

## Spanish World-Wide: Towards a More Perfect Union

Σπαρτίας Διδαχῆ Προάγωμεν reads the motto of the Spanish honor society Sigma Delta Pi. Translated into Spanish, in the initiation ceremony, this becomes *prosigamos bajo inspiración de España*. More than a thousand years after the formation of the Spanish language from spoken Latin, four hundred years after Cervantes and more than 150 years after the independence of most of Latin America, citizens of the world continue to turn toward Spain as the center of the Spanish language and Hispanic culture. Cultured Latin Americans love to speak of their fondness for *el idioma de Cervantes*, although if any Latin American (or for that matter, any Spaniard) were to seriously consider speaking like Cervantes, the result would be instant amazement if not outright ridicule, for what Hispanophone would think of saying, for example, *Y quien lo contrario dijere, le haré yo conocer que miente, si fuere caballero, y si escudero, que remiente mil veces*. Curiously, the further south one travels in Latin America, the more frequently the national language is referred to as *castellano* instead of *español*, thus limiting even more the geographical source of the language to a relatively small part of Spain which has continued to dominate cultural spheres not only in the ex-colonies but in the rest of Spain as well. And yet, were a proud Latin American speaker of *castellano* to address his friends as *vosotros*, to distinguish phonetically between *casa* and *caza*, or to say *patata* instead of *papa*, friends and enemies alike would join in commenting the obvious affectation, unless the hapless Hispanophile were fortunate enough to be taken for an authentic *gachupín*, *gallego*, or *isleño*, one of the thousands of poor but proud Spanish immigrants who have settled throughout the Americas. Within Spain, the *castellanos* find the speech of the *andaluces* laughable and sometimes incomprehensible; the rural *castúo* of Extremadura and the *panocho* of Murcia provoke tolerant smiles and the clipped Catalan accent connotes authority and impatience. Only the softer tones of the *gallego* are more generously accepted by the authentic *castellanos*. The *canarios* are off in another world, and as much as their accent sounds Andalusian, most Spaniards are interested only in the occasional visit to the Canary Islands for duty-free purchases, and leave the *canarios* to go their own merry way in choosing branching paths of linguistic evolution. Latin Americans make similar distinctions among regional accents, teasing Cubans for rapid and spicy speech, mimicking the singsong intonation of Mexicans, the Italianized patterns of Buenos Aires and the archaisms of Central America.

There is something less than unity here, since Hispanics cannot agree on what constitutes acceptable Spanish (or *español*), nor whether *castellano* (read *español*) differs from *argentino*, *andaluz* or *mexicano* in some substantial way. Guillermo Cabrera Infante claims that his novel *Tres tristes tigres* is written *en cubano*, but it looks like real Spanish, even read out loud with a Cuban accent. The verses of the *cante flamenco* may sound a bit strange at first, since one does not usually consider rhyming *majestad*, *bailar*, *compás* and *especial*, but with a little practice, even the most fiercely regionalistic Latin American can make perfect sense of spoken *andaluz*. I once sat in a movie theater in Havana with a group of Mexicans, who whispered in my ear to 'translate' Cuban Spanish for them so they could understand the dialogue of the film being shown; yet Cubans visiting Mexico are readily understood, despite their obvious Caribbean provenance. The *chicano* who visits Mexico, moving away from border towns and tourist hotels, is told that he does not speak Spanish, but only *pocho*, while a state-side Puerto Rican visiting the island is branded *Nuyorican*. Puerto Ricans from the island who visit Spain or other Latin American countries are told that they speak good Spanish 'for an American,' while everyone marvels at Argentines' abilities to carry on sustained conversations in what appears to be Spanish, but with a vocabulary which is unrecognizable to the rest of the Spanish-speaking world.

What does this all mean? Is there one Spanish language plus a number of regional dialects which fall short of being Spanish, are there a series of dialects all of which combine to form the Spanish language, are there some dialects which are so far out in left field that speakers of these dialects must be taught other dialects in order to survive pan-Hispanic contacts, is Spanish being replaced by Spanglish as *el coloso del norte* (alias *el pulpo*) spreads its tentacles further and wider, as McDonalds replaces the *torterías*, *pupuserías*, *areparías*, *chicherías* and *parrilladas*, and as Safeway invades the territory of *pulperías*, *abarroterías* and *colmados*? These questions are formulated within a linguistic framework, but they cannot be answered without going beyond the boundaries of linguistics. Many linguists would laugh off such questions as not worth answering and indeed are unanswerable, while many Hispanics are so confident of knowing the answers already that they are similarly disinterested in discussing the issues. Yet if we were to ask the same questions to various linguists, and to various Hispanics of different nationalities, the answers would be so diverse as to demonstrate the validity of asking them. Try it and see.

I don't claim to be able to answer these questions, but I do adamantly assert their legitimacy and relevance to social studies, textbook writing, language teaching, job interviews and even cocktail party conversation. And as a linguist suffering from a hopeless case of wanderlust, I have been able to view just enough different situations as to

risk a few general comments. First, regarding the geographical extension of Spanish in the modern world. A trivial question? Perhaps so, but not everyone is aware that Spanish is spoken, in some form or other, in all six continents, often in conjunction with 'exotic' languages and cultures, or that vast regions of nominally Spanish-speaking countries contain virtually no Spanish speakers at all. In Europe, for example, we have Spain, of course, but also Gibraltar, whose fiercely pro-British citizens speak a Spanish indistinguishable from the Andalusian spoken on the other side of the *verja* at La Línea, and who speak little English except at school. There are also large quasi-permanent Spanish communities, mostly migrant laborers in France, Belgium, Switzerland and even Scandinavia. In Africa, our attention turns to Morocco, especially Tangiers, where Spanish still holds on as a marketplace language, although rarely spoken at home, and in the former Spanish Sahara, whose Spanish-speaking residents are dispersing into the interior as this nation is torn by civil war. Neighboring Mauritania (a black Moslem nation) has always employed Spanish as a trade language along the northern border, and even has occasional radio broadcasts in this language. Finally, the tiny and politically devastated nation of Equatorial Guinea (find it nestled between Gabon and Cameroon plus an island to the south of Nigeria) speaks Spanish as the official language, the only sub-Saharan African nation to do so. In Asia, if one considers Sephardic (Jewish) Spanish (*ladino*) as a legitimate successor of the language of Cervantes (and indeed, it sounds much more like Cervantes than any of the modern contenders for this title), then we may speak of the extensive Sephardic communities in Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania and of course Israel, where Spanish follows close behind Yiddish as a non-official lingua franca. Oceania gives us the Philippines, where Spanish was never effectively implanted as national language, but where strange variants, known as Zebuano, Zamboangueño and Caviteño, continue to be spoken in some of the more remote islands, and whose oaths and curses have worked their way into the speech of urban dwellers on the main islands, as well as giving the modern name, *pilipino*, to the official language Tagalog. In North America, in addition to the nominally Spanish-speaking nations, we cannot overlook the millions of Hispanics in the United States, nor the not inconsiderable communities in Canada. The entire southern third of Belize (ex-British Honduras) speaks more Spanish than English, a fact which Guatemalans insist adds substance to their territorial claims, while vestiges of Spanish are found in Jamaica. The Netherlands Antilles speak Papiamentu, once formed from a blend of Spanish and Portuguese, but now creolized almost beyond recognition. In South America, above and beyond the Spanish-speaking republics, Spanish is spoken in areas of Guyana bordering on Venezuela (again adding fuel to the flames of a territorial dispute), in many frontier regions of Brazil, and vestigially in Trinidad and Tobago. Adding all

these 'exotic' and uncounted Spanish speakers would give us a figure far in excess of the usually quoted numbers for the world's Spanish-speaking population. And what of the residents in officially Spanish-speaking countries who speak little or no Spanish, or who speak it concurrently with a preferred mother tongue? In Spain, the Basques stand foremost, but not to be forgotten are the Galicians, particularly in rural areas, and the Catalans. Every Latin American nation with the exception of the Antilles and Uruguay has indigenous populations who speak little or no Spanish, and these communities reach significant proportions in Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay. Creole English predominates as a native language on the Atlantic coast of Central America, from Guatemala through Panama, while enclaves of non-Spanish languages may be found throughout the Americas; to mention only two examples, the black English of descendants of escaped American slaves, in the Samaná region of the Dominican Republic, and the Welsh still maintained in some towns of southern Argentina.

This tremendous geographical and ethnic diversity produces inevitable linguistic multiplicity, which however need not be equated with fragmentation. Despite the unfavorable conditions with which the Spanish language has had to contend in many parts of the world, and at many points in history, it has remained surprisingly uncreolized, purists' claims notwithstanding. But what is creolization? Put simply (much too simply), when a reduced version of a non-native language becomes used as a common medium, for reasons of trade, forced servitude, and the like, it is known as a pidgin. When, through some fluke of circumstances, the pidgin becomes the native language of a population, this language evolves into a creole, with respect to the original language. Imagine a troupe of American, French, German, Japanese, Russian and Hindu tourists in a Cancún hotel, whose only common language is tourist Spanish. If some catastrophe prohibited them from ever leaving the area again, or from having contact with speakers of 'legitimate' Spanish, then after the inevitable intermarriage, their children would acquire tourist Spanish as a native language (*mi querer caliente agua*), and would subsequently extend it, since no human language is found to be deficient in expressing all the needs of the community that uses it. Frequent modifications found in creole languages throughout the world are non-inflected verbs (tourist Spanish uses the infinitive), a single pronoun for subject, object, etc. (*mi querer*), and the lack of agreement between subject and verb, or between noun and adjective. Most European languages became creolized in African, American and Asian colonies: creole French in Haiti, creole Portuguese in Africa, creole Dutch (Afrikaans) in South Africa, and the omnipresent creole English. There is even evidence that Black American English comes from an earlier creolized stage, and most creolized variants of European languages stem from extensive importation of slaves, or from contact between Europe-

ans and Africans or Asians in the latter's home continents.

Spanish has remained surprisingly free of such massive creolization, although literary documents tell us that such variants were at one time common among field slaves in many colonies who had little contact with native Spanish speakers. A few tiny pockets of such speakers remain, in Colombia, Panama and the Dominican Republic, but these persons all speak normal Spanish as well as conserve the older forms as a type of 'in-talk' at the local level. Only in the Philippines, where Spanish was never fully transplanted as a colonial language, has a creolized language survived until the present time, in virtual isolation from metropolitan speakers of Spanish, while tourist Spanish of the gringo variety continues to arise by spontaneous generation every time a person with a minimal knowledge of Spanish is forced to communicate with monolingual Spanish speakers.

I have claimed that Spanish has remained uncreolized, but we find many assertions to the contrary, particularly regarding 'Spanglish' of Hispanics residing in the United States, but also in Puerto Rico, Mexico and even Panama. It is true, for example, that a sentence like *te lo doy pa tras* might not be understood in South America or Spain (although a *yanito* from Gibraltar would understand it perfectly since the same form has arisen spontaneously there), but this is simply a *modismo*, which obeys all the grammatical rules of Spanish. Equally strange to the Spaniard or the South American is the Antillean question form *¿Qué tú quieres?* coming not from English but most probably from the Canary Islands, and originally from Galician-Portuguese, the same as the patterns *más nada* and *más nunca*. The Spaniard who says *mi hijo se ha ido* instead of *mi hijo se fue* may cause consternation in Latin America, and the South American who says *mi hijo no llegó* instead of *mi hijo no ha llegado* may cause a Mexican to sense a finality which the former did not intend. These are minor syntactical differences, significantly smaller than are found among dialects of English within the United States, and do not indicate anything remotely approaching creolization. Whence comes the idea, then, that United States Spanish, or other dialects which have been influenced by English/American culture, are becoming creolized? We have no evidence of reduction of verbs to non-conjugated forms, except in tourist Spanish. Even here, despite literary stereotypes which portray foreigners as using verbs only in the infinitive (*tú no ser bien*), the most common route is an erroneous conjugated form. Not even the least proficient native speaker of Spanish in the United States will ever say *yo querer* (much less *mi querer*). What might and does happen, is a substitution of indicative forms for subjunctive forms, or the regularization of irregular forms, but this happens even in Spanish-speaking areas which have not been influenced by English. We also find analogical or archaic forms, such as *semos*, *onde*, *haiga*, *truje* and *vuelvemos*, but these are not creolized forms; many are closer to *el*

*idioma de Cervantes* than their modern textbook equivalents.

There are no dialects of Spanish, in the United States or elsewhere, in which pronouns have been reduced to a single form, where people say, for example, *mi* instead of *yo*, *nosotros* instead of *nuestro*. Nor is there any evidence that this has ever occurred, except in isolated cases of Hispano-African subdialects in earlier centuries. Some young Hispanic speakers raised away from large Spanish-speaking communities evidence insecurity as to the appropriate use of *tú* versus *usted*, but this stems from limited discourse possibilities, and is not a step toward creolization.

There is no dialect of Spanish in which prepositions have effectively been eliminated or even grossly reduced in function, although any cross-dialectal comparison will reveal a multitude of individual differences and nuances. There are, I repeat, no creole Spanish dialects, certainly not in the United States. No speaker of Spanish causes an impression upon listeners from the metropolis comparable to the impression on British or American listeners of a Jamaican who says *mi nah wak round wid belly, me dem pickney laugh at me* (I won't walk around pregnant so the children can laugh at me), the Nigerian speaker who says *opin yai lilibit en luk mi wan minut* (open your eyes a little and look at me for a minute) or the Belizean who says *di li bway me ron fan a* (the little boy ran away from her). Again the question: what is the source of the numerous comments regarding the creolization of Spanish in the United States, Mexico, Puerto Rico and elsewhere? We will return to this question shortly.

If Spanish has escaped creolization in its grossest form, perhaps we may find cases where Spanish has been grammatically modified through a substratum, that is, where Spanish is spoken via the syntax of another language. Surely the Hispanic-American who says *te lo doy pa tras, él está supuesto a venir, mi esposo está envuelto en su iglesia* is speaking Spanish with English syntax. We find the same forms among United States Hispanics, among Gibraltarians and among creole English-speaking Central Americans. Yet if we consider these examples, we see that they are all derived from normal, universally acceptable Spanish syntactic patterns; what has happened is that certain words have changed their meaning. It is perfectly possible to say *él se echó para atrás, el avión está programado a llegar*, and *mi esposo está envuelto en una cobija*; no syntactic changes are necessary in order to arrive at the new meanings, only a slight push from a comparable expression in another language. And what of more radical Anglicisms, such as *él está haciendo fix la televisión*? This form is strange, no doubt, but the syntax is neither English (we don't say *he is making fix the television*) nor Spanish, although it is closer to the latter (*él está haciendo pipí*). The fact that *fix* would not be understood outside of a bilingual Spanish-English community does not suffice to brand this construction non-Spanish, nor to claim

that Spanish grammar has been destroyed by the incursion of English. Forms with *hacer* + English verb are rare and attract attention to themselves. They may represent transitions to fully assimilated borrowings (*ahí te guacho, él está mapeando el piso*), or they may remain as linguistic scarecrows warning passersby of the dangers of bilingualism in the United States, but they cannot be used as evidence in favor of any particular thesis regarding the future of the Spanish language.

Much more radical departures from 'world' Spanish syntax are found in South American Indian speakers who often process Spanish through their own grammars. A Quechua speaker may say *la puerta sin cerrar nomás me había dormido; no queriendo tomar se fue; a cortar alfalfa mi mamá está yendo*. A Maya speaker may say *hacer hich'* for 'to tie a strong knot', *hacer ch'op'* for 'to poke in the eye' or *lo compré con Zavala (en la tienda de Zavala)*. Even a Uruguayan speaker of *fronterizo* may say *dijo para mí (me dijo), ia me sentar (me iba a sentar)*. This reminds us of the Pennsylvania Dutch (German) speaker who says, *Amos come from the woodpile in; Mom's on the table un Pop's et himself already*, or the Yiddish-speaking American who says *I want you should eat more*. In Spanish, the only documentable cases of true syntactic interference resulting in a total restructuring of Spanish grammatical patterns come in the most isolated regions of Latin America characterized by illiterate indigenous societies, completely removed from Spanish-speaking populations and educational systems. When Spanish is spoken natively, no matter what the educational opportunities or the official language of the country, there is no massive transference of syntactic patterns, but only the assimilation of non-Hispanic meanings to structures which already exist in some form within the established norms of the Spanish language. Basing oneself upon newspaper headlines, as some have done, or upon the Spanish of Hispanic-surnamed non-speakers of Spanish who enroll in beginning Spanish classes, as others have done, yields misleading results which in reality show nothing more than imperfect learning by non-native speakers and/or adaptation to non-Hispanic systems of communication, such as telegraphic and headline style. What then of the claims that Spanish syntax is being transformed by contact with English?

We return momentarily to the central topic of this essay, the unity of the Spanish language. The preceding remarks seem to be centrifugal, departing from the notion of unity and reaching out to the furthest divergence of Spanish throughout the world, a bestiary of weird forms, foreign borrowings, grammatical peculiarities and the like. All this discussion leads up to a single, non-trivial question: do there exist non-mutually comprehensible dialects of Spanish? If there do, then by definition some linguistic planning is called for, for if true pan-Hispanism is to be achieved, then some dialects will have to be taught to speakers of others, or one dialect will have to be chosen as foremost and taught to

one and all.

Many will object that the definition of dialect involves mutually comprehensible variants of a single language, but the issue is really more political than linguistic. Italy contains numerous mutually unintelligible versions of what are officially known as 'Italian' in the interest of national unity, although only a single dialect is propagated in the public media and in the schools. Only Sicilian and Sardinian, spoken in isolated islands with different cultural and historical traditions, are awarded the status of separate languages, and only grudgingly. For years, many Spaniards have insisted that *gallego* is a dialect of Spanish, while Portuguese is a different language, although *gallego* is much closer to Portuguese than to Spanish, and most Spaniards can make neither head nor tail of spoken *gallego*. The same holds for Catalan, which like Galician has an independent literary tradition, and which is even spoken as a national language in the tiny country of Andorra.

To return to the question of mutual intelligibility, let us first consider pronunciation. We have already noted major differences which separate northern Spain from the southern provinces, mostly centering upon the non-pronunciation of many consonants in the southern areas. The *castellano* finds it appalling that *l*, *r*, *s* and *n* should all disappear, although the *castellano* drops *d* much more than in nearly all of Latin America. Argentines cause surprise when giving *y* the pronunciation of *s* in English *measure*, while Paraguayans, Costa Ricans, and other South and Central Americans may give *rr* this same pronunciation. The Paraguayan hears the Argentine *callo* as *carro*, much as the Mexican hears the Costa Rican pronunciation of *otro* as *ocho*. Many Mexicans and Central Americans do not differentiate between *sea* and *sella*, while a Caribbean speaker may not distinguish *arma* and *alma* or *actual* and *actuar*. Each group has its own stereotypes of the speech habits of other groups, finding them laughable, overly formal, provincial, exotic, etc., but in no case does pronunciation impede pandialectal communication. The most diehard *andaluz* can communicate effectively with a Mexican or a Bolivian, although both may need a few minutes to adapt their perception to the other's mode of pronunciation. The *andaluz* will say *vamo a vé* and *tre peseta* while a Bolivian might say *trs psets*, but each will make an effort to enunciate in such a way so that the other will understand. The knowledge of the basic forms of Spanish has not been lost, not even among the most illiterate speakers of the Antilles or Andalusia, where consonants fall by the wayside and often reappear incorrectly through hypercorrection.

Any speaker of Spanish can thoroughly baffle a person from another area by his choice of vocabulary, for lexical differences are noteworthy and often drastic. A word may be unrecognizable outside of a given region, as the *mondongo*, *mamplé*, *baquiné* and *calalú* of the Caribbean, or the *punga*, *gayola*, *cafishio*, and *turro* of the Buenos Aires *lunfardo*;

they may shift meaning considerably, as *guagua*, which varies from 'bus' to 'small child,' *china*, which may mean 'little girl,' 'small stone,' 'orange' or 'Chinese.' Accepted words in one area may suddenly be taboo elsewhere, shocking and embarrassing: *coger*, *huevo*, *bicho*, *bollo*, *papaya*, *pinga*, *salchicha*, *cajeta*, *chingar*, *turca*. Speakers from one region may feel left out when overhearing conversations among speakers from another area, but once they are included in the conversation, immediate readjustments are made to accommodate the vocabulary to the needs of the newcomer. I have done fieldwork in the most remote regions of Spain, Africa and Latin America, among speakers who were totally illiterate and who had never travelled further than a radius of a few miles from their birthplace, but I have never found a single Spanish speaker who could not find a suitable substitute for an incomprehensible regionalism, nor for that matter, one not willing to look for such a substitute. We see regional tendencies elevated to prominence in literature, particularly patriotic or politically tinged poetry and also in speeches and declamations, but we also have evidence of homogenization in speeches before world bodies such as the OAS, the United Nations, in books written for international audiences, in radio and television broadcasting, and in general whenever multi-regional contacts take place.

What of the Cubans who laughed at the Mexicans, or the Mexicans who asked me to translate to them from *cubano* to *mexicano*? What of the Colombians who reported to a Bogotá newspaper that they were unable to use the telephone in Madrid because they found the machine-gun speech of Spaniards stunning and overwhelming? Obviously at an individual level, some people have more inherent linguistic adaptability than others, but more importantly, some people have greater willingness to accept diversity than others. The refusal to understand a speaker from another dialect region is a refusal to accept the diversity of culture, geography and history which separates individuals, because given the proper attitudes, such communication will inevitably take place. More striking are the differences within any given dialect, between the speech patterns of the professional class and those of the poorest laboring or peasant classes. The former often claim not to be able to understand the latter, but when pressed for elaboration, refer only to *viciocismos* or *vulgarismos* like *naide*, *delen* and *entodavía*, or to reduced pronunciations such as *pa* for *para* which may also be found in the professional class during unguarded moments. The poor or uneducated speaker may choose quaint words like *peje*, *arrebuscar* or *pepenar*, but no upper-class speaker who has been raised outside of the walls of a cloister or convent will fail to understand their meaning, however reluctant he may be to do so. Hispanic society has simply not provided class barriers so impenetrable as to isolate speakers from differing social classes. Lower class speakers work as servants in the homes of their upper-class

compatriots, tend their children, wash their cars and work in their office buildings. People of all strata listen to the radio, hear political speeches and deal with the same clerks, bus drivers and street vendors. One must search far and wide before finding cases of true cultural isolation which would prohibit one group from being aware of the linguistic peculiarities of another group, and such cases are always anomalous and infrequent. This fact notwithstanding, many Spanish speakers assert the unintelligibility of 'lower-class' speech. The same holds for the United States, where many Americans claim to find the English of blacks, hillbillies or Brooklynners incomprehensible, when in reality meaning that the groups in question are not worth the effort of understanding. Many Mexicans offer only blank stares when *chicanos* visit Mexico and speak Spanish; they offer lists of *anglicismos* and *pochismos* found offensive in Mexico. Little do these Mexicans know that they themselves may meet similar reactions when travelling to Spain or South America: *no más, ándale, zacate, mucho muy, pura mentira* and *camión (autobús)* may be provocative and ludicrous elsewhere. The Puerto Ricans who sneer at *newyoricans* may themselves be the brunt of ridicule when travelling abroad, when referring to *la guagua, jugo de china*, or *la goma ponchada del carro*. As for the influence of English, Spain has more signs that say *STOP* than do Mexico or Puerto Rico, and English is more widely spoken in Buenos Aires than in San Juan, Puerto Rico. There are, we repeat, no two dialects of Spanish which must necessarily be mutually unintelligible, nor even unilaterally unintelligible, despite the plethora of derisive comments. Slang, argot, and regionalisms separate not only geographical areas but also social classes, generations and even professional groups, but the common core of Spanish is sufficiently broad as to overcome such differences when the need to do so is foremost. The main factors which distinguish Spanish throughout the world are pronunciation and vocabulary. Pronunciation, as we have seen, varies widely, but the patterns of transference from one dialect to another are readily effected by even the most ignorant speaker, after a few minutes of practice. Vocabulary differences are more all-pervasive, often within the confines of a single nation, and rather than fragmenting the linguistic unity of Hispanic society, merely make it more interesting, since such diversity underscores the individual cultural units which have arisen as the result of multi-ethnic contacts.

Given that all dialects of Spanish can be made mutually comprehensible, to the extent desired by individual speakers, is there any need to exalt one dialect over all others as the standard to be imitated? Clearly not, for the centuries-long hegemony of certain segments of Hispanic society has been or is being broken, and as a result regional and ethnic autonomy is being recognized as the legitimate offspring of colonial feudalism. The totality of the Hispanic language, in all of its manifestations, must be accepted as the basis for discussion, the point of departure

for defining regional and sociocultural diversification.

Spanish has not 'degenerated' (if this term has any real meaning) in any area or as the result of any multicultural contact. The roots for such claims have to be sought along non-empirical lines, which ignore linguistic reality, consciously or unconsciously, and create the picture of a considerably greater fragmentation and dissolution than really exists. There is a long-standing tradition of equating linguistic characteristics of given regions with perceived political and social desirability of the individuals from that region. In Spain, Castilian dialects are the most prestigious, for historical reasons, but Catalan and Valencian accents are also accorded a high degree of acceptance, given the strength and unity of the *catalanes* and *valencianos* and their resistance to massive transculturation, even in the face of political persecution. Basque-Spanish, although not radically different from general Castilian, is similarly given a high social rating, for not only do the Basques have the longest-standing tradition of independence and strength vis-a-vis the rest of Spain, antedating even the Romans, but the modern day *Vascongadas* is the center of Spanish banking and finance, an economic lure which attracts to itself linguistic prestige. The *gallego* is tolerated with amusement, for the *gallego* has always been a strong race which has turned to the sea and its furthest frontiers to escape poverty and oppression; the *gallego*, however, has never been perceived as particularly strong within Spain. Even Franco, the most recently famous *gallego*, turned his back on Galicia and outlawed the use of the Galician language, as well as Catalan and Basque, in an attempt to force all of Spain into his own personal vision of unity through homogenization. The poorest areas of Spain, such as Extremadura, Murcia and Albacete are accorded little linguistic prestige, despite the fact that their modes of speaking are little different from neighboring areas which rank considerably higher, such as Alicante, Salamanca and La Mancha. Andalusia is perceived to be the land of vagrants and Gypsies, non-serious loafers who refuse to come to grips with reality. Andalusian Spanish is considered the least acceptable within Spain, which in turn has prompted a fierce backlash among many Andalusians who are fighting for the recognition of *la lengua andaluza*, an absurd claim alongside the legitimate assertions of Catalan and Galician. *Andaluz* never existed as a separate language or distinct sub-language; modern Andalusian Spanish is the result of the reconquest following the expulsion of the Moors, during which residents of northern and central Spain poured into the south as precursors of the carpetbaggers, to efface forever the nefarious Arabic influence which had been implanted through 800 years of Islamic domination. Five hundred years later, the Arabic influence continues to be prominent throughout Andalusia, in the architecture, the food, the dress and the language, and the Andalusians, regarded as contaminated beyond reclamation by the Moorish and Gypsy influences, are linguistic pariahs who



must atone for the sins of the ancestors who willingly or unwillingly coexisted and cohabitated with the conquering foreigners. Current Spanish president Felipe González, a fervent *sevillano*, is faced with a linguistic barrier in conveying a message of seriousness to the Spanish public through the Andalusian dialect (many traces of which he has removed from his public speaking style), and unless his government is followed by many other Andalusians, this dialect will remain as much of an outcast as the southern United States dialects after the reigns of Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter. Ironically, Canary Island Spanish scarcely differs from *andaluz*, but is much more tolerated in Spain, as is the Spanish of the Caribbean nations, since to be foreign and separated from Spain, having achieved this separation through a struggle for independence (the Americas) or through reinforcement of geographical and cultural isolation (the Canary Islands) is regarded as a badge of strength.

Within Latin America, common consensus favors the dialects of the large and/or powerful nations: Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Mexico. Objectively, there is no reason to raise these regional dialects above others; Argentine Spanish has a higher proportion of foreign elements (mostly Italian) than do many other Latin American dialects, Mexican Spanish is saturated with indigenous words and archaisms, as are the dialects of Peru and Colombia. Much of the prestige is a carryover from the colonial days of the *virreynatos* and *capitanías generales*, but modern power struggles exercise their influence as well. The common misconception held throughout Latin America that Puerto Ricans speak little or no Spanish, and that what Spanish they speak is hopelessly mangled through contact with English, comes from a cultural and political ambivalence as regards the status of Puerto Rico, a satellite of United States political and economic structures, whose Latin identity is put in crisis through racist homogenizing federal policies, but which at the same time enjoys the greatest economic prosperity of any Spanish-speaking nation in this hemisphere. Puerto Ricans on the island similarly denigrate the Spanish of their brethren on the mainland, since the latter have made the ultimate sellout to the Yankee system, but middle-class Puerto Ricans scramble to send their children to English-speaking schools, while they themselves engage in a voracious consumerism of American products unequalled in the rest of Latin America. The conception of Mexican Spanish (except for the prestige norm of Mexico City) as being ravaged by English comes from the image of a prostrate Mexico (*tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca de los Estados Unidos*) trampled by the colossus of the North, subject to the whims of imperialistic American politicians who capriciously wield the shutoff valve of wetback immigration to whip recalcitrant Mexican leaders into submission. Mexicans are ambivalent about *chicanos*, since the cucumber fields and greasy-spoon kitchens to the north are the culmination of Anglo-American repression

of Hispanics, reducing Mexican immigrants to beasts of burden, but these very same *pochos* and *mojados* send back to their families in Mexico more dollars than could ever be earned in the *ranchos* of Guanajuato and Michoacán.

The linguistic values which attach to regional varieties of Spanish have never been separated from cultural imperialism and an authoritarian mentality, which bows before strength and despises compromise or assimilation. The fact of the matter is that despite the vastness of its geographical extension, the multiplicity of its ethnic bases, the variety of multilingual contacts and the devastating effects of its political and social history, the Spanish-speaking world maintains a surprising unity and mutual intelligibility, not enjoyed by any other major language, not English, not French, not Portuguese, not Chinese. The very rigidity and intolerance of Spanish colonialism has produced this unity in the midst of adversity, for imperial Spain insisted on a centralization of power and cultural diffusion that drew a net ever closer around the colonial subjects. Religious evangelism and conversion, so controversial and so imperialistic, prevented further fragmentation when Spanish came into contact with indigenous languages, while the racial heritage of the despised Moors, which gave Spanish citizens a wide range of skin pigmentation and physical profiles, resulted in a greater willingness to intermarry with Indians and Africans, thereby assuring the future of Hispanic linguistic unity.

The social and political barriers remain, but the perspectives for maintaining linguistic unity are better than ever, as educational opportunities continue to evolve, as mass media reach ever more remote areas, and as larger segments of the population participate in collective endeavors. Even the tragic political events so common in Latin America have the effect of creating large exile communities which by definition increase linguistic cross-pollination and enrich multicultural awareness. It is unlikely that Hispanic society as a whole will ever accept the linguistic reality which is staring it in the face, which is that unity overshadows fragmentation, for to do so would be to abandon the easy pigeonholes for classifying personal desires and images. Human nature rebels against the idea of universal equality, at any level, demanding recognition of *los de arriba* and *los de abajo*. Cervantes would turn over in his grave were he to become aware of what has become of 'his' language, and Franco is surely sending shivers through El Valle de los Caídos as the result of his massive failure to force all of Spain into a single linguistic mold. Intellectuals will continue to argue for objectivity and tolerance, while at the same time nurturing personal prejudices and preferences, while common folk will wander along in benign indifference. The preceding remarks are not meant to change minds, for in language as in any other form of social politics, minds are already made up in advance. My only call is for greater multicultural awareness,

expanding the thresholds of knowledge of Spanish as spoken in the world, not with the ultimate aim of undermining stereotypes, but for the simple pleasure that comes from knowledge. Stereotypes will fall of their own accord, pulled down by the weight of accumulated linguistic evidence, only to be replaced by others derived from enhanced perception, but despite the human shortcomings the Spanish language will continue to enjoy a vigorous existence in all the areas where it is currently spoken, and perhaps in some new areas as well; the successful history of more than a thousand years serves as collateral for this claim.

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