

18th century linguistic mentality and the history of the Galician language

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Abstract

The Iberian Peninsula of the 18th century was characterized by the institutional reinforcement of the ideal of a unified Spain and, on the other side of the border, by the reaffirmation of Portuguese independence after the 16th and 17th century era of submission. In this context, the Galician language played for non-Galician intellectuals the role of an ignored and negated phenomenon, considered by some a simple vulgar variety of Castilian and by others an archaic and rustic form of Portuguese. Galician intellectuals of the time paid attention to the Galician language in a generally circumstantial or anecdotal manner that was transcended only by Padre Sarmiento who, having written a brief yet well-informed history of the Galician language, formulated regenerative projects that could begin to revive the language from its state of prostration. In this article I will provide a critical review of the contributions to the history of the Galician language made during the 18th century by various authors united by a clearly historicist attitude, which was characteristically 18th-century: for them, investigation of the linguistic history of the Peninsula provided precious keys to answering the questions they were asking at that time about Galician, Portuguese, and Castilian.

Key words: Age of Enlightenment, mentality, linguistic ideology, Galician, Portuguese, Castilian.

Resumo

Na Península Ibérica o século XVIII caracterizouse politicamente polo reforzo institucional da idea unitarista de España e, no outro lado da fronteira, pola reafirmación da independencia portuguesa trala época de submisión dos séculos XVI e XVII. Neste contexto, o idioma galego xogou para os intelectuais non galegos os papeis de ignorado e de negado, sendo para uns unha simple variedade vulgar do castelán e, para outros, unha forma arcaica e rústica do portugués; pola súa parte, os intelectuais galegos da época prestáronlle ó idioma de Galicia unha atención en xeral circunstancial ou anecdótica, só transcendida polo Padre Sarmiento,

quen, ademais de redactar unha breve pero ben informada historia da lingua galega, concibiú para ela proxectos rexeneradores que poderían empezar a tirala do estado de prostración en que daquela se atopaba. Neste artigo faise unha revisión crítica das achegas á historia do galego que no século XVIII fixeron distintos autores irmandados por unha actitude de base netamente historicista e, por tanto, caracteristicamente dezaoitescas: para eles, a pescuda sobre a historia lingüística da Península Ibérica podería achegar chaves preciosas que desen resposta ás preguntas que daquela se facían sobre o galego, o portugués ou o castelán.

Palabras clave: Ilustración, mentalidade, ideoloxía lingüística, galego, portugués, castelán.

1. The 18th-century Galician language in Iberian and European context

The ancient disputes about the relative superiority of some languages over others continued up to the 18th century. In the Iberian context these disputes dated back to the distant 16th century, when the debate over the primacy of Portuguese or Castilian, evidently reflecting a much broader-ranging debate over the relationship of equality or dependence between the two great Iberian kingdoms, produced various texts of high-voltage patriotism. In such discussions greater antiquity was usually understood to be the conclusive criterion that allowed the resolution of the dialectical battle in favour of one language or another, in such a way that temporal or genetic primacy was indisputably accepted as proof of greater prestige. This is hardly an exclusively Iberian phenomenon. In the European crisis of consciousness situated by Paul Hazard between the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, the entire continent was converted into a scene of multiple declarations of national primacy based on the possession of a supposedly greater antiquity, considered an indisputable attribute of superior nobility:

De nación a nación, se batalla también por reivindicar la prioridad en el tiempo. Todas intentan entonces descender hasta el fondo de su pasado, para sacar de él títulos de nobleza. Poseen la lengua más antigua, la poesía más antigua, la prosa más antigua, la civilización más antigua. Y cada una afirma orgullosamente que sus vecinas no son más que presuntuosas, recién llegadas. (Hazard, 1988: 325)

So strong was this national or patriotic impulse that it often overcame reason, the grand governing principal of European thought of the era: “en cuanto un italiano de la Italia fragmentada, un alemán de la Alemania desunida, un polaco de la Polonia que gustaba de hacerse la guerra a sí misma, un español de la España durmiente, creía que se atentaba a la cualidad profunda, o solamente a la gloria externa de su país, empezaban las protestas y las disputas; y ante los caracteres nacionales, la razón universal e igualitaria perdía sus derechos” (Hazard, 1988: 327). These discussions should be reduced to their proper terms: such protests and discussions were not massive or popular in the way they are generally presented today, but rather were limited to a minority of intellectual circles, comprised of those who largely functioned as qualified peons of their respective monarchs, representatives of a

nation-state in a process of consolidation which created an atmosphere of rivalry in a Europe that was rapidly turning into a political chess board.

In this scenario, the struggle for understood primacy in the manner presented by Hazard explains the great importance attributed in those times to historical speculation, a discipline that, purified of the most arbitrary elements with which it had been burdened and subjected to the principles of rigor and reason, eventually occupied a place of honour in the system of thought and enlightened mentality¹. The critics and erudite nationalists, shedding the fabulations of which more than a few previous chroniclers had been so fond, set out to conceive of history as a source that could provide precious arguments to all those who were interested in participating successfully in the diverse dialectical jousts so in vogue at the time. In reality, during the 18th century, historicism was the preferred mode of analysis when attempting to understand and explain human deeds and institutions.

The 18th century saw important advances in the institutionalising processes of the languages of the Iberian states, which had been initiated at the end of the Middle Ages. These processes were comparable with those that since the 16th century had been developing in other parts of western Europe such as France and England, where strongly centralised monarchies had been promoting internal linguistic unification, where the connection between political identity and linguistic identity had been strengthening, and where print expansion had been demanding a linguistic uniformity that Latin could no longer offer (cf. Giard, 1992; Harris & Taylor, 1997: xviii, 87-94). Portuguese, after beginning to gradually free itself from the unpleasant traces left by Castilian political domination from 1580 to 1640, had embarked upon a period of recuperation and had begun a process of consolidation that toward the end of the 1700's had already left the language in the state of being presented and exalted by its grammarians and orthographers as the *língua nacional* ('national language'; cf. Vázquez Corredoira, 1998: 22). As for Castilian, its use was imposed on different spheres of public life, with provisions explicitly dictated for Catalan-speaking territories by means of the *Decretos de Nueva Planta*, dating from the initiation of the Bourbon dynasty in Spain after 1700. Of particular importance was the obligation to use Castilian exclusively in the delivery of the educational curriculum at the secondary and primary levels, an obligation declared through provisions such as the

1 In the Kingdom of Spain the critical or sceptical concept of history that was underway during the 18th century was recommended as early as 1700 by Juan de Ferreras and, some years later, by the omnipresent Padre Feijoo, by Gregorio Mayans and by other authors (cf. Abellán, 1981: 418-24, 766-67; Sánchez-Blanco, 1999: 55-60, 84-97, 161-67). In all of Europe, as Hazard (1985: 212-19) has demonstrated, the 18th century meant the search for a history that would be science rather than myth and that, as such, would renounce the marvellous or supernatural elements that until then had had such unabashed circulation among the historians. In the field of Galician history the triumph of critical rationalism also produced these results (cf. Barreiro Fernández, 1988: 51-52).

Real Cédula de Aranjuez (1768) in the context of an emerging and ever more decided interest in basic education. The foundation of the *Real Academia Española* (Royal Spanish Academy) in 1713, under the direct protection of the Crown, was without a doubt another powerful indicator of the reinforcement of Castilian along these institutionalising lines throughout the 18th century. This institutionalisation took place at a time when linguistic appeals from the peripheral minorities were yet weak and nearly nonexistent, and Castilian was engaged in a fundamental struggle with two adversaries that were also threatening Portuguese: Latin, from which the two vulgar languages had been methodically seizing the academic and university functions that for centuries Latin had kept for itself, and French, hegemonic language from the moment it was assumed as the “official” language of the Kingdom of France, the grand prevailing political power in that era. In Spain the use and defence of Castilian was unequivocally linked with the innovative thought opposed to the stagnant scholasticism clinging to Latin, still reigning in the university.

Nevertheless, just as the institutionalised revitalisation of Portuguese in the 18th century did not imply an immediate extension of the knowledge and use of its standard model throughout Portugal, the analogous process experienced by Castilian in the same period was also far from enough to ensure that this language, outside of Castilla, would cease to be fundamentally the language of scholars. In this way the situation was presented by Gregorio Mayans in his *Orígenes de la lengua española* published in 1737 (cf. Mayans y Siscar, 1984: 329) and in this same way the situation is presented to us by those who, based on a serious analysis of the socio-economic structure of the Spain of those times, did not uncover conditions that would have then permitted significant advances in the knowledge and use of Castilian throughout all of those territories of the Kingdom of Spain where it was not the native language². There is nothing to impede the application of this same analysis to 18th century Galicia, a region almost monolithically agrarian and pre-industrial, and one in which the great majority of the population would only encounter in the religious sermon or in emigration (then preferably temporary or seasonal) the Castilianising stimulus of unequal power. The Spanish school, in those times still inaccessible for many and in general miserably equipped with resources, material and human alike (cf. Sarrailh, 1992: 55-59, 77-79), still was quite far from acquiring the great assimilative capacity that it did acquire in the 19th century and, even more so, in the 20th. Don Francisco del Valle Inclán was quite clear in this regard when in 1800 he printed the following observation in a pioneering publication out of Santiago de Compostela:

² According to Juan Francisco de Masdeu (1800: 333-34; 1805: 430), what the monarchy was seeking with its provisions was only to extend the knowledge of the language of the court to the provinces: “Lo que ha querido, y quiere el Ministerio no es que las Provincias olviden sus Lenguas, sino que sepan, y entiendan la de la Corte”. This means, logically, that in those days there were many in the provinces who did not know or even understand the Spanish language.

Por mas esfuerzos que hace el Ministerio con los Vascones, ni nosotros, ni los Arabes, Godos, y Romanos han podido forzarlos á olvidar su Vascuence. Lo mismo sucede á los Gallegos, Catalanes, y Valencianos, se nos estrecha á hablar y escribir en Castellano; y en el acto de arrojar las tablas de la Escuela se vuelven los niños, se explican, divierten, y desahogan en su lengua nativa.

(V[alle] Y[nclán], 1800: 23)

2. The exaltation of the Castilian or Spanish language in the 18th century

The *Diccionario de Autoridades*, first great work of the Real Academia Española and published in instalments between 1726 and 1739, contains among its first volumes several entries that, deriving from one of the principal bastions of officialdom of the time, provide us with keys to the predominant linguistic ideology among the enlightened elite of the Kingdom of Spain during the first part of the 18th century. The aggrandisement of the Castilian language, which the Academy sought from the time of its establishment, was expressed in the presentation of this work as a search in a double direction: outward and inward. Outward, imbued with the spirit of emulation and competition so characteristic of this era and motivated by a “ardiente zelo por la gloria de la Nación”, the institution proclaimed Castilian to be a grand, powerful, beautiful, elegant language, abundant in voices that enabled it to be completely expressive, in such a form that no other language “la excede en elegancia, frases, y pureza”. Furthermore, the Academy maintained that Castilian was one of the “mas compendiosas y expresivas” of the living languages, that to its “viveza no ha podido llegar Nación alguna” and that “en lo elegante y pura es una de las mas primorosas de Európa” (Real Academia Española, 1726–1739: vol. 1, I, VIII). Inward, coinciding no doubt with the spirit of linguistic homogenisation and Castilianisation in which the Bourbon dynasty initiated its Spanish advances, the Academy declared that the Castilian language was that used “en la mayor y mejor parte de España”, so that it was no surprise that foreigners called the language “Spanish” (Real Academia Española, 1726–1739: vol. 1, XLII). What was, then, the lesser and worse part of Spain, where Castilian was not spoken? In my view, there was in this passage a rather unveiled allusion to the territories of the ancient Kingdom of Aragon, hostile to the cause of Felipe V in the War of Succession to the throne, where the people still spoke a language that in no way could be considered a dialect of the Castilian language: Catalan or “lemosín”, as more than a few called it in those days in allusion to its western connections³. The learned institution, operating

3 This term was used by the Galician Fray Juan Sobreira (1974: 204), who toward the end of the 18th century affirmed that “la lengua catalana es un verdadero lemosín mixto de hispanismos y de propiedades latinas”. This had to do with, to my understanding, one more concession to the 18th-century fascination with the past, another infatuation with origins, so that in declarations of this style (Catalan = *lemosín*) there was frequently nothing but expressive license, an emotional identification of the modern

under the auspices of the Crown, openly recognised Catalan as a language apart from Castilian in its “Prologue” to the dictionary, which it had begun to publish in 1726⁴; not so Galician, to which it did not allude in this same prologue and which is not even mentioned as a variety or dialect in the corresponding lemma of the letter <G>⁵.

Concerning the history of the language, the Academy recognised the still unsurpassed authority of Bernardo de Aldrete, who in the then already distant year of 1606 had put into print his *Del origen y principio de la lengua castellana romance qui oi se usa en España*, a work in which, in opposition to fantastic theories which would not be completely dismissed until several centuries later, defended the Latinity of Castilian and of the other Romance languages spoken on the Iberian Peninsula. In accordance with the authority of this theory, the institution accepted that Latin had banished the use of pre-Roman Iberian languages and made itself common “in Spain”, in such a manner that “solamente los Vizcainos han conservado hasta ahora tenáces su lenguaje” (Real Academia Española, 1726–1739: vol. 1, XLIV). Among the Germanic peoples, only the Suevians (“señores de la antigua Galicia, y parte de la Lusitania” until the time of Leovigildo) and the Goths had remained in Spain sufficient time to introduce their language, which the Goths in the end did not do, because “como auxiliares, y à sueldo del Imperio Romano [...] procuraron saber la Lengua común en él, sin usar de la própria, sino quando hablaban privadamente”; for this reason, of the Goths there only remain “algunas voces” (Real Academia Española, 1726–1739: vol. 1, XLV). Although there is no mention of them, it may be assumed that the Academy understood this doctrine to also be applicable to the case of the Suevians. The Arabic colonisation initiated in the beginning of the 8th century had determined that, while those who remained under the domain of the new lords had introduced into their Romance languages many of the conqueror’s words, those who took refuge in the Northern mountains had conserved their language “algo alterada por la pronunciacion de los Godos” and it continued altering or *corrupting* until, at the start of the 12th century, it could be

language with the ancient. But understand it well: expressive license, identification only emotional or, if you will, pre-Romantic, since already toward the 17th century the idea had been born in the Catalan Nations that *lemosín* was the ancient common language of the entire Catalanophone region, from which in modern times has sprung Catalan and Valencian (cf. Nadal, 1992: 119-20).

4 It did so in the following paragraph: “En el Cuerpo de esta obra, y en el lugar que les corresponde, se ponen várias voces peculiares y próprias, que se usan freqüentemente en algunas provincias y reinos de España, como en Aragón, Andalucía, Astúrias, Murcia, &c. aunque no son comunes en Castilla: y en las de Aragón se omiten las que vienen de la Léngua Lemosina, y no están autorizadas con los Fueros, Leyes, y Ordenanzas de aquel reino” (Real Academia Española, 1726–1739: vol. 1, V).

5 Under the entry *GALLEGO* (‘Galician’) it is only said that it is an adjective meaning “cosa perteneciente a Galicia: como Tocino gallego, Gente gallega” and, in particular, that “se llama en Castilla [gallego] el viento Cáuro, porque viene de la parte de Galicia” (Real Academia Española, 1726–1739: n.v.).

confirmed that the *corruption* had formed “un nuevo Dialecto diverso en lo mas del Idioma Latino”. This new dialect extended toward the south driven by the *Reconquista* (Reconquest), taking up many Arab voices but without losing its essential Castilian base. King Alfonso X el Sabio (the Wise) confirmed the language’s maturity upon ordering in the 13th century that all public writing be written in vulgar Castilian, that had been polished and improved until it arrived at the state of perfection in which, according to the academics, it found itself in the 18th century.

It is notable that in this comprehensive presentation the Royal Academy situated the origins of the Castilian language in the “Dominios de Asturias y Leon” and explained it as a continuation of “el language de los Reyes de Leon y Castilla” (Real Academia Española, 1726–1739: vol.1, XLVI), in such a way that invites the belief that the different Romance languages spoken in the territories of Asturias and of the ancient kingdoms of León and Castilla should fit into this concept as regional varieties of the whole Castilian. It is entirely possible, as a consequence, that the Galician language, in accordance with the general opinion of that time, was considered by the royal institution to be a geographical variety of the Castilian language.

The exaltation of this language, also consciously called “Spanish” with more and more frequency⁶, was continued in similar terms by 18th century authors such as Gregorio Mayans, Esteban de Terreros, Antonio de Capmany, Juan Pablo Forner, Jovellanos and Juan Francisco de Masdeu. Such elegies to the Castilian, or Spanish, language were interlaced with quite a few histories of Spanish literature and of Spain that were equally exaltatory, as well as with frequent calls for prudence in the face of the invasion of Gallicisms, and with the definitive dismissal of Latin as the language of written and oral communication in the worlds of science and the university (cf. Sarrailh, 1992: 399-409). In the interest of brevity, I refer here only to the monumental *Historia crítica de España y de la cultura española* (1783–1805) of Masdeu (1744–1817), a work animated by a critical spirit in conjunction with an evident exaltatory passion for Spain. This Jesuit priest, based on the authority of Bernardo Aldrete, affirmed that the Castilian language is an “immediate child” of Greek and of Latin, and lapsed into an old and stale exaltatory topic: “La Lengua Española es igualmente hija inmediata de la Latina, como lo son la Italiana y Francesa; pero es hija que se semeja mas a la madre que las otras” (Masdeu, 1783: 212). As we can see, these disputes over prioritisation were coin and currency in the scenario of linguistic debate sustained during the 18th century, not only in Spain and Portugal, but in general throughout all of western Europe.

6 As observed by R. Sarmiento (1992: 336), the synonymy between the phrases *lengua castellana* (Castilian language) and *lengua española* (Spanish language) that emerged in the 18th century can be considered a symbol of the centralising and uniformising tendency that was establishing itself in the Spanish kingdom.

3. The Castilian-Portuguese brotherhood, according to Raphael Bluteau

It may be said without exaggeration that in matters of linguistics the *Vocabulario Portuguez, e Latino* (1712–1728) of Raphael Bluteau (1638–1734) inaugurated and presided over the 18th century in Portugal. Its own lexicographical work as well as the logical thought expressed in the text were cast with an air of recognised authority upon his compatriots, whether they were his contemporaries or not, and even crossed the Portuguese borders to present themselves to more than a few erudite scholars of the Kingdom of Spain. For these reasons there does not seem to be any room for doubt that the work of Bluteau can provide us some of the definitive keys to the Portuguese linguistic ideology of the 18th century concerning the questions addressed in this article.

We begin with an unavoidable observation: Bluteau’s vocabulary serves the object of aggrandising the Portuguese language, and, as a consequence, serves also the objects of aggrandising the Kingdom of Portugal. The dedication to the King don João V establishes the principal that “a opulencia de hum Reyno não só consiste na abundancia das riquezas, senão tambem na affluencia das palavras” (Bluteau, 1712–1728: I, without page), and it is evident that this enormous tome published over the span of 18 years is animated by the impulse to solidify and sanction not only the vocabulary inherited from the language of Portugal, but also the set of cultured and foreign elements, and all types of voices necessary to address in the Portuguese language all of the matters that the enlightened thirst for knowledge and encyclopaedism made attractive to the scholars of that time. In this way, Bluteau made a decisive contribution so that the Portuguese elite could forever leave behind a period of domination in which clear reductionist threats had weighed upon their language. His desire to raise the esteem of Portuguese was, therefore, evident, without renouncing in his attempts the topics so continuous and universally repeated since the 16th century like the greater proximity of the particular vulgar language to the mother Latin. Bluteau (1712–1728: I, without page) believed that, due to the privileged proximity of Portuguese to Latin, “à Nação Portugueza, mais que a qualquer outra, lhe importa saber com perfeição o idioma Latino”.

This line of reasoning led inevitably to the work of denying an idea at that time quite widespread outside of Portugal: that the Portuguese language was no more than a corruption of the Castilian language. The author in his prologue “ao leitor Estrangeiro” introduced the question in the following way:

Tambem houve, quem com rustica simplicidade me disse que não merecia a lingua Portugueza tanto trabalho. A razão deste disparate he, que na opiniaõ da maior parte dos Estrangeiros, a lingua Portugueza não he lingua de por si, como he o Francez, o Italiano, &c. mas lingua enxacoca⁷, & corrupçam do

7 In the corresponding entry, Bluteau defines *enxacoco* as “aquelle, que querendo fallar huma lingua, a confunde com outra”.

Castelhano, como os Dialectos, ou lingoagens particulares das provincias, que são corrupçoens da lingoa, que se falla na Corte, & cabeça do Reino; o Gascaõ v. g. o Normando, & o Provençal em França; o Genovèz, o Milanèz, & o Bergamasco em Italia. (Bluteau, 1712–1728: I, § 3)

Later Bluteau refuted before the foreign reader the principal arguments employed in those times by, according to him, those who supported the claim that Portuguese was a corruption of Castilian. These were not political or sociolinguistic arguments, those which today seem to us to be decisive and which to a large degree can be found implicit in the previous explanation of Bluteau: if the dialects are “corrupçoens da lingoa, que se falla na Corte, & cabeça do Reino”, it would be no wonder that, given the history of Portugal during the 16th and 17th centuries, many took Portuguese to be a dialect of Castilian. Far from following this course, Bluteau attended exclusively to those purely linguistic or “internal” arguments that, interestingly, were offered by those who presented Portuguese as a corruption of Castilian: such arguments dealt with, overall, the great hereditary lexicon shared by Portuguese and Castilian, which presumably was explained by the observation that the Portuguese terms resulted from diminishing or truncating the Castilian terms (*mão* would be truncated from *mano*, *mã*y from *madre*, etc.). It took little effort on Bluteau’s part to collect examples demonstrating exactly the opposite, such as those of *caridade* and *relogio* compared with *caridad* and *relox*. Similarity, clearly, was not corruption, and in this way “as lingoas Portugueza, & Castelhana são duas irmaans, que tem alguma semelhança entre si, como filhas da lingoa Latina; mas huma, & outra logra a sua propria independencia, & nobreza, porque nem do Portuguez se deriva o Castelhana, nem do Castelhana descende o Portuguèz” (Bluteau, 1712–1728: I, § 3). The languages were related in this way because, when the Romans arrived in “*Hespanha*”, Castilians and Portuguese mixed Latin in different ways with the language they were speaking at the time “com taõ senhoril fidalguia, que nas palavras derivadas do Latim, nem o Castelhana ao Portuguèz, nem o Portuguèz ao Castelhana deve a nova forma da sua locuçaõ” (Bluteau, 1712–1728: I, § 3).

Nevertheless, Bluteau defended the linguistic independence of Portuguese without going so far as to challenge the virtue of Castilian, in contradiction with what previous Portuguese authors had done, from within a context (that of the “dual monarchy” or Castilian domination from 1580 to 1640) in which the Portuguese clearly suffered a Spanish invasion. Bluteau, from within a context in which the Portuguese language had already been assured a certain degree of autonomy, produced a praise and defence of the Portuguese language that was compatible with an unequivocal declaration of admiration for Castilian, extensively expressed in the “*Prosopopeia del idioma Portuguez a su hermana la lengua Castellana*” that preceded the *Diccionario Castellano, y Portuguez* of 1721. In Castilian, because this work was intended for use by those Spaniards who wanted to avail themselves of the *Vocabulario Portuguez, e Latino* as an intermediary between their language and

Latin, Bluteau insisted on the idea that the languages of the two Iberian (or “Spanish”, according to the terminology of that time) kingdoms were brothers, with neither one being the progenitor of the other, because they were the twin contemporary children of Latin, brought to Hispania by the Roman colonisers and raised throughout the centuries on Germanic and Arabic contact, on the seafaring adventures begun in the 15th century, and on the work of illustrious authors who on both sides of the border had written in one or the other language. This Portuguese writer of dictionaries reclaimed the dignity and independence of Portuguese and, at the same time, called for collaboration—not confrontation—with Castilla and the Castilians:

Quien no será amigo, y admirador de tan admirable Hermana? Estamos separados por la diferente situacion de las Monarchias, pero sin offender la fidelidad, que devemos a nuestros Monarcas, podemos tener correspondencia; yo confieso, que la deseo, y con vuestro favor pretendo introducirme en vuestros dominios. (Bluteau, 1721: 4)

He added that the Spaniards could, with very little effort, learn a language that was as close to them as Portuguese was, and in this way they might benefit from the literary products created in Portugal. In the explanation of this benefit Bluteau transmits a certain profound rumour of sorrow for the fact that the Castilian-Portuguese cultural relationship was clearly asymmetrical, with disdain on the part of the Spaniards toward Portuguese works:

Yo, aunque zelador de mis expresiones, soy amigo y panegirista de las que en Castilla se usan. Admiro la elegancia de sus Escritores. Todos los dias resuena en los Theatros de Lisboa la discrecion de sus Comedias: en todas las fiestas, que en las Iglesias deste Reyno se celebran, con sus Coplas, Villancicos, y Motetes se alientan las armonias. Que razon avrà para que mi Angelica hermana cierre los oidos a mi locucion? No pretendo, que violente su natural, y se obligue a hablar Portuguez, quiero que quando yo le hablare, ella me entienda: no le faltará con que entretenerse en obras *Historicas, Politicas, Oratorias, Poeticas, Belicas, y Asceticas* de Autores de mi tierra, que merecieron la estimacion de los doctos. (Bluteau, 1721: 10)

For him, both languages were equally beautiful, noble, rich, and praiseworthy; both were “lenguas de Angeles”. He strongly denied, therefore, all claims concerning priority between these or other languages, which he defined as “curiosidade de necios” in 1712 (Bluteau, 1712–1728: I, § 3). This linguistic relativity, also defended in 1712 with arguments that seem to resonate with the famous *Paralelo de las lenguas castellana y francesa* of Padre Feijoo, can be condensed into the following two principles: 1) “toda a lingoa, bem falada, he bella”; and 2) “sendo pois todas as lingoas admiraveis emanaçoens deste Divino Espirito, nenhuma dellas foi indigna da declaraçam de suas verdades” (Bluteau,

1712–1728: I, § 3). From here the author derived the essential dignity of the Portuguese language which, judging from the type of words and arguments that he used in its defence, still required in the first decades of the 18th century a certain dose of elegies and legitimisations to present itself in the concert of Iberian (or “Spanish”) culture and of European culture on equal footing with the languages of the other western kingdoms.

In my view, Bluteau’s work must be read as a testimony of the sentiments and opinions of a large part of the Portuguese cultural elite during the time when the country in general, and its language in particular, was emerging from the tunnel into which it had plunged considerably before the year 1580, when the Castilian king Felipe II acceded to the Portuguese throne. Since the second half of the 15th century Portuguese had to contend with the Castilian language within its own territory, especially relating to the conduct of courtly and literary functions. This budding substitutive bilingualism enjoyed the advantage of an atmosphere conducive to its consolidation and progress during the sixty years during which Portugal lived under the reigns of Felipe II, Felipe III and Felipe IV. It is certain that the *Restauração* (Restoration) of 1640 put a stop to the advance of this substitutive bilingualism, but, as usually happens, the cultural and linguistic yoke was considerably more persistent than the political one: more than a few Portuguese writers published in Portugal in the Castilian language from 1640 on, and even in the 18th century, and it is quite significant that Francisco Manuel de Melo (1608–1666), classic writer in Portuguese as well as in Castilian, declared in his *Hospital das Letras* that “Espanhóis e Franceses [falam] as duas melhores línguas da Europa” (apud Vázquez Cuesta, 1988: 150)⁸. It is in the atmosphere of this dialectic between the confirmation of Portuguese independence and dignity and the maintenance of the old admiration for the Castilian language that we must situate the figure and the work of Raphael Bluteau, theatre of French origins who went on to become one of the principal characters of the Age of Enlightenment in Portugal.

4. The corollary of the *Paralelo de las lenguas castellana e francesa* of Padre Feijoo and some of its consequences

The *Paralelo de las lenguas castellana y francesa* was published by Padre Benito Jerónimo Feijoo (1676–1764) as *Discurso XV* (Discourse 15) of the first volume of his *Theatro Critico Universal*, written with the intention of challenging common errors and published in Madrid between 1726 and 1739. Animated by the desire to contradict those who proclaimed the advantage of French over Castilian

⁸ Concerning the linguistic question in Portugal from the end of the 15th century to the beginning of the 18th, cf., among other works, those of Stegagno Picchio (1959), Vázquez Cuesta (1988) and Vázquez Corredoira (1998).

and to put a stop to the fashions that converted those who at the time spoke “Castellano puro” into “hombres [casi] del tiempo de los Godos” (Feijoo y Montenegro, 1726: 774), Feijoo presented a measured defence of the equality of Castilian with French in matters concerning propriety and harmony. In general, he displayed great discretion in subjecting to critical and reasonable judgement a series of platitudes on languages that in his time enjoyed considerable favour. Nevertheless, he succumbed to partiality in declaring emphatically that, in what was referred to as “copia de voces”, Castilian was known to exceed French⁹.

As some things move almost imperceptibly toward others, Feijoo took advantage of the occasion to support the opinion that Atanasio Kircher had expressed regarding the number and identity of Latin dialects in his *Turris Babel* of 1679, where he added Portuguese to the three traditionally recognised neo-Latin dialects (Spanish, French, and Italian). It must be remembered, in effect, that the idea that Portuguese and Castilian, despite their (few) differences, are essentially the same language had deep Medieval roots. Some Castilian authors of the *Siglos de Oro* (Golden Age) had utilised these ideas *pro domo sua*, with the intention of casting Portuguese as a simple dialect of Castilian and, as a consequence, as a hierarchically inferior linguistic variety (cf. Mariño Paz, 1998: 144-48, 306-7). Feijoo aligned himself in this way not only with Atanasio Kircher, but also with all of the Portuguese who before him had refuted this claim of Castilian superiority. In his opinion, the fact that Portuguese remained in closer proximity to Latin than did Castilian was sufficient evidence to invalidate the consideration of Portuguese as “sub-dialect” of Castilian. Nevertheless, the Benedictine demonstrated a modern criterion in rejecting all use that was not merely metaphorical of the term *corruption* when attempting to analyse the transformation of the languages, since, in his understanding, the consequences of linguistic change should not be considered a worsening or degeneration from a supposedly superior starting point. Evidently, this change in mentality implied the refutation of doctrines or principles that had been maintained at least since the time of San Isidoro of Sevilla and, consequently, required the re-evaluation or dignification of the Romance languages with respect to Latin and, in general, of the vernacular languages in comparison with the sacred or learned.

In his analysis Padre Feijoo considered the Galician language to be, in reality, indistinct from Portuguese, as he saw between them an essential community in the lexical component and, surprisingly, in the phonetic (“por ser poquissimas las voces en que discrepan, y la pronunciacion de las letras en todo semejante”, apud Feijoo y

9 Concerning the essential equality of all languages, cf. Moreno Cabrera (2000). Feijoo’s reticence to enter into a debate about the priority of some languages over others or over which surpassed which in the originality of its meanings was logical in one who, based on Aristotelian principles, conceived the relation between the word and the designated object to be arbitrary and conventional, and not naturally motivated (cf. Lázaro Carreter, 1985: 71-74).

Montenegro, 1726: 785). For him, then, saying “Galician language” was the same as saying “Portuguese language”, since “el Idioma Lusitano, y el Gallego son uno mismo” (Feijoo y Montenegro, 1726: 787). The Benedictine encountered the “causa mas verisimil” of such a unity, naturally, in the great spring from which drank so many 18th-century critics: History.

Deriving from the known fact that since the beginning of the 5th century, and during more than 170 years, the Suevians governed from Braga a territory that transcended even that of the ancient Galicia to extend through Lusitania and also deriving from, with a modern perspective based on Bernardo Aldrete, the fact that at the time of the Germanic invasions the Latin language was spoken throughout all or almost all of the Iberian Peninsula, implanted as a consequence of Roman military and political domination¹⁰, the learned monk from Ourense arrived at the following conclusion:

Haviendo estado las dos Naciones [Galicia y Portugal] separadas de todas las demas Provincias, debaxo de la dominacion de unos mismos Reyes, en aquel tiempo precisamente en que, corrompiendose poco à poco la Lengua Romana en España, por la mezcla de las Naciones Septentrionales, fuè degenerando en particulares dialectos, consiguientemente al continuo, y reciproco comercio de Portugueses, y Gallegos (sequela necessaria de estàr las dos Naciones debaxo de una misma dominacion) era preciso que en ambas se formasse un mismo Dialecto. (Feijoo y Montenegro, 1726: 788)

In this way, then, the political community of both territories gave rise to the living community and this, finally, gave rise to the language community.

The discourse ended with the fall of Padre Feijoo into one of the greatest 18th-century platitudes, the exaltation of historical primacy (and therefore —it can be inferred— also hierarchical) of his own native land:

En fin, en honor de nuestra Patria dirèmos, que si el Idioma de Galicia, y Portugal no se formò promiscuamente à un tiempo en los dos Reinos, sino que del uno passò al otro, se debe discurrir, que de Galicia se comunicò a Portugal; no de Portugal à Galicia. La razon es: porque durante la union de los dos Reinos en el gobierno Suevo, Galicia era la Nacion dominante, respecto de tener en ella su asiento, y Corte aquellos Reyes. [...] Siendo, pues, durante aquella union, el Reino de Galicia asiento de la Corona, es claro que no pudo

10 The linguistic substitution is presented as the consequence of political domination: “La introduccion del language forastero es nota indeleble de haver sido vencida la Nacion, à quien se despojò de su antiguo Idioma. Primero se quita à un Reino la libertad, que el Idioma. Aun quando se cede à la fuerza de las armas, lo ultimo que se conquista, son lenguas, y corazones. Los antiguos Españoles, conquistados por los Cartagineses, resistieron constantemente (como prueba Aldrete en sus *Antiguedades de España*) la introduccion de la Lengua Punica. Dominados despues por los Romanos, tardaron mucho en sujetarse à la Latina” (Feijoo y Montenegro, 1726: 784).

tomar el Idioma de Portugal, porque nunca la Provincia dominante le toma de la dominada; sino al contrario. (Feijoo y Montenegro, 1726: 789)

Although in historical terms it is true that the Romance language of Galicia extended toward the south through the western Iberian strip, evicting from its territory the Arabic language as well as *mozárabe* (the Romance language spoken by the Islamic converts), the fact that this monk from Casdemiro wanted to conclude his parallel between Castilian and French with this particular collateral reflection reveals that he was also susceptible, albeit moderately, to the bite of passion for his native land, so widespread throughout the critical-erudite disputes of his day.

The *Paralelo de las lenguas castellana y francesa* merited the laudatory commentary of Ignacio de Armesto y Ossorio in his *Theatro anti-critico universal* (1735–1737). Armesto (1735–1737: II, 167) believed that in all languages vices and virtues can be found, in such a way that he found equally unacceptable the stance of those who saw Castilian to be no more than a “pepitoria de vn Latin corrupto, y de otras muchas Lenguas” and the claims of those who said that “el Portuguès, y Gallego [...] es una chanfayna ruda, è indiscreta, desaliñada, escabrosa, y de grosera articulacion”. It is true that he found some Galician and Portuguese voices to be “adulterinas” or “impolíticas”, but only in what was considered the vulgar register characteristic of the “low state” and not in the polished speech of some members of the “high state”¹¹. Moreover —and here Feijoo’s commentator moves into line with what is one of the principal arguments of this article— he considered that there were three qualities that gave Galician and Portuguese primacy over Castilian: their greater similarity with Latin, their closer relations with French (a language that, we must not forget, was then hegemonic in the western world) and their palatal rather than velar pronunciation of the graphic combinations <ge> and <gi> and the letter <j>¹². Overall, Ignacio de Armesto’s exposition was very promising for the Galician language, presented without complexes on a par with other neo-Latin languages and raised in esteem for the proximity to French that he claimed for it.

11 Although of merely collateral interest for the objective of this paper, it is worth noting the appreciation that a certain social variation existed in the Galician language of the first half of the 18th century: “Por lo que toca à las locuciones de Portugueses, y Gallegos, ay que hazer vna distincion entre el Vulgo, y los de estado alto. Es cierto, que el estado baxo de todas las Naciones suele introducir algunos vocablos adulterinos, y de obscuro linage, otros impoliticos, y bastardos. [...] No ay duda, que el lenguaje Gallego puede estar vn tanto empobrecido, por no vsarse de èl en lo Politico, y por escrito; no obstante, algunos Nacionales lo hablan con mucho primor, y señaladamente el Ilustrissimo Señor don Joseph Bermudez, dignissimo Obispo actual de Astorga” (Armesto y Ossorio, 1735–1737: II, 168-69).

12 Armesto expressed this idea as follows (1735–1737: II, 167-68): “El Idioma Gallego tiene mas similitud con el Latino, que el Castellano, y tiene mas parentesco con la Lengua Francesa (lo mismo digo de el Portuguès), prerrogativas con que puede entrar en disputa con las mas famosas lenguas de Europa. [...] Una prerrogativa se debe conceder à los Franceses, Italianos, Portugueses, y Gallegos sobre los Castellanos, Bascongados, y Arabes, y es en quanto al modo de pronunciar las letras *ge*, *gi*, y

In contrast, the writings of Feijoo provoked the indignant response of Martinho de Mendonça (1693–1743), who was inspired by the ancient Castilian-Portuguese animosity and violently spurred on by a well-known sequence of historical events: the subjugation of Portugal during Philippe’s dynasty initiated in 1580, the war for the restoration of Portuguese independence that broke out in 1640, and the War of Succession to the crown of Spain provoked in 1700, which resulted in the recognition in 1714 of Portugal’s sovereignty over the South American colony of Sacramento, which had been an object of dispute between the two powerful Iberian colonisers. In his 1727 essay the Portuguese Martinho de Mendonça, member of the embassy of Don João V which remained in Madrid from 1726 to 1727, prepared to confront the learned Benedictine with a defence and praise of his language in response to what he considered to be an evident error and, also, an intolerable offence: the declaration not only of the superiority of Castilian over Portuguese, but also, and most importantly, that Galician had the advantage of antiquity and priority of origin over Portuguese and, for that reason, was also superior to Portuguese. Concealing his identity behind the alias Ernesto Frayer, he set out to debate Feijoo probably with the intent to endow his criticism with a certain air of impartiality, that which might come from the pen of a Spaniard moved solely by the love of truth, and not from a Portuguese vehemently inspired by imprudent love of his homeland.

It can’t be chance that, in his desire to correct the errors that he identified in the first volume of the *Theatro Critico Universal*, Martinho de Mendonça chose as his topic of discussion precisely the corollary of Discurso XV, where Feijoo mentions, almost as an aside, his opinion of the origins of Galician and Portuguese and the causes of their unity. It was his wounded Portuguese pride that moved him to step out into the arena: “Tome solo à mi cuenta el Corolario del discurso quince, que afirma tuvieron su origen el Dialecto Portuguès, y Gallego en el principio del Reynado de los Suevos, lo que no podrá creer ningun Critico, medianamente informado de las cosas de España” (Frayer, 1727: 797). After a synthesis of the existing ideas about the origin of the languages, which was not always up-to-date, concerning their number and diversity and concerning the linguistic situation in pre-Roman and Roman Spain, Mendonça declared that the Germanic peoples, due to the frequent dealings they had had for centuries with the Romans, must have arrived to the Iberian Peninsula already speaking Latin, or at least, if this were not the case,

la *Jota*: porque estos las articulan con rigida violencia en la garganta; aquellos con suavidad, y dulzura en el paladar, oficina de suyo mas natural para la formacion de voces”. Armesto did not explain the reasons for this close relationship between the Galician-Portuguese block and French, but he did note certain lexical affinities, without mentioning that some of them were also shared by Spanish: *près* – *preto*, *amollir* – *amolecer*, *paille* – *palla*, *long* – *longe*, *grose* – *groso*, *eudre* – *odre*, *demeurer* – *morar*, *couteau* – *cuitelo*, *aiguilles* – *agullas*, *parler* – *parlar*, *travailler* – *traballar* y *converser* – *conversar* (cf. Armesto y Ossorio, 1735–1737: II, 180-81).

that once established in these territories, took as their own the prestigious language that was then used by the elite Hispano-Romans (the language that also would have been in an advanced process of absorbing the vernacular languages and of extending to the general society). “Supuestos estos preliminares” —he proposed— “es muy verosimil, que el origen del Dialecto Portuguès, ò Gallego, como contra distinto del Castellano, se debe tomar de Siglos mas cercanos à los nuestros, en las asperas Montañas de Asturias, y los primeros restauradores de la perdida libertad de España. Por lo qual, debe ser el mas venerado como Gefe, ò Mayorazgo de todos los Dialectos del Romance de España, y no debió sus principios, ni los pudo tener del Dominio, y Reinado de los Suevos” (Frayer, 1727: 802)¹³. The beginning of “las Lenguas Portuguesa, y Gallega” would therefore be “en las Montañas de Asturias del latin alterado en los Siglos octavo, y nono, que hablaban aquellos invictos Campeones, que de alli salieron à recuperar la libertad, y Religion de España, limpio, y puro de toda la mezcla Arabe” (Frayer, 1727: 804).

It was precisely on this anti-Arab prejudice that Mendonça rested the difference between Portuguese and Castilian, which he ingenuously based upon one single issue that affected the phonetic component of the languages: while Castilian had taken the guttural sound [x] from contact with “the Moors”, “Asturians, Galicians, and Portuguese” (as well as Aragonese and Provençal people), free of such undesired *mixtures* or *contagions*, had conserved “la Antigua, y sincera pronunciacion”. Here we see a topic frequently addressed at that time, that, without a xenophobic charge and with an admirable relativism, Feijoo had also used to deny a basis to the disputes over the greater or lesser harmony of different languages. For Mendonça, in contrast, what interested him about the supposed Africanism of this unvoiced velar fricative consonant was that the Portuguese language was free of it, which allowed him to clearly distinguish it from Castilian and, what was even more important, to situate Portuguese in a hierarchically superior plane. It should be kept in mind here that in that era, as for centuries before, this did not imply for the Portuguese the rejection of Spain, ancient designation of the Iberian entity of which they had always felt a part (cf. Mariño Paz, 1998: 140-52). For Mendonça (Frayer, 1727: 806), there was no room for doubt that, “como Colonia de Asturias, [retenía] Portugal el Dialecto de Alphonso, y Pelayo”. Portugal, therefore, was a reality very distinct from that of Castille (and even superior to it), but, nevertheless, could consider itself as Spanish as don Pelayo himself.

13 Mendonça’s prose is not always transparent, and for this reason his essay evokes the impression that perhaps the idea that Galician and Portuguese had origins in the Suevian language might be attributable to Feijoo, when what Feijoo said was that the specificity of the northwestern Iberian Romance language had been forged as a specific development of Latin that had taken place during the Suevian domination. It is significant that the Portuguese critic dedicated several paragraphs to denying Suevian or Gothic traces in the Portuguese language.

The argument in favour of Asturias as the cradle of the Portuguese language was posed by Mendonça as the key to guaranteeing the purity and brilliance of its origins, exactly as if dealing with a judgement of nobility and of the cleanliness of bloodlines. For this Portuguese the name of his language would be indisputably ennobled if its origins were situated in Asturias, place of refuge during the time of the Muslim invasion of those “Españoles, que estimaron en mas la libertad, que las conveniencias” (Frayer, 1727: 806). This would not have been the case, in fact the result would have been exactly the opposite, if these origins had been situated in Galicia and in the Galician Romance language, representative at the time, as they had been for years, of a rustic and backward world to be rejected and abandoned at all costs¹⁴. If to defend the superiority of Portuguese with respect to Castilian Mendonça had argued using the supposed lack of Arabic “contagion” that had maintained pure the essence of Portugal and its language, he demonstrated the primacy of Portuguese with relation to Galician by arguing for the unquestionable advantage of Portuguese in the realms of oratory and cultivated writing:

Las Lenguas se perfeccionan por los Elegantes, y cultos Oradores; por los discretos, y elevados Poetas; y por los exactos, y facundos Historiadores. En la Lengua Portuguesa nadie ignora el nombre de Vieyra Camois, y Barros: En la Gallega, no sè que se escribiesse libro, digno de ser leido; y para que lo fuesse el *Theatro Critico*, no le escribiò en Gallego su Autor. (Frayer, 1727: 806)

Mendonça’s opinion came to be supported a few years later by Gregorio Mayans (1699–1781), erudite of the Bourbon Spain of that time, who in his *Orígenes de la lengua española* (1737), while demonstrating a lack of interest in “disputar cuál viene de qual”, declared the following: “en el portugués [...] comprehendo el gallego, considerando aquél como principal porque tiene libros i dominio aparte” (Mayans y Siscar, 1984: 353). In other words, Mayans conceded to Portuguese its primacy over Galician and to resolve this issue he did not turn to the same old stale genealogical or historical discussion, but rather used two criteria that we must consider “external” or sociolinguistic: literary culture (to have books) and political independence (“dominio aparte”).

The *ad hominem* allusion with which Martinho de Mendonça concluded his essay was indeed accurate (Feijoo did not write in Galician), yet objections also might be raised that his analysis was incomplete –interestingly incomplete– because he did not include an explanation of the conditions leading to the situation of inferiority experienced by Galician in the 18th century. Such an explanation, by contrast, is not withheld from the reader of the Benedictine Fray Martín Sarmiento,

14 Concerning the presentation of the Galician language in the Portuguese grammars of the 16th and 17th centuries as a negative referent, as an example of archaism and rusticity that should be avoided in “proper Portuguese”, cf. Vázquez Corredoira (1998).

who contributed to the history of the Galician language quite a few valuable reflections that, among other things, came to demonstrate that the lack of literary culture and use in writing was not due to a congenital incapacity, but rather to a social depreciation born of specific historical circumstances¹⁵.

5. The history of the Galician language according to Padre Sarmiento

From among the considerable works of Fray Martín Sarmiento (1695–1772) which address issues relative to the history of the Galician language, I have selected those in which he lingers the most over discussion of the language. It is true that these works vary chronologically, and therefore were written under different circumstances and even experienced different histories of textual transmission. These writings comprise those produced by the Benedictine pen among the first years of the 1740's —in which he produced for Cardinal Valenti Gonzaga some *Memorias para la historia de la poesía y poetas españoles* which were only published post-humously in 1775— and October 1770 —when, two years before his death, he finished his *Discurso apologético por el arte de rastrear las más oportunas etimologías de las voces vulgares*. Despite the great volume of Padre Sarmiento's writing, in terms of the history of the Galician language they reveal a marked unity of thought that more than justifies their presentation as a set rather than separate or successive pieces.

In the *Memorias para la historia de la poesía y poetas españoles*, the author described as unrealistic the enterprise of discovering which language was the primitive language of Spain, while at the same time he had no doubt that this language must have had some connection with Hebrew¹⁶. This notion was, nevertheless, more a belief than positive knowledge and, in fact, Sarmiento had described the grave difficulties impeding the advance of this field of knowledge in his letter of 1755 to Terreros, where he denied the possibility that knowledge of pre-Roman Galicia could advance without the availability of much more epigraphic, numismatic, and other types of materials (Sarmiento, 1974: 22-23).

15 In his premier piece *Demonstracion critico-apologetica del Theatro Critico Universal* (1732) Sarmiento advanced his ideas about the difference between languages that are only spoken and those that are both spoken and written. “Acuerdome” —he said, referring to the pamphlet of Martinho de Mendonça— “que entre la multitud de papelones que salieron contra el Theatro, saliò un Anonymo, que queria hacer creer, que no era Lengua la Gallega, porque no havia en ella escritos algunos. El Anonymo confundió la Lengua con la pluma. [...] En poco tiempo se podrá poner en el Idioma Gallego, no solo quanto està escrito en Castellano, sino tambien quanto hai escrito en Griego, y en Latin” (Sarmiento, 1732: 190).

16 Of the “sacred and holy” Hebrew language Fray Martín declared toward the end of his life that, although it must be admitted that it had quite a few dialects, it was not necessary to believe, as had been said for some time, that Hebrew was the crucible of all living and dead languages of the world. Yet, despite this, a desire to reconcile his ideas about the origin and formation of languages with the Bible account remained clearly manifest in Sarmiento's work (1998a: 104-3).

Despite such difficulties, in the beginning of the 1740's Padre Sarmiento appears to have been persuaded that in the time of the Carthaginian Hannibal there was no common vulgar language for all Spaniards, but rather “tantas lenguas vivas, y vulgares, quantas eran las Naciones diversas, é inconexas entre sí, en quanto al gobierno” (Sarmiento, 1775: 42); the learned Benedictine also believed that some of these nations also preserved dead languages that were still occasionally used in writing, in transmission of ancient laws and religion. Fray Martín believed that among the living language that would have been vulgar in various territories of the Iberian Peninsula in the time of Hannibal would have been Carthaginian, or Punic, Celtiberic, Celtic, a “Griega alterada” and a few others such as “Cantábrica antigua”. In terms of the dead languages, he believed in the use of Phoenician. The “Nation of Galicia”, which would have been more extensive than the Kingdom of Galicia in his day and had been one of the points of entry —not the only one— of the pre-Roman Celtic migrations, would not have been a monolingual nation: based on the testimony of the historian Silio Itálico, Martín Sarmiento declared that the ancient Galicians would have had available to them “idioma propio, y aun idiomas diferentes, *propriis linguis*” (Sarmiento, 1775: 31). One of these would have been Celtic, in which they would have composed and sung poems in private celebrations, probably conserving also a “dead language” for public and sacred festivals. Another would have been Greek since, although information in this area was very scarce, the Benedictine of San Martín believed that there had been Greek settlements along the southwest coast of Galicia, toward Pontevedra (Sarmiento, 1974: 23-24). It can be said, therefore, that as a Galician intellectual Sarmiento was a moderate Celtist, far from the fervour with which many of the Galicianists of the 19th and 20th centuries confronted this issue. In my view, he did not believe that the Celtic of the Iberian Peninsula was exclusively Galician, nor that the spirit of the Galician people was essentially a Celtic spirit that had resisted almost unscathed the different dominations it had suffered throughout history.

The linguistic diversity of pre-Roman Iberia became appreciably reduced upon the introduction of Latin, “que se hizo vulgar” (Sarmiento, 1775: 44) by means of a substitutive process that toward the end of his life our friar imagined to be surprisingly brief; he supposed the process to have lasted no more than the lifetime of one generation (Sarmiento, 1998a: 198). Just as the Spaniards, in subjecting various American peoples to their domination, had replaced their vernacular languages with Castilian, “los romanos, como dominantes y políticos, fueron insensiblemente acabando con las naciones que no eran romanas y desterrando las lenguas que no eran conforme a la latina” (Sarmiento, 1974: 24). Offering the testimony of Estrabón, Sarmiento immediately declared that the Andalusian (or *turditana*) zone was the first to be Latinised, and that its inhabitants “hicieron estudio de olvidar el idioma patrio” (Sarmiento, 1775: 45). This historical teaching moved him to make an observation applied with exactitude to the Galician-Castilian substitution initiated at the end of the

Middle Ages and continuing into the 18th century, in the middle of which the author wrote: “Tan antiguo como esto es entre nosotros el ser admiradores de todo lo que es extranjero” (Sarmiento, 1775: 45). The case of the de-Romanised Castilian converts to Islam (*mozárabes*), denounced by Álvaro de Córdoba in the 9th century, merited the same observations. Nevertheless, the Benedictine maintained that, despite the linguistic vicissitudes historically experienced by the peoples of the southern Iberian Peninsula, their poetic inspiration invariably remained “en un grado excelentísimo”.

Based on 17th-century principles, Castilianist theories presented the Castilian language as the primordial Spanish language that, identifiable as one of the seventy-two primordial languages spoken after the disaster at Babel, resisted the Roman invasion. Far from these theories of passionate exaltation, Padre Sarmiento, borrowing ideas from Bernardo Aldrete, declared emphatically that the Catalan, Asturian, Galician, Portuguese, and Castilian languages were all Latin dialects “corrupted” by the Germanic and “eastern” peoples (north Africans, Arabs, etc.) established on the Iberian Peninsula. From this basis it could be inferred that “todos estos idiomas [son] con-dialectos entre sí”, in such a way that “se entienden, á poco estudio, unos á otros, los que los hablan” (Sarmiento, 1775: 95; cf. also Sarmiento, 1974: 20)¹⁷. He also derived from this basis the conclusion, contradicting an idea that must have been considerably in favour at the time, that it was a mistake to consider Galician a “dialecto de la lengua castellana, ni antigua ni moderna” (Sarmiento, 1974: 20; cf. also Sarmiento, 1998a: 94)¹⁸. Without a doubt, the degradory process into which Galician had been plunged since the end of the Middle Ages, along with its linguistic proximity to Castilian, had assisted the development of this belief during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries (cf. Mariño Paz, 1998: 288-90; Montegudo, 1999: 250-51). In addition, the affirmation of the Latinity of Galician and of the other Iberian Romance languages was a note of modernity that clearly distanced the ideology and linguistic understanding of Sarmiento from those others who even in the 19th century reinforced the fantasy of Castilian as “primitiva lengua española”. The Benedictine, emphatic and sure, told Esteban de Terreros at the beginning of 1755 that he considered “tiempo perdido el que se gastase en querer señalar a la lengua gallega origen más antiguo y más noble que el de la latina” (Sarmiento, 1974: 22).

17 The language of the Galicians was that which “entre todos los de España, se parece mas al Latino, y Castellano antiguo” (Sarmiento, 1775: 104). Based on this principle —the more ancient they were, the more similar the Romance languages were to Latin and the more similar they were to each other—, Fray Martín maintained in his *Memorias* that his countrymen would understand the ancient French text of the Juramentos de Estrasburgo even without any study of the language. He returns to this subject in Sarmiento (1974: 29).

18 Sarmiento had defended this idea earlier in the *Demostacion critico-apologetica del Theatro Critico Universal* (cf. Sarmiento, 1732: 189-91).

In contrast with what the Romans had done, the Germanic peoples who dominated Galicia and Castilla, “como eran bárbaros”, instead of imposing their own language, adopted Latin for oral as well as written expression, although not without “alterar algo los caracteres latinos y estropear algo la lengua romana, introduciendo en ella diferentes voces bárbaras sin sistema alguno” (Sarmiento, 1974: 24). Despite all this, Sarmiento believed that Galician was one of the languages least “cargados” with such “pegotes y corrupciones”. In this way he adopted a position much less inflexible than that which he took and defended on many occasions with respect to Arabic: for him, since no “príncipe o reyezuelo alguno mahometano” had ever settled in Galicia, the language enjoyed the “privilegio” of not having “voz alguna morisca” (Sarmiento, 1974: 25), of being “libre de esos *gabarros*”¹⁹ (Sarmiento, 1998a: 199), of not having been “emporcado” with them (Sarmiento, 1998–1999: II, 16) and of not having “las letras guturales, que han quedado de los moros” (Sarmiento, 1998–1999: II, 38). Galician, then, would supposedly be free of voices like *aldea* and *aceite* and, furthermore, if it did not include in its phonological repertoire items like the unvoiced velar fricative consonant—which had been assumed to be “Arabic” or “African” by a long uncritically transmitted tradition—, it was because it had maintained itself free of the Moorish contact that had managed to reach Castilian. Fray Martín, a man of his time, paid tribute to racial and religious prejudices like so many others and proclaimed the supposed “cleanliness” that distinguished the Galician language: “No goza la lengua castellana de este privilegio, si bien el castellano muy antiguo estaba tan limpio como el idioma gallego; pero después de las conquistas se llenó de voces moriscas o arábicas” (Sarmiento, 1974: 25)²⁰. Nevertheless, in one of his latest writings, the *Elementos etymologicos según el methodo de Euclides*, he qualified this strident declaration by admitting that Galician did contain lexical Arabic elements, although not communicated directly by the Moors, but rather by means of the speakers of Castilian and Portuguese. However, despite this concession, he persisted in his opinion that Galicians should not “manchar su lengua con [voces] *extraña[s]* y *morisca[s]*” (Sarmiento, 1998a: 102).

From these writings it can be deduced that, in the judgement of this Galician monk, the various invasions and colonisations experienced in the Iberian Peninsula during the high Middle Ages hardly managed to leave a trace in the vulgar Galician

19 According to the *Diccionario de Autoridades* of the *Real Academia Española*, the *gabarro* voice, aside from designating particular diseases of certain animals, can be used metaphorically to refer to “la obligacion, carga ù defecto que se descubre en lo que se compra, despues de celebrada la venta” (Real Academia Española, 1726–1739: s.v.).

20 This prejudice was still very widespread. Consider, for example, that Terreros y Pando (1758: 15), even speculating with the idea that the change /p/ > /b/ of the Castilian Romance language might have Arabic origins, declared that it might be found to have “otro origen mas honrado” in the Basque language.

language, which in the mouth of the Galician villagers had been preserved until the 18th century as a type of “latín de la *Media Edad*” (Sarmiento, 1998a: 200), or as its “más noble y antiguo *dialecto*” (Sarmiento, 1998b: 407). In this way, therefore, in order to acclaim the nobility and antiquity of Galician, Sarmiento drew upon the refrain of proximity to Latin, so frequently called upon by all or almost all of the defenders of vulgar languages who had written since the Renaissance era. For him, the purity and the nobility of the Galician language was measured in the fact that it had come almost directly, practically without mixtures, from the Latin language.

In the *Memorias para la historia de la poesía y poetas españoles*, Padre Sarmiento approached the issues relating to the origins of Galician and Portuguese and their relationship of unity or simple similarity deriving from three testimonies that to him seemed of greatest interest:

1. The letter of Íñigo López de Mendoza, Marqués de Santillana, to the Condestable don Pedro de Portugal, that Sarmiento supposed to have been written in 1441, but was actually written somewhat later, probably in 1455. Sarmiento, who encountered it as a manuscript copy that he considered modern and marred by more than a few defects, paraphrased the letter extensively between paragraphs 353 and 380 of his work. Later he took it up again to address the issue of the origins and the relationship of unity or similarity between Galician and Portuguese, about which he would comment after citing that well-known passage from the letter in which the Marqués said: “No há mucho tiempo, qualesquier Decidores, ó Trobadores de estas partes, agora fuesen Castellanos, Andaluces, ó de la Estremadura, todas sus obras componian en lengua Gallega, ó Portuguesa” (apud Sarmiento, 1775: 196)²¹.
2. The “*Crónica del Rey D. Dionysio*” of Duarte Nunes de Leão (included among the *Crónicas dos Reis de Portugal*, 1600), which declared that Don Dinis, king of Portugal between 1279 and 1325, had been a “grande Trobador, et quasi, ô primeiro, que na Lingoa Portuguesa, sabemos screver versos, ô que elle, [et] os da-quelle tempo començaraõ fazer, aa imitação dos Arvernos, et Provençaes” (apud Sarmiento, 1775: 196-97).

21 The reading of this passage from the letter of the Marqués de Santillana retrieved Padre Sarmiento from the state of shock into which he had fallen when in 1727 he found in the cathedral of Toledo a manuscript with the *Cantigas de Santa María* that, as unheard-of as it seemed to him, were written in the Galician language. Galician, language that he had learned in his childhood, was not only not used for writing in the 18th century but, further, was communally scorned (cf. Sarmiento, 1775: 270-73; Sarmiento, 1995: 108). For some time the Benedictine monk resisted admitting the truth that for him was no less than an “enigma, ó laberinto”: “that *el Rey D. Alonso el Sabio compuso las mas de sus coplas en idioma Gallego*” (Sarmiento, 1775: 270; italics are in the original).

3. The work *Origem da Língua Portuguesa* (1606), also by Duarte Nunes de Leão, where, referring to the Portuguese and Galician languages, we find the following: “As quaes ambas eraõ antigamente quasi hũa mesma, nas palavras, et nos diphtongos, et pronunciaçaõ, que as outras partes de Hespanha naõ tem” (apud Sarmiento, 1775: 197).

From a close reading of the corresponding pages it can be deduced that it was a political (or, if you will, sociolinguistic) stance that guided Fray Martin’s interpretation of the words of the Marqués de Santillana and of Duarte Nunes de Leão. Therefore, it was also a political stance that moved him to affirm the existence of Galician and Portuguese as different languages, even in the time of Alfonso X el Sabio, in the second half of the 13th century. The observations of Íñigo López de Mendoza were considered by their enlightened reviewer to merit a commentary expressed with total clarity: “parece verisimil que quando habla de la lengua Gallega, habla de ella como distinta ya de la que se usaba en Portugal, *como en Reyno distinto*” (Sarmiento, 1775: 197; italics are mine). From this it follows that the troubadours “Castellanos, Andaluces, ó de la Estremadura” that the Marqués evoked in the 15th century had composed their work “en lengua Gallega en lo antiguo, [...] pues no es creible que escribiesen en *lengua de Reyno estraño*, teniendo *dentro* lengua semejante, en que exercitasen su vena” (Sarmiento, 1775: 197-98; italics are mine). It seems evident that this “lengua de Reyno estraño” was none other than Portuguese and that which the Castilians, Andalusians, and Extremedurans had “dentro” was the Galician language. Sarmiento even added that this interpretation of his fit perfectly with the report, attributed to Nunes de Leão, that don Dinis had been “quasi ô primeiro” of those known to have composed verses in the Portuguese language (not Galician, since the kingdom of Galicia was not yet *within* the kingdom of Portugal in the 13th and 14th centuries) (cf. Sarmiento, 1775: 200)²².

Naturally, this type of argument permitted the defence of the concept that Galician and Portuguese had been separate languages since the 13th century, but it did not permit denial of the evident: their linguistic similarity or proximity, greater the further back we go in history. To explain this Sarmiento looked to the authorised opinion of Feijoo, expressed in his *Paralelo de las lenguas castellana y francesa*.

22 This vision of Galician and Portuguese as different languages or “dialects” at least since the 13th century was confirmed by Sarmiento relative to the work of poets who lived in the second half of the 14th century or in the first few years of the 15th century, such as Vasco Pérez de Camoés and Macías el Enamorado. Of the first Sarmiento said that it was “muy verisimil que la mayor parte de sus Poesias estuviesen en Gallego, sin negar que haria otras en el dialecto Portugués” (Sarmiento, 1775: 311). Of the famous poem of Macías that begins with the verse “Cativo da miña tristura” Sarmiento assured that “ninguno debe dudar que su idioma sea el Gallego, contradistinto del Portugués, y del antiguo Castellano” (Sarmiento, 1775: 313).

The situation described by both Benedictines was the result of a colonisation effected from the north to the south, spreading from a central nucleus none other than the territory of ancient historical and cultural roots approximately identifiable as the Roman *Gallaecia*:

El Reyno de Galicia tenia mayor extension ácia el Medio día; de manera que los países que estan entre los dos famosos rios Duero, y Miño, pertenecian á Galicia, y no á la Lusitania. [...] Pero despues que Portugal se erigió en Reyno á parte, agregó muchos países de Galicia. De esto ha resultado que muchas cosas, que en la realidad son Gallegas, han pasado por Portuguesas.

(Sarmiento, 1775: 201)

The conquest of Portugal was carried out “desde Galicia hacia el mediodía y en tiempo que ya Galicia estaba con su idioma vulgar. Así, la lengua portuguesa pura no es otra que la extensión de la gallega, y que después se cargó de voces forasteras, moriscas, africanas, orientales, brasileñas, etc., como se puede ver en Bluteau” (Sarmiento, 1974: 30). As a consequence Portuguese was, in his opinion, a “sub-dialect” of the Galician language (Sarmiento, 1998a: 98, 144-45, 188, 216; Sarmiento, 1998b: 379-80), in the same way that, for example, Mexican or Peruvian were sub-dialects of Castilian (cf. Sarmiento, 1998a: 144, 220-21). Here we find a new defence of the home land, very common among the enlightened and not unusual in the vast written work of Padre Sarmiento. The Galician language was more ancient than Portuguese, since Portuguese was only formed as a consequence of the western colonisation coming from the north. Toward the year 1090 “no se escribía [...] ni en Portugués, ni en Gallego; y el idioma vulgar que se hablaba, era el primitivo Gallego, que se iba extendiendo ácia Mediodía, segun se iban expeliendo los Moros” (Sarmiento, 1775: 224)²³.

The monk from the San Martín monastery in Madrid seemed to be fully abreast of the history of the shift from the use of Gothic to French writing since the end of

23 Martín Sarmiento brandished his “national passion” particularly before and against Portugal and the Portuguese, as he understood that, while this country had undeniable Galician roots, it tended in general to ignore them or even to attribute certain things to be exclusively its own that, in reality, it had inherited from its Galician origins. In Sarmiento’s opinion, Portuguese people pretended “ser aborígenes en todo” (Sarmiento, 1974: 30; cf. also Sarmiento, 1998–1999: 155-56; Sarmiento, 1998a: 144-45, 213-17; and Sarmiento 1998b, 378-82). It is true, then, that this Benedictine also brought to light in his writings his own national passion, although I don’t believe that it can be said, in general, that this managed to blind him completely. In fact, in his letter to Esteban de Terreros, Sarmiento openly renounced those who, needing to “apurar el origen de una lengua, hacen lo que algunos genealogistas alquileros, que quieren apurar, hasta el huevo de Leda el origen de alguna familia conocidamente noble” (Sarmiento, 1974: 19). In his judgement, such spurious declarations about the origin and antiquity of the most diverse languages were sustained by, in addition to the erudite pedantry of quite a few authors, “nimia pasión nacional” (Sarmiento, 1974: 20). Nevertheless, it can not be denied that the secular contention for Iberian primacy had in Martín Sarmiento a prominent anti-Portuguese militant.

the 11th century, and similarly abreast of the era in which Romance-language writing began to flourish within the Iberian Peninsula, extraordinarily accelerated in the territories dependent upon the Castilian crown of Alfonso X el Sabio after 1260 (cf. Sarmiento, 1775: 285-86, 299-300; Sarmiento, 1974: 34; Sarmiento, 1998a: 96). He believed that towards the 8th century the Romance language was already quite distinguished from Latin, (Sarmiento, 1974: 37), but did not know whether the mandate of Alfonso X that all documents be written in the vulgar language only reached Castilian or extended also to the various vulgar languages of the other territories. Nevertheless, even before his productive voyage to Galicia in 1745, a notebook that had been conserved in the Galician monastery of Sobrado dos Monxes came into his possession. This notebook contained copies of notary documents, some of which were written in Latin and many others in the Galician language. Of these, the most ancient dated from 1267, after which year the use of the Galician for the production of notary documents became increasingly prevalent in this set of texts. “Esto manifiestamente prueba” —concluded the author— “que ó los Gallegos al punto se acomodaron á la resolucion del Rey D. Alonso; ó que ya mucho antes de ella estaban en posesion de escribir el mismo Gallego vulgar que hablaban” (Sarmiento, 1775: 300). It did not escape the attention of this sharp and attentive enlightened historian that this second possibility, in light of the information contributed by the Marqués de Santillana and of the certain knowledge that the Rey Sabio (Wise King) had poeticised in Galician, became quite worthy of consideration. This secure historical knowledge enabled Sarmiento to affirm with conviction that it would be reasonable to suspect the age of any document written in Galician, Portuguese, or Castilian allegedly written before the 12th century (cf. Sarmiento, 1775: 202; Sarmiento, 1974: 37-38).

In line with the political or sociolinguistic approach that he had employed before, Fray Martín perceptively explained the divergent history that distanced the two western Iberian languages:

Despues [del siglo XII en adelante], sin saber cuándo, se introduxo escribir en vulgar. Pero los Gallegos, por deferencia á la lengua Castellana dominante, hacian, ó recibian los instrumentos públicos en vulgar Castellano; lo que aun hoy executan. No así los Portugueses; pues como tenian Monarca propio, introduxeron en las escrituras públicas, y privadas, aquel vulgar primitivo, que era comun á las dos clases de Gallegos Lucenses, y Bracharenses; el qual, con el tiempo, y con el exercicio de escribirse, se hizo como dialecto distinto, y es el que hoy llamamos Portugués; sí bien aún tiene tanta semejanza con el vulgar Gallego, que hoy se habla, que no todos los saben discernir.

(Sarmiento, 1775: 202)

The social, political, and cultural consolidation of Portuguese determined the progress of its formal development, at a time when the medieval and post medieval

history of Portugal brought into the Portuguese language as a consequence the incorporation of Arabic elements and exotic voices totally unknown to Galician. Nevertheless, this did not mean that spoken Galician was second to Portuguese in terms of the richness of “primitivas” or patrimonial²⁴ voices, nor that Galician had lost the potential to develop into a written language capable of full expression:

Y si hoy se quisiese escribir, tanto como en Castilla, y en Portugal, es el idioma capaz de todo, agregándose las mismas voces estrañas que se han aplicado aquellos dos dialectos; pues las voces *Trópico, Paralaxe, Cosmografía, Liturgia, Synopsis, Anthropophago*, etc. siendo puras Griegas, y pronunciables en Gallego, no sé por qué, con exclusiva, se han de llamar Portuguesas, Francesas, ó Castellanas. (Sarmiento, 1775: 203; cf. also Sarmiento, 1974: 20-21, Sarmiento, 1998–1999: 14-15, and Sarmiento, 1998a: 96-97)

After the 14th century the history of the Galician language consisted of a long decline that, if not causing the loss of expressive capacity, loss of potential to develop as a possible language of culture, or loss of a great number of speakers, did seriously attack the esteem in which it was held by insiders and outsiders and narrowed the range of functions for which its use was permitted by convention and social norms. Initially, toward the 14th century, the brilliance that until then had adorned Galician as the Iberian poetic language extinguished. Later, around “los tiempos de Carlos Quinto” it fell out of use “en los instrumentos públicos”, while those already produced in the previous centuries, “ya en papel, ya en pergamino”, could “cargar muchos carros” (Sarmiento, 1974: 21). Sarmiento attributed the abandon of written use of Galician in the beginning of the 16th century to the flood of foreign notables who were then monopolising the most desirable civil and ecclesiastical jobs of Galicia, so that there was not “ni *concilio*, ni *cortes*, ni *consentimiento uniforme* de los gallegos, para *actuar*, *otorgar*, *comerciar*, en lengua *castellana*” (Sarmiento, 1998a: 209; cf. also Sarmiento, 1998b: 401-2). He focused, therefore, much more on the actions of the external enemy than on any rejection, disinterest, and passivity on the part of the Galician nobles. There is much room for objection, in my opinion, in a declaration as limited and excessive as this: “no son los gallegos los que cesaron de escribir en gallego, sino los castellanos, que comenzaron a escribir y a *actuar* en castellano” (Sarmiento, 1998a: 212).

Since then, throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as what had passed of the 18th century, Galician had subsisted almost exclusively as an oral language,

24 On the contrary, Fray Martín was convinced that Galician far surpassed Portuguese, as can be confirmed by reading, among his other passages, Sarmiento (1998a: 213-17). It is well known that lexical abundance has been one of the most frequently-praised virtues of languages, and we have evidence of this, without needing to look any further, in the *Paralelo de las lenguas castellana y francesa* of Padre Feijoo.

incorporating some lexical Castilian borrowings, especially in the speech of those most exposed to contact with foreign elements, that is, in the speech of the cities and ports near the sea (Sarmiento, 1974: 26, 28). “Los Gallegos de hoy” —he explained in the *Memorias*— “tienen su propio dialecto, diferente del Castellano. Háblanle todos, así señores, como rústicos. Pero en quanto á comunicacion por escrito, unos, y otros usan del Castellano, ó afectan lo posible, para escribir en ese idioma dominante” (Sarmiento, 1775: 119). The meticulous knowledge that Padre Sarmiento had of the history of the Galician language is truly surprising, the fruit not only of the benefit, as noted by Lázaro Carreter (1985: 186), that he could draw upon medieval texts rescued by contemporaries such as padres Flórez, Burriel and Terreros, but also of his considerable personal erudition and his own labour of untiring scrutiny in libraries and archives.

The theories of Feijoo and Sarmiento were apparently contradictory in reference to the unification or distinction of Galician and Portuguese in the Middle Ages and until the 18th century. Apparently Feijoo defended their unity from their origins all the way up to the 1700’s, and Sarmiento argued that the languages had been distinct even as far back as the 13th century. However, the judgements of the two Benedictines are only apparently contradictory, since it is evident that, while Feijoo spoke exclusively in terms of linguistic systems or linguistic distance, Sarmiento transcended the strict realm of the linguistic distance between Galician and Portuguese to delve into terrains of the political, cultural, and linguistic history of Galicia and Portugal, in other words, into sociolinguistic terrain. There is not, then, such a contradiction. It might be said, employing (socio)linguistic terminologies and concepts that are frequently used and well-known today in Galicia, that, while Feijoo considered that Galician and Portuguese were the same *Abstand* language (because they were similar or proximal in their phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and lexical components), Sarmiento, even affirmed this great similarity or proximity, emphasised rather the fact that he was dealing with two *Ausbau* languages. Since the Middle Ages —even since the 13th century, according to Sarmiento— the divergent history of the human communities that spoke them had separated them and had determined that, while Portuguese developed written and oral varieties of a cultured nature, Galician, constrained by the subordinate role to which it had been assigned even since the 15th century, was not able to do the same. This did not mean, however, that Galician had lost the possibilities to experience similar developments²⁵. Therefore, the opinions of Feijoo did not imply that compatibility with those of Sarmiento would be impossible, nor did Sarmiento’s opinions necessarily imply a refutation of Feijoo’s views.

25 For the concepts of *languages by “distance”* (*Abstand languages*) and *built-up languages* (*Ausbau languages*), cf., among other works, those of Kloss (1967, 1976). For the application of these concepts to the case of Galician I highly recommend the contribution of Fernández Rei (1996).

Only in Sarmiento's case were the exaltation of the past and the study of the history of the Galician language clearly linked to the proposal to modify its contemporary state of prostration by means of its insertion into the primary and secondary education system, the requirement of its knowledge and use by the various agents of civil and ecclesiastical administration that would have to conduct their business in Galicia, its scientific study, and, in general, its social and cultural rehabilitation (cf. Mariño Paz, 1998: 239-50). Fray Martín was convinced that the divulgence of some facts of the history of the Galician language that were then commonly unknown might contribute to eliminating the disdain with which many Galicians of his time considered the language. Further, if his voice went relatively unheard in his time, around 1840 it would begin to capture the attention of more than a few Galician activists: the propagandist intentions of abundant 19th- and early 20th-century allusions to the fact that in the 13th century king Alfonso X had poeticised in Galician had their source, direct or indirect, in the references to this fact found in the writings of Padre Sarmiento, who believed that this information would fill with shame those Galicians who then made "estudio de olvidar su *lengua nativa*" (Sarmiento, 1998a: 205; cf. also Sarmiento, 1998a: 212-13, and Sarmiento, 1998b: 408-11)²⁶. Far before the numerous Galicianists, pre-Galicianists, or Nationalist Galicians did so, Padre Sarmiento understood that the defence of the nobility and dignity of the Galician language could be effected by appealing to historical erudition, demonstrating the antiquity and excellence of literate culture which the Galician language had enjoyed in past eras²⁷.

As an additional point, it is worth noting that Sarmiento, in comparison with the other enlightened writers discussed in this article, stands out for the fact that he applied his knowledge of the history of the Galician language to the conduct of a linguistic investigation that had attracted him passionately since his youth: etymology. As can be seen especially, but not only, in the *Elementos etimológicos según el método de Euclides*, his etymological investigations into the vulgar Galician voices are initially based on the theorems or laws of phonetic change delineated in this work but, in the end, they are also construed within the conceptual framework constituted by his ideas concerning the linguistic history of Galicia and

26 By way of example I cite the following words of the wise Benedictine: "El hecho constante es que Don Alonso el *Sabio*, siendo *castellano*, y siendo *rey*, no se desdeñó de estudiar y aprender la *lengua gallega*, y de llegar a *hablarla*, de modo que en ella pudiese componer *coplas* y *cantares* devotos en loor de Nuestra Señora y de sus *milagros*. [...] Y córranse de vergüenza los *gallegos naturales* de hacer estudio de olvidar su *lengua nativa*, como si fuese *incompatible* el poder saber *dos lenguas* a un mismo tiempo" (Sarmiento, 1998a: 205).

27 Concerning the various manifestations of this attitude in the work of the apologists of the Galician language during the *Rexurdimento* and the era before the emergence of Galician nationalism, cf. Hermida (1992: 92-117) and Fernández Salgado (2000: 63-83).

the history of the Galician language. No one besides Sarmiento took on such a work in the 18th century. Very few would ever even have conceived of it.

6. Galician, Portuguese, and Asturian in the *Paleografía española* (1758) of Padre Terreros

The influence of the letter that Martín Sarmiento wrote in Pontevedra in January of 1755 can be seen in at least two interesting aspects of the pages dedicated to the linguistic history of the Iberian Peninsula by Padre Terreros y Pando (1707–1782) in his *Paleografía española*²⁸: firstly in the comparatively notable attention paid in this work to the western Iberian block, and secondly in the reflection on the differences between Galician and Portuguese derived from the lack of written culture in the first since the end of the Middle Ages. For Terreros, the Hispania free from Muslim domination experienced a division into small states (*señoríos*) that would have given rise to a parallel linguistic division lasting until the middle of the 18th century, when he was writing. Galicians and Asturians, united by Suevian domination and by their superficial or nonexistent contact with the Arabs²⁹, would have conserved with more purity than did the others the basis of the Latin language, but, while during the 11th and 12th centuries Galician consolidated and took its own course with the influence of French derived from the arrival of the Counts don Ramón and don Henrique with their retinue, Asturias and León experienced the gradual introduction of “la misma lengua, que en Castilla, aunque con cierto ayre, y pronunciacion particular, que todavia dura” (Terreros y Pando, 1758: 9). In this time “la Lengua Gallega se acabó de formar dialecto separado, apartandose de él cada dia mas, y mas el dialecto de los Castellanos sus vecinos” (Terreros y Pando, 1758: 9-10).

There would not have been much difference between Galician and Portuguese until much later, since the second was no more than an extension of the first: the conquest and colonisation of Portugal was effected fundamentally with Galicians who brought with them their language. Therefore “los instrumentos antiguos en vulgar Portugués, y los que en gran numero se hallan en Galicia, donde se escribieron en idioma Gallego desde el siglo XII, en que se dejaron de escribir en latín, hasta el siglo XVI, y tiempo del Emperador Carlos V, son tan unos en el language, como si fueran de una misma Provincia” (Terreros y Pando, 1758: 10). I think that Sarmiento would have concurred and would have applauded the idea that Portuguese had formed as a development from Galician, but would have received with certain reservations the opinion that until the time of Carlos V there had been

28 The sources that Padre Terreros y Pando (1758: 4) claimed to follow relative to this linguistic history are Bernardo de Aldrete and Gregorio Mayans.

29 The author observed that the Arabs introduced many voices into Spain, but declared that this is a “mezcla de que carecen casi en el todo las Lenguas Catalana, y Gallega” (Terreros y Pando, 1758: 14).

practically no difference between the languages of the Galician and Portuguese documents. I have no doubt that Fray Martín would have recognised an idea very close to his heart in the following words of Padre Terreros:

Fuera de esto en Portugués se han escrito muchos libros de todas materias: las Navegaciones, y Conquistas portentosas, y sobre toda ponderacion admirables de la Nacion Portuguesa han henchido su lengua de voces del Africa, Asia, y America. Nada de ésto ha sucedido à Galicia. Pero si de los grandes, y abultados Diccionarios Portugueses se descartan las voces nuevas facultativas, las advenedizas del Africa, del Oriente, del Brasil, y las demás forasteras, y quedan solamente las antiguas Portuguesas originarias, se verá, que todas ellas son Gallegas. Y si se desnudan del disfráz de las terminaciones, cortes, adiciones, y trueques de letras, se verá, que todas, ó casi todas son latinas.

(Terreros y Pando, 1758: 10-11)

7. The debt to Sarmiento and the national passion of Padre Sobreira

The few notes and reflections of Padre Sobreira (1746–1805) about the history of Galician that have been preserved are concentrated in his manuscript entitled *Idea de un diccionario de la lengua gallega*, written between 1794 and 1797 and only published posthumously. These pages contain some ideas that had been expressed previously by Padre Sarmiento, whose work —we must not forget— Sobreira took upon himself to arrange between 1785 and 1789 (cf. Pensado, 1979). Three points concerning the history of the Galician language deserve to be highlighted in this brief review of the *Idea de un diccionario de la lengua gallega*:

- a. Galician is neither a “corruption” of Castilian nor a “corruption” of Portuguese (“vulgar preocupación, en que están innumerables”), but rather a “corruption” of Latin (Sobreira, 1974: 188, 204-5);
- b. Galician contains very few “African” words and those that it does contain come from the contact of Galicians with the people of Castilla, who had “constante comercio con los moros” (Sobreira, 1974: 204);
- c. the administrative cultivation of Galician was initiated in the beginning of the reign of Alfonso X and extended to 1525, with the settlement in Galicia of “innumerables escribanos venidos de Castilla con ocasión del establecimiento de nuestra Real Audiencia y de los muchos señores que acá se nos metieron cargados de familia castellana” (Sobreira, 1974: 208).

Although without going so far as to formulate proposals for the regeneration and rehabilitation of the Galician language, as did Sarmiento, Padre Sobreira also wrote and acted out of a certain “national passion” that pushed him to involve himself in the timeworn dispute over origins which, as we know, recurred throughout the 18th century. In his *Idea de un diccionario de la lengua gallega* he declared the following: “y aunque me propasara a decir que del gallego nació el castellano, no

sería tanta herejía, que no tuviese justificación en los ejemplares propuestos desde el número 12³⁰. Pero sería cisma literario o a lo menos nacional, que mi poca autoridad debe excusar en cuanto pueda” (Sobreira, 1974: 204). It is evident that this amounted to no more than a shot in the air, issued without the desire to argue, but we may consider it to be one more manifestation of the struggle for the priority of origins that interested, as we have seen, practically all of the enlightened 18th-century Iberians who wrote about the linguistic history of our peninsula.

8. The Portuguese dependence, according to Francisco del Valle Inclán

In the second, third, and fourth *discursos* (discourses) of the publication called *El Catón Compostelano*, published in Compostela during the year 1800, Francisco del Valle Inclán (1736–1804), following the line of old doctrines made available some two hundred years earlier by Gregorio López Madera (cf. Bahner, 1966: 101-17; R. Sarmiento, 1992: 332-33), tried to demonstrate that Aldrete, Sarmiento, Masdeu and many other authors had all been incorrect in declaring that all of the languages of Spain except Basque were born of the “corruption” of the Latin language which, introduced by the Romans, had come to drive away the Spanish “native language”, which for some would have been Basque and for others a different language. According to Valle Inclán, this “false opinion” marred almost all the pages of the *Historia crítica de España y de la cultura española* (1783–1805) of Juan Francisco de Masdeu. In the opinion of the Galician discussant, Latin and the Spanish languages are so different from each other that an argument that the Spanish languages derived from Latin could not be seriously sustained. Furthermore, since he was convinced that the formation of languages is a divine attribute inaccessible to humans and that “la lengua nativa nunca se olvida” (V[alle] Y[nclán], 1800: 57), he maintained that the colonising peoples would never have been able to substitute their language for the languages indigenous to the colonised peoples: the Basque language, despite everything, maintained its use up to the current time, Hebrew continued to be sung daily in the synagogues, “y nuestro Gallego, es, fue, y será el mismo, sin que haya poder humano capaz de alterarlo” (V[alle] Y[nclán], 1800: 18).

The internal logic of this outdated³¹ and ingenuous explanation led the author to the conclusion that the language imposed by the kings Fernando III el Santo (the Holy) and Alfonso X el Sabio in the 13th century as the written language had been

30 This refers to a series of historical considerations of various Galician and Spanish voices.

31 This notion may be considered outdated as early as 1800, but the truth is that in Spain and Portugal it maintained followers even until the 20th century (cf. Fernández Salgado, 2000: 110-11). We are looking at, without a doubt, a good demonstration of the sluggishness with which some basic accomplishments of modern scientific linguistics spread through the Iberian Peninsula.

the same vulgar language that had been spoken in Spain from long before the time of Viriato to the contemporary year 1800, but with one difference:

Luego que la Corona de Castilla tomó la preferencia sobre la de Leon, entonces empezó á pulirse el romance Castellano, porque empezó á ser la lengua de la Corte, como hoy lo es. Pero mientras las Castillas fueron feudatarias de la Corona de Leon y Galicia, la lengua vulgar dominante era aquella de los Alfonsos, la misma que todavia se conserva viva en Galicia y Portugal.

(V[alle] Y[nclán], 1800: 25-26)

Latin, therefore, was nothing more than a cultured and artificial language superimposed throughout centuries on the vulgar Iberian languages and languages in other areas of western Europe, with which it maintained no genetic relationship.

Although briefly, Valle Inclán made in his *Discurso IV* one reference to the history of Galician and Portuguese in which the informed reader will immediately recognise echoes of the ideas very dear to Padre Sarmiento: “Galicia y Portugal mientras formaron una sola Provincia, no tenian ni necesitaban de otra lengua que la Gallega, que era comun de los dos; pero luego que este se separó y formó distinta Monarquía, y redujo su lengua vulgar á arte y escritura, compuso un diccionario tan voluminoso, como es el de Bluteau”. In this way Portuguese was constituted as a “new language” that, if it can be qualified as such, “es por el inmediato principio que se le alcanza, no siendo sinó un nuevo dialecto de nuestro Gallego, que se conserva y conservará puro, mientras no se escriba” (V[alle] Y[nclán], 1800: 52). It was what we now call formal development that made Portuguese, more than a new language, a new dialect of Galician. Valle Inclán assigned in this way the hierarchical primacy of Galician over the language of Portugal, which would have been a nation “dependent” upon the Galician. This conclusion rested upon a line of reasoning that had been proposed on the preceding page: “yo no hallo un principio mas natural, ni mas sólido para deducir la *dependencia* de unas Naciones con otras, que por la relacion de los diferentes dialectos entre si, y con la lengua matriz, mientras ella se conserve en el estado de su simplicidad y sencillez original” (V[alle] Y[nclán], 1800: 51; italics are mine)³².

9. Final considerations

First, we bring to the table evidence that, in the enthusiasm for the object of study that usually accompanies any intellectual work, we might perhaps forget: the 18th century is a century in which the idea of a unified Spain and the exaltation of

32 The second, third, and fourth discourses merited a severe reply from Juan Francisco de Masdeu (1800, 1805), but the contents of this reply are essentially irrelevant to the topic and objectives of this article.

Spanish culture acquired great vigor, which explains why broad works that aspired to present the history of Spanish literature or language in conjunction with the history of Spain flourished during this time. A consideration of the works of Mayans, Enrique Flórez, Terreros, Francisco Javier Llampillas, Sempere y Guarinos, Capmany, Forner, our own Martín Sarmiento or Juan Francisco de Masdeu is enough to confirm this tendency. In the process of institutionalisation by means of which Portuguese and Castilian reasserted themselves throughout the 18th century, the Galician language was largely ignored or denied by non-Galician intellectuals. It was ignored, certainly, by the Real Academia Española in the introduction of its *Diccionario de Autoridades*, as well as by Raphael Bluteau in that of his *Vocabulario Portuguez, e Latino*, probably since it tended to be reduced to “invisibility” by those for whom it was no more than a vulgar variety of Castilian or for some others who considered it to be perhaps an archaic and rustic variant of Portuguese. The position of Martinho de Mendonça, in particular, was clearly that of a Portuguese who denounced Galician because he saw in it a humility and rusticity from which he wished to distance, at all costs, his own language, which, even long after 1640, continued to experience strong prejudices.

In this context, the attention that some enlightened Galicians paid to the history of the Galician language was, with the exception of that of Padre Sarmiento, circumstantial or anecdotal, and, moreover, completely unconnected to the authentic plan for regeneration of the language. Only Fray Martín Sarmiento wrote in the 18th century anything that can legitimately be called a history of the Galician language, and this work fortunately managed to be transmitted to the current time in conditions enabling it to be read by those interested³³. The remaining contributions reviewed in this article are no more than accidental and passing references, in which the fleeting attention paid to the history of Galician was dictated by the necessity to reinforce with collateral arguments the principal objectives of certain works conceived with different goals and inspired by equally different concerns. Barring the remote possibility that future discoveries may bring us yet unknown treasures, it can be said that during the 1700's only Padre Sarmiento managed to write a history of Galicia that, although brief, stood out because the Galician language played a principal role in the work. In my opinion, there is nothing comparable to be found in the rest of the works reviewed here in this article, nor, in general, in the chronicles and histories of Galicia written in the 18th century and in the two previous centuries (cf. Barreiro Fernández, 1988).

33 Between 1794 and 1797 Sobreira (1974: 198) left written testimony that he had read a copy of a *Disertación sobre el Origen de la Lengua Gallega* that, according to José Cornide, had been written “con mucha erudición” by the Galician José Labrada. We know nothing today of the possible conservation of any copy of this text.

Also worthy of emphasis is the idea that, in contrast with the general tendency of the works emerging from 19th century regional Romanticism, Sarmiento's historical account does not seem to suggest the intention to establish a foundational myth that would imprint Galicia and the Galician language with an indelible mark that would resist the onslaught of all the vicissitudes that it might be subjected to throughout the centuries. As noted earlier, Sarmiento, in contrast with Manuel Murguía and other 19th-century historians, was a very moderate Celtist, believing neither that the Celtic presence on the Iberian Peninsula was limited to Galicia nor that the Galician people were originally and essentially Celtic³⁴. Instead, Sarmiento did insist on the idea of the essential Latinity of the Galician language, which for him had resisted almost unscathed until the 18th century as a sort of “latín de la *Media Edad*”. In contrast, other enlightened writers attributed to the Galician language an era of formation subsequent to that of the Roman domination, but with a moderation that does not merit referring to them in terms of foundational myths: Feijoo proposed the Suevian period as the initial point, Terreros proposed the era of French influence initiated by the arrival of the Counts don Raimundo and don Enrique at the end of the 11th century... Only Martinho de Mendonça, in his desire to reject the idea of the Galician origins of Portuguese, demonstrated genuine passion in declaring that the initiation of the Galician language must have been situated in the mountains of Asturias during the 8th and 9th centuries, when the alteration of the Latin spoken by those who refused to assume the Muslim yoke would have begun to forge a new language. Anyway, whatever the era of formation selected as the most opportune, almost everyone agreed on the essential Latinity of Galician and of the other Iberian Romance languages, such that the stance represented by Francisco del Valle Inclán appears as a singular reminiscence of an old theory that would continue to be defended by some misinformed erudites into the 19th and 20th centuries. On the other hand, I think that only in the conceptualisation of Valle Inclán do we find the already preconceived idea, so revered in regionalist Romanticism, of the identification between language and people, according to which the language is a natural attribute essentially inseparable from the people. In my view, Feijoo and Sarmiento emphasised much more the transformative realities derived from the actions of the human, not natural, factors, such as military invasions and colonisations.

The underlying intellectual attitude detected in the works analysed in this article is clearly historicist and, therefore, characteristically 18th-century: the history

34 According to Barreiro Fernández (1988: 60-62), it was Juan Francisco de Masdeu through his *Historia crítica de España y de la cultura española* (1783–1805), who introduced the Celtic myth into Spain. After him, this myth was subjected to various accommodations and interpretations on the part of different historians.

of the language is conceptualised as a key that would permit the seeker to find the answers to the questions about Galician, Portuguese, Castilian, and other languages that the enlightened writers of the 18th century were asking in the Kingdom of Spain and the Kingdom of Portugal. History, moreover, was understood to be an irreplaceable source from which the erudite could find definitive arguments that would prove the antiquity and nobility of whatever language he was interested in defending. It is important to mention, even so, that this historicist attitude did not come to an end with the end of the 18th century since, without leaving the Galician context, it is evident that the histories of Galicia and of the Galician language written during the 19th and even the 20th centuries are inspired by the conviction that “a historicidade non só era o único modo de comprender o espírito da comunidade e de lexitimar a súa existencia, senón tamén a vía principal para entendela como un todo” (Fernández Salgado, 2000: 64). Analogous declarations can be found in other European national contexts during the same historical era.

In this way, then, Europe in the 18th century was the scene of innumerable disputes concerning the priority of some nations over others, disputes that systematically revolved around which possessed to a greater degree that which then was considered an indisputable attribute of nobility: antiquity. Enlightened Galicians such as Feijoo, Sarmiento, Sobreira and Francisco del Valle Inclán, fully immersed in this mentality, entered the general discourse of praise and defense of Spain and the Spanish language, and, without contradicting it, introduced their particular accent of praise and defense of Galicia and the Galician language. Padre Sarmiento was the enlightened Galician who advanced the most along this course. As a man of his time, he searched in history for, if not all, then at least some of the important reasons that might endorse the purity and nobility of the language, of any language. However, against the common tide of the most conspicuous erudites of his era, this Benedictine distinguished himself by preferring to direct his enterprise not toward one of the great languages then endowed with state support, but toward a humble regional language, his own first language, that at the time was commonly considered to be a simple dialectal variety or corruption of the language of the court. As Pensado (1989) has pointed out, Sarmiento comprised in this respect an authentic rarity in 18th-century Spanish context, which privileged the exaltation of the “national language” (Castilian) to the detriment of those considered “dialects”, that is, those languages that were spoken but not written. If in his historicist attitude Padre Sarmiento concurred undoubtedly with the dominant belief of his time, as far as the principal object of his reflections was concerned he proved himself to be, in my view, an exception, a lonely individual whom few contemporaries would have really been able to understand.

Was Galician a dialect of Castilian, as popular opinion at that time in the Kingdom of Spain dictated? Was it a dialect of Portuguese? Was Portuguese a dialect or corruption of Castilian, as even in the beginning of the 18th century was thought

“com rustica simplicidade”³⁵ by those who wished to refute Bluteau and Feijoo? Or was Portuguese a dialect or sub dialect of Galician, as some enlightened Galicians sustained by providing arguments not political or literary but, in keeping with the 18th-century spirit, historicist? Finally, were Galician and Portuguese essentially the same language? Without a doubt, the considerations concerning the position of Galician with respect to Castilian and Portuguese were in part inspired by the desire for classification and taxonomy characteristic of the century, by the desire to order the world into rigorously established categories, separated by divisions traced in accordance with reason and the necessary historical critique. Concerning whether the relation between Galician and Portuguese was one of unity or distinction, the reasoned explanations of those who were inclined toward the first opinion (especially Feijoo) drew upon arguments referring to the linguistic structures of both systems (conformity in the phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and lexical planes), while those who supported the second (Sarmiento, Martinho de Mendonça) cited the separating importance of sociolinguistic factors such as political and cultural vicissitudes and literate culture. In any case, both camps sought solid reasons upon which they might base their proposal of classification and organisation.

Further, associated with this intellectual impulse—that in the linguistic arena had a magnificent exemplar in the *Catálogo de las lenguas de las naciones conocidas* (1800–1804) of Hervás y Panduro—, members of both camps doubtless were influenced by what Padre Sarmiento referred to as “nimia pasión nacional”. In this context, some erudite Galicians sustained with enthusiastic vindication the independence and even the relative priority of their first language. In an era when the idea that Galician was a dialect or corruption of Castilian was widespread in Spain, an enlightened minority with an uneven but nevertheless notable degree of linguistic awareness not only attacked this belief, but also defended that, quite to the contrary, Portuguese was a dialect or sub-dialect of Galician (Sarmiento, Francisco del Valle Inclán) or, if they did not arrive at such a forceful declaration, at least maintained that Portuguese had been formed as an expansion of Galician from the north to the south (Feijoo). This 18th-century minority may be considered a precursor to those other minoritised Galician activists who, in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, more than a few times drawing explicitly upon the authority of Feijoo and Sarmiento, used this argument (“Galician is the father of Portuguese”) as a means to dignify the language of Galicia³⁶. Striking, without a doubt, is the contrast between the proud attitudes of those great Galician

35 Recall that these words, transcribed earlier in section 3 of this article, were used by Bluteau (1712–1728: I, § 3) to discredit those who in the first decades of the 18th century preserved the opinion that Portuguese was no more than a “corruption” of Spanish.

36 Concerning the use of this refrain in the historical era mentioned cf. Hermida (1992: 105-17) and Fernández Salgado (2000: 76-80).

Benedictines of the 18th century and the depreciation of the language of Galicia that can be observed in a work such as *El Cisne Occidental* (1678), written in the previous century by Padre Felipe de la Gándara, also Galician by birth (cf. Mariño Paz, 1998: 234; Monteagudo, 1999: 178-80). Feijoo and Sarmiento, as well as Francisco del Valle Inclán, José Cornide and some others, were representatives of a medium or minor rural nobility for whom Galician was still the family language or the first language learned, irremediably superseded in youth and in maturity in favour of Castilian, which functioned as an essential tool for entrance and progress in civil and ecclesiastical careers. Nevertheless, while all of them shared this common basis of a positive attitude towards the Galician language, only Sarmiento proceeded to develop proposals capable of retrieving the language from the social and cultural prostration in which it had subsisted since the end of the Middle Ages.

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