

# In that Precarious Exilic Realm: Edward Said's Andalusian Journeys

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Edward Said travelled to Andalusia on several occasions during his life, and wrote about his most personal impressions in the article “Andalusia’s Journey”. Said’s vision is highly conditioned by the multicultural past of the region, where Muslims, Christians and Jews lived together for centuries. The idealisation of this co-existence, as well as the most famous myths of Andalusian culture (Carmen, King Boabdil, etc.) are very present in the traces that Said discovered in the places he visited, and that make up a nostalgic past. Moreover, the author recognises the concealment and denial of numerous Jewish and Muslim elements in contemporary Spanish culture, with the aim of creating a stereotypical image in order to please the tourist.

This article is an exploration of Edward Said’s vision of Andalusia as both an origin and a destination, as a picturesque site to be toured, and as a location where the interaction between violence and tolerance demands new reflections, particularly vis-à-vis recent migratory flows between Southern Spain and Northern Africa.<sup>1</sup> Said’s “Andalusia’s Journey,” a brief essay published in *Travel + Leisure* in 2002 does not specifically refer to these flows, as it is geared to a very different sort of traveler than the immigrants who continue arriving along

Spanish coasts in makeshift boats, clinging to life and the hope of a better future.

However, while Said speaks from the glossy pages of a high-end travel magazine, the text’s contradictions (which also are Andalusia’s contradictions) reveal that the author does not divert from the tasks of a public intellectual – tasks which Said defined as the intellectual’s responsibilities in the 1993 Reith Lectures, later published as *Representations of the Intellectual*. While Said clearly states that these lectures are not to be taken as a form of au-

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1. This article has previously appeared in the collection *Edward Said and Jacques Derrida: Reconstellating Humanism and the Global Hybrid* (Mina Karavanta and Nina Morgan [eds.], Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008) and is reproduced with the editors’ permission. I first found out about Said’s “Andalusia’s Journey” from María Rosa Menocal during a lecture at Washington University in the fall of 2006.

tobiography (1994: xii), the critical voice that comes across in “Andalusia’s Journey” belongs to the role that the author reassesses in the final chapter of *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*: “The intellectual’s role is to present alternative narratives and other perspectives on history than those provided by combatants on behalf of official memory and national history and mission” (2004: 141).

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In light of Said’s stated role, his “Andalusia’s Journey” is here read as far more than a short piece of travel journalism. While the text initially displays a nostalgic vision of Andalusia, turning the region into an anachronistic model that would ideally aid in solving contemporary conflicts in the Mediterranean world, Said’s writing ultimately reverses such a one-dimensional understanding of the region and its history. Instead, in this succinct text, Said calls for an ongoing interrogation of the meanings that cultural heritage attains within the Spanish –and also in a global and postcolonial – context. A close reading of the text is timely and relevant for three additional reasons. First, a number of sites, restored and re-imagined city quarters, monuments and museums have turned both Arab and Jewish Spain into an accessible and popular travel destination. The offerings are plentiful for those who yearn to wander the streets of the rediscovered Jewish quarters in cities like Girona and Toledo, or to admire the intricacies of the Alhambra in Granada and the Mosque in Cordoba – two monuments that Said eloquently describes in his text. Second, the fact that the three cultures that once coexisted in the Iberian peninsula remain involved in wide-ranging and

often violent conflicts in different parts of the Mediterranean world, may make it easy to reify the Medieval co-existence of Arabs, Jews and Christians into a nostalgia for an impossibly harmonious future. I will later return to the issue of co-existence or *convivencia* in order to argue that Said’s vision of Andalusia relates to connections between a multicultural – yet not necessarily harmonious – past and an uncertain present. Third, immigration from Northern Africa is radically changing contemporary Spain and its relationship to its postcolonial legacies. Said does not discuss migration in Andalusia in this particular text, yet its causes and consequences should remain in the background of the analysis that follows.

### Specters of Carmen

Every Andalusian journey, including Said’s, should begin with a story. Possibly, the same statement could be made about any form of travel literature: good travel writing may be more about good stories than about the places themselves. Drawing a boundary between fact and fiction in certain travel narratives can indeed become a futile exercise: “Like certain forms of investigative journalism –another member of the genre’s extended family – travel writing enjoys an intermediary status between subjective inquiry and objective documentation” (Holland and Huggan, 1998: 11).

Bearing this in mind, I would like to briefly consider a literary heroine who embodies most Andalusian fantasies: Prosper Mérimée’s Carmen. The gypsy seductress first appeared in print in 1845: the author published the first three chapters of the novella in the *Revue de Deux Mondes*, a journal that “had originally been founded as a bi-weekly travel journal depicting, for the civilized ‘world’ of France, exotic landscapes and adventures in what today we call the Third World” (Robinson, 1, qtd. in

Clark, 2000: 198). Since the novella appeared in a journal specialized in travel narratives, many of his readers probably took the torrid love story between Carmen and Don José to be another fact-based travel narrative. The publication was, after all, devoted to this type of prose, and the author had already published narratives of his travels to Andalusia in similar magazines (*Revue de Paris*, *L'Artiste*). To make matters even more illusory, "Mérimée did everything to encourage this reading of his tale as a *vérité vécue*" (Clark, 2000: 189). The plot of the novella is said to be based on an anecdote – a jealous lover kills the unfaithful Andalusian gypsy woman he adores – narrated to Mérimée by the Countess of Montijo, with whom he became friends in one of his trips to Spain. Finally, Mérimée himself was fond of literary hoaxes and games that questioned (or even mocked) authority and identity: his first collection of plays, *Le Théâtre de Clara Gazul* (1825) was supposed to be written by a Spanish actress, and the book's cover features a portrait of a cross-dressed Prosper Mérimée "wearing a mantilla, a necklace and a frilly dress" (Raitt, 37-44, qtd. in Clark, 2000: 189). An interrogation of identity and authority also is at stake once Edward Said travels as a Palestinian Arab to Andalusia on four different occasions, beginning in 1966. Even though he does not mention the figure of the fiery, Flamenco-dancing seductress, Carmen's specter still becomes a useful trope for the understanding of Andalusia this analysis aims to convey.

This specter should not be taken for a representation of a subaltern, female subject – a real-life Andalusian gypsy that Mérimée may have encountered on a quest for exotic and sensuous adventures in Southern Spain. Instead, Said's Andalusian journeys are haunted by the fantasies of what Andalusia was once imagined to be, including both the vision of the co-existence of Arabs, Jews and Christians as an idealized form of multiculturalism, and the orientalized vision

of Andalusia as an exotic and sensuous locale. Ultimately, Carmen's ghost can be seen as an invitation to learn to "live with the ghosts" of al-Andalus in a Derridean fashion. "And this being-with specters would also be," writes Derrida, "not only but also a *politics* of memory, of inheritance, and of generations" (1994: xix). The inheritance at stake here is found in the remainders of Arabic culture in Spain, which, in spite of the mechanisms of erasure that the Spanish empire put in place already in the 15th century, stubbornly refuse to disappear.

*Said's Andalusian journeys are haunted by the fantasies of what Andalusia was once imagined to be, including both the vision of the co-existence of Arabs, Jews and Christians as an idealized form of multiculturalism*

The Spanish empire saw its birth with the Reconquest of the Kingdom of Granada by the Catholic Kings in 1492, the Expulsion Edict that initiated the Sephardic diaspora, and the conquest and colonization of the New World. In spite of its vastness, the empire was short-lived and was followed by an enduring political and economic decadence, as well as a rhetoric of loss and despair. In "Spanish Nationalism and the Ghost of Empire" Ángel Loureiro explains what this decadence implies: "A nation beset with problems of self-understanding and self-esteem, Spain has been haunted for two centuries by the specter of its former colonies. Consequently, in the late nineteenth century – and in both Spain and Latin America – an obsessive discourse about *Hispanismo* begins to develop around the subject of the conquest and colonization of American and ensuing heritage left by Spain in that continent. [...] The Spanish discourse on America is linked to a historical analysis conceived in terms of loss, decadence, ruin and even degeneration" (2003: 65).

Yet the colonial specters that remain from the conquest of the Americas and its consequences on both sides of the Atlantic may just be a different incarnation of other specters that also resulted from the Spanish imperial formation. This understanding of the Spanish empire draws from Américo Castro's historical thought. Said mentions Castro in "Andalusia's Journey," and I will return to the historian's work later in the essay. Before the loss of the colonies across the Atlantic was even conceivable, Islamic and Jewish Spain were pushed towards the borders of the Iberian peninsula, and its remainders – individuals, monuments, literatures, traditions, sounds, words, flavors – were disguised, silenced, acculturated, hidden, tortured, or re-written.

Any journey to Andalusia, as a matter of fact any literal or virtual excursion into past and present Spain (and the nation's diverse forms of literature, art, architecture, languages, or cuisine) will reveal that these remainders have by no means disappeared. Said's text mainly centers on the traces of Arab culture in Andalusia, referring to a "composite Andalusian identity anchored in Arab culture [which] can be discerned in its striking buildings, its tiles and wooden ceilings, its ornate pottery and neatly constructed houses" (2002: 2). But the term "composite" is key here – while the loss of al-Andalus often evokes a lost paradise in Islamic culture, Said's text reveals the limits of such a discourse.

Coincidentally, Loureiro shows in the above-mentioned essay that in the Spanish context a potentially comparable discourse of loss and decadence begins with the articulation of an imperial and Orientalist nostalgia in the eighteenth century, which lasted well into the Francoist years: "One of the better-known early formulations of Spanish-history-as-decadence can be found in the late eighteenth century in José Cadalso's *Cartas marruecas*, in which he proposes remedies to

return Spain to the apex it had reached in the fifteenth century with Catholic Kings" (2003: 66). Orientalism moves in two opposing directions in the Spanish context: while imperial discourse in Spain undoubtedly was constructed on an Orientalized vision of Latin America and North Africa, Spain itself becomes a sensuous, exotic and conquerable "Orient" in texts like Merimée's *Carmen*, as Ignacio Tofiño-Quesada argues in "Spanish Orientalism: Uses of the Past in Spain's Colonization of Africa" (2003: 142-143).

*Traveling to and in Andalusia also means negotiating the different meanings that the Andalusian cultural heritage attains in diverse contexts – not only in fancy travel magazines*

Thus, traveling to and in Andalusia also means negotiating the different meanings that the Andalusian cultural heritage attains in diverse contexts – not only in fancy travel magazines. Speaking from the pages of a publication like *Travel + Leisure* may be an unfamiliar location for a thinker like Edward Said; it may seem that here the author's own notion of "traveling theory" is taking him literally and figuratively to new discursive positions, which ultimately do not lead him safely back "home" (which is where tourism always finds its happy ending) but instead point to something closer to the "intellectual's provisional home" a location the author defines in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. Such a home, Said explains at the end of a complex reflection of Humanist critical praxis, "is the domain of an exigent, resistant, intransigent art into which, alas, one can neither retreat nor search for solutions." He concludes these thoughts suggesting that "only in that precarious exilic realm can one first truly grasp the difficulty of what cannot be grasped and then go forth to try anyway" (2004: 144).

Significantly, if only momentarily as “Andalusia’s Journey” appears in a publication in which Southern Spain may be reduced to an exotic travel destination, Said’s text moves beyond its venue, revealing also that Andalusia is always more than the sum of its parts. For the foreign tourist, traveler or armchair traveler who visits Andalusia, a city like Granada still may be “one of the exotic locales *par excellence* in Romantic culture, a geographic, cultural and temporal elsewhere far removed from the mundane aspects of contemporary reality” (Saglia, 2001-2002: 194). Said’s text, however, makes an attempt to connect Andalusia’s exoticism with contemporary reality, navigating the shifting meanings Andalusia attains within Spanish, Arabic, British and American traditions. Or it may just dance around these meanings, just like Carmen’s ghost: “And what could be more Andalusian,” writes Said, following the earlier citation “than the fiery flamenco dancer, accompanied by hoarse *cantaors*, martial hand-clapping, and hypnotically strummed guitars, all of which have precedents in Arabic music?” (2002: 2).

## Travel + Tourism

Said’s brief 2002 essay on Andalusia can be examined alongside his 2004 collection *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* in order to mark some important distinctions in Said’s observations, analysis, and work. With “Andalusia’s Journey”, Said is writing for an audience whose understanding of “travel” – at least when choosing to pick up this particular publication – might exclude the forms of theoretical maneuvers, displacement, exile and diaspora on which Said has written throughout his career. While undoubtedly informative about the region’s history and contradictions, the text also depicts the author’s inner journey: the essay is as much a description of several

trips to Andalusia, as it is a reflection on what these trips mean for Said as an intellectual, a writer, and an Arab.

### *The most obvious distinction between tourism and other forms of travel is a binary opposition between the authentic (travel) and the inauthentic (tourism)*

The distinctions between traveling and tourism have been widely discussed in such fields as anthropology and sociology. Rather than reproducing these debates here, I would like to focus on two issues that are central to my analysis of Said’s text, namely, a quest for a cultural experience considered to be “authentic,” and the multiple meanings that returning home attains when traveling. Possibly the most obvious distinction between tourism and other forms of travel is a binary opposition between the authentic (travel) and the inauthentic (tourism) (Curtis and Pajaczkowska, 1994: 202). Tourism may have been initially understood to function as a “quest for authenticity” (Rojek and Urry, 1997: 11), that is, tourism was to provide the means to escape the daily routine of work and conventional life; touring unknown grounds would provide a way of finding again one’s true subjectivity. Rojek and Urry write: “The world of habitual life is so ordered and managed that authentic feelings are subdued or choked off. Through tourism we are said to have the expression of real feelings.” Yet the authors concede that considering a location like Las Vegas reveals that, “tourist sights are increasingly using extravagantly inauthentic accessories to attract tourists” (1997: 11).

One does not need to look at Las Vegas – or Disneyland – and its excesses to grasp that tourism nowadays often has become synonymous with simulacra and in-authenticity, with recreation and restoration not of what certain locations like Granada are or might have been, but of what these are expected to signify. Traveling

*off the beaten path* has become the norm literally and metaphorically so that only the beaten paths may be left. The crucial issue here would not be to locate the exact barrier that divides the so-called authentic from the simulacra, or to establish once and for all where traveling ends and tourism begins, but to look instead for other variables that allow us to understand where the differentiation between travel and tourism shifts, and why understanding this shift is relevant.

*Tourism oscillates between a quest of the authentic and the perfect simulation that, at least temporarily, fills the gap for an authenticity that can neither be restored nor recreated*

Andalusia is a highly popular destination, and in the past decades Andalusian cities, organizations and private companies have made possible different forms of travel focused on the region's multi-ethnic heritage. These include, for example, the Fundación Tres Culturas in Seville, and the Casa de Sefarad-Casa de la Memoria in Cordoba. This does not mean that visitors who tour Alhambra in Granada, or the streets of Cordoba and Seville, are going to be merely confronted with nothing more than a miniature Las Vegas or, to use George Ritzer and Allan Liska's term, a "McDisneyization" of Andalusian cultural heritage. Rather, tourism oscillates between a quest of the authentic and the perfect simulation that, at least temporarily, fills the gap for an authenticity that can neither be restored nor recreated.

Similarly, Said's text oscillates between a travel narrative, tourist guide and a philosophical interrogation of what "home" may mean for a writer like Said. In these Andalusian journeys the expected meets the unexpected, and returning home from this journey is both possible and impossible. Curtis and Pajaczkowska argue that the opposite of tourism would not be a largely

authentic experience, or not embarking on any form of travel in the first place. The opposite of tourism would be "the involuntary travel associated with the predicament of the immigrant. If the tourist travels, for the most part, backwards in time, then the immigrant, the exile and the diasporic travel forwards with no promise of a restored home" (1994: 202-205). The ambivalent sense of "home" which comes across in Said's text also suggests that "Andalusia's Journey" oscillates between travel backwards and travel forwards, between tourism and other, much more complex meanings of displacement. This ambivalence, ultimately, also is what accentuates the above-mentioned critical voice in the essay. In a discussion of the predicaments of intellectual exiles, which also is part of the Reith Lectures, Said explains what the impossibility of returning home implies: "Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier or perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation" (1994: 53). While at first it may seem that a search for an ancestral home, that could provide both answers and comfort, motivates Said's earlier journeys to Andalusia, the text reveals that rather than encountering a "restored home," the author ends up facing his own nostalgia for a place that never existed.

This nostalgia is apparent in Said's descriptions of his consecutive journeys to Andalusia, which begin in 1966, during the Francoist dictatorship. He admits that at the time Andalusia was "wonderfully picturesque" but he contrasts his vision of Granada with the ways in which mass tourism has already changed other Spanish cities, that is, "the burgeoning and quite sleazy mass tourist trade that had put down roots in Malaga (not to mention the ghastly neighboring village of Torremolinos)" (2002: 1). Moreover, Said, at least in the initial

moments of the text, still seems to yearn for the restored home to which Curtis and Pajaczowska refer: “But for me, and indeed for many Arabs, Andalusia still represents the finest flowering of our culture. That is particularly true now, when the Arab Middle East seems mired in defeat and violence, its societies unable to arrest their declining fortunes, its secular culture so full of almost surreal crisis, shock and nihilism.” However, later in the text Said undermines this very idea, when he admits that Andalusia, with its striking monuments and watery gardens, “makes a rather too facile, moral lesson of the place.” At this point in the text Said moves away from a nostalgic idealization of Andalusia and explores instead the region’s conflicts and ghosts, traveling with the baggage of a Palestinian Arab, “as someone whose diverse background might offer a way of seeing and understanding the place beyond illusion and romance” (2002: 2).

In lieu of displaying the attributes of a lost paradise, in Said’s text Andalusia reveals the constant negotiation between historical repression of Arab culture and the persistent remainders of this culture: “The Arabs journeyed along the shores of the Mediterranean through Spain, France, and Italy, all of which now bear their traces, even if those traces are not always acknowledged,” writes Said (2002: 2). And little by little the contradictions of Andalusia come about: everywhere he looks, Said finds traces of Spain’s Arab as well as Spain’s Jewish heritage, echoing Américo Castro’s analysis of Spanish history and civilization. For Castro, these Arab and Jewish cultural traces are not the remnants of a foreign invasion that distorted a supposed national and ethnic unity of an essential and timeless Spanish identity. Instead, the encounter between these different cultures is what constitutes Spanish culture in the first place. Challenging more orthodox versions of history, Castro argues that rather than an interruption of a pre-existing Spanish

“essence,” the Arab invasion in 711, together with the Jewish presence, largely tolerated in Arab Spain, is part and parcel of the Spanish history and civilization of a country that never was and never will be monocultural.

*Everywhere he looks, Said finds traces of Spain’s Arab as well as Spain’s Jewish heritage, echoing Américo Castro’s analysis of Spanish history and civilization*

The moment when Said questions why the Arabic heritage in Spain lingered for so long “if Arabs had represented only a negligible phase in Spanish history” (2002: 4), Said’s Andalusian journeys do not only take him across the Atlantic, from New York to Spain, but also across time. His final destination is not a restored home, but a location that remains both *out of place* and out of time. Said’s travels to and within Andalusia are not a journey to a restored home, yet still a journey that makes him (and consequently, his readers) aware of a precarious, un-restorable home.

In “Andalusia’s Journey”, tourism coexists discursively with other forms of travel; the text’s contradictions also are the contradictions of Andalusia and what it stands for. And if the traveler is able to return home from this journey “backwards in time” the only home he shall return to will necessarily be a “precarious and exilic realm” (2004: 141). The text therefore is far more than a search for the “authentic” Andalusia, or a quest for the sole, real Andalusian journey, which would reveal the artificiality of other journeys to Andalusia. Instead, Said’s text also challenges the very idea of such a quest for authenticity.

## An Andalusian Palimpsest

“Andalusia’s Journey” may initially reinforce the idea of a lost paradise where watery gar-

dens and shady patios served as a backdrop for the harmonious co-existence of Arabs, Jews and Christians before 1492. A close reading of the text, however, reveals that what Said really encounters in Andalusia are palimpsests: trace upon trace and writing upon writing bear witness to conflict rather than harmony. Said writes: "Andalusia multiplies in the mind with its contradictions and puzzles; its history is a history of the masks and assumed identities it has worn" (2002: 2). The term palimpsest commonly refers to a parchment or vellum from which an earlier text has been erased or scraped in order to make room for a new inscription; the fact that the remainders of the older text are usually still noticeable has turned the palimpsest into a useful image within a poststructural and postcolonial context.

Cultural imprints tell stories that challenge colonial master narratives, stories that become, to use Said's terms, histories of masks and assumed identities. The important point is that Said never specifies what lies hidden underneath these masks and assumed identities. The Andalusian history he encounters during his journeys that span three decades is a history of these conflicts and their remainders. This becomes clear in his description of the "mosque-cum-Cathedral" in Cordoba: "The great mosque was later barbarically seized by a Christian monarch who turned it into a church. He did this by inserting an entire cathedral into the Muslim structure's center, in an aggressive erasure of history and statement of faith" (2002: 4). Scratching the imprints on a palimpsest would then not reveal the origin (of Andalusian culture) but instead display the constant interactions and conflicts between cultures, within communities and among individuals. Yet even the most "aggressive forms of erasure," and even this "statement of faith" end up revealing their own futility, as Said explains: "The whole composition is always in evidence – always

changing yet always somehow the same – a unity in multiplicity." The mosque/cathedral is a palimpsestic structure, as Andalusian culture as a whole may be: it is more than the sum of its parts, but it also is more than what Said himself calls the "amazingly mixed Arab, Jewish and Latin cultural centers of Cordoba, Granada and Seville" (2002: 1).

*Said's text reveals that Andalusian culture is palimpsestic: the remainders of past conflicts are what constitute the Andalusian cultural heritage Said discusses in his text*

Andalusia is not just a palimpsest because the structures of its monuments are constant reminders of the Arab and Jewish presence, instead, Said's text reveals that Andalusian culture is palimpsestic: the remainders of past conflicts are what constitute the Andalusian cultural heritage Said discusses in his text. These also are the traces that reveal a counter-memory Said is ready to articulate, in spite of this unconventional and leisurely venue in which this text appears. I am referring here to a statement Said makes in the final chapter of *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*: "The intellectual is perhaps a kind of counter-memory, with its own counterdiscourse that will not allow conscience to look away or fall asleep" (2004: 142).

I have argued earlier in this essay that in spite of the inherent contradictions in "Andalusia's Journey" Said's text remains engaged with "alternative narratives and other perspectives on history" (2004: 141). Said writes that Andalusia was "a particularly lively instance of the dialogue, much more than the clash of cultures" (2002: 1), however, the palimpsestic nature of Andalusia that becomes apparent in Said's text challenges a nostalgic view of such a dialogue. In a text in which tourism and travel coexist, Said the traveler,

Said the tourist, and Said the intellectual confront one of the tasks of the intellectual, articulated in the final chapter of *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*: “The need now is for deintoxicated, sober histories that make evident the multiplicity and complexity of history without allowing one to conclude that it moves forward impersonally, according to laws determined either by the divine or by the powerful” (2004: 141).

*It may not even be possible to fully grasp what Spanish literature is all about, without understanding the lingering Arab presence*

So while the readers who pick up a copy of *Travel + Leisure* may just yearn for an escape, to “leave behind a modern world of disillusionment, strife, and uncertainty” (2002: 1) and find calm and harmony in a structure like the Alhambra in Granada, Said’s text suggests that those who choose to travel to Andalusia (literally or not) are bound to encounter in the same time the “multiplicity and complexity of history” (2004: 141). The twofold meaning of the text also links “Andalusia’s Journey” to Said’s secular humanism, his critique of Euro-centrism and imperialism. Said’s secular humanism may also be what makes him so attentive to the violence caused by religious strife in Andalusian and Spanish history as a whole, long before and long after 1492. In his text, Said reminds us that the violent attempt to erase Arab culture was neither successful, nor complete: “Yet, classical Mudejar art, with its typically florid Arabesques and geometrical architecture, was produced after the Muslims were defeated. As far as Catalonia, Gaudí’s obsession with botanical motifs shows the Arab influence at its most profound” (2002: 4). The influence of Arab culture hardly is limited to art and architecture. From the Medieval romances to Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, all the

way to Juan Goytisolo’s *Don Julián* (a novel Said also mentions in the article), and recent literary texts focusing on migration and its consequences in an increasingly multicultural society, it may not even be possible to fully grasp what Spanish literature is all about, without understanding the lingering Arab presence.

## Don Quixote’s Ghost

So while a palimpsestic structure of a monument like the Mosque in Cordoba needs to be understood in the context of religiosity, edifices like the mosque or the Alhambra, or even street quarters like the Barrio de Albaicín in Granada, or the Judería (Jewish Quarter) in Seville tell stories within stories – not unlike the text that gave birth to the modern novel, *Don Quixote*. The narrator of Cervantes’s novel, we need to remember, translates the text from the original *aljamiado*, the Romance vernacular in Arabic script. The text’s original author is an Arab, Cide Hamete Benengeli. This character, following William Childers “displaces the idea of any essentialized cultural identity or preordained order to which the text could correspond” (2006: 70). María Rosa Menocal poignantly describes the genesis of the second part of the novel in her book *The Ornament of the World*. She narrates how in the beginning of Book II of *Don Quixote*, the narrator has traveled to Toledo, in search of the manuscript of Book I, which is about to be destroyed, so that the material on which the text was written can be reused: “The man is wandering down these streets because it is now the neighborhood of the rag sellers. The old neighborhood of books and the men who wrote the books and translated books for the world has become a place where the books no one is supposed to read anymore are turned into pulp. The man sees a boy with a pile of papers he is trying to sell to

an old silk merchant, and he can tell they are written in Arabic" (2002: 254).

The pile of papers is the first part of the adventures of *Don Quixote*, written, as I already mentioned, in *aljamiado*. The narrator now has to find a translator who will help him to read a text written in a script that officially no longer exists on Iberian soil. Similar to *ladino*, *aljamiado* is a palimpsestic language, displaying the remainders of the violent and tolerant co-existence of the three cultures in Medieval Spain. *Don Quixote*, emerges from the extremely contradictory and sedimented society that could be found in the Iberian peninsula in the years that followed the reconquest of Arab Spain, the expulsion of the Jews, and the conquest of the Americas. These were the years, briefly, when certain processes of religious and ethnic identification, either evident, concealed or falsified, acquired a whole new set of shifting meanings, often with devastating consequences for individuals and communities as a whole.

Said does not specifically discuss *Don Quixote* in his essay. Yet in addition to the undeniable Arab cultural imprints in this novel, the fact that Cervantes is understood to be "one of the founders of modern literature and a giant of the European canon" (Childers, 2006: 77) needs to be considered here, particularly bearing in mind the importance the author places on narrative in *Culture and Imperialism*. Here, Said analyzes novels in order to understand the discursive mechanisms of colonization and decolonization. The fact that the Spanish empire and its (decadent) remainders are for the most part absent from this study is somewhat perplexing. Said justifies the limits of his corpus in the book's preface in the following terms: "What I am saying about the British, French and American imperial experience is that it has a unique coherence and a special cultural centrality" (1993: xxii). Said also provides two further reasons for limiting his corpus: the "overseas rule" or "jumping beyond

adjacent territories to very distant lands" and, finally, his own upbringing and education in the US, French and British context" (1993: xxiii). A brief and seemingly extraneous text like "Andalusia's Journey" might not fill the lacunae that the author readily acknowledges in his broader analysis of culture and empire. However, this succinct text still provides a missing link between the Spanish imperial expansion from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, and the contingencies Said analyzes in such texts as *Culture and Imperialism*, and also *Orientalism*.

*Don Quixote, emerges from the extremely contradictory and sedimented society that could be found in the Iberian peninsula in the years that followed the reconquest of Arab Spain*

These connections do not correspond to a direct and unwavering line between the moment when the first Andalusian beach was conquered from the South in 711 to consequences of such events as 11th September or 11th March. Rather, I would like to avoid the all-too-easy fusion between past, present and future, which often happens when the Medieval co-existence of three cultures or *convivencia* is understood to be a "road map" that could solve present conflicts in Spain, and in the Mediterranean world as a whole. As mentioned earlier, there is a slight tendency to do so in the initial moments of Said's text, which needs to be examined further.

### Convivencia's Ghosts

Said himself refers to Andalusia as the site of dialogue, rather than clash of cultures. Particularly in the beginning of the text, Said refers to *convivencia* with a longing for harmony and tolerance: "Muslims, Jews and Christians

co-existed with astonishing harmony. Today its periods of fruitful cultural diversity may provide a model for the co-existence of peoples, a model quite different from the ideological battles, local chauvinism, and ethnic conflict that finally brought it down – and which ironically enough threaten to engulf our own 21st century world” (2002: 1). After all, the fact that the Medieval cohabitation of the three cultures that once shared the Iberian peninsula are still involved in wide-ranging conflict in the Mediterranean world can easily turn this *convivencia* into nostalgia for the future that never was. Yet even though Said’s text displays this vision at the beginning of his essay, the text also contains a shift from a desire for harmony to an understanding of the inevitability of conflict. In lieu of proposing *convivencia* as a model of co-existence, I would argue that this historically unique cohabitation needs to be understood through a consideration of the antagonistic relationships between the different cultures and the ways in which different exchanges, ranging from trade to cultural translations, were possible.

Historian David Nirenberg’s book *Communities of Violence* takes the issue of *convivencia* further, as his historical analysis is about “barter and negotiation, not about the creation of a ‘persecuting discourse’” (1996: 6). Instead of discussing the medieval co-existence in terms of harmony, Nirenberg uses the term tolerance. Rather than being a given, this tolerance was constantly negotiated, defined and redefined. Nirenberg therefore recognizes a “fundamental interdependence of violence and tolerance in the Middle Ages” (1996: 7). Nirenberg’s book emphasizes that “violence was a central and systemic aspect of the co-existence of majority and minorities. *Convivencia* was predicated upon violence; it was not its peaceful antithesis. Violence drew its meaning from co-existence, not in opposition to it” (1996: 245). Such an understanding of historical developments also challenges a teleological view of history

in which what began in the Middle Ages would lead directly to the present.

*Violence was a central and systemic aspect of the co-existence of majority and minorities. Convivencia was predicated upon violence; it was not its peaceful antithesis*

To return to Said’s text, it is important to point out that the serenity Said recognizes in the Alhambra or the “unity in multiplicity” he finds in the Mosque in Cordoba, will not lead him, nor any visitor, back to a more harmonious time, or even to a restored “home”. These buildings, bearing the marks of violence and tolerance – before 1492 – and also the marks of a violent attempt to erase this history of violence and tolerance – after 1492 – do not reveal, to use Nirenberg’s terms, a “history of persecuting mentalities.” Instead, the Andalusian cultural heritage reveals itself in constant negotiations, arch by arch, stone by stone, millimeter by millimeter, of what Said himself calls a world “whose multiple identities formed an enriched diversity” (2002: 6).

Nirenberg’s analysis ultimately teaches us to be wary of hasty, impatient connections between past and present, between the ritualized violence against minorities in the Kingdom of Aragon in medieval times and contemporary acts of racial violence in a world of increasing and daily changing migratory patterns. Even though Said does not specifically mention the term *convivencia* in his text, “Andalusia’s Journey,” still reveals that *convivencia*, should not be understood in the manner of a teleological narrative, as an unwavering line between the Medieval Mediterranean world and the present, or, to use María Rosa Menocal’s terms, from an idealized Andalusian past to “Andalusian Shards.” Menocal’s work, not unlike Said’s text, discusses a certain nostalgia for a lost reign of tolerance: “From the norma-

tive perspective of the history of Islam or the Arabic-speaking peoples, al-Andalus is reckoned more a nostalgic curiosity than anything else – and mostly, in the end, a failure, because Islam did not survive as one of the religions in Europe and because by 1492, Granada, the last Islamic city-state in Europe, was quashed and the “Moors” (the disparaging Christian term for Muslims), along with the Jews, were driven out of Spain” (2002: 10).

*A culture of tolerance means living with its contradictions – and its ghosts. The contradictions of Andalusian life fell victim to the Spanish Inquisition*

Thus, while Menocal emphasizes the tolerance of the Andalusian world, she admits that a culture of tolerance necessarily is a culture of contradictions. The author explains that a culture of tolerance means living with its contradictions – and its ghosts. The contradictions of Andalusian life fell victim to the Spanish Inquisition, whose history needs to be understood in the context of imperial expansion across land and sea. Menocal writes: “The Spanish Inquisition was set up to cure the perceived ills created by five hundred years of a society that did tolerate contradictions of all sorts” (2002: 271). In this passage the affinity between Said and Menocal may be strongest. Both texts ultimately show that the contradictions of Andalusian culture, the contradictions of any text about Andalusia can only be partially grasped. So the point is not to find the historic or individual causality that led to the end of *convivencia* and the end of tolerance, but to understand the ways in which tolerance and intolerance, co-existence and violence were (and are) in constant negotiation. What Said encounters in his different crossings to and within Andalusia are the remainders of these constant and open-ended negotiations.

## Call It Mooristan

I mentioned in the beginning that any journey to Andalusia should begin with a good story. A story also is appropriate in the Andalusian context because the tradition of the framed narrative, concretely, the *Thousand and One Nights*, is tightly intertwined with the themes of this essay, Andalusia's history, and Edward Said's work. The stories that now are part of the *Thousand and One Nights* reached Spain in Medieval times, much earlier than Antoine Galland's French translation brought the tales to Europe (Cinca Pinós and Castells Criballés, 1998: 5). Both Américo Castro (1976: 35), and later María Rosa Menocal (2002: 274) have pointed out the ways in which these tales are part and parcel of the Andalusian heritage.

The *Thousand and One Nights*, finally, is one of the countless references in what very well may be one of the most complicated and timely novels about what the Andalusian cultural heritage means today – except that the novel takes place for most of its plot in twentieth-century India. I am referring to *The Moor's Last Sigh*, by former fatwa-target and recently knighted (if a knight, for sure an errant one) Salman Rushdie. A brief allusion in Said's text might point to Rushdie's novel, yet it also may be a reference to a commonplace within British romanticism, Boabdil's tears as he was forced to leave Granada. Said writes: “The last king of Granada, the luckless Boabdil (Abu Abd Allah Muhammad), was expelled along with the Jews in 1492, weeping or sighing – choose your version. The unhappy Moor quickly became the emblem of what the Arabs had lost” (2002: 3).

In Rushdie's novel, both Boabdil's tears, and Andalusia as a whole are thematized in relation to religious, racial and ethnic conflict, as well as the post-colonial nation-building process in twentieth century India. The title is a reference to Boabdil's last sigh, but also to

the novel's main character, Moorae Zogoiby, or "Moor," who in the text often appears identified with Boabdil. In the novel, and according to the idiosyncratic mythology of the Zogoiby family, Boabdil leaves Granada with a Jewish concubine. She steals his crown, which then eventually appears hidden in a synagogue on the island of Goa. Here the protagonist's father, Abraham Zogoiby, finds the ornament. It is later revealed in the novel that this may be just hearsay; instead of locating an almost 500-year-old-crown Abraham Zogoiby has unearthed his mother's well-hidden contraband. As in any Andalusian journey, the reader of this novel is constantly faced with concealed, re-invented and faked identifications. The fact that the novel ends in the Andalusian village of Benengeli – an obvious reference to *Don Quixote* – is just one of the more obvious semantic games that locates Rushdie's novel somewhere between Andalusia and India.

The other issue that connects this novel with Said's Andalusian journeys is the image of the palimpsest, a crucial motive and metaphor in the novel, most evident in the paintings of Aurora Zogoiby, the mother of Moorae. These paintings depict a magical-realist world in which Granada slowly becomes Bombay. It also is a world filled with magical creatures (monsters, mermaids, ghosts) and also "a cavalcade of local riff-raff – pickpockets, pimps, fat whores hitching their saris up against the waves" (1995: 226). But more than anything, the lack of clear and solid boundaries between these different worlds, between the tangible and the intangible, the authentic and the fake, is what makes these paintings so important and so relevant to Said's brief yet immensely rich text. The artist herself discusses this "Mooristan" or "Palimpsestine" in the following terms: "This seaside, this hill, with the fort on top. Water-gardens and hanging gardens, watch-towers and towers of silence too. Place where worlds collide, flow in and out of one another,

and washofy away. Place where an air-man can drown in water, or else grow gills, where a water-creature can get drunk, but also chokeofy, on air. One universe, one dimension, one country, one dream, bumpo'ing into another, or being under, or on top of." (1995: 226)

*"Andalusia's Journey" is a tour and more than a tour, a lesson of co-existence and its remainders or shards, and ultimately an endless ghost story*

Aurora Zogoiby's watery images also correspond to the world Said evokes at the end of his text, a world "whose borders were also thresholds, and whose multiple identities formed and enriched diversity" (2002: 6). Rushdie's novel makes no attempt to display a particular Andalusian authenticity, hidden underneath the simulacra of commercialism or tourism. Instead, the text questions what the Andalusian heritage means in a global context. Similarly, "Andalusia's Journey" is a tour and more than a tour, a lesson of co-existence and its remainders or shards, and ultimately an endless ghost story, as Carmen's specter continues dancing surrounded by the ruins of al-Andalus.

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