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Ideological Disquiet and Certainty in
Moratín

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Abstract

This paper revisits the afrancesados’ role in Spanish historiography as well as their political positioning prior to, during and after the French invasion of 1808. Taking the famous playwright Leandro Fernández de Moratín as a case study, the paper explores his political ideas beyond established labels such as “supporter of enlightened despotism” coined by Sánchez Agesta. To this end the article reviews a variety of Moratín’s texts, including *Carta de un vecino de Foncarral a un abogado de Madrid sobre el libre comercio de los huevos*, *Apuntaciones sueltas de Inglaterra*, *Viaje a Italia*, a Prologue to Isla’s *Fray Gerundio de Campazas*, as well as Moratín’s correspondence. The essay argues that despite his confessed social, economic and even political liberalism, Moratín never supported any specific form of political organization, neither absolutist nor liberal. His open skepticism locates him beyond prevailing ideologies.

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The “Perfidious Invasion” of 1808: Ideological Disquiet and Certainty in Moratín

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Leandro Fernández de Moratín’s political profile was drawn by Luis Sánchez Agesta in his article, “Moratín and the Political Thought of Enlightened Despotism.” In this article, which is more interested in showing that the famous playwright was in favor of enlightened despotism than in exploring and analyzing Moratín’s political thinking, Sánchez Agesta links Moratín with enlightened despotism in at least three ways: First, by way of Moratín’s participation in governmental politics related to theatrical reform; second, by recalling Moratín’s friendship and intellectual rapport with some of the most representative figures of enlightened despotism; and third, “through the ideas that become clear in his correspondence and in the precepts of his *Discurso preliminar*” (573). Sánchez Agesta summarizes Moratín’s ideas as follows: “the reform of customs, the law and the entire order of a society based on traditional principles in order to rebuild it on the basis of utility. Two instruments of reform that oppose the revolutionary spirit are mentioned: the actions of an enlightened government, and the soft, continuous pressure of education” (373). Beyond this brief summary, Sanchez Agesta alludes to what he calls “the pedagogical themes of Moratín’s theater.” In short, the playwright is presented as one more among many of those who shared and supported the tenets of enlightened despotism from within the specific sphere of culture; in this case from within the world of the theater.

Although Sánchez Agesta adds that Moratín’s “exact place is not among the *afrancesados*, but rather among the men of letters of enlightened despotism’s second phase, who were supported by Manuel Godoy,” his opinion is but a complement to the label of *afrancesado* or collaborationist that Moratín has carried since the War of Independence. Moratín himself would write in 1816 that “this maintaining of friendships with *afrancesados*, *indinos*, traitors, is a delicate thing.” Now, was Moratín just one more *ilustrado* in favor of despotism? What were his political beliefs? Domínguez Ortiz declared in 1960 that Moratín “was incapable of living the

two passions of his time—the religious and the political—with intensity.” Is this true? Could it be that the subtle, civilized forms of his writing have been misinterpreted? Going a bit further, to what extent were his political ideas put to the test with the French invasion of 1808, that “perfidious invasion” to which Moratín refers in the 1825 *Advertencia* to the translation of *L’ecole des maris*? How did the experience of Joseph the 1st, the intruder king, influence the way he interpreted his world, the way he tried to influence it, and the way he inhabited the life of his times? These are the questions I will try to answer over the next few minutes with the goal of offering a more precise political profile of Moratín and of examining how the French invasion and the wars against Napoleon’s armies influenced his ideas. Needless to say, I will leave aside any moral judgment of his conduct from the perspective of a presumptive and debatable patriotism.

All the scholars who have consulted Moratín’s *Diario* know that the journal ends abruptly on March 24, 1808, when the writer notes: “venit new King; ego chez Tineo; Calles; vidi King.” Needless to say, this “new king” is not yet Joseph the 1st but rather Ferdinand the 7th, whose father had ceded him the crown after the Aranjuez uprising. The day before, however, Moratín had written “vidi Galli” or “I saw the French,” who under the command of Murat had already entered Madrid. What does Moratín do during the French occupation and the reign of Joseph Bonaparte? On the one hand it is difficult to know in the absence of entries in his diary; on the other hand though, taking into account the consistency of Moratín’s habits, one can assume that they changed relatively little, only perhaps when extraordinary or unexpected events called for it. Moratín stays in Madrid as secretary (or minister), but in a far less prestigious capacity as can be seen from his status as a sub alternate secretary-interpreter when he departs for Vitoria after the battle of Bailén (Artola 134-135n). It is worth recalling that the constitution of Bayonne established only nine ministries, among which the ministry of Language Interpretation did not figure. In 1809 Moratín writes to Cabarrús, who at the time is Minister of Finances, in order to propose “the creation of a periodical entitled *Prontuario de leyes*”. Around 1809 Moratín participated in a commission created in order to establish an appropriate dramatic

repertory. He translates Molière's *L'ecole des maris*, which is performed at the Príncipe Theater on March 17, 1812. At some point he receives the Royal Order of Spain, known as the Order of the Eggplant by "patriots" and as the Order of the Pentagon by those loyal to the legal government. (The medal was a five-pointed ruby-colored star). In November of 1811, Joseph the 1st names him chief librarian of the Royal Library, a position in which he probably remains, perhaps in combination with his post as secretary-interpreter, until August 1812. This much can be inferred from his letters asking for back pay. He leaves for Valencia on the twelfth of August of the same year thanks to a coach seat offered to him by Maria García—the Clori of some of his poems—and Manuel García de la Prada, *ex corregidor* of Madrid and future husband of the actress. He arrives in Valencia during the first days of September and he abandons the city by the river Turia on July 3rd 1813. In other words, Moratín stays in Madrid when Joseph the 1st arrives and he remains a public employee during his reign. He leaves with the court after the battle of Bailén and he returns with it to the capital. To sum up, he is among those who do not hesitate to serve the new king and in consequence he can be included among the *afrancesados*.

One can of course reasonably ask what political legitimacy was left in the Spain of 1808 after the Aranjuez uprising and the abdications of Bayonne (Carr 79-119). Like many others, Moratín followed the opinion of the Archbishop Félix Amat, who observed something that at the time was much more obvious than it had been in the England that decapitated Charles the 1st or in the France that executed Louis the 16th: That is, that in submitting itself to popular and Napoleonic pressure, the royal family had created an embarrassing spectacle in which both Charles the 4th and Ferdinand the 7th had exhibited a profound lack of moral character, making clear that they were willing to sell the nation to the powerful Napoleon, who had no qualms about placing his brother on the throne (see Mercader Riba). Popular resistance to the French, which a certain interpretive tradition identifies as the beginning of a national revolution (Carr 81; Juliá 21-22), seems rather, based on its short-term consequences in the Peninsula, nothing more than the movement to conserve and protect the reigning dynasty. From the perspective of the day, marked as it was by categorical moral imperatives, nothing justified abandoning fidelity to

the king of Spain. For those living through the moment, however, it was not an easy decision, and accepting a new king named by Napoleon had all the appearances of legality. As Jean-René Aymes writes, if the *afrancesados* “rally around king Joseph, it is in part so as not to legalize the forceful Aranjuez coup; the rabble, the ‘vulgo’ had enthroned Ferdinand: his power carried with it a disadvantageous vice” (55). Theorizing about the moment, Archbishop Amat had written that “It is God who gives and takes away kingdoms and empires and who transfers them from one person to another, from one family to another and from one nation to another nation or people” (Juretschke 46). In the Prologue to his ill-fated edition of Padre Isla’s *Fray Gerundio de Campazas*, Moratín alludes to the circumstances of the moment by referring to “the high designs of providence, which gives and takes away scepters,” and in 1810 he takes up the same idea in a sonnet where he writes “may the flash of war / break and overturn keys and crown” (10-11). In the face of **resistant Spain** struggling against the French occupation, Moratín thus belongs to the **legal Spain** as determined by the Bourbon’s dealings with Napoleon. And yet, it is those who remained within the letter of the law who went down in history as *afrancesados*.

In this context, the question we should consequently ask is, What were the *afrancesados*? The problem confronted by Artola in 1953 and later by Juretschke in 1962 is that the term *ilustrados* is an intellectual qualifier while terms such as liberal, absolutist or conservative are more properly political. In this sense, what Méndez Bejerano (1912) and Suárez (1950) affirmed about the continuity between ilustrados, followers of Joseph the 1st, and Cadiz constitutionalists came to be questioned by Artola but strongly supported by Juretschke. Despite ideological, cultural and political affinities, however, the radical difference that transects this group is their various institutional positioning in relation to the king imposed by Napoleon. This is the difference that became the basis for subsequent historians and politicians to definitively exclude the *afrancesados* from prevailing Spanish history (whether liberal or conservative). Needless to say, both Fernandine absolutism and nineteenth-century conservatism repeatedly used collaboration with the invader—symbolized by the word *afrancesado* itself—as a weapon against its political adversaries.

In his essay “Spain and Europe in Moratín” Julián Marías lucidly framed the dilemma the *ilustrados* had to face. He contends that their situation “scarcely had an adequate solution: if they embraced the cause of national independence [confronting the invaders with arms], this would lead them to cooperating with forces that primarily wanted to resist French innovations, to maintain the ancien régime in its most reactionary forms [...] On the other hand, if they wanted to save innovations and liberty, the immediate temptation was to cooperate with the invaders or to accept them at least, and that implied abdicating national dignity and independence” (136-137). We could nuance this further by observing that this “national dignity” did not stand very well after the Bayonne abdications, although we can also observe an essentialist, transcendent conception of national dignity here, a dignity that would presumably reveal itself to any “true” Spaniard. What seems most significant to me about this social group, however, is the way it finds itself **not in between** one group and another but rather on the margin of any group. Conservatives always portray them as traitors to the eternal and immutable values of the nation, equating them more or less openly with any form of progressive liberalism; for their part, liberals and leftists will always see them as traitors to the country’s own, independent democratizing process, associating them with absolutists. In this way, to be an *afrancesado* is to be outside of everything. It is to have no anchoring in any social sector; it is to have lost any possibility of being an acceptable part of history. (One need only read López Tabar to confirm this.) Historiography is of course slippery and it can be manipulated, which is why one can read texts that with little or no sense of shame leave Goya’s *afrancesamiento* ignorantly hidden. Similarly, the chief anathemizer of the *afrancesados*, Menéndez y Pelayo, has no problem silencing Martínez Marina’s *afrancesamiento*. As a matter of fact, as Guillermo Carnero pointed out, a pact was made to have all anti-Ferdinand groups accept the Bourbon dynasty (165). As a result, no room was left to *afrancesados* who had supported monarchy beyond dynastic loyalty.

It seems then, that the task at hand is to move beyond the term *afrancesado* in order to sketch a more precise profile of Moratín’s politics. I would like to begin tracing Moratín’s political ideas with a rarely cited 1788 text, his *Carta de un vecino de Foncarral a un abogado*

de Madrid sobre el libre comercio de los huevos. It is a work in which Moratín wryly defends freedom of commerce, aligning himself with a considerable group of *ilustrados*, particularly with Cabarrús. As John Dowling affirms, “the purpose of the pamphlet is the defense of the new political economy that from 1788 onward governed commerce between Spain and the Indies and between the different regions of America” (107). It is well known that in the eighteenth century the break-up of the Cadiz monopoly on commerce with America took place, opening the succulent American market to the various regions of the peninsula in addition to authorizing interamerican commerce. Dowling has convincingly discussed Moratín’s agenda in the pamphlet, its relationship to Cabarrús, for whom Moratín had worked as secretary in 1787, and the ideological content of the letter. The same attitude in favor of freedom of commerce is also developed in Moratín’s *Apuntaciones sueltas de Inglaterra*, where the author refers with disapproval to the “English tariff system, walls that are impenetrable to foreign industry, where one pays tyrannical entry fees” (157). There are no inconsistencies in his position: Moratín is against state intervention in the economy, and in his *Viaje a Italia* he makes it clear by stating that “a king should not make plates, nor weave velvet, nor sell nitrate, nor fabricate playing cards, nor distill whiskey; he should reign.” At the same time, in contrast to the physiocrats, who emphasized the role of agriculture, Moratín moves beyond mercantilism, taking factories and industry as determining factors for economic progress.

He is for freedom of commerce and private initiative, but where does he stand on freedom more generally? In *Apuntaciones sueltas de Inglaterra* he recalls his participation in a rally at the Crown and Anchor club in favor of freedom of the press. What is interesting about this passage is that in recounting the story, Moratín emphasizes the links that the speaker, Thomas Erskine, made between freedom, the progress of public education, and the prosperity of the nation (108). Moratín takes up several discourses that reveal a progressive strengthening of the public sphere. He writes: “In England there is absolute freedom of religion; as long as civil laws are obeyed, each individual may follow the belief that pleases him, and only the man who does not fulfill his contracts is called unfaithful” (122). Such observations on freedom within the

English system become even more significant when Moratín turns to the education of women. “Women in this country”—he writes— “do not receive as restrictive and nunish an education as ours do; they are raised with more freedom and ease [...] Not having had their limbs imprisoned nor their spirits anguished, they grow tall, robust, and well filled-out, and their feet, having grown like the rest of their body parts, participate in the privileges of this freedom” (127-128). It is worth noting that for Moratín the physical and the moral or psychological are intertwined; the political and the corporeal are enmeshed such that he can clearly conclude that freedom in the broadest sense of the word produces admirable physical and mental effects. This admiration for freedom, whether religious, educational or related to the press does not translate, however, into what we might call a coherent political liberalism. Rather than defending any concrete form of political organization, Moratín favors what he calls good government or sweet government, as he affirms in Tuscany, with the grand duke Ferdinand the 3rd, or in the Republic of Venice. At the same time, Moratín cannot be described as an emphatic defender of absolute monarchy. In the English system, for example, he criticizes “the division, in truth scarcely philosophical, between nobility, clergy and commoner,” and he similarly decries “the hereditary privilege of representation in the House of Lords because of nobility and the privilege acquired by the clergy by virtue of its offices” (132). He concludes that “the ills would be lesser if this glorious constitution, such as it is, were followed more rigorously, but that is not the case” (132). In other words, constitutional monarchy seems just as acceptable a model to Moratín as an absolute monarchy that wields power sweetly. The theoretical reasoning for this position appears in another fragment of *Viaje a Italia*. “Great politicians and statesmen”—he writes—“have devised excellent systems, admirable plans where one finds such solid principles, such unassailable truths, that one would have to lack understanding to disapprove of them; but then the question of execution arrives and everything becomes disrupted because, as laws cannot operate on their own, it is necessary for men to administer them, and since men have passions, they proceed according their passions, not according to the spirit of the laws; and since the multitude is always ignorant it is easily deceived, and while looking for freedom and the good, it forges itself

chains.” One might easily wonder whether Ferdinand the 7th’s “vivan las caenas” is not anticipated here.

Moratín’s religiosity is characterized by a tolerant view of other Christian churches, by a vulgar anti-Semitism—muted in part by the injustices the Jews suffer in Rome—, and by a radical, ironic and playful anticlericalism that permeates all of his writings. His favorable allusions to the reforms carried out by the emperor Joseph the 2nd in Rome are part of his vision of the church as an institution in need of changes. It is worth recalling that Joseph the 2nd disentailed religious properties, reduced the size and number of the clergy, and issued a Proclamation of Tolerance in 1781 in order to guarantee freedom of religion. Moratín’s anticlericalism, which is fed by hatred of the Inquisition, by disdain for superstition, and by the excesses of priests and monks, crystallizes in the face of Papal politics. His criticism, mockery and incisive commentary on Vatican politics thus pertain to the sale of relics, papal bulls, beatifications and sainthoods. In short, he decries that everything is for sale in Rome.

Another ideological and political constant in Moratín is his acerbic antinobiliary sentiment. In *Viaje a Italia* he writes: “Infatuated as it is everywhere with its coats of arms and its wrinkled titles, the nobility is so arrogant, so dim-witted, so poorly educated and so full of vices that to the eyes of a philosopher, of an *hombre de bien*, it is precisely the most despicable portion of the state.” Such sentiments can be found in other texts, and they are aimed not only at the Italian republics but also at England or even Spain itself. In a note to the *Auto de fe de Logroño*, for example, Moratín does not mince words when he denounces the abusive power of the Spanish aristocracy: “In Madrid we have already seen the heirs of la Cerda [the Duke of Medinaceli and his son, the Marquis of Cogolludo] honor themselves [...] accompanied by other constables and robust lackeys, in night-time assaults on attics and pigsties and in dragging musicians, libertines, monks and old ladies to the cells of the Inquisition.” This radical antinobiliary posture, which is in consonance with his views on agrarian reform as a means to overcoming social inequality, is complemented by Moratín’s sharp understanding of the role that common people can play. He thus writes in *Viaje a Italia* that “if [the gallows] were occupied by

those who deserve it, commoners would not be the ones contributing the most victims to the punishment.” The question of who deserves such a punishment is left open. Is it the nobles? Governors? The dominant classes? Here we might see the controlled expression of a radical Jacobism that wells up despite the fears Moratín expresses about the excesses of the *pueblo*.

We cannot know what Moratín said during the reign of Joseph the 1st, but what are the ideas he expresses in writing during these years? Can one maintain, as Domínguez Ortiz does, that Moratín “was enlisted into the lines of the Intruder king without conviction” and that he was “swept up by circumstances and by his own timidity” (259)? In letters written in 1810 Moratín unequivocally expresses two central characteristics of those who were in favor of Josephist legality: on one hand they were employees of the prior monarchy who were concerned about their positions and their future; on the other, as Aymes has written, “they are champions of maintaining order at all costs and of the preservation of private property” (56). In 1813, still in Valencia, he writes “Juicio del año de 1813” in which it is striking to find an allusion to the Inquisition as the “terrible tribunal.” In a handwritten note Moratín observes that the Inquisition was subsequently reestablished “to the scandal of cultured Europe.” In 1811 Moratín published the *Auto de fe celebrado en la ciudad de Logroño [...] en 1610*, a text in which it is clear that for him the Inquisition incarnated “the furors of religious persecution” and the cause of depraved customs of the day. By contrast, the present, the reign of Joseph the 1st, is described as follows: “Today [...] it is legitimate to speak the language of reason and to abominate the errors of our fathers.”

In the Prologue to the 1811 *Fray Gerundio*, Moratín communicates clearly the kind of hopes that the reign of Joseph the 1st had awakened in him and his peers. He writes of “an extraordinary revolution that will improve the existence of the monarchy by establishing it on the solid foundations of reason, justice and power.” While some historians have taken this passage out of context, the description of Joseph’s reign is for Moratín closely linked to the role of religion. He thus observes that “during this political commotion many ministers of the lord, ignoring the high designs of his providence [...] have assured [...] that a change of dynasty was a

change of religion”. In other words, the hopes kindled by Joseph the 1st face the opposition of a clergy not at all enlightened by works such as Isla’s. It is a clergy that is shamelessly lying and using its ideological influence to stoke the low passions of an impoverished *pueblo* against an advanced, enlightened regime. Conde de Toreno himself would subsequently acknowledge that “the popular anti-French reaction was thoroughly of a sentimental order” (Aymes 45). The last note in the *Auto de fe* expresses not unqualified support for Napoleon, but rather admiration of one of the emperor’s concrete acts: “If from this day forward we will no longer have these devoted and entertaining spectacles, it is the fault of the great leader who before fifty thousand men in Chamartín put an end to the barbaric laws that ignorance dictated to the opprobrium of humanity and of reason. In Uclés, Medellín, Almonacid, Ocaña and Tarragona [these are all French victories], the imperial decree [abolishing the Inquisition] was put to referendum; and everything has been necessary in order to expel such absurd opinions, such iniquitous tribunals, such base and ferocious customs from an obstinate, easily deceived nation.”

Similarly in the Prologue to *Fray Gerundio* Moratín offers another expression of confidence in legalist Spain and criticism of anti-French resistance: “The throne whose security thought to establish itself on public misery has fallen; but the nation [that is, the resistance], deceived by its magistrates, by its writers, by its grandees, by its leaders, by the ministers of its temples, has with the constancy that characterizes it fought against its own happiness. Despite all of its mistaken efforts, there will be religion in the country, there will be laws and a nation, the sciences will flourish, and its culture will make it powerful; it shall not be a crime to censure society for sad errors.” So on one hand Moratín denounces those who manipulate the people by deceiving them about the enlightened, just government of Joseph the 1st. And on the other hand he expresses disapproval of the way resistant Spain is unwittingly in league with the reactionary politics of the Inquisition, the way it incarnates the easily manipulated irrationality of popular violence. The truth is that the resistance movement against Joseph the 1st and the French troops, which has as its objectives “the maintenance of territorial integrity” and “the reestablishment of the dynasty,” is based on falsifications such as beautifying the image of a victimized Ferdinand

and highlighting hypothetical threats to Catholicism. As Jean-René Aymes has documented, the first calls to resistance “are doctrinally situated at the antipode to liberal thinking” and appear “under the sign of rehabilitating royal absolutism” (49). To sum up, what justifies Joseph’s regime for Moratín is the suppression of the Inquisition, the abolishment of convents, and the subsequent flourishing of culture along with the rational, enlightened, just character of the king.

In speaking of Juan Antonio Llorente, Juretschke affirms that “like many others—Moratín among them, for example—he [...] did not have sufficient courage to defend his ideas and his acts, and contrary to O’Farril or Azanza, he tries to justify himself with feints and tricks” (211-12). It may be that Llorente justified himself with feints and tricks, although Juretschke’s moral judgment is not all that solid when it comes to evaluating political dispositions. What is true is that Moratín did not of course write an apologetic self-defense; neither did figures as significant as Ranz Romanillos or Martínez Marina. He did leave, however, enough evidence in his later writings to make his position clear. In a note that he attached to the poem “En lenguaje y verso antiguo,” which he dedicated to Godoy, Moratín fully acknowledges the role that the king’s favorite (who some have called dictator and the like) played in his life. He writes that Godoy “distinguished Moratín among the humanists who flourished then, and he continuously encouraged him to write [...] [It was an] error, no doubt, but not the biggest one he committed during his government.” Someone who writes this type of thing cannot be accused of not having the courage to defend his ideas and acts. Moratín could not write anything similar concerning Joseph the 1st because he did not receive any particular favor from him. For the same reason he did not convey public support for Joseph.

When toward the end of the Napoleonic occupation the Captain General of Valencia, Francisco Javier Elío expelled Moratín from the city, he went to Barcelona, whose captain general, the Baron de Eroles, received him more humanely, allowing him to stay in the city. The baron did not feel the urgency that Elío did to expel Moratín from national soil. In July 1814 Moratín writes two letters. The first, written on the 18th, is to his friend Sebastián Loche, asking him to update his friends in Madrid about his situation in Barcelona. The other, written on the

30th, is to his close friend Juan Antonio Melón. Both letters practically convey the same message, although the tone of each varies. He writes the following to Melón: “You know well that, harassed by that Pepe, by that court, by those ministers, by Faipoult [Joseph Napoleon’s Minister of the Public Treasury], by his baldness and his impudent lies, and by so much abandonment, so many inconsistencies, eternal charlatanism and constant robbery and conning, I resolved to stay in Valencia at the mercy of my friends, to give my work to whoever wished to take it, and to live far away from such crooked people [...] But the great Pepe came up with one of his usual maneuvers: the French evacuated Valencia and began to flee, and there you have me, exposed again to the ire of the sovereign *pueblo* and the vengeance of the literary and sentimental hoard. I could not take any more; I left Valencia; I tried to stay in Castellón and they told me that it was folly because the Friar (a ferocious man, the leader of some four thousand partisans who were soldiers worthy of him) was in the surrounding hills. Within hours of the French departure he was going to occupy all of the villages and he would exert his customary cruelty against anybody who seemed suspicious to him; even the most innocent would not be safe [...] There was talk then of armistice, of the Congress of Prague and of a peace that we awaited from one moment to the next [...] I went to Valencia where general Elío commanded, and it gets into his head to persecute me and exile me to France, trampling the king’s decrees, which positively allowed me to live free in Spain [...] I finally arrived to Barcelona; a general took charge of the iniquitous outrage committed against me; he consulted with the court and in fifteen or twenty days I think I will have my license to be wherever I please [...] My property is impounded, neither Oviedo nor Córdoba have given me a penny, and they quote I know not what orders from the *Cortes* in order not to give me anything.” Moratín succinctly summarizes his activities under Joseph the 1st to Loche: “I had been an employee, I had left Madrid with the convoy and, furthermore, I was a Knight of the Pentagon; these were circumstances that exposed me in the terrible days of abandon and disorder to the peoples’ every insult, and in the days that followed to the vengeance of the literati, whose club you know I never joined.” So Moratín shows his disappointment in the face of the corruption of Joseph’s regime. Facing the

“betrayals” of the French he shows the fear that “patriot” warriors caused him, the brutality of the absolutists, and the thirst for vengeance of the men of letters of the “nation.” His activities during the time are summed up in the word *employee*.

But how involved was he in Joseph’s regime? We do not have much data on what he might have said or thought at the time, although in the preceding letters it seems clear that he experienced profound disillusionment with the reign of Joseph the 1st. In preparing the edition of his *Obras dramáticas y líricas*, towards 1824-25 Moratín takes advantage of the various notes he appends to his works in order to strike a balance on the earlier years, including those of Joseph Bonaparte. To my understanding, the most significant of these notes is appended to Moratín’s sonnet to Meléndez Valdés, where he writes the following: “The ease with which Spain detaches itself from the sons that most enlighten it and the indifference with which it looks at their loss makes too clear the backwardness to which three centuries of political and religious oppression have reduced her. The names of Jovellanos, Antillón, García Suelto, Sánchez Barbero, Mociño, Meléndez, Conde and Muñoz (not to speak of those that exist) are so many more accusations against the absolutist and constitutional, the monarchical and the philosophical, the liberal and the servile governments that in the last several years have alternately directed public administration. When accosted from all parts, French arms abandoned our soil and the usurper who called himself king disappeared and a constitution that was called liberal and beneficent was established [i.e. the Cadiz constitution], Meléndez and many others, having already learned from preceding efforts, fled the prisons and knives that threatened their existence [...] The constitution fell, the sovereign occupied the throne a second time, everything changed except the spirit of proscription that is our genius; those who had emigrated continued in their exile, suffering all the helplessness and affliction of a painful undeserved persecution.” Moratín makes clear what he had earlier affirmed in *Viaje a Italia*: there is no form of political organization that in and of itself guarantees good government. The errors of liberals, absolutists, constitutionalists and *serviles* succeed one another without Moratín’s seeming to deduce a firm position in favor of any of them.

In 1821 in Barcelona, Moratín writes a sonnet “En elogio del batallón de Guardia Nacional de Barcelona, compuesto de niños voluntarios.” And while he prophesies in the last verse that the children comprising the National Guard will be the “scourge of tyrants,” in a handwritten note to the poem he writes: “May they grow, and moved by the true love of country, inseparable from virtue, unagitated by infamous or ferocious passions, subject to the laws and always ready to defend them, may they make such attractive hopes true for the common utility.” These words probably summarize better than others the political convictions of the Moratín who returns to the Spain of the Constitutional Triennium.

Guillermo de Torre contends that the *afrancesados* were “faithful to their demanding consciences, daring to put themselves at risk in difficult conflicts” and that they were “ideological patriots who put their own interests before the apparent interests of the nation, [thus prefiguring] a human type that repeats itself often in the wars of this [the 20th] century” (346). The difference between apparent interests and essential interests is telling. Maintaining themselves in the solitude of conviction explains perhaps the *afrancesado*’s being outside of history, although they may be a topic of historiography. Moratín saw in Joseph the 1st the pragmatic possibility of advancing the cause of the public welfare, but the experience of Joseph’s reign (like the later experience of Ferdinand) convinced him not to trust in anything or anybody. This explains his convictions prior to the invasion, his tepid, uncertain *josefinismo* and, as we have seen, his later skepticism.

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