

1614.¹ They are extraordinary paintings: radically ambivalent in their ideological charge, and teeming with visual anecdotes that demand a story as much as they tell one, like the poignant scene of parting between father and daughter.²

The anecdote is, in this case, historically accurate: in compliance with one of the most controversial provisions of the 1609 Edict of Expulsion, the young *morisca* girl in this painting, like all *morisco* children under the age of five, is to be left behind in Spain in the custody of the state, perhaps to be adopted by a family of *cristianos viejos*, more likely, to be made their servant.³ The language of the “Bando de expulsión,” meant to quiet *morisco* fears and hence reduce the possibility of a mass uprising (about which there was tremendous anxiety on the crown’s part), simply states:

que los mochachos y mochachas menores de quatro años que quisieren quedarse, y sus padres, o curadores (siendo huérfanos) lo tuvieran por bien, no serán expelidos, (García Arenal 254)

as if the decision would be left up to two and three-year olds themselves. A document (not intended for public consumption) simply titled “La orden que se ha de dar,” accompanying a 1609 letter from Philip III to Valencia archbishop Juan de Ribera, more explicitly stipulates the terms of separation. Parents who resisted were to be put to death; children who resisted were to be imprisoned until the expulsion was complete.

1. Que se procure con todo cuydado que los niños y niñas de diez años abaxo se queden en los lugares enco-

mendados a los curas o a otras personas de confiança.

2. Que si en los padres, o madres de los dichos mochachos o mochachas uviere tanta repugnancia en dexarlos, [que] siguiendo los ministros que han de executar esta expulsion la orden de su Magestad, uviessen de degollar a los tales padres en pena de su resistencia, o de mover algun grave scandalo, que en tal caso se deve permitir que lleven los padres a los que fueren mayores de cinco años por que se juzga que ya en aquella edad avran sido enseñados de sus padres y madres de la secta de Mahoma y asi se puede temer que se conservaran en ella y en la aversion a nuestra santa fe [...].

3. Si los niños o niñas fueren menores de cinco, o seys años, se deven reservar con resolucion, no obstante qualquiera repugnancia de sus padres o madres.

4. Si la repugnancia de los mochachos o mochachas que fueren de diez años abaxo fuese de los mismos mochachos o mochachas, y no de sus padres, deven ser custodiados en la carcel o en otra parte hasta averse executado la expulsion.⁴

Under no circumstances were children under the age of five to be permitted egress from Spain; children between six and ten years of age were allowed to leave only in those cases in which forcing them to stay would incite a riot, as it was assumed that many of them were already “contaminated.” These measures were understood by the crown not as further punishment on the *moriscos* but, on the contrary, as a concession, a way to ease the king’s conscience. (One of the arguments put forth by anti-expulsionists was that exiling the

moriscos to Africa would condemn innocent children, already baptized in the faith, to a life of apostasy, never anticipating perhaps this type of solution.) In Valencia alone, thousands of children were effectively kidnapped from their parents by either local enforcers of the royal provisions (Spanish troops had been mobilized to each of the expulsion ports to prevent uprisings) or by Christian families who took matters into their own hands.

The state's right to execute *morisco* parents who resisted giving up their children was precariously founded on two points. In the first place, supposed crimes against the Spanish nation were indiscriminately charged against all *morisco* adults. It was in fact an accusation of treason, *lesa majestad*, against majesties both human and divine that had been used to legitimate the expulsion decision, which had no standing on theological grounds. (Rome—in the persons of Clement VIII and Paul V—refused to approve the measure, insisting on the *moriscos'* status as neophytes.) Second, and more interesting for a reading of and from remains, on the rights of the child once baptized: "rights" that could be exercised by the state on behalf of children against their own parents. Another document of 1609 responds to "doubts" raised about the legality of the state's adoption of *morisco* children. The fourth article specifically addresses the question of the rights of minors:

Cuarta duda...Respondese que si hay commodidad de criar estos niños aunque maten a los padres y a las madres, se los han de quitar para criarlos y instruirlos en la fe porque en esto no se haze agravio a los padres o madres, porque ya hay derecho de matarlos

como a traydores y tambien como apostatas incorregibles y hay tambien en este caso nuevo derecho de parte de los niños porque siendo bautizados como lo son les harian grande injuria sus padres y madres en quererselos llevar, y impedirles la educacion en la fe a la qual por el bautismo tienen derecho y deffenderles este derecho contra sus padres es bolver por los Innocentes, Y asi pues el derecho de matar los padres y madres es claro por las razones dichas, y asi mismo lo es el destes niños siendo bautizados porque es deffender a los Innocentes no hay duda sino que se pueden matar los padres y madres en este caso.⁵

The policy and the legal argument behind it are of considerable interest for early modern legal history; it is one of the first instances of *parens patriae*, of a modern state assuming custodial rights over minors of parents deemed unfit. The basis on which the argument is founded is of no less interest: affirming a kind of hybrid national-religious citizenship (statutory rights are conferred by baptism but recognized and enforced by the state, *not* the church) that takes precedence over familial ties. The alleged "rights" granted children by the *patria*, in this case, trump those of *patria potestad*. The argument is framed, moreover, as a rewriting of the texts of Exodus 1:16 (Pharao's murder of all male Hebrew children in the Old Testament) and of its recasting in Matthew 2:16 (Herod's slaying of the innocent babes in the New Testament). In *this* new New Testament, a corporate Spanish state saves the children ("es bolver por los Inocentes") at the expense of their parents ("se pueden matar en este caso") who were already "dead" to the body of the nation (expulsion was consistently referred

to as “muerte civil”). But perhaps the most immediate referent of *inocente* where children were concerned was the “martirio del niño Inocente de la Guarda,” a highly incendiary and no doubt spurious story that had fueled anti-Semitic sentiment in Spain in 1491, helping promote the Jewish expulsion, and that was mobilized anew in the early 1600s, but now directed against the *moriscos*.

As the actual date of the expulsion drew nearer, the age of the *morisco* children to be taken from their parents was progressively lowered from 10, to 7, to under 5. (It is not coincidental that the lowered age corresponds exactly with contemporary linguistic theories about when infantile mastery in language is achieved.) In a letter of 4 August 1609, after the expulsion had been signed into law, but before the Edicts of expulsion were made public, Philip III asks Ribera’s advice on the matter:

todavía ha parecido despues que los que fueren desta hedad quedaran tan instruydos de sus Padres en la secta de Mahoma que con dificultad se podran reducir ni combertir a nuestra sancta fee. Y creçiendo los unos y los otros si viniesen a juntarse podriamos con el disenso del tiempo allarnos en los mismos inconbenientes que agora [...].⁶

Not only did such measures respond to concerns about the intractability of religious belief in older children, a belief invariably tied to their knowledge of Arabic but, moreover, to anxieties about who these children might grow up to be. Underlying *these* anxieties was the gnawing suspicion that left in Spain, these older children, fluent in their language and, by extension, in the Muslim practices and

beliefs *taught* in that language, would repeat the infection of the national body: “porque no hay sperança de su correction, antes justo rezelo y temor que bolveran a inficionar el Reyno.”⁷

It is worth recalling that the threat *morisco* children represented to the national body had been discussed for years in a slightly different context. Pedro Aznar Cardona, avid defender of the expulsion, repeats the *topos* of the nearly legendary fertility of the *moriscos*:

Casavan sus hijos de muy tierna edad, pareciéndoles que era sobrado tener la hembra onze años y el varón doze, para casarse. [...] Su intento era crecer y multiplicarse en número como las malas hierbas, y verdaderamente, que se avian dado tan buena maña en España que ya no cabian en sus barrios ni lugares, antes ocupaban lo restante y lo contaminavan todo [...]. Y multiplicavanse por extremo, porque ninguno dexava de contraer matrimonio, y porque ninguno seguia el estado anexo a esterilidad de generación carnal, poniéndose frayle, ni clérigo, ni monja, ni avia continente alguno entre ellos hombre ni muger, señal clara de su aborrecimiento con la vida honesta y casta.⁸

Feeding anxieties of this sort (which were fairly widespread and commonly utilized in arguments favoring expulsion) was the fear that left unchecked, the productive sexual practices of the *moriscos* would replace the nation with its own other, from the inside, perpetrating a kind of Moorish invasion from within (Henry Kamen cites censuses from 1565 and 1609 documenting that the population growth of *moriscos* in Valencia was in fact occurring at a faster rate than that of *cris-*

tianos viejos, though by no means enough to render *moriscos* a demographic majority in the peninsula [227]).⁹

The eventual fate of the *morisco* children who stayed behind in Spain is unclear, though there is no question that thousands did. Original plans called for their adoption by Christian families throughout Spain: strategic dispersal and assimilation. In a letter of 1 November 1610, however, a full year after the Valencia expulsion began, the king writes to Ribera, asking if the children might provisionally stay in the Levante, suggesting that their prospects in Castilla, at least, were less than certain:

en esse Reyno se hallan (como saveis) cantidad de niños y niñas hijos de Moriscos en poder de diferentes personas y en otra forma y aunque se ha tratado de que se repartiesen en Castilla todavia por si esto tuviesse alguna dificultad holgare de saver si se podrian quedar en esse Reyno en poder de las personas que agora las tienen para criarlos y doctrinarlos [...].¹⁰

Other letters and memoranda from this same period make reference to the schools and monasteries at which the morisco children were interned; others still mention service—almost a kind of indenture, very akin to, if not modeled on, the Indian *encomiendas* overseas (a model that had been implemented in Granada after the 1568 Alpujarras revolt)¹¹—whereby slightly older children worked for their keep and a small salary, perhaps eventually earning their freedom. Some of the children who stayed in Spain reappear in Inquisitorial records. Once girls reached the age of 12 and boys reached the age of

14, they were subject to persecution by the Holy Office and could be tried as adults. Between 1612 and 1619, 152 teens were processed by the Valencian inquisition for crypto-Muslim practices or beliefs.¹²

Some of the younger children—particularly those who were still nursing—did not survive the separation from their mothers; others still did not survive even the threat of separation. Contemporary paintings and expulsion literature chronicle the acts of joint suicide and infanticide committed by *morisca* mothers, mothers for whom the idea of leaving their children or their country behind was so intolerable that they chose death—their own, their babies’—over separation. The *Rebelión de la Muela de Cortes* oil, one of two paintings in the series depicting the most important *morisco* rebellions in the Valencia area, records at least one such scene.

Illustration 3

From the close up we can just make out that it is not a woman alone who is jumping to her death from the cliff being stormed by Spanish troops, but a mother with a small child in her arms. Gaspar Aguilar’s 1610 *Expulsión de los moros de España* gives a poetic account of such suicides, which were not, apparently, infrequent:

Quantas pobres moriscas mal logradas
por ver los suyos de defensa faltos
con sus tiernos hijuelos abraçadas
se despeñaron de los montes altos.
Y quantas bellas moças delicadas
por huir de los fieros sobresaltos
rindieron a los ríos sus despojos
salidos por ventura de sus ojos.

We might think of these flights of despair by “moriscas mal logradas [...] con sus tiernos hijuelos abraçadas” in the terms that Homi Bhabha sets forth in his reading of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. Citing Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, he reminds us that infanticide (along with murder and self-mutilation) is at the core of the “psychological dynamics of all resistance” (16).

The thousands of *morisco* children who were made to stay behind and were invisibly folded in to the nation’s memory pose a challenge to received notions of national definition in early modern Spain. Assimilated into the canon, but only belatedly, their incorporation speaks a violent exclusion, a cut that troubles the nation’s borders, unsettling its founding definitions. If the operative model of the corporate state in seventeenth-century Spain was by and large a physiological one, proponents of the expulsion tended to link health with *limpieza* and disease with *raza* (understood at the time as a trace of Semitic or Muslim blood), appealing to an argument of *hereditaria apostasia*. Within this racial (or ethno-racial) essentialist paradigm, it was what we might (anachronistically) term a genetic form of contamination that predominated: even the slightest trace of non-Christian impurity was deemed enough to pollute a line. This was the justification for expelling *all* Spanish *moriscos* on a universal charge of *lesa majestad*, and not just those found guilty (or even suspected) of actual crimes of treason against the state.

The crown’s insistence on keeping *morisco* children within its borders suggests, however, a different model, one that radically destabilizes racial or ethno-racial essentialist nationalism, appealing instead to the links between nation and *natio* on

one hand, between nation and language, on the other. Contamination is here a matter of cultural and linguistic contact as



Vicent Mestre, *Rebelión de los moriscos en la Muela de Cortes*, detail.

opposed to genetic descent. Contagion becomes almost metonymic: a question of nurture and not nature. There is nothing

particularly redeeming about this second model, particularly when its material effects were to wrest young children from their mothers and fathers, leaving them orphaned, making the bitterness of exile infinitely harder to bear for their parents. But among its no doubt unintentional consequences is that it explicitly gives the lie to a *limpieza de sangre* ideology and, with it, to any arguments denying the Spanishness of the *moriscos*. National definition itself is revealed as a radically contingent (which is not to say exclusively discursive), construction, the product of accidents of place of birth and, more crucially, language. If children of *moriscos* could be somehow saved for Spain, it was because even the state recognized them as Spanish: “que en fin nacimos en ella y es nuestra patria natural,” in the words of Cervantes’s Ricote.

There are no ghost stories to narrate the plight of these *morisco* children left in Spain—those who survived their parents’ expulsion, those who did not survive the flight, the fall, to the literal bedrock of the nation. These children, whose “impure” blood would of course be incorporated into the national body, are not only the flesh and blood remains of the bodies lost to Spain by the expulsion but also, the ghostly remains that haunt the Spanish imaginary, at once spectral and material supplements of national definition.

Notes

¹ On the Valencia expulsion painting series, see the stunning 1997 catalog prepared by Jesús Villalmanzo Cameno. The catalog contains important studies by Manuel Ardit (“Los moriscos valencianos”) and Nuria Blaya (“Retratos”) and an invaluable documentary appendix. Villalmanzo

Cameno’s analysis of “La colección pictórica sobre la expulsión de los moriscos” is indispensable reading. I would like to express my gratitude to Francisco Borrás of the Fundación Bancaja for granting me access to the Fundación’s private collection in order to see first-hand this extraordinary series of paintings. I am also grateful to José Miranda for generously providing me with a copy of the catalog. On the number of *moriscos* expelled from Spain, see Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent.

² I have written elsewhere on the Valencia expulsion oils. See Dopico Black, “Espectros de la nación: la serie pictórica de *La expulsión de los moriscos del reino de Valencia*.”

³ Part of the argument I make here concerning the relation of *morisco* children who were made to stay in Spain after the expulsion and questions of Spanish national definition appears, in an expanded form, in my “*Lengua e imperio*: Sueños de la nación en los *Tesoros* de Covarrubias” in *Suplemento al Tesoro de la lengua española castellana de Sebastián de Covarrubias*, Georgina Dopico Black and Jacques Lezra, eds.

⁴ Archivo de la Biblioteca del Colegio de Corpus Christi, I-7-8-27.

⁵ Archivo de la Biblioteca del Colegio de Corpus Christi, I-7-8-30.

⁶ Archivo de la Biblioteca del Colegio de Corpus Christi, I-7-8-30.

⁷ Archivo de la Biblioteca del Colegio de Corpus Christi, I-7-8-30.

⁸ The passage continues:

Todos se casavan, pobres y ricos, sanos y coxos, no reparando como los christianos viejos que si un padre de familias tiene cinco o seys hijos, con casar dellos el primero o la mayor dellas se contentan, procurando que los otros sean clérigos, o monjes, o frayles, o soldados, o tomen estado de beatas, y continentes. Y lo peor era que algunos christianos viejos, aun presumiendo algo de hidalgos, por no nada de interesse, se cassavan con moriscas, y maculavan lo poco limpio de su linaje, y plegue a Dios, no llegue la mancha al alma (n. pag.)

⁹ Concerns over the incontinent, inseminatory sexuality of *moriscos* were so acute that one solution proposed to Philip II—by, among others the Bishop of Segorbe, Martín de Salvatierra—was the expulsion and castration of *morisco* males, both young and old:

esta gente se puede llevar a las costas de los macallaos y de Terranova, que son amplísimas y sin ninguna población, donde se acavarán a todo punto, specialmente capando los másculos grandes y pequeños. (“Parescer de don Martín de Salvatierra obispo de Segorbe del Consejo del Rey Nuestro Señor, dado por mandato de S.M. [acerca] del estado en questan los moriscos del Retno de Valencia y de la reformation e instruccion que se trata de darles, 1587”). (Boronat y Barrachina I, 633-34)

It is important to note that there are voices of opposition as well. A letter of August 1609 addressed to the king by anti-expulsionist don Manuel Ponce de León, for example, harshly criticizes such measures as unchristian and barbaric: “el cortarles miembros aptos a la generación, [es cosa] ageno del celo católico, inhumano y bárbaro [...] y no usado jamás aun entre Naciones bárbaras” (García Arenal 240). It also attests to the fact that “mutilación de miembros” was more than a fringe solution, but one advocated forcefully enough by some as to be given consideration even at the level of the Council of State.

¹⁰ Archivo de la Biblioteca del Colegio de Corpus Christi, I-7-3-93.

¹¹ A *Consulta* deliberated upon by the Consejo de Estado on 1 September 1609 states:

En el décimo (punto se acordó) que, pues el exemplo de lo que se hizo con los moriscos de Granada mostró que el expediente de repartir los niños para criarlos y servirse dellos hasta la edad de 25 años por solo el comer y el vestir salió bien, se podrá agora hacer lo mismo, dándolos a oficiales mecánicos que no sean armeros no cosa de letras o labradores para la cultura del campo

porque cuando sean grandes no aspiren a más de aquello que les hubieren enseñado. (Cited in Boronat II, 525)

¹² See Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent 247 and García Cárcel 150. See also Epalza 1998 and 1992.

Works Cited

- Aguilar, Gaspar. *La expulsión de los moriscos de España por S.C.R. Magestad del rey don Phelipe Tercero*. Valencia, 1610.
- Aznar Cardona, Pedro. *Expulsión justificada de los moriscos españoles, y suma de las excellencias Chritnas de nuestro Rey Don Felipe el Católico, Tercero deste nombre*. Huesca, 1612. N. pag.
- Bhabha, Homi, ed. *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Bleda, Jaime. *Corónica de los moros de España*. Valencia, 1618.
- Boronat y Barrachina, Pascual. *Los moriscos españoles y su expulsión*. Valencia: Vives y Mora, 1901.
- Covarrubias, Sebastián de. *Suplemento al Tesoro de la lengua española castellana de Sebastián de Covarrubias*. Ed. Georgina Dopico Black and Jacques Lezra. Madrid: Polifemo, 2001.
- Domínguez Ortiz, Antonio, and Bernard Vincent. *Historia de los moriscos. Vida y tragedia de una minoría*. Madrid: Alianza, 1997.
- Dopico Black, Georgina. “Espectros de la nación: la serie pictórica de *La expulsión de los moriscos del reino de Valencia*.” *Américo Castro y la desmemoria histórica*. Madrid: Libertarias, 2003. 179-99, 235-46.
- . “*Lengua e imperio*: Sueños de la nación en los *Tesoros* de Covarrubias.” *Suplemento al Tesoro de la lengua española castellana de Sebastián de Covarrubias*. Ed. Georgina Dopico Black and Jacques Lezra. Madrid: Polifemo, 2001. CCXLIII-CCLXXXIV.
- Epalza, Mikel de. *Los moriscos antes y después de la expulsión*. Madrid: Mapfre, 1992.
- . “Los moriscos y sus descendientes, después de la expulsión.” *La expulsión de los moriscos*. Ed. José Miranda. Valencia: Fundación Bancaja, 1998. 43-74.
- García Arenal, Mercedes. *Los moriscos*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1996.

- García Cárcel, Ricardo. "Los moriscos y la inquisición." *La Expulsión de los moriscos*. Ed. José Miranda. Valencia: Fundación Bancaja, 1997: 145-68.
- Kamen, Henry. *The Spanish Inquisition. A Historical Revision*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998.
- Philip III. Letters to Archbishop Juan de Ribera. I-7-8-30, I-7-3-93. Archivo de la Biblioteca del Corpus Christi, Valencia.
- . "La orden que se ha de dar." Unpublished order accompanying letter to Archbishop Juan de Ribera. 1609. I-7-8-27. Archivo de la Biblioteca del Corpus Christi, Valencia.
- Ribera, Juan de. Letters to King Philip III. Archivo de la Biblioteca del Corpus Christi, Valencia.
- Villalmanzano Cameno, Jesús, ed. *La expulsión de los moriscos del reino de Valencia*. Valencia: Fundación Bancaja, 1997.