



Al-Andalus

Olivia Diamond

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A blend of historical figures and imagined characters in these persona poems dramatically portray Morisco life in Christian Spain. Their voices resonate with contemporary events, for the story of the expulsion of the Spanish Moslems is pertinent to the modern world, but is not unique in history. It has been repeated wherever a large ethnic minority has existed in the same country with another dominant culture. Rendering this history into poetic monologues gives more power and poignancy to individual tragedy. The voices are drawn from events spanning the period from the mid-fifteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth century. The 1523, Carlos V reneged on the terms of the Granada surrender, which granted religious and cultural freedom to the Moslems of Granada, serving them the same ultimatum the Jews had received in 1492—to convert or to be expelled from the country. Mass baptisms of the Moors ensued. After the violent protest, the prohibitions against wearing Moorish clothing, practicing Islamic customs and speaking Arabic were suspended for forty years, purportedly to allow for cultural and religious assimilation. Under Philip II the mandates were re-imposed resulting in the rebellion of the Moriscos in the War of the Alpujarras 1568-1570. After the defeat of the Moriscos, Philip ordered the dispersal of the surviving Moriscos to other regions of Spain—a strategy to prevent a concentration of Moriscos that would be capable of armed revolt again. Throughout the sixteenth century the converted Moriscos were suspect. Religious and secular leaders feared they were a third column within the country conspiring with the Ottoman Empire to reconquer Spain for the Islamic world. After decades of debate and suspicion, Philip III ordered the final expulsion of Spain's Moriscos in 1609. This collection vividly demonstrates how poetry can make history come alive.

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