

**The Beginning and End of the *Good Myth* of al-Andalus: 711 and 1609.
Representations, Confrontations and Intellectual Interpretations of Al-Andalus in Spanish
Historical Narratives**

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The year 711 is an iconic date in Spanish minds because it suggests the rupture of a supposedly continuous historiographic narrative on the origins, future, and destiny of the Spanish nation.¹ In the year 2011 the 1300th anniversary of this transcendent event was commemorated with just a few academic activities in Spain and none in the Maghreb. Only members of the field of Arabic Studies showed any willingness to revisit the moment, which is beset today by two professional debates: whether an invasion as such ever took place, a debate ignited by Ignacio Olagüe's essay *Les arabes n'ont pas envahi L'Espagne* (*The Arabs did not invade Spain*, 1969), and whether the conquerors were Arabs or Berbers, an issue often raised by Pierre Guichard (1998).

The writings of Spanish intellectuals in general, not just those of specialized Arabists, reflect a different treatment of the conquest of 711 depending on whether the author was from the south (especially Andalusia) or from the northern half of Spain. This is evident in the well-known debates between Unamuno and Ganivet and between Sánchez Albornoz and Américo Castro. Andalusian intellectuals tend to be more understanding, while Castilians and members of the communities that participated in the *Reconquista* tend to represent the year 711 in an ideologically negative way. However, as stated elsewhere (González Alcantud 2002), it seems to me that the ideological category linked to the territorial fact of al-Andalus, in the style of H. Taine, does not exhaust our supply of interpretive frameworks. Indeed the concepts of philia and phobia, linked to falling in love and to hatred, are more profound and better explain cases of maurophilia like Martínez de la Rosa or Blas Infante on the one hand, and cases of maurophobia like Simonet and Fanjul on the other.

711 is a trial by fire for the consistency of the "good myth of al-Andalus," that is to say for the moral version that turns on a heroic and conciliatory myth of expansive, conquering Islam. The same is true of the "commemoration" of the 1609 expulsion of the Moriscos, despite a curious interpretive unanimity which has sprung up around this tragic minority, sympathetic with those expelled. The same is not true, however, of the realm of politics, where the Moriscos tend to be identified with the problems of contemporary Islam, characterized as something alien to being Spanish (*la españolidad*). In 711 and 1609, historical narration and myth confront one other at the beginning and end of peninsular Islam, and provide us with the hermeneutic tools to understand "the incompleteness" of the pristine history of the Spanish nation. From that date until today the conflictuality of the Andalusian question has only increased, both in the media and political field, as strictly academic, with conflicting and excluding positions (García Sanjuán 2013; Molina 2014).

I. 711 in 2011: Narrative forgetting, Andalusian sensibility, and interpretive conflict

We must keep in mind that in Spain, mention of the year 711 causes intellectual convulsions that are echoed in popular debates whenever the subject is raised. Eduardo Manzano opportunely reminds us of this "emotional" dimension, "which speaks of 'loss' and 'recovery'." (Manzano 2011,6)

¹ This article is the written expression of a conference held at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, I'm grateful to Professor Eric Calderwood his invitation to speak about this matter at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in mars 2013, and for his comments, that have given rise to other complicities (Calderwood 2015).

In general everything relating to al-Andalus is subject to controversy. Spanish Arabists and historians have split into two clearly divided camps, each with their respective followers periodically cheering them on. One group considers that Tariq ben Musa's legendary legacy marks the start of a dark interregnum in peninsular history that only ended with the restoration of universal Catholicism in 1492, and the other imagines that the period that began in 711 incorporated everything most advanced at the time, that is to say Islamic culture. Two stances that are hardly new, and that intellectuals and the general public have managed to aggrandize with old and new stereotyped images. We will never be able to step outside this vicious cycle by simply repeating antagonistic views in a *récit* that is complex but open to continual reworking. In the perspectives continually offered us, stubborn myth is taken for historical narration.

Despite the errors attributed to him by later critics (often to the point of discrediting him altogether), it is also important keep in mind the position of José Antonio Conde (1766-1820). Calling for a new reading of the pure, undiluted (*castiza*) Spanish historical narrative allergic to everything Islamic prevalent when he wrote in the early 19th century, Conde particularly emphasized the arrival of the Muslims in 711:

Here lie the origins of the common belief that the Moors, when they made their way into Spain, were countless and were not so much valiant and lucky warriors as cruel barbarians with neither culture nor restraint. That they took everything by blood and fire [...] and finally, that Christians fled from their advance in terror, trampled by the furor of the barbarian hordes, and that the bloody conquerors left nothing behind except horror, desolation, and Moors. (Conde 1874,4)

Conde's comprehensive attitude towards Islam faced some radical opposition because it made past notions founded on the idea of a bloody invasion look ridiculous. This, along with the common errors of anyone who ventures into unknown terrain, made Conde the butt of jokes and dismissals in the Arabic Studies community, which still rejects his work today.

Without doubt, 711 suppose a breach in peninsular history. Some are convinced that history itself was amputated at the time (Simonet, Sánchez Albornoz, Ladero Quesada and his followers), while others contend that the arrival of Islam, with or without invasion and despite the inevitable conflict it engendered, gave rise to a Golden Age in the south of the peninsula (Conde, Gayangos, Márquez Villanueva, Chalmeta, Guichard, and legions of others).

In reality the separation between East and West in the Iberian Peninsula was much older and was reactivated by the rupture of 711, like many other historical phenomena not fully understood in their time. In hindsight, it is clear that the figure of Hercules the Libyan is the key to understanding the Spanish schism between East and West. The heroic figure of Hercules – indeed there were many Hercules – rotated between the Greek and Egyptian worlds before finally settling on a homeland in the West. In the ancient Phoenician temple to Melqart (as Hercules was called in Tyre), on the isle of Sancti Petri in the Strait of Gibraltar, the “idol of Cádiz,” with its Berber features, was preserved during a large part of the Islamic period, reminding the local population of the curse that would fall on their lands should it be destroyed (Hernández Juberías 1996, 68-107) In this sense the year 711 continued to be inscribed with the pre-Islamic intent of maintaining autochthony as a way to exorcise the radical division between East and West whose foundations had been laid long before, in antiquity (González Alcantud 2011a).

The push to orientalize the geographic South and occidentalize the geographic North, always plagued with difficulties, originated in the ancient world, not the high medieval (Cañete 2011). In the latter period, however, the old discourse was embroidered with the important new theme of *treachery*, incarnate in the figure of don Julián, the Count of Ceuta. Both Christian and Muslim versions of the

mythic event of 711 were analyzed by Juan Menéndez Pidal, who concluded that in most of the tales the rape of the Count's daughter (for Christians), and the battles between Wittiza's sons (for Muslims), were respective interpretive axes for each side. King Rodrigo is forgiven for his weakness because of don Julián's greater fault in committing treason (Menéndez Pidal 2011, 135). The *Romance of the Vengeance of don Julián* reduces the story to its essence: "Mother Spain/ oh, poor you! / [...] / By the acts of a perverse traitor/ You are all in flames." Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo confirms the centrality of Rodrigo, of don Julián, and of Julián's daughter la Cava for both the author of the *Romance* and for Lope de Vega, especially for his play *The Last Goth* (Carrasco 2008, 287). This play recounts the story of don Julián's treason and ends with don Rodrigo's sentence: "this man will be an apostate if he already follows the law of the Moors." Current historiography of the event has continued to focus on the longstanding concept of treason (Hernández Juberías 1996, 165-193). Its insertion into the equation results in a definite conceptual delineation between the North and the South; the West, characterized by fidelity, and the East, characterized by treason. The image of the "treacherous Moor" persists even today (Martín Corrales 2002).

The year 711 reopens a debate about autochthony formulated long before by the myth of Hercules. Yet the Romantics and post-Romantics have always preferred the crepuscular world of the end of al-Andalus. The historical events of 711 did not inspire them to create art or literature. The nature of Romantic and post-Romantic emotion, which tends to imbue issues with the passions of those who write about them, is clear in the attitudes of many Andalusians toward the "problem of the Moor," as we shall see below. The tendency to identify with the Moor and to follow the path of *philia* is widespread both within and without Spain.

Within the sphere of Andalusian political and cultural liberalism, the figure of the Granadine Romantic playwright and author Francisco Martínez de la Rosa (1787-1862) stands on its own merit. Especially in his writings on the effects of the Islamic conquest and the expulsion of the Moors in the 17th century, Martínez de la Rosa identified with the exiled: his vision primarily reflects the twilight consciousness of one expelled unjustly from his homeland. This is especially evident in his works *Isabel de Solís* and *Aben Humeya*. The conquest of 711 and the figure of Tariq cannot generate nostalgia for a Romantic, since there is not enough dramatic tension in them. When discussing his plots Martínez de la Rosa explained that during his own exile in Paris, it was very moving to hear names connected to his longed-for homeland in another language. Therefore he took the theme of his play *Aben Humeya* from the tragic story of the minor Morisco king, producing a drama that became known in Paris theaters, by chance, at the time of the Romantic revolution of 1830 (Carrasco Urgoiti 1956, 320-332). The battle for liberty is the guiding thread. Martínez de la Rosa also spoke of his good fortune in finding plots in the epic figure of Isabel de Solís and in the Civil Wars of Granada. This twilight city generates an emotional unity which does not awaken ever-problematic questions about the "invasion."

As for others writing in Andalusia in the second half of the 19th century, maurophobic postures were rare in a society more interested in the squabbles between liberals and conservatives and in social struggles than in cultural representation. However, among the exceptions, one of the most important is Francisco Javier Simonet (1829-1897). Born in Málaga, Simonet was an Arabic professor at the University of Granada. Favorable readings of peninsular Islam were to his mind actually unpatriotic plots. Although Simonet was ideologically ultra-conservative, his phobia was not intrinsically related to a rejection of Islam. As mentioned above, ideological readings of the maurophobic phenomenon seem to me to be insufficient.

Another Arabist, Pascual de Gayangos (1809 -1897), provides one of the keys to understanding Simonet and his Islamophobia. Gayangos was the archetype of the exiled intellectual convinced of the "good myth" of al-Andalus who accordingly celebrated it as a cultural reference point. Moreover, his

daughter was married to the Granadine professor Juan Facundo Riaño, also an Arabist and liberal in exile. Simonet considered both Gayangos and Riaño anti-Spanish insofar as their idealization of al-Andalus blinded them to the Catholic past and present. The root of the matter was deeper than just the conservative ideology of Simonet: his rejection of al-Andalus involved “family issues” like the questionable Spanishness (*la españolidad*) of Spanish liberals.

Thus for Simonet the treason that rendered Spain to the Muslims was not an isolated incident but rather one attributable to multiple factors: to the survival of “the remains of Paganism and Arianism,” to “the tolerant treatment of the Jews,” to “fatal dissension among races and parties,” and finally to “the greed of Count Julian and the ambition of the Wittizans.” (Simonet 1983, I-35) Due to the treason of don Julián, his entire family line lost the Christian faith, “entering,” according to Simonet, “into the Muslim flock, a cesspool of apostates and traitors.” (Simonet 1983, I-40). For Simonet peninsular history was “mutilated” by the arrival of Islam and consequently he believed that Mozarabic culture, in his view clearly the most autochthonous, should be interpreted as “resisting” domination (González Alcantud 2003). The role of the Hispanovisigoth women who entered into marriages of convenience with the conquerors to save the culture and religion of their hearths and homes is proffered as an example of resistance (Simonet 1891, 13-ss). Simonet’s attitude was considered “violent” in his era and the publication of his work on Mozarabic culture was postponed until after his death. His maurophobia did not prosper; indeed he was an exception.

A later maurophilic figure, Blas Infante Pérez (1885-1936), was shot by Franco’s troops in 1936 but is today considered the “Father of the Andalusian homeland” in this autonomous region. Blas Infante tried to articulate the cultural essence of Andalusia through the concept of “race.” His writings refer to a “cultural race” and pretend to negate the stigma of the Andalusian race’s supposed “Oriental” provenance – that is to say, its African provenance, which is prehistoric – and therefore its supposed inferiority. “Andalusia,” he wrote, “is the homeland of one of the oldest original civilizations in the world. It challenges mightily the prestigious claim of the Far East, so questionable in modern times, to be the cradle of Humanity and of Civilization.” (Infante 1982,52) As respects the ancient world, Infante was convinced that the legendary people of Atlantis could not have been oriental; that they too must have been indigenous.

The year 711 is presented by Infante as simply “a torrent of Semitic blood” since “the Arab invasion nourished the Andalusians, above all, with Arab and Berber blood” (Infante 1982,56). He opposes to this “natural” influx of “Semitic blood” an exogenous element associated with fanaticism and ascribed to “Syrians and Moors,” the latter represented primarily by Almoravids and Almohads. As do many other intellectuals, Infante lifts up the Hispanomuslim past alongside autochthonous claims to culture in order to affirm the civilizing values of tolerance and “Andalusianness.” (Boumahdi 2009; González Alcantud 2010).

In 1931 Blas Infante, like R. Gil Benumeya and H. Estéfano, became excited about the prospect of an internationalist Semitic future. Simultaneously, he coexisted with the restoration of the fields of Arabic and African Studies by Julián Ribera, R. Dozy, E. Lévi-Provençal, E. García Gómez, Américo Castro, Asín Palacios, and others (Iniesta 2007, 29). Infante had no pretensions of restoring the historical al-Andalus, nor did he question the Moroccan Protectorate (1912-1956), which he saw as an opportunity to resume relations with lost brothers rather than a mechanism of oppression. Everything was sentiment and myth.

Infante was neither the first nor the last to assume a public persona that sought to emulate the Hispanomuslim past in the 1920s and ’30s. Federico García Lorca dressed as a Moor when he lived at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, an act that would not have been out of place at a masquerade though Lorca seemed to feel particularly profoundly the presence of the Islamic past, perhaps because of his Granadine origins and the omnipresence of the Alhambra in his imagination. The Africanist Gil

Benumeña, linked both to Granada and the Protectorate, affectionately called Lorca a “caliph in the minor key” and described him as “wrapped in cloths like a prophet.” (Gil Benumeña 1998, 29-32) This is not an isolated case; we find the same sort of conduct in other members of the same generation (Correa Ramón 2005).

For the Andalusians who played such roles, the concept of a twilight society so dear to the Romantics was clearly operating at full steam. We can therefore appreciate why Blas Infante so identified with al-Motamid, the last Muslim poet-king of Seville, who was threatened by all sorts of outside dangers: “It is not the death of a kingdom. It is the twilight of a belief...,” he declared (Ruiz Lagos 1983,10). A utopian view of ephemeral powers pervades Infante’s writings, where a poet-king takes charge, the image of a wise and genial governor who rules the destiny of a small, geographically limited society in decline with all his brilliant royalty intact. All of the Andalusian intellectuals connected with the Generation of ’27, including Infante lived and breathed this idea of the twilight of Muslim Andalusia.

Blas Infante’s immersion in the Andalusian past was profound. In Rabat, returning from Agmat, where he had visited the tomb of al-Motamid, he attended a festival where he heard Andalusian classical music and met the descendants of Muslims exiled from al-Andalus. He felt a kinship with them. The emotion of the Andalusian diaspora astonished him. His new consciousness of exile and wandering gave rise to the sense of fraternal reunion that he experienced in Morocco. The idea of a lost homeland is very important to understanding Infante’s prophetic vocation and his internal exile at home.

The search on the part of some intellectuals linked to the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco for a way to understand the “Moorish problem” of Andalusia had its greatest ideologue in the largely forgotten figure of Gil Benumeña (1901-1975). Benumeña formulated his hypothesis of Andalusian singularity in various publications, but it is especially salient in an early work of the 1930s, *Neither Orient, Nor Occident*. In its opening pages he defined, in terms reminiscent of Spengler, what for both East and West is “the South:”

The South is the supreme power of the Conscience, the ultimate attention and ultimate selection, retention, and accumulation of a great quantity of the past ready to be used in the current moment [...] Heading the South is Semitism, whose supreme expression is Islam. From Granada, the ‘Far West’ of the new Arabism we shall review the essential values of the most expansive and mysterious of religions. (Gil Benumeña 1996,46)

In the same era that Blas Infante was discovering Morocco and developing his theories on Andalusia, Rodolfo Gil Benumeña asserted that “Andalusian purity – its ‘depth’ – is the only guarantee that the Spanish Peninsula, the crossroad of cultures and intermediary between continents, will not be absorbed, colonized, imperialized, balkanized.” In essence Andalusia is the bulwark and “the imperial force of Iberia in the world.” (Gil Benumeña 1996,46) In some respects Infante shared this Semitic celebration of Spain, but he was less overtly expansive than Gil Benumeña, who consigned to insignificance the mythical event of 711.

A singular case is that of Ignacio Olagüe. Some find it strange that a diehard Francoist like Olagüe should have dedicated himself to demonstrating that the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 711 by Arab and Berber troops, an event which lasted three and a half years, was naught but a myth in the full sense of the word. Olagüe attributed to the Christians of the North the formation of this myth, of apocalyptic origin and of little historical accuracy given the gradual transition from Unitarian Arianism to Islam by a good portion of the population of the South. In other words, given its conversion.

According to Olagüe, the principal causes of the formation of the myth of invasion whereby the Trinitarian Christians would explain to themselves the transformation of their world were, to begin with, that “the memory of the misfortunes of the Civil Wars of the preceding century remained alive, but no one knew exactly what had happened nor why it happened in the way it did.” In second place, some Christians had fled to the North, escaping hunger. Thirdly, the remaining population was Unitarian, that is to say Arian. Fourth and fifthly, in the mid-9th century Eulogio and Álvaro of Córdoba realized that heretical members of their faith had embraced Islam; they saw that Islam was expanding. Sixth and seventhly, “Mohammed for this reason became – for Álvaro – the precursor of the Antichrist,” identified “with the fourth beast of the vision of Daniel” as described in the Book of Revelations. Eighth and ninthly: “An influx of stories from Egypt began to spread the idea that the Arabs had invaded Spain, defeating the Goths,” and “the Arabs, disciples of Mohammed, were assimilated by the Chaldeans who had invaded the land of Israel long ago.” (Olagüe 2004, 350-351)

Pierre Guichard had the privilege of being the first to make a systematic and devastating attack on Olagüe’s thesis. (Guichard 1995) The initial response to Guichard’s work might lead one to conclude that there is a certain

...reluctance on the part of many Spaniards to accept the fact of conquest simply as Arab sources describe it – that is to say, as a brutal seizure on the part of foreign conquerors of a land whose inhabitants seem to have been resigned not to defend themselves – and to admit moreover that the year 711 signals a decisive rupture in the history of their country. (Guichard 1995, 29)

However, since Guichard formulated these ideas in the 1970s, the analysis of the myth of reconquest has advanced a great deal, (Barkai 1984) as has the conflictual interpretation of al-Andalus. (Guichard 2002). There is nothing objectionable about this from a historiographical standpoint.

Maribel Fierro launched a head-on attack on Olagüe’s book in a more clearly ideological vein, viewing it not so much a seminal text of pro-Islamic regionalism – as people of diverse forums try to convince us today –, but rather as an extension of Spanish fascist nationalism (Fierro 2009). In any case he was a somewhat marginal Falangist in the “franquista” environment, as was Gil Benumeña (Vincent 2004).

It seems, however, that one of the topics that Olagüe hoped to air was not the remote Islamic matter but rather French rivalry much closer to home. This has generally gone unremarked, but it is clear in the epilogue to the first version of his book published by Flammarion thanks to the efforts of the great historian Fernand Braudel and others. “For the French troubadour” – Olagüe argued in this epilogue – “the Saracen was an exotic and fabulous enemy who had mysterious dealings with the Devil; while for the Iberian poet, the Muslim is a brother who, in times of crisis, is often presented as someone kinder than the Christian.” (Olagüe 1962, 344). The key lies once again in the Mediterranean, and in France’s role as an imperial power there.

The renowned polemic between Sánchez Albornoz and Américo Castro, two Republicans exiled during the Civil War who nonetheless took very different positions on Spanish history, was always rooted in the Southern sensibility described above. Castro, whose family was from Granada, maintained, “in light of what has become known in the last twenty years, the belief of certain Spanish researchers that the Muslims were ‘predators’ and ‘invaders’ of a previously existing Spain, and that once such undesirable occupants had been expelled Spain returned to its original self, is unsustainable.” (Castro 1985, 40) Sánchez Albornoz in turn was maurophobic. “Let us refrain,” he wrote,

...from thinking like Américo Castro that Spain became culturally and essentially Arab by

magic after 711. Cultural arabization was very slow [...] and the essential arabization of the Hispanics of al-Andalus perhaps never took place, if we understand by essential arabization anything more than the adoption of the outward customs of daily life. (Sánchez Albornoz 1969, 35)

For Sánchez Albornoz Spain was severed from part of its history by the Islamic invasion, giving rise to a long and tenacious crypto-Christian resistance in the heart of al-Andalus. (Sánchez Albornoz 1985, 39). His later phobias provide as much material for analysis as those of Simonet.

Extreme dissociation between researchers is still common, and we find it again in figures like Ladero Quesada and Márquez Villanueva. Ladero wrote in his well-known prologue to a book by the xenophobic – for all he pretends to deconstruct – Serafin Fanjul: “*Al-Andalus against Spain* is a book that undoes the tropes, falsehoods, and deceits of all kinds with which we are overrun today, which try to convince us of Islamic legacies in Spain and of past ‘coexistence’ between Muslims and Christians on Peninsular soil.” (Ladero XI). On the other hand for Márquez, true to the tradition of Castro, the period of Alfonso X (The Wise) was an especially glorious moment which embodied the ideals of al-Andalus. (Márquez Villanueva 2004). After the expulsions Spain would lack “something” of its past projection, something “Mudéjar.”

Perhaps the most extreme instance of the Castrian perspective is found in one of Juan Goytisolo’s books, where he curses a Spain enclosed in all its purity (*casticismo*) and prophesies the arrival of a new Tariq helped by new and willing don Juliáns, including himself. (Goytisolo 1994, 15-16) All of them, as an interpretative group, Castro, Villanueva and Goytisolo, have been violently disqualified for not being “historians” but literary or at most “philologists”. His “anthropological” perception, and therefore interpretative, reading the subliminal messages left by literary witnesses of his time like Cervantes, have been overwhelmed by those who make use of the archives, and consider them irrefutable proofs. In addition, these authors resorted to concepts presumably “pre-scientific” as coexistence or tolerance that the historian should abandon imminently (Manzano 2013).

A dream of invasion that reactivates old legends, but also realities like the arrival of troops from The Rif on the Peninsula in 1936. This episode revealed the existence of certain “labyrinths of otherness,” (Gonzalez Alcantud 2003a) paradoxical by nature, since no one seemed to be in their rightful place during this affair: the poor troops from the Rif fought them rather than conspiring with the Spanish proletariats, while the Communist Dolores Ibárruri made fiery speeches comparing the invasion of 711 to the arrival of the Moroccan Troops in 1936. (Goytisolo 1989).

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Despite conciliatory efforts there are still academics who, like Unamuno or Albornoz, view the paradigm of al-Andalus with apprehension. We must revive the essential distinction between “what belongs to us” and “what is ours” (this last the question underlying xenophobic positions) to help us appreciate what “the owners of a problem” do with their property: they make it their own not in a legal but in a sentimental sense. Their capacity to do this may explain why both the people of Andalusia and their intellectuals feel no manifest hostility against Islamic Andalusian culture. When he presented the *Risala fi Fadl al-Andalus* by Al-Saqundi in 1934, García Gómez noted the strictly “Andalusian” pride that enabled Andalusians to claim as their own this 13th century author, mindful as they are of the great cultural differences between al-Andalus and the Maghreb, especially the Berbers. (García Gómez 18) At issue, then, is an old sentiment, in which love, wine, and poetry reign supreme as ineluctable signs of the cultural superiority of medieval Andalusians, in fact or fiction the natives of Beric Andalusia (*la Andalucía bérica*), over the Berbers, the autochthonous people of North Africa. In any case as Pedro Chalmeta points out, the Arabs, who define themselves by kinship or by tribal affiliation, could never

have imagined a geographical abstraction like al-Andalus as something fixed and immutable. (Chalmeta 27)

For these and other reasons the al-Andalus paradigm is nowadays considered a *sui generis* realm of investigation. (González Ferrín) To this effect Mohammed Arkoun writes: “Therefore what is required is a global approach to the *al-Andalus paradigm* as an historical experience on a Mediterranean scale, as something far more than [...] a simple and closed historical trajectory.” (Arkoun 24). The Córdoba paradigm has been favored by the ideological image of al-Ándalus as a place of coexistence that emerged after September 11, especially in the United States and English-speaking countries. To offer a different vision, with the dialogue of the aesthetic forms, and the triumph of the beautiful as a guiding thread, we abound in the Alhambra paradigm. Al-Ándalus offers, from the paradigmatic point of view, diverse and varied possibilities (González Alcantud, Rojo, Muñoz, 2016; González Alcantud, i.p.2).

II. 1609 in 2009. Intellectual consensus and political differences as regards the *Moriscos*

In the year 2009 the fourth centenary of the expulsion of the Moriscos by Philip III was commemorated in Spain, especially in Andalusia and Aragon. It was also commemorated in various countries of the Maghreb, especially in Tunisia, a country that has always paid special attention to an historical problem it experiences as its own because it was a popular destination for the Morisco diaspora. The 1609 commemoration even gave rise to a Parliamentary initiative in Spain to recognize the descendants of the Moriscos. This generated certain controversy in the media due to the opposition of the extreme right wing led by the maurophobic Arabist Serafín Fanjul supported by the neo-liberal writer Mario Vargas Llosa. (Fanjul 2009) Fanjul has been insisting for quite some time, with the same bad manners and ill humor that Sánchez Albornoz displayed to Américo Castro, that there is no anthropological link whatsoever between the Maghrebi Islamic world and the Hispanic world of today, which he believes was founded for all historical purposes upon the reconquest of 1492. The commemoration led Fanjul to wonder if the Moriscos were Spanish at all, and to deny them this honor, falling back on the Baroque posture that he considered them a fifth column of the Ottoman and Moroccan Empires. Vargas Llosa also scoffed at the political relevance of the Moriscos at the fourth centenary (Vargas Llosa).

Setting aside extreme cases like Fanjul, who would raise the ghosts of the fifth column nowadays incarnate in the followers of the phantasmagorical likes of bin Laden, the majority of the revisionists writing in the daily press today say that the expulsion was “inevitable” and take refuge in supposed historical facts. But by situating the problem in amoral terrain, by trying to establish an historical narrative that takes into account neither the historical victims nor their persecutors, along the way such writers justify more xenophobic positions. In fact they will never triumph for reasons unique to the present day, in which the wish to recognize the justice owed to the victims prevails. (Mate). In this task Fanjul, and his followers, for the sake of deconstructionism in pectore have found allies among the most reactionary European intelligentsia, such as the historian of the Teutonic order, Sylvain Gouguenheim, who denies all transmission of ancient philosophy through Averroes (Gouguenheim; Libera).

As we have seen, the Spanish historical narrative has been enormously affected by past controversies, especially in the second half of the 19th century when its relevance came to the fore. Another important contributor to these controversies was Rafael Benito Sánchez-Blanco, who maintained that the expulsion was founded on “reasons of State” since the Catholic monarchy saw the Moriscos as fifth columnists in the context of pan-Mediterranean strategies, and thus as potential and actual allies of Turks and Maghrebis. Basically they were “traitors,” a cultural defect that the Moriscos doubtless practiced almost compulsively due to the indelible imprint of a culture, like theirs, destined to

betray. Moreover, according to Sánchez Blanco, they were guilty of “apostasy” to the extent that they were considered an extension of heretical movements. (Sánchez-Blanco) The expulsion signified in this sense the territorial culmination of the *Reconquista*, the elimination of the exogenous element represented by the Moriscos, who would also end up excluded from the definition of “Spanishness” (*la españolidad*). Among others, this issue sustained for three centuries the controversy over “what it means to be Spanish” that finally crystallized in the political philosophy of the Generation of ‘98.

While not a burning issue today, neither is the debate about the expulsion ancient history. De Bunes points out, for example, that 19th century historians “not only studied a (Morisco) historical event, but also defended concrete ideological points through their study of this minority.” (Bunes 60) Thus, the liberals took up the banner in defense of the Moriscos, linking themselves to the European Romantic maurophilic tradition, while the conservatives found the issue an inevitable obstacle to the coherent construction of the Spanish nation. Of course, many other issues were tied up in the defense of and opposition to the Moriscos, like the utility of this industrious, respected minority and the decadence of the Spanish nation. The colonial war in Morocco, in Tetuán as in Melilla, again put the Spanish face to face with their historical enemy the Moor and therefore with the Morisco, according to Bunes. The topic of the expulsion is so ideologically charged that writers such as Florencio Janer, Fernández Guerra, Modesto Lafuente, and Pascual Boronat, little if at all inclined to concrete research, limited themselves to pat ideology for or against Felipe III’s decree. As Bunes says, “the 19th century bequeaths us nothing but works seeking to justify or criticize the politics and solutions adopted by Felipe III. For example, one of the most successful, Pascual Boronat’s *The Spanish Moriscos and Their Expulsion* (1901), positively breathed maurophobia.” (Bunes 94) Bunes is struck by the fact that almost three centuries after the expulsion, the Islamic threat should still so loom large for Boronat and other Spaniards while basic historiographical questions like the customs and way of life of the Moriscos awakened little interest. (Bunes 73)

Julio Caro Baroja – after the Spanish Civil War in which the Moroccans’ service on the side of the victors helped to improve the image of “the Moor” in the official Spanish view-, was the first to “convey a complete picture of the inhabitants of Granada and their lives” because “he knew how to enter into the root of things. Thanks to this his work is one of the fundamental pillars of all Morisco historiography,” wrote Bunes. (Bunes 115) Arguably, the profound reason for the enduring value of his work was expressed by Caro himself in 1976 in the introduction to the second edition of his book, *The Moriscos of the Kingdom of Granada. An Essay in Social History*:

I took on this topic for personal reasons that had almost nothing to do with the fashion of the day or the old romantic passion for ‘the Moor.’ Reasons principally based on travels and personal experiences that began in 1948 and continued until 1954. Six years in which I was in close contact with ‘Oriental Andalusia,’ with the Moroccan cities that belonged to the erstwhile Spanish Protectorate and with the lands of Ifni and the Sahara. (Caro Baroja, 7)

Immersed in the most remote Saharan Muslim world for three short months of fieldwork, Caro performed a sort of “lightning anthropology,” (López Bargados) This experience was vital to his approach to the Moriscos of Granada. (Flores Arroyuelo) Caro had a summer home on the coast of Almería at the time, where he began his research. After an ethnographic review of the social history of the Moriscos which frequently highlighted the problem of long-term cultural continuity, he began to appreciate the insufficiency of pure historiography without a philosophy of culture. (Flores Arroyuelo 263) Caro had discovered that the historians of his time, polarized between maurophilia and maurophobia, had failed to address the very concrete, “true drama” of the Moriscos.

It is essential, then, to avoid the ideological problems that constrained historians in the past; to

instead approach the Moriscos with the *pietà* of the ethnographic studies that have aimed to present them as real and specific human beings via their “social history.” Thanks to Caro Baroja the Moriscos ceased to be a generalization and were finally profiled as an authentic historical problem.

Two decades after Caro’s book, Antonio Domínguez Ortiz and Bernard Vincent published their own milestones, continuing and consolidating the path opened by Caro Baroja (Domínguez Ortiz & Vincent 1978; Cardaillac 1977, 389; Vincent 1987, 7-100) Nevertheless years later, another historian who introduced anthropological factors in her analyses of the Moriscos, Mercedes García Arenal, lamented the widespread hermeneutic resistance she still encountered.(García Arenal)

In their effort to avoid both ideologization, which fosters maurophobia and maurophilia, and empiricism, anchored in a sort of localized erudition, some contemporary authors like Manuel Barrios Aguilera have stressed the importance of professionalism and science.(Barrios Aguilera 11; Dedieu)

Among the most important contributions in this vein are those of Mikel de Epalza. (Epalza) To begin with, Epalza eluded the artificial separation between Mudejars and Moriscos, a distinction that principally corresponded to the division of spheres of influence and academic power between medievalists and early modernist historians. By reuniting these historical issues and setting aside unproductive distinctions, he presented the Mudéjar-Morisco world in all its complexity. Moreover, to avoid other reductive simplifications, Epalza focused on the historical and anthropological heirs of the Moriscos currently living in North Africa. With them in mind, he noted that the word “expulsion” reinforces the ideas of both “banishment” and “exile.” Another false frontier was thereby abolished, the source of the rupture between the expulsion, the banishment, and the exile of the Moriscos.

Parting from the ideas of his professor Epalza, Luis F. Bernabé Pons observed that “the interval between 1609 and 1614 witnesses the disappearance of the Moriscos as principal actors in the history of Spain and shifts their sphere of action elsewhere,” amplifying the set of historical problems they raise.(Bernabé Pons 147) Instead of on the diaspora *per se*, attention is often focused on the gap the Moriscos left in Spain, creating a spectral population there. A diaspora founded on the pain of exile, however, also spawned the nostalgic idea of a “lost homeland,” raising a new and ongoing dimension of the expulsion.

Today, the words of Márquez Villanueva in the late ‘60s maintaining that “the historical problem of the Moriscos is still seen today as one of the most stubborn of all the Spanish past” seem dated.(Márquez Villanueva 1991,13) Although the massive colloquium in Granada in 2009 remains unpublished, it served to demonstrate that the Morisco issue is no longer simply a problem for intellectual minorities but rather one that has passed into the realm of public opinion, and that in this realm a certain consensus has been reached. It was unanimously seen as an unjust expulsion that brought only poverty for some and suffering for others. At that conference Francisco Márquez emphasized that the Moriscos had ceased to be a marginal issue; that they occupy a central place in the present. Bernard Vincent has also affirmed that Morisco studies “are going through a golden age,” (Vincent 2010, 8) and shortly before him another excellent Morisco scholar, Luce López Baralt, signalled that the Morisco topic “has come into the open.” (López-Baralt 13)

In contrast, the call to apply the anthropological or sociological method to the study of the Moriscos has been heard for a long time. Louis Cardaillac was already promoting this course in the ‘70s: “The Moriscos have no history,” he wrote, paraphrasing and extending an argument of Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, “in the sense that history supposes ‘the existence of an evolving human group.’” (Cardaillac 1977, 389) There would be no evolution for the minority that, after its forced conversion and what must have been a thousand reversals of fortune, presented itself as a united group to the majority in search of its own personality. In their case, as Domínguez Ortiz has also said, “the historical method does not work for us, and we must turn to sociology.”

Seeking to update this injunction Luce López Baralt, for example, has proposed connecting the

Morisco issue to postcolonialism as this is elaborated in Edward Said's work on Orientalism. Said's fundamental purpose is to denounce the construction of, and as such imaginary violence to, the Orient by the West. This connection is probably inapt for the *Morisco* problem due to Said's total lack of knowledge about anything Andalusí; (González Alcantud 2006, 2011e), indeed the *Moriscos* belong to the "interior Orient" and not to the exterior Orient studied by him. (Stoll 2006) López-Baralt has also suggested, more viably, that the "anthropological lens" now being applied by historians to the conquest of America should be extended to Morisco studies.

The scientific professionalization of the Morisco question has given rise to new interpretive categories over time, all of them of an anthropological nature. One is "Otherness," a concept which was less common in analyses in the past as they privileged more traditional categories, including some which found their way into Marxist language. As Perceval has pointed out,

and if 'all are not one,' we enter the realm of complexity, and from this new and rich standpoint we should rise to the challenges of rethinking the expulsion and confronting the new studies that must be done to continue advancing our knowledge of the reality of the Moriscos. [We embark as well on] something much more important, the creation of otherness as a separating element in modern societies. (Perceval; González Alcantud 2011f)

Fortunately, "Otherness" has revived the idea of conflicting plurality in Iberia as it figures in the work of Américo Castro (1974) and his intellectual disciples María Soledad Carrasco Urgoiti (2006) and Francisco Márquez Villanueva (2011), whose research required less an *ethnicization* of the problem than a painstaking exploration of the intricate cultural frontiers between the Spanish people. The former approach would have involved frequent use of the word "genocide," little if at all enlightening for the Morisco problem. Those who have applied it with concepts like "state racism" or "ethnocide" have been relegated to the camp of insubstantial ideologues.

Reading between the lines, it is clear that "suffering" is prominent among the new interpretive categories that have flourished in recent years. *Souffrance*, a phenomenological concept shared by the peoples of the diaspora, in this case especially the Jews, including the Sephardim, and the Moriscos (Russier 26) As *souffrance* is considered to be moral pain, "it is also passion, and passion of the conscience as conscience." (Benbassa) Suffering confers identity. Moreover, to defend themselves from the pressure of political power, upheld by the social networks that support it, sufferers frequently must resort to hiding and dissimulation, to the secret. "I confess," writes López Baralt,

that I have always been tempted to decode Morisco texts, not just the testimonies but also those inherited from their ancestors, in terms of what happened to them in the obscurity of their *aljamas* [communities]. Not only did they serve as a weapon of resistance [...] but they also helped them to understand themselves and to assume their own historical affliction.' (López-Baralt 23-24)

The great sociologist Georg Simmel emphasized that the secret is one of the characteristics of social conformity, one of the most important acquisitions of social life. (Simmel 378) Years ago Louis Cardaillac applied this concept to Morisco studies, focusing on hiding or *taqiyya*. (Cardaillac 1977) Unavoidably, together with the secret, prophecy emerged along with other occult aspects of the degraded religion noted by Cardaillac, who was alerted to them by the work of Pedro Longás. For Cardaillac the Morisco was in the process of acculturation, speaking the same language as the Christian as regards Biblical matters but primarily still a "Muslim." Prophecy, of apocalyptic origins, reinforced his sense of identity (Cardaillac 1984; Longás 1990). Especially relevant here are the studies of

Cardaillac-Hermosilla, Harris, and others.(Cardaillac-Hermosilla, Harris) Another topic that has emerged is that of conversion treated thematically as a means of religious and cultural integration. (García Pedraza).

These new directions, accompanied in great measure by anthropology, have not, however, prevented the resurgence of another ideologically motivated controversy. In his book *Río morisco* (Morisco River), published in 2006, Vincent, always alert to the problems of “minorities,” accused another prominent scholar, Márquez Villanueva, of “voluntarily stepping outside reality” when he argued that only a minority of the political elite advocated the expulsion of the Moriscos.(Vincent 2006,13) Vincent maintains that the only way to avoid such a mythologizing stance on the Spanish population of the 16th to 18th centuries is to introduce the dialectic of majority and minority populations appropriate to that period.(Vincent 2006, 156) We must not forget that this polemic has arisen inside an external category, that of the Hispanists produced by many Spaniards’ exile during and after the Civil War, like Márquez, and those weaned on the knowledge generated in foreign centers of learning historically interested in Spain, like Bernard Vincent. Consequently, the controversy does not seem to have taken root among Spanish scholars, who are more interested in empirical research or in other levels of interpretation. At the risk of being misunderstood by my friends Márquez and Vincent, I would even venture that this debate seems relatively insignificant, given that their apparently irreducible positions are determined by the literature and documents employed by each from the outset. (González Alcantud 2007) It is at least reassuring that they wholly agree on “the life and tragedy” of the Moriscos, alluding to a figure whom they both consider a great master, Antonio Domínguez Ortiz.

As Perceval has observed, controversies like these bring the Morisco issue into the present and relate it to current Spanish political history: “There is no such thing as an innocent investigation,” he writes, “and that of the Moriscos is no exception. One studies the Moriscos because one has sympathy for an oppressed group or because one hopes to demonstrate the impossibility of their integration – indeed the impossibility of integrating anyone ‘different.’” (Perceval) One studies the Moriscos because one dreams of internal dialogue in Spain, or because one fears the nation is dissolving and losing its original racial purity. And as in the myth of Sisyphus, just as it reaches the summit, the rock tumbles down the mountain to where it began.

For my part and as indicated in many footnotes in this article, the Morisco question has always personally attracted me as an anthropologist. The fruitful trajectory of Morisco studies notwithstanding – indeed it is marked by a growing number of specific studies and extremely important monographs over the last twenty to thirty years –, Spanish politicians still display little understanding of the ultimate meaning of the Morisco question or of the pressing reason for consensually inscribing it in the historical narratives of Spain and its Mediterranean neighbors. As García Cárcel notes, the Morisco question, inscribed in the more general issue of al-Ándalus, still politically segregates confrontations charged with sentiments and passions.(García Cárcel 150-170) Without doubt, the only way around this new apparatus of exclusion, solely imaginary but with real ramifications for the topic of North African immigration today, is to choose to view the Moriscos as a positive condition of plurality as suggested by López-Baralt. Were this exclusive apparatus inverted and its possibilities explored, the Moriscos could become one of the most solid anchors for dialogue with the people of the Maghreb and more concretely with its urban elites, who are proud of their Andalusí heritage.(González Alcantud 2015)

The life of the frontier characters of the crepuscular Islamic kingdom of Granada has also deserved special attention in recent years. This is the case of León el Africano, who has had literary success even with Amin Malouff (Zemon), or Luis de Mármol Carvajal (Castillo). Both figures of subjects of plural personality, like Cervantes (Márquez Villanueva 2011) or Calabrés Uchali, at the service of the Sublime Puerta (Sola 2010). The biographical outline of all of them leads us to the consideration of the liquid border outlined by F. Braudel. The Moorish passion has its champions,

which is shown with the particular history of Azzuz Hakim, master of Moroccan "moriscólogos", or in Tunisia of Abdeljelil Temimi, enthusiasts of the "cause" (Velasco; Temimi). From these eccentric positions, the truth is that as Youssef el Alaoui has recently pointed out, the Moorish issue continues to maintain an intimacy with Spanish history, and those who claim it (Alaoui).

* * *

In the previous pages we have seen that the year 711 continues to provoke bitter scientific controversies colored by ideology in Spain, while the year 1609 has ceased to be an object of controversy and has given way to a consensual vision of al-Ándalus, crepuscular from a literary point of view, that underlines the loss of Spanish cultural plurality. In any case as represented in the Spanish historical narrative, Al-Ándalus continues to be alien or at least peripheral to the history of the nation. Today as yesterday. The global topic of al-Andalus is still not included in the Spanish historical narrative, revealing its *incomplétude*.

The civil war, with the Moroccan participation of the *franquista* side, improved for some the vision of the "Moor" (González Alcantud 2003b). Contemporary migrations have reinforced this threatening stereotype, but without generating an Islamophobia that is more intense in France, for example. These two paradoxical and labyrinthine attitudes put us before the mirror of a historical narrative, the Spanish, not easy to enclose in a unilinear story. We will have to start from this impossibility to let the different "collective memories" circulate at will, on the basis of respect. And this was learned in the Andalusian period. The dialogic image of al-Ándalus, with the Córdoba paradigm in the background, and the aesthetics, with the Alhambra paradigm, confirm the uniqueness of the post-national and post-colonial Spanish historical narrative (González Alcantud i.p. a).

Those who disqualify this debate, of an "anthropological" nature, on the grounds that science should exclude the historical imagination - and with it, for example, literature and art - to go after the archive data -an otherwise limited by the control exercised by the powers over them - they completely fail to realize the reintegration of the memorialist discourse into historical narrativity. In the end it is as if they wanted to force us to choose between Don Quixote or Cervantes, between the fantasy character or the real being (Sola 2016). Absurd. The short-sightedness can lead, unfortunately, to the suicide of history as an elucidatory discipline of meaning. Your space will be covered -as it already is- by fantasy, with the subgenre of the historical novel. Another thing will be the anthropology, that allied with archeology, will probably give more hermeneutical results, if it attends to the coincidence with history. In this field, al-Andalus, as a paradigm, has much to say.

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