begin with, does Anderson mean by the enigmatic "messianic time" and "homogeneous, empty time," and what do we mean by "historicity" or "historicism"? All are vexing terms, subject to controversy among specialists, but some fundamental points can be clarified.

Benjamin's Time

The source of Anderson's contrasting terms is Benjamin's assertion that "history is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now"(1968:261). "Homogeneous empty time" was Benjamin's characterization of the conception adopted by "historicists" (see Tiedemann 1983–84 and Wolin 1994). By *historicism* Benjamin meant specifically the 19th- and 20th-century school of historiography identified primarily with Germans such as Leopold von Ranke (1968:255) (see Iggers 1983 and Ankersmit 1995 for overviews).

The central tenet of this historicism was that the essential nature of an entity—such as a nation or state—was to be found in its development over time in response to its specific historical context. Formed in reaction to the Enlightenment, natural law, and the French Revolution, German historicism rejected universal laws that assimilated human history to natural phenomena. Nature was eternally recurring, but history was a matter of unique and irreplicable human acts (Iggers 1983:5). Each historical entity and period could only be understood in its own terms and its own context. Institutions appropriate to one setting could not successfully be imposed on, much less predicted in, another. The affinity with nationalism is visible in this attitude, as is a susceptibility to moral relativism that ultimately proved fatal in the face of Nazism.

Benjamin characterized historicism's vision of time as "homogeneous and empty" because it recited events "without distinguishing between major and minor ones." The historicist's past proceeds as a causal sequence of undifferentiated events "like the beads of a rosary" (Benjamin 1968:263). For historicists, one bead of time leads to another down—or rather up, since it is viewed as progress—through history, no moment qualitatively different from the others. According to Benjamin, the conventional historian—that is, the historicist—used an additive method to muster a mass of data to fill this homogeneous, empty time, piling up the bits until they culminated in a universalizing history (1968:262). Benjamin quoted Leopold von Ranke's famous dictum on the historian's task—not to judge the past, but to describe it "the way it really was" (1968:255). By implication he also referenced Ranke's insistence that the proper historical method was "objective" archival work and analysis of documentary evidence. The historicists' goal was to achieve understanding of an earlier culture conceived as alien, through an empathetic suspension of anachronistic judgment in favor of sober scholarly objectivity.

Since each era is unique unto itself, historicists urged those seeking to understand an earlier period to blot out everything they knew about the later course of history (Benjamin 1968:256). The past is gone, no longer alive in the present. To the historicist, we can say that indeed "the past is a foreign country," where things were done very differently from the present (see also Ankersmit 1995:161, Grafton 1991:3).

Benjamin despised the putatively objective additive method of historicism as mired in ideology and self-delusion. With whom did historicists actually empathize? Only the victor, said Benjamin (1968:256). In the guise of accepting nonjudgmentally "the past as it really happened" and endorsing each entity as having its own logic, German historicists took the part of rulers and the state, erasing the anonymous masses whose toil created their so-called cultural treasures (1968:256). Benjamin was unforgiving of historicism for what he saw as its false representation of interested cultural forms and oppressive institutions as neutral and organic traditions.

The historicist view of time troubled Benjamin as well, principally because he saw it as underpinning faith in a kind of progress and perfectibility of mankind that he found insidious: "The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogenous, empty, time" (1968:261). This faith in progress was his main target, and he criticized the notion of homogeneous, empty time in order to criticize the historicists' concept of progress itself (1968:260–261). A belief in progress could be built only on a conviction that there was ongoing linear change and development over time (as opposed to the repetition of cycles or a timeless undifferentiated era as in classical and medieval thought). For Benjamin, complacent illusions of gradual progress and human improvement allowed the continued exploitation of the oppressed and lulled the masses into inaction. He saw this same gradualism, based in the historicist sense of time, in the Social Democratic political theories of his era, and he rejected the political position together with the scholarly. (Indeed, leading historicist scholars were involved in liberal German politics.) The "notion that it was moving with the current" of development over time corrupted the German working class, in Benjamin's view, resulting in a continual deferral of liberation to some more perfect future (1968:258). The full, brutally oppressive force of the past on the present was ignored by those who believe in "this storm called Progress" that blows from Paradise and catches in the wings of the angel of history (1968:257–258).

In contrast to his disdain for the Social Democratic historicist, Benjamin lauded the materialist historian, the mystic, and the revolutionary, who all recognize a history "that is not a transition" (1968:262). This history is messianic time, "a past charged with the time of the now" (1968:261). In turn, the heroic "time of the now" is shot through with chips of messianic time (1968:263). Benjamin did not date this concept of time to a specific period of European history, but rather advocated its adoption in his own period as the more fruitful view because it is revolutionary rather than evolutionary. Nonetheless, Benjamin's translator Harry Zohn notes that in his phrasing, Benjamin had in mind the mystical *nunc stans*, the 'standing present' or 'everlasting now' of medieval scholasticism, an eternal present of God's mind, where all events past and future coexist (see also Auerbach 1952:9). For Benjamin and the historian of messianic time, as for Faulkner's American South, not only is the past not dead or foreign, it is not even past. Rather, the past is ever present in the here and now: "The nourishing fruit of the historically understood contains time as a precious but tasteless seed" (Benjamin 1968:263).

In the atemporal coexistence of the "time of the now," theological typologists read events of the Old Testament as prefiguring the New, and Christian universal history as prefigured by the Roman Empire (Auerbach 1952:6). Similarly, Benjamin pointed out with admiration that the protagonists of the French Revolution viewed their enterprise as Rome reincarnate. For Robespierre, ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now and messianically "blasted out of the continuum of history" by the French revolutionaries (Benjamin 1968:261).

Auerbach's Time

Auerbach's description of the medieval comprehension of historical and human phenomena is indeed fundamentally similar to Benjamin's messianic time. For Auerbach, the messianic perspective is a characteristic of a historical period, rather than a

desideratum, and is entirely different from "our own" historicizing approach (1952:5). What is strange to the modern, historically alert eye about the medieval view is that it had no concept of anachronism (see also Burke 1969; Gilmore 1959; Panofsky 1960). Instead, it accepted a providential simultaneity of what the later historical imagination sees as distinct, disconnected eras. "The present and the past were enclosed within a common historical plane," as Richard Koselleck puts it (1985:4). This is most vividly apparent in paintings that represent medieval burghers kneeling at the manger to adore the Christ child, or the Roman soldiers who arrest Christ dressed in the clothes of the artist's own time (Burke 2001:163, Panofsky 1960:170ff.). All were taken to be part of the same era, with no recognition of significant discontinuities or differences between them.

Auerbach, like Benjamin, identified this conviction of timeless simultaneity in the medieval typological habit of reading an event of one epoch as a "figure" of that of another, with both understood as equally real. In God's mind no difference of time exists, and thus all historical events coexist there eternally: "In His sight, what happens here and now, has happened from the very beginning, and may recur at any moment in the flow of time" (Auerbach 1952:9). Anderson quotes another of Auerbach's descriptions of the medieval mentality, in which we hear the echo of Benjamin's messianic time: "the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future" (Anderson 1991:24).

Auerbach traced the historicized sense of time that contrasted with this *nunc stans* not to 19th-century Germany as Benjamin did, but rather to the birth of humanism and the self-conscious rupture between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (1953:321). Humanism in his view had an in-depth historical perspective that no earlier epoch had possessed. Humanist scholarship brought a recognition that the events of classical history and those of the Bible were not separated from the present just by an extent of time, but also by "*completely different conditions of life*" (Auerbach 1953:321, italics added in Anderson 1991:68). The past was now not only past, but it had also become foreign, as for Benjamin's historicists.

Anderson's Time

Anderson borrowed explicitly from both of these scholars. While the labels were Benjamin's, the explanations and illustrations were taken primarily from Auerbach, along with the ordering of their appearance in European history. John Kelly has already pointed out the consequences of the sleight of hand that Anderson performed as he borrowed Benjamin's image of homogeneous, empty time, "like a book from a library" (1999:266). I would add to Kelly's critique that in appropriating Benjamin's image, Anderson shifted its focus from the apprehension of history to the apprehension of community, that is, to the experience of social simultaneity. When he recast Benjamin's homogeneous, empty time as "simultaneity . . . transverse, cross-time," Anderson meant a community defined by a synchronic cross-section of time (Anderson 1991:24). Somewhat idiosyncratically, for Anderson "cross-time" appears not to mean 'diachronic' or 'transtemporal,' but rather 'across space in one given time,' cutting across the flow of time to create a sort of frozen section of one moment. "Temporal coincidence" as "measured by clock and calendar" (1991:24) becomes the central defining experience of modern identity.[1] With this shift of analytic interest from a way of experiencing time to a way of experiencing community, Anderson turned Benjamin's historicists completely on their heads; historicism became ahistorical and synchronic. In Benjamin's rendition, it was time that was homogeneous. But Anderson pockets the string of identical rosary beads of historical time that historicists told one after another. What is crucially homogeneous for Anderson is not time but rather the community at a given time, with its horizontal comradeship of an undifferentiated, temporally coincidental mass, "the people." The historical perspective that was for both Benjamin and Auerbach a diachronic vision (or illusion) of the significantly

changing progression of human life up through time became entirely synchronic in Anderson's representation.

Anderson's key notion of an experience of simultaneity and horizontal comradeship with unseen contemporaneous others is a provocative idea that has proved inspiring across the social sciences and humanities. The counterintuitive synchronicity of Anderson's view of the nation has been a large part of its charm and usefulness. Nations portray themselves along time immemorial, completely dependent on distant origins. Anderson counters that they do not depend on linear time at all (real or imagined), but rather on the loss of such linearity. The defining moment of a nation is just that, a moment—"all of us in the here and now." That crucially synchronic moment is then projected diachronically, backward and forward, but this recursivity is only secondary in importance, in Anderson's view. Attractive as this idea has been, it is not Benjamin's (nor is it Auerbach's). Moreover, John Kelly (1999) has pointed out that it does not very accurately capture views of the nation in the period to which Anderson attributes it.

With Anderson's transformation, we lose sight of that which was decidedly linear in Benjamin's "homogeneous time," an endless chain of undifferentiated events along time ticking away and accreting. In the historicist's homogeneous time as Benjamin described (and repudiated) it, what was important was the illusion that we leave the past behind, we emigrate from it as from a foreign land; we become something else, something better. Without this development through time, in Benjamin's view, we are unable to conceive of progress, with all its destructive ideological power. The loss of linear development is unimportant to Anderson because in exploring nations he is not interested in a critique of progress. Benjamin, however, decidedly was, and we will also be concerned with the possibility of progress when we examine the Spanish case.

Anderson significantly altered the thrust of Auerbach's distinction as well when he brushed aside the dating of the historicized consciousness of time with the observation that it was "a long time in the making" (1991:24). Auerbach, unlike Anderson, had claimed that the new consciousness of time was clearly established by the 16th century. In spite of this, by Anderson's account it did not come into play in the formation of the nation concept until almost three centuries later, blossoming not in Europe, where this Renaissance revolution in historical perception took place, but in the colonial Americas of the late 18th and early 19th century. Tellingly, Anderson omitted from his extended quotation of Auerbach (Anderson 1991:68) the author's own conclusion that the new historical consciousness did bring with it a consciousness of nation: "The various European peoples *came to regard themselves as national entities* and hence grew conscious of their distinctive characteristics. . . .This did not happen all at once, but *in the sixteenth century it progresses by leaps and bounds*, adding enormously both to the breadth of perspective and to the number of individuals acquiring it" (Auerbach 1953:321, emphasis added).[2]

Although Anderson's argument departed a good deal from his main sources of inspiration, it nonetheless conformed to received wisdom. It has been a truism that the three principal phenomena in question here—historicization of language, historicism, and nationalism—are late-18th century inventions, all interrelated reflexes of German Romanticism. Crucial aspects of Anderson's thesis of the emergence of nationness depend on this conventional account, even though Anderson rejects other aspects of this same received story when he locates the nation in consciousness rather than politics and in the Americas rather than Europe.

There is little dispute that the dating to the late 18th century correctly captures the period in which these concepts came to be full-blown and dominant, not only as elite phenomena but also as popular ones. However, important scholars in each of the three fields have challenged claims that such dominance entailed the *invention* of the historical perspective, the nation, and the historicization of languages. Although these ideas all moved to the fore in elaborate form in this period, none was original to it. Each had significant manifestations at least as early as the Renaissance, and

these early manifestations created traditions of thought and scholarship on which German historicism built (Grafton 1991:4). There is, in fact, a competing truism that the Renaissance brought the birth of the historical perspective, philology, and nationalist consciousness of vernacular language. After claims for each of these are summarized briefly, they will be explored in the Spanish case.

Language, Historicism, and Nation

Language

Anderson tells us that "it was only in the later 18th century that the scientific comparative study of languages really got under way." Language then became "an internal field created and accomplished by language users among themselves," and "out of these discoveries came philology." Genealogical comparative linguistics forced the old sacred languages from this point on "to mingle on equal ontological footing with a motley plebeian crowd of vernacular rivals" (1991:70). This brief passage elegantly summarizes the accounts given in introductory texts and encyclopedias. Certainly the 19th century is well known as the age of scientific, historical, and nationalist philologies. But Aarsleff (1982:293–294) has shown the problems that follow from the common but unexamined assumption that the systematic study of language, particularly the "scientific study" of "language for its own sake," originated with the Germans, what he calls the "Bopp tradition" (see also Hymes 1974).

We should understand that by *philology*, Anderson meant specifically the comparative grammar of the 19th century. Nonetheless, he omits any acknowledgment of the Renaissance philology of Lorenzo Valla, Politian, and other humanists. Their recognition of different forms of Latin as dating to different historical periods allowed them to identify forgeries, thus discrediting false "authorities" and giving rise to "a fundamental historicism replacing a fundamentally monistic view of the world" (Scaglione 1961:50). As Grafton writes, these humanist scholars "forged many of the technical methods still applied by the supposedly revolutionary German philology of the late eighteenth century" (1991:4). Thus it will not be surprising to find that Latin was already "mingling with its motley vernacular rivals" in early 17th-century Spain, although it may be surprising that I argue that this rivalry did not necessarily rest on the historicization of the language.

Historicism

For many scholars, the recognition of the historicity of all things, widely regarded as originating in late 18th-century German Romanticism, "is the hallmark of modern thought" (Reill 1975:2; Schiffman 1985:170). German intellectuals such as Meinecke and Mannheim saw historicism (*historismus*) as a specifically German intellectual revolution that could only be dated to the post-Enlightenment period (Ankersmit 1995:143), "an essentially modern attitude, a way of looking at man and the world which did not exist before the eighteenth century"(Huppert 1966:48). This is the historicism that Benjamin had in mind in his fervid indictment.

However, historians of early modern Europe such as J. G. A. Pocock (1962), Donald Kelley (1970), George Huppert (1966), and Peter Burke (1969, 2001) have traced the development of the historical perspective and what they are willing to call *historicism* to late 16th-century philological scholarship, not only in studies of language such as Lorenzo Valla's, but in the work of legal humanism. The *mos gallicus*, the method of interpretation favored by French legal humanists, applied philological techniques to the study of canonical texts such as Justinian's *Corpus juris* to establish their "true" meaning through a historically contextualized reading. This led some to view Roman law as that of a past society, so foreign to the contemporary one as to make it an inappropriate model for contemporary legal problems.[3]

There is some disagreement over whether the term *historicism* should be applied to these early developments or reserved for the ideological complex of later German thought, and there is also disagreement about the breadth and stability of the Renaissance historical insight (Grafton 1991; Pocock 1973; Schiffman 1985; Skinner 1996). Pocock conceded that it was certainly a late 18th-century "revolution" for the historical approach to be applied to every aspect of human experience. But the discontinuities and socially consequential differences between past and present societies were being systematically studied "as much as two centuries before that era of historicist revolution which we are accustomed to think alone made such endeavours conceivable" (Pocock 1962:245–246). With Peter Burke we must acknowledge that there was no single Renaissance sense of past, and that therefore we must ask "whose sense of the past" we intend when we characterize "the Renaissance" (2001:160). The historicist perspective was certainly not that of the majority of the population in the 16th century. Both Burke and Grafton see contradictory historical and ahistorical views coexisting, sometimes within the work of one humanist scholar such as Lorenzo Valla (Grafton 1997:252). This diversity even within a well-marked period is a point we will pursue in the Spanish case. However, there is not much dispute that a historicized perspective on time and human life emerged in the Renaissance period, identifiable in the sense of anachronism, awareness of evidence, and interest in causation shown in humanist studies (Burke 1969). Renaissance humanists considered the past to be different in quality from the present, "rather than more of the same thing" (Burke 2001:157).

Nation

In treating not only nationalism but the very concept of the nation itself as a late 18th-century invention, Anderson accepted without question and even extended the received wisdom of social and particularly political science. He credits the periodization to Hans Kohn and Carleton Hayes, claiming that no one but nationalist ideologues has seriously disputed their "persuasive dating" of the phenomena (1991:4).[4] Indeed, Kohn wrote with enviable certainty that nationalism was "unknown before the 18th century"(1968:63). But Kohn also wrote in the same passage that "nationalism is a political creed" (1968:63). Anderson, in contrast, rejects this classification of "nationalism-with-a-big-N" as an ideology belonging with liberalism or fascism. Instead, nationalism as he analyzes it belongs with "kinship" and "religion," as a kind of conceptual frame for imagining one's place in the world (1991:5–6).

As is equally true of philology and historicism, the dating of nationalism depends entirely on what we mean by it. The definition of it as a "political creed," with its implications of codification and followers, will certainly take us to the late 18th and 19th century. However, if we focus not on the "-ism" but on the "nation," and if we take Anderson at his word and treat nation as a form of consciousness of (political) community, then this form of imagining was well established in European circles by the 16th century, as Auerbach himself concluded. Although I will argue below that the two can be uncoupled, historians of the early modern period, like Anderson, often tie consciousness of nation to the emergence of the historical perspective (Molina Redondo 1968:184; Ranum 1975:17). It is not surprising, then, that the case for late Renaissance national consciousness has often been made for France, where historiographers have made the most claims for early historicism (but see Greenfeld 1992). Huppert argues that after 1559, "the model of modern historiography was fashioned. The French now firmly possessed . . . a new secular perspective from which to judge the past: the idea of the nation" (1966:54). Philippe Desan (1984) has demonstrated that all the elements of the conceptual and symbolic framework of nationalism had developed in French political and intellectual activity by the end of the 16th century: a distinct territorial space, the awareness of belonging to a distinct culture, and the idea of self determination as the principle of leadership. We may prefer to think of this as a "pre-" or "proto-" phase of the full-blown nationalist political movements of the 19th century (Maravall 1972:472). Nonetheless, a national consciousness that encompassed

territory, language, culture, community, and sovereignty was established as a political resource in early modern Europe.

We are at last ready to turn to the case of early 17th-century Spain. We will see there a historicized conceptualization of the development of languages in conflict with an atemporal, messianic view of the same. We will also see consciousness of nation and national honor used as a political cudgel in a public intellectual controversy. But contrary to the expectations established by Anderson's thesis of time, this national consciousness proves to be more grounded in messianic time than in historicist time.

The Spanish Origins Debate

Bernardo Aldrete's *On the Origin and Beginnings of the Castilian Language or Romance, which Is Used in Spain Today* (1606) was the first published account of the Latin origin of the Spanish language. In this work, the cleric and antiquarian scholar argued that Spanish was derived from Latin over centuries of use, with crucial changes triggered by the invasion of the Visigoths. After developing his argument by citation of authoritative sources and consideration of analogous sociohistorical situations, Aldrete clinched it with an analysis of etymology and sound changes in Spanish vocabulary.

The idea that the Spanish language was a corruption of Latin had generally been taken for granted by earlier scholars influenced by Italian humanism. However, this assumption had been challenged as Renaissance humanism gave way under the religious, political, and social anxieties of the Baroque period. Aldrete found the commonplace in need of explicit defense and laid out his stance succinctly:

> I have commonly heard that Romance, which we use today . . . was derived from Latin . . . . This happened because for many years Latin was the vernacular language of Spain, in the time that the Romans held it peacefully, populated it and lived there. With the arrival of the Vandals and Goths, as the empire changed, so too did the language, but not completely. Rather, the vernacular that we use today was taken from it, changing with the times. If you would grant me the first, it would be very easy to show the second, but because that has been placed in doubt these days, it is necessary to demonstrate it at length with all kinds of arguments. [1606:6]

One of the most influential opponents of the theory of Latin origins was Gregorio López Madera, not a philologist or antiquarian himself, but rather a jurist, political figure, and author who earned a reputation for his displays of erudition. The son of a physician to the royal court, López Madera was trained in canon and civil law and made a brilliant career serving the king and court in prestigious capacities in Granada and then Madrid. López Madera argued that Castilian had not been formed from the corruption of Latin, but rather had always been a distinct language (1625:106). He held that it was one of the 72 languages created by God in the confusion at Babel, and that this divine creation was brought to Spain by Tubal, grandson of Noah. From the time of postdiluvian repopulation, the Spaniards had "never lost their language" despite centuries of subjugation to Roman (and later Visigothic and Islamic) conquest, López Madera asserted (1625:100; see also MacCormack 1992). He published some of his ideas about the origins of Spanish in 1595 and again in 1601. In 1625, he reiterated his linguistic theory in detailed and vitriolic counterpoint to Aldrete's arguments, in the second edition of a patriotic panegyric tellingly entitled *Excellencies of the Monarchy and Kingdom of Spain.*

López Madera's enterprise of defending Castilian as the primordial language of Spain was triggered in part by his zeal to establish the authenticity of supposedly prophetic writings and saintly relics that had been uncovered late in the 16th century in Granada, where he was starting his career in royal service. The first of these findings was a parchment in a lead box secreted in the tower of a mosque, uncovered during demolition for reconstruction as a Christian church. The parchment was written in Latin, Arabic, and Castilian, and purported to be a prophecy by St. John recorded by a disciple in Granada in the first century A.D. in the time of Nero. Defenders

were thrilled that the findings, which came to be called the Sacromonte discoveries, established such precedence for the advent of Christianity to Granada and Spain. The repercussions of the Sacromonte affair in Church, state, and international politics were enormous, and endured for more than a century (Harris 2000; Kendrick 1960; Valencia 1999). However, the anachronistic language of the parchment presented problems for its defense.

Both López Madera and Aldrete upheld the authenticity of the parchment, the former with energy and enthusiasm, the second only later and guardedly. In an early written defense of the parchment and relics, López Madera claimed that the Castilian of his day was already spoken in the time of Nero. Aldrete more reluctantly and obliquely entered the fray, with his scholarly demonstration of the Latin origins and post-Roman, post-Visigothic evolution of Castilian, but no published commentary on the parchment. Pressed hard about his patriotism and religiosity by López Madera and others, Aldrete defended his thesis and himself in a second book. He insisted that although the parchment was likely to be authentic, Castilian had not existed at the time it was written. Rather, it was a miracle that the parchment was written in a language in which it could be read 1500 years later (Aldrete 1614). In this solution Aldrete invoked the *nunc stans* of God's omniscience, at the same time as he defended a historicized vision of linguistic evolution.

Visions of Language and Humanity

In developing their respective positions, López Madera and Aldrete drew on very different conceptualizations of the nature of language and its place in human society. (I have presented this argument and supporting evidence in detail elsewhere [Woolard 2002] and only summarize it briefly here.) Aldrete viewed languages as mutable and perfectible over time, subject to cultivation and improvement through human intervention. He saw humans as cultivable and perfectible as well. Aldrete argued that under the right social conditions, communities give up their deeply held languages and customs, acquire new ones and form new social bonds and loyalties, to the point of becoming indistinguishable from former enemies.

López Madera, in contrast, located the essential nature and immutable value of languages and peoples in their origins. He saw substance, nobility, and value only in the oldest, original forms. The only real languages of substance in the classical sense were those originally created by God: "It would be truly absurd to grant substance to a language that did not have its origins as one of the seventy-two languages of the division [at Babel]," he wrote (1601:70v). All other languages were merely contingent derivatives of these. True languages never really change in their essential, ineffable, and untranslatable cores. In turn, people do not change their distinctive ways. Sounding uncannily like a 20th-century minority nationalist, López Madera asserted that "a people would lose their lives before they lose their language" (1601:68v).

These contrasting ideas of the nature of language and society resonated strongly with the racial and religious politics of the period. At the time Aldrete and López Madera clashed over language origins, anxieties were rising in Spain about the intractability of the Moriscos, descendants of the Muslims who remained on the peninsula and were forcibly converted to Christianity after the completion of the "Reconquest" with the fall of Granada in 1492. There was widespread fear that Moriscos were conspiring with Turks for another Islamic invasion, and strident calls came for the expulsion or extermination of this "intrinsic pestilence" (Boronat y Barrachina 1901:II, 64–65). Others counseled patient evangelization and mixing of the populations, but the voices that ultimately triumphed in the "Morisco question" held that the Moriscos were inassimilable and must be extirpated from Christian Spanish territory.

Aldrete and López Madera's two different visions of human, cultural, and linguistic mutability bore explicitly on the Morisco question of assimilation versus extermination or expulsion. As analogic support for his claim that Latin had entirely displaced earlier Iberian languages, Aldrete argued that Moriscos who had been integrated into

Christian communities had assimilated linguistically and religiously. He repeatedly advanced the idea that given time, intermarriage, social integration, responsibilities, and rewards, Moriscos learned Spanish so perfectly as to be indistinguishable from the rest of the population.

As evidence for his claim that Latin had never been a vernacular language of Spain, López Madera in contrast pointed to the refusal of Moriscos to learn the Spanish language and give up their own. Even a people as scant and subjugated as the Moriscos of Granada would die before giving up their language, he asserted (1601:58v).

Only a few years after Aldrete's first book was published, the Moriscos were expelled from all Spanish territories by royal order and force of arms. López Madera himself was appointed by the King to oversee the completion of the expulsion and to track down recalcitrant Moriscos and those who had surreptitiously returned. He was renowned for his severity and rigor in carrying out these tasks.

López Madera's cultural and linguistic fatalism, and his essentialist stress on origins and authenticity, were of a piece with the ideological defense of the Morisco expulsion, which he himself helped carry out on behalf of the Crown. In the light of the Morisco debate and ultimate expulsion, Aldrete's Christian universalistic faith in slow progress toward a fellowship of humankind stands out. The specific arguments he offered to support his theories of language shift and change militated against the kind of essentialization and racialization of difference that was called upon to legitimate the expulsion of the Moriscos.

I now take this earlier analysis further by considering the different conceptions of history that undergirded the consequentially different visions of language and of human nature espoused by Aldrete and López Madera.

Constructions of History and Time

We are accustomed to read claims to a noble ancestor such as Latin as glorifying a language and its speakers. Indeed, this was one established use of such claims in 16th-century Spain (see Guitarte 1986; Maravall 1986:502–503; Mignolo 1995). However, the invocation of a history for a language can be glorious only if historicity itself can be glorious, and this depends on a concept of development, rather than just decay. If historical contingency is itself viewed as ignoble corruption, then the ideological positioning of the attribution of a history, however glorious, is dubious.

Lucia Binotti has pointed out that Latin "corruption theory" did not necessarily glorify Romance vernaculars. For humanist Latin scholars, it was a way to redeem the integrity of Latin, not of the vernaculars. As a sacred language, Latin should have been immutable, not subject to any internal change or evolution in its system (Binotti 1995:42). Corruption theory laid down two linguistic tracks: the high road for immutable, eternal and sacred Latin, and the low road for the corrupted linguistic forms that became the Romance vernaculars. Corruption theory shored up the glory of Latin but contributed to the idea that vulgar languages such as Castilian were simply inferior. Such an implication triggered in reaction López Madera's theory of primordial Castilian.

López Madera: Messianic Time

López Madera held that stasis, not change, was natural: "each thing tries to conserve the characteristics of its kind" (1601:68v); "according to the laws of nature, change in things cannot be presumed"(1625:100v). Although he recognized change over time in some languages, he had a classical view of "corruption": any change from an originary perfection could only be decay (Read 1977). Hence his indignant rejection of the claim that Castilian derived from Latin. Instead, López Madera insisted that his own Castilian was also the primordial and eternal language of Spain. Not only the language but the people were aboriginal, being "Spaniards" from their first appearance after the Flood: "The Spaniards never lost their language" (López Madera 1625:100). In

excluding the possibility of corruption for his language, López Madera also excluded the possibility of descent, or even evolution over time. "Our Castilian is the true language of our ancestors," he wrote (1595). Moreover, "our language now" is the same as that of 1,500 years earlier (1601:68v). In defense of the apocryphal parchment of Granada, López Madera wrote, with more than a glimmer of a mystical messianic time, "seeing our language of today in the prophecy of the parchment, so like that which we use, so different from what we know of past years, it is so familiar that we do not recognize it (*de puro conocido le desconocemos*)" (1601:56v).[5]

For López Madera, the ancient past is not a foreign country; it is an uncannily familiar one where they did things in exactly the same way as "we" do. The past of his Spanish language is not actually past. It is charged with the time of the now, and his language in this time of the now is shot through with chips of the glorious past, eternally anchored in messianic time.

The scholars who have examined López Madera's work have emphasized the importance he gives to history, not just in his account of the Castilian language but in all of the arguments he brought to his larger enterprise of lauding the excellencies of the Spanish monarchy (Bermejo Cabrero 1999:xlvii; Binotti 1995:68). But what is the sense of history that matters to López Madera? It is antiquity, which is in and of itself "venerable," constituting the highest excellence (Bermejo Cabrero 1999: xlix; cf. Woolf 2001). He quotes from Pliny that for cities and provinces, antiquity is "sacred" (López Madera 1999:44). Antiquity brings venerability not just to the language itself but from there to "our nation": "What we find in the language of the prophecy is one of the most honorable things we could ask for our nation, which is the antiquity of its language" (López Madera 1601:75r). (This nationalist significance is explored further below). An enthusiastic if sometimes muddled contemporary follower of López Madera's theories, Luis de la Cueva, explained why antiquity itself is valued:

> The ancient has great kinship with the good, and it is a clear indication of being [good] to have antiquity. If the republic of Venice had not been just, it would not have lasted so long. And if the Spaniards had not been so loyal and their monarchs so Catholic, the reign would not have remained in one family for more than 900 years . . . . Gold is the best metal because it can become older than others that fire could damage and consume. Only gold could defend itself, becoming more pure. [1993:8]

As Cueva made clear, what was important to the theory of primordial Castilian was not history in the way we now think about it, which is about change. Rather, it was antiquity, which is about constancy. Krieger (1975:73) observed that in the early modern period, a historicist interest in documentable origins conflicted with a historiography focused on tradition. "Tradition," predicated on continuity and constancy, erased the distinction between past and present and along with it the temporal dimension essential to history. As Pocock wrote, "The mere affirmation of continuity can produce only traditionalism; historical explanation can arise only where there is some awareness of discontinuity" (1962:23). What López Madera valued for his own timeless and unique language, monarchy, and society was not historicity in the sense of change, development, evolution, or contingency, but only antiquity, continuity, and constancy. "Origin is the goal" in Benjamin's messianic time (Karl Kraus quoted by Benjamin 1968:261), and origins and essence were key in López Madera's thinking about the merits of linguistic as well as social and cultural forms, such as kingdoms, peoples, and religion (see Rothstein 1990).

In López Madera's claim that primordial and contemporary Spanish were the same, Lucia Binotti has recognized the superimposition of two synchronic planes of a national landscape, the pre-Roman and the early modern (1995:68). Just like the messianic-time vision of the French Revolution as Rome reincarnate, this superimposition flattens history into a unified chronotope (Bakhtin 1981) (or we might say it gives dimension to the present, creating a four-dimensional space). In López Madera's representation of the Spanish language and monarchy, just as in Benjamin's historical

materialists' accounts, "the nourishing fruit of the historically understood contains time as a precious but tasteless seed." Time gives great value to the language and the kingdom while not sullying their purity with new flavors.

Given the role of Renaissance legal humanism in generalizing the philological perspective on history and applying it to problems in social life, it is worth noting López Madera's antipathy to legal humanism. In an earlier treatise on law, López Madera took to task the humanists who criticized Justinian and his collaborator: "If we are permitted to denigrate Justinian and Tribonien, all of civil law will crumble" (Pelorson 1980:324). In what Pelorson calls an "invective against legal humanism," López Madera reproached colleagues whom he viewed as "contaminated by humanism" for destroying the authority of these venerable sources and thus contributing to their own ruin. In Pelorson's paraphrase, López Madera judged that "these modern sectarians pass all their time carrying out research on the cults and ways of life of the Ancients, reporting their customs in the most minute detail. Jurists afflicted by this erudite furor forget to do their work" (1980:324).

Aldrete: Homogeneous Historical Time

Aldrete was himself a humanist antiquarian who passed much of his time carrying out research on the ways of the ancients. He brought to bear on the question of origins a very different sense of history than did López Madera, one more like the historicist's chain of events progressing through homogeneous (though not necessarily empty) time that Benjamin described. In direct opposition to López Madera's endorsement of stasis, Aldrete took change not only in all languages but in all things for granted: "Only in God the creator and lord of the universe is there neither variation nor change. All of creation is subject to it, and time changes, converts and confounds it" (Aldrete 1614:*2). For Aldrete, language history specifically was a matter of transformation and development: "language changes with time, and little by little it becomes other, such that, even without new incidents beyond that which time itself causes, it is enough for a language to become almost another from what it was three hundred years before" (1614:90). Change was such an integral aspect of language that "in one or two hundred years it changes in such a way that many words cannot be understood, just as if they were words in a strange or foreign language" (1606:176). "Since language is not the same in all parts, nor in all times, for as it changes with lands so also with the ages, in order for there to be communication it is necessary for the foreign language to be learned; and in order to understand what was written in early times, there has to be someone to teach it" (1606:42). For Aldrete, then, the past was indeed a foreign country, where they did things differently and spoke a different language.[6] The pre-Roman languages of peninsular Iberia were simply unknowable in his view, having been completely displaced by the Latin vernacular of the conquerors. Whatever they had been, they surely were different from any that remained in his day, Aldrete concluded.

In contrast to López Madera, Aldrete elaborated historicity almost to the exclusion of antiquity. In what is transparently a rebuttal of López Madera's criticism of him, Aldrete deplored the glorification of antiquity itself, finding it empty of any real value.

> I cannot refrain from responding to those who feel that I do harm to our language by attributing to it a beginning that is more modern than the population of Spain by the ancient Tubal. They hold that anything else is unworthy of Spanish greatness, which they claim for their side, and they persuade themselves that everything else is not honorable and should not be written. Such trappings and adornments of antiquity do not beautify or honor the language, which has its own riches and luster, and those are not imaginary.
>
> The abundance of words, sweetness together with gravity, elegance accompanied by ease, and other similar ornaments are what honor and give value and esteem to a language. If these are lacking, no matter what the antiquity, it will not be worthy. [Aldrete 1606, prologue s.n.]

For Aldrete, it was not so much the origins, and certainly not immutability, but rather the development of language that mattered. For if language could be developed, and if even Latin was developed by its users, then vernacular languages like Castilian could also develop and achieve great glory, even through deliberate cultivation. Castilian could be made better and achieve its full linguistic potential: "The fruit of this work that I would hold greatest, after the glory of God, would be if, after I have established the origin and beginnings of our language, others would honor it with the clarity of their talents by raising its style, and taking advantage of their erudition, advance it in such a way to show what can be done with art and diligence" (1606:5).

As an antiquarian and scholar of Semitic and classical languages, Aldrete was an almost obsessive advocate of detailed scholarly inquiry into evidence (see Woolard 2003). In his history of Spanish, he compared Latin, Spanish, and even other Romance language family vocabulary to establish regular mutations in sounds over time in series of words. Where his contemporaries allowed arbitrary sound change in any given word among many possibilities, Aldrete, like the neogrammarians, insisted on a set of constants. In Léon Wagner's view, Aldrete followed the "elementary rule of modern etymology, the law of series: all the changes seen in a word have to be justified by analogous mutations in a series of other words. He freed etymology from arbitrariness" (Nieto Jiménez 1972:51). Moreover, Aldrete held such changes to be irreversible; vicissitudes of the times could not return a language to its original form (Aldrete 1614:303).[7] In the view of Amado Alonso, among others, Aldrete anticipated the comparative historical grammar and laws of sound change of 19th-century linguistic science: "Aldrete had a powerful scientific mind, and in his book we can admire the basis and first satisfactory realization of historical and comparative grammar, which was only developed in the nineteenth century. Aldrete must be given a place of honor in the history of phonetic laws" (Alonso 1938:104–105; but see Guitarte 1986; Johnston 1978; Molina Redondo 1968).

Historicism and Progress

As Benjamin, Anderson, Maravall, and others have suggested, these different models of language and of time helped construct competing visions of human nature, its mutability and perfectibility. Aldrete's linguistic historicism, which posited regular progression and change through time, was indeed companion to a certain kind of faith in the possibility of gradual progress and perfectibility, in line with Benjamin's thesis. Not only could languages be perfected and achieve their full potential through cultivation by their speakers, so too for Aldrete could peoples such as the Moriscos achieve their full human (i.e., Christian) potential, given time and proper cultivation (e.g., Aldrete 1606:86). This kind of assimilationist faith in incremental progress and perfectibility has been criticized by modern theorists as an oppressive illusion, especially for Europe's Others, just as Benjamin criticized 20th-century Social Democrats' faith in progress (see Dollimore 1984; Todorov 1984, 1993 for discussion). The very real alternative of expulsion—and even the possibility of extermination—make the evaluation of assimilationism in early modern Spain a more complex issue than can be treated within the scope of this article. We will touch on it again, however, in the final section, when we consider the relation of these ideas to Spanish nationalism.

Periodization

The different constellations of ideas represented in López Madera and Aldrete's work fit scholarly descriptions of different periods in European thought. In the schema adopted by Panofsky, Auerbach, Anderson, Burke, and others, López Madera appears not to have the "sense of history" and recognition of anachronism characteristic of Renaissance thinking, but to draw on the earlier medieval mode (see Lloyd 1991). Mondéjar Cumpián in fact characterizes López Madera's method as "medievalizing pettifoggery" (1992:466). Although he inventoried the doubts that had been raised

by humanists and antiquarians about anachronistic linguistic, orthographic, and onomastic patterns in the Sacromonte parchment, López Madera easily accepted anachronisms under cover of syllogistic reasoning and the uncritical patchwork citation of authority that Burke (1969) characterizes as medieval.

In this schema, Aldrete was the more advanced thinker, participating in the Renaissance mode and even anticipating 19th-century scientism. As an antiquarian scholar, his sense of anachronism was so well developed that he was obliged to endorse the solution of a miraculous *deus ex machina* to account for the Sacromonte parchment. Aldrete's appreciation of evidence was equally acute, as seen in his dismissal of coincidental similarities in linguistic forms as evidence of genealogical filiation. He treated only series and patterns, not isolated resemblances, as constituting evidence.

In Foucault's ordering of epistemes, however, it is López Madera who appears to outstrip Aldrete, anticipating the classical episteme of the 17th and 18th centuries. The 16th century "accepted that languages succeeded one another in history and were capable of engendering one another," with Latin as the common ancestor of Italian, Spanish and French (Foucault 1970:89). Such is Aldrete's position, precisely. In contrast, the later classical episteme is exemplified for Foucault by the rejection of kinship with Latin: he points to "the paucity of interest shown by the Classical age in chronological filiation, to the point of denying, contrary to all the 'evidence'—our evidence, that is—the kinship of Italian or French with Latin" (1970:89). Thus Foucault fits the kind of linguistic primordialism espoused by López Madera into the classical episteme that followed the Renaissance, rather than the medieval episteme that preceded it.

Instead of attempting to reconcile these conflicting periodizations of the positions in the origins controversy, it is useful to focus on the fact that Aldrete and López Madera were contemporaries. Theirs were competing, rather than "earlier" and "later," positions. Maravall (1986) views primordial Castilian and Latin corruption theory not as reflexes of earlier or later intellectual stances, but as two facets of the same impulse toward emulation of the ancients. From the whole cloth of the "descent from the ancients" *topos*, the contemporaries Aldrete and López Madera picked apart the two threads of historicity and antiquity. They pulled these threads in opposite directions, and in so doing they elaborated opposing views of history in language, based in different conceptualizations of historical time.

The Link to Nationalism

This Spanish case shows that consciousness of nation was known in the early modern period and that it could be built on a foundation of messianic rather than historicist time. López Madera boasted that his account of Castilian as the primordial language honored the glory of the Spanish nation. "Since my intention has been to defend through all means the excellencies of our Spain, it would not have been good to leave this [language origins point] undefended. In every way [this work] satisfies my desire for the honor of the nation that has always been so dear to me"(1999:181–182).[8]

What Binotti calls López Madera's "fanatic patriotic vision" of the language (1995:11) was also nationalistic in Anderson's sense (see also Alarcos 1934; Bahner 1966; Mondéjar Cumpián 1992). That is, it was a vision of language as the treasured property of its community of everyday speakers: "the love and affection that everyone has for their language, and the greater strength and mass of the common people (*el vulgo*) is enough to preserve [a language] against the will of their superiors (*mayores*)" (López Madera 1999:173). Compare Anderson's comments on events that he locates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: "the lexicographic revolution in Europe created and gradually spread the conviction that languages (in Europe at least) were, so to speak, the personal property of their daily speakers and readers" (1991:84).

López Madera not only claimed the national interest for his own account, but he also vehemently disqualified Aldrete's view of the origin of the language as an insult to the Spanish nation. Attacking Aldrete as an unnamed "scholar," he wrote that it

was traitorous to the Spanish nation to assert that its language derived from any form of "corruption," "as the scholar who raised the doubt, unworthy son of his fatherland (*patria*), so unworthily called it, for solely through his imaginings he wanted to deny his own language, which is so much a part of the honor of the nation" (1601:70).

In his later work, López Madera repeated his patriotic assaults on Aldrete:

> This conservation of its language touch[es] so much on the honor and excellence of Spain, for the Romans could not claim to have triumphed over it, . . . nor could any nation of the world claim to have displaced it . . . . The habit of contradicting (to show erudition) motivated one author who wrote after my discourses to impugn the excellence of our nation and its language, pretending to prove that the Castilian that we speak is corrupted Latin rather than ancient and our own. . . . This is so important for the excellence of Spain that I make no apology for responding. . . . That author voluntarily wrote against the honor of his nation. [1625:100r–100v]

And again:

> And even though that same author followed with a second book, with great erudition, his arguments have so little force that . . . I do not see that they obliged him to impugn something so true and so honorable for Spain as is the conservation of its ancient language. [1625:109v]

To be sure, despite López Madera's attacks, it is nonetheless possible that Aldrete's theory of Latin origins was taken by some contemporaries as a glorification of the Spanish nation. Although I have found no explicit evidence of this reading of Aldrete by his contemporaries, modern commentators have seen a nationalistic or imperialistic glorification of Spain in his claim to Latin origins for his language (see Guitarte 1986; Johnston 1978; Maravall 1986; Mignolo 1995). However, not only such credulous followers as Luis de Cueva but also leading grammarians and rhetoricians of the time such as Gonzalo Correas and Jiménez Patón agreed with López Madera. Jiménez Patón acknowledged that he preferred López Madera's account of the origins of the language over Aldrete's:

> The Spanish language is original to Spain. I confess that letting myself be carried away by the opinion of many others I had erred in believing that our language was corrupted Latin, but I have recently read with great attention the acute and most learned discourse written on the subject by Doctor Gregorio López Madera, of His Majesty's Council, and *Alcalde* [judge with prosecutorial powers] of the royal house and court, mature and universal genius of all forms of letters, on those [writings] of Sacromonte in Granada . . . he has shown me the truth, and I can say with Horatio that God has corrected my sense. [Viñaza 1978:273]

In a letter, Jiménez Patón made it clear that it was the patriotic thrust of López Madera's argument that swayed him:

> I have see what Doctor Aldrete and many others of his opinion say about the Castilian language, but I confess that since I saw the work of Doctor Madera, it pleased me so much that I have not been able to give it up, and it could well be that at work here is the pious affection that I owe my country, because I look with enthusiasm on all things that speak in its favor. [Viñaza 1978:273]

Anderson argues that after William Jones's investigations of Sanskrit in the late 18th century, breakthroughs in comparative philology laid the ground for nationalist perspectives on language because they forced the old sacred languages—Latin, Greek, Hebrew—"to mingle on equal ontological footing with a motley plebeian crowd of vernacular rivals" (1991:70). If all languages shared a common status, "then all were in principle equally worthy of study and admiration" (1991:71). But the pretension to equality with the ancients was already a Renaissance theme in relation to language and other areas as well; Maravall (1986) sees exactly this in the theory of primordial Castilian. Moreover, in an analog to Anderson's position on the later period, Binotti has argued that López Madera's atemporal view of language facilitated not

only vernacular nationalism but also the independent synchronic study of the Spanish language. She claims that linguistic scholars like Jiménez Patón embraced López Madera's theory because it legitimated their work (Binotti 1995:110–111).

López Madera's active defense of the Spanish nation extended well beyond the language. His best known book was *Excellencies of the Monarchy and Kingdom of Spain* (first published in 1597; the defense of the antiquity of the language was appended in the 1625 edition.) This book belonged to the tradition of the *laudes Hispaniae* ('praises of Spain'), dating from work of Orosius in the fifth century and Isidore of Seville in the seventh (see Bermejo Cabrero 1999:xxix; Binotti 1995). Although highly patriotic, the early tradition was a paean to the land, not to a people and political community identified with that land, and thus not nationalist in the modern sense (Davis 1935; Koenigsberger 1975). By the time López Madera took up this apologetic form, however, the tradition had added an emphasis on the qualities of "the people" (*el pueblo, la gente*) evolving a national consciousness and consolidating it into a "Spanish nationalism *avant la lettre*" (Binotti 1995:18–19).

For Anderson, one of the hallmarks of the nation is that people are willing to die for it (1991:7, 144). It is telling, then, that López Madera began his prologue to *Excellencies* with the same theme. Like Rome, he wrote, Spain had had many sons willing to give their lives for "*la patria*" (López Madera 1999:9). What it lacked, unlike Rome, were sons who would tell of their heroic deeds and of the grandeur of the *patria*. López Madera therefore took up the task in the body of his text, lauding the antiquity and nobility of the kingdom and its monarchy, its clear sovereign right to the peninsular territory, its early and stellar Christianity, its government and administration, its language, literature, and military strength, the riches of the territory, and the excellence of the Spanish people. The touchstones of European national mythology that Desan described for France are all present: identification with a distinct territorial space, autochthony as the principle of leadership, and the awareness of belonging to a distinct and venerable culture (with its own completely distinct and venerable language).

To claim unbroken sovereign and legitimate rule over the territory by the Spanish monarchy, López Madera argued that the Moors could never really be said to have ruled Spain. Since they occupied a foreign territory by force, they didn't actually "possess" it, he reasoned (1999:139). Although temporarily vanquished, the kings of Spain never lost their "natural," legitimate possession of Iberian territory, which they held aboriginally (1999:140). (A decided difference from modern nationalism is that López Madera believed the kings' power depended on nothing but their own autochthonous right, "not even on the people" [1999:41].)

Although accidental features of reconquest may have divided the territory into different titles, López Madera held that "the kingdom of Spain is truly one" because of its natural integrity (1999:142). In López Madera's account, the Christian monarchs' conquest of the peninsula reads like a 19th-century national irredentist's territorial imperative fulfilled. He even invoked Spain's capacity for autarky, in contrast to rival nations that are dependent on trade for their survival (1999:124). For López Madera, Spain was timelessly, naturally, independently, and uniquely Spanish.

Similarly, in López Madera's description, the Spanish language had its own timeless, inimitable substance, the kind of "genius" for which Romantic nationalism is known (Stankiewicz 1981). For example, in López Madera's words, the style of the first-century poet Martial showed him to be Spanish, revealing "a genius (*ingenio*) that is very particular (*propio*) to Spain and its natural poetry" (1999:178).

Finally and most significantly for the question of whether this is traditional territorial patriotism or an emergent national consciousness, López Madera extolled the excellent nature of Spaniards themselves (admittedly, introduced primarily as "subjects" rather than in their own right). He addressed "those most significant qualities that have always given Spaniards the advantage for the glory of their nation and kingdom": "The judiciousness and gravity of the Spanish . . . their courtesy and warm welcome to strangers . . . their constancy and forbearance . . . Spanish loyalty . . . piousness and staunch faith . . . humility and moderation" (1999:151–152).

Although López Madera encompassed all Spaniards in his paean, he valued nobility most highly in a monarchical subject. His Spanish nation is not the horizontal comradeship of Anderson's definition, if by horizontal we mean among equals. We might ask, however, whether horizontal comradeship beyond restricted classes actually characterized any of the early nationalisms, even in those of the Americas that Anderson cites as the originals. (See Céspedes del Castillo 2000 for a rather different version of Latin American independence than Anderson's account.) In its celebration not just of heroic kings but of language, culture, and people within the *madre patria*, the sovereign territory and cultural homeland, López Madera's work is at the very least "proto-nationalist" (Bermejo Cabrero 1999:xxviii–xxxiv).

Nationalism and Race

One final issue should be discussed briefly, and that is the relationship of nationalism and racism, which Anderson argues against. "Nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time . . . outside history" he writes (1991:149). But it is as much nation as race that is eternal, outside of history, transmitted from the origins of time, in López Madera's vision. In the light of the early modern Spanish case, the nation casts a racialist shadow.

Anderson argues that racism has its origin in ideologies of class, rather than those of the nation, in claims to "blue" or pure "blood" and "breeding" advanced by rulers and aristocracies (1991:149). However, Spain developed the metaphor of "blood" early, a biologized conceptualization of human difference in its popular ideology and regulatory statutes of "blood purity" (*limpieza de sangre*), dating from the mid-15th century. Contrary to Anderson's assertion, this blood purity is well known to have had "strongly anti-aristocratic overtones" (Koenigsberger 1975:149). "Old Christian" *hidalgos* (petty noblemen) and even peasants could and did claim greater purity of blood than aristocrats whose descent lines were often "tainted" with Jewish *conversos* (as converts to Christianity were called), and "questions of blood and lineage were no less important to the Castilian peasant than they were to the king himself"(Mariscal 1991:36, 40).

As Luis de la Cueva's explanation of its value made clear, antiquity is tied to purity for primordialists. Binotti observes that López Madera's inventory of the greatness of Spain connects linguistic purity and unity to the purity and unity of the Spanish realm, which in turn rests on racial purity. In López Madera's writing, "All of the grandees are 'Goths', as if there had never been an invasion of 711 and the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 had occurred in the year 0"(Binotti 1995:68). López Madera praised the wisdom of the expulsion of the Moriscos and boasted of his part in it (1625:54r). His ahistorical, change-defying, essentialist vision of the Spanish nation built on and contributed to the virulently exclusionary racial and religious politics of his time.

The period when López Madera published the second edition of *Excellencies* (1625) was a time of crisis for the Spanish state, with Castile particularly disenchanted with the monarchy, and one approach to restoring unity emphasized the providentialist role of the monarchy. In a treatise on Spanish politics, Fray Juan de Salazar wrote in 1619: "With this aim, the kings of Spain put all their efforts into the unity of the Catholic religion so that their peoples, realms and estates should love each other, not allowing to live amongst them Jew, Moor or any heretic who might impede or contribute to the undoing of this bond and union" (translated in Thompson 1995:146).

In his insistence that European "official nationalism" developed only after popular European national movements of the 1820s, which were in turn modeled on American nationalisms, Anderson dismisses early modern Spanish imperial cultural policy as unselfconscious religious pragmatism rather than hispanization (1991:86–87). The contemporary observation of Fray Salazar, however, suggests that there was a self-conscious state policy to stress a unity of the "peoples" (and even loving comradeship across the estates) built on a foundation of racial-religious exclusion. López Madera's

Excellencies, particularly the second edition, may best be seen as belonging to this racialist, providentialist, and protonationalist approach to reconciling discontented elements of the monarchy to its imperial project.

Conclusion

I have argued that both the historical perspective and national consciousness were present in Spain in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. I am not claiming, however, that Spain was a "nation" in that period (or even now, for that matter), nor that national consciousness was a mass phenomenon then. Rather, I am arguing that the construct of nation as a natural and venerable political community was not only available to competing elites but was being used as a strategic tool in public debates in early modern Spain. When a lawyer for the king appeals to the honor of "our nation" and the national "genius" of "our language" in an attempt to silence a scholarly theory of linguistic history, it seems reasonable and useful to say that we have a politicized national consciousness in play.

In identifying both a historical sense of time and consciousness of nation in early modern Spain, I do not suggest an earlier instance of the relationship between them that Anderson posited. It was not the historicized sense of time, but rather the atemporal, messianic view of the past that provided the chronotope for López Madera's forceful imagining of the nation.[9] If Anderson's interpretation of homogeneous empty time turned German historicism on its head, then the 17th-century Spanish case turns the relationship between time and the nation back again. To paraphrase Benjamin (1968:263), nationalism glinted less in Aldrete's historicist account of the language than in the chips of messianic time from which López Madera formed a glorious constellation of an earlier era and his own.

Notes

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1. Rather than assimilating clock and calendar as the essence of modern time, as Anderson does, Benjamin actually claimed that calendars, with their recurring holidays, "do not measure time as clocks do" (Benjamin 1968:261). Instead, he saw them as monuments to messianic historical consciousness. Anderson appears to have noticed this discrepancy by the second edition of his book, although he does not address it directly. Instead, in a new chapter, he describes the revolutionaries' discovery of the American nation as both a "radical break with the past" and "a blasting open of the continuum of history" (1991:193). We now have Benjamin's visionary messianic time figuring in the birth of national consciousness, completely intertwined with rather than counterpoised to historicist homogeneous time. This does not, however, lead Anderson to revise his general view of the relation of nation to time.

2. Anderson quotes Auerbach that under Louis XIV the French considered "their own culture a valid model on a par with that of the ancients" (1991:68–69). However, he minimizes the import of this, noting that Auerbach says "culture," not "language," as if the difference were somehow crucial to Anderson's argument. He also cautions that "we should be chary of attributing 'nation-ness' to 'their own' " (1991:69), although he does not explain why or acknowledge that Auerbach himself makes that attribution.

3. Although the "foreign country" trope has been appealing, not all who use the figure think it applies to the humanists. Quentin Skinner writes of the English Tudor humanists,

> What is striking . . . is the extent to which they . . . lack any sense of the past as a foreign country. Having dusted down the ancient texts, they exhibit almost no interest in reconstructing their historical contexts as a way of making better sense of them. On the contrary, they approach

them as if they are contemporary documents with an almost wholly unproblematic relevance to their own circumstances. [1996:39–40]

4. Nonetheless, the influential Spanish historian José Antonio Maravall commented that Kohn's lack of knowledge of events of his period in parts of Europe such as Spain led him to miss the early appearance of protonationalist sentiment there (1972:494–495).

5. López Madera does acknowledge in this passage that in past years Castilian had differed from its original and present form. However, the suggestion is not of unidirectional change, but rather of reversion to an earlier state, and is reminiscent of the figural relations of messianic time.

6. Aldrete's historical perspective allowed him an acute understanding of anachronism and led him to conclude that his antecedents on Iberian soil were culturally and linguistically foreign to him. But in a sense that is significant in the debate over the differences between Renaissance and later German historicism, Aldrete did not think that human nature and social processes were different or "foreign" in different periods. Very much a universalist, Aldrete was happy to reason inductively from historical and contemporary cases to general social laws.

7. Metcalf argues that although language change was well recognized (with exceptions) by the 16th century, phonetic elements were viewed ahistorically. Phonetic change was not limited to a specific direction in a given dialect and period of time, but rather was depicted as random and likely to reverse direction (1974:237). Aldrete's contribution can be appreciated in contrast.

8. The formula "our Spain" has been viewed by the historian Pierre Vilar as a diagnostic of national sentiment (Thompson 1995:159).

9. I cannot exclude the possibility that the Renaissance historical perspective was necessary for the first emergence of national consciousness, and that by the turn of the 17th century it had already started to "become modular," as Anderson says, and detach itself from its roots in the historical perspective.

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Department of Anthropology, 0532
University of California, San Diego
La Jolla, CA 92093-0532
kwoolard@ucsd.edu