

BERNARDO DE ALDRETE, HUMANIST AND *LAMINARIO*

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Antiquarian, scholar of classical and Semitic languages, precocious historical linguist and canon of the Cathedral of Córdoba, Bernardo José de Aldrete (sometimes Alderete, 1560-1641) had a curious and apparently contradictory relationship to the Sacromonte affair over the course of his career. He was reviled by some contemporaries for impugning the Sacromonte discoveries in his first book in 1606.¹ Yet by 1618, Aldrete could be found in Madrid serving as a representative of Archbishop Pedro Vaca de Castro y Quiñones in the defense of the Sacromonte lead books and Turpiana parchment.²

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¹ Aldrete, B., *Del origen y principio de la lengua castellana ò romance que oi se usa en España*, Rome, Carlo Willietto, 1606.

² For Aldrete's life and work, principal sources include: Antonio, N., *Bibliotheca Hispana Nova*, vol. I, Madrid, J. de Ibarra, 1783; Bahner, W., *La lingüística española del siglo de oro: Aportaciones a la conciencia lingüística en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII*, trans. Munárriz Peralta, J., Madrid, Editorial Ciencia Nueva, 1966; Nieto Jiménez, L., *Del origen y principio de la lengua castellana ò romance que oi se usa en España. Ideas lingüísticas de Aldrete*, vol. II, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1972; Gauger, H.-M., «Bernardo Aldrete (1565-1645): Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte der romanischen Sprachwissenschaft», *Romanistisches Jahrbuch XVIII* (1967), 207-248; Guiltarte, G. L., «La dimensión imperial del español en la obra de Aldrete: Sobre la aparición del español de América en la lingüística hispánica», in *The History of Linguistics in Spain*, eds. Quilis, A. and Nierderehe, H.-J., Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 1986, 129-187; Johnston, M., «Bernardo Aldrete and Sixteenth Century Historical Linguistics», *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 12 (1978), 441-464; Martínez Ruiz, J., «Cartas inéditas de Bernardo J. de Aldrete (1608-1626)», *Boletín de la Real Academia Española* 50, no. 189-191 (1970), 77-135, 277-314, 471-515; Molina Redondo, J. A. de, «Ideas lingüísticas de Bernardo de Aldrete», *Revista de Filología Española* 51 (1968), 183-207; Mondéjar Cumpián, J., «Nuevos datos y documentos para la biografía de Bernardo de Alderete (1560-1641)», in *Miscelánea de estudios dedicados al profesor Antonio Marín Ocete*, Granada, Universidad de

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Aldrete's 1606 book, *Del origen y principio de la lengua castellana (DO)*, was one of the earliest published histories of the Spanish language. In addition to being something of a scholarly breakthrough, *DO* was also a product of the Sacromonte affair, part of a debate triggered by the discovery of the parchment of Torre Turpiana. The fact that the parchment contained writing in Spanish provoked doubts about its authenticity at the time of discovery.³ In his inventory of objections that had been raised against the parchment, Gregorio López Madera listed this as the first and most important:

que la profecía... esta puesta y traduzida por sant Cecilio en nuestro vulgar Castellano, tan puro y tan proprio como oy se habla, siendo muy dudoso que entonces se hablasse nuestra lengua, que como a corrupta de la Romana llamamos Romance...⁴

How could texts from the time of Nero have been written in Castilian, if that language had not even existed until the corruption of Latin accelerated under the Visigoths, beginning in the fifth century? Rooted in concerns about the authenticity of the parchment, this question stirred debate about the history of the language.

Granada, 1974, 775-829; Mondéjar Cumpián, J., «La génesis de una obra (Bernardo J. de Alderete frente a López Madera)», in *Estudios de literatura y lingüística españolas. Miscelánea en honor de Luis López Molina*, ed. Andres-Suárez, I., et al., Lausanne, Sociedad Suiza de Estudios Hispánicos, 1992, 457-475; Rubio Lapaz, J., *Pablo de Céspedes y su círculo. Humanismo y contrarreforma en la cultura andaluza del Renacimiento al Barroco*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 1993; Ramírez de Arellano, R., «Alderete (Bernardo José de)», in *Ensayo de un catálogo biográfico de escritores de la provincia y diócesis de Córdoba con descripción de sus obras*, Madrid, *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos*, 1922, 48-61; Ward, M. T., «Bernardo Aldrete and Celso Cittadini: Shared sophistication in Renaissance linguistic investigation», *Hispanic Review* 61, no. 1 (1993), 65-85; Wunderli, P. and Braselmann, P., «Positions dialectiques chez Bernardo José de Aldrete», *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 25 (1980), 437-453.

³ The presence of Arabic in the parchment was also a challenge to its authenticity, since it was not known to have been used on the Iberian peninsula before the arrival of the Moors centuries later.

⁴ López Madera, G., *Discursos de la certidumbre de las reliquias descubiertas en Granada desde el año de 1588 hasta el de 1598*, Granada, Sebastián de Mena, 1601. Throughout this article, I have retained original orthography except for the modernization of "v" and "u", and the insertion of "n" where originally indicated by "~". At times Aldrete's opponents in the debate discussed in this article objected to the term "romance" because of its implications of Roman and Latin origins for the language in question. In general, however, the terms "romance", "castellano", and "(h)español" were used interchangeably by the participants in the controversy. I will follow suit by using the terms Castilian and Spanish with no distinction intended.

As one of the earliest defenders of the authenticity of the Turpiana parchment and the lead books found at Sacromonte, Gregorio López Madera also took up the linguistic defense. He asserted that Castilian was in fact the original language of Spain, and that it had not descended from or ever been displaced by Latin. Thus, it was not surprising to find it in a document written in the time of Nero.⁵ Bernardo Aldrete's book, in direct opposition, argued that the original languages of Spain were multiple and unknowable, and surely not the Castilian of his day. He provided detailed arguments and evidence that Castilian was derived from Latin and that the corrupting linguistic influence of the Visigothic reign was an essential element of that derivation.

Because of the relatively meticulous and systematic method of linguistic investigation that Aldrete developed in *DO*, that work has been characterized by philologists and linguists as a precocious bud of scientific historical linguistics.⁶ Modern philologists situate most of Aldrete's linguistic ideas within wider trends in European humanism. Little consideration has been given to the relation of Aldrete's linguistic ideas to his local context and to the Sacromonte affair itself, much less to the political, religious and racial matters that historians have read in it. In turn, Aldrete has been treated by historians of Sacromonte as a negligible player in that complex affair.⁷ Yet Aldrete believed that not even the Archbishop de Castro had staked his whole being and worth to the cause the way that he himself had:

⁵ The idea that Castilian was the original, primordial language of Spain was defended in other works of the period, as well, including importantly Correas, G., *Arte grande de la lengua castellana*, Emilio Alarcos ed., Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1954 (1626); Bermúdez de Pedraza, F., *Antigüedad y excelencias de Granada*, Madrid, Luis Sánchez, 1608; Cueva, L. d. l., *Diálogos de las cosas notables de Granada y lengua española y algunas cosas curiosas*, José Mondéjar ed., Granada, Universidad de Granada, 1993 (1603); Jiménez Patón, B., *Mercurius Trimegistus*, Biatiae, Petro de la Cuesta Gallo, 1621. For discussion of this theory, see Alarcos, E., «Una teoría acerca del origen del castellano», *Boletín de la Real Academia Española* 21 (1934), 209-228, and Binotti, L., *La teoría del "Castellano Primitivo": Nacionalismo y reflexión lingüística en el Renacimiento español*, Münster, Nodus Publikationen, 1995.

⁶ See Alonso, A., *Castellano, español, idioma nacional: Historia espiritual de tres nombres*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Coni, 1938, 105; Mondéjar Cumpián, «Génesis de una obra», 463; Nieto Jiménez, *Ideas lingüísticas de Aldrete*; Rubio Lapaz, *Pablo de Céspedes*, 235.

⁷ For example, Aldrete merits only one brief mention in each of two classic references on the case, Godoy Alcántara, D. J., *Historia crítica de los falsos cronicones*, Madrid, Imprenta de M. Rivadeneyra, 1868, and Alonso, C., *Los apócrifos del Sacromonte (Granada). Estudio histórico*, Valladolid, Editorial Estudio Agustiniiano, 1979.

si en qualquier causa los interessados an de ser llamados i citados, ninguno más que io. Su Sa. Illma. mucho a hecho, i haze, pero no a echado todo el caudal, tienelo para maiores cosas, io e puesto todo el mío, i mi honor i reputación de lo que tengo escrito.⁸

In modern scholarly analysis, Aldrete's linguistic work has been sundered from the politico-religious events that gave rise to it. This is a dissociation that, ironically, Aldrete himself dearly desired but could not achieve in his own time. His many critics, including Archbishop Pedro de Castro himself, saw Aldrete's published works as inseparable from the question of the Turpiana parchment.

The linguistic debate and its principal participants, Aldrete and López Madera, are of relevance to Sacromonte in both immediate and indirect ways. As noted, Madera played an early leading role in the defense of the parchment and lead books. Aldrete himself corresponded extensively with Archbishop de Castro and his assistants about the parchment and *plomos*, published a second book that devoted many chapters to the parchment, and defended the Sacromonte discoveries in Madrid.

Beyond these direct links, the work of both Madera and Aldrete bears on another issue of central concern to many historians of the Sacromonte affair, the "Morisco question". This theme has been particularly well-investigated because of the content of the books themselves as well as the scholarly consensus that Moriscos were involved in the fabrication of the parchment and books, perhaps in an effort to forestall their expulsion from Spain. López Madera himself participated not only in the linguistic debate and the Sacromonte affair, but also in the state's resolution of the Morisco question through expulsion. He was well-known for his exploits in quelling, disciplining and expelling Moriscos in Hornachos, and he also headed a junta that oversaw the completion of expulsion orders in recalcitrant cases.⁹

⁸ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 474.

⁹ On López Madera's exploits, see Lea, H. C., *The Moriscos of Spain: Their Conversion and Expulsion*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1968 (1901), 182, 347; Pelorson, J.-M., «Recherches sur la 'comedia' *Los moriscos de Hornachos*», *Bulletin Hispanique* LXXIV, no. 1-2 (1972), 5-42; Pelorson, J.-M., *Les "Letrados": Juristes castillans sous Philippe III: Recherches sur leur place dans la société, la culture et l'État*, Le Puy-en-Velay, Impr. l'Éveil de la Haute-Loire, 1980; Pelorson, J.-M., «Toujours sur la comedia 'Los moriscos de Hornachos'», *Bulletin Hispanique* 77, no. 3-4 (1975), 391-394.

Aldrete played no comparable role and took no overt position on the Morisco problem. Within his written work, however, Aldrete, like López Madera, made explicit use of the example of Moriscos and the degree of their cultural and linguistic assimilation in order to support linguistic arguments. Their contrasting interpretations of Morisco assimilation patterns resonated with contrasting proposals for the resolution of the Morisco question.¹⁰ For López Madera, the Morisco experience demonstrated that a people would rather die than give up their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, and that there was no hope for real change and conversion. Aldrete, in contrast, held up Moriscos as an example of what social integration, intermarriage and social rewards could do to encourage the full linguistic assimilation and loyalty of peoples of different origins. Like Pedro de Valencia, Aldrete drew strong analogies between the assimilation of Spaniards under the Roman policies of intermarriage and full universal citizenship, on the one hand, and the possible assimilation of Moriscos under similar policies, on the other. *DO* is in a sense an extended discussion of the linguistic, cultural, social and political consequences of the policy that Pedro de Valencia called for as “permision”.¹¹

For all these reasons, then, Bernardo Aldrete and his linguistic work as well as his defense of the parchment and *plomos* merit more attention than they have yet been given in studies of Sacromonte. My purpose in the rest of this article is to bring Aldrete into focus as *laminario*¹² as well as linguist and humanist. I draw on published sources (to which I am most indebted) to construct a narrative of his involvement with the Sacromonte discoveries and to identify the continuities as well as the contradictions between these roles.

¹⁰ This argument is developed in detail in Woolard, K. A., «Bernardo de Aldrete and the Morisco problem: A study in early modern Spanish language ideology», *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 3 (2002), 446-480.

¹¹ Valencia, P. de, *Tratado acerca de los moriscos de España. Manuscrito del siglo XVII*, Gil Sanjuán, J. ed., Málaga, Algazara, 1997 (1606). Beyond just intertextual resonances, there are documented connections between Aldrete and Pedro de Valencia, who corresponded about an epitaph for Valencia’s mentor, Arias Montano. See Martínez Ruiz, J., «Cartas inéditas de Pedro de Valencia a Pablo de Céspedes», *Boletín de la Real Academia Española* LIX (1979), 371-397.

¹² I use the term here as characterized by Gaspar Morocho Gayo, as a neutral shorthand for defenders of the Sacromonte finds. Morocho Gayo, G., «Estudio introductorio del discurso sobre el pergamino y láminas de Granada», in *Pedro de Valencia, Obras Completas*, Vol. IV *Escritos sociales*, 2 *Escritos políticos*, León, Universidad de León, 1999, 143-357, 164.

Aldrete's public position on the Sacromonte discoveries

In his first book, Aldrete eschewed any direct commentary on the parchment found in the Torre Turpiana or the lead books and relics found on Sacromonte. He addressed them only obliquely in his introductory chapter. There he argued for a strict separation of the regularities of the profane historical world, amenable to scholarly analysis such as his, from the powerful mysteries of the sacred, to which the parchment belonged:

Contra nadie escribo, a nadie contradigo, ni me opongo, solo procuro con verdad dezir mi sentimiento; Mas que descortesia seria juzgar, ò afirmar lo contrario. Porque a todos estimo, i reverencio, i mas a *las cosas sagradas*, que por ellas a passado muchos años en silencio, i se sepultara en olvido, sino me obligara à manifestarlo lo que en esto devo. Assi *nadie me oponga dellas*, que las cosas delos santos no se an de juzgar, por las reglas ordinarias, de que io escribo, i trato: fuera dellas camina lo que es sobre natural. Bien se compadece, que sea cierto, i verdadero lo que io dixere, i a quello tambien lo sea, pues la mano poderosa de Señor no es limitada para hazer maravillas sobre toda nuestra capacidad...que sus caminos son mas altos, i soberanos, que les podamos dar al cance, i assi por los que quiso, *que aquellas cosas fuessen, io no los rastreo, ni dellas hablo*, delo que es de nuestros limites aca en la tierra querria tratar, i acertar.¹³

The holy things to which Aldrete insisted that no one should oppose him were the Torre Turpiana parchment and the lead books and relics of Sacromonte, as his contemporaries recognized. *DO* was understood by Gregorio López Madera to be an attack on him personally, on his theory of the origin of the Spanish language, and on the authenticity of the parchment as well. He mounted a counter-attack in the 1625 second edition of his book, *Excellencies of the monarchy*:

Esta costumbre de contradezir (para mostrar erudicion) movio a un autor que escrivio despues de aquellos discursos mios, a impugnar esta excelencia de nuestra nacion y language, queriendo provar, que el Castellano que hablamos, es Latino corrompido, y no antiguo y propio. Y si bien en el principio de la obra dize, que no escribe con emulacion de nadie, y haze una salva bien floxamente a lo descubierto en la torre y monte santo de Granada, muestra bien claro, que todo lo que discurre y trata es contra lo que yo avia escrito... escrivi casi forçado de la ne-

¹³ Aldrete, *DO*, 4; italics mine.

cessidad de la defensa que tocava a un suceso tan importante a España, y la Religion: y este autor voluntariamente, contra todo esto, y contra el honor de su nacion.¹⁴

López Madera was not the only one who recognized that Aldrete's work implied that the Sacromonte discoveries were apocryphal. In his second book, *Varias antigüedades (VA)*¹⁵, Aldrete reproduced a letter that he reported he had received from Granada in 1609. The published letter contained the following critical commentary on the significance of Aldrete's work for the Turpiana parchment:

En la cortesía, con que V.M. escribe, no quiere ofender a nadie. Assí lo dize, i que no quiere meterse en cosa de Sanctos. Entiendo donde va encaminado esto, que deve ser a la prophesia del pergamino que hallamos con las reliquias en esta ciudad. Segun lo qual entiendo, que no le contenta a V.M. el language del pergamino, ni el Arabe, ni el Hespagnol, aunque no lo dize con su cortesía, pues dize que fueron introduzidas la una lengua con los Godos, i la otra con los Moros Mahometanos, que entraron en Hespaña tanto despues de Cecilio, i de la escritura del pergamino. En esto, que toca al pergamino no me conformare con V.M. pues es evidente, i claro, que es verdad el pergamino...Digo Señor, que el pergamino es verdadero, i todo lo que tiene con toda la antigüedad, que le damos de tiempo de San Cecilio, i es de tal manera verdadero, que es imposible, que sea falso....Agora digo io, que tambien es verdad, que avia entonces lengua Hespañola en Hespaña, pues esta en el pergamino verdadero.... entro en Hespaña la lengua Arabe, quando los Phenices, i la Hespañola, quando los Romanos.¹⁶

Aldrete coyly declined to identify the author of this letter, describing him in glowing terms as:

persona cuja eminencia en estado, dignidad i letras es de tanto lustre, i grandeza, quanto ninguna maior, ni mas esclarecida, i aun que pudiera no callar su nombre, pues lo que dize muestra que es illustrissimo en todo, io devo ocultarlo por muchas razones.¹⁷

¹⁴ López Madera, G., *Excelencias de la monarquía y reyno de España*, 2nd ed., Madrid, Luis Sánchez, 1625, 100.

¹⁵ Aldrete, B. J., *Varias antigüedades de España, África y otras provincias*, Amberes, Iuan Hasrey, 1614.

¹⁶ Aldrete, *VA*, 57-58.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

Correspondence held in the Archives of the Abbey of Sacromonte and published by Martínez Ruiz¹⁸ shows that this eminent personage was Archbishop Pedro de Castro himself.¹⁹

Aldrete was stung by the criticisms of his position on Sacromonte, which he held to be unfounded:

A vezes una palabra, de que no se haze caso, es causa, de que lo que justamente se defiende, injustamente pierda su valor. Quieren, que no lo tenga mi libro atribuyendo le, que todo lo que en el se dize, es contra el Sancto Pergamino, i assi contra los libros, i lo de mas, que se a hallado en el Monte Sancto de Granada.²⁰

In the face of what he held to be unjustified indictments of his work, Aldrete felt compelled not only to defend his linguistic thesis but also to clarify his position on the Turpiana parchment. To this end, he published *Varias Antigüedades* in 1614, dedicating it to Archbishop de Castro. Commenting in the first chapter on the reception of his earlier book, Aldrete distinguished the doubts that had been raised by two kinds of critics. On the one hand were persons of erudition and wisdom who made their concerns known with dignity and affable humanity, and on the other hand, those who looked for offense even in incidental phrasings where none was meant, and who indignantly and heatedly made bitter accusations. Aldrete addressed *VA* to the objections raised by the first but not the second, he said, preferring to allow time to temper and cure the complaints of the latter.²¹

In the dedication to the Archbishop, Aldrete claimed deep distress that anyone believed his work impugned the Sacromonte discoveries, particularly those which were the Archbishop's jurisdiction:

el que a mi me lo dio maior, fue lo, que se podia oponer, i poner lo en confusion de aquellos sagrados tesoros por particular, i soberana providencia reservados a

¹⁸ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 280-283.

¹⁹ Martínez Ruiz (*ibid.*) reproduces two separate fragments of letters, VI and VII, with the first appearing to be from Licenciado Ramírez de Tejada in 1609 and the second attributed to Archbishop de Castro and dated 1610. In *VA*, however, Aldrete reproduced these two segments as just one letter, dated November 30, 1609. I have not had an opportunity to consult the original letters myself, but I believe the comparison of Aldrete's own published version with Martínez Ruiz's clearly establishes the authorship and date. See also the discussion of this letter in Mondéjar Cumpián, «Nuevos datos», 780.

²⁰ Aldrete, *VA*, 269.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

V.S. Illustrissima, i apunte mi sentimiento en una palabra; la qual a convenido declarar, i juntamente mi animo siempre dedicado, i prontissimo ad servicio de V.S. Illustrissima.²²

After giving extravagant praise of Castro's illustrious lineage and virtues, Aldrete wrote that divine providence had placed in the Prelate's hands

aquellas preciosissimas, i candidissimas margaritas bueltas en blanquissimas i purissimas cenizas delos gloriosos Martyres, Piedras fundamentales de la Iglesia de Nuestras Españas, con los antiquissimos originales de los escritos de los gloriosos hermanos Sanctissimos Pontifices, i Martyres CECILIO I TESIPHON, paraque con tanto valor, diligencia, trabajo, i gasto su verdad sea conocida, defendida, i amparada de los, que los quieren en vano contrastar. ...Altissimos son los mysterios, i sacramentos, estupendos los prodigios, i maravillas, que en tan pequeñas laminas estan escondidos. Quando la Divina bondad se sirva, que se corran los velos, i quiten las cortinas del language Arabe, que los tiene encubiertos, se conocera con pasmo, estupor, i admiracion del orbe todo, lo, que no se alcança aora.²³

Close inspection shows that these effusions and most of the comments on the topic throughout the book include no straightforward assertion of Aldrete's belief in the authenticity of the parchment and lead books. The endorsements he did give were not formed as explicit propositions about his own conviction, but rather were couched in presuppositions to other declarations, in the subjunctive mood, in predictions of future conclusions, or in ambiguous lexical choices. Such phrases as "most ancient originals of the writings of the glorious... martyrs Cecilio and Tesiphon" nonetheless strongly implied an endorsement of their authenticity.

How could the parchment, which was written partly in Castilian, be authentic if Aldrete was correct that the language had not come into being until some four hundred years later? As Pedro de Valencia wrote,

Ello no se puede negar, sino que el que escribió el pergamino sabía hablar castellano como se habla hoy. Resta que los asertores prueben con semejante certeza que se hablaba así en tiempo de Nerón, o que se vayan a milagro y revelación, que es con lo que todo se salva.²⁴

²² *Ibid.*, *3.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Valencia, P. de, *Obras Completas, Vol. IV Escritos sociales, 2. Escritos políticos*, G. Morocho Gayo ed., León, Universidad de León, 1999, 448.

López Madera had defended the first position that Valencia suggested, but Aldrete chose the second solution. To resolve the dilemma, he proposed that St. Cecilio had both the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy, allowing him to use a language that did not yet exist. Aldrete had already hinted at this idea in *DO*:

Que si los sanctos Apostolos, i a quien ellos ponian las manos, recibian el don de hablar diversas lenguas, i profetizavan, del mismo poder es, i no mas dificultoso, darles las que avia en el mundo, i no sabian, que darles las que no avia, i avian en algun tiempo deser. Pues al confundir la primera todas las dio de nuevo, no siendo mas que una: Señor es cuiá omnipotencia corre ala medida de su voluntad.²⁵

Elaborating on this hint, Aldrete laid his explanation out explicitly in *VA*. Fifty-five pages in sixteen chapters of that second publication (Chapters X through XXV of Book II) were devoted to a painstaking discussion of the Sacromonte discoveries, in which he reiterated his earlier admonition that “nadie me oponga dellas”.²⁶ The title of Chapter XVIII summarized the first premise: “San Cecilio tuvo don de lenguas i de prophecía...”.²⁷ In Chapter XIX, entitled “Escribio San Cecilio la prophecía de San Iuan en lengua que no avia...” Aldrete provided the second part of the explanation: “Hablo San Cecilio la lengua que no avia, pero que avia de ser...” He acknowledged immediately that this was a hard proposition for some to accept. But he argued that it should not be, since the source of the gift was equally the master of all languages that ever were or were to be.²⁸

Aldrete reiterated these arguments in detail throughout the following pages, and insisted repeatedly that the Castilian language had not existed at the time the prophecy was written. “Estoi cierto, que ni letra ni lengua della quando la escribio San Cecilio uviera, quien la leiera i entendiera, sino teniendo el mismo don, que el tuvo. Todos estos milagros se abraçan unos con otros...”.²⁹ “La pureza del lenguaje del Pergamino es deste siglo”.³⁰ “Assi que en suma el Romance del Pergamino es del tiempo en que Dios fue servido de

²⁵ Aldrete, *DO*, 4.

²⁶ Aldrete, *VA*, 270.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 295.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 299.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 300.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 301.

manifestarlo, i no de tiempo tan atras como quando San Cecilio lo escrivio...”.³¹ “El modo como pudo ser, que antes, que uiesse lengua Castellana se escriviesse en el Pergamino, aia sido por el don milagroso de lenguas”.³²

The intellectual contradictions between Aldrete’s endorsement of a miraculous prophecy and the scientific rigor he brought to his latinist scholarly work have struck many commentators.³³ Whether the otherwise judicious scholar actually believed in the miraculous gift of languages that he proposed has been the subject of debate across the centuries. The eighteenth century Benedictine P. Martín Sarmiento refused to believe that Aldrete’s faith in the prophetic gift of future tongues was genuine: “Jamás creeré que un hombre tan erudito y juicioso como Aldrete, asintiese de veras á este dictamen”.³⁴ Others have seen him as able to maintain his credulity in matters of religion simultaneously with his precocious scienticism only by strictly compartmentalizing the two.³⁵ Aldrete himself asserted as much, repeating in *VA* what he had argued in *DO*: “las cosas de los Sanctos no se an de juzgar por las reglas ordinarias, de que io escrivio i trato, fuera dellas camina lo que es sobrenatural”.³⁶

José Mondéjar Cumpián has also suggested that Aldrete’s defense of the parchment and lead books was based in the “affection and disinterested loyalty that tied him to Archbishop de Castro” rather than in intellectual conviction.³⁷ Letters to Castro from Aldrete (which will be discussed below) begging for money, complaining of being slighted, and worrying that the fate of his own books was tied to that of the lead books call his disinterest into question. Some find Aldrete cowed by the Archbishop’s criticism, perhaps because “the religious euphoria of the era created an environment in which it was dangerous

³¹ *Ibid.*, 303.

³² *Ibid.*, 326.

³³ See, in addition to those discussed in this section, Rubio Lapaz, *Pablo de Céspedes*, 235, 242.

³⁴ Cited in Viñaza, Conde de la, *Biblioteca histórica de la filología castellana*, Madrid, Ediciones Atlas, 1978 (1893), 20.

³⁵ Kendrick, T. D., *St. James in Spain*, London, Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1960, 81-82; Nieto Jiménez, *Ideas lingüísticas de Aldrete*, 144; Mondéjar Cumpián, «Nuevos datos», 781.

³⁶ Aldrete, *VA*, 270.

³⁷ Mondéjar Cumpián, «Nuevos datos», 780.

to show skepticism”³⁸ or perhaps because Aldrete was fainthearted, inconstant, and of weak character.³⁹ Francisco Pérez Bayer interpreted one of Aldrete’s letters to Castro as indicating that the solution of the miracle was not invented by Aldrete, but rather was suggested to him by the Archbishop.⁴⁰ As we have seen, however, the miraculous account was already sketched in brief in Aldrete’s 1606 publication, on which Castro commented in his 1609 letter as if reading for the first time. Moreover, the Archbishop closed his letter of June 23, 1610, with a wish that Aldrete would find a different solution to the puzzle: “Holgara yo que V.M. con su erudición advirtiese para lo defender sin milagro y prophecía”.⁴¹

Certainly it is true, as Pérez Bayer noticed,⁴² that Aldrete addressed the Archbishop with an obsequious flattery quite different from the candor with which he regularly addressed his friend and Castro’s secretary, Cristóbal de Aybar, on the same matters. And Aldrete indeed showed inconsistency in his characterizations of the Sacromonte discoveries even within *VA* itself. Despite the seeming profession of belief in his dedication to Castro, Aldrete struck a cautious note at the end of his discussion of Sacromonte in Book II of that work:

Menos me agrada lo que algunos quieren con sobra de aficion, que lo que contiene el Pergamino se a de creer como cosa de fee teniendo lo por cierto i verdadero, sin inquirir el modo i manera como fue, o pudo ser. Porque aunque io lo tengo i estimo por tal, hasta aora no esta determinado, que sea de Fee catholica, i con todo, ella no impide, que despues, que el entendimiento se rinde i cautiva a crear firmemente lo que enseña, que no se puedan buscar razones, que muestren, que no es imposible lo que la Fee propone.⁴³

³⁸ Sotomayor, M., «Introducción», in Antolínez de Burgos, J., *Historia eclesiástica de Granada*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 1996, xxxiv. See also Kendrick, *St. James in Spain*, 81.

³⁹ Godoy Alcántara, *Historia crítica de los falsos cronicones*, 163; Pérez Bayer, F., “El viaje de Pérez Bayer”, *La Alhambra: Revista Quincenal de Artes y Letras* III-IV (1900-1901), 109.

⁴⁰ Pérez Bayer (ibid., 109) based his conclusion on a segment of the letter of June 25, 1610, which he transcribed in the 18th century, but which does not appear in the version published by Martínez Ruiz, “Cartas inéditas”, 289-290. I have not had the opportunity to examine the letter in question and don’t know which version is more accurate. Since Martínez Ruiz gives the letter as incomplete, it is also possible that some of it was lost in the almost two centuries that intervened between their readings.

⁴¹ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 289.

⁴² Pérez Bayer, «El viaje», 152.

⁴³ Aldrete, *VA*, 326.

This passage appears to violate the separation between the unfathomable sacred and the ascertainable historical on which Aldrete insisted at other moments. Rather than contradicting, however, it may clarify the way that Aldrete reconciled his approaches to understanding the sacred and the historical earthly world. For Aldrete, both were the work of divine providence, but a divine providence that worked through more and less immediate intervention on the two planes. What differed was not the degree of systematicity and order of the profane and the sacred, but rather the nature of the particular regularities they followed, the tempo of those regularities, and their accessibility to ordinary human scrutiny. The rational scholar could still fit the interventions of a *deus ex machina* to the regularities of the human world, like the fit of two gears of very different size.⁴⁴ In this closing section of his discussion of Sacromonte in *VA*, Aldrete treated the entire proposition of the prophetic gift of languages not as a matter of faith but rather as a kind of scientific conjecture, which he supported on the basis of its elegance and explanatory power:

El modo como pudo ser, que antes, que uviessse lengua Castellana se escribiesse en el Pergamino, aio sido por el don milagroso de lenguas, me parece el mas conveniente i digno, i que quita grandes dificultades, que contradizen i repugnan con gran fuerça a que en aquel tiempo uviessse la misma lengua, que en este...⁴⁵

The epistolary record of Aldrete's involvement with Sacromonte

Whatever Aldrete's true opinion of the Turpiana parchment, by 1618 he was defending it and the lead books in Madrid, acting on Archbishop de Castro's behalf. Aldrete and Castro had begun their relationship by the autumn of 1609, when Aldrete sent Castro a copy of *DO* and a letter of congratulation on his appointment as Archbishop of Seville. The letter that Aldrete reproduced in *VA* was Castro's response to that overture, and the initiation of a series of exchanges on linguistic matters with implications for the authenticity of the parchment and *plomos*.

⁴⁴ See also the discussion of the influence of medieval scholasticism on the scientism of late Andalusian humanism in Rubio Lapaz, *Pablo de Céspedes*, 58.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 326.

From the first, Aldrete responded to Castro's criticism with evasive hesitation, asking for more time to address the doubts that he had raised. Aldrete indicated to Castro that he held that the Pergamino "es cierto, verdadero i del tiempo de San Cecilio i imposible que sea falso ni fingido", although this avowal was also embedded within syntactic equivocation.⁴⁶ In another letter to Castro in 1610, Aldrete clearly stated, "tengo por mui ciertos i verdaderos" the "Sancto Pergamino y libros". For once he wrote his endorsement in the indicative mood, but even then not in an independent declarative clause.⁴⁷

Despite his hedging, Aldrete responded rapidly to Castro's criticisms and suggestions with a barrage of written material. In February 1610, Aldrete sent Castro the manuscript of *VA*, saying that he had put it together in response to the concerns that Castro had raised.⁴⁸ Castro commented on it at length in a letter the following June. He recognized Aldrete's conciliatory efforts, seeing that in the new work Aldrete wanted to "favorecer las cosas de estos santos y procura responder a las dificultades que an puesto de la lengua Hespañola y Arabe, porque no le convencen las respuestas de otros". Castro wrote that he shared Aldrete's discontent with other views of the linguistic problem, but that he nonetheless found many of the things that Aldrete wrote distressing, "muy enojosas".⁴⁹

In his correspondence with Aldrete, Castro showed himself ready to brandish knowledge of classical languages and to skirmish with the scholar over linguistic and philological details. For example, Castro pointed out an error in the Greek inscription on the frontispiece of Aldrete's *DO*; Aldrete complimented Castro on his eye for the language and made his excuses for the error.⁵⁰ Castro interrogated Aldrete's ideas about when Arabic arrived on the Iberian Peninsula,

⁴⁶ Rather than giving a literal assertion of faith, Aldrete reported what he wrote in an earlier letter to Castro that allegedly had been lost, saying that in that letter, "no salgo de la proposición de V.S. Illma. en lo del Pergamino que es cierto, verdadero, i del tiempo de San Cecilio i imposible que sea falso ni fingido..." Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 283-284. Throughout his work, Aldrete used indirect quotation and the subjunctive masterfully to hedge his pronouncements on the Sacromonte discoveries, leaving his endorsements deniable.

⁴⁷ "Si para comprobación del Sancto Pergamino i libros, los quales, como dixen, tengo por mui ciertos i verdaderos, hallara otro camino..." *Ibid.*, 290.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 295.

and urged him to pinpoint when it had arrived in Africa as well.⁵¹ Aldrete explained his reluctance to discuss the dating of Arabic in Africa, but committed himself to undertake this assignment since the Archbishop desired it.⁵² Aldrete did not always defer so easily to the Archbishop's opinions on scholarship. For example, Castro recommended Miguel de Luna's 'translation' of the history of Abentarique as a good source for Aldrete's work. Aldrete reported apologetically that he had taken a second look at the book on the Archbishop's advice, but that he doubted its authenticity.⁵³

In his commentary to Aldrete on the *VA* manuscript, Castro laid out his own explanation of the origins of the Spanish language, offering a compromise with Aldrete's theory that would still legitimate the parchment. Like Aldrete, and unlike López Madera, Castro accepted the Latin origins of Romance. However, he argued that the language could have evolved much more rapidly than Aldrete thought. Three centuries rather than seven sufficed for the process that resulted in Romance, in Castro's account, without need of the corrupting influence of the Visigoths.⁵⁴

Although Castro was unable to persuade Aldrete to change the account of linguistic origins that the former found unsatisfactory, he placed considerable confidence in Aldrete's linguistic and philological skills as well as his personal loyalty and discretion. In July, 1610, Castro charged Aldrete to carry out consultations about inscriptions for Sacromonte in utmost secrecy; Aldrete complied.⁵⁵

In 1614, the year that *VA* was published, Aldrete committed himself to defend the parchment and lead books, in a letter to Justino Antolínez: "El oficio de los Sanctos desseo hazer, i servir en mucho al Sacro Monte hoc est a sus sactos passados i presentes".⁵⁶ Mondéjar Cumpián and Nieto Jiménez place Aldrete in Seville, in service to the Archbishop de Castro, for at least the greater part of 1614, and possibly longer.⁵⁷ It appears that Aldrete may have been part of the Arch-

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 290.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 291-293.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 296-297.

⁵⁷ Mondéjar Cumpián, «Nuevos datos», 802; Nieto Jiménez, *Ideas lingüísticas de Aldrete*, 30.

bishop's household during this time. In a letter to Castro about his brother's death in 1616, Aldrete referred to "dos hermanos que con tantas veras y afición an desseado servir a V.S. Illma. *dentro i fuera de su casa...*".⁵⁸ Aldrete left Seville and the Archbishop's house precipitously and apparently under a cloud, as shown in a letter to his friend Cristóbal de Aybar, Archbishop de Castro's secretary:

Nadie de essa casa me escribe, ni sé cosa de élla, bien merece estar tan lexos de élla quien no fue digno de élla, al menos una cosa me consuela, que ni al maior ni al menor de todos lós de ella siento, que aia desservido, antes servido. Con esto estoi contento, que salí de ella no por deméritos, i fui arrojado como piedra con honda. Perdone V.M. i perdoneme Nro. Señor, que bien excusado es hazer memoria de esto...⁵⁹

This cloud looms in several letters from Aldrete to Aybar beginning in January of 1616, a difficult year for Aldrete that brought the death of his twin brother José as well as the isolation, calumny and financial straits of which he complained frequently. In May, Aldrete urgently asked Aybar to help transfer the library he had left behind in Seville and quickly clear his belongings from his lodgings there. In early June, Aldrete wrote to Aybar again, thanking him for his aid "en tal torbellino, i motin como se armó contra mí". "Ojo al norte", Aldrete warned Aybar gloomily, "que el más seguro a de aver hora que lo que passa por otro a de passar por él", adding "de la tormenta escapo alcançado, i para pedir a los amigos, i que no lo son".⁶⁰

Later that month, Aldrete wrote to Archbishop de Castro asking to be compensated for the many services he had rendered him. He hinted darkly at tales he could tell:

No tengo de qué suplir las pérdidas, i gastos, que de ellos se me an recrecido, i fuerçan a que contra mi natural justamente suplique a V.S.I. me haga merced, i sería maior si se entendiesse que *de veras e servido a V.S.I. sin faltar punto, aun aora quando los respectos humanos pudieran averme alterado. Passo en silencio lo mucho que pudiera dezir*. Se lo digo que V.S.I. sabe hazer mercedes a todos, i que io no los aia desmerecido lo sabe V.S.I. i todo el mundo. Crea de mí V.S.I. que le e de servir en toda ocasión sin que nada lo impida con voluntad prontíssima, a que deve V.S.I. corresponder.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 303. Italics mine.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 305. I have seen no explanation of the mysterious circumstances in which a professedly blameless Aldrete would have been so unceremoniously slung from Seville.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 302. Italics mine.

On the same day, Aldrete wrote even more bitterly and baldly to Castro's secretary Cristóbal Aybar. He argued that it was unjust that he had never been paid by the Archbishop for services of the kind for which others received pensions and benefices:

La necesidad me fuerça ser importuno...apurado con tantas cosas, que veo el daño, i no el remedio, lo de aqui hallé perdido, i lo de aí, i sobre todo mi trabajo, i que nunca merecí, ni una pensión, ni un beneficio, de tantos como se repartieron. Escribo el Arçobispo, mi señor, me haga merced, suplico a V.M. favoresca este partido, i para con V.M. no pido sino lo que me deve, i a pagado a otros de Juez de testamentos, visitas de Hospitales, i de tantos pleitos i cosas que io hize...Assí que la Justicia clama, i no permite que io lo passe en silencio, i creame V.M. que la necesidad me aprieta...⁶²

Aldrete bemoaned not only the lack of compensation but also the lack of recognition he received from the Archbishop and his assistant, who often didn't answer his letters. To Aybar he wrote "Sé mui bien mis obligaciones de servir a V. Merced i las reconozco, i también las ocupaciones de V.M., por estas dexo de acudir a aquellas con tan poco reconocimiento como son algunas cartas".⁶³ In the difficult year of 1616, the Archbishop didn't respond to Aldrete even on matters of textual interpretation regarding the lead books and the Immaculate Conception, themes dear to Castro: "como su Señoria no me respondió a lo de las conclusiones no quiero cansarle con estas cosas".⁶⁴ The Archbishop's unresponsiveness exacerbated Aldrete's regrets about the personal costs of his defense of Sacromonte,

Son recordaderas de otras que causan no pequeño sentimiento, i dolor, de tanto trabajo y gasto como costó el último libro que escriví i lo que padecí en Madrid por el Pergamino i libros del Sacro Monte, no lo querían dexar imprimir.⁶⁵

In November, 1616, Francisco de Gurmendi and Dr. Martín de Berrotarango y Mendiola's translation and commentary on two of the lead books (*Fundamentum Ecclesiae* and *Essentia Dei*) were presented to the Royal Council.⁶⁶ It became necessary for Archbishop de

⁶² *Ibid.*, 303. In June 1617, Aldrete referred again to work he had done, "Oficio de Juez de Testamentos, i visita de Hospitales." But this time he alleged indifference to recompense; *ibid.*, 488.

⁶³ October 21, 1616. *Ibid.*, 305.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁶⁶ With the collaboration of Pedro de Valencia. See Morocho Gayo, «Estudio introductorio», 326.

Castro to respond to their denunciation of the books as Islam-tainted heresies. Aldrete's standing with the Archbishop and his team apparently rose rapidly as his linguistic skills were recruited for the detailed rebuttal of Gurmendi and Mendiola's analysis of the texts. A letter to Aldrete reported that the Archbishop had received something "muy propia de V.M." that "le toca el oponerse a ella". This was "un libro scripto de mano" that the King's confessor had just sent; it was the translation of the two lead books, *Fundamentum Ecclesiae* and *Essentia Dei*.⁶⁷ Aybar and Castro began to answer Aldrete's letters, and Aybar praised the work that Aldrete had done earlier in the cause as well as in his own books.⁶⁸

Already in late October, Aybar had drafted a letter to Aldrete reporting the problems that Gurmendi and Mendiola raised, including criticisms of the books' Arabic grammar and style. He focused on an issue that a later *laminario* characterized as the origin of the uproar that lasted a century.⁶⁹ This was the phrase that Aybar reported was translated as "No ay Dios sino Dios, Jesus espiritu de Dios", which he also reproduced in Arabic script for Aldrete. In various places in the book *Essentia Dei* the phrase was written in abbreviated form using just the initial Arabic symbols equivalent to "M" and "R". The core of the dispute was whether the M. signalled Mahoma or Messiah. Aybar reported that "el intérprete" (Gurmendi) characterized the phrase as Islamic because "las dos letras abreviadas quieren dezir y significar Mahoma enbaxador". In contrast, Aybar asserted that the initial M. signified "Messias" while R. stood for "spíritu", and that Gurmendi's interpretation betrayed his ignorance of Arabic usage. Aybar wanted Aldrete's expert opinion on this and other objections raised by Gurmendi and Mendiola, but realized the difficulty of enabling him to consult the original: "vea V.M. qué tiene que ver esto con Mahoma... holgara que V.M. viera al libro. No le quede dexar de la mano".⁷⁰

In an uncharacteristically brief response, Aldrete professed great interest but no insight into the question: "qué puedo yo dezir? y más

⁶⁷ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 311-312.

⁶⁸ November 26, 1616. *Ibid.*, 310-311.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Morocho Gayo, «Estudio introductorio», 325. See also Bernabé Pons, L. F., «Los mecanismos de una resistencia: los libros plúmbeos del Sacromonte y el *Evangelio de Bernabé*», *Al-Qanṭara* XXIII, 2 (2002), 477-498.

⁷⁰ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 306-307.

donde se save tanto? y donde se sabe tan poco?”.⁷¹ However, he laid out his views of the matter in another letter a week later (November 11, 1616). Aldrete easily dismissed Guermendi and Mendiola’s criticism of the poor Arabic grammar and style of the lead books, by pointing out the existence of dialect differences. He reminded Aybar that he had discussed the topic of dialect variation in his own two books. The regular occurrence of dialect differentiation as a normal linguistic phenomenon, and especially in change over time, was one important basis of Aldrete’s argument in *DO* that a primordial Spanish identical to that spoken in his own time was implausible. He brought the same ideas about dialect differentiation to bear on the interpretation of the mooted initials and the lead books. Arabs themselves didn’t understand most of the Koran, Aldrete asserted, so he didn’t see how the interpreter (Gurmendi) could know so much about it. To interpret the lead books one needed a knowledge of Oriental Arabic and the Syriac spoken at the time of Christ in Palestine, as well as the varieties of Arabia, he wrote. Syntax and idioms of these various dialects would have been mixed in communication with the Apostles to write about “nuestra sagrada religión”.⁷²

In his own eventual memorial responding to Gurmendi and Mendiola, Archbishop de Castro asserted that even without knowledge of Arabic, one could know that the letter M. in *Essentia Dei* could not possibly mean Mohammed: “Y no es para esto necessario saber la lengua Árabe”.⁷³ In contrast, Aldrete the humanist scholar argued that only extensive linguistic and historical scholarship could equip an interpreter to understand the lead books with all their dialect variation and cultural references:

Diferentes son los dialectos, i frases i pureza de nuestra lengua que se usan en Madrid de las de México i Lima; no tan lexos de Córdoba a Sevilla ai en muchas cosas diferencia, vea V.M. mis libros, i también de la lengua que CHRISTO nuestro señor hablo. En el segundo hallará V.M., también que muchas cossas puso Mahoma en su Alcorán que las tenían antes los Árabes, como la circuncisión, muchas mujeres etc. Facilmente se colige de esto i de mucho que pudiera dezir, que a de saber i tener mui gran noticia de lenguas, historia, i de las sagradas letras, i de la lengua Sancta, i Syra el que uviera de interpretar los libros de Sacro Monte.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Dated November 4, 1616. *Ibid.*, 307.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 307-309.

⁷³ Quoted in Bernabé Pons, «Los mecanismos», 482.

⁷⁴ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 308.

Aldrete indicated in more than one letter that he believed his work on the principles of dialect variation and language change over time was relevant to the problem at hand in Sacromonte. He was always pleased to meet figures involved in the case who agreed:

Al Doctor Don Joan Bezerra también visité...A leído con cuidado ambos libros [plomos], i sus dos traduciones, i dixo que le parecía bien i que de ninguna manera tienen lo que les imputan; vio el testimonio del del Líbano, i me pidió copia. Dixo mui buenas cosas de la lengua Árabe en razón de ser antigua con exemplo de la nuestra, i de la Hebrea, de que tiene noticia, *i la diferencia que hazen las lenguas mudandose con el tiempo, i de una region a otra, i que de fuerça a de ser diverso el Árabe oriental del Occidental...*⁷⁵.

In an exchange of several letters with Aybar, Aldrete developed a hypothesis that the Arabic initial M. was infelicitous in its immediate context and had been mistranscribed. He queried Aybar repeatedly about the script. Aybar tried with increasing exasperation to clarify details of the Arabic orthography. Aldrete reminded Aybar repeatedly how difficult it was for him to give useful advice since he had never seen the lead books nor Gurmendi's translation: "desseo mucho saber si lo que dixen en la passada fue a propósito, no aviendo visto los libros ni más de lo poco que V.M. me escribió, sería harto que lo fuesse".⁷⁶ And again,

...fue harta dezir algo en defensa del pergamino, no teniendo sino una mala copia, sin aiuda de otra mejor i de papeles. Son menester para que el discurso sea a propósito i todo lo que hago en lo que V.M. me escribe es a tienta, i assi uti convocato, i dexo de dezir lo que diría siendo dueño del campo... por no aver visto los motivos del Contrario, ni los libros, sino una desnuda proposición de ella, no los puede aver para dar satisfacción... aun viendo errar quando más sin ver...⁷⁷

Despite his empiricist protests, Aldrete continued even in the absence of further data to develop his hypotheses about the text in question. In December, 1616, Aldrete wrote candidly to Aybar that for those who wanted to "calumniar" the Sacromonte books as tainted by Islam, the phrase "no ai Dios sino Dios, IESUS espíritu de Dios" itself was more than sufficient, without entering into orthographic de-

⁷⁵ Letter from Aldrete in Madrid to Castro, 1618. *Ibid.*, 494. Italics mine.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 312-313.

tails.⁷⁸ Aldrete wrote that he knew so well the power of the objections that could be raised to this phrase that he didn't even dare commit them to paper for himself: "no e querido ni aun para mí hazer memoria por escrito antes las procuro olvidar". His desire was to defend, not offend against, the lead books. To do this, Aldrete insisted, one needed to find foundations for the defense by considering the whole of the book, rather than just decontextualized orthographic signs.⁷⁹ Later that month, Aldrete wrote Aybar that he had done all that he legitimately could in defense of the Sacromonte books; to go beyond "más sería divinar, que discurrir". In response to Aybar's request for the correct translation of a single phrase, he wrote, "en cosa tan llana... puede aver dificultades... Es la vez primera que esto viene a mis manos ni lo e leído ni sé en qué libro está, ni el fin que uvo para dezirse, ni lo que precedió ni lo que se sigue".⁸⁰

Aldrete was tenacious in his insistence on bringing linguistic scholarship and principles, empiricism, and contextualized readings to the lead books. Was this just a timid scholar hedging on a dangerous question, or equivocating as did the Archbishop of Monte Líbano after he was bribed by Castro's representatives, Antonio Tavares and Andrés de León?⁸¹ Perhaps not. Although Aldrete refused to commit himself to an interpretation without seeing the work, he did not seem at all anxious to dodge the topic. If anything, his pursuit of the details of the puzzling abbreviated script was dogged and even obsessive. Over the course of years, he repeatedly pleaded with Aybar to clarify the orthography, and he added new hypotheses about the symbols in late-night postscripts to completed letters.⁸² Five years later, in August 1621, Aldrete was still writing to Aybar about his "conjecture" that the vexing abbreviation was not "M." at all, but another letter that had been mistranscribed in copies. Aldrete finally visited Granada and the site where the lead books were held in 1621. But although he expressed hope of examining the books to ascertain the script, it ap-

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 314. Pedro de Valencia was among those who diagnosed this phrase as indicative of Islamic influence and authorship, in his *Discurso sobre el pergamino y láminas de Granada*. See Valencia, *Obras completas IV/2*, 448.

⁷⁹ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 314.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 471.

⁸¹ For Monte Líbano's retraction, see Morocho Gayo, «Estudio introductorio», 336.

⁸² E.g., his letter of November 18, 1616 to Aybar. *Ibid.*, 309-310.

pears that he never gained access.⁸³ In 1622, he wrote to Aybar minimizing his contribution —“No estoi olvidado de que...estudié algunas cosillas”— and reminding him of why he had given up on the topic: “lo dexé porque no se puede en cosa tan grave escribir sin verlo todo, i sería devinar a peligro de errar”. Nonetheless, he reiterated to Aybar that he remained firm in his conviction that the orthographic symbol had been mistranscribed and therefore misinterpreted. And he complained once again that despite his many exhortations, no one had checked his hypothesis against the originals.⁸⁴

There is a certain consistency between the stance Aldrete took on interpretation of the books and the method that he applied to his historical linguistic analysis, for which he has been lauded by later commentators as a proto-scientist of language. Many of Aldrete’s European contemporaries were happy to pick out isolated words to make almost any interpretive case or historical claim.⁸⁵ In contrast, Aldrete’s systematic comparison of series of sound changes across whole lexical sets was a significant innovation. That systematic approach and especially his corresponding skepticism about an isolated datum was consonant with Aldrete’s refusal to interpret a single phrase outside of the full context of the lead books. Some of Aldrete’s hypotheses, such as his suggestion that two distinct Santiagos were conflated in the translation of the lead books, seem like the desperate rescue tactics of a compromised scholar.⁸⁶ But Occam’s razor had never been Aldrete’s favorite tool. He achieved his philological advances because he was often willing to assume plurality without necessity, *contra* Occam; in fact, he was generally more unwilling to assume identity without necessity. This is what allowed him to move beyond the “etymological wishful thinking”⁸⁷ of many of his European contemporaries. He was more reluctant than most to seize on similarities that might prove merely coincidental. In his linguistic

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 501-503. The lead books were in Seville, with the Archbishop, at the time that Aldrete was there, before his sudden mysterious expulsion; see Morocho Gayo, «Estudio introductorio», 318. It appears as if Aldrete had not been allowed to consult them there, either.

⁸⁴ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 504.

⁸⁵ See Eco, U., *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. Fentress, J., Oxford, Blackwell, 1995.

⁸⁶ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 503.

⁸⁷ Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, 96.

work, apparent identities between words were only meaningful to Aldrete when found in confirming patterns.

Unlike Arias Montano, who avoiding compromising himself by avoiding the opportunity to examine the lead books, Aldrete gave at least an appearance of desperation for a chance to study them in order to confirm his hypotheses and interpretations. He scolded Aybar for colluding in the secrecy surrounding them:

No puedo dexar de dezir a V.M. que estoi con mui gran sentimiento de ver a V.M. tan recatado en materia de los libros del Monte Sacro y casi determinado de no hablar palabra en manera alguna: mas charitas Christi urget nos. No sé para qué son estos secretos, donde el negocio está puesto en tela de juicio, i en Roma i Madrid lo an de ver tantos, i se a de disputar i ventilar el caso.... por ventura importara lo que io buscara aunque tan desechado, que mucho fuera embiarme una copia de lo que en Roma la avrán todos lo que la quisieren, a mui poca costa. Si esto es tan bueno, como lo es, no ai por qué esconderlo de quien a de procurar su defenssa con tantas veras. Si io conociera que avía gusto de mí, ia uviera ido a hablarme al trabajo pero no lo veo pues no lo ai aun de responder a mis cartas...⁸⁸

Aldrete's opinion, most often and most strongly expressed to Aybar rather than directly to the Archbishop, was that Castro should have made the lead books public as soon as possible: "Lo que sé dezir a V.M. es que estos libros si quien los estima tanto no los saca a luz se an de perder, porque si lo que dizen es cierto, no sé cómo se a de sanear, si una vez como estan se publican...".⁸⁹ He elaborated sharply on the point in another letter:

estos libros son para ella [la iglesia] i no es justo fraudarlos de ella, Parece que la Divina Clemencia hará fuerça a que se publiquen, no es bien resistirle. Sino que vean la luz, i que los incrédulos se desengañen. El ocultar esto tanto lo hará sospechoso i más lo que se a escrito del anillo de Salomón i otras cosas....Mas quiero dezir que se a dicho que se haze una Junta para todo esto, i que viene el padre Suárez. Pienso era menestar afilar i mirar los libros todos primero que nada de esto.⁹⁰

The Archbishop did allow Aldrete to see the memorials that he had prepared in response to Gurmendi and Mendiola's denunciation. On April 28, 1617, Aldrete wrote to both Aybar and Castro to thank

⁸⁸ January 21, 1617. Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 474.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 473.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 475.

them for this opportunity: “E visto los Memoriales, son maravillosos”. In his letter to Aybar, Aldrete displayed his fear of the Archbishop, saying that he was writing to Castro as Aybar had instructed him. Aldrete asked that Aybar as secretary intercept the letter and check to make sure that it was phrased as it should be.⁹¹ The letter to Castro was most flattering, and it reported that Aldrete delighted in seeing “como se aniquilan las acusaciones tan rigurosas”.⁹² In a *parecer* of 1618 on Castro’s reply to Gurmendi and Mendiola, Aldrete also praised the Archbishop’s memorials: “son del cielo”, before entering into gentle discussion of the details.⁹³

Aldrete complained chronically that the fate of his two books was tied to the fate of the lead books. When he first sent a copy of *VA* to the Archbishop’s household in December 1614, he lamented that it had cost him a year of work, considerable suffering, and continual struggle with those who disagreed with him.⁹⁴ His tactic of defending his first publication, *DO*, by explicitly addressing the lead books in *VA* backfired. As he drew new criticism, now from the other side of the controversy, he regretted the strategy:

harto he perdido en aver dicho tanto bien de lo que tantos dizen tanto mal, i me cuesta hazienda, i enemigos, i sobre todo obligación de defenderlo....Holgara que mi libro no tratara de ellos ni aver metido prenda tan grande sin más luz.⁹⁵

His expressions of bitterness were salted with recurring resolve to maintain his commitment to the Sacromonte defense and to the Archbishop: “Empeñado me hallo en la defensa de los libros del Sacro Monte, quisiera io ser para servir a nro. Señor en ellos un Serafim”.⁹⁶ By June, 1617, Aldrete despaired that either the honor of his work or his own material wellbeing could be salvaged:

Oxala ni el primero ni segundo libro no uviera salido, ni hecho otras cosas, que me an hecho harto daño, i tienen destruido, i más el segundo libro, que me cuesta hartos centenares de ducados, i aun un Dios os dé salud no e recibido de él.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 482.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 483.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 496.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 473.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 471.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 487-488.

With his interests vested in the outcome, Aldrete followed closely the Sacromonte defense as it unfolded in Madrid in 1617-1618. Despite his bouts of intense scholarly involvement, Aldrete appears to have remained on the fringes of the defense team through much of this period. He was unsure who would represent the cause in Madrid in response to the summons from the King to bring the books by mid-April of 1618. The correspondence suggests that Aldrete was not privy to the subornation of the Archbishop of Monte Líbano. On the news of Monte Líbano's sudden change of heart about the authenticity of the lead books, Aldrete wrote:

Lo del Arçobispo del Monte Líbano, aunque me dezían lo que V.M. me escribe, no lo creía. Deve de saber mucho. El vendrá a Granada, i a Sevilla. Lo que resultare me diga V.M. i quien está a la defensa de los fiscales de los libros del Monte en Madrid. El mío padece por ellos, i io también después de averme costado muchos centenares de ducados.⁹⁸

In November of that same year, 1618, it was Aldrete himself who was at the defense of the lead books in Madrid. He wrote to the Archbishop de Castro about his rounds of visits to deliver the Archbishop's letters to principal players such as the Cardinal Rojas y Sandoval, Archbishop of Toledo.⁹⁹ Aldrete also informed Castro of the sequestration of papers regarding the lead books.¹⁰⁰ But in a letter to Castro in May, 1619, Aldrete characterized his own efforts in Madrid as simply wasted time:

Mui gran dicha fuera la mía si el tiempo que e desperdiciado en Madrid lo uviera aprovechado en el Sacro Monte...Perdilo y quisiera ganarlo, si pudiesse, compensandolo con reducir a Francisco de Gurmendi a lo que a el estuviera mui bien.¹⁰¹

Despite or perhaps because of his own failure, Aldrete professed a continuing faith in the efficacy of open discussion. He was particularly convinced of the power of the written word and, not incidentally, the persuasiveness of prestigious varieties of language, which had been a key point of his linguistic work:

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 491.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 494-495.

¹⁰⁰ Mondéjar Cumpián, «Nuevos datos», 826.

¹⁰¹ Martínez Ruiz, «Cartas inéditas de Aldrete», 499-500.

El remedio de todos más eficaz es el que se a usado siempre en todas las opiniones i questiones encontradas escribir contra ellas. La verdad siempre prevalece; Lo que V.S.I. a escrito en defensa de los libros si mandase ornarlo, i ponerlo en el estilo que se usa, i en latín, i que corriesse por el mundo sería a lo que más podría acreditar los libros.....No conta que el del Líbano, ni Gurmendi digan diferente de lo que an dicho, aunque sería de mucha importancia, no para los que ia están ligados a su opinión sino es que se deshaze con argumentos, que convençan.¹⁰²

At the same time as this passage flatters the Archbishop, it alleges an almost poignant faith in scholarship and in open, well-founded argumentation to reveal the truth and persuade the skeptical. This faith stands in marked contrast to the secretive and manipulative tactics of the Archbishop de Castro and *laminarios* such as Tavares and Andrés de León. That the Archbishop of Monte Líbano might be bribed to change his opinion didn't matter in Aldrete's view, if he could not also marshal convincing arguments to support that opinion.

There is, then, more consistency and more intellectual coherence—or at least considerable intellectual obstinacy—in Aldrete's positions across the domains of inquiry and across the years than at first has met philologists' analytical eyes. Despite his deferential, accommodating and even fearful stance toward Castro, Aldrete was bold enough to resist some of his recommendations. Against Castro's criticisms and urging that he find another solution to the dilemma of early Spanish, Aldrete never budged from his theory of Latin origins via Visigoth corruption of the language, nor of the miracle of the prophetic gift of tongues. Over at least thirteen years, many of them in close correspondence with Castro's household and working at his behest, Aldrete never repudiated either position, despite his exasperation at the criticisms he received from both defenders and opponents of Sacromonte.

Aldrete subjected historical accounts—as opposed to accounts of direct providential interventions—to scholarly skepticism when they were tied to the cause of the lead books just as when they were not. He dismissed other historians, including those sympathetic to the *plomos*, who had allowed themselves to be carried away by the “patrañas” of Abentarique and “other Arabs”.¹⁰³ To be sure, Aldrete

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 500. Aldrete had earlier written to Aybar his belief in the power of the written word: “es arduo responder a lo escrito”; *ibid.* 313.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 504.

suggested that he was willing to suppress knowledge that worked against his cause when he wrote that he preferred to forget rather than record the damning objections that could be made to the key phrase in the lead books (discussed above). This rhetorical flourish indeed revealed a prior commitment that biased his analysis, but its pragmatic effect was only to mitigate rather than cancel his frank signal of the heretical meaning of the phrase. Even the analytic bias it revealed did not distinguish his scholarship as a *laminario* from that as a humanist philologist. In his major intellectual achievement, *DO*, Aldrete had been willing to ignore the fact that his principal argument, “the conquered take on the language of the conquerors”, was not confirmed by the key case of the Visigoths, since it was inconvenient for the conclusion he had drawn.¹⁰⁴

In a magisterial study of the polemics surrounding the Sacromonte discoveries, Gaspar Morocho Gayo identified the anti-humanist underpinnings of the work of Archbishop de Castro and *laminario* sympathizers.¹⁰⁵ However, Aldrete, admirer of Arias Montano, follower of Pablo de Céspedes, scholar of classical and Semitic languages, was simultaneously humanist and *laminario*. By keeping his antiquarian eye focused not on the larger project embodied in the lead books but on the puzzles posed by the immediate contextualization of details, Aldrete managed to bring to the *laminario* enterprise some of the same practices, with their strengths and weaknesses, forged in his humanist scholarship.

ABSTRACT

The humanist scholar and philologist Bernardo de Aldrete had a contradictory relationship to the Sacromonte affair. His first book in 1606 was a path-breaking history of the Spanish language. Notable for its rigorous methods of linguistic inquiry, that work demonstrated the Latin origins of Spanish and rejected its existence before the time of the Visigoths. Aldrete’s thesis was attacked for impugning the authenticity of the Turpiana parchment. In a second book Aldrete defended both his earlier work and the Sacromonte discoveries. He assisted Archbishop de Castro in the defense of the lead books, but that role has received little attention from historians. This article draws together Aldrete’s published work and his correspondence with the Archbishop’s house-

¹⁰⁴ *DO*, 138.

¹⁰⁵ Morocho Gayo, «Estudio introductorio».

hold to bring his role in the Sacromonte case into focus. It attempts to identify the continuities as well as the more often noted contradictions between Aldrete's roles as *laminario* and humanist scholar.

RESUMEN

La relación de Bernardo de Aldrete, humanista y filólogo, con el caso del Sacromonte fue ambigua. Su primer libro, publicado en 1606, fue una historia innovadora de la lengua española. Notable por sus métodos rigurosos de investigación lingüística, la obra mostró los orígenes latinos del español y rechazó su existencia antes de la época de los godos. La tesis de Aldrete fue atacada por impugnar la autenticidad del pergamino de la Torre Turpiana. En otro libro, Aldrete defendió su obra anterior y también los hallazgos del Sacromonte. Aldrete ayudó al Arzobispo de Castro en la defensa de los libros plúmbeos, un papel que ha llamado poco la atención de historiadores del Sacromonte. Este artículo compagina la obra publicada de Aldrete y su correspondencia con la casa del Arzobispo, para enfocar su papel en el caso del Sacromonte. Pretende identificar tanto las continuidades como las contradicciones entre el trabajo de Aldrete como laminario y como humanista.