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Todorov's Gift of Ethics to History

Todorov's works of ethical history — which are aligned around centrality of "judging" found in ethics and in narratives of the past a tremendous gift to the discipline of History.[1] While historians not comprehended or rejected other forms of critical theory, the practical qualities of Todorov's wide range of historical studies have me: work could not be rebuffed on the grounds of its excess of theory or its conceptual character. Yet Todorov's histories are clearly founded upon major currents in European philosophy and critical theory (not least those of his own earlier work), and historians will soon realize that in reading Todorov they are also entering into debates on alterity and ethics which never have otherwise found. Todorov's work offers a sense of surprise to the jaded historian who is forced to confront the idea that here is someone doing work similar in many ways to herself, yet which is subtly different in terms both of its intentions and its methods.

This "smuggling" of ethics into History has a triple benefit for the academy. First, historians are forced to reflect on their practices of judgment in the light of major discussions of such questions in and critical theory. Second, critical theory and philosophy will benefit from the writing of a wider range of works in that genre of historical ethic history) which Todorov innovated. Third, and perhaps least commented on, Todorov's strategy in combining history with ethics takes us b debates of the Enlightenment and the formation of the discipline In this paper I shall argue that ethically-driven forms of historic were passed over at that time, in favour of Western brands of empirical History, and suggest that Todorov's work provides us with the basis for reclaiming ethical traditions in History.

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The first half of this article looks primarily at the technical question of the import of Todorov's texts for the discipline of History, whilst the latter half of the essay introduces a more substantive discussion of the place of such writing in debates on selfhood and alterity. There I try to show how Todorov's historical practice can be emulated by other historians by extending and critiquing Todorov's claim that the modern world began in 1492 C.E.

Todorov's moral histories evidently foreground questions of ethics. They centre our attention on the task of describing the moral behaviour of people in the past and also on an investigation into our capacity to sincerely address such questions. In *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other,* Todorov asked how one group of men deployed, and ignored, the idea of "difference" to allow themselves to treat other people as lesser human beings. Todorov's first entry into the writing of "moral histories" also included a theoretical description of the nature of this genre (a rather rare event as Todorov's histories present surprisingly little overt theorizing):

> I have chosen to narrate a history. Closer to myth than to argument, it is nonetheless to be distinguished from myth on two levels: first because it is a true story (which myth could, but need not, be), and second because my main interest is less a historian's than a moralist's; the present is more important to me than the past. The only way that I can answer the question, How to deal with the other? is by telling an exemplary story (this will be the genre chosen), i.e. a story that will be as true as possible but in telling which I shall try to never lose sight of what biblical exegesis used to call its tropological or ethical meaning. And in this book, rather as in a novel, summaries or generalized perspectives will alternate with scenes or analyses of detail filled with quotations, and with pauses in which the author comments on what has just occurred, and of course with frequent ellipses or omissions. But is this not the point of departure of all history? (4)

The characteristics of the genre of moral history are thus laid out: it deals with the truth of the past, yet its focus is moral discussion in the present rather than an impassive conjuring of past times, it understands the way it is narratologically connected to forms such as novels and religious texts, and it conceives of history as a vehicle for moral discussion rather than an end in itself. In asking if this is "not the point of departure of all history" Todorov deploys a form of scepticism towards the methods of the traditional historian which we would expect from his work in linguistics and critical theory, yet

while such claims strike at core beliefs of empirical historians, it is not Todorov's intention to engage in an extended discussion on the nature of history. It is self-evident to him that history is a narrative construct, and pragmatic to assert that such a claim can co-exist with a belief in the truth of the past.

In *A French Tragedy* Todorov makes his commitment to both pragmatism and scepticism plainer still:

> It is only natural that the interpretation of the past should serve the present, but that does not mean that we can allow any one particular interpretation to be made sacred and transformed into a pious image. The historian cannot let himself be led by any principle other than the search for truth, even if he knows that there is no such thing as absolute truth in this world. (x)

History becomes, then, something of a heroic task for histories are quests for the unattainable, and are all the more valuable for this. In *The Fragility of Goodness* Todorov addresses this question to his readers in an even more direct fashion, for the book is divided into three distinct sections — a description the way in which many Bulgarian Jews were spared in the Second World War, a discussion of the moral world of 1940s Bulgaria, and a collection of primary sources which relate to the saving of many of Bulgaria's Jews. Todorov’s text is therefore simultaneously a history, a work of practical ethics and an archive. Readers are invited to move between these three seemingly distinct genres — which together constitute the "moral history" — and it is clear that they will construct different forms of meaning as they engage critically with Todorov’s argument. For the moral history to operate in the present, it must structure itself in such a way that it is an invitation to dialogue, which Todorov acveived through the form of this book.

In some ways we may say that there is relatively little difference between Todorov's work and that of other historians. After all, it is a commonplace to say that historians write about the past with one eye on the present, or that it is a duty of the historian to judge the actions of people in the past. Todorov, however, is able to establish a rationale for history's ethical content and purpose which is based upon the idea that his moral histories are an extension of existing discussions in the fields of ethics and literary theory, where questions of language and morals are central to those subjects' identities. Todorov makes explicit things which are already present in the act of history writing. In doing this he collapses a set of presumptions which most historians would tacitly wish to maintain in their own writing. Put bluntly,

most historians today would like to believe that the moral character of their work was an unfortunate side-effect of the act of investigating the past, but not one which wholly detracts from the quasi-objective character of empirical history. Todorov, of course, turns this around so as to say that moral investigation can be the central reason for looking at the past. He candidly asks whether the actions of an explorer or a camp guard can be described as good or bad, right or wrong, and sets out to examine the behaviour of such individuals within both the moral world of their present and our ethical universe today.

Thus far I have been comparing Todorov with empirical historians. What, though, happens if we compare his work with more radical historiographers such as Alun Munslow and Keith Jenkins who interrogate the epistemological and political premises upon which the discipline of History is founded? Such writers question the ease with which they feel historians skate over methodological issues and criticise the manner in which hard philosophical and ethical questions are evaded in what is an inherently anti-theoretical discipline. They ask whether we can really know the past and demand that historians describe much more carefully what they think they are doing when they claim to be able to conjure the past from documents, sift it through their own imaginaries and then reproduce the truth of past times in their writings.

Munslow argues that only once a thorough deconstuction of what he terms the "modernist epistemology" (4-5) of History has taken place could we begin to conceive of engaging in the kinds of ethical adventures undertaken in Todorov's moral histories. Jenkins argues more radically for an abandonment of history as a field in which truth-telling is the ultimate arbiter and suggests that "History" be seen as a branch of social and political theory. In making this claim he is in some ways close to advocating a practice of history which is reminiscent of that found in Todorov's writing, and such an idea might seem to be supported by a tracing of the common structuralist and poststructuralist heritage shared by both writers.

Yet such is the vehemence of Jenkins' dismantling of the modernist props that sustain History that I would suggest that the sensibility of his work lies very far from that of Todorov. Todorov, after all, makes claims that would be anathema to writers such as Jenkins. He asserts that we can establish conversations with the peoples of the past and can know their worlds through their writings. He suggests that people ought to learn lessons from the behaviour of others in the past. He seems comfortable with the idea that the practice of history is actually more important than the abandonment of thinking about the past owing to the epistemological

inconsistencies embedded in such thought. In the end Todorov's historical writings are characterised by an enlightened sensibility, in that they express the breadth of hope which characterised the thinkers of that time, supporting the possibility that the moral behaviour of man might improve through reflective enquiry.

In writing Enlightenment-inflected moral histories Todorov is in fact referring to a tradition of writing about the past which has been lost in contemporary historical circles. Jenkins rightly criticises empirical history but his condemnation of History falls easily into the belief of empirical historians themselves that their field of study is a monolithic, single entity. Such forms lend themselves to partisan defence and attacks, but a study of the history of History reveals that the "empirical" method was the victor in a contest between different approaches to the past and ought not to be seen as the natural way of doing history. This discussion, of course, took place in the Enlightenment period, when the first university chairs in History were being established, and from which Todorov draws inspiration for his own historical practice. In essays such as "Les Sciences morales et politiques" (1991) Todorov has shown his great interest in the connections between the political and philosophical world of the Enlightenment and its generation academic disciplines.

If we think about writing on the past in late-eighteenth- an early-nineteenth-century Europe we will recall that at that time such discourse took place mainly in literary and philosophical works, which evidently prized moral discussion as one of their main aims (Whately). The space between literature, history and philosophy was slight and when modern History emerged as a distinct field of study it did so as a generic offshoot of literature and philosophy, as had arguably been the case in the development of classical History in ancient Greece. This prizing of the intimacy of the literary and the political, of the poetic and the human sciences, within the same work can later be found in the work of Bakhtin (Macey xi), whose thought has of course been of great importance to Todorov.

In early-nineteenth-century Europe I believe that the nascent discipline of History was faced with an epistemological choice between two competing models of knowledge: that of the Enlightenment and that of the theological *Ancien Régime*. Munslow confuses matters in his account of the *modernist* epistemology of empirical history, for what the discipline really adopted not a modern epistemology, but the theological model of investigation. Where

Enlightenment thought prized scepticism, questioning, philosophical troubling and politico-religious critique, History adopted an approach to knowledge which cherished certainty and absolutism in its approach to truth, method, tradition and its own purpose. History did, however, adopt enlightened, scientific understandings of time — which asserted that time's "natural" state was biological, as observation of the natural world confirmed — and therefore abandoned the theological, spiritual understanding of time which asserted that the biological, material and earthly were of lesser significance than the true history of Christianity, which incorporated both stories about the past and a certainty that a day of judgement would come in the future.

That History was able to adopt this stance whilst describing itself as "empirical" was something of a betrayal of the ideas of Enlightenment empiricism, but a great deal of things were confused in that intellectual milieu, not least because of the work of Enlightenment thinkers such as David Hume. In one sphere (philosophy) Hume radically attacked theological modes of knowledge, whilst in others (his histories) he perfectly reproduced the logic of the theological mode of thought. In philosophical works, such as his "Essay on Miracles," Hume challenged the idea that we can know the truth of the past, yet Hume the historian wrote best-selling histories which displayed no doubts as to the possibility of recovering the truth of the past.

The Enlightenment was not a philosophical movement which emerged fully-formed. My contention is that it was the failure of figures such as Hume to follow through the logic of their epistemologies in all their writings which dissipated the radical potential which Enlightenment philosophy offered for genres such as History. It is true that Hume's philosophical logic was followed in theological tracts which questioned the truth of the Bible and the bases of Christianity, but such texts came to be seen as expressions of doubt as to the existence of specific people and things, rather than a more concerted assault on the knowability of the past. This was made plain in the reception of Richard Whately's famous pamphlet *Historic Doubts Relative to the Existence of Napoleon Buonaparte*. Whately's work was a satire of the Humean legacy which sought to ridicule the underlying logic of Enlightenment philosophy, yet in extending those philosophical ideas Whately also delighted in exploring the creative possibilities which emerged from the premise that Napoleon had not existed. I would argue that the reason why Whately displayed such affection for the arguments of this piece — evinced in the many later editions he produced of the pamphlet — was that he understood that had opened up questions and debates about the past which merited critique. Whately was

ultimately a defender of the theological mode of knowledge, but he understood that Hume and others had opened up arguments which needed to be countered, for they could not be ignored and it needed to be understood that their radical potential had neither been fully comprehend challenged.

Progress in "empirical" History became associated with the quantitative, and endless, task of describing all that had ever happened, rather than the continuation of the enlightened task of developing truly sceptical ways of thinking about the past. Certainty, therefore, won out over Enlightenment. The entrenchment of the theological mode of History was arguably completed through the early-nineteenth-century development of the idea that History was founded upon the tension between two competing modes of analysis: the macro-narratives of idealist history (found in Hegel and Marx) and the empirical micro-narratives of more prosaic historians. The discipline itself into believing that these two approaches represented the gamut of thinking about the past and, arguably, this impression has lasted until this day. Arnold makes this plain in his claim that:

> It is, of Course, ludicrous to suggest that developments in historiography "ended" in the mid-nineteenth century. [...] But there is some truth to the claim. Since Ranke, historians of every hue have had first and foremost in their minds the idea of "truth" as something that can be approached or achieved through fidelity to their sources. (54)

Can we imagine such a claim that a field of study has not advanced philosophically or conceptually since the mid-nineteenth century, being made of any discipline other than History?

In truth, there was perhaps very little Enlightenment History, for its claims existed more in the form of criticisms than practices, but there do exist texts such as Whately's which one can refer to in undertaking an archaeology of this field of knowledge and one can certainly trace the manner in which more radical ideas about the past were redirected into literary texts. The nineteenth-century novel combined self-referential scepticism as to knowledge with forms of moral argumentation which might be said to continue the Enlightenment legacy. Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* cycle — whose subtitle *Historie naturelle et sotiale* plays upon the connections between stories and histories— offers a classic example of this form. In his novel cycle Zola advanced and impassioned critique of modernity and capitalism in nineteenth-century France in the guise of a fictionalised family history, whilst simultaneously populating

his texts with artists, writers and thinkers who speculate on our ability to truly describe the past.

My point in setting out this counter-history here is, of course, that I believe Todorov to be the heir of the enlightened historians and therefore a writer whose work has a broader potentiality than might at first seem to be the case, for he offers a deeply coherent, history-conscious account of how writing about the past might be re-imagined. He is a writer who offers us a route back to paths that were not taken in the past, reminiscent of Wittgenstein and Walter Benjamin, who also located early-nineteenth-century moments as the site of ideas which they wished to reclaim for their presents (Wittgenstein 2e).

Todorov's moral histories are then continuations of a lost genre of writing in which questions of politics, morality and the philosophy of knowledge interacted in the study of the past. We need to ask, then, in as blunt a form as possible how this genre compares with the dominant, so-called empirical, historical genre. However artificial, I think that the central differences between these two forms are best explained in a dichotomised table:

Empirical history	Moral history
Truth	Explanation / understanding
Moral detachment	Moral engagement
Temporal split between past and present	Temporal flows
Origin of texts	Consequences of texts
Theoretical insularity	Theoretical cosmopolitanism
The glossing of choice (in method)	The exposure of choice (of method)
Prosaic sensibility	Poetic sensibility
Genre blindness	Genre awareness / hybridity
Authority	Conversation

Todorov himself has established that there is a generic distinction between his work and that of other historians, writing that "[fjhe genre I have chosen is not history but reflection on history" *(On Human Diversity* xii). Similarly, what I here call "moral history" might also therefore be called "reflection on history."

Looking at the table above we see that the more basic the questions which we put to these genres are, the greater the gulf between them, and the greater the sense of liberation that comes to the historian who is usually so constrained by the limits of the conventional language game of historiographical debate. In moving historiographical discussions towards questions of genre, Todorov's work seems close to that of Hayden White in *Metahistory*, where White sought to classify the chief literary representational modes of historical writing in the nineteenth century and to unpick the social and political implications of each type of writing. Elsewhere in my own ("Towards a Typology"), I have attempted to show in a more concrete way how exactly Todorov's ideas on genres and types might be applied to histories.

It seems obvious to say that "truth-telling" is the aim of historical work, but of course this aim is only seen to be particular to a certain model of knowledge when it is set aside the alternate goal of explanation/h understanding found in a genre such as moral history. This is not to say that questions of truth are of no interest to moral historians, or understand empirical historians, but merely to draw inferences from their end-points.

There is evidently much clearer disparity in the goal of moral detachment in empiricism and the ethical engagement of moral histories. Todorov has identified this disconnection and lifelessness of the empirical mode as c the driving forces towards his own method:

> When I became conscious of that separation [between beliefs and actions], I began to feel a growing dissatisfaction with the aforementioned human and social sciences (a category that, to my mind, includes history) as they are practiced today. The separation between one's life and one's words, between facts and values, seems to me deleterious, especially for these disciplines. (*The Conquest of America* x)

When viewed individually, the dichotomies listed in the table above may not seem to represent radically different approaches to knowledge, but my suggestion here is that once we begin to parse a set of fundamental differences in approach between empirical and moral histories, we start to see that they are very dissimilar creatures indeed. Let us imagine, for example, a world in which all historians saw themselves as archivists of past moral engagements, and their task as being the recovery of such discussions so that they mi deployed in contemporary ethical discussion, or a world in which the aim of histories was not the fixing of authority and certainty but the development of moral and political conversations. *In A French Tragedy* Todorov notes that, “As

they say, political life is a matter not of the ethic of conviction but of the ethics of responsibility. Its manifestations are judged not in function of what precedes them but of what ensues, of their effects rather than their motivations" (127), and one wonders if he might not also have historians in mind here.

In addition to the theoretical implications of his work, the thematic gains that Todorov has offered to historians have been of great practical use. Given History's anti-theoretical bent, it is not surprising that work on alterity in Levinas, Heidegger and Derrida had almost no impact whatsoever on the work of (Anglo-Saxon) historians, yet Todorov's transposition of such discussions from the realm of theory to a concrete study of explorers in the Americas opened up the possibility of historical engagement with this central theme in modern thought. The fact that *The Conquest of America* could be read with or without a knowledge of earlier writing on alterity only enhanced its pervasive influence in history. As well as Todorov's moral histories we can now point to work by writers such as Jonathan Glover, Michael Burleigh, Robert Young, Ashis Nandy and Gayatri Spivak within the broad field of moral history, and while most of these writers would not identify themselves as historians, I think there is now a sense that a developed field of moral history is forming in and beyond the discipline.

I now want to look more closely at one of Todorov's moral historical arguments as a means of showing how historians might develop Todorov's offer. The expansion of the genre of moral history can only take place in the writing of such histories and in their engagement with the ethical arguments of other works. The discussion that I am particularly interested in is Todorov's contention that Iberian explorers adopted a set of classifiable attitudes towards the *others* whom they encountered in the Caribbean and the Americas. These stances ranged from the annihilatory, through dominance and assimilation, to strategies only marginally more attendant to the difference of others. Nowhere in the writings of Columbus, Las Casas and the other explorers could Todorov find human encounters of an ideal type, which he characterised as being ones where both parties are open to dialogue and attempting to see the other as she sees herself.

Todorov contended that the year 1492 C.E. was of epochal importance in world history for it initiated a process whereby Europeans colonized the world, both in geographical terms and in the extension of a particular model of the human encounter whereby the European self intentionally ignored the alterity of others. As Todorov puts it:

> But the discovery of America is essential to us today not only because extreme, and exemplary, encounter. Alongside this paradigmatic value, it was another as well — the value of direct causality. The history of the globe is of course made up of conquests and defeats, of colonizations and discoveries of others; but, as I shall try to show, it is in fact the conquest of America that heralds and establishes our present identity; even if every date that perm separate any two periods is arbitrary, none is more suitable, in order to n beginning of the modern era, than the year 1492, the year Columbus crossed the Atlantic Ocean. *(The Conquest of America* 5)

Here I would like to argue against Todorov on two grounds. Firs-he is somewhat mistaken in identifying the year 1492 as the "beginning modern era" for that era had arguably begun in Iberia and the wider world in the ninth century. Secondly, and relatedly, while *The Cornquest of America* posits the unlikelihood of our ever finding truly communicative human encounters, I contend that we can find precisely such conversations in medieval Iberia. These forms of communication were not uncontested, for between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries Iberian societies engaged in a series of "identity wars," in which "cosmopolitans" —- who stood for communications betweens selves and others — fought "parochialists" — who asserted the superiority of their culture and selves over others.

Columbus, Cortes and Las Casas were of course representative of the crowns of the new nation states of Spain and Portugal, which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries inaugurated novel and radical forms of radical forms of political organisation which were based around the principle of the singularity of selfhood. In other words, they were the instruments of the parochialist victors of the Iberian identity wars. Thus, the new Spanish nation state was based around a single religion (Roman Catholicism), a single language (Castilian Romance), a single capital (the new city of Madrid, symbolically locate centre of the Iberian peninsula) and a single form of national political and cultural rule. These principles for organising a country may strike us as natural and obvious, but they were of course both new and artificial at the time of Columbus and Las Casas. New capitals, forms of politics and languages were created and imposed upon Iberians, whilst older forms of language, and rule needed to be eliminated to enable the singularity of the nation state to come into being.

What was purged in a calculated fashion in Iberia was a culture of religious, linguistic and political pluralism, and my suggestion is that if one wants to find a culture where there is genuine and open dialogue between the

self and the other its location is in pre-"modern" Iberia (this study of the qualities of earlier times leads us away from the modern assumption that human relations always progress in a more sophisticated direction). I am not claiming that medieval Iberia was always characterised by a culture of great tolerance, for like all places at all times disputes were sometimes settled by organised violence and there did exist rulers who objected deeply to the cosmopolitan instincts upon which medieval Iberia was founded. Yet even such moments of parochialism were moments of contest for cosmopolitans always fought hard for the virtues of their way of life. I think we can see this by following Menocal and splitting medieval Iberian history into three phases.

The first stretches from the arrival of Arabs and Berbers in 711 C.E. to the conquest of the Almoravid dynasty in 1080 C.E. This, I would suggest, was the most truly cosmopolitan of periods in Iberian, and arguably world, history. Elsewhere ("Andalusi Cosmopolitanism") I look closely at the reasons as to why such a cosmopolitan culture developed in al-Andalus, but let me restrict myself to three main points here. Firstly, the Umayyad ruling class were a dynasty in exile in Iberia, and their sense of a loss of identity after their expulsion from their Syrian homelands helped them to develop a certain ironic sense of selfhood, in which they saw their identity as complex and intimately related to the others' with whom they were now surrounded. This was enhanced by their living on the edge of the world, and their understanding that the rest of the Arab-Islamic world perceived them in this way. Second, the small Umayyad ruling class oversaw a huge state of remarkable ethnic and religious heterogeneity. Given the invocation to Muslims to protect the *dhimmi* (the peoples of the Book), it made both practical and ideological sense to allow cultural difference to flourish in Iberia, so long as distinct groups demonstrated their political loyalty to the Umayyad centre through peace and the payment of taxes. Third, the Umayyads saw themselves as cultural and intellectual leaders as well as political rulers, and they quickly began to celebrate the fluidity and complexity of Andalusi Islamic culture, which drew on Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Berber, manifold Arab, and Iberian influences. The building of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in a style which used Roman and Byzantine motifs, as well as Syrian Islamic and Christian styles, was a cultural statement of political strength which was not lost on the other power centres of the medieval Islamic world.

Architecture was one field in which the combination of identities is still made plain to us today, for we can look at the Great Mosque of Cordoba or the Synagogia del Transito and unpick the layers of borrowing and influence

between cultural groups in Iberia. Yet there were many other practical ways in which cultures collaborated, such as literature, language, dress, food, and music. We can see such things especially clearly in the development of Mozarabic culture, for the Mozarabs were Iberian Christians who chose to keep their faith but to adopt Arab cultural traits in terms of dress, language, cuisine and literature. The very fact that such a group chose to borrow such traits — whilst maintaining their essential religious difference — seems to offer a perfect example of Todorov's conception of an ideal human encounter between groups who wish to truly understand each other, in which individuals lived life as a conversation between cultures. It was not accidental that such human situations emerged in al-Andalus. As I have suggested, there were powerful political reasons for this being the case, but there were also deep philosophical logics at work, for Muslims were the inheritors of thought and there is increasing evidence that Greek notions of cosmopolitanism played a powerful part in the development of the conception of universalism in medieval Islamic culture, which ensured collective forms of protection without demanding cultural and religious homogeneity. The extent of the cultural pluralism of al-Andalus was made plain when the Umayyad state eventually broke down in the eleventh century. Rather than splitting into two or three rival kingdoms, the state broke down into around sixty competing "taifas" or city-states, each often repressing a particular ethnic, tribal or political grouping.

The second period, which lasted from 1080 C.E. until 1492 C.E., represented a period of contestation between the cosmopolitans and parochialists. Religious affiliation provides us with no guide as to whic rulers and peoples would fall into, for just as one could find Christian parochialists such as Ferdinand and Isabella, one could find cosmopolitans such as the Arabic-speaking Alfonso X of Castile or the rulers of Navarre who protected their Muslim inhabitants against the designs of neighbouring Christian rulers (echoing the protection and fragile goodness found in Todorov's account of the Bulgarian Jews in the Second World War). Similarly, whilst the leaders of the Moriscos (Iberian Muslims forced to outwardly live as Christians after 1492) constantly sought to develop forms of worship and culture which allowed them to live peacefully in Christian kingdoms, point to the Almoravids and the Almohads as examples of Islamic rulers who, in the name of purifying the faith, sought to crush the cosmopolitan a of the Umayyads.

The slow *Reconquista* led by Christian rulers against the Iberian Islamic kingdoms in many ways represents the slow extinguishing of cosmopolitan Iberia, and the final unification of Spain in 1492 C.E. seems to represent the climax of this movement (most especially as that year saw both the defeat of domestic difference and the beginnings of the conquest of the external other in the Americas.) Yet Spain's last Jews and Muslims were not expelled from Iberia until the 1620s and one might contend that the argument between cosmopolitans and parochialists arguably lasted until that final and decisive moment of ethnic cleansing (perhaps the only way that parochialists conceived that the debate could be definitively settled). In contrast to Todorov, then, I would claim that we need not simply see the year 1492 C.E. as a beginning, for it is better construed as a form of ending. Such a view offers hope for human relations for it suggests that we ought to undertake deeper moral investigations into al-Andalus so as to excavate cosmopolitan forms of ethics and politics.

The third phase of Iberian history began then in 1492 C.E., but did not arguably end until the seventeenth century. The victory of the parochialists was a victory of simplicity over complexity, and the triumph of an uncertain self fixing itself a clear, unambiguous unitary identity as compared with the fluidity of Andalusi selves. What is more, where Andalusi selves could conceive of living with and borrowing from others, the new Spanish self was so traumatised by its battle with the cosmopolitans that it could only conceive of peace coming from the expulsion of otherness, and the development of a moral and artistic culture of forgetfulness which allowed it to imagine that cosmopolitan identities had never flourished on the peninsula. This found its apotheosis in the development of the so-called "continuity" school of Spanish historians who argued that Spaniards had a continuous form of unchanging, Christian identity which stretched back to the earliest Roman and Gothic forms of Iberian Christianity (analysed in Click and Linehan). Such historians contended that the seven hundred year presence of Muslims in Iberia was a historical anomaly which had not all affected Spanish culture. These claims are arguably only now being discredited in a post-Francoist, democratic, multicultural Spain which is looking to the past for models of cosmopolitan statehood with which to contest the long legacy of cultural insularity which lasted from the seventeenth century until the 1970s.

Todorov rightly notes that Columbus himself stood as a symbol of the forgetfulness of the parochialist politics he represented, for his own identity was rather more complex and fluid than the culture he promoted:

> He does not perceive alterity, as we have seen, and he imposes his own values upon it; yet the term by which he most often refers to himself and which his contemporaries also employ is *extranjero*, "outsider"; and if so many countries have sought the honour of being his fatherland, it is because he himself had none. *(The Conquest of America* 50)

In this essay, then, I have tried to show that Todorov's ethical approach to the past can help historians to retrieve two aspects of the past about they have become forgetful. The first is the historian's tendency to for choice which was made at the origin of her discipline between approaches to the past and notionally neutral methods, the second is the diminishment of both selves and others which took place in the a encounter. I have also tried to extend Todorov's genre of moral history in a practical fashion, and in doing so have claimed that an extension of Toe concerns to pre-Columbian Iberia leads us to a deeper understanding discovery of America and the potential to imagine better human encounters.

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