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Courting *Convivencia*: Hispano-Arab Identity and Spanish Women's Orientalism in the Franco Regime's Years of "Unbearable Solitude" (1946-1950)

She would have given all she possessed [...] to have had him as she once thought him, a man of her own colour, not with this dreadful black barrier between them; [...] He was lost to her forever. No amount of love or understanding could pull down that barrier.
(Louise Gerard. *A Son of the Sahara*. 1922: n. pag.)

Había entre ellos muchas cosas, raza, religión, costumbres, pero cuando un gran amor une dos corazones, todo desaparece. Y ellos saltaron por encima de todo.
(Ana Marcela García. *El oasis del odio*. 1951: 72)

An insight into Spain's longstanding self-perception as a hospitable and non-racist nation can be glimpsed in the suggestive claim of Ramiro de Maeztu in his 1934 *Defensa de la Hispanidad*:

los españoles no damos importancia a la sangre, ni al color de la piel, porque lo que llamamos raza no está constituido por aquellas características que puedan transmitirse al través de las obscuridades protoplásmicas, sino por aquellas otras que son luz del espíritu, como el habla y el credo. La Hispanidad está compuesta de hombres de las razas blanca, negra, india y malaya, y sus combinaciones [...]. (34)

Murdered at the outbreak of the Civil War, Maeztu, prominent thinker of the Generation of 98 and supporter of the 1936 military uprising, became one of the Rebels' first martyrs. His concept of *Hispanidad*, which integrated nationalism, Catholic principles and a belief in Spain's "espíritu misionero" (Maeztu 90) had been taken up enthusiastically by the Falangists and later constituted one of the most emblematic policies of the Franco regime (Grossman 756-757). This negative association of his work has endured, so it is perhaps surprising to recall that in an affectionate letter to Maeztu following *Defensa's* publication, the poet and Republican, Antonio Machado, lavished praise on the work and concurred with its "análisis y valoración del humanismo español" (González Cuevas, 315). Setting aside the obvious sentiment of colonial exceptionalism, it is not difficult to see how Maeztu's insistence on race as a matter of spirituality and culture, and the innate equality of all human beings (e.g. 34-35, 75, 79-81, 91-92, 103, 214), lends itself to such a favourable interpretation.

Maeztu's definition of *Hispanidad* reflected the move in Europe from a concept of biological race to more spiritual and civilizational inflected notions of *raza cultural* or *raza histórica* from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.¹ For obvious reasons, the former would become untenable after World War Two and "race" was officially denounced as a myth by UNESCO in 1949 (González Alcantud 16, 39). But alongside cultural and historical meanings, Maeztu articulates an idea of the Spanish race as built on *mestizaje* that both he and Machado would have been familiar with from energetic intellectual debates in the late nineteenth century that had consolidated an ideologically and politically unifying conception of Spain as a racially hybrid nation (Goode 2-4, 17, 33, 63) and was subsequently appropriated by Spanish fascism (9-10). Maeztu's perspective can be traced to the late nineteenth century Catholic traditionalist vision represented by Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, which understood fusion as the expression of both the Spanish spirit of conquest and the Catholic ecumenical embrace of indigenous peoples (63). Unlike the British, for example, asserted the anthropologist Manuel Antón, not only did the Spaniards bring civilization to New World, "we gave them [...] even our blood, which was the most that we could give. And this is something the British have never known how to give" (quoted in Goode 69).

¹ For an analysis of the development of these concepts in Europe, see González Alcantud (2011).

The shift in meaning that concepts such as “race” and “culture” were undergoing in the early twentieth century is exemplified in the revised name of the *Día de la Raza* to *Día de la Hispanidad* in Spain on 12 October 1939. Established in 1917, this celebration of ties between Spain and Latin America (the precise referent of *raza* was ambiguous), was part of a wider project of regeneration to deepen Hispano-American alliance in the wake of Spain’s 1898 losses and the growing economic and cultural hegemony of the United States. For José Antonio González Alcántud, the ideologues of *Hispanidad*, and namely the historian Rafael Altamira, fought to counter the *leyenda negra* that had long haunted Spain (230), and the ostensibly anti-imperialist, anti-racist orientation of *Hispanidad* contributed to fomenting the conviction in Spain that “nosotros no somos ni fuimos racistas” (177). Maeztu was in fact opposed to the term *raza* as a marker of cultural ties because of its association with biological characteristics and hence preferred *Hispanidad* (Birkenmaier 198-199).²

In Francoism’s formulation, *Hispanidad* became a tool of political expediency to sustain the imperial dream that was a main agglutinating factor among the various sectors which supported the Rebels during the Civil War. Despite its inclusive pretensions, the exclusionary principle inherent to *raza cultural* was devastatingly apparent in the Rebels’ treatment of their enemies. Republican Spaniards were conceived of as racialized others, effectively denying them “Spanishness”. Joshua Goode contends that the long legacy of the scholarly assumption of Spain as lacking a theory of race (resting on an implicit or explicit comparison with the Nazi model of purity) has had an exculpatory side-effect that is detectable, for example, in the continued reluctance of certain historians to acknowledge frankly that some of the policies pursued by the Franco regime against its enemies were akin to those implemented by the Nazis (209-214). The discursive prevalence of *raza* in post-War society, as well as the malleability of the concept, made it open to interpretation and applicable to situations beyond those circumscribed by official discourse. This article explores one intriguing and unstudied mode of imaginative engagement with Francoism’s promotion of *Hispanidad* and its relationship to colonial discourse regarding Morocco: an Orientalist sub-genre of the defining Spanish romance novel of the dictatorship, the *novela rosa*. Set in indeterminate North African locations, this *Orientalismo rosa* rewrites its more well-known British precursor, the popular desert romance, along apparently pro-miscegenation lines – in contrast with literary trends at home and beyond. In so doing, it probes the inclusive and exclusive element of the idea of hybridity as constituting the Spanish race.

The juxtaposition of citations opening this article exposes the glaring differences between the British and Spanish examples; still, they bear some comment to prepare the ground for what follows. The “tragedy so ghastly” lamented by the English heroine of Louise Gerard’s 1921 *A Son of the Sahara*, is the discovery that her fiancé has Arab roots. Gerard resolves the dilemma of forbidden love and leaves intact the novel’s unstinting racism by later revealing to the protagonists a fact that the reader has been comfortable in knowing from the outset: that Raoul Le Breton/Casim Ammeh is the son of a French colonel who had impregnated his mother just before she was abducted by a sultan in the Egyptian desert. As a supposed “half-caste”, the male protagonist provokes disgust because he embodies the spectre of miscegenation abhorred by colonial powers (Stoler 33-39; Young 25, 149-50, 181). Accordingly, in such romances, the device of mistaken identity functions to unveil Arab heroes as white Europeans to authorize the happy ending and avert the awful prospect of “contaminating” the white, imperial “race” and compromising its prestige (Diamond 93-103; Teo

² The term *raza* was defended by some Latin American intellectuals, e.g. the Dominican Pedro Henríquez Ureña, because of its perceived affective charge (Birkenmaier 198). However, the *Día de la Raza* was condemned by the Cuban thinker Fernando Ortiz for its homogenizing intent, Spanish paternalism and tint of scientific racism (197). He famously criticized Altamira, who had visited Cuba and other Latin American countries delivering a series of talks on the Hispano-American “comunidad de ‘raza’” (204).

84-85, 104-5, 108).³ Hence for a British woman in the 1920s (and until 1948), entering into a mixed marriage meant relinquishing her citizenship (Baldwin 522). Turning to Ana Marcela García's 1951 *El oasis del odio*, there is a divergent advocacy of miscegenation. The character Fadal's reference to her Spanish mother and Arab father's surpassing of boundaries animates the prospect of romance between her brother, Omar, and the Spanish heroine. Whereas "race" is the insurmountable obstacle in the British desert romance, resolved only through its disavowal, religion is the apparently more tractable problem in the numerous *novelas rosa* occupied with "interracial" love. This stance, together with the novels' gesture of incorporation into the Catholic community, resonates with Maeztu's message about "la igualdad esencial de las almas" (75), predicated on an innate capacity for conversion (104-5).

Why should this overlooked and non-prestigious literary genre elicit our interest? One reason is that its Orientalist variety shows an arresting departure from what is generally assumed to be the virtual absence of portrayals of mixed relationships across the colonial divide in contemporaneous fiction concerning the Spanish protectorate in Morocco (Carrasco González *Historia*; Mateo Dieste "Amores prohibidos").⁴ Even though no law existed against miscegenation in Spain, the racialized hierarchy that underwrote the Spanish colonial project engendered a *de facto* tacit prohibition which was largely upheld in cultural representation. Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste remarks that the attraction felt by Spanish men towards Moroccan women – often unreciprocated or ending in catastrophe – is a recurrent theme, while romance between Spanish women and Moroccan men remains taboo (133-136). Susan Martín-Márquez's brilliant study bears out this observation: her analysis of Francoist films with a Moroccan/Moorish theme illustrates that even when these feature *mestizo/a* characters and flirt with "poetically Orientalized heterosexual love relationships" (221), anxieties about such relationships in real life are managed either by foreclosing their realisation, or by redefining hybrid protagonists as ethnic Moroccans, thus precluding their integration into the Spanish nation (220-268). During the Civil War, intimacy between Spanish women and North African recruits was not tolerated in the Nationalist zone (Martín Corrales 224). Fear of mixing was acute: alarmed by the presence of so many Moroccans on the peninsula, the colonial authorities, the Delegación de Asuntos Indígenas (D.A.I.), ordered the immediate repatriation of all those whose services were no longer needed (Nerín 235). Subsequently, from 1945, the considerable consternation caused by mixed relationships led to the implementation by D.A.I. of a covert policy to obstruct them, with an overwhelming focus on those between Moroccan men and Spanish women (Rodríguez Mediano, "Delegación"). Efforts to undertake mixed marriages were severely hampered by the D.A.I. (Mateo Dieste 148), which considered them anathema (Rodríguez Mediano 179). Moreover, if they did manage to take place, neither party could acquire the other's nationality (187). In this respect, the attitude was not dissimilar to the British colonial stance, and studies of race in the colonies were invariably prompted by "el miedo a la mezcla sexual" (González Alcantud 18). Evidently, fusion was a Spanish quality best performed in the past.

³ The notion that racial mixing would lead to degeneration of the "superior races" had been most influentially expressed in the previous century by the French anthropologist Arthur Gobineau in his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-1855) (González Alcantud 42; Goode 30). The "unveiling" device was also repeatedly used in Hollywood film: see Jack Shaheen's encyclopaedic study, *Reel Bad Arabs*.

⁴ The exception both cite is Carmen Nonell's 1956 *Zoco Grande* (Carrasco González 249; Mateo Dieste 137), also discussed by Martín-Márquez (272-277). What is not mentioned is that Nonell also wrote *novelas rosa* and was likely responding to the Orientalist sub-genre studied here. A forthcoming article examines *Zoco Grande* in this connection.

It is no surprise that popular, female-authored depictions of interracial love have not received scholarly attention. Hurriedly and inexpertly written for the most part, and deemed to be purveyors of the most retrograde Francoist gender ideology, or simple escapist triviality, when the *novela rosa* has been subjected to critical scrutiny, the justification is usually limited to its undeniable sociological bearing.⁵ Andrés Amorós puts this into context when he notes that fewer than 5,000 copies were printed of Luis Martín Santos's *Tiempo de Silencio*, a landmark novel of the dictatorship, whereas Corín Tellado's romances could reach 100,000 (12).⁶ Less visible authors are the focus here; even so, Nino Keadze observes that María del Pilar Carré and María Adela Durango (discussed below) originally had a larger readership than canonical women writers (*Romance and Exemplarity* 47). Durango's 1947 *El príncipe Harasi Kaddur*, for example, had an initial print run of 10,000, which also doubled the norm for the average *novela rosa* at the time. One might be inclined to dismiss the exceptions presented by these texts in their treatment of interracial relations because they are so obviously fantasy constructs; yet the ostensible purpose of the *novela rosa* to emulate prescribed codes of conduct (Keadze, *Romance and Exemplarity*), makes their deviation from norms notable. One might also reasonably point out that the depictions of homoerotic bonding in colonial settings in the literary and cinematographic texts scrupulously examined by Martín-Márquez (161-219), are no less fantastical. As Keadze perceptively argues, viewing women's romances as "always already read" means disregarding the ways in which the genre (which, after all, young women were encouraged to practise) could serve as "an auspicious testing ground" for negotiating social expectations and gender identities ("Francoist Politics" 124). Bearing in mind, Jo Labanyi's apposite insight that romance novels provided a form of cultural continuity in a post-War context of radical and traumatic personal and political disruption ("Romancing" 4-5), I suggest that whereas the British narratives unmask their heroes as European, the use of conversion by the Spanish ones can be interpreted in a more metaphorical sense (facilitated by cultural notions of *raza*) that relates to the social cleavages of the post-War period. As such, they provide an insight into the reception of Francoist colonial discourse in one of the areas of Spanish culture that Labanyi argues remains "ghostly", precisely because it was "consumed by subaltern groups" ("Engaging" 1).

My intention thus is not to make an essentialist claim that the Spanish female imaginary was more open-minded regarding miscegenation when compared to male cultural producers, or the British desert romance novelists. Rather, I am interested in investigating the frequent appearance of mixed relationships in the post-War climate of international ostracism and the regime's attendant promotion of *Hispanidad*. In what follows, attention is directed to the Hispano-Arab dimension of the latter discourse and its material manifestations during the United Nations official condemnation between 1946 and 1950: specifically, the "courtship" of emerging Arab states designed to "[fulfil] the role of feigning a minimum of external credibility" (Bautista Delgado 304) and to palliate "una soledad insoportable", in the evocative words of then diplomat, Fernando Morán (quoted in Algora Weber 41). To elucidate these linkages, this article first addresses certain discursive uses of *raza* and Hispano-Arab *convivencia* in the formulation of Nationalist identity and dwells on the example of *Raza*, the novel-cum-screenplay by Jaime de Andrade (pseudonym of Francisco Franco), published in 1942 and released in cinemas that year. It then turns to the influence of British female-authored Orientalism and, specifically, the case of E.M. Hull's 1919 scandalous bestseller, *The Sheik*, re-issued in a new Spanish translation in 1943, a year after *Raza*, and comparable to the latter in terms of its cultural resonance. The final part explores the different ways in which these texts and the debates they engaged shape the Spanish Orientalist romances by analysing a selection published between 1943 and 1951 by María del Pilar Carré, María Adela Durango, Ana Marcela García and Lía Ramos.

⁵ E.g. Amorós (1968); Díez Borque (1972).

⁶ His book only addresses a small corpus of 10 novels, all by Tellado.

Raza and Hispano-Arab Identity

A centuries-long history of depictions of the Muslim “other” preceded the authors of the Orientalist *novela rosa*. María Soledad Carraso Urgoiti observes that literary *maurophilia* emerged with the *romances fronterizos* in the last decades of the fifteenth century and refers to the nostalgic, idealized representations of the Moor and Moorish civilization when the Moors had already ceased to be a threat (21). The *romances* gave rise to a form of Spanish “exotismo que no conduce a regiones remotas, sino al propio pasado” – a past that was on the verge of disappearing with the fall of Granada in 1492 (41). The resulting portrayal of the Moor as having a “carácter sentimental y galante” (26) derived from the medieval ideal of courtly love (20, 49) and continues to resonate in Spanish women’s *Orientalismo rosa* during the Franco regime. Yet *maurophilia* and *maurophobia* have invariably been two sides of the same coin (17). As Juan Goytisolo observes, “A menudo será nuestro negativo: proyección de cuanto censuramos en nuestro fuero interno, y objeto por tanto de aborrecimiento y envidia. A veces, también la imagen romántica y atractiva de un imposible ideal” (8). Hence the dichotomy of the “buen abencerraje” versus “el moro sanguinario, violador y fanático” is a recurrent presence in Spanish literature across eight centuries (17).

The troubling duality of the Moor was cast anew during the Moroccan Campaigns (1909-1927) and encapsulated in the *moro amigo*, versus the *moro enemigo* or *rebelde*, who was stubbornly defiant towards the Spanish colonial enterprise. The former applied to the tribal leaders with whom pacts had been forged and to the *Regulares* (Moroccan soldiers in the pay of the Spanish army); and later extended to the troops recruited for the Nationalist side during the Civil War. For many Spaniards, their deployment of Moroccan fighters in the Civil War, evoked as a Reconquista by both sides, symbolically signified the return of the “enemy Moor” to Spain. Despite the exploitation, by Republicans and Rebels alike of entrenched perceptions of Muslims as the external enemy, the fiercely traditionalist Nationalists were able to draw on “a long-established myth of Hispano-Arabic identity” and “idealized vision of *convivencia*” to offset the weakening of their ideological front (Jensen 496).⁷ Paradoxically, the *Reconquista* as a prism through which to view the Civil War meant that the Republican enemy could be conceived of as a foreign aggressor: a new version of the erstwhile Muslim invaders. Crucially, too, Moroccans belonged to the community of believers, the single most important trait which justified the alienation of the Republicans from the *Patria*. Indeed, the incorporation of the Moor and concomitant denial of Spanishness to the “infidel” Republican, facilitated the latter’s construction as a racialized other. A chilling example of this discourse is provided by the writer Carlota O’Neill (wife of the murdered Republican Captain Virgilio Leret) when she describes hearing the prosecutor “clamando por el exterminio de la raza que no pensara como él” (93) at a *consejo de guerra* in Melilla.

Franco’s own triumphalist account of the Civil War as a *cruzada* in his propaganda vehicle *Raza*, contains several references extolling the Hispano-Arab component of Spanish history and racial hybridity with maurophilic overtones. In an early scene, having received his “Real Despacho de Oficial” from Toledo’s Military Academy in a ceremony in the Alcázar, the protagonist José Churruga pontificates on the fortress’s illustrious past, selecting an anecdote about “dolores femeninos” to impress his mother and sister:

⁷ There is not space here to examine representations of the Moor in Republican propaganda during the Civil War: see Martín Corrales (2002) and Sotomayor Blázquez (2005).

Sí, de las inquietudes de Doña Berenguela, mujer de Alfonso VI [*sic*]⁸, cuando desde un torreón del viejo Alcázar ve acercarse los ejércitos árabes que sorprenden a la ciudad desguarnecida. Contados caballeros guardan a la dama, mas a la caballeridad española responde el gesto de la hueste agarena, que saluda y pasa perdonando la cautividad a la dama indefensa. (65)

Here the gallant conduct of the Muslim army upon reaching the unprotected Alcázar and its vulnerable queen is seen to mirror Christian “caballeridad”. The episode refers to the 1139 attack on Toledo by the army of al-Zubair ibn ‘Umar, governor of Córdoba and Granada, in response to King Alfonso VII’s onslaught and siege of nearby Oreja. In this dramatic story, narrated in Book II of the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*,⁹ al-Zubair and his forces are unable to thwart events at Oreja and resort to an attack on Toledo. They are deterred by the Empress Berengaria/Berenguela’s message warning al-Zubair that he is about to wage war on a woman. Arriving at the Alcázar, they are greeted by the sight of Berengaria at its summit accompanied by her ladies-in-waiting clutching their prayer books, whereupon they begin singing and playing instruments.¹⁰ The chivalrous attitude of the retreating Muslim army is explained by James F. Powers as the result of a shared honour code that renders the episode plausible (21). Its inclusion in *Raza* is evidently supposed to echo the honourable conduct of Moroccan warriors in the Civil War, for it is consonant with the Nationalists’ other claim that they were respectful to Spanish women (Martín Corrales 225). This contradicted, for example, Queipo de Llano’s ranting radio broadcasts which sought to terrorize Republicans with reports of massacres committed by the *Regulares* (134, 220-221, 146, 151). Some of these bore the vicious mark of a reversed colonialism, such as the reference to a “razzia espantosa” (174).¹¹ Orientalist stereotypes of savage sexual excess were also reworked in Queipo’s sadistic revelling in incidences of past and future rapes (e.g. 431, 456). In *Raza*, the parallel between the Civil War and the Middle Ages works allegorically to legitimate the collaboration of the Nationalists with the present-day “Moors” (and to distance them from the more recent and compromising image of the ferocious Rif warrior) who were a worthy adversary in times past. José, like Franco, later becomes “Capitán de Regulares” (73) in another gesture fusing past and present Moors.¹²

Another significant parallel that would surely not have been lost on *Raza*’s audience reinforces the psychic displacement of the Moorish enemy with the Republican other. The Toledo episode resonates with Franco’s September 1936 diversion of his African forces to relieve the Republican siege of the Alcázar, thus “reconquering” a site associated in cultural memory with the first defeat by Christian forces of Muslim-held territory. His “strategically bizarre” (Preston, “General Franco” 29) detour slowed the advance to Madrid and obeyed solely political motives. A propaganda coup, the “emotional victory and propagandistic coup” (29) of the Alcázar’s liberation consolidated Franco’s position as the Rebels’ supreme military and political commander (Graham 40). Images of the war-torn Alcázar continued to be exploited after the War as both a symbol of Francoist resistance and of Imperial Spain (Barreiro López 724). In *Raza*, José is positioned as caretaker of this lost history that Spaniards have neglected at their peril. The fate of the nation depends upon the resurgence of the true Spanish “race”, the embodiment of which is the *Almogávar*: “lo más heroico

⁸ José’s praise for the Academy’s rote-learning method, to which he credits the knowledge he is proudly sharing, is involuntarily undermined by his erroneously stating Doña Berenguela to be the wife of Alfonso VI (instead of Alfonso VII).

⁹ See Powers (1995), and Barton and Fletcher (2000) for discussion of the chronicle.

¹⁰ Predictably, the daring bravery and ingenuity attributed to Empress Berengaria is reduced in *Raza* to a story of mere “dolores femeninos” (65).

¹¹ *Razzias* were attacks on Moroccan villages perpetrated by the Spanish colonial army.

¹² Although the bonds forged between colonial officers and *Regulares* facilitated recruitment (Balfour 275), the vast majority appear to have enlisted because of economic deprivation and coercive measures than out of any conviction regarding the Nationalist cause (Madariaga, “Intervention” 78-9; *Los moros* 180-1).

de la legión romana, lo más noble y guerrero de las estirpes árabes” fused with “nuestra raza ibera” (198). The concept combines the elitism of fascism (despite its populist bid, *Raza*’s protagonists are of aristocratic stock) with Falangism’s espousal of hybridity.

After the War, the privileged position of the Moorish other was maintained by the new regime. Until Moroccan independence in 1956, Franco’s *Guardia Mora* constituted a potent visual encapsulation of the embrace of the Moor. At an individual level, one of the dictator’s most loyal soldiers, Mohammed Ben Mezzian, rose to the highest ranks of the Spanish army, becoming Captain-General of Franco’s native Galicia. Such displays of inclusion are partially explicable because it was necessary to express gratitude for the Moroccan contribution to victory and, accordingly, a number of cultural texts exalted the Hispano-Moroccan relationship. The continued existence of the protectorate also had to be justified in view of the empty assurances about Morocco’s future independence given by the Rebels during the Civil War (Balfour 274). Most importantly, the self-interested pursuit of Hispano-Arab amity would become the lynchpin of the regime’s foreign policy when it found itself diplomatically ostracized after the Second World War via UN Resolution 39/I: passed on 12 December 1946 and rescinded four years later on 4 November 1950 by 386/V (Algora Weber 49, 79). Throughout this time, the regime strove to gain the backing of the newly decolonized Arab countries in the UN to overturn Resolution 39/1 (the so-called “política puente”) and thereby secure its long-term survival, even while trying to retain its own status as a colonial power. It was a balancing act that involved outward shows of support for Moroccan nationalism to differentiate the Spanish approach from British and French imperialism (Gillespie 22-3). The discourse of *convivencia* had been revitalized by the *Africanistas* in the late nineteenth century, undergirded by the findings of anthropologists, such as Manuel Antón, who claimed that the fundamentals of the Spanish racial mix were an amalgamation of European and North African roots, but that “the closest racial affinity was to be found in Morocco” (Goode 71). These ideas were co-opted with militaristic emphasis by emergent Nationalist ideology and the regime’s subsequent cultivation of the Arab world was even referred to as *mozarabidad*, recalling the Arabic-speaking Christians of al-Andalus who lived in Muslim lands and followed Arab customs without converting (Rein 201). Franco’s 1947 end of year speech singled out Morocco in markedly affectionate terms, offering up “unas palabras de amor para el noble y leal pueblo marroquí, tan unido a nosotros” (“31 de diciembre”).

Hispanicizing *The Sheik*

Nevertheless, as the foregoing already indicates, a defining trait of the Franco regime’s colonial discourse, and its attitude towards Moroccans, was its inherently contradictory nature – revealed and exploited in Spanish women’s Orientalist romances. The dictatorship’s efforts to foster positive perceptions of Moroccans is attested in the intervention of new censorship norms to eliminate racist material that might be offensive to Moroccans, including Franco’s own 1922 *Diario de una bandera* (Martín-Márquez 206). On the other hand, despite the logic of Hispano-Arab identity seeming favourable to miscegenation, heterosexual racial mixing was outlawed in cultural representations primarily for domestic consumption (and, as noted, sabotaged in real life in the protectorate by the colonial authorities). For example, a section was removed from the 1952 republication of Antonio Fernández-Caro’s Hispano-Arab inspired poetry which, exceptionally, appeared to proffer reflections on sexual contact between Moroccan men and Spanish women (272). The pernicious influence on susceptible young women of “literaturas totalmente nefastas” penned by “escritores africanistas ‘exóticos’” was highlighted among the chief concerns of the D.A.I. (Rodríguez Mediano 174, 176): journalist and writer Luis Antonio de la Vega, who occasionally “ventur[ed] to focus on

mixed couples”, was one target “despite his otherwise impeccable Francoist credentials” (Martín-Márquez 271).

Of course, after the Civil War, the risk of interracial relationships was much lower. This enabled Francoism to promote Hispano-Arab identity nationally – and internationally in an attempt to curry favour with the Arab countries whose support it needed – while covertly pursuing anti-miscegenation tactics in the contact zone of the protectorate and controlling the expression of *mestizaje* in the cultural imaginary. One of the regime’s foremost colonial ideologues, Rodolfo Gil Benumeya offers a telling insight into the regime’s simultaneous deployment of contradictory positions. In his 1952 *Hispanidad y arabidad*, he highlights Latin American and Arab solidarity with Spain in the 1949 vote against the UN resolution (132) and he applauds historical examples of intermarriage among Middle-Eastern Arabs, Spaniards and Hispano-Americans, citing these as evidence that “resulta imposible trazar fronteras entre lo árabe y lo hispano, pues sangres semejantes corren con frecuencia por venas de unos y de otros” (83). Still he stops short of endorsing *mestizaje* in the present (except in distant Latin America), tending to view mixture as already ossified in the *raza hispana*, much like he sees Morocco as the living past: “una supervivencia de la media España medieval” (95).

Besides popular male-authored fiction which underlined cultural commonalities with Morocco without countenancing mixed marriage, the romance novels by young Spanish women were clearly influenced by European literary Orientalism to expand the new official “discourse of brotherly love” (Martín-Márquez 206) into the realms of romantic entanglement. The most famous text is E. M. Hull’s 1919 polemical sensation, *The Sheik*. Credited, alongside its 1921 Hollywood adaptation starring Rudolph Valentino, with launching “sheikh fever” across Europe and North America in the 1920s (Teo 1), the novel represented the feminization of the desert romance (a sub-genre of the nineteenth century romance novel) and women’s insertion into the discourse of Orientalism (85). *The Sheik* has enjoyed a long legacy: variations on its narrative paradigm, which has an intrepid Western heroine being abducted and eventually falling in love with an Arab hero, continue to proliferate among the category romances of Harlequin Mills & Boon.¹³ First translated into Spanish as *Diana en el desierto* in 1926 by Rafael Cansinos-Assens, *The Sheik* was more avidly read when re-issued in 1943 in a new translation by Palmira Viñolas Saurí, significantly titled *El árabe*.¹⁴ It was shorn of the more sexually suggestive passages, according to the censor’s 1942 report “por la crudeza de su exposición” – a euphemistic reference to the implied scenes of coercive sex.¹⁵ For Hsu-Ming Teo, the most radical aspect of *The Sheik* was not that eroticized violence morphed into love, but that for nearly the duration of the novel the reader titillatingly participates in a transgression of the racial taboo by believing the affair to take place between a white woman and an Arab (79). By 1946, *El árabe* was already on its seventh edition. Of note is the altered title, which re-centres the male protagonist and his ethnicity by favouring the term “árabe”. The sequel, *El hijo del árabe*, also appeared in 1943, and the translation of other popular desert romances such as those by Robert Hitchens (*El jardín de Alá*) and Kathlyn Rhodes (*La gloria de la luna*) followed in 1947 (though these shunned interracial relations), indicating that the genre was then in vogue. Outside Spain,

¹³ The rise since 9/11 of “sheikh romances” has attracted new critical interest in the genre: e.g. studies by Teo (2012), Jarmakani (2015) and Burge (2016). Its peculiar longevity is striking amid the persistent scarcity of interracial romances in cultural production.

¹⁴ It is conceivable that the commissioning of a new translation was linked to his marginalization during the Franco regime for his Republican sympathies.

¹⁵ Passages containing sexual material (allowed in the 1926 edition) were removed from pages 62, 64, 96, 114, 148 (Expediente: 285-42).

however, interest had petered out by the 1930s, according to Teo because colonial unrest in the Middle East after the First World War had curbed the desert's romantic appeal (85).¹⁶

The close link between the rise and fall in popularity of the genre and socio-political developments is illustrated in the Spanish Orientalist *novela rosa*, which is a cultural particularity of the Franco regime, attuned to its rhetoric of Hispano-Arab identity. Writers would have been positively steered in that direction given the concentrated press coverage. To cite but two prominent examples during international hostility, a Spanish cultural delegation toured Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria in early 1947, and September saw the opening of the great mosque in Melilla by the Spanish High Commissioner, José Enrique Varela (Rein 201).¹⁷ The attraction to Orientalist fiction can, of course, also be attributed to its ready-made connotations of exoticism, sexuality and abundant sensuality – exacerbated by Spanish stereotypes about the alleged permissiveness and lasciviousness of North African and Islam (Goytisolo 73; Mateo Dieste 131) – in a climate when official propaganda “insistía en los peligros de entregarse a cualquier exceso o derroche” (Martín Gaité 12). Like their British forerunners, the Spanish sheikh romances are also distinctly classist and furnish their female protagonists with welcome opportunities for social mobility, via connection to a powerful Arab hero, amid post-War conditions of poverty and austerity. Yet the different attitudes towards “race” cannot be accounted for merely by the fact that they were published some two to three decades after the desert romance, since “the pseudo-sheikh” (i.e. the Arab suitor unmasked as a white European) remained the norm in British publishing until 1970s (Burge 31). The New Woman protagonist of *The Sheik* is preserved from the fate of losing her British citizenship when Ahmed Ben Hassan, the eponymous sheikh, turns out to be the son of an English aristocrat “gone native”. A vestige of exoticism remains by endowing him with Spanish heritage on the maternal side in a convenient and intuitive exchange of Arab for Spanish ethnicity that exemplifies the trend from the nineteenth century to “Orientalize” Spain from without, as a “conveniently close-to-home incarnation of the Oriental exotic” (Nunley 125).¹⁸ The cursory nature of the revelation of origins in *The Sheik* is underscored in Diana's final reflections, which divulge her intention to continue to regard Ahmed Ben Hassan as an Arab. The 1943 Spanish translation magnifies this desire by having Diana declare in the novel's closing words: “¡Ahmed! ¡Mi adorado árabe!...” (294). The 1926 version had reproduced Hull's original “Ahmed! Monseigneur!” (114).

The home-grown Orientalist romances deploy longstanding notions of racial hybridity via tropes of masquerade and mistaken identity, and they convert their Muslim heroes in order to incorporate them into an often surrogate national community. To be sure, religious conversion can be viewed as merely an alternative means of moderating difference. Still, the perfunctory nature of the conversion in most of the novels does not always – or only – seem to respond to an impulse to restore “sameness”, but is more bound up with recovering the other within a hostile environment. It is instructive to read conversion in the context of the brutal 1940s when Spain was a country obsessed by internal difference, or rather, the dangerous potential of difference to produce internal dissent. Hence ideological conversion narratives were common in fiction about the Civil War in the 1930s and 1940s (Thomas 38-40). Labanyi has argued in relation to the folkloric and missionary films

¹⁶ In Britain, no such romances by Harlequin Mills & Boon were published in the 1940s and only five in the 1930s; numbers would not increase again substantially until the 1960s (Burge 29).

¹⁷ The appearance of Spanish desert romances can also be related to supply problems during the 1940s when the Second World War, subsequent isolation and lack of money to pay royalties blocked access to foreign fiction rights, necessitating more domestic production to meet rising demand and creating new career opportunities for aspiring authors capable of producing large volumes quickly (Álvarez Macías 57).

¹⁸ Latinity more broadly is strategy for producing the exotic, as in the case of Gerard's French hero. However, Spanish translations of French romance novels set in Africa by the popular author Magali (published by Editorial Betis in the 1940s) operate the same method of unmasking the Arab protagonist as French/European.

of the early Francoist cinema that they deployed Spain's traditional advocacy of miscegenation to promote the imperialist dream and compelled identification with the other as a – Spanish fascist and Catholic – strategy for disavowing threatening difference through incorporation (“Race” 223). For her, this yields mixed results since identification with colonial/exotic others also had the effect of undermining the position of colonial superiority, albeit from a Western Orientalized perspective (223). A similar effect is at work in the *novelas rosa*, but the obvious “whiteness” of the on-screen characters (230) is necessarily absent from literary portrayals, thus possibly attenuating the impression that difference is merely “cosmetic”. Furthermore, in the context of National-Catholicism becoming the regime's ideological ballast and the conflating of Spanishness with Catholicism, conversion in the novels ought to be read principally as a mandatory inclusion rather than averring sincere religiosity. Indeed, Amorós censures what he sees as the trivializing approach to religion in the *novela rosa* (34). Even though proselytization is not the driving force behind these stories of interracial romance, conversion of Muslims being as compulsory as the happy ending to the plot, conversion as a motif is revelatory on other fronts.

Catholic love, or propagandizing *Hispanidad*

Two of María Adela Durango's novels, *El príncipe Harasi Kaddur* (1947) and *La prisionera de Baroda* (1950) thematize conversion; religious conversion in the first is followed by a more political inflection in the second. I will begin with *Harasi Kaddur*, as this appears to be the earliest Spanish “sheikh romance” and possibly because of that, the only one to dwell on religion, handled superficially elsewhere. Durango may also have felt a religious engagement to be necessary because the Arab hero is not presented as having mixed ancestry. To prepare the ground for her unconventional choices, the Spanish heroine, “Araceli Maldonald”, has an unexplained Scottish-sounding surname, connoting “foreign” inheritance. Any indecorous conduct was more palatable if there was an excuse for the female protagonist not receiving a Spanish education; orphanhood was a popular option (Byrne 204-5). Durango had already tested the ground with an earlier novel, *Ojos verdes* (1943), partly set in the protectorate. It contains a sub-plot involving the engagement of the heroine's cousin to a Spanish-Moroccan officer Amed-Ebn-Thaber, who fought with the *Regulares* during the War – a paradigmatic *moro amigo* whose seamless integration emblemizes *convivencia*. Amed also acts as go-between for the Spanish protagonists in Morocco when the heroine “Zobeida”/Magaly initially masquerades as a *mora*. In *Harasi Kaddur*, interracial relations are tackled head-on by making the mixed couple the primary focus.¹⁹

The novel combines an explicit endeavour to exalt the moral character of Catholic Spain with a more implicit preoccupation with reconciliation, which (inadvertently) exposes some of the former's contradictions. Durango creates a fantasy space in an unspecified location in Morocco where Spain occupies equal standing with major European powers, represented by a party of tourists featuring characters from France and Britain, then viewed as Spain's “natural enemies” because of their animosity towards Francoism (Gillespie 15). Spain's actual marginal status is apparent in the attempt to ameliorate the country's reputation with somewhat uneven results. The heroine's justification for travelling alone intends to project a progressive image of her country: “Las costumbres en España han evolucionado [...] en mi casa somos muy independientes” (9). The front

¹⁹ Of all the women writers discussed here, Durango is the most well-known and mentioned in studies on women's popular fiction (e.g. Godsland et al. 47). It is possible to speculate on her political leanings by virtue of her publishing with Ediciones Betis, established in 1937 and associated with right-wing writers, such as the celebrated Concha Linares (Corderot, “La Biblioteca Rocío”). *Ojos verdes* provides some evidence of Durango's Nationalist, and perhaps Carlist, affiliation: in addition to the flattering portrait of the military and the *Regulares*, the happy ending has the couple rejecting “materialismo” and retreating to a bucolic ideal in the traditional heartland of Navarre.

cover displays an alluringly “modern” image of Hispanicized New Woman heroine (short hair substituted by a *moño*) in trousers sat astride a camel, smoking. Araceli claims she must indulge her dauntless spirit, for being confined to home “me vuelvo neurasténica” (9) – an admission that hardly corresponds to the vision of Catholic womanhood advocated by the regime. In this way, she resembles other heroines from the genre who embrace modernity by being geographically mobile and seeking excitement (Labanyi “Romancing” 5-6). Submitted to the censor in July 1947, the novel was written as Spain’s international ostracism was increasingly evident, and the growing closeness between Araceli and Salah (the titular prince), who rescues the Europeans from a raid by an enemy tribe, anticipates the dictatorship’s Arab solution of a “política puente” *vis-à-vis* the UN. Even the protagonists’ racial affinity is stressed: upon meeting Araceli, Salah’s brother declares “pareces de nuestra raza” (52).

Racial divisions, though, represent the chief narrative obstacle. Salah’s lament that he cannot aspire to love a European woman because of racial inequality generates an opportunity to illustrate Spain’s Christian spiritual leadership and, obliquely, its merits as a colonizing power. The direct comparison is with France, via Marlene, the heroine’s French rival for Salah’s affections. Marlene’s characterization captures the contradictions of the regime’s colonial discourse in that she is disparaged by the third-person omniscient, heterodiegetic narrator (the stock choice of narrative perspective in these novels) for her promiscuity with men “de todas las razas” (41) and for racist remarks directed against both “chinos y negros” (41) and the Arab Salah whom she labels a “salvaje” (97). Curiously, Araceli’s impassioned defence of the latter and retort that “Muchos de nuestros hombres [...] querrían estar tan civilizados (97), effectively casts doubt on the “civilized” nature of Spanish men. In a rejection of Spanish masculinity shared by the other Orientalist romances, she dismisses the potential Spanish male love interest because he seems “artificial, falso” (12). As the contrastingly chaste Spanish heroine, Araceli is authorized to proclaim that “La raza es lo de menos; en cuanto a la religión, no sería usted el primero que se hace cristiano” (34), although in reality Christianization was not a feature of the Spanish colonial project in Morocco, nor was there any attempt “to bring Moroccans within the fold of the Spanish nation” (Jensen 501).

Nonetheless, in *Harasi Kaddur*, the spiritual weight in the conception of *raza histórica* or *raza cultural*, is eagerly adopted, along with Maeztu’s idea that capacity for conversion is the basis of equality among all human beings. Conduct as central to an understanding of *raza* is highlighted when Salah “Sin las ropas moras” is viewed by the only prominent Spanish male character in the novel, Carlos Arden, as “enteramente un hombre europeo” (63) and is later said, in the chapter “Dos hombres en uno”, to suit European attire impeccably. The attitude towards Salah is aided by his perceived phenotypical similarity – complemented by Araceli’s dark hair and skin as markers of her indisputable “origen latino” (7) – but just as importantly by his later readiness to convert. Foregrounding religion as a signifier of permeable difference permits the romance’s integration into the framework of Catholic love that the regime found it expedient to promote via the *novela rosa* (Faura, Godsland and Moody 47). At several points during the convoluted plot, involving alternate periods of abduction and captivity of both protagonists, they express a willingness to die for the sake of the other that is consistent with Christianity’s exaltation of sacrificial love and with National Catholicism. Ironically, Araceli’s lack of racial prejudice where intimacy is concerned has to be condoned by the English woman who befriends her. The latter initially voices the standard Orientalist warnings about the dangerously passionate temperament of “estos hombres del desierto” (42) and insists that Salah is off limits for belonging to a “raza inferior” and a different religion (42). She later urges Araceli to seize the day regardless: “goce plenamente de ese amor que Dios ha puesto en su camino [...] sin pensar en mañana” (94). It would have been difficult for a Spanish character to voice such a morally suspect position, even invoking God’s will. The ensuing voluptuous descriptions of the couple’s nights together go so far as to hint that the relationship is

consummated: “En aquellas noches conoció el amor en toda su amplitud [...] carecía de aquel vacío de antes” (104).

The approbation shown towards Salah’s masquerading of Europeanness conveys an identification with the Oriental which is played out in an allegorical recollection of conflict on the peninsula – a device also found in the films of the period whereby “Morocco and traditionalist Moroccans come to symbolize Spain and Rebel values” (Martínez-Márquez 248).²⁰ Here, the protagonists’ love is threatened by intertribal strife reminiscent of Spain’s recent war. Salah’s promise of revenge against an enemy tribe opens the novel; that dispute is displaced by an internecine feud between Salah and his brother, Hadjui, and then between Salah and his father the Caíd who is virulently opposed to his son’s union with a Christian woman. There are echoes of *Raza* here and of the fiction figuring fraternal enmity, described by José Álvarez Junco as “cainismo racial”, which proliferated in the post-Civil War years. The reprobate Hadjui, whose collusion with the enemy is overcome by the eventual renewal of proper tribal allegiances in the chapter “De la misma raza”, is ascribed to the power of blood ties: “la noble raza de los Harasi Kaddur le venció” (133). This plotline is similar to the political conversion undergone by José’s Republican brother Pedro in *Raza* when he is inspired by the sacrifice of a female Falangist at the end of the Civil War. His reincorporation to the Churrucas and the wider Nationalist “family” is explicated through recourse to *raza cultural*: “No puede desmentir la sangre que lleva” (177).

But in contrast with the dehumanization of the enemy in *Raza*, the diegetic events of Durango’s novel undercut the reiterated Oriental premise that “no hay otra ley que el más fuerte” (63) in order to favour reconciliation. The noteworthy aspect of this is the defiance of patriarchal authority it entails. The tribal enemy recedes into the background and Salah’s father obligingly dies after writing a repentant letter giving the couple his blessing. Araceli’s father, the other paternal impediment, is quickly disabused of his racism towards “moros” when she convinces him of Salah’s heroic role and suitability as a husband. An understanding of *raza* as cultural and moral thus appears to prevail to promote inclusiveness. Or does it? The novel’s ending to a degree reinstates segregation, notwithstanding Salah’s newly-acquired Catholic credentials. Araceli departs Morocco with her father, leaving Salah behind to process his immigration papers. Despite reassurance that their love is “novelesco” (179), the prospect of a shared life in Spain seems foreclosed: as the delay is prolonged, the closing image is of Salah on a white horse stranded in a vast desert. Whereas the *mestizo* Amed in *Ojos verdes* is able to assert that he is a Moor only because of “las ropas que llevo y el nombre que me dan aquí” (19) and consequently win his Spanish bride, Salah is problematically not a product of extra-diegetic miscegenation and his union with Araceli would breach the racial frontier so energetically disavowed in the novel. Penalised for this transgression, Salah is also divested of political power. Having renounced his faith for love, Salah’s brother Hadjui, who has respected proper boundaries, will become the new ruler, securing Moroccan territory in Muslim hands and tacitly affirming the Spanish claim to greater respect for its colonized subjects, or indeed its pretension to “un innato anti-colonismo” (Gil Benumeya 137). Thus even while signalling the obstacles to mixed couples, Durango’s novel presents a variation on Maeztu’s contention that Spaniards have historically rejected racial hierarchies (92), mixed with the populations they colonized and forged affective bonds with them (133-134, 305).

Durango’s still rather daring proposition of interracial love is pursued in *La prisionera de Baroda* (1950) where race and international relations merge to tackle analogously Spain’s ostracization. The novel was written during a particularly high point in Hispano-Arab unity, symbolized by the visit, in September 1949, of the Jordanian King Abdullah, the first foreign leader to be hosted by Spain since the UN condemnation (Algora Weber 75). The visit’s significance was also

²⁰ See her discussion of the 1939 film *La canción de Aixa* (235-249).

that it occurred in the months following the failure to overturn UN Resolution 39/1 as a result of Israel's negative vote. This turn of events meant that Spain and the Arab League now shared a common enemy and relations were further enhanced by the Francoist refusal to recognise the new state (75). Equally beneficial was the primacy of the Palestinian question, which overshadowed the demands of Moroccan nationalists, one of the major stumbling blocks for Hispano-Arab cooperation (59). Since the passing of the resolution in December 1946, the regime had stepped up its efforts to forge strong links with Arab states because previous experience had demonstrated the vagaries of their support.²¹

In *Baroda*, Egypt is the backdrop against which salient aspects of the relationship between Spain and Western powers are dramatized. Egypt was the dominant country in the Arab League and hence Spain's most important Arab ally at the time. Along with Lebanon, Egypt was also one of the sites of most intense cultural and educational activity with Spain (González González 186, 192). In November 1950, the Farouk I Institute of Islamic Studies was founded in Madrid by Egypt's Education Minister (Rein 205). Durango's use of Egypt as a kind of proxy for Spain mirrors the public celebration of the friendship that would reach its *apogée* in 1951 in the reciprocal awarding of medals: the Order of Isabella the Catholic was presented to the Egyptian King Farouk and the Order of Fuad I to Franco (201). In the novel, "Baroda" (the eponymous hero) is a nickname meaning "gun" or "rifle" in Arabic: the overtones of masculine power and sexuality are obvious enough, but there may be a more literal significance in that Spain had been supplying arms to Arab countries from the late 1940s and "especially Egypt" (202). Durango's knowledge of Arab names is evident in *Harasi Kaddur*, so her atypical choice here can plausibly be linked to her Christianization of Egypt.²² Baroda and some of the other male Egyptian characters are helpfully already converts. One character's name, "Peck Tiber", actually conveys the process of conversion figuratively as "crossing the Tiber".

Conversion of another kind transpires in the sense of the West's political "conversion". Not only does this serve as defence of Spain in its isolated and demoted condition, it is consistent with the Franco regime's promotion of *Hispanidad*, already institutionalized by the time Durango was writing her Orientalist novels, via the establishment of the Consejo de la Hispanidad during the War and the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica in 1946 (Barreiro López 719). Although *Hispanidad* above all referenced the relations between Spain and Latin America, it was an eminently sketchy and opportunistic concept that could accommodate connections with the Arab world. Indeed, Gil Benumeya argued forcefully that the Hispano-Arab relationship was central to *Hispanidad*. In a vision that aspires to restore Spain's former imperial glory, he reworks the negative aphorism about Africa starting in the Pyrenees – appropriated by *Africanistas* in the late nineteenth century to make a determinist argument for Spain's destiny as colonizers in Morocco – and extends it to encompass Latin America: "respecto a las tradiciones y restos pertenecientes a arábigos y americanos sobre suelo hispano peninsular [...] efectivamente, África empieza en los Pirineos; pero América comienza también" (91). Furthermore, he proposes a Hispanic genealogy in which "si los americanos son hijos de los españoles, también son nietos de los antiguos árabes" (81).

Gil Benumeya's idea of a plural *Hispanidad*, expressed in the triumvirate "Hispanidad peninsular"/"Hispanidad mediterránea"/"Hispanidad ultraoceánica" (95) is mirrored in *Baroda* through the incorporation of Egypt and the novel is in tune with the more inclusive concept of *Hispanidad* not reliant on a common tongue that developed in the context of Spain's international

²¹ In the 1946 and 1947 votes on Resolution 39/1, they had simply abstained *en masse*, wary of damaging their own ongoing negotiations with Western powers (Algora Weber 69) and would not wholeheartedly back Spain's campaign for an end to the UN ban until May 1949 (74-5).

²² This was probably not based on fantasy but on religious connections emphasized by the regime. Gil Benumeya stresses that millions of Arabs are Christians and (152) and is keen to point out that there are at least two million Catholic Arabs in Egypt (155).

marginalization to “serve as a – Catholic – model for the anti-communist fight against the Eastern Bloc” (Locker 662). The central dilemma is Baroda’s battle with the Europeans and the Americans (the major powers in the UN) to force their assistance in averting the humanitarian catastrophe threatening Egypt: an imminent drought. Various narrative clues recollect Spain’s own situation. Western indifference to Egypt’s plight mimics the country’s exclusion from the 1948 Marshall Plan. More specifically, in the latter half of the 1940s, Spain suffered a severe drought (Rein 195). Baroda himself is conspicuously Hispanicized: a convert to Catholicism following a spiritual experience in Spain (he was baptized “Jesús”, but as with all the Arab heroes, he is never known by his Christian name so as to heighten his exotic otherness), he drives a Hispano-Suiza (like Amed in *Ojos verdes*) and must negotiate political survival with Western powers, personified by Russian governor, “Federico” Nawinski. Though described as a “ruso blanco” (6), the selection of Russians as protagonists (Durango pairs Baroda with his haughty, spirited daughter Lidya) once again figures the warring between Nationalists and Republicans. In addition, Christianized Egypt’s emergence as a bulwark against communist Eastern Europe is reminiscent of the regime’s self-appointed international vocation: by this point, it was exploiting the global power realignment occasioned by the Cold War to flaunt its anti-communist credentials, as means of rationalizing and downplaying its fascist leanings and Axis support during the Second World War.

In *Baroda*, the familiar trope of the heroine’s abduction in the Orientalist romance is underpinned by a political motive which seeks to counter the idea of Spain’s “barbarism” in European eyes. The Russian Lidya becomes Baroda’s hostage until her father capitulates by providing aid to Egypt. Lidya herself eventually converts to the hero’s political cause (and falls in love), though not before making repeated statements about his, and his country’s, uncivilized, savage nature (e.g. 54, 82, 83, 97) and insisting on Egypt’s irredeemable racial “otherness” when compared with “occidentales” (10). Such comments bring to mind the negative characterization of Spain from the perspective of hostile Western powers and even more than in *Harasi Kaddur*, the meaning of race here appears chiefly cultural-ideological. To bring about Lidya’s “conversion” (at one point, Baroda accuses her of being a poor excuse for a Catholic [23]), the hero resorts to behaviour which tends to validate Lidya’s charges of savagery and also unchristian behaviour – the former is the typical reproach aimed at the sheikh hero. Her accusations stem from the novel’s erotic paradigm (loosely, *The Sheik*), which this time caused Durango trouble with the censor.²³ But they also entail a rather ambiguous vindication of traditional values understood to conceal a barbaric underside. Lidya’s father’s musing that “Un beso no es suficiente para romper las relaciones entre Oriente y Occidente” (48) foreshadows the eventual coupling of Lidya and Baroda as an attempt to reconcile the wider political struggle that they emblemize, and perhaps obliquely, the regime’s own internal ideological conflicts. In this way, *Baroda* is suggestive of the *novela rosa*’s ability to process, and possibly alleviate, anxieties beyond the romance narrative yet embedded in its formulaic structure.

As is the case with *Harasi Kaddur*, celebrating Hispano-Arab alliance stops short of a mixed marriage, but here unintentionally offers the potentially more scandalous denouement of an elopement. After a series of misunderstandings, Baroda is on the verge of marrying his Egyptian fiancée when a disguised Lidya usurps her place at the altar and the pair flee the ceremony together. The unease about consummating interracial unions in Durango’s novels is partially assuaged in others by uncovering the hero, or heroine’s, mixed origins. One example is Ana Marcela García’s aforementioned *El oasis del odio* (1951), largely set in Morocco, in which the hero Omar abd-el-Hakan and his siblings Alí and Fadal turn out to be masquerading as Muslims. These dual identities

²³ Baroda’s erotic coercive methods elicited strong moral objections. Publication was suspended until offensive material was deleted/edited on pages 208, 209, 210, 226 and 227 (Expediente: 4016-50).

are evocative of Spain's Morisco history and concede a sentimental glimpse of a more inclusive past. Omar, Alí and Fadal are the product of a disallowed (and extra-diegetic) mixed union, with both parties now conveniently dead. Their mother, a Spanish Catholic from Córdoba, married a Moroccan Muslim colonel whose deathbed conversion does not erase the fact that the couple lived together respecting one another's faith in genuine *convivencia* (see this article's opening quote). The heroine, Stella, must overcome her initial racism towards "moros" in order to find love. García supplies a conservative outcome to *El oasis* by installing Stella within the patriarchal regime back in Spain. On the other hand, she also employs an acceptable symbolic affirmation of *convivencia* to integrate the hybrid hero: Omar is unmasked as David Pombo, Stella's father's medical student who has enjoyed the benefits of Moroccan access to Spanish education, though of course she will never use his Christian name and continues to think of him as an Arab.

In other novels, the device of mixed heritage operates less complaisantly *vis-à-vis* Francoist rhetoric of Hispano-Arab identity. The engagement with the Oriental in the final two novels examined below offers a covert critique of Spanish society and its divisive structures whilst also interrogating the model of masculinity represented by the sheikh figure as a Hispanicized Arab hero.

Flight to the margins: the desert as refuge

In *El Beduíno* (1949) by María del Pilar Carré and *El señor del desierto*, by Lía Ramos (1950) Spain's collective political isolation is transposed to individual isolation in an unforgiving society, resolved by a retreat to the desert in locations significantly characterized by their proximity to French – rather than to Spanish – Morocco and their distance from colonial control.

One of the interesting features of Carré's *El Beduíno* is that it subverts the idea of the protective *Patria* and the image of a beleaguered Spain promulgated by the regime. The initial obstruction to the heroine's happiness is the legacy of maternal adultery (criminalized under the Franco regime) and attendant social marginalization. To escape the scandal, Mariló goes to live in Seville with her aunt Clara – also a marginal figure, the "solterona amargada" (15) whose negative example was strong incitement for young women to marry (Martín Gaité 42-46). There, Mariló becomes engaged to the wealthy Javier de Salazar, but is hastily rejected by his family once her secret is unearthed. It is her stigmatization as "mala hierba" (29) that prefigures her compatibility with the *mestizo* hero. Another move, this time to a "ciudad africana puesta bajo la protección de Francia" (106), is precipitated by Clara's fortuitous reunion with Ahmed Ben Taleb, a sheikh she would have married many years earlier, only religion kept them apart. Having recently converted to Catholicism (belatedly following the example of his sister's Christian marriage to a Frenchman), he has come to rekindle their erstwhile doomed romance. Thus here, female initiative and France, rather than Spain, model miscegenation for the patriarch in need of reform. The "Beduíno" of the title is Ahmed's nephew, Hassan (both names echoing "Ahmed Ben Hassan" of *The Sheik*).

The pro-French stance in the novel should not go unremarked given the tensions with Spain regarding the protectorate and the activities of Republican exiles across the border. An official Bureau of Information and Propaganda in Madrid was charged with disseminating pro-Spanish propaganda in Arab countries while discrediting France (Madariaga, "Confrontation" 494). This was accomplished in part by emphasizing the common past of al-Andalus, with Franco as "amigo conciliador" and France as "enemigo represor del pueblo árabe" in the protectorate and the UN (González González 191). It is also noteworthy that, in contrast with Durango's novels, which work to raise Spain's status, *El Beduíno* contains a muted denunciation of an intolerant Spanish society against a Franco-Arab alternative.²⁴ In Morocco, Mariló's new family life with Ahmed Ben Taleb and

²⁴ It is not possible to link the novel's apparently more negative assessment of Spanish society to the politics of the author. Although María del Pilar Carré and her sister May are among the more well-known romance

Clara, now married, secures the outcast heroine the respect of the community, including characters representing European countries; namely, France and Britain, whilst fulfilling the requisite Orientalist expectations of luxurious indulgence. Conversely, the hypocrisy of Spanish society is unequivocally underlined when Mariló's former fiancé, Javier de Salazar, reappears and attempts to woo her back. It is perhaps not coincidental that he shares his surname with the dictator of Portugal, one of the regime's close allies and defined by Gil Benumeja as representing along with Spain "lo árabe europeo" (93). Eager to profit from Marilo's newfound wealth and privilege, the Salazar family deign to overlook her morally questionable background and association with "moros".

If the heroine finally spurns the Spanish false suitor Salazar – "demasiado debil por naturaleza" (69) – this is not without also rejecting the model of belligerent Oriental masculinity that she fears Hassan may represent. Like many of the genre's Arab heroes, he is implicated in a plot of masquerade and mistaken identity, to the point of producing reader disorientation. He possesses both Muslim and Christian names, and is alternately referred to as Hassan and Marcel (and "el árabe"/"el francés"). Moreover, he has a third, clandestine identity as the dangerous bandit "El Beduíno" who confronts Mariló in the desert and more closely resembles the desert romance's archetype of "irresistible, ruthless, masterful, and over-sexualized masculinity" that redefined the meaning of "sheikh" (Teo 1). This identity is soon killed off, but Mariló's abiding ambivalence towards Hassan/Marcel is nourished by her suspicion that he is actually the violent "El Beduíno". It later transpires that he was working to protect French interests in Morocco, again refuting the colonial one-upmanship that stands out in Durango's novels.

Another interpretation of this turn of events is that it constitutes a reassuring "de-Orientalization" of the hero and corresponding affirmation of Europeanness, the latter often operating as a byword for civilization in these romances, albeit sometimes quite ambiguously, as in Durango's *Baroda*. Here Europeanization retains a critical gaze towards Spain. Marcel/Hassan, like many heroes of the romance, embodies a gentled masculine authority which embraces mutual dependency (Radway 81): in all his different guises, he repeatedly declares that he is the heroine's slave (e.g. 68, 81, 104, 119); and exhibits a nurturing, almost maternal quality common in the romance (Radway 84, 144-45, 155-56) by becoming Mariló's confidante when she is haunted by her mother's reputation, fearing it will condemn her to "una soltería eterna" (77). Significantly, Carré's hero has no Spanish blood, thus the romantic liaison does not serve to bolster the official discourse of Hispano-Arab fraternity. Religion is also relegated to the background. Instead, the wedding invitation that closes the narrative celebrates a Franco-Arab union endorsed by the couple's forerunners, Clara and Ahmed, "los Taleb", who value their niece's happiness "por encima de todos los prejuicios sociales" (147). Moreover, there is no hint of a return to Spain.

Lía Ramos's 1950 novel, *El señor del desierto*, similarly eschews blatant alignment with the regime's Hispano-Arab policy by featuring a French heroine and a Bedouin protagonist whose territory is close to – yet ostensibly independent of – French colonial authorities. However, unlike in Carré's novel, Franco-Arab identity is not really privileged over Hispano-Arab identity in order to express an implied critique of the hypocrisy of Francoist colonial rhetoric (its claim to openness and tolerance). Instead, since *El señor* features the only clearly consummated relationship between a "white" heroine and a non-hybrid Arab, the Franco-Arab dimension is more likely a means of evading censorship by distancing the more controversial diegetic elements from Spain's protectorate whilst enabling a gender critique that engages with Spanish women's "Orientalization", or subjection to oppressive gender roles. Ramos, like most of the authors of the *novela rosa*, has fallen into obscurity, so next to nothing is known about her. What can be gleaned from her work is a fascination

novelists, virtually no details are available about their lives. Their grandfather, Eugenio Carré Aldao, was a writer, secretary of the Real Academia Gallega and an early supporter of the Republic.

with the themes of “race” and reconciliation. For example, mixed relationships which overturn prevailing racist attitudes inform *Joska, el zingaro* (1950) and *De la misma sangre* (1954). In *El señor*, the approach to the topic of interracial love is problematic because it is often at odds with the novel’s negotiation of gender identity and results in an internally contradictory text. Illustrative of this is that Ramos replicates the most disturbing element of *The Sheik*: rape. Jenny Sharpe observes in her analysis of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century British fiction set in colonial contexts that “rape is not a consistent and stable signifier but one that surfaces at strategic moments” and, particularly during “moments of political instability” (2, 7). In Ramos’s novel, the spectre of interracial rape relates less to a crisis in colonial structures,²⁵ as in Sharpe’s examples, than to the symbolic and material violence accompanying the institution of a rigid and regressive gender binary under Francoism and, obliquely the memory of the Civil War. Here the construction of a sheikh protagonist as the enforcer of gendered oppression conveys a profound ambivalence regarding an Orientalized Spanish masculinity and suggests a subconscious conjoining of the idea of the *moro violador* with that of the desert warrior associated with the Army of Africa and with Franco himself.

For Carmen Martín Gaité, the model of male authority in the *novela rosa* is patently not Franco whose public persona was simply incompatible with romance: “jamás se le conoció más pasión que la del mando absoluto. Ni pasiones de carne, ni pasiones de espíritu” (18). Nevertheless, the notion of the “desert hero” was intrinsic to the reputation the dictator had forged. One of the first public uses of “caudillo” for Franco was in 1923 when his marriage was reported in the press as “The Wedding of an heroic Caudillo”, in reference to his North African exploits (Preston, *Franco* 42). The term is used to construct Omar in García’s *El oasis* as an archetype of exemplary masculinity when he is identified as “un gran caudillo, altivo y recio, de gran personalidad y vigoroso carácter” (21). And the final image of Salah in the desert astride a white horse in Durango’s *Harasi Kaddur* evokes a familiar image closer to home: during his Africa career, Franco would lead the *Regulares* on horseback “[favouring] a white horse, out of a mixture of romanticism and bravado” (Preston, *Franco* 17). This is not to argue that Franco himself was the inspiration for the array of Oriental heroes in these novels. Rather, it is to suggest that they participate imaginatively with hegemonic ideas of Spanish masculinity which integrated “the Oriental”; for example, the warrior leader, or *Almogávar* eulogized in Franco’s *Raza*. One of the most popular women authors, Carmen de Icaza, a prominent activist of the Sección Femenina, reflects the centrality of the Oriental to Nationalist identity in her 1941 novel, *Soñar la vida*. Its pro-fascist male protagonist and Nationalist supporter Alfonso/Alí is half-Spanish, half-Turkish, but characterized as possessing “algo de árabe, de moro, de oriental” and exhibiting the same vigorous “cruce de razas que muchos de los españoles sentimos en las nuestras. [...] Y siente a España como usted y yo” (122). Icaza thus paves the way for a happy ending between Alí and the Spanish heroine. There is still a hint of ambivalence *vis-à-vis* the model of masculinity he embodies, or fails to completely embody, since he is mutilated by a war injury. In the example below, the aforementioned duality of the Moor encapsulates the ideological contradictions of conventional patriarchal gender relations as they are frequently articulated in romance fiction: the equating of male brutality with deep love (Modleski 33).

A striking aspect of *El señor*’s rendering of the desert romance is that in wrestling with violent masculinity, the female protagonist is compelled to assimilate the “Oriental” element of her own identity and accept that she is not, in fact, “de otra raza” (47). The female protagonist, Lilian Daudet, daughter of a French colonel and a Moroccan woman, enacts the struggle to reconcile female agency with love, desire and the obligatory self-abnegation of Catholic womanhood. An orphan marginalized by her French relations, Lilian travels to Morocco in search of her mother’s

²⁵ This is not to deny a link: Mateo Dieste observes that the front cover of the 1934 edition of Pedro Mata’s 1856 novel, *Los moros del Riff*, displays a violated Spanish woman being carried off by a Moor (133).

village, but falls into the hands of a slave trafficker. She encounters the hero, Hassán-Abd-el-Surí (whose name also recalls *The Sheik*), when he purchases her to secure her liberation. Misconstruing the gesture as domination, she showers him with insults: “vicioso”, “bandido”, “salvaje” (22, 23, 29). The misunderstanding exposes a fundamental truth about the tendencies of patriarchal power: Hassán vents rage at what he perceives as Lilian’s ingratitude and European superiority (physically she epitomizes European “whiteness”, belying her mixed origins) by holding her captive in conditions of enforced domesticity. Henceforth, she must dress like the Moroccan women she disdains as “esclavas” (25) and perform their labours. The tenets of Francoism’s prescribed femininity are actually voiced by Lilian’s companion, Halima, who cautions her that “La mujer debe ser alegre y transparente como el dueño y señor goce y beba en sus labios la dicha y la paz” (30).

Race, then, operates for the most part allegorically to delineate the versions of masculinity and femininity which the heroine must come to accept in what Modleski has described as a “complex process of self-subversion” that entails the heroine relinquishing her impulses towards self-affirmation (29). A pivotal event takes place when Hassán insists on taking Lilian away from the camp and in the atmosphere of growing intimacy between them, she confides her desire to leave alone in search of Aín Salah, where she spent her early life with her mother. It is precisely the expression of her desire for autonomy, compounded by her rejection of Hassán – who has just declared his love for her – that triggers the rape. The culmination of the heroine’s subjugation – the rape as an attempt to reduce her subjectivity to her body – is tempered earlier on by glimpses of the hero’s sensitive side that foreshadow his inevitable redemption. The rape, then, is not conceptualized as a pathological act, but as a form of uncontrolled desire which “rationalizes violent behaviour” (Radway 216). The rape’s ambiguous eroticization further undermines the critique of gender relations. In this confused portrayal, Ramos insinuates the heroine’s complicity: when Lilian senses Hassán’s sexual desire, she feels a “miedo extraño” (93), then wonders “¿cómo una Daudet iba a confesarse ni aún a sí misma que se sentía atraída hacia un beduino ‘tuareg’, aunque este fuera un Jeque?” (95). Her physical resistance manifests as lack of consent whereas the inner monologue suggests that Lilian reciprocates the hero’s feelings, only is inhibited by racial prejudice, despite their shared Arab heritage. The allusion to racist attitudes indicates awareness of the miscegenation taboo (with the attendant erotic frisson for readers) that can potentially be legitimately transgressed in light of the Francoist colonial discourse of racial affinity. But the understanding of *raza* is a multi-layered and unstable signifier which also appears to refer to aggressively patriarchal culture. Lilian’s repulsion is partly directed inwards: the submissiveness she despises in the desert women will not save her from final capitulation and the troubling conversion of an object of fear into one of desire, or the projection of “a utopian conclusion to an event that she and her readers have good reason to fear” (Radway 142).

It is quite exceptional to find a rape story in the *novela rosa* – it was almost certainly missed by the censor.²⁶ One interpretation is that the rape occurs in lieu of a frank assertion of female desire and sexuality, in this case *vis à vis* an “exotic other”; the necessary narrative ellipsis in which it unfolds allows the reader to construct its meaning. On the other hand, it is helpful to consider Tania Modleski’s re-reading of rape in women’s romances as fantasies masking “anxiety about rape and longing for power and revenge” rather than the long-established psychoanalytical interpretation of rape imagined “as concealing a desire to be taken by force” (40). The heroine in *El señor* is presented with the opportunity to indulge the revenge fantasy that Modleski sees as underlying the pleasure many women derive from reading romances (37-40). There is a form of psychological compensation

²⁶ This is not surprising given the censors’ prodigious workload (Byrne 202, 211). The report’s conclusion of “Nada censurable”, may be owing to the heroine’s French nationality and a superficial reading, including the misattributed propriety of a wedding (Expediente: 2145-50).

for the violation of both Lilian's body and her quest for selfhood: in Hassán's absence, an army led by his cousin, Jaffar, has occupied his territory (in another representation of intertribal enmity akin to civil war). Lilian is granted permission to exact revenge prior to Hassán's execution. In the event, she chooses to save the repentant Hassán who has already offered her marriage and a vague promise to convert to Christianity. Lilian's ultimate identification with Hassán's cause exposes the futility of female revolt that is insistently underlined in the romance (Modleski 36, 39). Jessica Benjamin's influential analysis of women's alienated desire as evidenced in masochistic love is also instructive here: Lilian regains selfhood only through identification with the male – the customary surrender to conventional gender relations – rather than through the search for her maternal roots, because the mother figure is no longer able to “model autonomy” (215). This latter point is repeatedly witnessed in the stories of motherless female protagonists who feature in Spanish women's post-War fiction. In *El señor*, as in *The Sheik*, the rape does not destroy the heroine, psychically or socially: the novel concludes with their harmonious cohabitation (with no mention of nuptials or religious conversion) and the hero encouraging Lilian to maintain her rebellious spirit by challenging his authority. That this compromise takes the form of a “role play” contests the notion of essentialized gender identities while uneasily reinforcing where the “real” power lies. At the same time, the retreat from colonial control suggests the attempt to salvage a space in which, perhaps, gender roles can be negotiated.

África: “¡Tus bodas con España producirán la luz!”²⁷

Although the Civil War intensified the disturbing duality of the figure of the Moor, the rehabilitation of this historical “other” was also pursued within Nationalist propaganda and the work of ideologues such as the Arabist Miguel Asín Palacios, who avowed that Moroccan soldiers possessed “un corazón gemelo del español”, and Gil Benumeya who claimed that “España está espiritualmente dentro de [lo árabe]” (quoted in Madariaga, *Los moros* 346; Gil Benumeya 10). This article has sought to make some inroads into the overlooked area of women's literary responses to this discourse of Hispano-Arab identity. The sample analysed here attests to the connection “con el “arabismo” o la “hispanidad” that Algora Weber contends existed among Spaniards made aware of the regime's foreign policy orientation through its extensive reporting on diplomatic, ceremonial and affective exchanges with Arab states “generando ‘inconscientemente’ una simpatía mutua entre ambos pueblos” (253). Nevertheless, the heterogeneous and ambivalent nature of women's literary responses also indicate that they were not merely its dupes.

It is important to remember that these were young women who had witnessed the ravages of war. So little else is known about them that it is difficult to link their work to ideological motivations based on biography. Even so, it is probably not too farfetched to suggest that amid the intense physical and mental repression of the 1940s, the desire for peace in many cases would have transcended political differences. Although Spaniards were exhorted to denounce one another, binding them to the new state (Graham, 85, 134-5), there was, of course, also resistance to this pressure.²⁸ The rhetoric of *convivencia* associated with *arabismo* may have held particular appeal, producing a displacement of anxieties about social cleavages, dislocation and violent masculinity stemming from home to the site of the desert. At the same time, by conjuring lavish and ethnically diverse settings in which to dream about the incorporation of an exotic other, these authors were also participating in the recent literary trend of feminized Orientalism, allowing them to explore

²⁷ Jose María Pemán, quoted in Nerín 231.

²⁸ Kathleen Richmond argues that the Sección Feminina did not contribute to post-War repression and opposed reprisals; for example, the Department of Education was instructed “to ignore SF testimonials because they were known to be statements of charity” and, as such, unreliable (79).

ideas about “Europeanness”, “civilization” and modernity, and thereby negotiate the imposition of Orientalization understood as the rejection of modern values. Rather than disavowing difference, their texts tend to probe the limits of its possible integration whilst often attempting to soften the aggressive, Orientalized model of warrior masculinity then prevalent. It is the fact that they were drawing on materials that resonated with their domestic conditions which makes their texts interesting as affective responses to the ideological manipulation involved in the embedding of National-Catholicism and its concept of *raza*.

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