UC Berkeley
UC Berkeley Previously Published Works

Title
The contemporary afterlife of Moorish Spain

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5r09m4tc

ISBN
9781472413130

Author
Hirschkind, C

Publication Date
2014-05-29

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

© Copyrighted Material

Chapter 18

The Contemporary Afterlife of Moorish Spain

Charles Hirschkind

www.ashgate.com

I

In 2003, the Spanish government of then-President José Maria Aznar agreed, in the face of immense popular opposition, to send a contingent of Spanish troops to join in the US-led invasion of Iraq. In preparation for the mission, the Spanish military produced a new badge for the soldiers emblazoned with the emblem of Santiago Matamoros, St. James the Moor-Killer. With its sword-point tip and brilliant red color, the cross has long served as a symbol within Spain for the defeat and elimination of the Moors by the Christian armies in the fifteenth century. Spanish troops, now armed with this symbol, were sent off to Iraq to patrol the city of al-Najaf – one of the holiest cities in Shi'a Islam.

The choice of the Moor-Killer emblem was not incongruous with Aznar's strident anti-Muslim rhetoric or with his historical sensibilities. In a talk on "global threats" that he gave in Washington in 2006, Aznar drew the connection between the fight against Muslim radicals and what is known as the *Reconquista*: "It's them or us. The West did not attack Islam, it was they who attacked us … We are constantly under attack and we must defend ourselves. I support Ferdinand and Isabella" (cited in Gulfnews 2006). At the same event, while defending Pope Benedict's controversial claim that Islam was an inherently violent religion, Aznar suggested that Muslims should apologize for having invaded Spain in the eighth century.

Aznar's tenure in power ended with the general election of March 2004 (he later joined the right-wing think-tank the American Enterprise Institute and then moved on to join Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation). Despite a significant lead in the polls just weeks before the elections, his government's response to the March 11 train bombings in Madrid, particularly the widespread perception that government officials had continued to place the blame on the Basque separatist movement ETA despite evidence that Muslim radicals were involved, provoked immense popular condemnation and produced a decisive defeat three days later. Upon assuming the presidency, the victor, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero of the Socialist Party, immediately instituted a recall of Spain's troops from Iraq. In addition, he quickly produced and presented an initiative to the United Nations for what he called an "Alliance of Civilizations," its purpose being to "deepen political, cultural, and education relations between those who represent the so-called Western world and,

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

in this historic moment, the area of Arab and Muslim Countries" (BBC News Online 2004). As with his predecessor, Zapatero also invoked Spain's Islamic past in presenting his initiative, not, however, as one more campaign in a long-standing war between the West and Islam, but rather in terms of a legacy of *Convivencia*, the practice of mutual tolerance and respect that, according to some scholars, characterized relations between the Muslims, Christians and Jews of al-Andalus.[1]

Across much of the nation's history, Spanish political elites have engaged some of the most pressing questions of the day through a detour into the Moorish era, those aligned with liberal currents often invoking the romantic image of interconfessional harmony, while those linked to conservative Catholic Monarchism depicting the period as a brutal interruption of Spain's pious Christian soul.[2] Contemporary debates on immigration, on Spain's role within the EU or on the War on Terror frequently come to pivot upon discordant interpretations of the Andalusian legacy. Since the development of Spanish nationalism in the nineteenth century, much of the Spanish historiography of the Moorish period has itself been highly conflictual, never too distant from ideological struggles over the definition of Spanish identity, struggles fed by long-standing anxieties over the nation's peripheral status in relation to Europe (at least until recently, and perhaps now again with unemployment well over 20 percent).

These tensions within the historiography of al-Andalus are not exceptional within Europe but are characteristic of a more general phenomenon: the ideological appropriation and deployment of the distant past by nationalists of all types. This phenomenon is particularly evident today in the context of contemporary micro-nationalist movements throughout Europe, with Spain being no exception (Payne 1991; Stolcke 1995; Borneman and Fowler 1997). While Catalonian and Basque nationalisms represent the strongest regionalist movements in the country, the southern province of Andalusia has also been the site of long-standing efforts to secure greater independence *vis-à-vis* the Spanish state. In order to do so, the Andalusian state and other regional entities have sought to cultivate and promote a distinct historical identity through an emphasis on its "Moorish legacy" and its multicultural and multireligious past – a project that testifies to the economic importance of local heritage industry (Aidi 2006; Rogozen-Soltar 2007). I will return to the Andalusian context a little later on.

My concern in this chapter, however, is not about the distortions introduced into historical accounts by political pressures, such as the subordination of the Spanish historiographical tradition to nationalist imperatives. Rather, I want to explore a tradition of inquiry that focuses on Spain's medieval history as means to pose questions in the present about the conceptual and moral boundaries of Europe. Since the late nineteenth century, the question of Spain's relationship to

1 American President Barack Obama also invoked Spain's legacy of *Convivencia* in his speech at Cairo University in 2009. For an analysis of this speech, see Hirschkind 2009.

2 Hishaam Aidi (2006) provides an excellent overview of contemporary ideological struggles in Spain to define the meaning of the country's Moorish past.

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

centuries of Islamic presence in Iberia has repeatedly come to the fore of public discourse in moments of national crisis, including the devastating defeat of 1898 and the Civil War of the 1930s, as if such critical moments produced a fracture in the nationalist narrative of Spain's Catholic career through which other histories momentarily exacted a claim. In other words, for a variety of thinkers, the problems posed by such national crises demanded a reflection on the nation's Muslim and Jewish past, as if the path forward and beyond the current predicament could only be found via an acknowledgment of that legacy. For a number of these thinkers, as I explore below, this act of acknowledgment was not to be simply a belated recognition of a distant debt, but the animation of a political sensibility they saw as grounded in layers of historical experience, woven into the social, aesthetic and moral fabric of Spanish life. This sensibility was present yet trapped within the ideological erasure of the nation's non-Catholic self, an erasure most dramatically affected by the institution of the Inquisition, but also in an all-pervasive fiction of Spain as an eternal Catholic crusade (for which Aznar may stand as an example). To disinter these underground resources of historical inheritance, to right Spain's distorted relation to its existential career, would open up possibilities of action and reflection necessary for overcoming the crises of the moment. What was at stake, in other words, in the tradition of Spanish historiography I explore here was not Islam and Judaism's contribution to medieval Europe, but rather how the ongoing reverberations of these Spanish traditions might act as a dynamic force within the political present.

The question I am raising here, of course, concerns not simply Spain but Europe on a whole. As Edward Said (1994) has famously argued, the idea of Europe as a civilizational unity was constructed in way that was dependent on a principle of differentiation opposing a Muslim Orient to a Christian Europe. Today, the project of securing this boundary has received new impetus due to increasing anxieties around European identity occasioned by the growing presence of Muslim immigrants within the continent. The demand to include a reference to Europe's Christian character within the 2003 Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, a position strongly championed by Aznar, is one symptom of this project, though it is also evident in claims that Europe's secular traditions are an extension of its own forms of Christianity. Thus, for Marcel Gauchet (1999), it is Christianity alone among religious traditions that has the theological resources to achieve its own self-overcoming and thus set in motion the processes that lead to secular modernity and the autonomous subject of modern democratic political life. Accounts of this sort introduce religion into the conceptual vocabulary of modern political life in a way that simultaneously naturalizes one particular religious tradition (Christianity) and secures the civilizational boundaries of modern Europe. Most importantly, for my analysis here, such accounts identify the conceptual edifice of European modernity in a way that forecloses a consideration of Europe's long-standing entwinement with the Middle East.

I want to begin this discussion by examining how Spain's Moorish past has been taken up as a problem and affirmed as an inheritance by a few different thinkers

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

responding to conditions of social and political crisis. Within the dominant currents of Spanish historiography, the final defeat of Spain's Muslim rulers in the fifteenth century and the subsequent expulsion of the Muslim and Jewish populations from its territories stand as the founding events of the Spanish nation. Yet, despite a vigorous and sustained attempt within Spanish historiography to erase Islam and Judaism from Spain (coupled with systematic attempts to purify the language of Arabic influences, the land of Arabic architectural forms and so on), a counter-history of the lasting imprint left on Spanish life by 800 years of Muslim presence has repeatedly emerged onto the stage of national public dialogue. Until the late nineteenth century, this counter-history of Muslim influence was most developed in aesthetic arenas, particularly in the fields of literature, language and music. It is with the approach of the twentieth century, however, that we see the emergence of a historiographical literature, tied to liberal political currents, aimed at affirming and documenting the heterogeneity of Spain's historical origins and the contribution of Islam to Spanish national culture and identity. In addressing this literature, I aim to highlight the historical sensibilities, attitudes and practices that ambivalently link the Spanish nation to its Muslim past and that have found expression in a range of contemporary social and political movements.

In the second part of this chapter, I turn to some of these contemporary movements that incorporate a lived relation to the Islamic past as a condition of ethical agency. In doing so, I want to question the tendency to dismiss these movements as founded upon a fictional or distorted image of the past. Rather, I focus on how the forms of historical memory discussed in relation to Spanish historiographical literature continue to inform social and political practices of both Muslims and non-Muslims in southern Spain, conditioning and enabling a variety of contemporary political projects in the region. By exploring some of the fissures within contemporary narratives of Europe's Judeo-Christian identity, I hope to contribute to current scholarly conversations on religious pluralism within Western societies, and particularly to debates on the place of Muslim minorities within Europe.

II

The most provocative and influential interpretation of the Moorish contribution to the formation of Spain written during the twentieth century is that of Americo Castro.[3] Writing from exile in the US in the early years of the Franco regime, Castro came to formulate an understanding of Spanish history which saw "the enthronement of mental ineptitude and paralysis," exemplified by the Franco dictatorship, as a direct consequence of the Inquisition, the cult of pure blood, and

3 While Castro wrote many works on Spanish literary traditions, the most important statement of his broader vision of the Moorish and Jewish contributions to Spain is found in his *Espana en su Historia*, first published in 1948.

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

the historiographic operation by which a Spanish essence was secured through a compulsive denial of the constitutive role of Jewish and Muslim traditions in shaping Spanish life. Castro rejected a long tradition of Spanish historiography that posited the origins of the nation in the Visigothic state, and viewed the 800 years of Muslim presence as a national parenthesis, finally to be overcome by the *Reconquista* and the return to religious and territorial unity, and to its essentially Western identity. Rather, he argued, the uniqueness of Spanish identity was the product of a creative symbiosis among Muslims, Jews and Christians set in motion by the occupation of Spain by the Moors in 711. As he summarizes: "that which made possible such great works as the Celestina and the Quijote, and hence the European novel and drama, was a certain vision of man in which were woven – as in an ideal and precious tapestry – the Islamic, Christian, and Judaic conceptions of man" (Castro 1961: 13, my translation). Castro was not an historian by training, but rather a literary scholar, and his romantic and existentialist vision of history took language and literary works as its primary material. Through a brilliant and original reading of medieval and early modern Spanish literary forms, he sought to elucidate how this conjunction of the three "castes" (*castas*) had produced a unique form of life, or what, in his existentialist vocabulary, he termed a *morada vital*, a dwelling place of life; namely, a weave of moral, aesthetic and religious values that conjoined to form a distinctly Spanish way of reflexively inhabiting a specific context of possibilities and obstacles. His inquiries gave particular attention not only to grammatical and semantic hybrids, but also to the way in which Spanish literary expression had incorporated a vision of human life – of love, joy, pain and death – directly from Muslim and Jewish traditions.

Influenced by German Romanticism, Castro understood the task of the historian to revivify the dynamic relation between past and present, and thereby release the creative potential of historical events from their temporal prison.[4] In this, he saw himself as the inheritor of a long lineage of liberal and Romantic thinkers – historians, Arabists and literary scholars – going back at least as far as the mid-nineteenth century.[5] It was in this period, one marked by a growing rift between liberal and conservative political currents, that the notion of Spain's inferiority and decadence in relation to the rest of Europe acquired considerable force both outside the country and within it. In this context of dissatisfaction and frustration, many of the leading intellectuals grew disillusioned with the continuous attempts to Europeanize, and began to promote, in response, an anti-historicism emphasizing Spain's unique spiritual foundations as embodied in its ancient traditions. One product of this romantic reassessment of the distinctness of Spain's historical vocation was a body of scholarship demonstrating the

4 For some useful essays on the intellectual currents that influenced Castro's thought, see Lain-Entralgo 1971.

5 The Spanish Orientalist tradition has been explored with great insight and depth by James Monroe (1970). The Spanish scholar Bernabe Lopez-Garcia (1990) has also provided a useful assessment of the tradition.

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

multiplicity of ways in which Arabic and Jewish cultural forms had left their imprint on European knowledges and institutions (Monroe 1970: 151–2). For at least some of the scholars of this generation, notably the Arabists Julian Ribera y Tarrago and Miguel Asin Palacios, this exhumation of a buried and fragmented Moorish past was seen as necessary to the revitalization of Spanish cultural and educational institutions, much as Americo Castro would argue half a century later.

The encounter of cultural and historical horizons articulated in a variety of forms by nineteenth-century scholars was conditioned by the orientalization of Southern Europe that began a century earlier. As European Orientalism was reaching its apogee in the mid-eighteenth century, a new logic of European self-definition emerged in which the Oriental other was internalized, translated and relocated into Europe's own south.[6] Europe's antithesis was now incorporated within its own heterogeneous topography. In Hegel's formulation, Europe is the site where all of the civilizational principles unite within a single unfolding, "the continent where the infinite process of civilization can be traced" (cited in Dainotto 2000: 380). As literary scholar Roberto Dainotto observes:

> The "infinite process of civilization" – the teleological movement from what was to what is now – institutes then a geographical past of Europe, an "origin" that is no longer elsewhere – in the wilderness of Africa or in the flatlands of Asia – but right in the middle of the "liquid" and "centerless" *mare nostrum*. Europe, in order to become a totality, invents its own south, the place, namely, where the "other" civilizations are translated into, and internalized as, a past moment in the giddy progress of Europe. (Dainotto 2000: 380–81)

Not surprisingly, it is precisely at this historical juncture that the question of Moorish roots emerges as a problem within Spanish historiography.

Forced to inhabit the role of the nobly savage past within the total system that consolidates Europe's identity, Spaniards react in two directions. One, evident in most historical writing up to the present day, is to insist on its essential Europeanness, often through the erasure or denigration – almost as a ritual act, the textual embodiment of the Christians and Moors ritual – of its own African and Middle Eastern genealogy. A second direction, however, personified in Castro and his nineteenth-century predecessors, has been to exploit the gaps opened up within Spain's historical experience by its very peripheralization so as to articulate a unique role for Spain within the story of modern Europe, one constituted, in part, by the imprint of al-Andalus explored across a variety of expressive media, language, literature, architecture, art and so on. It is worth remembering here that German Romanticism, a movement that powerfully shaped the sensibilities of Spanish historians from the nineteenth century onward, was not concerned with

6 Roberto Dainotto has written insightfully about the impact of this orientalization of Spain on Spanish intellectual life (2000, 2006, 2007).

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

recovering past practices or with inventing an imaginary tradition where none existed, as critics of Castro and his contemporary followers often assert. In other words, the sense of belonging articulated by the Romantics was not understood as something simply given; it was both real and imaginary, built upon a dynamic and creative engagement with the past. The historian Charles Larmore brilliantly captures this aspect of Romanticism in the following quote: "the Romantic imagination in general aims to be creative and responsive at once, attuned to experience as it also enriches it. So it may well be true that the Romantic sense of belonging is inescapably an act of the imagination, transfiguring as it does its favored traditions in a traditionalist spirit that they themselves did not have before. But this does not mean that such forms of life do not really exist. And where they do exist and move our being, our imaginative identification of them can count as an expression of reason" (Larmore 1996: 63). It is this imaginative act, both creative and responsive, by which forms of sedimented historical experience relegated to the margins of Spanish public life are animated and deployed within contexts of political action that characterizes the historiographical tradition to which Castro contributed.

The style of inquiry pioneered by Spanish Arabists continues to shape contemporary investigations into the country's Moorish past. I provide one relevant example. Barbara Fuchs, in a recent article, explores the highly ambivalent relationship that sixteenth-century Spaniards had with the Moorish culture they so vehemently attempted to negate. On ceremonial occasions, she notes, it was common that participants would adorn themselves in Moorish attire. This still takes place today, notably in the mock-battles between Christians and Moors enacted in many parts of the country. As opposed to contemporary festivals that celebrate the defeat of a mortal enemy, in many sixteenth-century festival occasions, all celebrants wore Moorish garb. Such usages of Moorish style, she suggests, could be and have been interpreted as "ethnic cross-dressing" – a practice of staging otherness as a means to fabricate, by counter-position, a Spanish national identity. However, while this is clearly one feature of the practice, the identification with Moorishness is far more contradictory than this suggests. This is because in many instances, Fuchs observes, Moorish style was not fetishized or marked as "other" in any way, but was simply made to represent Spanishness. In other words, it was through such a self-orientalizing gesture that, paradoxically, Spain constructed certain elements of its own identity in the sixteenth century. As Fuchs concludes, "whether embraced or stigmatized, Moorishness becomes an essential component in the construction of national identity. The process is not one of simple othering but a more complex negotiation between past and present, intra- and extra-European pressures, and fictive identities crafted both at home and abroad" (Fuchs 2007: 97). This double gesture by which Moorishness is both denigrated and celebrated, both expunged and embodied, points to a far more complicated relationship than that which we see today in the simultaneous enthusiasm for the Noble Moor coupled with an often racist discourse on the Arab immigrant.

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

III

I have attempted so far to sketch out the rudiments of a Spanish tradition geared towards creatively interrogating the past as a practice of ethical and political self-fashioning, a task oriented towards a present of determinant demands and possibilities. I now want to shift focus to look at some of the contemporary practices and movements that this tradition animates. To do so, I will focus on some facets of the contemporary regionalist movement in Andalusia.

Although the Andalucista movement has its origins back in the early years of the twentieth century, it is not until the late 1970s, with the end of the Franco era, that the movement acquired particular momentum.[7] Many of the men and women who gravitated towards *Andalucismo* in these years were intellectuals and political activists who, disillusioned with the social and political transformations that accompanied post-Franco Spain's integration into the global economy, came to embrace a regionalist model of politics centering on the renewal of local histories and traditions. This movement has since generated a vast proliferation of associations and advocacy groups emphasizing the contemporary importance of Andalusia's Moorish and Jewish heritage and organized around a wide variety of social and political causes.

A number of the activists involved in the formation of this movement eventually converted to Islam, and today Andalusia has the most rapidly growing community of converts in all of Europe.[8] Many of these converts have played an active role in tying the movement for regional autonomy to a cultural politics aimed at establishing connections to the Muslim world. They have also frequently lobbied for legal protections on behalf of Muslim migrants. This group represents a dynamic and well-organized force within the political scene, especially in Granada, where they have been instrumental in securing official representation for Muslim celebrations, in extending greater protections to Muslim historical sites and in organizing the construction of a large mosque, despite a highly organized movement to oppose the project.

As many scholars have noted, the project of producing a unified Europe has, paradoxically, led to a reassertion of regional identities and the proliferation of numerous subnational movements pressing claims for greater autonomy (Payne 1991; Stolcke 1995). Seen in this light, Spain's convert movement has been interpreted as one face of the contemporary politics of identity, attractive to frustrated elites dissatisfied with more New Age options and allured by Islam's current counter-hegemonic aura. While I do not want to entirely discard this view,

7 On the history of the Andalucista movement, see Cortes and Luis 1994; Sanchez-Mantero 2001; Moreno 2008.

8 A vast body of scholarly writings on conversion to Islam in Spain has appeared during the last decade. See in particular Bahrami 1998; Stallaert 1999; Olmo 2000. Javier Rosón-Lorente's (2000) ethnographic study of relations between Muslim converts and Spanish Christians is particularly useful on this topic.

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

I do want to briefly point to some aspects of the conversion phenomenon that challenge the adequacy of such a framing.

One association formed by the early wave of converts to Islam founded a University of Islamic Studies in Cordoba. The University's own founding narrative echoes a set of tropes common within convert circles:

> The revival of Islam in Andalus, Spain, has been a cherished ideal of the Muslims since the fall of Grenada in 1492. The Holocaust coming in the wake of the down-fall of the Muslims was unprecedented in the annals of human history. The Inquisition carried out by the Spanish church in the name of religion undoubtedly tarnished the image of Christianity in the eyes of the impartial observers and students of history … In spite of this bleak period hundreds of thousands of Muslims retained their religious commitment and strived hard to impart some sentiments of Islamicity to their forth-coming generation … There has always been a feeling in the educated class of the Andalusians that their real identity was different from the Northern Spaniards who denied this right to their Southern compatriots. This long feeling found expression in the conversion process started soon after the ending of General Franco's dictatorship. Several thousands of people embraced Islam within a short span of time. (Ibn Rushd, University website)

Many converts experience their turn to Islam as the gradual liberation of that barely perceptible trace left dormant across the generations.

Karim Viudes, now in his late seventies, is an historian and architect affiliated with the recently built Mezquita de Granada. His conversion story is not unlike that of many others Spanish converts: "I was living in Paris in 1968, in exile from the dictatorship of Franco. It was there that I read Ignacio Olague's book on the Islamic Roots of Spain, which prompted me to take an interest both in Spanish history as well as in Islam. A few years later, an occasion came for me to travel to New York where I had the possibility of studying with a Sufi Shaykh from Iraq. It was that way that after a few years I became convinced of the truths I encountered in the religion, and I decided to convert."

Olague's book is a commonplace in many Spanish conversion stories, despite the fact that its central claim – that there was no occupation of Southern Iberia by Muslims from North Africa and the Middle East in the eighth century, but rather a mass conversion by the local community – has been shown to rest on numerous historical errors.[9] However, it is not the accuracy of Olague's text that is crucial, but the processes of historical exploration and self-transformation that it serves

9 Despite his enthusiastic reception by Andalusian activists and converts, Olague was in no way a moorophile, nor did he have any interest in the Arabic language or the Middle East. Rather, as Maribel Fierro (2010) has recently, examined, he was first and foremost a Spanish nationalist, and one, moreover, with strong links to certain Spanish fascist intellectuals.

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

to set in motion. Viudes links his personal trajectory with his place of birth, the city of Murcia, established in the ninth century by Abd al-Rahman II, the Emir of al-Andalus, and then called *Medinat Mursiya*: "I am a witness to history without wishing to be so, by my family origin, which extends as far back as the 13th century, a descendent of a family present at the colonization of al-Andalus after the fall of Granada, and by my personal experience of having observed the time we live in for three quarters of a century, with acuity and depth" (Viudes 2005). Viudes weaves himself into the past genealogically, but also through his "acute and deep" engagement with the present. In this regard, a motto frequently cited by Spanish converts states: "Somos moros viejos y musulmanes nuevos" ("We are old Moors and new Muslims").

Viudes played an important role in the establishment of the Mezquita de Granada, completed in 2003 after a 20-year struggle against local and national opposition, designing the interior. In preparing for the task, he spent many years studying Moorish architectural and decorative styles, and also traveled throughout the Middle East, visiting Islam's greatest architectural accomplishments. The mosque that resulted from his inquiry and designing skills is extraordinary, fusing stylistic elements from some of the most outstanding examples of Islamic architecture within an overarching aesthetic form derived from Andalusian traditions. Thus, the *mihrab*, or prayer niche, is a replica of the one found in the Red Mosque in Cordoba; colored marble panels repeat a pattern found in the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem; some of the stained-glass windows reproduce those of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul. The mosaics lining the patio and prayer hall were made by craftsmen in Fez who had preserved traditions of design and techniques of production used in al-Andalus. For Viudes, the construction of the mosque, the first in Granada in 500 years, is not about the return of al-Andalus, as others sometimes describe it. "Al-Andalus is gone," he says, "but from its ruins we are creating something new, that is spreading throughout Europe." Viudes' mosque, a frequent site stop for Muslim dignitaries traveling to Europe, inhabits an imaginative geography that fits uncomfortably within the conceptual and material contours of Europe.

Another Spanish convert to Islam, Mansur Abdulsalem Escudero, a long-standing advocate for Muslims in Spain and the founder of a vast Internet archive of contemporary and historical writings on issues of concern to Muslims, views the rebuilding of Islamic institutions in southern Spain by converts and Muslim immigrants within an eschatological frame:

> al-Andalus will continue to be al-Andalus, for all Muslims at all times. This is given; we didn't create it. Here we have our dead, who still live on, waiting for the Day of Resurrection. Today, on the spiritual plane, saints from all Muslim regions reunite here in al-Andalus, as they have always been reuniting. The Islamic presence has always existed, without interruption, in spite of the fact that we were apparently expelled in the 17th century. We are not few,

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

> but rather multitudes, but there are those who see this and those who don't. (Escudero 1999)

Al-Andalus for Escudero has escaped historical time, as if a place held in the mind of God (along with its dead) until the Last Day. Who are the multitudes only apparently expelled by the Christian armies? The dead themselves, ever passing through on a spiritual plane? The present-day inheritors, some of whom are now awakening to this fact and returning to Islam? The final clause – about those who see and those who do not – echoes the Koranic verses concerning the two categories of people: those who see and hear the truth of God's word and those who cannot. It is only within eschatological time that the events of Andalusian history – past and present – achieve their true dimensions and significance.

Let me finally turn to a second activist movement that also has its roots in *Andalucismo* and that includes both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The movement I am referring to centers on a campaign to replace the Catholic-nationalist festivals celebrated (seemingly without pause) throughout southern Spain with festival forms emphasizing Andalusia's pluralist and liberal traditions – the *Convivencia* of Jews, Muslims and Christians during the Moorish period, but also the liberal martyrs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from Mariana Pineda to Federico Garcia Lorca, themselves inheritors of the life-blood of this tradition (as Lorca certainly recognized). For its organizers, this campaign is a vehicle for promoting and creating an open, tolerant, multicultural society in southern Spain, and many of the group's activities focus on the policies and politics of immigration.

Paco Vigueras is one of the primary coordinators for this group, sometimes known as the "Collective of the 2nd of January Manifesto." Like Karim Viudes, Vigueras' first encounter with a different Spain was through Olague's work, though he has since read Castro and many other historians of Moorish Spain, as well as the works of Blas Infante, the intellectual and political father of the Andalucista movement back in the 1920s and 1930s. For close to 15 years, he has worked tirelessly to counter the xenophobia and intolerance he considers inherent in contemporary Andalusian cultural forms and public life, through an ongoing effort to give public recognition to the region's rich cultural legacy. In a statement criticizing the *Dia de la Toma*, the annual celebration of the conquest of Granada in 1492 that marked the end of the Moors in Spain, he observes:

> The poet-king *al-Mutamid* was as Sevillian as Antonio Machado; the philosopher Averroes, as much a son of Cordoba as Seneca; and King Boabdil (the last Moorish ruler, who surrendered to the Spanish), no less Granadan than our Federico Garcia Lorca … In these times, when xenophobia has returned to the old continent, it is useful to remember that Andalucía was much more than beaches, sun, bulls, and subsidies; that while Europe wrapped itself in shadows, and agitated itself with the phantom of the Inquisition, al-Andalus knew how to share, to exchange, to create.

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

IV

For many residents of Granada, the "2nd of January Manifesto" and other such efforts are based on a fictitious past. "They don't want to acknowledge the real history of Spain," as one woman told me, though what counts as "real" in such comments, that which Juan Goytisolo has called a "clean-shaven Hispanic civilization" – a Spain free of Islamic and Jewish influence – clearly owes its force to a vast endeavor of historical fiction. It has become common today for Spaniards to hold together the two rather contradictory ideas that the Moors, in some fashion, left a permanent imprint on Iberian soil *and* that the real history of Spain is to be found in an ideal that crystallized with Ferdinand and Isabella. The same gesture by which Islamic and Jewish roots are posited is also that which prophylactically consigns them to an irrelevant past.

While I was in Granada a few years ago, a story appeared in the newspaper *El Pais* indicating that recent archaeological work suggested that San Isidro, the Patron Saint of Madrid, had most likely been a Morisco, a Muslim forcibly converted to Christianity in the sixteenth century. A very popular comedic television program called *el Intermedio*, Spain's answer to Jon Stewart, reported the findings, spinning them into a series of skits set up by the host's question: what if the Moors had never been defeated? Lots of headscarves, turbans, beards and orientalist paraphernalia were then dutifully donned and paraded about in some role reversal fantasy, a fetishization of the exotic Muslim "other" in response to an anxiety produced by San Isidro's Muslim genealogy. But that anxiety can lead in two directions.

I have attempted here to outline, in a tentative fashion, what might be seen as a tradition whose advocates and adherents seek to adjust their lives to a different geopolitical imaginary, understood by many as an ethical response to the xenophobia and racism they see around them. While often relegated to the margins of Spanish public memory, this tradition nonetheless has repeatedly found expression in literary and aesthetic domains, as well as within political life. It is worth noting here that over the course of the last 25 years, Spain has gone further than most other European states in recognizing and responding to the demands of its religious minorities, especially Muslims. A key moment in this evolution is the Cooperation Agreement of 1992 between the Spanish state and the Islamic Commission of Spain, an agreement that makes explicit reference to the historical contribution of Islamic traditions to Spanish identity. This agreement is exceptional in the European context for the variety of rights it extends to recognized Muslim communities in Spain, among them the right of Muslim children to receive Islamic religious training in public schools, the right to be exempted from work on Friday at the time of prayer and the right to halal food in public institutions such as schools and the military. Moreover, the previous government of Spain under the socialist Zapatero passed a measure that granted amnesty to as many as one million Muslim immigrants who were in the country illegally, a step strongly at odds with the policies of other EU nations. Admittedly, many of these

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

measures have yet to be implemented and continue to be viewed by many as a dangerous accommodation to an undeserving religious minority, as well as a betrayal of Spain's Catholic identity. However, what is interesting in these debates is the way they have reintroduced into public discourse the question of Spain's Islamic heritage in relation to contemporary deliberations over issues of Muslim immigration. The legacy of Castro and his predecessors remains a vital point of reflection for Spaniards, and Europeans more generally, concerned with the place that Muslims will occupy within European social, political and religious spaces.

References

Aidi, H.D. 2006. "The Interference of al-Andalus: Spain, Islam, and the West," *Social Text* 87, 24(2), 67–88.

Bahrami, B. 1998. "A Door to Paradise: Converts, the New Age, Islam, and the Past in Granada," *City and Society*, 10(1), 121–32.

BBC News Online. 2004. "Spain Proposes Cultural Alliance," September 22, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3679336.stm.

Borneman, J. and Fowler, N. 1997. "Europeanization," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26, 487–514.

Castro, A. 1948. *Espana en su Historia: Christianos, Moros, y Judios*. Buenos Aires: Losada.

Castro, A. 1961. *De la Edad Conflictiva*. Madrid: Editorial Taurus.

Cortes, P. and Luis, A. 1994. "El Ultimo NAcionalismo: Andalucia y su Historia," *Manuscits: Revista de Historia Moderna*, 12, 213–43.

Dainotto, R. 2000. "A South with a View: Europe and its Others," *Nepantla: Views form the South*, 1(2), 375–90.

Dainotto, R. 2006. "The Discreet Charm of the Arab Thesis: Juan Andrés, Historicism, and the De-Centering of Montesquieu's Europe," *European History Quarterly*, 36(1), 7–29.

Dainotto, R. 2007. *Europe (In Theory)*. Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press.

Escudero, M. 1999. "A Fondo con Mansur Abdussalam Escudero," *WebIslam*, September 16, http://www.webislam.com/noticias/41375a_fondo_con_mansur_abdussalam_escudero.html.

Fierro, M. 2009. "Al-Andalus en el Pensamiento Fascista Espanol: La Revolucion Islamic en Occidente de Ignacio Olague," in M. Marin (ed.), *Al-Andalus/Espana. Historiogrfia en Contraste: Siglos XVII–XXI*. Madrid: Casa de Velasquez.

Fuchs, B. 2007. "The Spanish Race," in M. Greer et al. (eds), *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Racism in the Renaissance Empires*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 88–98.

Gauchet, M. 1999. *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gulfnews. 2006. "Aznar Defends Pope's Remarks," September 25, http://gulfnews.com/news/world/other-world/aznar-defends-pope-s-remarks-1.256520.

© Copyrighted Material

© Copyrighted Material

Hirschkind, C. 2009. "Obama on Palestine: What New Beginning?" *The Immanent Frame*, http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2009/06/09/obama-on-palestine-what-new-beginning.

Lain-Entralgo, P. (ed.) 1971. *Estudios sobre la obra de Américo Castro*. London: I.B. Taurus.

Larmore, C. 1996. *The Romantic Legacy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lopez-Garcia, B. 1990. "Arabismo y Orientalismo en Espana: Radiografia y Diagnostia de un Gremio Escaso y Apartadizo," *Awraq, anejo al volumen*, XI, 35–69.

Monroe, J. 1970. *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship (Sixteenth Century to the Present)*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Moreno, I. 2008. *La Identidad Cultural de Andalucia*. Seville: Junta de Andalucia.

Olmo, M. del. 2000. "Los conversos espanoles al Islam: de mayoria a minoria por la llamada de Dios," *Anales del Museo Nacional de Antropologia*, 7, 15–40.

Payne, S-G. 1991. "Nationalism, Regionalism, and Micronationalism in Spain," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26(3/4): 479–91.

Rogozen-Soltar, M. 2007 "Al-Andalus in Andalusia: Negotiating Moorish History and Regional Identity in Southern Spain," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 80(3), 863–86.

Rosón-Lorente, F-J. 2000. *"El retorno de Tariq" Las comunidades musulmanas en la ciudad de Granada*. Granada: Laboratorio de Estudios Interculturales.

Said, E. 1994. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Sánchez-Mantero, R. 2001. *Historia breve de Andalucía*. Madrid: Sílex.

Stalleart, C. 1999. "El movimiento Neomusulman y el Intento de (Re)construccion de una identidad Andalusa/Andalusi," in S. Rodriguez Becerra (ed.), *Religion y Cultura*. Seville: Junta de Andalucia/Fundacion Machado, 189–97.

Stolcke, V. 1995. "Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe," *Current Anthropology*, 36, 1–24.

Viudes, K. 2005. "La alianza de civilizaciones, el punto de vista de los musulmanes," Mezquita de Granada website, http://www.mezquitadegranada.com/index.php?id=lacomunidadmusulmanadegran02.

© Copyrighted Material