

Iberian Confessional Minorities and the Concept of the Nation in the Early Modern

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1. Introduction

I propose to examine the Jewish Question in recent Marxist theory as a point of departure for exploring Iberian confessional minorities and the concept of the nation in the early modern. In so doing, I hope to expand John Beverley's notion of the Baroque as a place "before and after the nation" as well as to interrogate the present moment in Spanish early modern literary studies and history as disciplines (2008, 185).

To make my case, I would like to first revisit a previous intervention by Beverley, his 1987 essay, "Class or Caste: A Critique of the Américo Castro thesis." In this essay Beverley criticizes Castro's insistence on "castes rather than classes" in the emigre Hispanist's otherwise illuminating focus on the impact of Jewish and Islamic cultures, in interaction with the Christian, in the formation of "Spain and Spanishness itself" (125). Rejecting Castro's understanding of the collective as the individual writ large, Beverley instead focuses on the collective consciousness of class as a social and economic form. He points to the economic foundation of Jewish oppression in Spain and relates it to a similar dynamic in other European countries, occasioned by "the emergence of primitive forms of capitalism and the market economy," which in turn "precipitate a collapse of the traditional functions of the Jewish community in the interstices of feudal economies and displace onto it the resentments and antagonisms generated in the population at large by these new forms of wealth and exploitation" (130). Here Beverley cites the Polish Trotskyist Abram Leon's "classic Marxist account," written in clandestinity before Leon's capture and ultimate death, at the age of 26, as a Jew in Auschwitz (130). Inspired by Leon, Beverley argues for a more nuanced understanding of the Jewish question based on the formula "'caste and class,' where the one is seen as a dialectical aspect of the other" (131). He concludes by characterizing Castro's historiography as "a form of existentialism applied to Hispanism," appealing to a post-World War II liberal sense of self and thereby constituting "an *ideology* of North American academic Hispanism" (126, 131).

While Beverley's early essay remains a valuable contribution, it can be qualified in light of more recent critiques of Leon's work, by sociologists Maxime Rodinson (1981) and Enzo Traverso (2018). While both extol Abram Leon's thesis, particularly given the limitations under which he wrote during World War II, they signal some important corrections. Rodinson argues that Leon transposed the situation of the Jews in Europe after the Crusades to the past and to other cultural situations (79). Traverso, concurring with Rodinson, argues that Leon's concept of a Jewish "people-class" "was historically circumscribed and could not be extended both temporally (before 1096) and spatially (outside of the Western Christian world)" (181). Furthermore, Traverso claims that Leon continued a line of crude materialism, following social democratic theorists Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer, which "was founded on the same tendency to reduce Jewish history to the socio-economic function of the Jews" (178).

Abram Leon's thesis, while not universally applicable to all times and regions, does however seem to be generally accepted by these critics as a description of Jews in the European later Middle Ages and early modern, along the lines of Beverley's summary above. I don't think Leon's concept of the Jews as a "people class" is really so crudely reductionist, as the term "people" suggests an identity beyond economic function. The contours of his thesis may indeed compare to Kautsky and Bauer's analysis of the changing economic role of Jews in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, but Leon, as a Trotskyist, most certainly did not share their social democratic framework of extolling progress through gradual reform, much less in Kautsky's Social Darwinist terms.¹ Nonetheless, Rodinson and Traverso are correct that Leon's thesis evinces the limits of his time, in his available documentation and his circumstances.

As a Polish Jew who began his political life in a Zionist-socialist organization, the Hashomer Hatzair, Leon was the product of a specific moment in history—well explained in elegant and painstaking detail by Traverso—, in which Eastern European Jews, unlike their assimilated compatriots in Western and Central Europe, were separated from the rest of the proletariat by restrictive regulations and a climate of violence and aggressive discrimination, while expressing an emergent autonomous consciousness in their representation in organizations such as the Bund and the Poale Zion (Traverso 178-95, 100-26). They also, importantly, spoke various dialects of Yiddish and contributed to the proliferation of Yiddish literature (111, 113, 217). Whether they might, therefore, have constituted an "extraterritorial nation" was up for debate (70, 92-93, 113,

¹ On Kautsky's Social Darwinism, see Traverso (78).

121). Leon, like Trotsky and the Bundist leader Vladimir Medem, accepted the possibility that Eastern Jewry could at some point constitute a nation, to be determined by the course of history (195, 91-92, 111). As Traverso points out, by the 1930s Trotsky “admitted the existence of a living Jewish nation in eastern Europe that had to be defended against Nazi threat” (92). Trotsky imagined the possibility of a socialist Jewish nation, never, however, anticipating the founding of the state of Israel in the wake of the Holocaust on colonial terms (See Trotsky 1934 and Traverso 125-26).

These debates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the nature of the Jewish people and whether they had a national character provide a vocabulary for examining the Jewish Question as also a potential “national question.” The national question in early modern Europe—and in particular Iberia—, can be productively juxtaposed to its late modern counterpart to define the place “before and after the nation” which Beverley has identified as baroque. To do so requires a review of a basic Marxist definition of the nation and the nation-state.

2. The Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution and the Limits of the Nation-State

Contrary to Benedict Anderson’s notion of “imagined community,” a nation is conceived in Marxist terms as a material entity rather than as an idea. Typically, a nation consists of a common territory, language, culture and political economy, although there are variations in the degree to which a nation might possess these characteristics, which have been the subject of debate. “National consolidation,” the unification and assimilation of nationally distinct territories within the political entity of one nation-state, is one of the historic tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, which also includes agrarian reform, separation of church and state, a constituent assembly and democratic rights.

The prototype of the bourgeois democratic revolution is the French Revolution (1789-), which also gives us a useful vocabulary for analyzing future revolutionary history, including as it pertains to the national question. In the French Revolution of the late eighteenth century, the bourgeoisie allied with the peasantry and artisans to overcome feudalism as a political and economic system, victorious over king, nobles and church. The French Revolution created a moment of radical democracy in the Jacobin clubs and Paris Commune. Yet this was short-lived, as in mobilizing the masses against feudalism, the bourgeoisie had unleashed forces which could threaten its own rule. For this reason, the bourgeoisie suppressed the popular movement, famously in the month of Thermidor of the new revolutionary calendar. Napoleon Bonaparte represents the final point of control and consolidation of the new capitalist order in dictatorship. Thus, “Thermidor” refers to a period of reaction, “Jacobins” to radical democratic revolutionaries, and “bonapartism” to dictatorship. This pattern of uprising and suppression, of democratic aspiration followed by reaction, recurs at pivotal moments throughout modernity, underscoring the incomplete nature of the bourgeois democratic revolution, its unkept promises.

The limits on the bourgeois democratic revolution intensify with the growth of the proletariat, associated with watershed moments such as the German Revolution of 1848. The failure of the German Revolution has been seen as a result of the bourgeoisie’s compromise with Prussian absolutism in the face of the rising power of the working class (Traverso 149). In the wake of similar failed revolutions, Traverso describes a legacy of unresolved national questions, what Engels referred to problematically as “fragments of peoples” (*Völkerruinen*) (24-25). Traverso argues that such compromises with the remnants of feudalism are actually typical exceptions to an illusory normative teleology (208-9). Indeed, Spanish capitalism faced an even earlier impasse with the *ancien régime*, and the second half of the American bourgeois revolution, the Civil War, achieved only a qualified victory over the Confederate agrarian oligarchy, the “forty acres and a mule” promised to the formerly enslaved taken back in a recrudescence of “slavery by another name” and the rise of fascist terror.²

3. Imperialism, Nationalism and Internationalism

Referencing a later watershed moment marking the start of World War I in 1914, Lenin’s classic work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), describes the role of the nation-state in capitalism’s death agony. For Lenin, the logic of capitalist competition for international markets in colonialism and inter-imperialist rivalry, its drive to export capital across national boundaries, is ultimately world war. Trotsky took this as a premise in his development of the theory of permanent revolution, in which he argued that in the age of imperialism, the task of the bourgeois democratic revolution falls to the proletariat. Here Trotsky stands in opposition to Stalin’s theory of “two stage” revolution, which supported a “first stage” of national or bourgeois revolution

² On the Spanish compromise with the *ancien régime*, see Beverley (2008, 145-46); “slavery by another name” recalls the title of a recent book by Douglas A. Blackmon on the Reconstruction period and its legacy in the American south.

before a second stage of a proletarian or socialist one. Stalin's stagist theory is a direct correlative of the policy of "socialism in one country," his nationalist defense of the Soviet Union at the expense of potential socialist revolutions around the world, most famously in China in 1927, where Stalin ordered the Chinese Communist Party to support the Kuomintang, which led to their massacre, or in the case of the Spanish Civil War, where Stalinists sacrificed the Spanish revolution to the anti-fascist cause. The post-World War II map was decided out of similar national interests by Stalin in his negotiations with Churchill and Roosevelt in the Yalta Pact, which handed back a number of revolutionary victories in areas where communists had led the resistance, while also carving up the postcolonial world into multinational states in a way designed to exacerbate communal tensions, many more of which have reemerged with the restoration of capitalism to the states of the former Soviet bloc.

Opposed to the policy of "socialism in one country" is the ultimate socialist goal of an international planned economy, based on the Leninist principle of the equality of nations and languages, but moving from separate national political economies into an integrated, democratic structure in which the world's resources and technical capacity could be used efficiently, to maximize the common good rather than to generate profits for private interests defended nationally. This vision of world unity is prefigured in utopian imaginaries, in earlier glimpses of internationalism. Pivotal moments "before and after the nation" repeat the contours of cosmopolitan culture, even in the most embryonic forms. In this context we can better appreciate the situation of Iberian confessional minorities in their time, "before the nation," in the era of multinational feudal empires on the threshold of mercantile capitalism.

4. "Before the Nation": Utopian Space and Protonationalism

The political of the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 through the conquest of the Islamic kingdom of Granada was accompanied by a parallel religious unification. In the same year the Jews were expelled, as were the Muslims soon after, in 1502 and 1526, with only those who converted to Christianity—many by force—permitted to stay. Those who remained, the judeoconvertos and Moriscos, were considered "New Christians" and subject to discriminatory policies as well as to the threat of punishment by the Inquisition for heresy or any return to their former faith. The Moriscos were a varied group, as Mercedes García Arenal points out. Some, the Mudejars, had converted to Christianity earlier and were well assimilated. However, others, including the recently conquered populations of Valencia and Granada, spoke Arabic and followed their former religious leaders, while enduring what García Arenal has considered a "parallel colonialism" to the American indigenous.³ These populations mixed when the defeated Moriscos of the Alpujarras Rebellions were dispersed throughout Spain. The perception that the Moriscos had failed to assimilate as Christians eventually fueled the decision to expel them *en masse* in 1609, in what many have seen as an early case of "ethnic cleansing." Nonetheless, as Trevor Dadson has shown, many Moriscos returned, protected by their Christian neighbors in areas where the two groups had lived together harmoniously for generations, as well as by members of the Andalusian aristocracy, who valued the Moriscos as vassals skilled in agriculture and other essential trades.

Mercedes García Arenal has presented what might be considered the "negative space"⁴ of such a ruthless carving out of a Christian nation—in networks of resistance (cryptoislamic and cryptojudaic) within Spain and in exile, pseudogenealogies (such as the Lead Books forgeries) and all sorts of hybridity, doubt and religious heterodoxy which anticipate the transfer of faith to the private sphere. She points to new scholarship which shows that the Reformation and Lutheranism took hold in the peninsula to a greater degree than previously recognized, impacting the faith of conversos, who might be skeptics, divided between the two or even three religions, or even non-believers, the "lessening of faith" being one result of compelling mass conversion (2009, 907).⁵ Two examples she cites speak to the extent of the religious diversity of the time.

The first is the case of Juan de Prado, the son of Portuguese judeoconvertos, raised in Spain, and as García Arenal points out, like many of his peers at the University of Alcalá de Henares, a deist (914). His friend told the Inquisition that Prado had stated "each man is saved in his law, be he Christian, Moor or Jew."⁶ This was a common heresy, which García Arenal suggests gave comfort to New Christians in "the thought that their own parents and grandparents who had died before the decrees enforcing conversions were issues, might still be saved" (907). Fearful after

³ (2009, 889) and (1992). García Arenal's "Religious Dissent" (2009) is an excellent guide to books which represent new scholarship on the Moriscos, judeoconvertos and religious dissent in Spain and Europe.

⁴ This is Betty Edwards' term from her book, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*; the left brain sees the image, while the right brain sees the negative space which surrounds it.

⁵ Here García Arenal acknowledges Miriam Bodian's work.

⁶ Citing Kaplan (125-26). García Arenal also acknowledges the research of Israel Salvator Révah and Natalie Muchnik for their attention to Prado's case.

his friend's denunciation, Prado flees to Europe where he converts to Judaism in Hamburg, later befriending Spinoza and then facing excommunication from the Amsterdam community of "New Jews"⁷ with whom he had difficulties. While he was reinstated, he eventually left for Antwerp, moving back to Catholicism and considering a return to Spain before he died. As García Arenal comments, citing Natalie Muchnik, his case was "neither isolated nor extreme" (913).

The second example is a remarkable statement by Beltrán Campana, executed in Cuenca by the Inquisition. García Arenal translates the Inquisition's report of Beltrán Campana's testimony, from his trial in Toledo (1651-54) as follows, in which he

did say that the religion of the Calvinists, of the Romans, of the Lutherans, is all good, is all a most excellent thing [...] and that each man could be saved in his own law, like the Moor, the Turk in his law, the Hebrew in his, the Englishman in his, the Spaniard in his and all others in the world in their own law; and freedom of conscience is what matters [...]. Pontiffs and priests are not necessary for they do inhuman things and want to take what belongs to others and make all men obey them and take away their liberty and free will, and behind their fine appearance they deceive people and rob them, abusing their power greatly, and as regards freedom of conscience, it is this that matters, the rest is falsity, for there is nothing else except eating and fornicating and drinking and freedom and the last of these is the glory of this world (917).

Campana's testimony illustrates for García Arenal the fact that Spain participated in the European-wide battle between orthodoxies and their resistance, culminating in the fight for "freedom of conscience" (917). In this vein she compares Spain's *alumbrados* to the Quakers (918).⁸ Thus the fight for religious freedom in Spain connects to the broader discourse on the "rights of man"—and woman—associated with the bourgeois democratic revolution.

The words "nación" and "ley" had different meanings before the separation of church and state, as the testimony by Campana demonstrates; in his understanding, a nation was a people governed by a religious law. Is it possible, however, that Spanish early modern confessional minorities were *potential* nations in a modern political sense? The more recently conquered Islamic kingdoms could be considered oppressed nations—indeed colonies—but the dispersal of pockets of unassimilated Moriscos complicates the question of a common territory, as does their relationship with their assimilated brethren the questions of common culture and language.

Maybe Green Mercado has published the 1602 letter from the Moriscos to Henry IV of France seeking an alliance against Spain in retribution for retracting rights granted as terms of the original conquest treaty and in the treaty ending the war of the Alpujarras, as well as for "tyranny," forced baptisms, confiscation of possessions and arms, retraction of privileges, and excessive taxation. While the language uses the Medieval and feudal rhetoric of prophecy and submission to the king, the spirit is one of protest over the violation of a social contract and reminiscent of the North American indigenous' citation of the "trail of broken treaties."

The letter appeals to an ecumenical monarch who granted religious freedom to the Protestant Huguenots, with the Moriscos asserting that they can also mobilize dissident Christians from within Spain. Their appeal failed and was used to justify the expulsion, but it reveals a hope for a solution to the oppression of the Moriscos in a feudal, but ecumenical, multi-national state, a kind of utopian road not taken. After the expulsion, the exiled Moriscos found a mixed reception in their Arab host countries, where they already had sufficient national identity so as to consign them to minority status.⁹ In this sense the exiled Moriscos became the remnants of the process of Spanish national consolidation, a failed national possibility in Spain as well as a new national question across the ocean.

The judeoconversos, on the other hand, did not represent a potential nation within Spain; the possibilities of founding a Jewish nation drawn from various waves of diaspora, as discussed, are only seriously entertained in the twentieth century. This did not prevent the myth of the New Jerusalem, the use of the image of Solomon's temple, from being a kind of hermetic symbol to vindicate national, ethnic or religious identity in a trend Carmen Bernand has called "la moda salomónica" (2010, 11). Indeed, Jewish messianism becomes both a validating strategy for the Spanish empire as well as for confessional and colonial minorities. The art historian Jesús Rubio Lapaz describes the project of placing Spanish "sacred imperialism" on Jewish foundations as one which aimed to bestow upon Spain "una preeminencia de origen divino que lo colocaba por encima del resto de países en el contexto contrarreformista" (166).

Cities also vied for such sacred preeminence, with the cathedrals of Córdoba and Granada both imaginatively tied to the foundational architecture of Solomon's temple. García Arenal links the validation of an original Jewish population in the invented local histories of Granada, Toledo and

⁷ García Arenal credits Yosef Kaplan for this term.

⁸ Here García Arenal signals Stefania Pastore's original research on the *alumbrados*.

⁹ See Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent on the Morisco diaspora (225-45).

Córdoba, in the context of expulsion and the “Limpieza de Sangre” (“blood purity”) statutes, to the project of the Sacromonte discoveries (2006, 581). The Sacromonte discoveries were forgeries planted by Morisco elites, including the famous Lead Books purported to be gospels written in Arabic by disciples of St. James. These were celebrated as evidence of an early Arab Christianity, vindicating the Christian heritage of Granada's once Islamic population as well as the sacred origins of the city.¹⁰ As she writes, “La solución, que viene proporcionada por los hallazgos sacromontanos, radica en incorporar a esos judíos y musulmanes despojándolos de su identidad religiosa: haciendo a los árabes cristianos y a los judíos españoles, enraizándolos con aquellas Tribus Perdidas que no habían podido participar en la condena de Cristo” (581; García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano 7). Kevin Ingram makes a similar point, citing the parallel between the use of the figure of Solomon by converso intellectuals and artists to promote “religious synergism” (as part of an “integrationist project” in the face of “hostility towards New Christians in Spain”) and the project of the Lead Books, thereby underscoring that judeoconversos and Moriscos would make common cause (145-46).

The image of Solomon's temple was not only appropriated by confessional minorities but also by a representative of a colonial minority in Spain, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, as Carmen Bernand has amply demonstrated, in his description of Coricancha, the Inca temple of the sun, in the *Comentarios reales* (2006, 275). She also points out that Inca Garcilaso decorated his planned Spanish burial chapel with a painting linking Solomon's Temple, Coricancha and the mosque-cathedral of Córdoba (“Hebreos” 15). Yet, as Christian Fernández notes, Inca Garcilaso's syncretic burial chamber was also decorated with his heraldic shield, which featured the crowned *amaru* (serpent), an Inca royal symbol, and conformed more directly to indigenous burial practices of the Andes. In Fernández's words, Inca Garcilaso had designed a “tumba mestiza de un lugar sagrado mestizo” (110). As he states:

La mezquita-catedral de Córdoba era lo más cercano que tenía el peruano de las tumbas de sus antepasados incas a las cuales los primeros cronistas llamaban *mezquitas*. Así cumplía de una manera simbólica con una costumbre ancestral de sus antepasados andinos y con su cristianismo. Así lo hacían en el Perú los indígenas sepultándose en las nuevas iglesias que habían sido construido sobre antiguos templos incas (110).

Inca Garcilaso's appropriation of messianic imagery in mestizo terms, as Beverley argues, interpellated the aspirations of the indigenous masses, anticipating the defeated mestizo nationalism of José Gabriel Condorcanqui (2016, 362-63).¹¹ The possibility of a national road not taken for the Moriscos thus points to others, in this early modern special moment before the nation.

In this context, we must consider that national revolutions in the colonial world around the time of the French Revolution pose questions which call for the expansion and rethinking of Marxist theory, particularly given the role of slavery in the colonial economy. C.L.R. James recognized this in *The Black Jacobins*, his analysis of the Haitian Revolution, which followed the model of the French Revolution but was carried out by the enslaved in a massive revolt in 1781, leading to an independent nation in 1804. A recent volume reviewing the importance of James's work makes the case:

One of James's most striking achievements in *The Black Jacobins* was his demonstration that just as “the law of uneven but combined development” meant the enslaved laborers of Saint-Domingue, suffering under the “concentrated oppressions” of slavery, were soon to be “hospitable to the boldest conclusions of revolutionary thought” radiating from the Jacobins in revolutionary Paris, so the Marxist theory of permanent revolution illuminated not just anticolonial struggles in the age of socialist revolution but also the antislavery liberation struggle in the age of “bourgeois democratic” revolution. (Forsdick and Høgsbjerg 13).

The watershed moments of 1789, 1848 and 1914 that we have discussed earlier in this essay clearly do not apply in the case of Haiti. Haiti was well within the framework of viability of bourgeois democratic revolution—the time of the nation—, having declared independence in 1804, but was recolonized by debt to France two decades after, when French gunboats arrived demanding reparations financed by predatory loans to French banks.¹² C.L.R. James's thesis should be generalized to other revolutions in which the dynamics of slavery or colonialism hold back the bourgeois democratic revolution before the ostensible start of the age of imperialism (1914).

¹⁰ García Arenal (2006) and García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano (13-34); Fuchs (99-117).

¹¹ In a related vein, Mabel Moraña cites the later “nationalist appropriation of pre-Columbian history” in the creation of the Spanish American republics, studied by Ignacio Sánchez Prado (xi-xii).

¹² In a sign of the times, the story of “Haiti's Ransom,” tracing the trail of loans financing reparations to former slaveowners (even leading to the US institution, Citibank), was front page news in the *New York Times* recently.

Armando Muyoema's recent notion of the "anticolonial imposture" of the *criollo* elite in Latin America¹³ would seem to suggest as much, as well as the need for Marxism to reflect other epistemologies beyond the European, especially where the mass of the population was indigenous, of African descent and/or mestizo.

Raising the topic of the "racial" composition of the Latin American population, the colonial "castas," poses the question of race and slavery more generally in early Spain. Slavery was a punishment for participation in the Alpujarras uprising and systems for freeing such slaves ran through cryptoislamic networks as well as Morisco clergy¹⁴; clergy were also involved in negotiations for the freeing of captives. Many Portuguese Moriscos who fled to Spain after the Portuguese expulsion were enslaved Africans (Barletta 113-14) and Spain itself participated in the African slave trade. The role of race in antisemitism is another question.

Enzo Traverso distinguishes between an early "religious" antisemitism in Germany and the racialized antisemitism of the Nazis, what he views as "reactionary modernism" (2, 158). But can such a sharp distinction between early and modern antisemitism, broadly construed, be posed, and specifically in Spain? The historian David Nirenberg, while pointedly rejecting conclusions based on facile teleologies and genealogies, does note "some broad similarities in the theoretical underpinnings of Toledo's purity of blood statutes and the 'racial anti-Semitism' of later periods" (261). Traverso suggests a resolution of such a counterposition of the pre-modern and modern in a dialectic, citing "one of Nazism's constituent elements—its singular mixture of the archaic and the modern" (209). Yet is it so singular? Nazism's automation of racial extermination on a large scale, its industrialization of genocide, was certainly singular. But the mixture of archaic and modern in the recrudescence of a culture medium for fascism is not; the rekindling of nationalist mythology by far-right organizations had its parallel in other lands (consider the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States of the 1920s). It is also now common in many countries as the post-World War II order crumbles. In recognizing this, we arrive at the point of naming and interrogating our own contemporaneity. If post-World War II Castrismo constituted an "ideology of Hispanism," what is ours?

5. Contemporary Ideologies of Hispanism

The current wave of interest in Spain's multi-confessional past continues the critique of Castro in a number of interventions. For example, George Mariscal (1990) examines the ideological trajectory of Castrismo; in parallel with Beverley, lucidly anticipating the consensus of the past decade:

[Stephen] Gilman's early account of Golden Age Spain as a site of ideological competition incorporates the insights of Américo Castro's first seminars at Princeton in the early 1940s, and prefigures by some fifteen years Castro's model of an "edad conflictiva." Castro's account was decisive for the deconstruction of the conservative model of "Spanishness" defended by establishment historians and the Franco regime, but ultimately his caste-based reading, in its retention of various forms of bourgeois individualism, was to be more limited than the one that might have been theorised from Gilman's initial suggestion (22).

Anthony Cascardi (2005) echoes Beverley, contending that "Castro's thesis about the primacy of caste led him to a view of Spanish history that attributed existential qualities to the collective subject of history" (141). Mercedes García Arenal (2007) reprises Castro's polemic with Claudio Sánchez Albornoz as a revisiting of the Generation of 1898's reflections on the meaning of Spanish history, left unfinished by the interruption of the Spanish Civil War. She concludes, "En réalité ces deux historiens [...] souffraient d'un même problème, celui de la recherche d'une *essence* immanente et, inaltérable et allant de soi, de toute l'histoire de l'Espagne" (2007, 44). David Nirenberg (2009) shares such concerns with essentialism, arguing that Castro was blind "to the ways in which his methodology simply displaced many of the naturalizing and essentializing functions of 'race' into the less charged term of 'caste'" (246). By 2010, Vincent Barletta, in an essay on Castro and *aljamiado* literature, which Castro simply lacked the training to analyze,

¹³ Beverley summarizes Muyoema's argument as follows: "[The] claim of Latin American culture to be anticolonial during the period of Independence and the formation of the Latin American nation-states in the early nineteenth century is an imposture because it comes mainly from the creole and the mestizo sectors, rather than from the populations that were actually conquered and colonized: that is, the indigenous peoples and the Africans brought to the Americas mainly as slaves. Those populations could sympathize, or not, with the goal of Independence. But Independence was not *their* project, nor did it solve (indeed it may have even deepened in some ways) the problems of their subordination. For indigenous and African populations, the colony was not in the past, "before" the nation, something that had to be removed for the nation to emerge, but also in the present" (2016, 355-56).

¹⁴ García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano (123-24).

seems to suggest that we no longer take the Spanish historiographer quite as seriously, except as a point of departure for new endeavors.

Francisco Márquez Villanueva is now more highly regarded as an initiator of the new wave of scholarship on Spain's confessional minorities and is also emblematic of the new interdisciplinary dialogue between scholars of Spanish literature and those of Spanish history. Mercedes García Arenal highly praises Márquez's book on the Moriscos "based entirely on literary sources" as well as his strategy of reading "between the lines" (2009, 896-97). In her words,

His lifelong purpose [...] has been to show that there was in fact a plurality of voices in an early modern Spain that has long been depicted as homogeneous and univocal. And I believe he is right. If Márquez (and others like him) have been misunderstood or ignored, it is because Spanish historiography on this period has been sharply divided between a traditional, Catholic, nationalist strand and a liberal, secular strand that in turn was linked to and nourished by the Protestant historiography of Spain that developed in northern Europe beginning in the seventeenth century. Although diametrically opposed to one another, both in fact present the same image of an undivided Spain, where absolute royal power and the church are inextricably linked, where there is no intellectual or ideological pluralism of any kind, and all of whose citizens stand firmly united behind its singular version of the Catholic Reformation credo under the watchful eye of the Inquisition (896).

She criticizes him, however, for a subjective empathy with the Moriscos and their dissident defenders, based, she suspects, on his personal experience as an émigré, and noting that his perceived similarity to Américo Castro ruffled feathers among her generation of Spanish historians (897). Nonetheless, he opened a door. As she states, "Recently, [...] younger historians, the product of quite different historiographical traditions, have masterfully uncovered the same plurality of voices that Márquez drew attention to, including the dissenting voices of those who refused to toe the official political or ideological line" (897).

Mercedes García Arenal's reception of Márquez's work underscores her appreciation for scholarship in literature and for literature in general, evident in her discussion of the *Quijote* in her now classic book with Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain: Converted Muslims, the Forged Lead Books of Granada, and the Rise of Orientalism* (2013). Her own bridge-building from history to literature, in her scholarship and publications for a more general audience, is a welcome and heartening reminder of the fact that the arts are the common patrimony of all humanity. Conversely, scholars of literature have incorporated her work, and those of other historians of confessional minorities in the Iberian early modern, in a historical turn which raises new questions for literary theory, beyond the debates over "the New Historicism" of the early 1990s.¹⁵

One recent book which poses these questions for me is Steven Hutchinson's *Frontier Narratives: Liminal Lives in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (2020), a study of "the conflicted Mediterranean world of corsairs, captives and converts" which has earned comparisons with historian Fernand Braudel's classic opus and which points to the same sort of "negative space" outside the nation which García Arenal has described (21). Hutchinson's book occupies a parallel frontier methodologically ("historiography and literary studies") as do his materials of study generically, as they include "geographies, chronicles, descriptions of countries or cities, religious treatises, archival sources, autobiographical accounts, captives' tales, and all the major genres of literary works" (14). The expansion of the range of his objects of investigation evinces the impact of cultural studies as well as a logical association between the study of "crónicas," the writing of history, and the historical documents themselves. What is unexpected, however, in Hutchinson's endeavor, are the questions which he orients his research to address.

Hutchinson moves from Braudel's announcement that the Mediterranean speaks with many voices to analyze texts that incorporate them, including those of imaginative literature, cast as one valid source among others for understanding "how the Mediterranean world worked" (17). Hutchinson takes his cue from Cervantes, noting that "in recent decades historians have been deeply impressed by how much rare insight can be gained from reading Cervantes's stories about the early modern Mediterranean world. As we know, fiction can sometimes illuminate what non-fictional genres are incapable of expressing" (17). He admits, "All genres are suspect with regard to their truth value, yet few if any can be discounted" (16), arguing that "the best we can do is counterbalance the different genres, often reading against the grain" (17). Hutchinson develops an impressive portrait of "a particular kind of frontier slavery" that was "historically unique" and not based on race, while bringing new light to episodes in Cervantes's work that comment on key moments in the history of the Moriscos: "The Captive's Tale" with its drama of Zoraida's escape, and that of Ricote's return, both from the *Quijote*, and the willing exodus of cryptomuslims in the *Persiles* (32). Yet what strikes me in his defense of his method is the focus on "truth value." I had a similar reaction while reading Nicholas R. Jones's defense of an author's sincerity, in his

¹⁵ See Beverley (1993) and Tom Lewis (1991), for example.

work to validate the voices of enslaved Africans in Sor Juana's poetry (268). "Truth" and "sincerity" were values of the New Criticism of long past. But these contemporary Hispanists are clearly oriented towards something new.

What motivates this new wave of criticism is a zeal to understand the history early modern literature represents symbolically, in response to the emergence of new histories post-Francoism, recovering lost voices buried in the institutional legacy of nationalist historiography, as well as to an earlier moment in literary studies. In this sense, there is a confluence of today's "memory battles" in Spain, undoing the damage of dictatorship in the Spanish educational system¹⁶ and the moment of racial reckoning in the US and of migration struggles around the world, especially from Islamic countries. Mercedes García Arenal, as a renowned Arabist writing in Spain, part of the "avant garde" of scholars of the Mediterranean Hutchinson welcomes,¹⁷ offers insight into this contemporary context:

The Morisco question provokes strong emotions and constitutes a "living problem" for which the purely historiographic approach is not always appropriate. Above all, writing this history cannot avoid being influenced in some way by the current and controversial presence of Muslims in Europe today. (2009, 891)

In his review of Hutchinson's book, James Iffland offers similar comments, citing the book's "timeliness" in addressing the frontiers which frame "our current geopolitical malaise": the crisis on the US-Mexican border, the Muslim bans, the surge of refugees headed for Europe, the Mediterranean crossings of today (238). All of these frontier moments of crisis speak to the unkept promises of the nation.

This is our context; what is our ideology as scholars of the literature of the Spanish early modern? It depends on how we read Spanish ethnic and religious conflicts of the period in relation to the problem of the nation. In this regard, the historian Daniel Hershenzon¹⁸ continues García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano's topic of the incompleteness of Spanish "ethnic cleansing and religious unification," arguing that

While the Spanish monarchy successfully unified Spain by expelling the Jews (1492) and the Moriscos (1609-14), it failed to eradicate from the Iberian landscape all signs of Muslim and Arab otherness. [...] To be sure, in the seventeenth century Spain was far more homogeneous than ever before, and yet it remains to reconstruct and study the "refractory imprint of the native counterclaim,"¹⁹ as well as how this imprint evaded registering in the archives (190-91).

While I celebrate attempts to reconstruct this imprint, the recovery of the "negative space" of lost voices, we should still face the reality of the expulsions and indigenous conquest which created the "positive space" of the early modern Spanish nation and empire, and do so with a clear-sighted gaze, informed by the radical possibilities of grief and remembrance, as Walter Benjamin has taught us and as the Spanish recovery of Republican testimonies shows us. Any defensiveness over "Prescott's paradigm"²⁰ or the Black Legend²¹ simply fuels an alternative form of Spanish nationalism as a continuity of Castrismo. Early modern Spain did decline and the conquest of the Amerindians was barbaric, as any scholar of Latin American colonial studies can well attest,²² but not for reasons of national character. Spanish imperialism was supplanted by others just as violent, beginning with the British and most recently by the Americans. An internationalist approach allows us to go beyond all of this, to engage our special moment in history to create new constellations of scholarship which we have yet to imagine, using our moment "after the nation" to better understand the early modern time "before the nation."

¹⁶ See Sebastiaan Farber.

¹⁷ Hutchinson (14).

¹⁸ Hershenzon treats a topic similar to Hutchinson's, but as a historian and from the perspective of "region formation" theory.

¹⁹ Hershenzon attributes this term to Patrick Wolfe (389).

²⁰ Richard L. Kagan defines "Prescott's paradigm," named for US historian of Spanish history William Hickling Prescott (1826-1867), as the "juxtaposition of Spanish decadence and American progress" (425). The paradigm represents Spain as "inherently backward" (430) and develops as a discourse of "national character" (432).

²¹ As Kagan explains, "One variant of this legend, traceable to Bartolome de las Casas's condemnation of Spanish atrocities in the New World, described Spaniards as barbaric bigots with an insatiable lust for gold. Another variant, rooted in the early seventeenth-century treatises of *arbitristas* ("economic projectors") such as Pedro Fernández de Navarrete, portrayed Spanish society as one sunk in the depths of decline: a nation that wasted the silver it had mined in the Indies on monasteries and religious wars without bothering to invest it productively in commerce" (425). Nonetheless, Kagan welcomes his teacher John H. Elliot's multicausal and comparative European approach to the question of Spain's decline, reflecting the influence of the *Annales* School and new archival methods from the social sciences (440-41).

²² See Ivonne del Valle on José de Acosta and the consolidation of the conquest, for example.

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