THE TIMES OF AL-ANDALUS: PERFORMING ALTERNATIVE TEMPORALITIES
IN SPANISH NEW HISTORICAL NOVELS, FESTIVE REENACTMENT, AND
CONVERSION NARRATIVE

by
Julia C. Baumgardt

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Abstract

With the current rise in popularity of the historical novel and “medieval” fantasy renderings in television and film, as well as the increasingly charged political rhetoric centered on notions of medieval conflict and territorial rights, the Middle Ages have become a repository for a diversity of contemporary cultural significance. Many of these meanings are resonant with Spanish National-Catholic ideology and historiographic praxis and invested with a temporal logic that makes the medieval both essence and antithesis of the modern West. This dissertation examines contemporary renovations of al-Andalus—in two historical novels, one fiesta de moros y cristianos “reenactment,” and one hybrid conversion narrative-historical novel by a Spanish convert to Islam—that contrast with or attempt to contrast with these ideological uses of the Middle Ages.

Following the temporal critiques of Johannes Fabian, Wai Chee Dimock and Dipesh Chakrabarty, it investigates the texts’ reconstructions of the Iberian Middle Ages through an interrogation of both the temporalities the works renounce and those they create. Furthermore, it analyzes the function of these texts’ attempts to vindicate the role of two groups both marginalized and appropriated by National-Catholic discourses—women and Muslims—and the intersection of this vindication with the texts’ resultant temporality.

Through an emphasis on discourse and communal ritual, several of the texts manage to move away from a conflict-based, teleological concept of Spanish history in time, establishing an alternative temporality and a more inclusive version of al-Andalus, past and present.

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# Table of Contents

## Abstract

## Acknowledgements

## I. Performing the Past as Present: An Introduction

“Going Medieval”: Imagining the West Versus Islam..............................1
Spanish Moors?: The Iberian Middle Ages and Contemporary Spain..........4
Out of Time: A Critique of Progressive Temporality and Historiography......14
Closing Temporal Distance: Deep Time..................................................28
Closing Emotional Distance: Alternative (Performative) Historiography......33
Introduction to the Corpus........................................................................38

## II. Playing Scheherazade: Women, Time and Destiny in La estirpe de

*la mariposa* and *El viaje de la reina*

Imagining a Feminist al-Andalus..............................................................41
Plot Summaries and Critical Perspectives................................................50
*La estirpe*: Reproductive Protagonism or Divinely Ordained Fertility?........56
Man's Secret Weapon..............................................................................60
God and History: *La estirpe de la mariposa* and Francoist Discourse........66
A New Scheherazade: Nur’s Discursive Protagonism.................................70
*El viaje de la reina*: Female Protagonists and the Masculine Void..........78
*El viaje*: Performative Orality..............................................................91
*El viaje* and *La estirpe*: Women’s Narratives and the Production of History...96
Female-Protagonized Historical Fiction..................................................104
III. Playing at War: Representing Morisco Conversion in the \textit{Fiesta de moros y cristianos} in Válor

\textit{cristianos} in Válor

The Válor Festive Weekend.......................................................113
Critical Perspectives...............................................................116
Reverse Reenacting: From Cyclical Conflict to Sympathetic Refocus........123
Historical Antecedents............................................................128
Reenacting Reconciliation: The Rebellion as Subtext.......................131
La Tropa Cristiana.................................................................133
La Tropa Mora..........................................................................137
Conversion: Already Christians?................................................144
Dramatic Structure.................................................................148
The Spy Dialogue and the Festival’s Comic Core............................150
The War in Africa as Context....................................................155
Deep Time and a Vision of Future.............................................169

IV. Performing the Paradox of Past: Conclusions

Alternative History as A Critique or a Revision?: Summary of Arguments....177
Morisco Genocide and Crypto-Muslims.........................................184
The Failures and Powers of (History) Text....................................193
Unity Through Liturgy.............................................................204
Beyond a Dichotomous Notion of Spiritual Time..........................209
Performing Monologues............................................................214

\textbf{Works Cited}.....................................................................220

\textbf{Curriculum Vitae}............................................................232
“Time, much like language or money, is a carrier of significance, a form through which we define the content of relations between the Self and the Other” (Fabian ix).

“[…] a seam has materialized before our eyes at which the past and present touch […] enabling the hand of the past to reach out and illuminate the events of the present, this seam is palpably invested by desire: a desire for an intelligibility that was, and still is, urgently wanted” (Heng, “Sex, Lies” 3).

Chapter One
Out of Time: An Introduction

“Going Medieval”: Imagining the West Versus Islam

The “Middle Ages” does not refer to a specific, well-defined, and closed-off period in the past, but to a time in between two better defined periods. Nevertheless, cultural and political references to the Medieval as an agreed-upon, well-defined moment abound. In the West in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many of these political references and some of the popular ones take the form of disparaging comments in which contemporary events, ideas, communities and peoples are disdained for being “medieval”: backward, ruthless, violent and uncivilized. Particularly in the last several decades, in the wake of violent attacks from various militant Islamist sects, the (U.S.-lead) Western War on Terror, and the formation of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, many cultural stereotypes about the widespread medieval conflict between Christians and Muslims—often formed from historical misreadings and ideologically manipulated
overgeneralizations—are being revived and extended. For both the (“Secular”-Christian) West and militant Islamist groups—two sides of an imagined dichotomy that in reality do not exist as monolithically as described—the Middle Ages form part of a renewed rhetorical strategy to support a conflictive political and ideological position. Both parties refer to and revive the medieval past as the primitive kernel of their essential character as well as the essential mode of interaction with their (religious) enemy.

Spanish former prime minister José María Aznar (PP, 1996-2004) and U.S. former president George W. Bush (R, 2001-2009) present two notorious examples of recent prominent political figures that refer to the Middle Ages in these terms, reviving and furthering the “clash-of-cultures” historical understanding that the Middle Ages was a “dark” monolithic block characterized by religious confrontation. Aznar condemns the current state of Spanish regional discord as “taifismo” (Interview by Prego). He also made waves in his address at Georgetown, “Seven Theses,” in which he connected al-Qaeda’s attacks—what he called Bin Laden’s war “on us, on democratic, prosperous, free and basically secular western society”—to the eighth-century “invasion” by the “Moors” (Aznar). Aznar is certainly not alone in this type of politically and ideologically charged interpretation of the Middle Ages. As Bruce Holsinger and Geraldine Heng have illuminated, the Bush administration built the justification of its policy of war in the Middle East and torture of P.O.W.s around the premise of fighting with a “medieval”

1 “Taifismo” comes from “taifa,” the term for the independent, Muslim-ruled city-states that arose after the destruction of the Caliphate of Cordoba in 1031. Along with describing the general political environment of rival cities and their rulers vying for power and territory, the term “taifa,” as evidenced by Aznar’s use of it, also has a strong negative connotation of factionalism and in-fighting as opposed to the harmonious Golden Age of Islamicate Iberia united under the Caliphate.
opponent. Just as these political leaders from distinct national traditions rhetorically rallied behind the imagined supra-national community of the (Secular-Christian) “West” in the face of the threat of “Muslim extremism,” so too have various distinct Islamist factions embraced the notion that these relations are and have always been normatively conflictive. References to the West as common enemy unite militant sects from a large array of national and Muslim denominational traditions.

The positioning of certain key leaders who refer to these two “sides” (namely, the West—North America and Western Europe as secular with a Christian past—and Islam as cultural, political and military entities) has reified and enlarged a greatly oversimplified concept of medieval politico-religious conflict as the paradigm of interaction between them. Both the designation of these two groups as unified blocks and the reading of the Middle Ages that characterizes their interaction are equally imagined and homogenized. Despite the proliferation of the West-Islam dichotomy in public discourse, both contemporary and medieval relations are and have been revealed to be far more variegated and complex than ideological rhetoric and sweeping historical overgeneralizations claim. Nevertheless, the West—imagined as a political and cultural monolith—has developed a system of interaction with Islam—likewise imagined—that not only continually reinforces this stereotype of essential difference and armed conflict, but also enlarges it to include cultural paternalism. Within this mode, not only the political and military clashes attributed exclusively to the bloodthirsty nature of various

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2 Holsinger carefully traces the way that the Bush-era torture memos justified torture by their opponents’ “premodern barbarism” and literal incivility (Neomediaevalism 77). Heng illustrates the use of rhetoric of the Middle Ages and the crusades on Bush’s part in “Holy War Redux.”

3 Daniel Pipes—who is, granted, an outspoken critic of Islam—compiles an informative list of quotations from various Islamic militant leaders that all rally behind a particular notion of West and that center on al-Andalus.
Islamist factions, but also certain cultural norms and values of Islamicate societies are disdained and considered “backward.” The overgeneralized category of “treatment of women” serves as one of these central spaces from which the West asserts its progressive superiority and civility over its backward “medieval” other. A unified, democratic system of government is another. The West uses both of these categories as justification for its “advancement” over Islamic(ate) societies and the idea of “teaching” (nation-building) and “rescuing” (women’s rights specifically and human rights, generally) are also touted as primary reasons for its invasive interventions into many Islamicate polities. The “secular” West calls upon its supposed Christian medieval past to bring forth an ideology and rhetoric of armed struggle against Islam at the same time that it also affirms its cultural “progress” and position of civil superiority over the same “backward” foe.

Spanish Moors?: The Iberian Middle Ages and Contemporary Spain

The Iberian Islamicate Middle Ages, the politically, religiously and geographically diverse swath of Muslim-ruled southern Iberia from 711-1492 known as al-Andalus, takes a front-and-center position in this rhetorical conflict about the Middle Ages and its contemporary relevance to both “West” and “East.” This is true within Spain’s own discourses—nationalist, secular-idealized, and even anti-national—as well as in other Western European rhetoric and that of several denominations of militant Islamists.

The National-Catholic tradition—established by Isabella and Ferdinand in their creation of the Reconquista ideology and continued from Golden Age politics through the celebrated Generation of ’98 and consolidated and codified by Franco into the Fascist
rule of “patria, familia y religión”—takes a clearly conflictive perspective on Medieval Iberia. Through both careful narrative control and a dizzying manipulation of “factliness,” Franco championed and disseminated a concept of Spanish history that was “bound by rigid a priori schema” and constantly preoccupied with time and notions of historical destiny vis-à-vis God’s plan and providence (Herzberger 32). The regime promulgated a notion of history as ultimately a universal one that unfolded on two (hierarchical) temporal planes: first and most broadly, the divine and truly universal view in which there was only essence and stasis; but secondly, there was a human (i.e. sinful) dimension to time, marking humanity’s constant falling away from and subsequent return to the divine plan. Based on this vision, Spain’s Catholic essence was formed in the divinely ordained struggle of the Reconquista—a pinnacle “moment” for this ideology—and any subsequent appearance of decay or decline was the result of Spain’s momentary falling away from its essential, static and divinely ordained nature. Franco’s historiographical rhetoric consolidated and codified an already extant notion of Spanishness as essentially Catholic and as formed against the threat of a Muslim foe. Particular to his regime’s interpretation was his preoccupation with historical time as both the universal—and conflictual—stasis of religious essence and the cyclical, messianic return and re-affirmation of that essence. Thus, for National Catholicism, “universal history begins with Catholicity” as firmly established in the Middle Ages “and ends with

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4 Among the Seven Fundamental Laws of the regime, Franco’s Ley de Principios del Movimiento Nacional established an understanding of Spanishness inextricable from a conservative interpretation of Catholicism and history; the essential character of Spanishness was forged and fortified in the Middle Ages with the Roman and Visigoth rule of the Peninsula and the subsequent eight centuries of struggle by these authentically Christian individuals against the Muslim invaders.

5 For a more detailed interpretation of the Francoist notion of time as cyclical as it relates to reviving the Middle Ages, see my discussion of women, time and destiny in chapter two of this dissertation.
a monological discourse that bears upon the conceptualization of history as related to
time, structure, narration and myth” (Herzberger 26). Central to this conception of
Spanishness and the divine plan are the women who, Mary-like in temperament, religious
fortitude and submissiveness, physically and metaphorically bear forth the next
generation of god-fearing Spanish men.

Almost forty years after his death and after the subsequent transition to
democracy, Franco’s temporal justification of Spanishness based on a mythologized
cycle of conflict begun in the Iberian Middle Ages and the continual rebirth of strong
Spanish (Christians) who fight in the conflict pervades in cultural and political rhetoric.
Aznar’s positioning of Spain’s destiny in the unchanging fight against a static Muslim
foe, as well as celebrated Spanish historian, novelist and columnist César Vidal’s España
tfrente al Islam illustrate this precisely. Within this optic, al-Andalus is that against which
Spain was built. It is the conflict against this foe that provides the force through which
Spain repeatedly asserts itself.

Conservative Spanish nationalists do not represent the only religiously oriented
movement that makes use of a mythologized notion of Islamicate Iberia. In a 2007 article
widely quoted and re-posted in the blogosphere, Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi observes
multiples statements about reclaiming Iberia for Islam by some of the West’s most
noteworthy adversaries. Osama bin Laden and his advisors, the prominent Saudi sheik
Safar al-Hawali, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt Muhammad Mahdi Akef,
and even Hamas, in its Children’s magazine, all call for the reclamation of al-Andalus for
Islam. Akef, as well as the many anti-Muslim journalists and bloggers that comment on
and disseminate Dahoah-Halevi’s work, cites a “deep assumption” within Islam “that a
land conquered and settled by Muslim [sic] becomes part of an inalienable Islamic patrimony” (Pipes). That is, once under Muslim rule, always a Muslim territory. While the amount of press these statements of anti-Western Islamists have received by anti-Muslim journalists is noteworthy, it does appear to be a genuine preoccupation by various Islamist factions or at least a prominent charged threat. Soeren Kern reported in 2014 on the social media campaign undertaken within Spain by ISIS sympathizers that documents famous Spanish landmarks with ISIS posters containing statements about retaking Spain in the foreground. Furthermore, he documents statements by Spain’s Interior Minister Jorge Fernández Díaz referring to the threat of jihadist terrorism in Spain as real and serious. While Spain certainly is not the only target of Islamist attacks, the charged rhetoric of an ideological interpretation of Reconquista appears to fuel both “sides” of the supposed ongoing clash of Islam versus West.

As Domínguez Díaz notes in her study of Andalusian converts to Islam, this occurs not just within the West’s outspoken Christian right, but also with those who identify with the “secular” left. She identifies what she calls a “three-fold prototype” of uses of the al-Andalus myth in Spain, in which both the first group—represented by the conservative National-Catholic wing—and the second—those on the “secular democratic left”—yoke together contemporary Islam with Spain’s past in al-Andalus, determining them as “backward,” and a stain on the progress of contemporary Western democracy. Hisham Aidi has investigated the culturally identified “Judeo-Christian tradition” that represents the common core shared between the Conservative Christian right—in Spain and elsewhere in the West—and the West’s most outspoken secular politicians on the left. This tradition unites these two wings in the joint vilification of Islam as antithetical
to both the “Judeo-Christian tradition” and the “modern” secular democratic system that supposedly grew out of it. As Aidi asserts, citing Said, the centuries of brutal anti-Semitic thinking on the part of Christians have somehow been erased from the cultural memory of much of the West as these countries, scrambling to position themselves as “modern” post-WWII, adopt Christians and Jews as their in-groups while maintaining Islam as their joint out-group (Aidi, “Interference”). Despite the wide variety of religious and national traditions from which the “secular West” as a unit has appeared, there has emerged a relatively monolithic anti-Muslim rhetoric that places Christianity, Judaism and agnosticism under the umbrella of Western democracy and that pits this variegated block against Islam in general. As Dahoah-Halevi concludes his piece about the references to retaking al-Andalus in various Islamist factions, “this is an existential struggle over the nature of the world, pitting dark religious fanaticism against democracy and humanism.” Here, clearly, there is a kind of unity between Domínguez Díaz’s first two groups—the Catholic right and the secular democratic left—against the supposed common enemy that Islam represents. Therefore, out of the variety of interpretations of al-Andalus as a historical entity with a contemporary legacy, the Reconquista approach maintains the most potency as it is operationalized by a religiously centered West, its more liberal “secular” arm, and the likewise heterogeneous grouping of Islamist organizations. As Lisa Lampert writes, for the West, these “neomedievalist” trends “rely on a vision of medieval Europe that is frozen within traditional notions of periodization and that is uniformly Christian and normatively white” and, I would add, thoroughly characterized by cycles of conflict against the religious Other (392-3).
Along with the political interpretations of al-Andalus and medieval Iberia more broadly—from Franco’s National Catholicism to the contemporary secular-but-Judeo-Christian West, to anti-West militant Islamism—that revive Islamicate Iberia as a charged period of conflictual religious relations that supposedly continue to characterize geopolitical dynamics today, there is a parallel cultural trend that interprets al-Andalus with a rose-colored sparkle. The Franco-Aznar-Bush political positioning of the West as essentially Christian calls forth Spain as understood by thinkers such as Sánchez Albornoz, Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington. The cultural industry plays off both this clash-of-cultures excitement and an idealized convivencia-esque exoticism depending on demographic appeal and potential capital gains.6

Politically speaking, Spain has adopted Western Europe’s in-groups (Christians and Jews) and out-groups (Muslims). From a tourism standpoint, it has also positioned itself as the authority on cross-confessional dialogue and harmonious and tolerant living; it is the veritable “teacher” who can instruct the rest of the secular Christian West on how to interact with its Eastern Other (Aidi, “Interference”). Southern Spanish tourist organizations capitalize on the idealization of al-Andalus as a standout, peaceful and harmonious society in the midst of the rest of the medieval chaos. The Junta de Andalucía makes use of both these trends—the simultaneous idealization of al-Andalus and the pejorative use of the Middle Ages, in Spain and elsewhere—when it explains the legacy the contemporary government has inherited, describing the Muslims who arrived in Iberia in 711 in the following terms: “Portadores de una avanzada cultura en contraste con el

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6 In most cases, the cultural revival of Islamicate Iberia as ultimately beautiful and harmonious, a lost jewel in the history of Spain, is an overly facile and idealized view of convivencia. Appropriately problematized, the concept of convivencia is actually a very useful tool for understanding the complex and interconnected networks of relation between communities in medieval Iberia.
generalizado repliegue de la Edad Media, [los moros] convierten a Córdoba en la primera ciudad de Occidente” (“Al-Andalus”). Giles Tremlett calls this kind of re-interpretation and appropriation of the Middle Ages “theme park medieval.” These agencies engage in a clever and lucrative move that, with varying degrees of historical specificity, Orientalizes al-Andalus as simultaneously fantastic and mythically barbarous, mostly for the purpose of producing a product for commercial consumption.

The revival of a popular fascination with the Middle Ages in books, films, video games, and television series often serves a similar end. In many of these media—the blockbuster *Game of Thrones*, for example, which has surpassed even *The Sopranos* as the most-popular HBO show ever (Marcos)—medieval Europe acquires more than a veneer of the fantastic, becoming a fully exoticized—if nevertheless violent and deeply religious—other-worldly locus of escapism and entertainment. Given the rampant popularity in Spain of historical fiction and television shows depicting the Middle Ages, it is no surprise that *Game of Thrones*—or *Juego de tronos*, as it is known in its dubbed version—has reached iconic status. The tourism industry has teamed up with the culture industry where medieval Spain is concerned, with the show receiving insider access to film in Spain’s cultural monuments and Game-of-Thrones themed tours increasing visitation to certain historical sites by a whopping twenty-five percent according to NPR (Frayer). Lauren Frayer, NPR’s Spain correspondent, reports that while a great deal of Spain’s historical foreign policy rests on the understandings of the Iberian Middle Ages I described above, the inverse is also true: although Aznar uses his interpretation of the Spanish Middle Ages to justify his religio-political ideology, Spain’s up-and-coming populist party Podemos has looked to *Game of Thrones* for insight into the innerworkings
of Spain’s domestic politics. Its leader, Pablo Iglesias, published a book drawing parallels between Game of Thrones and contemporary Spanish politics and allegedly gifted the Spanish King a box set of the series (Frayer).

In the midst of the “medieval struggle” national rhetoric, the West-Islam conflict as homogenized and aggrandized by both sides, and the cultural-capital appropriation of a fantasized medieval Iberia, a noteworthy group has emerged that walks a distinct line through these questions of nationalism, religion and history. According to findings by the Pew Research Center, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, and this is a result not only of the relative youth and fertility of Muslims compared with non-Muslims but also the estimated rate of conversions to Islam (“Future of World Religions”). Based on a 2014 census completed by the Spanish Union of Islamic Communities (Unión de Comunidades Islámicas Españolas, UCIE) Muslims now represent 3.9% of the Spanish population, and 40% of those resident Muslims are Spanish citizens, either native-born or naturalized (4-6). A subset of this demographic, those native-born citizens who converted to Islam, call themselves “moros nuevos,” recalling and riffing on the derogatory term (“cristianos nuevos”) for those Muslims and Jews converted under duress in Spanish history. Lisa Abend and Domínguez Díaz highlight the growth and public presence of this group beginning in the 1970s, noting that for converts and non-converts alike, professing and practicing Islam was a subversive act that consolidated somewhat into a political movement and a firm alternative to National-Catholicism’s essentialist Spanish Christianity. In fact, Domínguez Díaz points to the strong connection between
Andalusian nationalism and the political activism of Muslim converts. A diverse group espousing a heterogeneous and varied set of viewpoints—some expressly political, others more historicist, and others still reviving a conscience-focused new mysticism—these Moros nuevos present yet another way in which al-Andalus has a central stake in notions of contemporary Spanishness, and the concept appears in a startling number of essays and other publications by contemporary Spanish Muslims. Some of these use al-Andalus to assert a belief in Muslim indigeneity that by its nature overturns the National-Catholic narrative of the 711 “invasion,” instead emphasizing the historic violence against Muslims and moriscos. Rodolfo Gil Benumeya Grimau, essayist for Webislam, highlights the joint tendencies within this relatively diverse group to both idealize Caliphal Cordoba as a Golden Age and also emphasize the trauma suffered by Spain’s Muslim population after the fall of Granada. He notes that the idea of al-Andalus as a paradise “ha sido el fruto de una admirativa autovaloración posterior, de una nostalgia, y de la recreación del viejo mito de la edad dorada como compensación históricopsicológica de los traumas vividos posteriormente con las expulsiones y las diásporas” (Benumeya Grimau). Hashim Ibrahim Cabrera’s 2002 Párrafos de moro nuevo reflects on al-Andalus from a variety of positions: idealized, Muslim-centric and politically critical. Not only these Spanish Muslims but Muslims from a wide variety of nationalities look to their version of al-Andalus as a past to be both properly narrativized and recaptured. As the 2013 issue of Critical Muslim entitled Reclaiming al-Andalus and entirely devoted to the topic indicates, al-Andalus also stands as a central knot for a more

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7 Of the many examples she presents, one of the most noteworthy is that Blas Infante (the so-called “father” of Andalusian nationalism), along with many of his political proponents, was a convert to Islam.
scholarly revisiting that presents some hope for openness, inclusivity and critical thinking within and without the spiritual tradition of Islam. As with the other ideological, political and cultural manifestations I mention above, for Moros nuevos also, “al-Andalus is not past… [it] is a living memory” (Abend 141-42).

From the off-handed comments of political leaders to the strategic use of medieval cultural monuments by the entertainment industry to the increased publication of historical fiction to the variegated Muslim movement that recognizes al-Andalus as a present spiritual reality, much of this contemporary medievalism works in ways to (at best) Orientalize the medieval past and (at worst) actively and consciously Other it through an overarching temporal logic. This logic is present in political discourse, cultural production, and even historiography proper. In Return of the Moor, her astute and nuanced study of contemporary Spanish film, fiction and folk festivals that revive a fascination with medieval “Moors,” Daniela Flesler takes the broad majority of her texts to task for keeping Islamicate Iberia in all its resonances and renovations safe in a distant past, thereby displacing the very real and present ethical issues of Moroccan immigration and xenophobia against Muslims. She argues that for the majority of these renovations,

8 Here I follow the International Society for the Study of Medievalism’s ample definition of medievalism as articulated by Tom Shippey: “Medievalism is the study of responses to the Middle Ages at all periods since a sense of the mediaeval began to develop. Such responses include, but are not restricted to, the activities of scholars, historians and philologists in rediscovering medieval materials; the ways in which such materials were and are used by political groups intent on self-definition or self-legitimation; and artistic creations, whether literary, visual or musical, based on whatever has been or is thought to have been recovered from the medieval centuries. The Middle Ages remain present, moreover, in the modern consciousness, both through scholarship and through popular media such as film, video games, poster art, TV series and comic strips, and these media are also a legitimate object of study, if often intertwined with more traditionally scholarly topics.” For a detailed discussion of the term and its stakes, see Studies in Medievalism XVII-XX, Defining Medievalism(s) I-II and Defining Neomedievalism(s) I-II.
the Moor stays distant in “the safe space of an (imaginary) medieval Spain” (98). By way
of their underlying temporal logic, these exoticizing “medieval” fantasies as well as the
use of notions of the medieval by politicians such as Bush and Aznar are remarkably
similar to the political and historiographical appropriation of the medieval as both that
against which and out of which the Modern West was formed.

Out of Time: A Critique of Progressive Temporality and Historiography

There is a distinct and observable trend in Western culture to view time as linear
and evolving. “Progress,” not just as a historical reality but as a cultural ideal, is
ingrained in North American and Western European thinking in a way that not only
privileges Western culture and history as the most “advanced” but also plots specific
points—dates, events, movements—along a timeline that extends from “uncivilized” on
the left to a highly technologically “evolved” “modernity” in the present day. Johannes
Fabian’s *Time and the Other* traces what he calls the “spatialization” of time by
endowing it—through a bastardization of Darwin’s theory of evolution—with some kind
of “innate law” of progress (Darwin qtd. in Fabian 14). That is, some sort of pre-
ordained direction toward a specific and determined—though unknown to those who are
experiencing the change—end. Uncovering the complicity of anthropology in the
colonial enterprise as it specifically regards the use of time, Fabian brings to light the
West’s use of a spatialized temporal logic in order to “deny coevalness” to its colonial
objects (35). Among other considerations, Fabian points out that this denial is also
interwoven into academic practices, allowing for a clear delineation between

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9 For a more detailed discussion of this trajectory, and the differences between Darwinian time and
that of Social Evolutionists, see *Time and the Other*, chapter 1: “Time and the Emerging Other.”
anthropology’s subject (the “modern” academic) and its object (the “backwards,” or “savage” Other). Following along these lines, Dipesh Chakrabarty extends Fabian’s indictment of anthropology to historiography and politics, recognizing that the conception of time as evolving is also a product of Western historicism and the Western historian’s distance between her historical object: “Historicism thus posited historical time as a measure of cultural difference that was assumed to exist between the West and the Non-West” (Provincializing 7). This kind of othering based on an end-directed temporal logic is present in the Junta de Andalucía’s representation of Córdoba as “la primera ciudad de Occidente,” in contrast to “el generalizado repliegue de la Edad Media.” In one sentence, the Junta both presents the Middle Ages as a period without cultural advancement and presents the West as somehow juxtaposed and in plain contrast with the entire medieval period. Ironically, of course, it describes the Arab-led Muslims themselves as being the “portadores de una avanzada cultura” though somehow that culture which was transplanted would be and is considered in many respects “Oriental” by both “sides” of the West versus Islam debate today. In one glib move, the Junta, attempting to celebrate the rich cultural inheritance of Andalucía, manages to set West as quintessentially Modern and advanced and yokes the Islam that allegedly brought western modernity to Europe together with the Middle Ages as being of lesser cultural value for its existence to the further left on the West’s timeline. It maps political geography onto history, making temporal and spatio-cultural distinctions that (1) equate “civilized” and “modern” with “West” and (2) posit the Middle Ages as antithetical to both civilization and West.
In non-academic circles, “modernity” has become a powerfully loaded term that encapsulates this ideal of progress in its multiple facets, and this cultural notion of what is modern both follows and enlarges the idea of modernity as a period in the academic sense. It encompasses a sense of technological, political, spiritual, economic and overall civilizational advancement, all tailored to contemporary Western European/North American cultural values: (at least nominally) secular capitalist representative democracies that invent, wield and control the latest “smart” technologies. The West’s monopoly on modernity is so engrained that its out-groups—Muslims and non-European/non-North American countries—have begun to embrace their position as anti-Modern as positive. Hashim Cabrera, one of the many prolific “new Muslim” essayists presents a strong critique of the ethos of capitalist consumerism, its gadgets, and the overall sense of fragmentation and isolation that it engenders in Párrafos de moro nuevo—which I will discuss in the conclusion. Spain has almost always been uneasily situated within these markers of East/West and Medieval/Modern, given the problems of periodization and what Dagenais and Greer term the “double colonization” of the Iberian Middle Ages (439).

Periodization is both a useful and problematic tool when considering human history, and one subject to ongoing critical inquiry in attempts to resolve its inherent challenges.\(^\text{10}\) It seems impossible to understand ourselves, our world, and our place within it without some generalizing about the “nature” or “character” of the time between one set of dates and another. As carefully researched and articulated as these dates—typically moments of rupture or culmination—might be, there is always arbitrariness in

\(^{10}\text{See, for example, the 2001 special issue of MLQ.}\)
their selection. Wai Chee Dimock, as well as other critics keen to question notions of time as fixed, objective, and progressive, refers to the establishment of these “allegedly founding moments” as chopping up time into sections on a measuring tape, with “fixed segments, fixed unit lengths, each assignable to a number” (4, 2). This is not to say that determining important dates in a given society or for a given historical phenomenon is not useful or interesting. Without the tool of the tape measure it is extraordinarily difficult to pinpoint trends and movements, or talk in simple terms about any historical reality. The problem arises when these “founding moments” are endowed with an innate objective truthfulness, when we lose our perspective on dates and periodization as tools and begin to see them as even more fixed than the reality we are attempting to describe. Furthermore, the larger and more important the concept of any given period grows, the more danger there is in falling into this trap. Such is the case for the Middle Ages, whose very name denotes its constitution in reference to and for the purpose of another period. It is defined not on its own terms, but in terms of the decline of classical civilization and the beginning of “Modernity.”

The temporal boundaries of medieval Iberia can be fixed, on one end, at the Sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410 and their subsequent entrance in Iberia, the 711 Berber-Umayyad invasion, the proclamation of the emirate of Cordoba in 756, or even the declaration of the caliphate in 929; and on the other, the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212), the conclusion of the Reconquest in 1492, or even the 1569-1609/14 expulsions of the Moriscos. The one constant in the plethora of interpretations surrounding the timeline of the Middle Ages seems to be that its distinction as a closed-off “period” is taken as an essential aspect of its character. No matter which dates are chosen as
foundational moments, most of the political and rhetorical maneuvers that make use of them work from a concept of time as progressive, so the “distant” Medieval past is both the seed/root/origin and representative of our “less-developed,” “barbaric” selves. As Dagenais and Greer express:

The chronological rupture cleaving The Middle Ages from history must be absolute so that any genealogies (say, the Middle Ages as “Europe’s infancy”) can be constructed under present control, any miscegenation carefully regulated, even if it cannot entirely be suppressed. The manifest history of the West ought to run directly from the brilliance of Antiquity to its natural successors in Petrarch and others. The thousand years which intervene are a gaping hole in history. But this gap can be made to serve in the writing of a typological history of the West. (435)

Situated thus as middle, outside of Medieval Studies and a specialized group of interested individuals, understandings of the Middle Ages are largely constituted for, by, and against notions of Modernity. Thus, the Medieval Period itself is largely subject to the same “spatializing” temporal logic that Fabian, Chakrabarty, and others have unveiled.

As I have attempted to show, this logic operates based on a principle of end-directedness which constantly privileges the present as “best,” as in the position of most advancement and progress. Frank Kermode’s inquiry into time—in its various forms and understandings—and fiction reveals some interesting truths about the concept of historical “progress.” Kermode points to the fact that humans create histories—of various genre—out of a desire for “concord,” that is, a sense of connectedness, unity and order between the past, present and future (7). Accordingly, this is the reason for the desire to see time as progressive and directed toward a certain better and more advanced end. Kermode also astutely draws out, however, the simultaneous impulse that often accompanies a notion of historical progress: the sense of the present moment as culmination and pinnacle. Despite the idea that as time progresses human civilizations
become better and more civilized, which would lead to an ever-hopeful long view of the future, there is no dearth of doomsday predictions, both for individual societies and for the World as a whole. Kermode accounts for this by arguing that the human need for significance makes a “special case” out of the present (48-59). Despite the general acknowledgement of temporal continuity into the future, in historiography and in literary fictions alike, there is often a presentation of the present as a “boundary situation,” a period charged with significance in relation to the end. This double inscription of humans on time, in which civilization is engaged in a clear progressive trajectory, and in which the present moment is nevertheless given a privileged position as pinnacle, occurs almost effortlessly in most Western stories, historiographic or otherwise. As Dimock identifies and critiques, much of this desire for significance and concord that gives rise to progressive concepts of time paints a clear picture of time as linear. Nevertheless, this double-edged temporal logic that serves as the main thrust of linear time is equally present in many concepts of time as cyclical.

In *Myth and History in the Spanish Novel*, Jo Labanyi carefully traces the use of myth in the Spanish fascist perspective on universal cyclical history, revealing the instrumental temporal framework that Herzberger also affirms. She delineates the (albeit paradoxical) balance between the falange’s specifically “anti-modern” and “anti-progress” political perspective in which secular modernity was adamantly rejected for a view of a single, constant, universal divine plan for the world *and* the conceptual designation of time as cyclical. In this latter view, Spain continually engages in regenerative cycles that follow a path paved by the birth, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As such, within any given cycle, there specifically *was* hope for and
movement toward a more ideal moment, even if culture itself had to experience death in order to arrive at it.\(^\text{11}\)

Throughout *Myth and History in the Spanish Novel*, Labanyi takes a clear and understandable stance against Franco’s notion of history and time, pointing to its overwhelming use of myth for legitimacy and self-aggrandizement. She sets up a dichotomy between myth—as a grand narrative concerned with universals and the eternal, neutralizing change—and history—as concerned with specifics and the actual passage of time—thus referring to the fascist viewpoint not as Franco’s historiography but “mythohistoriography” (33-34). While she is quite right in this denunciation of the a-historicism of Francoist historical rhetoric, she also states unequivocally her preferences for a linear and progressive presentation of history and cites that she wants to celebrate those novels with a “forward-moving historical vision” (47). Despite the emotional weight of the distinction Labanyi draws between Franco’s cyclical mythohistoriography and linear, evolving history, and the clearly valid ethical concerns raised in rejection of the fascist perspective, I find the difference between these two terms to be one of degree rather than kind; the temporal-logical thrust behind a view of history as cyclical or progressively linear is often one in the same. Labanyi herself draws this parallel when she notes that “The Western linear concept of progress is thus a view of history as a single *cycle*: modern man, having lost faith in the possibility of securing regeneration in the here-and-now, has post-poned it till the future” (18, emphasis mine). For Labanyi, the essential difference between myth and history rests here, in whether it engages cyclical (regenerative) thinking or linear (progressive) thinking. Nevertheless, I identify within

\(^{11}\) Labanyi develops her perspective on the fascist concept of time throughout the whole of the book but chapter two, “Myth and Nationalist Spain” addresses this most directly.
both an essential movement toward “progress” of a certain kind, whether that comes to fruition in an “evolved” future or the “better, purer” state of regeneration that occurs at the beginning of a cycle. Furthermore, and most important for my discussion in the following chapter, both notions of history maintain a sense of end-directedness, even if Franco’s end is directed by divine providence and the progressive movement of linear history occurs through some kind of secular, natural innate law. In both, there is some inherent propulsion toward an ideal, which naturally means that there is, in the same vein, movement away from the less-ideal, represented in linear historiography as the antiquated and the non-modern.

Whether the trajectory is cyclical or linear, there is a common consideration in Western—here, Spanish—thinking of one’s past vis-à-vis the future as both point of primitive origin—the kernel from which the current point of pinnacle has developed—and the less evolved, antiquated, often barbaric past against which the present and future can be compared. If we are to prescribe to Kermode’s understanding of human nature as needing to find (i.e. create) both concord and significance, this is simply to be expected, and so any perspective of one’s past—presented fictionally, in a more straightforward historiographical narrative, or some other mode—will always already be embedded with this lens that seeks validation for the present moment. Citing Bernard Lewis, Labanyi recognizes this as a characteristic of a mythical conception of history and uses it to contrast with her idea of true, progressively oriented history: “History, in Lewis’ view, is all too often invested with the mythical function of providing a ‘foundation’ for those in authority—or for those seeking to assert an alternative authority” (Myth and History 33). As Hayden White has demonstrated, however, the narrativizing of history means that it
will always already be embedded with a certain meaning that is conferred by the plot itself. This is true to one extent or another in any and all narrative about history, it is particularly evident in histories about the Middle Ages, for temporal logic I have identified often works hand-in-hand with the plot-making that occurs with historical narratives.

The same process that has succeeded in colonizing past historical periods through the multiple moves of temporal logic has likewise colonized the West’s medieval “enemy”: Islam. Each exists pre-progress in a static and unchanging state that is linked to both (1) the naïve, white and Christian beginnings of civilization out of which the “Modern West” emerged as well as (2) the barbaric, violent and heinous problems (the Crusades, the Inquisition, Islam) that the West has since resolved. Within the West’s linear logic, Islam—albeit contemporaneous—has come to take on both its own medieval image as threatening Saracen hordes and the violent and unsavory elements of medieval Christianity now swept nicely under the rug. Al-Andalus places medieval Iberia still front and center, as the both non-compliant—in the sense that it represents something different from the supposedly normative Christianity of medieval Europe—and quintessential example of—in terms of the Reconquista/Crusade ideology, for it provided the impetus for the consolidation and unification of Christian Spain—much of what the Middle Ages have come to mean.

As with Franco’s National-Catholic cyclical temporality, women also remain at the crux of the West’s temporal othering of Islam. As Kathleen Davis so eloquently states,

Over the past two decades, critical exploration of the entwined significations of time, gender, and sexuality in nationalist projects has
demonstrated that in the resolutely heterosexual discourse of nationalism, women bear the burden of representation for the collectivity’s identity, particularly as the embodiment of the national, authenticating past. (106)

According to Franco’s national vision, women are both literally and temporally the bearers of culture, carrying forth and rearing the biological species—as their sole role—and enacting the continuing cycles of (re)birth and regeneration of society through a specific Marian purity, meekness and grace. The West’s temporal othering of Islam hinges on women in a slightly different though nevertheless appropriative way. Whereas the West positions itself as a proponent and protector of women’s rights, Muslim women’s frequent (physical, sexual and emotional) abuse, and unequal cultural and economic status vis-à-vis their male counterparts is frequently cited as a reason for Islam’s “medieval” ways. Furthermore, it is not only the status of women’s rights, but the physical bodies of Muslim women—covered in hijabs, burkas and the rest of the variety of traditional women’s clothing—are “described as inert, beaten, invisible,” when “hidden” behind these “non-Western” garments, which “signals their culture’s paralysis and absolute disassociation from the modern” (108). Certainly, as Davis discusses, this criticism is not meant to suggest that there are not, in fact, abuses of women in Muslim countries. Nevertheless, the notion of “rescuing” Muslim women by lifting their veils and saving them from the rule of Islam demonstrates a deeply paternalistic tendency by Western patriarchy that denies both individuation and choice to Muslim women.

Mahmood’s study of the Women’s Mosque Movement in Egypt explores just how erroneous such thinking can be and demonstrates the potent capacity for women’s agency and choice within what the West considers the rigid and patriarchal strictures of Islam. Just as within Franco’s national discourse, “secular” Western society also empties Islamic
women out of individuality in order to attribute to them and their bodies the burden of (temporally othering) cultural significance.

In all the multiple views of al-Andalus with which I opened this chapter, some kind of plot-making and temporal logic is at work which uses the past to (implicitly or explicitly) justify a present positioning. The National-Catholic as well as the secular-but-Christian West perspectives employ a notion of the Middle Ages as justification for, origin of, and the unevolved past of contemporary attitudes and practices. Tourism, the entertainment industry, and a contemporary strain of liberal-secular politics—as identified by Domínguez Díaz—seek to position the early years of al-Andalus, unified under the caliphate, as the model for peaceful and harmonious coexistence between individuals in a heterogeneous group. They use this (excessively) positive view of al-Andalus’s convivencia and to configure Spain as a “conveyor of knowledge” and Europe’s teacher in civility with the Muslim “East” (Aidi, “Interference” 69). With seemingly so much at stake for multiple (sub- and supra-) national groups, both within and beyond Spain, as Aidi eloquently summarizes, “the epoch known as ‘al-Andalus’ appear[s] at the center of discordant historiographies and ‘imaginative geographies’” (68). Despite the presence of alternative discourses—such as the sometimes positive spin presented in the cultural production of an imagined Middle Ages and the potentially recuperative narrative as displayed through writings by Moros nuevos—as Daniela Flesler concludes, the predominant trend in Spain is still to view the medieval past heavily weighted with a sense of conflict that remains in place despite a cultural “evolution” on the part of the (now) secular West:

Spaniards have been persuaded by a long tradition of nationalist historiography that the invasion and ensuing Muslim presence was, in fact,
traumatic, and that Christians (identified as ‘Spaniards’ in these accounts, introducing a doubt as to whether Muslims and Jews were genuinely Spaniards) were finally able to ‘recover’ their true identity and way of life after the expulsion of the infidels. (57)

Much of the narrative surrounding al-Andalus in Spain—political and otherwise—portrays it as a moment of rupture, an invasive stain on the continuity (in Francoist terms) and trajectory (in terms of linear progress) of Spain’s growth and development as a nation.

An excellent example of the pervasiveness of this trend—even among those who espouse inclusionary worldviews and who were and are specifically anti-fascist—is the celebrated historian, novelist and (Catholic) journalist César Vidal, in his España frente al Islam: de Mahoma a Ben Laden (2004).12 Here he plots the development of Spain into a democratic nation all the while it is continuously and constantly besieged by its unchanging and static Islamic foe. He posits Spain and Spanishness as a set of modern circumstances that simultaneously evolved out of and maintained the essential cultural practices bequeathed by the Iberian Visigoths. Islam, however, in its various manifestations and factions, is conceived as a static and omnipresent force, presented as such by Vidal’s stringing together foundational moments (711 and 3/11) to create a narrative in which (Christian) Spain, happily moving along the path toward progress, is constantly barraged by attacks from the very same Muslim enemy. While (Christian) Spain draws on its Visigothic roots for an origin story and the beginning of its cultural

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12 Vidal’s biography as publicized on his personal webpage emphasizes his human rights activism and his political objection to fascism: “Objetor de conciencia durante la dictadura de Franco, sólo la muerte del general lo salvó por poco más de un mes de ser encarcelado. Durante los años siguientes, asesoró de manera gratuita a objetores de conciencia en España y el continente americano, una tarea que le llevó a ser parte relevante en la redacción del recurso de inconstitucionalidad presentado por el Defensor del pueblo contra la ley de objeción de conciencia española y a también a estar a punto de ser fusilado en dos ocasiones.”
evolution, then positing itself as centuries “evolved” beyond those origins, Muhammad, Abd al-Rahman, Turkish and Barbary pirates, and even Bin Laden are different permutations of the very same barbaric seventh-century man, bloodthirsty and unshakeable in his campaign of violence and conquest.

These problems of temporal othering occur not only in reference to the Middle Ages and Islam but to any period viewed as a distant and closed-off past. It is for this reason that Chakrabarty and Dimock extend their critiques to the whole discipline of historiography generally. Along with this othering temporal logic, as Fabian identifies, the subject-object distinction that forms the centerpiece of objective historiography is quite problematic and allows for the furthering of the same kind of presentist bias that occurs within the temporal logic. Chakrabarty is adamant that in order to connect in any way with historical evidence, whether it be people, texts, or artifacts, historians already maintain some relevant connection to that evidence, something that makes the historical object contemporaneous with the historian. Given the collusion between historiography and the nation, he stresses the need to find new ways to express this very relationship—the contemporaneity of historian and evidence, which deep time makes abundantly clear—that can and should overturn the subject-object distinction that western temporal logic seeks to maintain (*Provincializing* 107).

Two common perspectives that arise from the acceptance of this critique of the institution of historiography are historical revision and a kind of postmodern overarching criticism of the possibility of historiography to transmit truth on any level. In order to compare and readily make reference to these two thrusts, I will refer to them as the historico-revisionist and the historico-critical perspectives, respectively. The first, the
historico-revisionist, occurs when an established interpretation of history has been identified as flawed and a new—but most likely equally biased—interpretation is substituted in its place and presented as someone definitively true. As Dominguez Diaz indicates—and as I address in the conclusion—an excellent example of this is the perspective espoused by some Moros nuevos that Spain’s official history has been specifically contorted to present the 711 entrance of Berber and Arab Muslim troops in Iberia as an invasion. After making this (quite reasonable) criticism of historiographic bias, some go on to argue forcefully that the broken promises of the Capitulation of Granada and the subsequent expulsion of the Moriscos represents the true invasion, colonization and massacre of indigenous Iberians. Historico-revisionist perspectives are sometimes presented in New Historical Novels such as La estirpe de la mariposa, and while they often rightly reject a hegemonic historical interpretation as flawed, they are often too ready to replace it with a (new) equally biased interpretation without recognizing it as such.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the outright historico-critical approach simply presents a comprehensive criticism of the failings of multiple attempts at writing the past without providing any possible tools or alternatives. The slippery slope of such a full-scale rejection leads one to an impasse at which it is not only not fruitful but it is in fact entirely useless to attempt any kind of meaningful discourse at all. After recognizing the abovementioned (valid) critiques of historiography, one is often caught in the trap of historico-revisionism or historico-criticism and does not manage to proceed beyond that. This can be especially problematic in the New Historical Novel, for it on principle often maintains both these thrusts without necessarily reconciling them. As a fictive or at least
fictionalized portrayal of history, there is an inherent question about the capacity for straightforward historical narrative to fully transmit or adequately meet the needs of those concerned with the past. If historiography alone were sufficient, there would be no historical novel. But if we consider the novel as a standalone conveyor of historicity, problems of accuracy weigh heavily. Nevertheless, many New Historical Novels—such as *La estirpe de la mariposa*, as Elizabeth Espadas argues—do attempt to revise historical understandings, in many cases “vindicating” the role or importance of an individual or group not as present in established historiographic narratives.\(^\text{13}\)

Having recognized the temporal problematics of much of conventional historiography, as well as the challenge of re-writing history with the knowledge of the inherently flawed nature of the project, new historiographic theories and modes are emerging that attempt to—at least partially—account for and surpass some of the errors in objective progressivist historiography.

Closing Temporal Distance: Deep Time

Rejecting progressive notions of time, Wai Chee Dimock proposes a new engagement with time that accounts for its “extension and duration” over the course of planetary history, not just the individual narratives of nation. She accounts for the “longitudinal” profundity of time, as well as its “latitudinal stretch,” and defines this new concept as “deep time”: “a set of longitudinal frames, at once projective and recessional, with input going both ways, and binding continents and millennia into many loops of

\(^{13}\) Espadas maintains that *Moras y cristianas* as well as *La estirpe de la mariposa* manifests the desire to recuperate the legacy of the “historia femenina” of al-Andalus, “y de reivindicar la presencia y papel femeninos en esa cultura, sin abusar de la verdad de los hechos históricos” (129).
relations, a densely interactive fabric” (3-4). While more useful as a general framework for considering time than a practical tool for the exploration and analysis of history, Dimock’s deep time presents a potent and inclusive alternative model to that offered by both linear and cyclical concepts of time. Engaging with deep time shatters the temporal barriers put in place by progressivist periodization, resituating time not as a march toward “progress” driven by an innate law, but as a “shared and constant ‘now,’” which expresses itself on the historical plane but the character of which is ontological, [and] is what allows historical time to unfold” (Chakrabarty, Provincializing 112-3). Deep time accounts for the series of connections uniting individuals from the twenty-first century to the first, and posits their distance as being a matter of degree, not kind. As such, thinking in deep time does the opposite of progressive temporal logic. While individuals like Vidal use progressive time to deny coevalness to Muslim contemporaries, thinking through deep time actually makes the non-coeval contemporaneous, thus affording equal critical footing and consideration not only to individuals, communities and cultures that currently exist with us, but also to those who have long since died and those of the future.

Deep time’s stretch does not, however, imply a decontextualization of history. In fact, this profound and interactive fabric of time specifically allows for and seeks contextualizing on the most local level, noting the seemingly infinitesimal changes and differences that take place, even between individual members of the same community. On the global (deep) scale, however, it seeks to level the unequal power relations engrained into our basic assumptions of ourselves and our communities in time, eliminating the ideological underpinnings of progress as a means of othering. It recognizes the simultaneous coexistence of multiple temporalities within a single
historical moment and levels the interpretative footing of those moments. As Heng underscores in her essay on Deep Time and race,

Study of the global past [world history in Deep Time] invites critical responses to the foundational history of the present—decentering tenacious narratives of an exceptional European genius, essence, climate, mathematical aptitude, scientific bent, or other environmental, philosophical, or cognitive factors guiding destiny in ‘the rise of the West.’ (“Reinventing Race” 362)

Displacing these “tenacious narratives” by disembedding time from progressivist Eurocentric ideologies opens up the possibility for a more thorough, rigorous, and truly comparative approach, and, as Heng’s essay illuminates, “recalibrates the urgencies of the present,” in the recurrence of various hegemonies. Eliminating historiography’s imposed trajectory of progress, however, does not remove the need for interpretative tools in order to approach the specific historicity of global civil society—all individuals who have existed and will exist at any moment—that deep time produces.

Following Wallerstein, Dimock suggests the use of “world systems” to study the global civil society over the course of deep time. Abu-Lughod has argued for the historical relevance of World Systems theory beyond its dichotomy with Modernization theory, demonstrating its usefulness as a concept in medieval Mediterranean studies. These world systems—including literary and artistic production, religion, and any other broad “thread of relation” connecting continents, eras and communities in a plurality of ways and iterations—act as organizing structures independent from and in some ways antithetical to the constructs imposed by linear time—such as nationality and historical periods—and they transgress the political, spatial and temporal boundaries previously imposed (7-9). Thus, within the literary world system, a twenty-first-century American reader can connect with the stories in 1001 Nights. In fact, 1001 Nights itself is a perfect
example of the literary world system at work: existing in multiple versions, *1001 Nights* is the product of readings, re-readings, writings, re-writings, additions, and translations, and maintains its relevance, interest and appeal to readers from eighth-century Persia, to tenth-century Iberia, to nineteenth-century England, to twentieth-century Argentina, and beyond. Not intended as a theoretical frame that simply replaces nationalist or periodist divisions, the concept of world systems allow us to see the world as “a structure of evolving relations, a structure of everyday ties, rather than a few executive dates,” but nevertheless allow for a kind of common denominator to begin comparison. (Dimock 4-5).

Official historical and political discourses have often appropriated the past by means of a temporal logic in a rhetorical move to other both the past—as “unevolved”—and current contemporaneous communities—as not coeval—, keeping them safely distanced on a temporal trajectory that moves toward progress. In contrast to this, approaching world history through world systems in deep time looks for the threads of relation that connect these (previously conceived of as distant) groups, and traces the dynamic trajectory of each thread as it changes colors, textures, thicknesses and directions, and intersects with other threads. These systems represent the forms of a civil society “mapped along the temporal axis as well as the spatial, its membership open not only to contemporaries but also to those centuries apart” and are thus, in terms of nationalist temporal logic, out of time (5). Following the example of *1001 Nights*, engaging with it through the framework of the literary civil society that produced it might involve a study of one particular version, the transformations and editions evident across

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14 This mention of evolution, we can be certain, is intended in the true Darwinian sense, and not as a process directed by any sort of “innate law.”
multiple versions, its interpretation by or for one or many distinct communities, or even
the existence and use of the frame narrative or other literary tropes in any/all versions of
1001 Nights and contemporaneous texts. An investigation into the text from a linear
temporal perspective might look exclusively for the first or “authentic” version, thereby
ignoring many (and possibly all) possibilities for the texts as a living and relevant
document for present and future readers. Engaging with history through the lens of world
systems can thus influence established hegemonic notions that posit specific
communities, practices, events, and periods as either “modern” and “progressive” or
eternally “past”—static, unchanging, unevolved—by their openness to the multiple,
unique, curious and very real connections between the barriers set up by periodization
and reinforced by temporal logic.

In this way, using a notion of time as deep to reject linear time both is and is not a
radical move: many of its ramifications are so engrained and well-established that its
rejection calls for, in some ways, an entirely new set of concepts and critical vocabulary.
At the same time, tracing these threads of connection across time and space is something
we as scholars continue to do more and more, for we do, often, see the worth of reading
1001 Nights, or engaging with autochthonous Amerindian religious practices, or
Cervantes, Heidegger, or fifth-century Chinese art. Furthermore, as evidenced by the
increase in collaborative and inter-disciplinary research, the intersections between
multiple threads of relation make for particularly interesting study.

As Brian Greene, the world-renown theoretical physicist—and thus one of the
leading scientific experts on time—declares, time is a construct we invent to understand
change. Once we can identify time in this way as a construction, we can come to a greater
awareness of our connections with what was previously viewed as a distant and closed-off past, decolonizing—as much as we are able—not just the Middle Ages, Spain, and notions of Islam, but any and all geographic, political, and temporal categorizations. What remains in the space left by the dissolution of progressive time is thus a new understanding of ourselves today as coeval with fellow members of the global religious and literary civil societies, whether they read, wrote and worshiped in the first century or the twenty-first.

Chakrabarty is adamant that in order to connect in any way with historical evidence, whether it be people, texts, or artifacts, historians already maintain some relevant connection to that evidence, something that makes the historical object contemporaneous with the historian. Given the collusion between historiography and the nation, he stresses the need to find new ways to express this very relationship—the contemporaneity of historian and evidence, which deep time makes abundantly clear—that can and should overturn the subject-object distinction that western temporal logic seeks to maintain (Provincializing 107).

Closing Emotional Distance: Alternative (Performative) Historiography

Along with Dimock’s alternative temporal framework, Simon Doubleday, David Cohen, Greg Denning and Scott Maglessen all recognize the need for new critical apparati in the study of history. They all in one way or another break with the constructed notion of historical “objectivity” with an understanding that it—despite being so prized by historians who maintain the empiricism of their field—never really existed in the first place. Attempts to maintain such objectivity, in fact, provoke the very ethical concerns
inherent to progressive temporal logic, the former—the “objectivity” that comes through
temporal and emotional “distance”—being a product of the latter (Doubleday, “Criminal”
2-3). As Doubleday articulates and Denning expresses similarly, “the consciousness of
things past is, in fact, our present,” and so the historian must therefore be always aware of
her “subject positionality” (Denning xiv; Doubleday “Criminal” 3). This fundamental
disavowal of objectivity is important in two pivotal ways. First, it entails the recognition
of what Hayden White has championed and so many others have articulated: that the
form of history (as a narrative of the past) is always already embedded with a particular
content. That is, whether we mean to or not, our understanding of the past is directed,
informed, colored, and wholly situated by our subject positions in the present. Second, it
points to the multiplicity of ways in which we adjust our perceptions of the present—of
who we are, in comparison to our past selves and our unlike neighbors—based on a
reading of the past. Thus, whether or not we are aware of it or choose to admit it, our
situation in the present focuses our understanding of the past. Any sense of the past is
necessarily bound by history’s form, the historian’s subjectivity, and the “consensus
paradigms of the field itself.” As Doubleday continues, this knowledge, in many ways,
“leads anthropological—and, one might add, historical—truth much closer to the realm
of so-called ‘literary’ truth, which makes no pretense at objectivity” (“Criminal” 3; “Re-
Experience” 276). Furthermore, Doubleday makes clear that the fallacy of historical

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15 Even such staunch historicists as Gabrielle Spiegel point to the “veil of objectivity” imposed
and constructed by empiricism and have recourse to postmodern practices to attempt to escape it
16 See Hayden White, The Content of the Form and Metahistory. “One cannot represent the
meaning of historical events without symbolizing them, because historicality itself is both a reality and a
mystery. All narratives display this mystery and at the same time foreclose any inclination to despair over
the failure to solve it by revealing what might be called its form in ‘plot’ and its content in the meaning
with which the plot endows what would otherwise be only mere event” (Content 53).
objectivity not only ignores the traumas of history, but enact its own trauma: “what is critical is the repressive function of historical objectivity itself, and of the discipline of History as it has been institutionally regulated; the debt is one left unpaid by a kind of history in which an ethical imperative of empathy is limited by empiricism” (Doubleday, “Re-Experience” 282). Doubleday and Flesler both point to the traumas of Spanish historiography, and Flesler especially emphasizes the doubly traumatic nature of the historiography of al-Andalus. First, because it is constituted as a traumatic “invasion” by the Moor; and second, because such a constitution in turn enacts an epistemological violence on Spanish Muslims ("Moors"), past and present (81).

Doubleday sees the merits of an overtly poetic or literary historiography as one alternative possibility, in that it meets the ethical demands of the historian when traditional historiographical methods fail: a poetic approach to the study of the Middle Ages “accentuates our appreciation of the violence intrinsic to medieval cultures of power, heightens the humanity of those who experienced this violence, and—from the vantage point of re-experience—underscores our own possession by the past” (“Re-Experience” 285). A more literary history—one that is conscientious of its own craftedness and that also brings its audience in to perform that history in a personal way—breaks down the subject-object distinction between historian and historical object, and creates empathetic readings that can come to bear on the future. Such a history breaks the fallacy of the subject-object distinction, allowing the historian her already-occurring personal engagement with—her performance of—the past.

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17 His essay, “The Re-Experience of Medieval Power: Tormented Voices in the Haunted House of Empiricism,” specifically discusses Thomas Bisson’s poetic history of Cataluña, Tormented Voices, and opens the discussion to the crafting of history in general.
Beyond breaking that emotional barrier put up by the desire for objectivity in historiography, a history actively and overly performed also shatters that false spatialization of time that Fabian identifies. Denning asserts that one of the reasons for the ultimate inaccessibility of the true past through a post-facto narrative—our traditional historiography—is that it is written with a sense of outcome, and therefore its tense is the past perfect. The fullness of a historical moment, as it truly occurred, existed in the present progressive, with a sense of ongoing possibilities and incompleteness. He therefore wholly embraces drama and the physical performance of history as a way to approximate that sense of present progressive and enable the “historian”-actor to experience, if not the true past, a sense of past that is fuller in its openness than that which is written as completed in a text. He writes of his experience as a performer: “It was not the replication of a Golden Age. It was theater enacted to catch the spirit that would infuse new and changed conditions. There was a feeling of playing a new-old role, of being at the forefront of something new rather than of guarding some museum-like treasure” (21-22). Along with the obvious empathic benefits, performing history recreates the temporal sense of a historic moment by taking it out of the past participle and, to the only extent possible, making it as ripe with possibility as it was in the moment of its occurrence.

Beyond conventional theater with trained actors and expressly rehearsed scripts, there are other types of situations in which individuals can have personal experiences with past. Working from the gaming term, Scott Maglessen studies “simmings,” which he defines as “live, three-dimensional, immersive environments in which spectator-participants engage in the intentionally simulated production of some aspect of real or imagined society, recognized as such by all parties” (5). As such, the category of
simmings encompasses more than just performances of past scenarios, including present and future imaginings. Nevertheless, it presents an extremely useful optic for understanding and analyzing individuals’ active performance of past scenarios, especially those performances that cannot be considered explicitly historiographic. As many who espouse a critical view of objective historiography would claim is true of all history texts, Maglessen acknowledges that simmings are more about the present circumstances surrounding the simming than they are about the (past or future) scenario they are simulating. No matter how tightly controlled the scenario, the end result for the participants always goes beyond the initial “aims” set by its creators, though there is greater or lesser room for improvisation and participant decision-making depending on the scenario itself. Maglessen describes that the goal is always to “gain or produce understandings of a situation and its context” though the understandings are often not able to be imposed in exactly the way the docents may like (3). He recognizes that in simmings, as with any time an individual engages with a text created by another, there is a “shared authority” between the designers of the scenario and those who participate in it, even in those situations that allow for absolutely no deviation from established scripts. Even if they must speak and act in the manner ordered of them, participants can and will always draw their own personal meaning from the experience. This is not to say that all simmings of past scenarios are subversive to hegemonic notions of history or that they necessarily give rise to a more heterogeneous, inclusive, or simply different perspective on that past. Most simmings entail some kind of “a reification of values,” to some extent further the monologic nature of a singular perspective on the past (13). No matter how strict the controls, however, all simmings have the capacity to be both ideological and
subversive, to both challenge and solidify interpretations. They do this through not only recognizing and welcoming the role of participants, but actively seeking it out as fundamental to the presentation as a whole. Unlike a traditional “objective” approach to historiography, simmings must necessarily recognize their own position as contrived and the fact that they—ultimately like any history text, though not all who produce them are cognizant of this—“produce a new narrative or experience, versus simply reproducing an original” (9).

The concept of simming can be a useful tool in bringing together a wide variety of types of history texts and experiences encompassed by engagement with them. Most notably for my purposes, it provides the necessary problematization and insight into the double potential for ideological and emancipatory uses of personal experiences with the past while also recognizing the role of reader, performer, and/or recipient of established history texts. As I will argue in the next section, historical novels can and should also be viewed as immersive experiences with the past in a manner similar to historical reenactments and other obvious active performances of past. In this dissertation, I consider two historical novels jointly with a folk festival reenactment and a historical, novelistic, theological and philosophical hybrid text, all of which in one way or another actively perform the Iberian Middle Ages as present and of present concern.

Introduction to the Corpus

The corpus of this dissertation is comprised of primary texts that are both popular and political, who attempt to walk the line between historical rewritings (historical revision), wholesale critiques of historiography writ-large (historical criticism), and
engrossing experiences that create an entirely new version of past. In the following section (2) of this dissertation, I engage with two historical novels—Ángeles de Irisarri’s *El viaje de la reina* and Magdalena Lasala’s *La estirpe de la mariposa*—that unfold during the caliphate of Cordoba with vastly different characterizations, perspectives, and outcomes. In section three, I examine the *fiesta de moros y cristianos* in Válor, a “reenactment” of an imagined, future, “medieval” battle for the Alpujarras town that occurs between a group of Christians and a group of Muslims, both of whom express a legitimate claim to the territory. In the final section, I put the novels and *fiesta* in dialogue while mediating their intersection with a generic hybrid text written by a self-designated Moro nuevo: Hashim Ibrahim Cabrera’s *Párrafos de moro nuevo*.

Each of these sections examines vastly different media that nevertheless all represent performative texts that take up the Iberian Middle Ages, a period that, I have argued, has more often than not been subject to a progressivist, end-directed and othering temporal logic. To some extent, they all engage in the various historiographic moves I describe above that seek to close the temporal and emotional “distance” between the present and the past and thereby—as Maglessen notes of simmings—not to recreate an original, but to actively creating a new meaning of that past in the present progressive. Beyond this important similarity, all the texts in this corpus display—and reconcile, with varying degrees of success—both historico-revisionist and historico-critical thrusts in their revisiting the Iberian Middle Ages. Specifically, each attempts to challenge the Iberian Middle Ages and/or al-Andalus specifically as interpreted by normative National-Catholic discourses. They dialogue with and—at times—substantially challenge the
underlying mode(s) of temporality that give way to this dominant discourse, and when successful, they transform understandings of the Spanish community through time.
As with any discourse which lays claim to ‘realism’, historical discourse only admits to knowing a semantic schema with two terms, the referent and the signifier; the (illusory) confusion of referent and signified is, as we know, the hallmark of auto-referential discourses like the performative. We could say that historical discourse is a fudged up performative, in which what appears as statement (and description) is in fact no more than the signifier of the speech act as an act of authority.  

(Barthes 17)

[W]omen cannot simply be added to an existing historical narrative, like a dash of pepper to an otherwise successful recipe. (Ruggles 66)

Chapter Two

Playing Scheherazade:

Women, Time and Destiny in La estirpe de la mariposa and El viaje de la reina

Imagining a Feminist al-Andalus

Although their styles and thematic foci vary considerably, the first historical novels of Magdalena Lasala and Ángeles de Irisarri lend themselves well to a critical comparison revolving around their treatment of female historical protagonists in the Middle Ages. Both Zaragozan female writers’ main narrative acclaim has been historical fiction, and each has won several prizes, including two in common: the Premio Sabina and Premio Búho. Irisarri’s approach is by all accounts more rigorously historical, and she even completed a PhD in history and worked in the field as a historian before dedicating herself more fully to writing novels. As such, Irisarri has earned much more acclaim in the arena of serious historical fiction, including the prestigious 2005 Premio Alfonso X de Novela Histórica. Her first historical novel, originally published in 1991 as
Toda, Reina de Navarra and repackaged in 2002 as El viaje de la reina, has been immensely popular, undergoing 14 separate printings (10 in hardcover and 4 in paperback) with a total of 48,000 copies sold. In contrast, Lasala first established herself as a poet, dramatist and actress, and published La estirpe de la mariposa as her first novel—of any type—in 1999 under the same publishing house as Irisarri. La estirpe has had a much more narrow range of appeal and readership, with only two printings (in hardcover only) and a total of 15,000 copies sold. Nevertheless, Lasala has gone on to publish many more historical novels and, increasingly, to gain recognition and acclaim as a Zaragozan woman of letters. In the past year, she won the Premio de las Letras Aragonesas de 2014, was inducted into the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Luis (2015), and has served as the President of the Asociación Aragonesa de Escritores. Since her historical fiction debut, Irisarri likewise remains active in Aragonese letters, and recently inaugurated a conference of escritoras there. Despite the difference in their training and style, these two popular writers of historical fiction have collaborated—they are co-authors of Moras y cristianas (2005)—and their works overlap and intersect in terms of subject, with the central focus of both authors being medieval Iberia. The joint popularity and thematic focus of these two authors contrasts with both their literary styles and personal (marketing) self-presentations, creating an interesting and fertile locus for comparison of the grounds that have provided both women with considerable acclaim: women and their place in and importance to history.

In this chapter, I investigate the function of women’s centrality to tenth-century Iberia as depicted in Lasala’s La estirpe de la mariposa and Irisarri’s El viaje de la reina.

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18 Print statistics courtesy of Eva Congil at Ediciones Salamandra.
Since both authors are positioned as paragons and champions of female letters, and since both novels center on female characters within the same historical period, my key research inquiry is into what kind of historical female protagonism these novels promote and create. Furthermore, given the importance of the Middle Ages to the progressive (linear) temporal logic I describe in detail in the introduction to this dissertation, here I also investigate the implications of these novels’ (re)writing of medieval women for notions of historical time and human destiny within it.

*La estirpe de la mariposa* presents a distinctly positive, exotic, and feel-good representation of women whose essence hinges on their fertility, both artistic and reproductive. The novel’s uncritical emphasis on women’s reproductive cycles problematically recalls certain oppressive historiographic strategies and, despite its emancipatory tone, ultimately limits the range of (historical) female protagonism and therefore of women’s role in human destiny. *El viaje de la reina*, in contrast, displays an ironic and self-critical portrayal that binds women’s historical protagonism up with questions of discursive power, emphasizing textuality over (end-directed) temporality.

The vastly different perspectives from which these two female-authored fictional histories approach medieval Iberian women during the Caliphate of Cordoba are reflected in both the authors’ professional training and marketing identity politics.

Irisarri's biographical blurbs often cite her historical training and describe her distinctly intimate, humorous, and detailed portrayal of historical women and the other characters (both historical and imagined) that surround them. In her interviews and in her headshot she comes across sharp, witty, knowledgeable and entertaining all at once. Her responses to questions in interviews about events from her novels often involve a detailed
historical explanation and she repeatedly refers to the archives, chroniclers, and historical
documentation: “como para toda novela histórica, hay que documentarse” (Interview by
Márquez). She attends to medieval topics but is by no means limited to them, and writes
on a wide range of periods and Spanish historical minutiae. One constant is Irisarri’s
attention to historical Spanish women, the majority of whom—and all of those who are
her main protagonists—are Christian. She states on several occasions that “la historia ha
olvidado a las mujeres” and uses that as the jumping-off-point for her (source-based)
historical invention (Interview by Camacho).

Although she began her career as a poet and has worked as an actress, playwright
and director, with the publication of her historical novels, Magdalena Lasala likewise
emphasizes her interest in history—and in particular that of al-Andalus. Though she does
not have specific university training in history, several profiles of Lasala in El País assert
that she is “especialista en la Edad dorada de al-Andalus” (Valverde) and that she “lleva
más de diez años investigando la cultura andalusi” (Castilla). Unlike Irisarri, the focus of
her historical fiction has been almost exclusively Islamicate Iberia and Lasala says that
she would like to “reivindicar” the importance of al-Andalus in Spanish history
(Interview by Tristán). Similar to the way Irisarri's historical training comes through in
her works, Lasala's positive, spiritual poetics comes across in her prose fiction generally
and very notably in La estirpe, which includes long, poetic descriptions and artistic
exaltations, particularly of motherhood and the women’s artistic creations. This
difference in training is reflected not only in the authors’ literary production but also in
their identity politics packaged for marketing.

Irisarri's approach is more text-based, rigorous and complex than Lasala's, whose
approach in turn is more effusive, emotive, and poetic. As Flesler begins unpacking in her study of *Moras y cristianas* and *El viaje de la reina*, both authors play up identity politics to their advantage, presenting Irisarri as the austere, no-nonsense scholarly Christian writer and Lasala as the beautiful, poetic, (“Islamic”) and emotional one (“Cristianas y moras” 419). On the cover flap of *Moras y cristianas* itself, it is made perfectly clear that Irisarri, as the Christian, wrote the *cristianas* and that Lasala—as the representative if not in actual fact—“mora,” wrote the *moras*, and this is a comparison picked up by and projected even in the newspaper blurbs about the novels: “nadie puede poner en duda que de Irisarri—pelo corto y gafas, aspecto austere—ha escrito los relatos de cristianas y que Lasala—larga melena negra y carácter extrovertido—ha trazado los perfiles de las moras” (Villena). Interestingly, to my knowledge, none of the aforementioned published comments to this effect reflect on the problematic self-designation of Lasala as “mora” when she does not, in fact, identify as Muslim. This stereotypical self-presentation and novelistic emphasis is present before *Moras y cristianas*, in their very first novels [Irisarri: *El viaje de la reina* and Lasala: *La estirpe de la mariposa*], which are the focus of this chapter.

In *El viaje de la reina*, the majority of the dialogue and action centers on Toda (and her ladies), Andregoto and Elvira, who are all Christians and from the north, although several notable Muslim women—the Caliph's daughters, once the entourage reaches Cordoba—play a role. In the final author’s note in which she divulges the “verdades y mentiras” in the novel, Irisarri states specifically some of her main inventions on the Christian side but affirms that “Al contrario que los cristianos, los personajes musulmanes son todos verdaderos, hombres y mujeres, principales y
menudos, incluso las autoridades mozárabes de Córdoba, de ellos ha dejado cumplida razón la abundante historiografía árabe que ha llegado hasta nosotros” (390). With this statement, Irisarri creates a stark contrast between her comfortable historical invention of Christians and her representation of these “verdaderos” Muslim figures perhaps lesser known to her. Identity politics play out similarly for Lasala, whose characters in *La estirpe de la mariposa* reflect her effusive and lyrical self-rendering in a sensual setting where religious devotion is much more akin to a generic, new-age, emotional-connectedness spirituality rather than one that is specifically Muslim.

In these, the first novels of both authors, Irisarri and Lasala both recreate central communities in tenth-century Iberia from the perspectives of female characters of the authors' respective religion of interest, with mixed attention to historical and religious fidelity. Participating in the new wave of popularity of historical novels beginning in the 1980s, both *El viaje de la reina* and *La estirpe de la mariposa* have been classified as part of the New Historical Novel (NHN) movement. Martínez-Samos defines this movement as emphasizing the subversive potential of historical fiction, in particular for re-examining and re-writing “key” national moments in order to challenge dominant historical narratives, play with established national pedagogy, re-insert trauma, violence, and marginalized voices into these stories, and at times, wholly question the capacity of history or any representation to present the “true” or “authentic” past. Both Irisarri and

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19 In her study of *Las damas del fin del mundo*, Trigo-Martinez cites a variety of social-cultural and historical factors for the rampant popularity of this genre—and it various subgenres—in the 1980s and 90s.

20 Martínez-Samos’s dissertation provides a thorough explanation of the aims and techniques of the NHN movement. Additionally, chapters 5 and 6 in de Groot's *The Historical Novel* examines the effect of post-structuralism and post-modernism in giving rise to the NHN movement though he maintains—and I follow him on this—that these subversive aspects have always been inherent to the form of the historical novel, even if they are more fully and blatantly brought out within these recent movements.
Lasala specifically profess an interest in doing the work of Spanish women's history and in doing so, whether intentionally or not, dialogue with previous historiographic practice that failed to recognize or explicitly disregarded female protagonism in Spanish history. Irisarri always centers on female characters, and repeatedly states in interviews that there remains much to be done in writing women's history. Similarly, Lasala asserts that “la historia de lo femenino todavía está pendiente, y la vamos construyendo poco a poco...me interesa mucho rescatar a mujeres que nos guardan mensajes muy valiosos para el mundo de hoy, y que pueden ayudar a construir los nuevos modelos que nos hacen falta en estos momentos” (Tristán). Since both authors are popular and celebrated women of letters who seek to refocus attention on women in Iberian (medieval) history—the history that, according to Irisarri, “ha olvidado a las mujeres” (Camacho)—in this chapter I examine Lasala’s *La estirpe de la mariposa* and Irisarri’s *El viaje de la reina* with an eye toward the manner in and extent to which women protagonize.

As I stated above, scholars such as Martínez-Samos have emphasized the liberating thrust of recent historical novels (and the NHN movement broadly) as vindicating and giving voice to women and other groups marginalized in and by conventional, nationalist and grand-narrative histories. The basic premise of these revisionist histories—fictional or otherwise—is to some extent to present women—or individuals from other marginalized subgroups—as the key historical actors they truly were, emphasizing their importance and contribution to the events of history as they unfolded. As such, it seems fitting to examine the agency allotted to female characters in supposedly feminist new historical novels. Questions of feminine agency are paramount to Women’s Studies broadly, in literary, historical, anthropological, sociological, political,
and other fields. Generally, the term revolves around action, whether the potential to act, the limitations of that action and its possibilities, and/or the forces that restrict or inhibit women’s action or ability to act. Within this strain, a person’s agency denotes her ability first to make choices about her own life and then to act upon those choices, thus requiring that an agent in this sense be someone who acts freely and of her own accord.

Perhaps paradoxically, colloquial (non-theoretical) language employs the term “agent” to refer to an individual who carries out the orders and designs of some higher authority—for example, the unindividualized and undifferentiated image of an FBI agent clothed in a black suit in popular television shows and movies—and as such, an “agent” may be considered in many respects someone without full agency. Furthermore, in critical language, and as Saba Mahmood illuminates in her study of the Egyptian women’s mosque movement, agency in feminist scholarship has come to be normalized by liberal discourses as specifically involving resistance to relations of domination. She emphasizes that within this trend, “feminists have sought to understand the ways in which women resist the dominant male order by subverting the hegemonic meanings of cultural practices and redeploying them for their own interests and agendas” (205). While this certainly has not been an entirely negative move, the notion of agency created by this feminist critical optic almost always requires a struggle against normativity, and it positions those women who do not struggle—for whatever reason—as being complicit in their own subjection.

When considering women’s roles as historical actors in the Middle Ages, and particularly when taking into account stereotypes of women in that period as being subjected and without power, it is very easy to fall into the liberalizing trend that
Mahmood identifies, emphasizing how women either fight against or participate in their own oppression. In an attempt to avoid the weighty problematics of the term agency, and also in order to bring to the forefront the discursive aspect of history texts—in this case, historical fiction—I propose to use the (however clumsy) terms “protagonize” and “protagonism” to refer to and describe the depiction of individual characters as important to the (fictional) history texts I examine. In English, the neologism “protagonism” immediately recalls a discursive reality—something that someone wrote—and as such, acknowledges the textual layer and constructedness of any narrative about the past in a way that “historical actor” or even “agency” does not. Furthermore, in literary terms, a protagonist is simply a central figure, whether real or imagined, and one who may even play an important role without actually acting in the story. While the noun “protagonist” is more than common in discourses about text, to my knowledge there is no established term for describing the work of a protagonist (actions, dialogue, presence..) that make him or her central to a story. This work often involves some kind of meaningful action, but it also can be more overtly passive. For example, in any given narrative, an infant, a ghost or the memory of a person can be a protagonist and thereby be central to the story without ever explicitly acting.

Part of the problem with revisionist histories is the push to vindicate the roles of marginalized peoples as “historical actors” who did things to contribute meaningfully to the course of history. Those of us who recognize the craftedness of any and all narratives (of the past or otherwise) understand that a lack of official narrative “documentation” does not in any way entail a lack of action for these individuals who are not depicted in official histories. No story can provide a complete account of all individuals and their
actions surrounding a certain place and period and therefore there must be many historical individuals who did act meaningfully who remain in the shadows of recorded history. Nevertheless, as Mahmood emphasizes, whether an individual contributed by “great” actions or by seeming submission—or any number of other options that fall between those two—should matter little when approaching the dignity of that individual and the worthiness of her story. For this reason, I choose to use the term “protagonism” rather than “agency” or “action” to describe the centrality of women in the stories I analyze in this chapter. It is my hope to use this term and its surrounding significance as a theoretical tool to examine the method and manner in which women are central to *La estirpe de la mariposa* and *El viaje de la reina*, while subtly shifting the focus away from a necessary emphasis on status in historical *action* and thereby away from the domination-resistance problematics that beleaguer the term agency. As such, in this chapter, I undertake to engage with what other scholars have pinpointed as the fundamentally important aspect of these two historical novels—the presentation/revision of women and their roles in medieval Spain—at the same time providing a distinct perspective and, hopefully, a useful theoretical approach for further inquiries.

Plot Summaries and Critical Perspectives

Magdalena Lasala's *La estirpe de la mariposa* narrates from the perspective of five exceptional female voices within the royal harem of abd al-Rahman III, each the daughter of the previous section's protagonist. The central woman, Nur, narrates the entire tale to her granddaughter, Hawa, the last in the *estirpe*, though most of the novel is told from a third-person omniscient perspective so it is not until the end that Nur is
clearly identified as the narrator. Each of the five women presented has an extraordinary
talent in the arts and a profound but nonetheless generic spirituality. Through their
cultivation of their artistic talents, these women incite passionate sentiments in the
“great” figures of caliphal al-Andalus—abd al-Rahman III, al-Hakam and al-Mansur—and act as muses for the inspired deeds that the novel reclaims for Spanish history more broadly. The novel ends with the destruction of the caliphate and the beginning of the fitná, though the epilogue, along with revealing the entire novel as a(n auto)biography written by Nur, hints that the power and talent embodied in the estirpe will be reborn with future generations and future times.

Also focusing on the time after the proclamation of the Caliphate, El viaje de la reina likewise tells the story of the cultural preeminence of al-Andalus in medieval Spanish history but (mainly) from the perspectives of queen Toda of Navarra and her female entourage. The novel traces these women (and the men that accompany them) as they make the comically hazardous journey from Pamplona to Cordoba and back again. The journey is undertaken in homage to abd al-Rahman III (al-Nasir) so that his celebrated physician, Hasday ibn Shaprut, will cure Toda's grandson of his morbid obesity and (hopefully) allow him to retake the throne of León. The bulk of the novel covers the journey and the group's stay in Cordoba and the main body of the text ends as the Navarreños begin their trip back home. The lengthy epilogue recounts what happened after they returned, including Toda's death, and accounts for the existence of the text as a biography of Toda written by a distant, sixteenth-century relative of Toda's lady Alhambra.

Both novels attempt a supposedly feminist rewriting of the centrality of women in
medieval Iberia, each novel following the self-representation of each author: Lasala’s depicts gorgeous and artistically talented Muslim women and Irisarri’s presents clever, satirical, powerful and independent (but flawed) Christian women. Their historical legwork (orientalist, new-agey and allegorical stance versus careful-not-to-invent-Muslims stance), characterization of the period, fictional liberties, and emotional tone/distance of the works are all quite different. The (albeit scant) criticism of these works and the authors broadly reflects this difference, revealing a scholarly preference for Irisarri's more historically grounded, less-emotional presentation.

A predominant trend in the critical literature is to judge historical fiction in relation to historiography, and these novels are no exception. I identify two main approaches within this trend of comparison: first, those critics that emphasize the extent to which the novel presents a “true” versus “invented” history—an approach that favors the historiographical mode in communicating truth—and second, an approach that identifies the ways in which the text dialogues with and potentially overturns certain aspects of established historiographical practices.

In his explanation of Francoist historiographic practices, Herzberger emphasizes that history is not a set of content to be revealed or explained (and thus expressing some ontological truth), but in fact itself a process of narrative strategies of interpretation. This nuanced theoretical position stands in contrast to that taken by Francoist historiographers themselves. Herzberger’s approach is not a new one, and, post-structuralism, it is widely held that history and depictions of reality are interpretable and contingent on the

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21 Herzberger unveils his approach to historiography as a set of strategies in the introduction to *Narrating the Past* and delves into the specifics of Francoist historiographic strategy in chapter one.
interpreter and language itself.\textsuperscript{22} Nevertheless, there is still an understandable trend to read historical fiction and other non-historiographic historical modes in reference to “history” as if this latter were an ontological truth to be revealed. The extant criticism on \textit{La estirpe de la mariposa} demonstrates this problem and the need for more theoretical tools for approaching the historicity (or not) of non-historiographic history texts.

García-Quismondo García (2011) staunchly criticizes the recent trend of feminist historical fiction as an attempt to re-write—not just re-consider but to blatantly change, i.e., falsify—history from a twenty-first century perspective of multiculturalism and political correctness. She is adamant that \textit{La estirpe de la mariposa} not only fails at presenting history from the perspective of those marginalized politically and historiographically, but also and more importantly, that it contributes to the trend of falsifying and mythologizing history for the sake of contemporary ideology. Furthermore, historiographic questions aside, she finds fault with the idealizing impulse of the text that creates a utopian society of indistinguishably perfect, creative and fecund women.

On the other side of the spectrum, Espadas (2008) lauds the historical revisionism of \textit{La estirpe} as key in reclaiming historical memory from Franco's homogenizing praxis. She emphasizes the work that Lasala's novels do in reclaiming the true-to-fact female legacy of medieval Iberia, and she cites a catalogue of evidence from historiography that validates the “accuracy” of female portrayal in \textit{La estirpe}. As is necessary in this comparative-historiographic perspective on the historical novel, Espadas makes clear that there are two moments in which \textit{La estirpe} engages in historical “falsehood”: that

\textsuperscript{22} Herzberger thoughtfully and carefully summarizes the stakes of the history-fiction comparison post-structuralism in the introduction to \textit{Narrating the Past}. See also Hayden White, \textit{The Content of the Form}; Roland Barthes, \textit{The Discourse of History}; Ricoeur, \textit{Time and Narration}; as well as the introduction to this dissertation.
Lubná—an actual historical figure—was al-Hakam’s daughter and that she translates Dioscorides’s *Materia medica*—the translation of which did appear during the Caliphate but is not known to be credited to Lubná. Espadas concludes that the relation of the story of the Caliphate through the line of the five women of the *estirpe* is “una perspectiva innovadora sobre esta sociedad patriarcal” (135). Both critics easily categorize *La estirpe de la mariposa* as pertaining to the NHN for its revisionist history and feminine focus, though with disparate perspectives on the impulse of the project itself as well as on the success of the revision.

Irisarri has received considerably more critical attention for her novels, though she has also written more novels overall than Lasala, who did not begin to write historical novels until after they had regained significant popularity. The central critics of Irisarri’s works do not focus as much on historical veracity—as do Lasala scholars—but instead on the kind of revision presented in her works.

As I discussed earlier, Martínez-Samos (2004) lauds the feminist vindicatory moves in *El viaje de la reina*, though his dissertation refers to the original title, *Toda, Reina de Navarra*. After comparing Irisarri’s Toda to historiographical accounts, he concludes that the novels succeeds in presenting the “alternative voice” of women and as such, it “correct[s] the omissions that History has perpetrated on women” (41). Beatriz Trigo (2002-09) and Francisca López (2004) delve into specific mechanisms of the fictional feminist historical revisionism achieved in Irisarri’s novels, though neither scholar treats *El viaje de la reina* directly. Trigo focuses on the supernatural elements

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23 Irisarri admits in an interview with Daniel Arjona that she decided to write historical novels after failing to publish other types of fiction. He suggests this and she responds, “Pues sí, después de una larga agonía opté por la novela histórica cuando todavía no estaba de moda, y mira…”
present in *Las damas del fin del mundo* that she concludes are necessary in providing women with the power they historically were without, and she establishes a catalogue of supernatural elements present in much feminist revisionist historical fiction. López’s analysis centers on Irisarri’s trilogy about Isabel the Catholic and she brings out questions of historiography and truth in Irisarri’s works, following Herzberger in contrasting Irisarri’s treatment with Francoist discourse.

Daniela Flesler manages to keenly avoid the stereotypical questions of “historicity” in historical novels in her two scholarly works that treat *El viaje de la reina* directly. Both her (2003) article “Cristianas y moras” and chapter two of her (2008) book, *Return of the Moor*, represent somewhat contrasting versions of the same inquiry. In these two, Flesler examines the intersection of religion with identity and the function of the journey trope as a key hybridizing factor in blurring distinctions between Muslims and Christians. In the article, Flesler concludes that *El viaje de la reina* ultimately points to the non-separation of the two religions, though in her later essay, Flesler takes a far more critical tone, concluding that the stark separation between Muslims and Christians is momentarily lessened in the middle space of the journey but ultimately upheld at the end.

Despite the varied emphases of critical works on Irisarri’s novels, and the apparent lack of critical distance in scholarly approaches to *La estirpe de la mariposa*, all the critical literature refers in some way to the (albeit problematic) connection between fiction and historiography and in some way attempts to account for historical fiction’s place as a history text. Herzberger’s conclusion about the joint separation and interrelation between these two modes is both practical on its own and useful as a focusing lens for my own analysis of the novels. Citing Ricoeur, Herzberger points to the
central crossover shared between history and fiction: they both take as their ultimate objects time and narrative (7). In both *La estirpe de la mariposa* and *El viaje de la reina*, female protagonism is specifically bound up in a nexus with these two (time and narrative). Each novel’s representation of women as protagonists is directly related to the function of the women’s own narratives. Female protagonism is in large part discursive, and each novel creates a distinct vision of temporality and women’s role (protagonism) in shaping, directing, or bringing about human destiny within time.

*La estirpe*: Reproductive Protagonism or Divinely Ordained Fertility?

At first glance, *La estirpe* presents strong female protagonists that inspire and influence the historical and cultural production directed by the more celebrated figures—abd al-Rahman III, al-Hakam and al-Mansur—through their feminine crafts, including both their artistic creativity and their reproductive capacity and thus, according to Espadas, *La estirpe de la mariposa* re-focuses historiography of caliphal Cordoba, revealing the powerfully creative women who play the essential but hidden-to-history roles in influencing and bringing them about. Philpott identifies two distinct modes of historical fiction that existed well before Walter Scott's novels: first “particular” history, which was focused on a smaller-scale place, person or event that was “too specialised for the purposes of general or universal history,” but a study of which/whom revealed truths about the “larger” or “greater” events (Maxwell qtd. in Philpott 5); and second, “secret” history, which divulged and imagined some of the underlying motivations and psychological processes at work that inspired, led to and culminated in the “great” events upon which the contemporaneous historical grand narratives focused. In many respects,
La estirpe seems to present a secret history that demonstrates that there were women “behind” the great actions of the men whose deeds are recounted by traditional historiography. La estirpe's emphasis on the secret history of female power through fertility—both creative and biological—however, warrants problematization.

The beginning scene of the novel sets the stage for this feminine secret history and need for more critical inquiry. The novel opens close to the day of Abd al-Rahman III's auto-proclamation as caliph. He has sent his visir, Musa Ibn Muhammad, to make preparations for a night of entertainment following the coronation and the visir goes to Awriya, great-granddaughter of Ziryab, who runs a school for the arts for young girls. What begins as a task for and by these men turns into a theater for seduction staged and executed. Awriya, a woman who is both more assertive and more sexually experienced than Musa, creates an opportunity to possess him sexually. In this scene of seeming female empowerment, however, rather than presenting a new or alternative mode to the traditional the patriarchal structure of male sexual dominance over female, and thus doing the supposed historical vindicatory work that the novel purports, the established patriarchal order is inverted but maintained; many markers of that order as well as the underlying relational modality of domination-subjection remain intact.

The very language Awriya uses—in her internal monologue—during the initial episode makes use of a common trope referring to young women as “ripe” for male picking: Awriya begins to make her move “pensando para sus adentros que ese fruto tan largamente deseado [Musa] ibale a resultar muy sabroso” (15). Awriya is a savvy, independent businesswoman as well as a teacher of the arts, and her position provides her with much more freedom to choose her sexual partners than that which the central
women in the harem enjoy. Through her position in the school and Cordoban society as a whole, Awriya demonstrates a powerful ability to act of her own accord and exercises her power by performing, in several respects, a more traditionally masculine role. She not only acts out her sexual fantasies of men authoritatively, but she also uses the sexuality of both men (Musa) and women (Zayyan) within her control for personal enrichment and material gain. This initial scene of sexual appropriation acts as one of the frames for the entire narrative. Awriya is the first of several Scheherazades. Here, she is different from the original storyteller and from Nur's performance later in the novel, for her manipulation of her environment through narrative control has a rather less-than-wholesome or mutually beneficial effect.

It is Awriya who decides to sell Zayyan to the caliph—despite having initially indicated that she planned to find her a husband, not sell her maidenhead—but Awriya says goodbye tearfully, calling Zayyan “ahijada” and amply providing for the latter's material comfort in her new home (42). As Zayyan enters the palace, and her “deflowering” by abd al-Rahman is interrupted by her first menstruation, she finds herself under the care of another surrogate mother. Azahra, this second surrogate, is the other female protagonist not genetically related to the women of the estirpe but who also plays a central role as another example of feminine power as expressed by the novel. Azahra acts as both a foil and a double for Awriya. Her social status as favorite concubine in the Caliph's harem awards her significantly less freedom than Awriya, and in that respect makes her situation appear quite opposite to Awriya's. However, Azahra is a likewise powerful woman, despite the fact that she is relegated to a more traditional female role for and power dynamics with (i.e. subordination to) men. Azahra nevertheless
exerts influence and authority from within that position, though as with Awriya, the result of that influence also culminates in a jarring image of patriarchal appropriation in which Azahra becomes a(n albeit joyful) symbol of masculine power.

As the kind, talented and savvy favorite concubine of the Caliph, Azahra has a special way of appeasing and swaying al-Nasir when no one else can. After he erupts with anger over Zayyan's menstruation, Azahra settles him down, convinces him not to execute Zayyan and then tend to the frightened girl. Over the course of the novel, Azahra is a de-facto maternal figure and figurative head of the entire estirpe, and she not only instructs Zayyan in the ways of the harem, but also in the arts of romance (56-57). Among her many talents, Azahra is a gifted weaver, and she passes on this art to Lubná, with whom she spends a great deal of time (112). Within the historiography the text constructs, however, Azahra is principally remembered for her role as the Caliph's muse; she supposedly inspires the building of the beautiful and unprecedented Madinat al-Zahra (the aptly-named city of Azahra) and at its entrance stands not a statue of the powerful ruler, but of her. The statue is “magnífica, sugestiva e imponente al mismo tiempo, erguida como lo hace un desafío a sabiendas—pues que ése era el símbolo del tal poder califal—y colocada de modo que fuera ella y el mensaje oculto de su presencia, lo primero que cualquier viajero vislumbraba” (122). At first glance, this statue seems a homage to Azahra that crowns the novel's vindication of women's importance in the history of caliphal al-Andalus. However, the depiction of Azahra here is not one of a specific, concrete individual with a unique personality but one of a rather undifferentiated muse, whose entire being—intellect as well as body—serves only as a symbol of the true greatness of the Caliph himself. Although this is a statue of Azahra, the appropriation of
her person by the Caliph is so powerfully and fully realized that a bystander, looking right at “her” sees only al-Nasir and his tremendous power.

Both Awriya and Azahra are matriarchal figures who instruct the women of the estirpe in the arts in general and the art of romance in particular. The fact of their protagonism does represent a shift from male-centered historical narratives about the period. Nevertheless, Awriya's sexual assertiveness—both in acquiring Musa and in selling Zayyan—simply inverts patriarchal structures of domination, reproducing and extending the appropriation of female bodies as an essential trait of social power. Furthermore, Azahra stands as prime example of the way in which most women in this novel, no matter how talented, industrious, or intelligent—serve as cultural signifiers, equal to static muses or iconic and emblematic works of art to be appropriated by and gazed at by men. In the narrative begun by Awriya as Scheherazade, the narrative focus on the estirpe in many cases simply serves to reinforce patriarchal narratives and schema—and Francoist historiography in particular—including perspectives on female reproductivity and concepts of time.

Man's Secret Weapon

By recounting this supposed feminine history of caliphal Cordoba, the novel nonetheless focuses on the male figures that have been traditionally celebrated in historiography. It is no secret to the men that the women that surround them have a powerful potential. At times, the inscription of that potential has recourse to a patriarchal trope that stereotypes and then appropriates female gifts, a move celebrated rather than criticized in the novel. As Al-Nasir declares to Zayyan on their very first—and only—
night together,

No existe poder más grande...que el brío que la visión de una mujer bella suscita en el interior de un hombre, pues tal fuerza no tiene comparación con ninguna otra fuerza, y por ellos los hombres matan y crean por igual. Ello es, a partes iguales, gozo y esclavitud en el varón, y nada puede detener el ansia cuando ésta es aparecida. (48)

Here, as with the statue of Azahra, what is presented as obeisance to female potential is in fact a sanctioning of the appropriation of that potential by the empowered men. The “poder más grande” is not in fact the beautiful and talented woman who enslaves the man, but the response she “suscita” in the man who gazes upon her. The novel treats this problematic female gift in the same way that it treats Awriya and Azahra's assertiveness and influence, without sussing out the inherent power relations that make this supposed historical elevation of women basically void. Given the utopian, emancipatory feel of the novel that is created by Lasala's enchantingly poetic and positive prose, it is easy to read these sections glibly as affirming and celebrating the women in their own right. Readers must distance themselves from the emotional tone of the novel with a critical eye that reveals that the text is actually quite troubling.

It is unsurprising, then, when al-Mansur also describes his desire for Nur in terms of what he has to gain: “faltásrame tú, Nur…tuve el tiempo y el espacio y el coraje y la ambición para levantar mi imperio, y me faltó el secreto para alzarlo” (284). In La estirpe, this “secreto” that is woman continually articulates femininity in essentialist terms tied to reproduction. Even al-Hakam, whose relationship with Zayyan is perhaps the most egalitarian of the romances depicted in the book, views female potency specifically on those terms. When gazing at Zayyan while she is pregnant, “Al-Hakam sintió su pecho sobrecogido; de pronto una certeza imprevista inundó su corazón y lo
entendió todo…[estaba] amorosamente envidioso de lo femenino capaz de albergar la herencia de la continuidad del mundo, y súbitamente feliz, con esa felicidad íntima que da el entendimiento de las cosas” (89). It is important to note the resonances of a kind of transcendent spirituality here and elsewhere in the novel's presentation of women as essentially fertile. Somehow just being in the presence of a pregnant woman provides al-Hakam with a deeper understanding of the world. The novel’s perspective of female protagonism as ultimately fertile goes further to place it within an overarching divine plan. The women’s biological reproduction both carries out and stands as symbol of God’s plan for human destiny in time.

*La estirpe de la mariposa* presents a biological imperative to procreation as being the pinnacle of femininity, and furthermore, as being almost entirely separate from female choice. This imperative has primacy over the women's sexual autonomy as well as their individual choices. The novel plays out the initial framing narrative of sexual appropriation (of Musa by Awriya) multiple times among the women of the *estirpe* and their respective or would-be lovers, without the warranted critique. Despite the lack of choices for the women, the idealization of the harem here presented is so complete that sexual exploitation is almost entirely absent from the depiction. In its stead—and as an antidote to the (only) two episodes of would-be exploitation—is a depiction of female fertility as a drive so strong that it, apart from the woman's control, “saves” her from physical harm. The first representation of (attempted) sexual exploitation occurs when Zayyan (and her maidenhead) are sold to the Caliph and it is not actually carried out. The violence and trauma involved in even just al-Nasir's attempt are markedly subdued in the tone of *La estirpe*’s presentation and there is no real accounting for the fact that the act
would consist of the sexual exploitation of a pre-pubescent child. Al-Nasir's “deflowering” of her is thwarted by the unexpected arrival of her first menstruation, which is described in a profoundly sexualized way: when the Caliph unties her skirt, “[a]l mismo tiempo el vientre de Zayyan parecióse abrir de repente, dejando manar un voluptuoso fluido que embargo de placer los miembros de su cuerpo adolescente, que henchía sus pechos abultados y hacía latir muy fuerte su cintura” (49). Here, Zayyan's nascent fertility acts as a protective force when she has no other recourse, though it is presented in such a way that it practically stands as a sexual act in itself. However, it does almost result in her beheading until Azahra intervenes and rescues Zayyan. Thankfully, Azahra is able to sufficiently calm the Caliph and subsequently whisks off Zayyan to teach her how to care for herself during her monthly period, which includes how to keep the men distracted and satisfied during this time. Detailed accounts of non-consensual encounters are absent from the novel.

The second episode of potential sexual exploitation occurs when al-Mansur takes power as visir, kidnaps Nur, and holds her in his quarters. Nur cannot bear this captivity nor al-Mansur's advances, and she slits her wrists. Despite the gravity of her wounds, she is unable to take her own life. Once again, as with Zayyan on night with al-Nasir, the fertility of the estirpe intervenes and somehow the blood of her menstruation—occurring at the precise moment she slits her wrists—runs stronger and more abundantly than that of her cut arm: “estallada mi sangre lunar con más abundancia por la debilidad de mi cuerpo” (207). This outflow of blood revives rather than weakens her as her fertility, the essence of her femininity, asserts itself more loudly and strongly than her own will. Unlike Zayyan's saving menstrual blood, Nur's does not occur at the same time as an
attempted violation by al-Mansur. She is alone when she attempts suicide. It is al-
Mansur's captivity of her that sparks the desire to end her life, however, just as her period
likewise intervenes in a moment of physical danger to herself. Also, after this failed
attempt at suicide, al-Mansur coaxes her back to life and expresses his desire to win her
favor, thus ending the threat of rape.

Zayyan and Nur's miraculous menstruation resonates with Lasala's essentialist
definition of femininity as presented in the epilogue to the novel, though she describes an
independence lacking in the above-mentioned episodes. As Lasala explains, “Los
personajes femeninos de este libro representan el poder del amor y encarnan la fuerza de
la independencia y el coraje de amar” (318). As such, the women in *La estirpe de la
mariposa* are not specific individuals differentiated by unique personalities but instead
allegorical stand-ins for love itself. The male characters also have allegorical equivalents,
but they each have a different characteristic, according to the unique personalities
assigned them in the novel: Abd al-Rahman III “es tomado...como demostrativo del poder
carismático del líder, encarnando la fuerza de la pasión y abundando en su visión
emotiva”; al-Hakam “representa en este texto el poder de la sabiduría, encarnando la
fuerza de la lucidez serena” (316); and al-Mansur “representa el poder de la ambición
personal, encarnando la fuerza que ejercen las frustraciones humanas” (318). According
to Espadas, *La estirpe’s* most fervent defender, this portrayal of women as allegories for
love and its product through biological reproduction is not a problematic feminist issue
but in fact a celebration of the quintessentially feminine: “Lasala enfatiza los valores
femeninos—el poder de la mujer a amar y la liberación a través del amor—mientras
celebra la resistencia femenina en la adversidad, su fuerza espiritual y la satisfacción
derivada de la maternidad y de la atención a otros” (135-6). It scarcely needs to be stated that this portrayal of femininity—depicted in the novel and supported by Espadas—as inherently linked to matters of love, reproduction and childrearing is at best limiting, and it contrasts sharply with the novel’s more individualized portrayal of the men. Given this allegorical rendering, García-Quismondo García's declaration that the women of the estirpe become undifferentiated seems entirely validated.

Geraldine Heng's study of women in the Constance cycle of medieval romances resonates with the depiction of the women in La estirpe, though of course Heng's analytical focus is properly medieval texts and not historical novels treating medieval periods. Nevertheless, Heng examines the intersection of women and maternity with nation formation and cultural production and demonstrates how “[w]omen carry the burden of culture…In literature, they constitute a figural presence through which the concerns, ideas, pressures and values of a culture can be expressed, can signify. In history, women also implicitly or explicitly function as the touchstones and communicants of culture and cultural values” (Empire 192). They are stripped of individuality and emptied out of personal characteristics to become embodied fertility, the vessels through which and by which culture is carried forward according to the divine plan. As I discussed above, in a variety of situations in La estirpe, women are celebrated for and themselves celebrate their emptying out of individuality and personality for appropriation and domination by men. Their fecundity is their central characteristic and in many cases, it is the only one not appropriatable by the men. Nevertheless, the manner in which their fertility asserts its “saving” dominance over their would-be exploitation and its explicit connection with divinity and divine ordination result in a problematic
tension reminiscent of oppressive and limiting historiographic practices and not the emancipatory (fictional) historical revision that *La estirpe de la mariposa* attempts. Nur asserts that her attempt at suicide failed specifically because “Alá no me había concedido la satisfacción de mi deseo de morir a pesar de mis intentos. Acepté que el destino para mí marcado transcurría por otros derroteros” (207). In this novel, God works in the world through the expression of the women's fertility in childbearing and the cyclical nature of that fertility becomes a structuring force.

**God and History: *La estirpe de la mariposa* and Francoist Discourse**

The novel presents women’s (fertile) femininity as yoked to the temporal cycle as both its agent and its signpost. This configuration of female fertility, divine destiny, and time strikingly evokes Francoist historiographic practice. Jo Labanyi's *Myth and History in the Spanish Novel* analyzes the “legitimizing function” of myth in human understandings of history in general (5), and chapter two, “Myth and Nationalist Spain” delves directly into Franco's Catholic “mythohistoriography” and his conception of time as cycles of regeneration modeled after the Passion. She evidences writings that identified Franco as a Mary figure in his purity and capacity to “give birth to” a regenerated Spain. David Herzberger and Francisca López (following Herzberger) point to Franco's use of a cyclical concept of time, and Herzberger delves into the narrative and rhetorical strategies employed by Francoist historiographers in order to assert and support Franco's specifically cyclical-universal vision of Spanishness in time. He demonstrates that a particular notion of history—both as a general concept and its specific embodiment in Spain—was integral to the widely disseminated, repressive and totalizing force that was the fascist vision of Spain.
This notion of history relied on the powerful narrative strategy of “truth by assertion” that on its own disavowed even the possibility of dissonance with the regime's major rhetorical themes or dissent against its historiographical praxis. This strategy “converts what at first are contingent assertions into a series of essences, which in turn imply their own necessity and certitude in the validating of truths about life” (Herzberger 34). One such essential truth was the divine plan for human nature as revealed and executed through the history of Spain itself. Francoist historiography employed a dizzying logic to at once assert the impermeability of God's “universal history”—executed seamlessly and a temporally on earth—and the moral superiority of Spain for always carrying out God's perfect, immutable plan, in contrast to Spain's other, “decadent,” “amoral,” and/or simply “godless” neighbors. Paradoxically, this perfect, a-temporal universality of God's plan also—as Labanyi has enumerated—took shape within Francoist rhetoric as a cyclical conception of time, through which Franco conveniently asserted his practically messianic task of “returning” Spain to the purity of God's plan. Francoist historiography successfully disseminated this double temporal framework of universal carried out through the cyclical, despite the fact that his underlying assertion of the seamless and universal a-temporality of divine providence always already negated the existence of anything other than its own carrying-out in perfection.

As Labanyi notes, the key structuring element of this paradoxically cyclical while at the same time seamlessly a-temporal universe of Catholicity was the story of Jesus's life and Passion. The concept of temporal cycles of birth-life-death and then rebirth/resurrection underscored the importance of Christ's sinless birth through the Virgin and his resurrection as repetition and fulfillment of that initial human birth. As
such, pivotal to the carrying out of God’s directed and pre-ordained temporal cycle were
the Madonna-like historical figures, such as Isabel the Catholic and Franco himself, that
bore out—both literally and figuratively—God's will. López demonstrates that in this
way, women were not absent from Francoist historiography, but instead functioned as—
albeit static and choiceless—central figures in the working out of God's plan through
their (chaste) reproduction (200). As such, the female reproductive cycle formed a
convenient metonymy for the (somehow both cyclical and constant) working out of God's
plan for earth, which included the entrance of sin, one's death, and the subsequent
redemption—and therefore the continuation of the cycle—through the birth of the Savior.
Just as Heng identified in the Constance cycle, in Francoist historiography as well,
women were made to “carry the burden” (Empire 192) not just of culture, but of the
literal conception and conveyance of divinity on earth; their bodies both symbolized and
enacted this transmission across time. Espadas points to this exactly when she discusses
the meaning of the women’s names in La estirpe. She notes that the Spanish translation
of the name of the last woman in the estirpe, Hawa, is Eve. Espadas notes that she is also
“simbólicamente una nueva Eva” who will bring forth a new cycle and a new generation
in a new, post-Madinat al-Zahra era (135). For Francoist praxis, women are a central
component to the nexus of temporality and divine providence—the latter as paradoxically
both acting upon and inherently structuring the former—for they physically bring about
human regeneration through birth at the same time that their cyclical pattern of fertility
structures and gives constancy to earth's time. In La estirpe de la mariposa, as with
Francoist historiography, questions of female agency and protagonism in history—the
focus of almost all critical literature on these novels as well as the unofficial aim of the
NHN, according to Martínez-Samos—are bound up within the larger nexus of women, time, and destiny. In many respects, *La estirpe* reflects a vision similar to the Generalísimo's and thus fails on multiple levels to either vindicate women’s roles in history or even present a critical, dissenting, or novel variation on that theme.

With *La estirpe de la mariposa*'s central metaphor—the butterfly and its life cycle, symbol of the protagonists, Madinat al-Zahra, and Spain itself—the novel seems to uphold Francoist historiographic practices both in their emphasis on temporal cycles and in their appropriation of women's bodies as agency-less agents of divine temporality. The novel's central object, the butterfly pendant, is passed from woman to woman and reflects each individual's culminating moment of fertile splendor as she becomes pregnant and gives birth and is then passed down to the next generation as she fades from view. It functions as a symbol of the women's ultimately protective fertility, in the same way as their menstruation physically protects them from harm. The quartz butterfly pendant is one of Zayyan's standout features when she dances for the Caliph on the night of his coronation and it, as much as her own dancing, commands al-Nasir's attention and draws him to her, eventually leading to her installation in the harem and to the furthering of the *estirpe*. Furthermore, the pendant is the only thing that protects Nur from Subh's murderous rage; it literally blocks Subh's potentially deadly blow.

The provenance of the pendant is relatively unexplored; we know only that it belonged to Zayyan's mother and that it is Zayyan's only legacy, “que nada en verdad era suyo, únicamente la mariposa de cuarzo rosa que llevaba prendida del cuello” (77).

According to Zayyan's mother, the butterfly...
alma. En principio nace oruga, extraña de sí misma y semilla de lo que será; con el tiempo ha de aprender a saberse, y a sentirse, y a comprenderse, y ha de encerrarse después, con su misterio, en una crisálida que romperá un día para que brote su auténtica belleza y su verdadera grandeza, y pueda al fin, al abrir y cerrar sus alas, alcanzar con su vuelo a la luna, la primera mujer. (54)

Interestingly, in this description, women would not come into the fullness of their power and splendor until an older age. However, in the estirpe, the pendant is passed down precisely as each woman reaches a certain maturity—and becomes a grandmother—thereby elevating and celebrating instead woman's younger, reproductive years as the culmination of her female prowess and essence. As such, it is fitting that the end of the novel and the dissolution of the caliphate come as Nur ages, and she explains that her life—and, by default, that of all the women in the estirpe—is yoked to that of the city and al-Andalus broadly; the two mirror each other in their “stage” in the “cycle” of human biology and human history. This explicit overlap between women, their cycles of fertility, their souls' individual “secret,” and a biological life cycle that encompasses both periods of dormancy and flourishing maps women, their bodies, and even their souls, onto a vision of God's universe entirely compatible with—if not one in the same as—Franco's conception of providence, history and time.

A New Scheherazade: Nur’s Discursive Protagonism

There are some notable exceptions to this overall re-inscription of bodily-maternal femininity and divine will. In contrast to Awriya's inversion of patriarchal values and practices and Zayyan and Azahra's appropriation by the Caliphs, Hind and Lubná are characters that in one way or another actively reject the essentialist equation of femininity with motherhood and the use of their persons for male empowerment. Lubná's aunt,
Hind, is the only “mujer vieja, sabia y soltera,” and she, as a homosexual, is also the only one who maintains a life entirely apart from male sexual appropriation and divinely ordained fertility. It is Hind whose presence allows Lubná to participate actively alongside the other male pupils in the school and thus to develop her talents—and, subsequently, it must be said, meet her lover, al-Aziz. Lubná maintains a public stature and she is well-respected in the community for her intelligence, experience and learning.

As Espadas celebratorily notes (130), and Lasala underscores in her post-epilogue, “Verdad y ficción en La estirpe de la mariposa” (317), the character of Lubná is based on a historical woman who garnered a substantial name for herself for her learning, acumen and gift for calligraphy; her character in the novel is depicted similarly. Lubná maintains a public stature and she is well-respected in the community for her intelligence, experience and learning. For this reason, she is even asked to be a sort of figurehead for the political opposition. Unlike her mother (Zayyan), though, she demurs, refusing to be used by others: “yo nací del amor entre dos amantes…que podían haber pertenecido a cualquier linaje y a cualquier religión. No es mi destino porfiar por un trono…ni tú ni ellos podrá utilizar mi persona para su convivencia particular” (269). Unlike her mother's dancing and singing—which serve to attract the attention of the Caliph and accompany the other couples in the palace in their lovemaking—Lubná's artistic skills are not immediately operationalized for romantic or sexual ends. Her copying and calligraphy substantially broaden the royal library and her reading and studying make her a sought-after counselor on matters of state. Even with al-Mansur in control, the society of madinat al-Zahra comes to Lubná for guidance and she—at times secretly—leads a monthly tertulía for dissemination and discussion of topics ranging
from poetry to politics.

One of Lubná's chief literary endeavors is text transcription and calligraphy, which she greatly enjoys. She copies, meditating on the words that others have written and at the same time creating something new from them:

Lubná adoraba el arte de la Caligrafía en todo su proceso. Considerábalolo como un acto mágico de materialización de lo invisible. ‘Los trazos manan de la tinta, dibujados sobre el papel—solía decir—, agradeciéndose mutuamente su existencia. De los trazos surgen palabras, que son los lazos tendidos desde este mundo a lo ignoto, más allá de las fronteras de lo visible, palabras que suscitan en la mente las imágenes precisas para comprender. Luego, las frases completas vienen a hilvanar las otras, como las perlas de un collar, juntándose entrellas en maravilloso mosaico multicolor.’ (130)

Her work of illumination recalls the work of weaving silk that she and (“su madrina”) Azahra did together, and Lubná reflects that “el arte de la Caligrafía érase igual al de tejer” (131). She loves every single part of the process: the preparation of materials, the meditative copying of someone else's words, and the way that each word naturally gives way to others, together taking on a form all their own, distinct from the original; it is a form that she herself both chooses and directs.

It is, in fact, one of Lubná's texts that gives rise to the novel's central episode: Nur's performance of Scheherazade with al-Mansur. Although Awriya's story represents an important frame for the novel, Awriya is neither the only nor the central Scheherazade figure in La estirpe de la mariposa for which this chapter is named. As reader/storyteller of 1001 Nights with al-Mansur and narrator of the entire novel itself, Nur's character is central in terms of narrative action as well as her position in the estirpe (third of five women). Her masterful performance of Scheherazade has a tangible effect on the physical world in several respects. While holding her captive, al-Mansur goes to Nur and tries to
coax her out of her despondence, expressing that he desires to possess her fully, producing an heir through her only after winning her favor and devotion. To that end, he presents her with a special gift: a copy of *1001 Nights* that Lubná herself calligraphed, one of the very few texts that he saved when burning al-Hakam's library. In a clever move, reminiscent of the quick savvy of the original narrator of the *1001 Nights*, Nur makes a deal with Al-Mansur. He will not attempt intercourse with her until she has read aloud the entire book of stories to him, at which time she will give herself freely every night for forty nights. At the end of the forty nights, she will either be pregnant with his heir or, if not, be free to die in a manner of her choosing, and thus escape her captivity. Al-Mansur takes the deal. As expected, during their time reading together, Nur's performance as a new Scheherazade, re-reading the text that her mother re-inscribed, reproduces the original results, at least briefly.

When describing her reading to Al-Mansur, Nur narrates that she “alargaba los cuentos más por placer que por ganar tiempo...y me complacía comprobando cómo él habíase entregado a los textos, escuchando con fruición e incluso haciendo preguntas o entablando, con el tiempo, conversación sobre las muchas historias que se entremezclaban” (217). She begins to look forward to their nightly visits and the two develop a relationship through their participation in the reading act. As Nur reads to him, al-Mansur begins to be more vulnerable with her, opening himself up to truly caring for her rather than simply desiring to possess her. When they finally finish reading and have their first sexual encounter, Nur admits that she now loves and desires al-Mansur and he likewise tells her that “amábame desde lo más profundo de su ser, y que a veces despertábase anegado en llanto, de tanto como deseábame abrazar y besar, y que ahora,
sin embargo, en la cercanía de mi boca sólo podía sentir miedo, igual que da miedo el horizonte, o el abismo” (223). This represents a pivotal turning point for this “great” historical figure, particularly as he is characterized in La estirpe. What manifests itself as fear in this erstwhile fearless warrior is the mark of true affection and thus the capacity to experience loss should that affection not be requited. Following Shahryar—who likewise engages in acts of brutality clinging desperately to the desire to never (again) open himself up to being wounded in love—al-Mansur is likewise transfixed and transformed by Nur's captivating narrative. Instead of his usual position of empowerment and domination, the fear he feels is a condition of his vulnerability as he is now wrapped up in Nur's stories and, by extension, in Nur herself. Like Scheherazade's original, Nur's telling is potently transformative and, however briefly, her performance conceives true affection and an approximation of self-giving in al-Mansur.

Playing Scheherazade while being held captive by al-Mansur, Nur is master of the narrative, both within the story of 1001 Nights and external to it. It is this management that has the most powerful effects that extend beyond her telling. Within the confines of their agreement, which he, as her captor, controls, Nur’s participation as director of the frame tale places her in a position of power vis-à-vis al-Mansur. It is she who decides how, when and how long to read, and whether or not she will follow the text as Lubná inscribed it or spin it out in her own way, and thus she can follow al-Mansur’s cues and manipulate the written text accordingly. By suggesting the both tantalizing and titillating agreement in which al-Mansur is in physical proximity to but unable to actually physically engage with Nur, she presented him with a situation too tempting to pass up. Within these bounds—that he, ultimately, could break at any time—Nur provides the
space for al-Mansur to gain everything he wants; he can actually win her favor and enjoy her (company) while he does so. Nur is aware of this from the beginning and never loses sight of her ultimate aims of seeing her family again, even when she falls in love with al-Mansur. As Mahmood’s nuanced study of the Women’s mosque movement in Egypt suggests, Nur’s accepting (albeit briefly) the terms of her captivity and the parameters set therein does not make her less active or less self-directed in the process of unravelling a plan within her position of domination. And the fact of her growing genuine feelings of love for al-Mansur also does not preclude her active choice and decision-making. In the original *1001 Nights*, Scheherazade also sets the stage for her telling to Shahryar within an explicitly chosen position of captivity; she volunteers herself for his bride. Scheherazade is able to manipulate Shahryar’s aims and desires when she initially creates the situation of her storytelling and along the way, even while she herself falls for him. Nur does the same, though she is guided not only by Scheherazade's initial example but also by the very text her mother calligraphed.

After the tales have been told and the forty nights have passed, Nur's two options are to either be pregnant with al-Mansur's child and thus remain tied to him for life, or be free to choose the manner of her death. She is the author of this agreement and in a sense, she makes both options come to fruition, with a trick of cunning and a lie. Once the reading is at an end, they do indeed share a mutual love, though one that will not continue or flourish because al-Mansur will not let himself be truly vulnerable and trust in Nur. At the end of forty nights, Nur is indeed pregnant, but she cannot bear to continue with al-Mansur while he will not truly and fully give himself to her in love. For that reason, she says, “decidí dentro de mí seguir mi camino,” the path that she creates for herself,
actively choosing to renege on the agreement that al-Mansur actually followed (228).

Accordingly, Nur continues to control the narrative beyond its initial frame—the time it takes to read *1001 Nights* and forty days afterwards—by creating and carefully sustaining a lie that brings about her freedom. She fakes her period with lamb's blood and plots how she will “die.”

With the help of her servant, Nur manages to get ahold of a deceased woman's (Subh's) body, whom they dress like Nur and carry away in a chest that supposedly contains Nur's prized possessions. Nur declares she wants to be thrown, along with the chest, from the highest point in Madinat al-Zahra into the precipice. Thus, at the opportune moment, Subh’s body is thrown into the abyss and Nur and her servant escape. Here, Nur's narrative control does not demand that everything told be or become true. It involves a mastery of what is understood, believed and experienced. In the same way that she dominates the reading of *1001 Nights* and creates an experience of mutual love between herself and al-Mansur, here she manages the experience and expectations of al-Mansur and his men, while in this case following her “path.” Her playing Scheherazade discursively performs multiple frames of the narrative as she articulates them.

The novel's central episode, as well as the portrayal of the Lubná and Hind (who is not depicted as a member of the estirpe but who is an important influence/presence for these two, much like Awriya and Azahra) differs from this conception of bodily-maternal femininity and divine will. Lubná's powerful transmission of the *1001 Nights* text and Nur's performative reading of it comprise the novel’s closest attempt at female autonomous protagonism, though Nur’s maternal love for her unborn child does significantly play into her efforts, thus still linking her actions to the essentialist feminine
fertility described above. Nevertheless, in this episode, as with Lubná’s artistry, Nur's fertility is also discursive; she manipulates both time itself and her own destiny within it through her artful crafting of narrative.

Nur’s performance of Scheherazade—as well as Lubná’s defiant refusal to be used in the same way as the others—stands out as distinct from the fertile function the majority of the women in the novel carry out. In this episode, the novel finally achieves what Espadas lauds as the principle feature of the entire text: it underscores the “presencia y papel femeninos” in the history of al-Andalus and Spain at large (129). It is important to note that the mechanism of this female “presence” and “role” is discursive, but it nevertheless has the potential to affect the tangible world.

Although the novels are in many respects as unlike as their authors’ self-portrayal, Ángeles de Irisarri’s El viaje de la reina also makes use of this mode of discursive protagonism in its female-centered historical novel about tenth-century Iberia that likewise includes al-Andalus as (one of if not the) central element. Unlike the bulk of La estirpe’s essentializing portrayal, however, from beginning to end El viaje presents a measured, critical and self-reflective stance on gender, history and notions of destiny. The novel’s playful, ironic and self-deprecating tone both allows for a more nuanced and less-idealized portrayal of medieval women and medieval Iberia in general while avoiding the (both totalizing) and utopian self-aggrandizement of its own genre’s prowess and potency. At the same time that it creates a much more mundane and vulgar world—in which the queen talks about her indigestion and bowels almost as much as she does matters of state—it also succeeds much more readily in presenting a nuanced and authentic-feeling world in which women protagonize. Like Nur’s Scheherazade moment
in *La estirpe*, the women protagonize principally by and through their discourse and it is through this mechanism that the novel manages to offer a distinctive vision to that of (Franco’s) Catholic Women-Time-Destiny paradigm.

*El viaje de la reina*: Female Protagonists and the Masculine Void

*El viaje de la reina* presents a history of the Caliphate of Cordoba from the vantage point of key female figures: that of Queen Toda and her (female) entourage as they journey to and stay in Cordoba. Its strong female characters are both much less idealized and much more mundane than those of *La estirpe* and rather than lounging in poetic fecundity in the harem, they endure the ardors of travel, tell anecdotes to pass the time, and battle indigestion. While *La estirpe* attempts to recover and perhaps emancipate a specific class of individuals marginalized by the society in which they lived and by the history written about them, the fact that it wholesale ignores the actual situation of marginalization and subordination of these individuals—its glossing over sexual exploitation, for example—results in an overly utopian portrayal that simply resituates a patriarchal schema on a different plane. *El viaje's* female protagonists hail from historically corroborated female figures of authority and do not shy away from treating some of the contradictions and challenges of being bright and capable women in a position of relative power in tenth-century Iberia.24 *El viaje de la reina's* narrative protagonists and voices are many, ranging from the women employed in various *oficios* along the journey to the inner monologue of the Queen herself, though the three dominant

24 By this I do not mean to say that all these characters were real historical figures, but that their roles as powerful prioress and woman warrior are positions that were indeed held by medieval Christian Iberian women. On this point, Irisarri explains about the invented characters, including Toda’s ladies: “hemos tratado de crear tipos ajustados a la realidad social relatada” (*El viaje* 390).
characters are Toda, her niece Andregoto, and her granddaughter Elvira. The novel presents a satirical portrayal of gender stereotypes—particularly as regards popular thinking of medieval women as without power—without providing a facile inversion in which women are “masculine” and men “feminine.” Toda, Elvira and Andregoto—along with some of Toda's ladies—are among the few individuals who have a clear sense of duty and obligation and for the most part, try to let their reason, not their individual emotions at any given moment, govern their actions. As such, the complexities and contradictions of gender dynamics and politics do play an important role in El viaje, which does not shy away from dealing with topics of love and motherhood—the two keys in the generally essentialist portrayal of femininity in La estirpe. At the same time, it treats them within a better-rounded and nuanced panorama of human emotion and experience. Potent to the articulation of these women's power as women within their individual communities is the novel's emphasis on women’s discursive authority in general and narrative authority in particular.

Storytelling and the exchanging of various kinds of texts is an important past time for the women, both in the long hours of the journey and once they have arrived; it serves as a means of information as well as a space for building, maintaining and altering relationships. The collective knowledge of the group tends to come from stories including sung epics, recounted anecdotes, and insular hearsay. Most importantly, the three principal characters garner and create their authority from forms of discourse—oral-declarative, oral-literary, and written—and manipulate, control, and enact that discourse in their roles as historical protagonists.

Throughout the novel, Toda both presents and considers herself as an elderly
woman—she is eighty-two—who is too old and tired to be making long journeys and dealing with matters of state. At certain points, she goes so far as to designate herself as simply unfit to be the one ruling. Nevertheless, she is constantly and consistently called upon—both by others and of her own accord—to act as principal regent and deal with matters of state both large and small. Despite no longer being the active queen, she is always working out fresh schemes and plans for the good of her family and Navarra en general. She constantly feels that “de todo se tiene que ocupar ella,” and she does so, despite the fact of her being “ya muy vieja” (15). While she consistently complains of her physical ailments and is advised by Boneta—her right-hand lady—to rest, Toda still continues exactly as before, since she feels that “la responsable de la expedición era doña Toda, no porque quisiera sino porque, una vez más, tenía que hacerlo. No es que a la reina le gustara […] sino] Porque a ella, en la vida, le había tocado ser reina” (42). As such, despite her lack of official role, it is still Toda who rules with a queen’s authoritative voice.

Her son García is officially the reigning ruler and his (current) wife Teresa is queen, but this in no way lessens Toda's power, influence and position of authority. In fact, she is made all the more regal and formidable when placed alongside her less-than-kingly son. Toda sees herself as “el báculo sostenedor de ellos [los reyes],” and takes it upon herself—though, as I state above, she expresses that she feels put upon—to ensure that García and Sancho's delicate sensibilities and prideful natures are not injured (48). Through her commands and conversations, she arranges everything for them, from the most important matters of state (the peace treaty with abd al-Rahman that they sign) to the insignificant details that make up their (inflated) senses of self. A telling example is
when, failing to consult with Toda prior to their visit, Andregoto and Elvira go to the tower to play chess with García in a genuine effort to raise his spirits. Without having received instruction from Toda, however, these intelligent and talented women play sincerely and easily beat him four times in a row, which sends the king spiraling back into hysterics. Toda chastises them for not having consulted with her first, since she knows all the delicate ins and outs of Navarra and her son, the king, in particular: “Ay, había que saber tratar al rey, y esas dos necias no le habían consultado a ella, a la reina Toda, que era quien conocía los interiores de su hijo, de palacio y reino todo” (93). In some ways, this is similar to the women of La estirpe’s inspiration of the “great men”; however, Toda verbally creates as well as supports the successes and overall position of her son. Furthermore, in El viaje, this does not represent a secret history of appropriation, but a story known to apparently all but García himself. For that reason, despite the fact that it is García and Sancho who officially sign the peace treaty with al-Nasir, it is Toda with whom he arranges it and with whom he meets privately and informally, as the true leader of Navarra (221). During this meeting, “Toda, más que una reina viuda y anciana, más que una abuela, parecía una emperatriz, con tanto mando y disposición” (22). Toda feels that if she wants to see Navarra thrive and her family continue to rule it well, she has to personally arrange everything to make that happen. Nevertheless, she sees her tight and at-times authoritative control of her grandson and the entire party as specifically for the benefit of these others and she works hard to publicly maintain her position as secondary to her son and as a behind-the-scenes advocate for her grandson. Thus, she attempts to present herself humbly while she works her machinations in order that García be regarded, at least officially, as the ruler. Upon leaving the cathedral right before their
journey, “Cedió paso a los reyes con ceremonia porque sabía estar en su sitio; si hacía lo que hacía, si disponía más de lo que una reina viuda y anciana debiera disponer, era porque los demás no disponían, porque nadie hacía, y alguien debía hacer, en puridad, en el reino de Navarra” (19). Toda ceremonially cedes her place to the younger, official rulers but it is obvious to all—save, perhaps, for García and Sancho themselves—who is truly in power. It is still Toda’s queenly voice that acts and enacts.

Toda's actual position appears to exceed her official status as past and elderly grandmother-queen, though they are in fact quite complementary. Toda thinks constantly about her children and grandchildren and practically everything she does is for their good in one way or another, because she also feels the things that “llevan las madres en el corazón, por cosas de madre” (35). Despite her at-times uncharitable frankness, she is a motherly or grandmotherly figure to the entire cast of characters of the novel, from her ladies-in-waiting, her actual niece and granddaughter, her subjects—and even Andregoto's subjects, when the latter fails to be sympathetic to the dishonored woman—al-Nasir's daughters, her Cordoban servant Aixa, and even abd al-Rahman himself, whom she calls “sobrino.” When she treats one of her soldiers with special care after he is injured, he “se atrevió a llamar[la] madre. Toda Aznar no es sólo una gran señora y reina, es también madre, gritó para que se enteraran todos” (53). Her acting as motherly figure complements and enhances her queenly voice, and Andregoto’s womanhood is likewise also compatible with her mythical warrior following.

Toda’s niece maintains a public persona very much more typically male though also one that garners and enlarges its authority discursively—here it is a popularly circulating literary discourse that is disseminated and to some extent controlled by Toda
herself. Andregoto, “la castellana de Nájera,” has a mythical origins story befitting a celebrated warrior that is recounted regularly by Toda, her ladies, and those in the northern territories generally. It begins with a sense of grandeur and epic foreboding: “Una fría noche, el doce de las calendas de enero, lo recuerdo muy bien, el viento llamó tres veces, tres veces, a la puerta del castillo de Nájera: pon, pon, pon...” (28). The story continues in this way, with the kind of grandiosity and narrative presence characteristic of tales of epic heroes. Andregoto was not born in the typical way but rather “había venido entre prodigios. A través del viento; un viento capaz llamar a la poterna, pon, pon, pon, como podían corroborar las dos mujeres. La niña era hija del viento” (29). Her story spreads throughout the kingdom and it reaches narrative heights befitting her own status as a war hero: “Se supo lo del viento y se inventó otro tanto más, porque la niña, ahora mujer, es una gran guerrera” (30). Toda's ladies state that they recently heard a minstrel tell three different versions of Andregoto's arrival to her (adoptive) parents. Her literary presence rivals that of historic and epic heroes, great kings and warriors, and one of Toda's ladies distinctly states that the songs “eran cantadas como [las de] Carlomagno, Roldán o Bernardo del Carpio” (31). Even among Toda's ladies Andregoto has a certain renown, and early in the journey they take turns commenting on what they know about her, who has seen her, and what she is like.

In the same way that her story and reputation precede her, so do the physical signs of Andregoto's mythical potency. The day before Andregoto arrives unexpectedly, “El viento ululaba fiero,” which, those in the entourage comment, “no es común tal temporal por estos predios” (82). The next day, Nuño sounds the alarm because “una inmensa polvareda que llegaba hasta el cielo se acercaba por el camino a toda prisa en dirección a
ellos […] Nunca se había visto otro tal” (82). Everyone is terrified and Toda starts to believe that the omens were wrong and that that they should not have left Pamplona. An ominous voice calls out from amidst the whirlwind asking for Toda, inspiring great fear and unrest among Toda's entourage. As soon as Andregoto makes herself known and she dismounts, however, the dust settles and the women all greet each other warmly. Andregoto is the picture of a mythical warrior except for—but very much not except for, since it in no way lessens the fear and awe the entourage demonstrate before her—the fact that she is a woman:

Las gentes del cortejo e incluso las camareras de la reina miraban con curiosidad a la Hija del Viento. Todas la habían contemplado con pavor cuando se apaciguó la ventolera y de entre el polvo surgió un jinete que más parecía un demonio dentro de una armadura de plata. Que fue como una aparición fantasmal. Que ya sólo faltaban las trompetas del Juicio Final. Que ya estaban los expedicionarios agazapados en el suelo, resignados a volver a la tierra, cuando apareció el misterioso caballero, que no era caballero, sino que se presentó como mujer, terminando con el misterio y con el temporal de viento. Para después aparecer del caballo de un salto, librarse del yelmo con un certero ademán y mostrarse como era, una mujer de cabello largo y bermejo, que se arrodilló sumisa, como cualquiera de ellos, ante la señora Toda. (83-4)

The perception of the entourage presents an ironic twist on the gendered perceptions of the community, for they are entirely terrified of her until she shows her lovely face and hair; her feminine traits indicate that from such a person there is really nothing to fear. At the same time, their perception plays with what very well may have been the response of fear and awe to the kind of woman that commands an army and, while on horseback, seems to command the wind as well. Nevertheless, Andregoto herself seems nonplussed by this typical reception and entirely comfortable with the mix of social contradictions she embodies. She easily and warmly finds her place among the women and “se reveló como mujer muy habladora” (84). Andregoto describes the wind and the entire terrifying
scene she enacts every time she rides as simply “un arte que tenia, acaso por bien, acaso por mal” (85). This (mythical and seemingly masculine) skill is as much part of her character as her red hair and her propensity to talk.

Along with her position as a caballera, Andregoto is also the sole ruler of Nájera and, like Toda, she thinks exclusively of maintaining, enlarging and protecting her realm—as well as acting as faithful vassal to her aunt. For her part, Toda, who is constantly scheming of alliances and thus of marriage plots, declares on several occasions that she must find a suitable husband for her niece. This is not in order to restrain her “masculine” life or pass the rulership of Nájera to a man, despite the fact that Toda asks Andregoto to dress in traditional feminine garb during their stay in Cordoba. “Andregoto es mi mejor castellana de la frontera,” Toda admits, “a mí me va bien que sólo piense en la guerra, pero prometí a su madre que me ocuparía della y debo maridarla para que tenga un brazo fuerte a su lado e hijos que sean consuelo de su vejez” (62). Despite the multitude of problems that a bad marriage can bring for a woman, which the ladies promptly discuss in reference to Andregoto's “father,” Toda understands the political and emotional stability that can come from a good match. Furthermore, she sees the traditional female position of motherhood as compatible with Andregoto's knightly occupation. Thus, Andregoto, fearful woman warrior, warm, gregarious and impetuously loyal, takes her place among Toda's women but is the first to act as their guardian should trouble of any sort threaten. She also has some of the most stereotypical female traits: she is talkative and (apparently) given to lovesickness for powerful and impressive male figures (Abd al-Rahman himself). While Toda seeks—though fails to achieve—a rather less overtly powerful position, constantly stressing her femininity and age, Andregoto
actively maintains a masculine role but in no apparent contradiction with her more traditionally feminine characteristics. Toda’s queenly voice commands and controls when her son’s and grandson’s cannot and Andregoto’s literary discursive presence is likewise powerful.

Similar but opposite to Andregoto, Toda’s granddaughter Elvira embodies a submissive and humble role specifically designed for a woman, but consistently steps beyond the bounds of that role as meek and self-effacing nun to assert herself as prioress. Also like Andregoto, she joins the party discursively before arriving physically. A group of nuns from Elvira's convent arrives unexpectedly with a letter for Toda. After Toda reads the letter, Elvira reveals herself, having hidden within the group in order to gauge her grandmother's response to the nuns' arrival. As such, Elvira, like Andregoto, also uses her discursive presence to create an actual effect on reality.

Like Toda and Andregoto, Elvira makes no effort to restrain, dampen, or hide her intelligence and she fiercely insists on maintaining her personal and spiritual integrity despite social constructs, even those within the church itself. When Toda, Elvira, and the other ladies all go to hear the Mozarab bishop say mass in the cathedral, Elvira cannot sit by and hear the bishop preach the exact heresy he purports to be condemning. She leaves her seat in the middle of mass, goes to Toda to explain the situation, and urges her grandmother, “instándole a intervenir y a poner al obispo en su sitio. Le susurraba que era la reina de Navarra y ella la hija del emperador... Que juntas habían venido a la ermita de los Santos Mártires a venerar unas reliquias muy queridas, pero no a que un obispillo de tierra infiel les echara un rapapolvo. Que el obispo no era quién” (322). It is because of her insistence that Toda confronts the bishop in the middle of his diatribe on the vanity of
frivolity of active women—who are, according to him, “queriendo ser como los hombres”—saying, “Nos, señor abad, valemos tanto como vos. Y ansí lo consideraba, por ende no tenía por qué oír a un obispillo echar sapos por la boca contra las mujeres, máxime siendo hereje” (322). At Elvira’s urging, Toda literally interrupts an explicitly patriarchal and misogynistic discourse with her own authoritative voice.

Representing three primary occupations of powerful men—nobility, clergy and military—these women invert the heroic historical gendered narrative but do so without simply supplanting men's roles for women's. In this way, the novel presents a nuanced perspective of the challenges of political, religious, and gender dynamics in a medieval Spanish Christian community. In terms of authority and influence, the men and women in El viaje de la reina have switched roles and the women are the historical protagonists, without having to give up, essentialize, or otherwise homogenize notions of gender on either side, as is done in several respects in La estirpe. While the women do not necessarily take on inverted “masculine” roles to fit their positions of power, however, the men do manage to take on some stereotypical female traits.

The would-be powerful men are practically impotent, and they are both rendered this way and saved from their own powerlessness by women. García is lovesick over Teresa, whose power over him is so great that he is characterized as one of her possessions. As part of a catalogue of the royal family, the king is not described in his own right but in terms of his wife: “lo que sí tenía doña Teresa era un marido enamorado, sí. Nada menos que un rey, hijo de reyes, que suspiraba por ella desde su altura sin dejar de mirar hacia Pamplona” (42). García does present with some traditional traits of kings, however; he is pompous and self-important and enthralled by hunting. Toda manages to
simultaneously maintain for Garcia his position of authority and protect his delicate ego by allowing him to think himself the singular (and powerful) monarch, though it is made clear that he would be far worse off than Sancho—the king without a throne—without her. Sancho, even more so than his uncle, is unable to function politically or personally without the help of his grandmother. Not only does she organize the entire trip and alliance for him—both for his benefit and in his stead—but she must make arrangements for his arrival at every step of the way; he cannot even ride in a carriage and Toda has to get creative in order to transport him to Cordoba. Toda admits that, along with his gluttony—which is certainly of his own doing—Sancho's obesity is a result of another woman's influence: that of his mother. Toda thinks to herself: Sancho “había heredado de parte de padre un reino y por parte de madre la obesidad que, en verdad, resultaba más permanente que el reino […] todo lo malo que le sucedía le venía por parte de madre y de abuela” (21). Nevertheless, all the good things he experiences are also the result of his grandmother Toda's influence. Like his uncle, who is paralyzed by lovesickness, Sancho seems to betray a certain propensity for the most unpleasant and unhelpful stereotypical female traits. Immediately following a description of his grandmother as an empress, a woman of action who is always busy with matters of state and surrounded by men, Sancho is described in the following way: “El rey del reino perdido lloraba en lo oscuro de la iglesia...” (23). It is the man who cries weakly in the darkness while the women are off leading. While certainly humorous, El viaje’s portrayal of these “powerful” men comes across more biting and derogatory than some of the less-than-celebratory depictions of the women. Given this, there does seem to be a general undertone of scorn and derision for historical men at the same time that the novel presents nuanced and
complex—if flawed—historical women.

Where *La estirpe* fails as it somewhat essentializes femininity, equating it with motherhood, *El viaje* succeeds in presenting a thoroughly complex portrayal in which these often-stereotyped but nonetheless real female concerns are not simply written off in a feminist condemnation but presented and dealt with in the text. Marriage and motherhood are two of the most prominent issues discussed at length by all the female characters of both religions, and what makes an advantageous or disadvantageous union, the duties of a good wife and mother, and who is best suited for whom form central questions for all female parties. Toda's preoccupation with marrying off Andregoto and finding good matches for her ladies displays a legitimate concern for how to best navigate the complexities of the institution of marriage in order to provide for these women whom she loves in terms of social status, economic stability, intellectual companionship and emotional well-being. She rarely engages in sentimental or idealistic thinking about love, finding it to be detrimental: “un embargo del corazón” (281). She admits that she has only seen one case of a man truly loving a woman in all her life—her son García's love for Teresa—which has only lead to difficulties. Her very successful marriage to Sancho Garcés was not predicated on love and it took time before each of them could truly value the other (282-83). For Toda, marriage is for the purpose of security, comfort, alliance, and children, the latter reason being perhaps the only one that involves love, though of a different sort.

In her important *Return of the Moor*, Daniela Flesler concludes that *El viaje de la reina* ultimately maintains the (relatively static and superficial) divisions between Muslims and Christians. Nevertheless, I find that the treatment of these specific issues of
marriage and motherhood represents an important point of unification between the Christian and Muslim women depicted in the novel; their discussions at length surrounding these issues—even when they are comparing notes on the cultural differences regarding these practices—bring them together in a shared experience of being female. The camaraderie between Toda, her ladies, Aixa, and the Caliph’s daughters, especially when they discuss the aforementioned questions of gendered limitations, love and marriage, represents in large part a blurring of divisions between the religiously designated groups and instead unifies the women in their common struggles with (or in finding good) spouses and partners and navigating social conventions surrounding family life.

Furthermore, it is from within their given positions as grandmother-queen, sung female warrior and lettered abbess that the three most prominent women in the novel—Toda, Andregoto and Elvira—assert themselves and protagonize. Like Nur’s performance of Scheherazade while held captive by al-Mansur, Toda, Andregoto and Elvira’s power to act is mainly discursive. Their actions and the effect of those actions are carried out principally through their narrative control, with Toda—like Nur, who is La estirpe’s ultimate narrator—acting as primary narrative protagonist. It is the queen’s voice that manages and controls the action of the novel, and that ultimately presents the model for interpreting narrative, history and temporality in the novel’s wider, more generalized critique.
While *La estirpe* is recounted by Nur, at times in the first-person omniscient perspective, *El viaje de la reina* is narrated collectively with a polyphonic free indirect discourse. For most of *El viaje*, all the women appear to speak for themselves with no mediating narrative voice. This collective narration is at times so crowded with voices and perspectives that it is difficult to be sure who is “talking” and whether the reader is privy to spoken dialogue or inner thoughts. With *El viaje*’s style of free indirect discourse, the novel takes on a style of oral telling; even in the general action, the majority of what the reader sees is comprised not of direct narration by a narrator but simply of a variety of voices, both internal (monologues) and external (dialogues and conversations) to the characters. As with Nur's episode with al-Mansur, storytelling is of particular importance to the action of the novel itself.

Not far into the journey, Alhambra asks Toda to recount “la historia verdadera de doña Andregoto y su singular forma de venir al mundo” as a means of entertainment (28). Toda spends some time physically preparing for the task of narrating; she adjusts her clothes (her jubón), thereby settling in to the space proper to storytelling. I have already described the epic style of Andregoto's narrative, as well as the way that others know about her from the various versions of her story that circulate. The story itself is exemplary of the function and efficacy of women's narratives in *El viaje* on various levels.

As Toda tells the story, once the wind has brought the child (Andregoto) to the house, her cousin doña Mayor and her ladies “sopesaron la conveniencia de quedársela o devolverla al viento y dejarla donde estaba. Pero acordaron lo primero […] La niña era
hija del viento y, desde ese momento, también de don Galancián y de mi prima, aunque
su esposo no lo supiera ni lo quisiera” (29). Mayor's and her ladies' act of declaring it
made it so. This performative adoption occurs not only without the knowledge of doña
Mayor's husband, but most likely specifically in contrast to his wishes. Toda continues,
explaining how her cousin, having made the decision, only needed to tell her husband
that Andregoto was his daughter in order that it then be the case. Doña Mayor's
explanation about the situation—mediated through Toda's account, of course—also
provides a humorous commentary on wife-husband relations when it comes to
childrearing that is consistent with the whole of female-male dynamics throughout the
rest of the novel: “Y decía mi buena prima que su marido no tenía necesidad de enterarse;
simplemente, cuando volviera de la guerra, ella le diría: aquí tienes a tu hija, y él la
tomaría en sus brazos, como hacían todos los hombres, que no hacían otra cosa que
preñar a la mujer y de los hijos luego no se ocupaban nada” (29). Once again, doña
Mayor's telling it makes it so. She justifies this situation—as does Toda when the queen
takes it upon herself to intervene in matters of state that García or Sancho would not be
able to handle—explaining that “porque Galancián no lo entendería,” and she means it in
a literal way: he is practically deaf from being wounded in battle and, being illiterate,
neither would he be able to understand a written message (29). Doña Mayor takes and
maintains control of this narrative about their daughter—and, most likely, the majority of
the narratives in their marriage—because she is the one with the capacity to do so. Like
Nur with al-Mansur and 1001 Nights, she has the narrative skills to do that while her
husband does not; Doña Mayor is in a position of narrative authority in which she both
can and must take control. This narrative control produces tangible results, translating
into a worldly control external to the narrative itself. After declaring it, she now is Andregoto's mother and Galancián is her father.

One layer external to Andregoto's story, the frame of Toda telling it to her ladies, Toda exercises a similar kind of discursive control that produces tangible results. Toda's telling Andregoto's story, at least within the journey, has a kind of summoning or at least foreshadowing effect. Not long after Toda recounts it, Andregoto appears on the scene, exactly as Toda describes her, “a través del viento; un viento capaz de llamar a la poterna, pon, pon, pon, como podrán corroborar las dos mujeres” (29). Furthermore, a version of this story becomes reality for the group along the journey, and this occurrence has an even further rebounding effect, causing the re-retelling of Andregoto's tale. Near the Monastery of San Esteban de Deyo, the group comes across an infant girl whom they take in and about whom “Boneta decía que había sido traída por el viento como doña Andregoto de don Galancián y que en ella se repetían las historias de la sobrina y della misma” (79). Like in La estirpe, where Lubná's calligraphy affects Nur's telling and effects actual change, in El viaje, women's crafting of narrative has a proliferating effect that interacts with the tangible world. Also like Nur's manipulation of the palimpsest of the illuminated copy of 1001 Nights, this discursive power functions both internally and externally to the text of Andregoto's narrative, creating and altering reality both within and beyond the frame of the story.

Some readers may consider these discursive interventions in reality to be, rather than a mark of female protagonism, a separate, supernatural intervention that comes in to assist the women and the group as a whole. Beatriz Trigo reads the magical elements surrounding Andregoto and others in Irisarri’s Las damas del fin del mundo as a
necessary step in allowing for the empowerment of female characters in narratives about a past in which they had little power: “el texto combina el ámbito sobrenatural con un documentado marco histórico para establecer la posibilidad de revivir el siglo XI desde una perspectiva eminentemente femenina” (70). Accordingly, the element of the supernatural is necessary when rewriting historical moments because it “legitima el deseo femenino abriendo espacios antes vetados”; that is, it provides the means to subvert the historical “truth” of how things were—that medieval women were oppressed and without adequate agency—providing a mechanism that returns power to the women (73). In El viaje de la reina, the Doña Andregoto character has the same magical ability to create a foreboding wind, but unlike in Las damas del Fin del Mundo, where she both actively employs the power and maintains that her position is only tenable while she remains single, here Andregoto neither controls nor places much emphasis on her “ability.” In El viaje, both Andregoto’s power of bringing wind and the stories told about her are divorced from any explicit discussion about or struggle with patriarchy. Rather than being a supernatural tool “para posibilitar una experiencia femenina que no sigue las normas establecidas,” as it may certainly be in Las damas (Trigo, “Las damas” 70), in El viaje, women’s actions and power to act come specifically from their own selves and their own discourses, which in turn can have a tangible and seemingly magical effect that alters the physical world.

More than any other woman in El viaje, it is Toda that makes things happen and whose narrative control is evident throughout the whole of the novel. At times it has a more circuitous or wayward effect as she works behind the scenes to effect change and at others it is specifically performative. Early in the journey, when the entire group needs to
cross the river Ebro, the tower is precariously tall and too heavy to tilt it enough for it to be carried over the bridge. Here, Toda's words have a direct and indelible influence. The soldiers try without success to lift it and all the women begin to pray. Toda, “no contenta con ello, en uno de los prontos que la asaltaban,” runs to her carriage, grabs the relics of Santa Emebunda, and with them goes up the tower to Sancho's floor. Then she yells, “ante el estupor de los presentes: ¡adelante, por Navarra...!” Immediately after, the men, “haciendo un esfuerzo supremo,” tilt the tower and carry it over to the other side without any more difficulties (52). Everyone is amazed, applauding Toda and Sta. Emebunda and speaking of the event both in terms of a miracle and “la bendita habilidad de la anciana señora para encontrar remedio en situaciones difíciles” (53). Toda feels that it was not a miracle, nor any particular strength on her part, for the men truly did all the work. What she has provided is “un estímulo” (53). Nevertheless, this is, in effect, how she governs and controls all the goings-on: both in and through her discourse.

López and Martínez-Samos both emphasize the postmodernness of Irisarri's writing because of its explicit meditation on the power of narration: Martínez-Samos declares that “the queen of Navarre arrives on the scene as an active figure of the past since she is the one who is actually creating it” (93). On many levels—from the literal performative adoption of Andregoto that can be understood explicitly in terms of Austin’s theory of speech acts, to the more subtle and wayward performatives that occur in the intersection between oral mandates, narrative control and the tangible world—El viaje blurs the line between saying and doing, yoking both together in a mediation on the power of women to perform through discourse. In contrast to the subject-object distinction in place in traditional objective historiographies, in these novels—and in many
cases in the historical novel generally—women are not only the objects of the narrative, but in fact they control it as its subject—its narrative “I”—as well. This is also what occurs as Nur manipulates her environment—al-Mansur included—through her reading of *1001 Nights*, though as I have tried to make clear, this episode represents a rather singular exception to the predominant mode of action in *La estirpe*.

The individual women's taking charge of narrating their own stories does come at a cost to the others in the texts. Only one person can hold the final position of narrative authority. Inasmuch as the breakdown of the subject-object distinction is a positive force for Nur and Toda, it becomes a totalizing force when its effect is generalized to all of the characters. As part of these novels’ articulation of female narrative power and its effect on the tangible world, they both take up questions of power dynamics among individuals and the vital role of narrative control in exercising and maintaining power.

*El viaje* and *La estirpe*: Women’s Narratives and the Production of History

*El viaje* uses Toda’s narrative potency to suggest that a truly heterogeneous and inclusive discourse is impossible, despite the novel’s seeming polyphony. A telling episode within the frame of the novel occurs when the Navarreños are visiting the Monastery of San Esteban de Deyo and Toda prays before her late husband Sancho's tomb. Toda begs his intercession for the good health of García and Sancho and for a good alliance with Cordoba. Immediately after, “Doña Toda creyó oír una voz grave aunque muy lejana, muy lejana, y aguzó el oído [...]” (72). Sancho speaks to her and the two have a lengthy conversation in which he is less than thrilled with her for undertaking this journey, saying “No, no gusto dello...!” (73). At first, this seems to be a powerful and
potent discourse that condemns the voyage and undermines Toda's authority, supplanting it with that of her (disapproving) late husband, and in a sense, that of God himself, since she is praying. Immediately following this conversation, however—in an clever use of free-indirect speech in which Toda's voice is both differentiated from and merged with the narration—she admits to herself:

Y allí, naturalmente, no había pasado nada. Sancho Garcés no había hablado, ni menos reprendido a su esposa. La plática había sido cosa de la reina. Ella misma se había hablado, reprendido y contestado. Porque, lo dicho, no era de razón que un muerto y un vivo platicaran aunque hubieran estado maridos. Me he portado como una niña locuela, diciéndome que lo que hubiera querido oír de mi esposo. (73)

This episode is emblematic of Toda's powerful management and specifically her artful maneuvering of discourse. Her at-times semblance of concession to certain authorities—her late husband, for example—as well as her official and public deference to García, Sancho, and the Caliph himself reveal a (sometimes more- and sometimes less- obvious) behind-the-scenes manipulation of the situation to achieve a certain outcome. It appears that she lets the men speak or that she follow's God's direction, but the entire discourse of the novel turns out to be a monologue for it is only Toda whose voice comes through. This is a clear presentation of Toda's overt narrative control and authority. It also is a startling reminder that in many ways a dialogue with the past is in fact a personal monologue from a position of present, about the present.

Furthermore, it is important to note the implications of this episode in the novel’s ultimate negation of a final religious principle at work in the unraveling of destiny. Toda kneels in the monastery in an attempt to glean advice and direction from the beyond—essentially, to gain some insight into divine providence for her life and thereby act accordingly—but in the end she is only talking to herself. It is her own voice she hears
and her own voice that directs and enacts. This stands in stark contrast to *La estirpe*’s general reification of Catholic providence carried out by cycles of female fertility. The episode with Nur as Scheherazade, despite the contrasting female narrative protagonism that it puts forward, is ultimately just a momentary exception to the novel’s underlying re-affirmation of women’s reproductive roles in a cyclical divine temporality. Similar to Toda’s monologue, in the end, Nur’s narrative control also prohibits the possibility of other voices, though in the case of *La estirpe*, it does so by strongly reinforcing rather than negating the ultimate control of divine providence.

Nur describes that “Comprendí mi destino unido a esta ciudad” and she feels herself to be personally chosen to speak on behalf of all who inhabit it (308). In her first moment of clairvoyance, she declares that Madinat al-Zahra is “mudo testigo” of (its own) history and as such, it requires an authoritative narrator to give voice to it: her (253). One of García-Quismondo García's principle criticisms of *La estirpe* is specifically the way that “la autora que pretende devolver la voz poética a un grupo social injustamente olvidado” but instead manages to present simply a privileged “feminine” twist on a totalizing narrative (84). In the final pages of the novel, as the above quotation from Nur indicates, Nur's subjectivity is generalized to all in the city, and thus—in the same way as when we believe we are hearing a conversation between Toda and her late husband—the entire novel is revealed to be a monologue, despite the appearance of other voices that disguise Nur’s ultimate narration. Having embraced Nur's narrative “I” as specifically *chosen*—in the religious sense—to speak as voice for herself, the *estirpe*, and the entire community of Madinat al-Zahra, her life becomes metonymy for the city, the caliphate and the “golden age” of al-Andalus broadly. This overlap of one person's voice
as capable of speaking for all both belittles dissonant individual experiences and homogenizes the ineffable complexity of any community at any moment in time.

It is hardly an agreed-upon aim of any novel—historical or otherwise—to present a “definitive” and totally inclusive account. In fact, one of the things that make the novel a potent form for a historical mode is precisely its conscious interiority and the space it provides for individualization and overt subjectivity. Nevertheless, whereas *El viaje*’s ironic humor makes its presentation of the inherent individualized subjectivity of any narrative perhaps the central issue, *La estirpe* fails to problematize this generalization of Nur’s subject position to all of Madinat al-Zahra. The hopeful and celebratory tone presented throughout the novel and most especially in this final episode indicates an uncritical overlaying of Nur’s story on that of all the women of the *estirpe* as well as onto all the city’s citizens, those of al-Andalus more broadly and, as is hinted at, potentially all of Spain, past, present and future. The fact of Nur’s speaking for all is articulated at the same time that Nur declares she wants to present a narrative “página” that will be “única dentro dese inmenso libro que es la historia de los hombres” (309). Ironically, the novel seems to fail to recognize that the very move it engages in as it expresses hope of some kind of feminist vindication of a patriarchal discourse is specifically the kind of homogenizing, silencing and totalizing methodology that those very monologic discourses—be they generally patriarchal and Christianizing or specifically Francoist—employ. Thus, despite the one episode with Nur as Scheherazade reading *1001 Nights*, the novel ultimately conforms to the frame initially set by Awriya; at best, it simply inverts the dynamics of power relations in place within the existing system, not only leaving the system in place but in fact, reinforcing it.
Furthermore, quite the opposite of *El viaje’s* episode at the tomb that solidifies Toda’s monologue—in which Toda attempts to speak to God and heaven about the divine plan and hears only herself in reply—Nur becomes an oracle, losing all of her individuality in a total communion with the divine will as enacted in Madinat al-Zahra. Toda’s monologue underscores the power of the queen’s performative discursive praxis while accounting for the fact that such a protagonism can be, on its own, also totalizing. In sharp contrast to this fact, Nur’s monologue so joyfully incorporates the entire community of people into one voice and then empties that voice out of all individuality, fully reifying and operationalizing women’s role as empty agent in the (physiological carrying and) carrying out of divine providence.

Historical fiction has an uneasy but undeniable relationship with historiography proper, in which many historical novels point to their historiographic sources and self-consciously identify the elements that are “true” and which are “fiction,” while at the same time often explicitly contesting the notion that there is such a thing as an objective historical “truth” to begin with. In *The Content of the Form*, Hayden White has demonstrated that the narrative—almost always the chosen form for historiography—is already imbued with a certain content that necessarily shapes the “story” being told, however well-meaning the narrator in her adherence to historical “truth,” “accuracy,” and “authenticity.” That is, the form of the narrative seeks out a content befitting its own structure. It also cannot escape being a product of its narrator, and is thereby always

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25 As I describe in both the introduction and conclusion to this dissertation, historical fiction is often used as an easy tool for historical revision—adapting, rewriting, or overturning existing narratives about the past—but also as a means to criticize or at least problematize the claims to “objective” truth certain official historical discourses promote. These historico-revisionist and historico-critical thrusts, while often existing together, have some inherent animosity. Most historical novels or any attempts at historical critical revision fail to expressly reconcile or at least acknowledge this paradox.
already a kind of monologue.

With each novel’s self-reflexive accounting for its own creation by a character within it, the central female narrators truly are simultaneously narrative subjects and objects in a history that is not static or retrospective, but instead one that continuously exists as present, being created as it is enunciated. Nur and Toda become both narrative “I” and narrative “she,” in the stories whose reality unfolds in the very moment of their articulating it through discourse. At the same time that the subject-object distinction breaks down through this mechanism of their protagonism-narration, so does the past-present distinction; women's telling the past is in fact their very creation of the here and now in its present-progressive potential, rather than as a past participle (Denning 5). While *La estirpe* fails to develop this line of inquiry in a fruitful way, instead having recourse to essentializing tropes about femininity and totalizing notions of God’s will for women in destiny, *El viaje*s emphasis on discursive power has important implications for supposedly objective historiography and its temporality.

Whereas *La estirpe de la mariposa* concludes with Nur’s epilogue in which she completes her transformation as Oracle, re-solidifying the knot of women, time and destiny within a patriarchal Catholic (Francoist) paradigm, the central episode of *El viaje de la reina* with Toda at Sancho’s tomb occurs in the beginning of the novel, along the journey. It is perhaps afforded even more importance in this position, acting—like Awriya’s seduction in *La estirpe*—as a framing episode. Like *La estirpe de la mariposa*, however, *El viaje* also ends with an epilogue. Within this final section, *El viaje’s* masterfully critical and comical irony continues to pervade and undermine the entire work, including the central episode with Toda at the tomb that—on its own—undermines
much of the novel’s supposed polyphonous discourse. In the epilogue, it is revealed that
the novel is—or at least, Toda asks that it be—the work of Doña Alhambra, one of Queen
Toda's ladies-in-waiting. Alhambra feels that she is simply unsuited to the task, however,
and she suggests to her husband Nuño as she is on her deathbed (never having written it)
that perhaps one of her descendants will have or find “mejor disposición que yo en estas
cosas del historiar” (384). It is not until the sixteenth century that Gaudelia Téllez de
Sisamón—that descendent of Alhambra's—finally completes the task of writing Toda's
life, which becomes the novel El viaje de la reina itself. In her process of historical
investigation, Gaudelia turns first to her mother for her (nevertheless just as distant)
knowledge on the medieval queen. After that, Gaudelia goes to the chest full of
testimonies that Alhambra herself collected from those who knew Toda, and also to a
wide variety of individuals from Gaudelia's own generation: once again, mostly female-
controlled discourses. She states her methods as follows: “Mi madre me contó lo que
oyera. Platiqué con clérigos doctos que revisaron los viejos cartularios de iglesias y
monasterios, y me trajeron noticias de los antiguos reyes... Y hablé con gentes de toda
condición. Y donde no llegó la memoria, ni el recuerdo, ni los diplomas, lo suplé yo”
(387). It is indeed telling that Gaudelia consults with her mother before any other source,
even though her mother has no more direct knowledge or experience about Toda than she
does. Gaudelia recognizes the crucial place of female narratives in relating with the past
as well as her own present participation in the creation of this supposedly past narrative
(“lo suplé yo”). In this tongue-in-cheek description by Gaudelia, El viaje powerfully and
accurately articulates the process of the production of history. In his nuanced way, David
Cohen describes historical production:
This processing of the past in societies and historical settings all over the world, and the struggles for control of voices and texts in innumerable settings which often animate the processing of the past, this we term the production of history. [...] We mean this to encompass conventions and paradigms in the formation of historical knowledge and historical texts, the patterns and forces underlying interpretation, the contentions and struggles which evoke and produce texts, or particular glosses of tests along with sometimes powerfully nuanced vocabularies, as well as the structures of frames of record-keeping. (4-5)

Ultimately, it is this multivalent process that each novel both attempts to describe and to which each purports to contribute. As I describe in the introduction to this dissertation, it is precisely because of the assertion of objectivity that progressivist historiography manages to simultaneously (a) use time to Other/deny coevalness (to both the coeval and the past) and (b) fail to recognize its own craftedness and self-elevating gestures. The entirety of El viaje de la reina—and, to a lesser extent, the 1001 Nights episode of La estirpe—not only draws attention to but actively subverts these two moves.

It is a quintessential adage about historical fiction that it brings the past “alive,” turning the “cold, objective facts” of history into a meaningful moment with which contemporary readers make connections. Historiography has long not been viewed as a set of cold, objective facts or a homogenous and grand narrative. However, this idea of reviving the past, making it un-past, at least for the briefest of moments during the process of reading, is extraordinarily powerful. The power and appeal of fiction often stems from its affective qualities: in the midst of reading, subject-readers experience a slippage between themselves and their “real” world and that of the subject-protagonists of the text. This immersion is elusive and temporary, for novels end, their conflicts are resolved, and past becomes past once again. The limited immersion, however, provides a space in which the past ceases to be past, and instead is imagined in the fullness of its
potentiality, in which things might go a different way, and resolutions are unknown and/or unknowable. In *El viaje*, both throughout the drama of the narrative and in the epilogue, the performative nature of women’s discursive protagonism continually reveals a temporality that is present in its unfolding, even in a supposedly past narrative.

Female-Protagonized Historical Fiction: Women’s Writing of Time and Destiny

From the beginning of her important study of women and the historical novel, Wallace points out that it is no coincidence that women are the primary writers and consumers of historical novels and that these texts suffer relative critical disdain. The historical novel “has come to be seen as a 'feminine' form, a view damagingly reinforced by its association with the 'popular.’” (Wallace 3). Although many dismissive critics might cite historical fiction's escapist allure as reason to write it off, Wallace demonstrates that the “escapism” of women's historical fiction is rather closely related to the impulse to political intervention—one of Lukacs's criteria for canonical novels and a central aspect of many critics' definition of literary merit (2). “'History' has traditionally excluded women, but paradoxically the 'historical novel' has offered women readers the imaginative space to create different, more inclusive versions of 'history', which are accessible or appealing to them in various ways” (Wallace 3). Wallace recognizes the need for “escapist” historical fiction not only for women to write themselves into the extant historiography as actors, but also to reconfigure the community itself based on that re-insertion and re-writing; to present an alternative past to that inscribed by official historical discourse that not only revolves around but is in fact created by female and.

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26 For more on representing the past as present progressive rather than past participle, see the penultimate section of the introduction to this dissertation, “Closing Emotional and Temporal Distance.”
other marginalized historical subjects.

It is also important to point out the specific potency of historical fiction to reconfigure a “present” reader's relationship with her “past.” Wallace owns the “escapist” aspect of historical fiction as a means for women to escape totalizing patriarchal historiography. The notion of “escape” through reading—while belittled by some critics as exoticist or fetishistic—actually underscores a central mechanism upon which historical fiction hinges and that differentiates it from historiography proper. The immersive experience of “escape” breaks down the artificial barriers between historiographical subject—the “absent” I writing the “objective” narrative in his present—and historiographic object—the “who did what” in history presented as closed-off and completed. I follow Hayden White and others in rejecting the notion that there can ever be a clear separation between a writing narrative subject and (written) narrative object. Furthermore, the very attempt at making such a distinction is problematic, for past written as past (completed and closed-off) is always a product of the unwitting “hindsight” of presentism. Therefore, this much degraded “escapist” mechanism of historical fiction manages to meld these two problematic distinctions set up by official totalizing historical discourses—subject/object and past/present—and thus allows for a momentary slippage between the reader's “I” in the present and the “present” of the text. However fictional, such a slippage allows or the possibility to experience a version of “past” in its fullness, as a currently unfolding moment; an experience in present progressive instead of past perfect.

*La estirpe de la mariposa* and *El viaje de la reina* bring this aspect to the forefront when they assert the active engagement of (women) narrator-protagonists in the creation
of the reality that is narrated. They literally create reality with their stories. Thus, like the act of telling, to read a historical novel is to actively (and consciously) participate in the performance of past—and perform the past for oneself—as present in its unfolding. This is as much the case when Nur controls the situation with al-Mansur through 1001 Nights as it is when Toda’s voice (speaking for her saintly husband) resounds in the monastery, and when Gaudelia—and I, as reader, compiling and interweaving my own experiences into my reading of the text—declares that “donde no llegó la memoria, ni el recuerdo, ni los diplomas, lo suplé yo” (387).

Female discourses are the principle means by which the past is animated—to use Cohen’s wonderfully rich and accurately descriptive term—in both La estirpe de la mariposa and El viaje de la reina. In the former text, the women of the estirpe as well as their surrogate mother figures (Awriya, Azahra and Hind) are as gorgeous as they are artistically and reproductively fecund and they do play a role in (a) inspiring the great deeds of the central male figures and (b) continuing the unbroken and uniquely Spanish bloodline through generation after generation, despite periods of political strife and cultural dormancy. This recourse to a divinely ordained cyclical temporality ultimately furthers an idealized, essentialized, mythical and allegorical representation of femininity; it is one that painfully recalls Francoist historiographic logic and praxis. For La estirpe, women represent an important tool for the carrying out of the divine plan on earth and the cyclical pattern of female fertility acts as sign and symptom of the (somehow both) cyclical and ultimately timeless unfolding of God’s providence. In contrast, in El viaje de la reina (and the 1001 Nights episode of La estirpe de la mariposa), women animate the past through their performative protagonism of the present. It is a protagonism that hinges
on discourse and narration. Here, the narrating protagonist actually creates as she 
describes; female discourse represents a performative medium that enacts its own reality. 
As opposed to (Francoist and other) logics that knot women and their reproductive 
temporalities into the divine plan, operationalizing and emptying out (an essentially 
reproductive) femininity as the vessel and marker of God’s providence, *El viaje de la 
reina* articulates a mode of female protagonism in which women discursively enact their 
own destinies in a performative temporality.
“Los textos no deben modificarse. Lo que sí deberíamos es renovar nuestra reflexión sobre ellos, sobre lo que reflejan” (Gómez Garcia, “La mala conciencia” 16).

“It seems to me that the nature of the Spanish folk festivals of Moors and Christians is not to reenact history but to embody a vision of what might have been and what might yet be…The fiestas deliberately revise history, not to deny its pain or to conceal its guilt, but to envision a better outcome” (Harris, Aztecs Moors and Christians 211-12).

Chapter Three

Playing at War:

Representing Morisco Conversion in Válor's Fiesta de moros y cristianos

Both vilified as blatantly xenophobic and lauded as an essential and iconic legacy, Spain’s fiestas de moros y cristianos, “reenacted” “medieval” battles between Christians and Muslims, represent a central point of both pride and contention in Spain and act as a shining example of the conflicted roles played by notions of the Iberian Middle Ages in Spain today. There is a current political push for all the 220 fiestas currently celebrated in 21 Spanish provinces to be recognized as UNESCO Intangible World Heritage sites (Candela). The process the campaign has undergone in order to arrive at its current stage of legislative approval is demonstrative of the way that the fiesta has become a repository for a whole host of concerns, not only about defining and protecting Spain’s Medieval history and heritage, but about to whom it belongs, of what it consists, and how it is to be
interpreted for the diversity of Spaniards today.

Beatriz Santamaria Campos traces the trajectory of the campaign for UNESCO recognition. She notes that the push actually began on October 4, 2006 as a move by Félix Hererro, president of the Federación española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas (FEERI), to have the fiestas de moros y cristianos supressed due to their offense to Spanish Muslims. The outcry against this petition was so great that within two days Herrero had changed his statement, asking instead for the “offensive parts”—e.g. the representation in effigy of Muhammad in the Villena fiesta—to be taken out. By October 7, some of the specific members of the FEERI had decided to abstain from the campaign. October 13, in response to Herrero’s request, the Partido Popular (PP) launched an initiative to get official recognition for the fiestas as a worldwide heritage site. Though the 2006 campaign fizzled out unsuccessfully, it was taken up again in 2014 and the motion has been passed through congress.\textsuperscript{27} Therefore, what began as a rather understandably traditional reading of the fiestas as proclaiming an exclusively Catholic Spain in eternal conflict with its foe, the “Moor,” has erupted into a multifaceted political and cultural dispute over not only how to interpret the fiestas but also to whom they belong. Though the original “battle” lines in this dispute were religiously conceived—the Muslim group FEERI versus the conservative PP party—it has taken some interesting twists and turns. Currently, some conservative Catholic Spaniards condemning the move for UNESCO recognition as central government overreach—i.e. that the fiestas belong to

\textsuperscript{27} It is interesting to note that there has been virtually no movement on furthering the campaign for official recognition since the September 2014 approval by congress. This lack of action in itself has become a point of political contention and in April of this year (2015), Patricia Blanquer, a PSOE congresswoman from Alcoy, has publicly denounced the PP for using the fiesta de moros y cristianos as a political tool (“Blanquer lamenta”).
the specific regions in which they take place and it is a popular festival, not something to be politicized and appropriated by Madrid—while other Muslim groups, such as the Junta Islámica—a group that plays role in my discussion in the following chapter—have come out with a public stance in favor of the fiesta, recognizing the potential for cathartic and non-Islamophobic renderings (“La Junta Islámica apoya”). The variety of responses to and claimants of the fiesta de moros y cristianos indicates its centrality to contemporary culture at the same time that the complexity of its varied interpretations points to the many valences of Medieval Spanish history in Spain today. Nevertheless, as I will demonstrate, critical approaches to the fiestas tend toward the same object: a search for the historical origins of the battle represented in the fiesta and a traditional reading of its main ideological thrust. In this chapter, I seek to provide a reading of one less-well-known fiesta de moros y cristianos that demonstrates both the need for more critical inquiry into these unabashedly popular but highly contested festivals and the festival’s potential for a kind of healing contact with Spain’s Muslim past in an alternative temporality.

In the last chapter of this dissertation, I analyzed two historical novels that take up women's protagonism in medieval Islamicate Iberia and attempt to provide an alternative to National-Catholic discourses on women in Spanish history and time. In this chapter, I examine a text that once again engages contemporarily with Spain's medieval past and performs a vision of time Spanish temporality distinct from authoritative models. The fiesta de moros y cristianos in Válor (Granada)—like El viaje de la reina—attempts a plural and participatory mode of history-telling that (1) recognizes and vindicates a group othered by official hegemonic historiographies, and (2) reconfigures, rewrites, and
represents the past with the new perspectives, methods and modes resulting from contemporary contact with that past. Also, just as the novel’s representing the experience of medieval Iberian women as discursively performative works to undermine and overturn predominant notions of time, the Válor Moros y cristianos performs a sympathetic reversal of a key historical moment (the Morisco Expulsions) and in doing so, manages to finally break free of the notions of progressive cultural evolution and the temporal cycles of conflict that characterize hegemonic Catholic Spanish historiographies. Along with its reversal of the Morisco Expulsion, this particular fiesta also simultaneously celebrates is distinct locale while drawing attention to the smallness of the political and territorial concerns being played out in the moros y cristianos genre broadly, hinting toward a (specific instantiation of a) larger vision of the future in deep time.

Válor, specifically, and Granada, generally, represents a region with a dynamic medieval history that plays an important role in historical narratives of Spain as a Christian nation. The conquest of Granada in 1492 is a moment greatly emphasized in Spanish historiography as one of the key pillars upon which the Catholic Kings built their (Modern, Christian) empire and around which the myth of Catholic Reconquista—as a homogenous, repetitive struggle by a unified Christian Spain against a unified Muslim Other—has been built. Along with this centrality to totalizing Catholic historiographies, Válor also played a central role in resistances to both the final Capitulation of Granada and the enforcement of its repressive stipulations against those with Islamicate cultural heritage. 28 Many other fiestas serve to uphold this Reconquista-esque vision of history as

28 Local resistance to the cultural restrictions and regulations imposed after the conquest—the Morisco Rebellion—stemmed from many areas surrounding Granada. Válor does claim a special place in
a repetitive struggle. In this conception, Spanish history is characterized by cycles of conflict between (Christian) Spaniards and their Muslim (invader) foes.\textsuperscript{29} The very nature of the \textit{fiesta} as an annual dramatic presentation re-enforces this cyclical pattern by reenacting the same struggle year after year. Although the Valor \textit{moros y cristianos} still ends in a Christian victory and religious conversion, like all other Iberian \textit{fiestas} to my knowledge, it engages in several distinctive moves that make it unique among \textit{moros y cristianos} festivals and worthy of further examination. First, while most \textit{fiestas} recall an (often mythologized) battle between medieval Christians and Muslims or seventeenth-century (Christian) Spaniards and Turks, Válor's calls upon a particular set of circumstances internal to Christian Spanish politics as its referent: the Morisco conversions, Rebellions and Expulsion. As the Valoreños revive these historical practices and moments, they do so with a specific revisionist focus that emphasizes the atrocities committed against Mudéjares and Moriscos. Second, it uses that referent as a not-so-veiled allegory to discuss contemporary-to-the-text political issues, and provide a critical and politically liberal stance on Spanish interventions in Morocco. Finally, the Válor \textit{moros y cristianos} ends with a solution that, despite its Christianizing thrust, attempts to reverse the expulsion and re-work and re-institute the failed promise to the moriscos as they converted. Through that reversion/revision and an emphasis on the land itself, the Válor \textit{fiesta} manages to move away from the vision of Spanish historiography as characterized by repetitive cycles of conflict between Christians (Spaniards) and Muslims.

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\textsuperscript{29} This is precisely the kind of logic employed by César Vidal in \textit{España frente al Islam} and is also extremely reminiscent of Franco's cyclical concept of history that I discuss in chapters one and two of this dissertation. For more on Francoist historiography, see Labanyi's \textit{Myth and History in the Contemporary Spanish Novel} and Herzberger's \textit{Narrating the Past}. 

112
(invaders) and instead enact a vision of a future.

The Válor Festive Weekend

Though it is perhaps of greatest interest to scholars and tourists, the Moors and Christians drama is only one component of an entire weekend devoted to the patron saint of Válor, Santo Cristo de la Yedra. The fiesta unfolds over the course of several days, usually on the weekend that falls closest to September 15—the actual feast day—with the “tradicional y conocida función de Moros y Cristianos” occurring on the very last day (“Programa”). Thursday afternoon, the festival opens with some festivities for children and a band in the plaza in the evening. The next afternoon (Friday), the main events begin with the ceremonial lowering of the image—a large and heavy gilded statue—from behind the altar in the town church, amidst a charismatic display of local loyalty. The central celebration on Saturday is the procession of the image around the town, which begins after dark and lasts several hours as a whole parade of priests, festeros, and penitents with candles—along with the image carried by the same group of men who lowered it from its place the day before—slowly travel through the town whose streets are packed with festive onlookers sharing a drink or a meal or just catching up as they await the procession. Sunday completes the fiesta with the moros y cristianos in two acts: one just before lunch and one in the evening. Each night of the festival, there is music and dancing in the plaza on the stage built specifically for the festive weekend, and

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30 My description of the festival comes from cited sources as well as my experience as a participant-observer in the 2013 festivities. That year the festival occurred from Thursday, September 12 to Sunday, September 15. In the past, the festival has been moved to fall specifically on the Feast day (September 15), regardless of the day of the week on which it falls. When I witnessed the festival, the practice was to celebrate it on the Thursday-Sunday closest to the feast day.
smaller events—such as the crowning of the festival queen and recognitions and honors for local achievements—frame the larger ones. Part of each event are periodic explosions of fireworks from various locations around the city, especially on the night of the procession, when everyone—penitents, priests, musicians, image carriers and onlookers—pauses each time they are set off, approximately every fifteen minutes. On the last night of the festival, lavish pyrotechnic displays accompany the final reconciliation of Moors and Christians, their triumphant march together around the church, and the ceremonial re-raising of the Santo Cristo.

As is typical of Iberian fiestas de moros y cristianos, the Válor drama follows a double structure; the two acts mirror each other in form and content. Each begins with one group in control of the plaza and castle—and, thus, the portrait of Santo Cristo hanging from it that serves as the image for the moros y cristianos—first the Christians and then the Moors. The respective kings express their good fortune at residing in such a beautiful place and there is general merriment among the entire group until a spy or emissary informs them that there are rival soldiers preparing to attack. Then, an ambassador comes from the opposing side to exhort the enemy king to surrender, which he of course does not. A battle ensues and the plaza and castle change hands. In the first act of the Válor moros y cristianos, like so many others, the Christians start with the upper hand but then lose their territory to the Moors. The second act begins like the first, but with the Moors in control, and they lose their territory in a similar fashion. Once the final battle comes to a close, the Christian King asks the Moors to leave—rather than killing them—but then offers conversion to Christianity as recourse to remain in Válor and live as a community of brothers with the Christians. The Moorish King accepts, all
convert, and then the entire group, both moros and cristianos, parade around the church as both Kings march side by side carrying together the image (painting) of the patron. Then, amidst raucous cries of “VIVA SANTO CRISTO DE LA YEDRA!” all return to the church—which is bursting with festeros and onlookers who spill into the street and stand on tip-toe catch a glimpse of the raising—to return the actual image (statue) to its resting place for another year.

As I discuss the fiesta de moros y cristianos, it is important to note that, much like the use of the term “Arab” in the United States to refer to any Muslim—fluent Arabic speaker, ethnically from the Arabian peninsula, or not—the term “Moor” or “moro” has become a universalized name for a monolithic and imaginary Muslim Other. Originally, it denotes an individual hailing from Mauritania, a pre-Islamic empire in North Africa, and as such it was used to describe the North African armies—mostly Berber Muslim converts lead by Arab captains—that entered Iberia in the eighth century. In Iberian history and contemporary culture, the term “Moor” is still very often applied indiscriminately to any Muslim or individual from an Islamicate culture, regardless of geographic, ethnic, religious or linguistic background, from Berber nomads and Umayyad caliphs, to Abbasid and Almohad fundamentalists, Ottoman Turks and contemporary Moroccans. Despite moves by historians of the Iberian Middle Ages and others away from this homogenizing and rhetorically weighty term, it still appears in scholarship. The concept of “Moor” indicates an always already an imagined figure—as Flesler describes, a repository of historical anxiety of the Christian’s Other—and never someone real and contextualized. This is the kind of mentality toward Islamicate cultures

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31 For example, Baumann, despite his overall success at specific and nuanced historiography, still occasionally uses the term monolithically to describe any and all Iberian Muslims.
strongly evidenced by individuals such as José María Aznar and César Vidal and it specifically employs the kind of temporal othering I describe in the introduction to this dissertation, in which the Muslim “Other” remains a static, stagnant and barbaric aggressor constantly confronting a West that is, despite these continued assaults, “progressing.” The continued use of the term “Moor” as a catch-all for (Iberian) Muslims makes them all barbaric and undifferentiated in contrast to a complex, heterogeneous and dynamic (Secular-Christian) West. In this chapter and in the dissertation as a whole, in an effort to move toward specificity and contextualization, I use the terms “Moor” and “moro” only when I refer to the characters of the _fiesta de moros y cristianos_—since they are named as such, despite possible historical referents, and are often presented as wholly imagined, static, and timeless foes—but never in reference to historical peoples or communities.

Critical Perspectives

Válor's _moros y cristianos_ is one of many such folk festivals that take place throughout the Peninsula, the wider European continent and Latin America. In all cases, this festive tradition presents a palimpsest of historical, literary and religious layers from a variety of moments—some “real,” and historical, some imagined and fictive—pertinent to the region in which the festival takes place. There is a large corpus of critical literature on the _fiestas_, much of which centers on identifying the various forms from which the

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32 For more on Aznar and Vidal’s _España frente al Islam: de Mahoma a Ben Laden_, see the introduction to this dissertation. These two are emblematic of a mentality that creates a static, universal Muslim foe out of a multitude of individuals, cultures, and specific religious practices whose one unifying feature is that they identify with Islam.
contemporary fiestas de moros y cristianos have emerged: (possibly dramatized) minstrel songs and epic poetry about battles, military exercises, renaissance royal entries, Corpus Christi and other religious festivals, and eventually, patron saint celebrations. The Válor moros y cristianos, as I have described, forms part of the latter category of patron saint festivals. The majority of the existing scholarship on Válor's and other moros y cristianos focuses on excavating historical precedent rather than interpreting and analyzing the function of these historico-artistic spectacles. Canonical scholarship (mainly historical and anthropological) has focused almost exclusively on either their historical precedents or the religious ideology of these ritual performances. The predominant critical interpretation of the fiestas has been a reading of their unyielding Catholicism, with the Christian victory as a sign of God’s favor and the ultimate designation of the peninsula as Christian land. As Gómez García succinctly describes, this ideological reading, “vale todo lo que evoque una supuesta ‘españolidad’ capaz de oponerse a la morisma” (“La mala conciencia” 134). Those scholars that present a slightly more nuanced, positive or communal take often separate the performance from the text of the drama itself, many preferring to write-off the words spoken (text) as nationalist and homogenizing and instead focusing exclusively on the communal atmosphere the speaking of those words (drama) supposedly creates. After observing three main trends in the interpretation of Peninsular patron saint festivals that include a moros y cristianos drama—in which the

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33 See Harris, “Muhammad” 46; and Aztecs, Moors and Christians 31-36; as well as Checa and Fernández Soto 265-70.

34 For the purposes of this dissertation, I limit my review of critical texts to those that treat peninsular festivals in particular and, when possible, specifically those in Andalucia. However, as Harris makes clear in his important Aztecs, Moors and Christians (2008), there is a rich tradition of mock battles in the Americas—as well as in other parts of Europe—and the exchange between the Americas and Europe (and Europe and the Americas) has resulted in a variegated practice of these kinds of fiestas across the globe. The mutual influence and impact between continents deserves more critical attention, particularly by those scholars concerned with the origins and evolutions of the fiesta in its multiple forms.
majority of the critical studies fall into the first two waves of criticism—I will show how an interpretation that treats text and dramatic performance as a cohesive and inseparable unit provides a more nuanced and enabling yet largely unexplored understanding of the *fiesta*, and one that bears on both the specific historical circumstances of the text’s creation—here, the mid-nineteenth century—and on its performance in the present day.

The first critical group (Alford; Ricard; Carrasco Urgoiti; Guastavino Gallent; Brisset Martín) tends to have published in the early to mid-twentieth century, and many of these studies—Alford’s in particular—have reached canonical status as critical texts on the *fiesta de moros y cristianos*. They focus primarily on tracing the history of the fiestas by pinpointing historical antecedents and first recorded instances, as well as classifying them by type according to historical referent (Ricard), geography and genre (Carrasco Urgoiti) and motif (Brisset Martín). Apart from Carrasco Urgoiti’s emphasis on the connections between Golden Age comedias and fiestas of Moors and Christians, few in this group present any real analysis of the text or its dramatic staging. These scholars interpret the *Moors and Christians* as an ideological representation of the “spirit of Reconquest” or “crusade” so integral to Spanish Nationalist discourse\(^{35}\) and thus, as wholly pedagogical.\(^{36}\)

The second group of scholars (Bernabeu Rico; Baumann; Gómez García; Jérez

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\(^{35}\) This so-called crusading “spirit” does not in fact represent the full picture of what we know about medieval Iberia or the crusades in general, of course. Riley Smith’s study of the crusades points to their draw as an individual, penitential pilgrimage, not as motivated by the clash-of-cultures mantra that seems to be what is meant by this group of scholars when they refer to a “crusade and Reconquest spirit.”

\(^{36}\) Unless otherwise specified, when I use the terms “pedagogy” and “performance” in relation to nationalism, I refer to Bhabha’s concept of pedagogical and performative nationalisms. Bhabha contests Anderson’s notion of the nation as necessarily essentialist. Instead, he posits the nation as formed through the dialectic of pedagogy (official, historicist, based on progressivist logic) and the performative (the space of “becoming” the people, in non-horizontal temporalities).
Hernández; Checa and Fernández Soto; Rodríguez Becerra) surfaces mainly in the last two decades of the twentieth century and is slightly more diverse in its approach to the fiesta, while still tending to focus on exhausting the possibilities for historical origins and “true” historical referents. Checa and Fernández Soto list the romancero tradition, the Cid, chronicles, comedias de moros y cristianos, histories, and military exercises (265-70). Many in this critical group separate the “traditional”—i.e. conservative—text of the drama and its National Catholic ideology from its performance and its overall significance in the festival weekend, as I describe above in the introduction to this section. These scholars emphasize the importance of the moros y cristianos as a community-building event but read the actual scripts and their dialogue as overtly and exclusively ideological, as the repetition, year after year, of Christian victories over Islam; a cycle that continually establishes and re-establishes Spanishness as indivisible from Christianity and in opposition to Islam. Baumann—whose 1995 800-page dissertation attempts an exhaustive historiographical and anthropological perspective on the Valor fiesta and its significance in conjunction with the Spanish Civil War—and Gómez García conclude that this ideological (pedagogical) aspect of the fiesta is the predominant takeaway for both participants and observers. Baumann concludes his exhaustive account asserting that the Válor fiesta, like others in the region, presents a “repetitive vision of history” (Moors and Christians 310).

Checa and Fernández Soto and Jérez Hernández maintain that the community ignores the “outdated” xenophobic character of the relación (the term for the dramatic script) in favor of the positive communal experience that comes out of the festival. Bernabeu Rico and Rodríguez Becerra likewise separate the ideological elements from
the overall festival experience. These scholars conclude that, despite the official, state-sponsored structure and organization of these popular festivals, they express the intimate, heterogeneous, and variegated concerns and experience of the community in practice. They argue for the importance of popular communal rituals as presenting differing perspectives from the official ideology that sanctions and structures them. This is a central point in Maglessen’s grounding theory of “simming” that I discuss in the introduction to this dissertation. Maglessen—like Beezley, Martin and French, who do not, however, write specifically about reenactments—points to the way that simmings always both challenge and reify official structures and values imposed by the creators of the simulation. Even in the most tightly regulated simming environments, in which there is little to no room for deviation from the set script—as with the fiestas, which, along with having a set script called a relación, have M.C. overseeing the production who attempts to keep a kind of order during the chaos of the battle scenes—there is always a shared authority and control between designers and participants (3). Nevertheless, none of the critical scholarly works, even in this second group, truly takes both the challenging and reifying aspects as equally part of the performance, examining the fiesta de moros y cristianos as an integrated ritual act, in which prescribed text and dramatic performance are a cohesive and inseparable unit.

A drama cannot exist without a script nor is a script a standalone work of theater.

37 While they do not examine fiestas de moros y cristianos, Beezley, Martin and French present this possibility for an entirely non-ideological performance of communal ritual as part and parcel of any official ritual: “Whether commemorating religious beliefs or national events, festivals displayed and represented the collective life of the community and provided an opportunity for constructing and expressing meanings not connected with ideology” (xx). Furthermore, “However impressive and colorful the rites devised by rules and elites, abundant evidence suggests that the intended audiences often rejected the authoritarian messages conveyed in these rituals even when they failed to display their insubordination in open rebellion. Lower classes often imposed their own agendas on state-sponsored observances and rejected others entirely” (xxiv).
The relación, the actual script of the moros y cristianos, has been consistently undervalued and overlooked by fiesta scholars, at best treated as an antiquated but still-present aspect of the tradition whose overt National-Catholic ideology is ignored by festive communities (Jérez Hernández; Checa and Fernández Soto) and at worst as unequivocal anti-Muslim pedagogy used as a “historical model of [National-Catholic] interpretation for the present,” (Baumann, Moors and Christians 739; Driessen; Gómez García; Flesler). 38 Almost every non-ideological reading of the fiestas either ignores or discounts the relación, the dialogue that comprises the core of the drama. Gómez García's indictment is particularly scathing:

Los textos de moros y cristianos granadinos […] despliegan un argumento tan reiterativo, recurrente, obsesivo, tan arquetípico, que se han convertido para el pueblo en un mito de orígenes, cíclicamente evocado, y en realidad siempre presente en las historias de moros que pululan por doquier. La mitificación de la guerra alpujarreña ha sido total. (“La mala conciencia” 127; emphasis in original)

Harris (2000), Flesler (2008) and Santamarina Campos (2008) are, to my knowledge, the only scholars to thoroughly explore the fiesta in its complexity, presenting a nuanced, contextualized, and theorized approach. They comprise the third critical group—where I would like to place my own approach to the fiesta—whose work demonstrates a positive analytical turn in festival scholarship, though they are the exception rather than the norm. Harris delves more into the historical precedents and development over time of the fiesta but Flesler specifically analyzes the contemporary text and performance of the Alcoy fiesta as it relates to Moroccan immigration. Except for Carrasco Urgoiti’s work on the fiestas’ connection with Golden Age comedias de

38 See Flesler’s chapter three: “Playing Guest and Host,” for her analysis of the ways in which the Alcoy fiesta provides a historical basis for the othering of contemporary Moroccan immigrants.
moros y cristianos, and Flesler’s nuanced account of the Alcoy fiesta, the fiesta de moros y cristianos has been generally overlooked by literary scholars, despite its being a text-driven, dramatic spectacle. To my knowledge, Santamarina Campos is the only scholar to begin to investigate the ramifications of the process of the creation/demarcation of the fiestas as heritage sites for global tourism, an angle that certainly merits further exploration though one that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter’s discussion.

In this chapter, I take the Válor fiesta de moros y cristianos as a complex dramatic work of literature that has a historical subtext and a context integral to its proper understanding. Using these two historical focal points, I argue against the previous write-off of the drama's relación as displaying only a repetitive vision of history. First, following Baumann, I argue that the fiesta's unnamed subtext (its unofficial referent) is actually the Morisco Rebellion and Expulsion and not any of the conflicts traditionally used to argue for a view of history as a conflictive cycle—the Conquest of Granada in 1492 and the battle of Lepanto in 1571, for a couple of historical examples. I maintain that the thrust of the Válor moros y cristianos is in fact a re-do of the Morisco conversions and that this historical conflict acts as allegory for the contemporary-to-the-relación (nineteenth-century) political disputes between Spain and Morocco. With this double focus on two central events in which Christian on Muslim violence was unjust and unwarranted, the fiesta de moros y cristianos in Válor presents a sympathetic rendering of the past and a fantasy of a future, voluntary integration between the groups based on shared interests.
Reverse Reenacting: From Cyclical Conflict to Sympathetic Refocus

The primary reason for the predominant interpretation of the fiestas as enacting a reiterative, cyclical performance of Christianity's victory over Islam is that most fiestas draw from a specific historical battle that actually occurred, even if not in the way that it is presented by the drama. Baumann—along with many others—concludes that “every performance [of the moros y cristianos] is fundamentally a representation of the medieval crusade, still awaiting completion,” and that thus the time performed by the fiesta presents a “repetitive vision of history” (Moors and Christians 294, 310). Accordingly, the yearly performance manifests a “Reconquest Spirit,” re-establishing Christianity's dominance and creating a historical narrative characterized by regular attacks from an unrelenting Muslim foe and just as regular Christian victories. This is specifically the temporal othering I discuss in the introduction to this dissertation, in which the “Moor” is a non-coeval enemy—that is always medieval—who is just as bloodthirsty in the twenty-first century as in the thirteenth, and in which the Middle Ages are the pinnacle of that violent and bloody time for both parties. One may suggest that the Christian side in the fiesta is likewise static and non-coeval with the current Spanish population. Nevertheless, as I discuss in the introduction, the rhetoric of the PP through Aznar and works such as César Vidal's indicate that there is a paradox in Spain's current association with its own past; certainly, the warlike Christian side performed in many of the fiestas is not one with which it would be politically correct or advantageous to identify as a “modern,” secular state. The reenactment of “medieval battles” through the fiesta de moros y cristianos in most circumstances manages to both continually re-situate and re-ify the religious conflict between Muslims and Christians in Iberia, but in a political environment in
which the Muslims (“Moors”) are still considered in their “medieval”—i.e. Barbaric—state but the Christians consider themselves to have moved past this and “evolved” socially. The existence of a clear and verifiable historic referent to the fiesta's reenactment is pivotal to this process as the historical evidence that is perpetually being presented.

One of the initial striking differences between Válor's fiesta and others is that there seems to be no obvious historical referent being reenacted. In other locales—such as Alcoy, which commemorates the defeat of Al-Azraq by Jaume in 1276 (Bernabeu Rico 15; Harris, “Muhammed” 45-6; Flesler, Return 110)—there is a generally agreed-upon historic battle that acts as both impetus and inspiration, even if the interpretation of that battle through the festival itself is entirely a product of historical imagination. This lack of defined referent is not for lack of an important battle in the region—consider, for example, the significance allotted to the 1492 Capitulation of Granada—but almost the opposite. There were many conflicts that historiography has imbued with an archetypal Reconquest spirit that the Valoreños could reenact, but it is clear that the conflict being staged in the moros y cristianos is none of them.

On two separate occasions, the Embajador cristiano piles up references to Christian (mostly Castilian) victories over various Muslim troops, creating what appears to be a measuring-tape historiography, with selected chunks sectioned off and fused together into a line that tells a distinct homogenous story of Reconquest.39 When the

39Wai Chee Dimock uses the analogy of the measuring tape to describe a closed and limited linear temporal framework. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, César Vidal’s España frente al Islam provides a current example of this kind of temporal view. Dimock’s alternative concept to linear temporal logie, deep time, takes a much more inclusive and expansive view of temporality, accounting for both breadth and depth, and extending connections and relations in multiple directions.
Christian Ambassador first learns of the arrival of the Muslim troops, he proclaims about the opposing force:

¿Y acaso no recuerde

nuestras glorias conquistadas

en los muros de Granada

que rindió nuestro poder?

¿Y no parece ante su mente

la corona más hermosa

que en las Navas de Tolosa

adquirimos con ardor?

¿Y no tiemblan los cobardes,

extremecidos de espanto,

recordando que en Lepanto,

se alzó el pendón de la Cruz (767-68; emphasis mine)?

Here recorded are three of the victories most celebrated by Spanish Nationalist historians: the conquest of Granada over the Nasrids by Ferdinand and Isabel in 1492, thus concluding the Reconquest; the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa by Castile, Aragon, Navarra and Portugal against Almohad forces in Andalucía in 1212, considered a major turning point in the Reconquest; and the battle of Lepanto against the Ottoman Turks in 1571 by soldiers of the Holy League under Juan de Austria.40 While this speech has a clear rhetorical purpose of animating the Christians’ spirit in war against any and all Muslim foes, there are several aspects of this time line that require further analysis.

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40 We must take note, also, of the fact that it was also Juan de Austria who in the end captained Castilian (and Flemish) troops against the Moriscos in the Granadine Rebellion.
Rather than reaffirming a repetitive vision of history, this buildup of historical referents actually serves to undermine such a cyclical vision. First, it is “out of order,” in such a way that it emphasizes the battle of local importance, the Conquest of Granada. In a later restating of these referents in the second embajada, the Christian Ambassador adds Covadonga (718/22) to the list of historical Christian victories. He begins: “Nunca pueden temer los que os vencieron / en Covadonga, en las Navas y en Lepanto” (782). Then, the Christian Ambassador saves the conquest of Granada for last, emphasizing it as the pivotal moment and stating that from that point on, the expelled Moors were forced into lives of hardship and pain, particularly after the expulsion, which further necessitated the bellicose conflicts that later occurred:

Desde entonces en tribus de salvajes

por los desiertos y arenales esparcidos

y entregados como infieles al pillaje

vivisteis en afrentas sumergidos. (782; emphasis mine)

The indication that they lived “like infidels” implies that this is not actually one of their essential characteristics; rather, they were forced into this kind of lifestyle, having been thrown into it in their unjust exile. With this, what begins as a seemingly obvious National timeline stressing the ongoing—static, unchanging, and therefore, entirely de-contextualized—fight between Christians and Muslims becomes inverted, highlighting these events, and the conquest of Granada in particular, as instead a series of violent affronts to Muslims that resulted in the impoverishment and exile of Iberians.

Unshaken by the Ambassador’s historiography, the Moorish King presents his own, which even further centers on the plight of its expelled citizens. Highlighting that
Válor is the “herencia de mis mayores,” he agrees that the hardships suffered by him, his men, and his people, are the direct result of the cruel and unjust treatment they received during and after the conquest of Granada.

Si ambicioso me has supuesto

...

mejor puedo yo culpa[r]
tu estirpe de usurpadora
de tiranía invasora

que nos arrojó a la mar. (784)

Unique about the Válor fiesta de moros y cristianos is that the moros, as is clear from the above quotation, are not exactly depicted as medieval Iberian Muslims, nor Ottoman Turks. Rather, they are the children and grandchildren of Iberian Muslims. The apparent historicist time line drawn by the Christian embajadas is here reframed by the clear emphasis on the trauma endured by the moros. This reframing centers the entire fiesta on a main regional conflict that is not listed in the catalog in the embajadas: the Morisco Rebellion and Expulsion. Gómez García describes what is really being reenacted in the fiesta as “la tragedia de los moros” and he suggests that it reflects the current residents' twinges of conscience over the horrors inflicted on the exiled Alpujarreños (“La mala conciencia”). Baumann is the only other scholar who directly states that the Válor fiesta is “about” the Morisco Rebellion and expulsion, though his reasoning is purely anecdotal. The relación’s emphasis on the affronts and atrocities suffered by the Moors radically shifts the focus of the text from a cyclical re-enactment of Christian dominance to a sympathetic and perhaps even—as Gómez García suggests—penitent refocusing on the
horrors inflicted on the region's historic Muslim population.

Historical Antecedents

This interpretation of the Válor *moros y cristianos* as being “about” the Morisco Rebellion and Expulsion is consistent with the historical tradition of mock battles in the region. Along with or during the process of determining the specific historical referent for a given *fiesta*, many scholars, as I have mentioned, delve into the historic antecedents of the mock battle tradition in the given area, searching for that elusive “originary” moment to understand the *fiesta*'s function “from the beginning.” This function of historical antecedents overlaps with that of the historical referents for in the majority of the cases, they are one in the same. Given that the Válor *fiesta* represents a set of future, fictional battles with an eye to the reconciliation of expelled Muslim, Mudéjar and Morisco citizens, historical antecedents affirm this use of the mock battle tradition for the purpose of (albeit underhandedly) sympathizing with and supporting the morisco cause. Unlike in many regions—such as Alcoy, whose *fiesta*, as I mentioned above, supposedly draws from a “real” thirteenth-century Reconquest battle—the Alpujarras has a historical tradition of *mock* battles between Moors and Christians put on by local community members. These historical mock battles in the region do not appear to have been clear-cut in either ideology or social function. If anything, they seem to have actually served the Mudéjar and Morisco communities more so than old Christians and may have even favored the former in the outcome.

Harris cites three historical instances of festive mock battles in the Granada-Alpujarras region, all dating approximately to the time of sixteenth-century conflicts
between Morsicos and the state. Under the terms of the 1492 Capitulation of Granada, Muslim citizens in the newly Christian Granada—called Mudéjares—were allowed to keep their religion, language, style of dress and other cultural practices, as well as property and laws. However, by February 1502, Mudéjar citizens were by decree forced to either convert or be expelled, creating a new class of “Moriscos,” Muslim converts to Christianity. Many Moriscos maintained their language, style of dress, and other cultural factors, and this in tandem with political tensions and the nature of Morisco conversions as obligatory lead to suspicions about the authenticity of Morisco Christianity and led to Charles V’s proclamation of an edict in 1526 that prohibited the use of Arabic, Morisco dress, and other Morisco customs. This proclamation was granted a stay of forty years, however, due to a sizable donation by the community to Charles V’s coffers. When the stay ran out in 1566, however, Philip II began to truly enforce the regulations, fomenting a series of serious and violent rebellions.

Luis Hurtado de Mendoza, the second Marqués de Mondéjar, was at the time nearing the rebellion—and Granada’s mock battles—the mayor of Granada and its army’s Captain-General. Both privately and in his official position under Charles V and Philip II, Mondéjar is considered to have been a Morisco sympathizer and a political opponent of the Granada chancery, which at that time comprised a more conservative and traditional (Castilian) faction. In 1561, he organized a mock battle between “Christians” and “Muslims.” He himself dressed as and led the “Muslim” side, and his army was comprised mainly of local Moriscos. Harris interprets this battle as an act of solidarity on the part of Mondéjar with the Moriscos, who at that time were in the midst of the aforementioned social, political and religious upheaval to simply maintain their cultural
traditions. Then, supposedly to celebrate the arrival of Juan de Austria in 1569, Mondéjar put on another mock battle performance—again as a *moro*—perhaps to subtly express his distaste at being replaced by Juan de Austria as military head. Though there is no irrefutable evidence to prove it, Harris suggests that in this second mock battle, the *moros* came out the victors.

At first glance, a historical mock battle between Christians and Muslims put on during a time of such high tension might appear to be a clear demonstration of the power of the (Christian) state to subdue and control a rebellious religious faction; the second mock battle between Moors and Christians was ostensibly put on to commemorate the entrance of the King's half-brother, a shrewd and powerful military figure who had come expressly for the purpose of subduing the Moriscos on the part of the Christian state. However, for the mock battle to have played out such a purpose, Mondéjar would have assuredly played the role of the Christian captain, as he symbolically passed the “torch” of military leadership to the incoming commander. Given Mondéjar's political sympathies and the fact that he was about to be essentially relieved from his post by an outsider, it seems fitting to interpret this second mock battle as a thinly veiled sign of hostility and a challenge on the part of the “rebellious” *moros.*

There was one more historical mock battle that took place in this same geopolitical environment, though this time it was specifically used as a military strategy. In February 1569, Juan de Austria had some of his men dress up as “Turks” and “attack” an

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41Harris presents other Iberian mock battles that were also ostensibly put on to glorify a kingly ruler but that instead operated as a thinly veiled demonstration of local power. Harris’s reading of the mock battles put on at the royal entry of Charles V in Toledo in 1533—soon after the Castilian Comunero Revolt of 1519-21—is an excellent example of the mock battle tradition as subversive in its celebration of official authority. See chapter 19—“Royal Entries”—of *Aztecs, Moors and Christians.*
outnumbered group of his own soldiers from sea. This is significant because the Morisco leaders had been in contact with some of their allies in Morocco and they were hoping to receive some military aid in their struggle against the Spanish crown. Thus, as the Moriscos supposedly came to the aid of their “allies,” they were ambushed on both sides and carried off to be sold into slavery (Aztecs 206-210). These three instances of historical mock battles, all within the explosive political environment of Granada in the mid-sixteenth century, draw upon the preoccupations and struggles of the relatively recently converted population of Moriscos leading up to and during the rebellions that eventually culminated in their 1609-1614 expulsion.

Reenacting Reconciliation: The Rebellion as Subtext

Thus, Baumann's assertion that the true referent—that I will call subtext—for the Válor moros y cristianos is the Morisco Rebellion seems apt, despite the fact that it is the one obvious regional conflict never mentioned in the relación's long catalog of battles. He even points to the similarities in the style of dress of the cristianos and the uniforms that Juan de Austria’s men wore during their suppression of the Rebellion (Moors and Christians 202). Of course, the fact that the drama is “about” the Morisco Rebellion and Expulsion—that is, that it calls upon it as referent—is only one of two aspects of the Válor moros y cristianos that function apart from the typical cyclical temporal logic of other fiestas. Given that the drama's characters list many of the key Muslim-Christian battles that occur throughout centuries (from Covadonga to Lepanto), the drama of the fiesta itself must be set in some later period apart from this historiography: an unspecified future fictional time. This time is separate from the cyclical narrative of conflict and
makes an attempt at a future reconciliation between all parties first by emphasizing their mutual “nativeness” to the region, their mutual positions as both guests and hosts—to use Flesler's term—in Válor at different points. Secondly, there is a reconciliation of the situation surrounding the Morisco conversions which the drama's Moors desire to be Christian, convert, and are then accepted by the Christians as part of the community while maintaining their ethnic traditions.

Flesler asserts that part of the process of orientalizing and othering the Moors in the Alcoy fiesta occurs through their portrayal as being sensuous and creative while still being violent and bloodthirsty. In this way, she argues, the Christian victory and subsequent conversion allows the Christians to both defeat and culturally appropriate the Moors (Return 99). The extremely lavish presentation of the Moors in costume, dance, music, and other accompaniments are evidence of the exoticism attributed to the Moors. In fact, Harris points out that the Moors are the generally more popular group and that in many cases, there are more individuals lining up to be Moors than Christians (“Muhammed” 47-48). In contrast to the Alcoy fiesta, the performance in Válor is much simpler and it is the Christian side that is presented as more bloodthirsty and powerful, a fact that serves to strengthen the sympathetic portrayal of the Moors as having been wronged. Here I present a close-text analysis of both “sides,” first to demonstrate the apparent lack of orientalism displayed as pertains the Moors and second to argue the position of the Moors as having a “rightful” place in Válor as well. Each side's depiction as mutually legitimate creates a notion of Christian Spanishness as flexible and heterogeneous during the course of the performance. Namely, it problematizes the stock characterization of Christian Spaniards while presenting a sympathetic depiction of the
Moors as aggrieved and deserving of recognition for their Spanishness. Although religion still plays the starring role in notions of Spanishness, as I will describe in my analysis of the final conversion, the Válor relación attempts, at least in part, to nuance archetypal notions of what it means to be Christian—i.e. to be Castilian—towards a final re-inclusion of the (newly re-made) Moriscos.

La Tropa Cristiana

In contrast to several of the moros y cristianos performances in the Levante, in which there are a multiplicity of troops or comparsas for each religious “side,” who are dressed in spectacular regalia and present themselves in unique and exciting ways—dances, songs, particular marches—in the Válor representation, there are only two groups: one Christian and one Moor, and neither puts on a particularly lavish display. The group with the most pomp and circumstance, however, is easily the Christians, who are always accompanied by the band of young musicians from Ugijar (a neighboring village) hired to play at the fiesta. The entire festive performance begins, after a musical interlude, with three different parades by the Christian soldiers marching into the square and out of it, pausing each time in the center to follow, in unison, a series of commands from their head officer. Each time the tropa grows larger—as it is joined by more cristianos waiting in the wings—and after the third round, the entire group remains in the square as they welcome their king and his captain with music and military salute. All of this occurs before the first line is spoken, and during the processions the Christian soldiers display their special costumes and rehearsed movements.42

42 There are several theories about the origins of the Christian costumes. One Valoreño I spoke with when I observed the 2013 fiesta was adamant that the Christian soldiers dressed in the military garb of the conquistadores. Jérez Hernández notes the similarities between the Válor Christian costumes and those
In the dramatic dialogue, the Christians are characterized by a variety of epithets that reveal a mixture of bloodthirstiness, religious piety, comedy, and mercy. At varying moments throughout the performance, they are noble and honorable, fierce and warlike, as well as cowardly and buffoonish. There are, of course, several depictions of the Christians as ready and valiant in battle and apt to defend their territory against their invading Muslim foe. Nevertheless, an archetypal reading is complicated by this heterogenous portrayal throughout the drama, epitomized by the more subtle, human representations of two of the most prominent and favored Christian characters: the Spy and the Gracioso.

The drama opens with a loa to the land by the King, who invokes its beauty and majesty and attributes them to divine providence and the grace bestowed upon him and his men. The initial action, however, does not begin until the entrance of the Spy, who introduces the first conflict and also a comedic element that pervades the rest of the drama. The King asks the Spy if he has come to join in the day’s celebrations, to which the Spy replies: “Aunque hacer eso quisiera, / me lo impediría el miedo” (763). Thus, juxtaposed and contrasted with the initial romantic ode to the land and God’s providence for the Christians is the simple and unavoidable fact that they, too, are human, and experience fear as well as valor. The dialogue continues:

REY CRISTIANO. ¿El miedo?

ESPIA. Sin duda alguna.

REY. ¿Y un español dice eso?

of the Vatican guard. As I mentioned, Baumann suggests that they come from the sixteenth-century military uniform of soldiers in Naples, reflecting the intervention of Juan de Austria in the Morisco Rebellion (Moors and Christians 202).
ESPÍA. Aunque decirlo me pesa

yo, señor, os lo confieso

pues mi valor no es muy fuerte,

ni nací para guerrero:

además, hoy mis temores

motivos tienen muy serios. (763-4; emphasis mine)

The King’s initial reaction to his soldier’s fear both recalls a Reconquest-spirit ideal for Spanish citizens and overturns it. It is true that the King expects courage and valor from his men, as Spaniards, but his response to Spy’s (understandable) nervousness reaffirms that indeed, the category of “español,” even among Christians confronted with Muslim military enemies, also includes those lacking in the archetypal warlike temerity.

Along with allowing for a variety of personalities and vocations—those who are made to be soldiers and those who are not—the depiction of the Christians in Válor’s moros y cristianos explicitly pokes fun and laughs at a central Spanish preoccupation directly related to Morisco concerns: the notion of “old Christian” as inherently morally superior. After the Moorish victory, when the moros are relaxing and celebrating in their newly (re)won territory, the Moorish Spy/Gracioso drags the Christian Gracioso onto the scene, whom he has caught skulking around the moros’ festivities. Refusing to attest to his true reasons for being there, but assuring everyone that he was not spying for the Christian army, the Gracioso hints to the audience in an aside of his certainly ignoble intentions, pointing to his less-than-upstanding character: “¡Si supieran a lo que he venido, / me estrangulan sin remedio!” (777). The Moorish King questions the Christian Gracioso about his loyalties, asking if the latter is in fact a Christian. The Gracioso
replies, inciting a wave of laughter from the audience: “¡Sí señor y cristiano viejo!” (776).

We learn as the scene progresses and the two Graciosos begin a dialogue—with the moro attempting to convince the cristiano to convert to Islam and join him in Morocco—that hand-in-hand with the Christian Gracioso’s status as a “cristiano viejo” is his woman-chasing behavior and propensity to drink. He refuses to become a Muslim and after objecting several times, he finally admits that it is because “Pero no beberé vino / lo que aquí moro / sí lo bebo” (779). At the same time the Gracioso declares that he shall reside in Válor (“aquí [yo] moro”) and not in Morocco since he does drink (sí lo bebo”), the pun on “moro” here indicates that he would certainly become a moro right here and now (“aquí [soy/me hago] moro”) if he were to be able to continue to drink after converting (“sí lo bebo”).

From the beginning of the controversy over blood purity, in the Alpujarras, being “cristiano viejo” versus “nuevo” made the difference between relocation, ethnocide, and exile or government allotments of land and ready-made homes (Baumann, Moors and Christians 127-29; 137-41). Thus, this humorous portrayal of what it means to be “cristiano viejo” resonates as a strong social criticism that objects to the supposed secondary position of converts to Christianity. “In contesting official portrayals of the world, no weapon is more subversive than laughter,” and the laughter provoked by this one and only reference to the Christian social hierarchy is central to understanding the tragedia of the Moriscos (Beezley, Martin and French xxv). This rejection of the limpieza that ended in the expulsion furthers the text's emphasis on the injustice inflicted on the Moriscos and takes an open—and more theologically rigorous—stance on conversion.
The initial promise to Mudéjar subjects under the 1502 Pragmática that forced their conversion was that their conversion would allow them to enjoy the full rights of citizenry. The reality of the situation could not have been more different. Here, what those critics who uphold the cyclical “función genérica legitimadora” of the fiestas must take as a lighthearted jab at an important marker of social status, taken in the context of the Morisoco Rebellions and Expulsion as referent, reveals a biting—and true—social and political commentary thinly veiled in humor. Along with the sympathetic depiction of the Moors I explore below, this humorous negation of the supposed superiority of Old Christians—whom Baumann argues again and again truly were the usurpers after the Morisco relocation—continues to refocus the drama on Morisco concerns and their Christian legitimacy.

La Tropa Mora

In the discussion between the Christian King and his soldiers about the reason for the Moroccans' arrival, the Christian Captain suggests that the African soldiers have come for a specific purpose that has very little to do with capturing the image of the patron or the castle: the moros have arrived “ansiando nuestro rico suelo” (766). This is the true cause that frames the entire drama; despite the occasional rhetorical flourishes that present other, minor and archetypal concerns, the Moorish claim to and love for Válor as their ancestral homeland—and their pain in having been forced to leave it—is front and center. Bearing this primary purpose in mind, the relación reveals a group of Moors more dignified and rational than in many other moros y cristianos depictions. While the Levantine festivals draw crowds to the moros with an excess of exoticism, the Válor
Moors are made more human and their claim to the land more sympathetic by their humble adornment and overall simplicity of presentation.43

There is in fact very little that is spectacular about the presentation of the Moorish troops in the Válor drama, particularly in comparison with the tri-part parading entrance of the Christians with their accompanying musicians. The Moors are dressed much more simply in white robes with skull caps, and they parade in just once, with only a single snare drum to accompany them. They, like the Christians, display several choreographed moves marked to the commands of their head officer, but these are fewer and appear clumsier and less rehearsed. As they announce their reasons for entering Spanish territory, their humble presentation, coupled with the descriptions of the pains and hardships they have endured, makes them the more sympathetic group.

The most notable characterization of these moros is not their bloodthirsty avaricious quest to defeat their religious foe, but rather their genuine love for the land of Válor and their feeling, as exiled Spaniards, that it is truly home. As the Moorish Ambassador exclaims poetically to the Christian King in their first encounter, after the cruelties enacted upon them by Ferdinand and Isabel and subsequent rulers,

Que huir tuvimos del hermoso suelo,

donde reposaban los amados padres,

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43 Writing about nineteenth-century artistic portrayals of Moroccans during the War in Africa—a connection that I will explore further later in this chapter—by (Andalusian) Pedro Antonio Alarcón and (Catalán) Maria Fortuny, Ginger makes the connection between the lack of exoticism of description—the more mundane, subdued and realistic portrayal of Moroccans and their daily lives—and a returning to the Moroccan subjects of their dignity and humanity: “The movement away from an interpretation of North Africa as exotically passionate, violent, polychromatic, and sensual, and towards an emphasis on restrained dignity, is intimately related to the inner independence and freedom of the spirit that is the essence of Moroccan autonomy” (153). This is certainly true of the non-exotic treatment of the moros in the Válor moros y cristianos.
dando el último adiós a sus cenizas,
dando el último adiós a los lugares,
donde pasaron su tranquila infancia,
extentos de inquietud, libres de males. (769)

After the challenges faced by the Mudéjar—and eventually, Morisco—
community under the Catholic Kings, Charles V and Philip II, the Moorish Ambassador
describes their eventual flight into the Alpujarras, and the long, drawn-out rebellion in
which they had no choice but to participate: “pero también allí nos persiguieron / con más
afán con que lo hicieron antes” (769). While this description and the entire relación lack
an explicit reference to the Morisco Rebellion, it follows Baumann’s historiography of
the revolt closely, for he describes the Rebelión as characterized by factionalism,
mismanagement, and a strong desire on the part of Castile to be rid of the Morisco
“problem.” He describes specifically how the Moriscos’ efforts to surrender were rejected
and how they continued to be pursued, even after several sincere attempts to end the
conflict (Moors and Christians 114-18).

The Moorish Ambassador asserts that after being “acosados por doquiera, /
cercados de miseria, luto y hambre” they escaped to Africa, both because they were
forced to leave and also because staying in Válor or being relocated elsewhere also meant
certain death (769). They never stopped thinking about their lost homeland and they
vowed to come back to it and write a new ending to “la desgracia horrible / que nos
lanzaba por el mundo errantes” (769). Despite the reasonable and pathos-invoking
declarations on the part of the Moors, the Christian troops reject their offer to surrender
the land, castle and image without a fight. The first battle ensues, in which the moros win,
and as soon as they are well-established in their new territory, the Moorish King remarks that Válor will be his permanent residence and he will battle no more.

¡Por Alá! Que este pueblo es hermoso,
bellas sus campiñas y sus prados,
azul su cielo, sandidas sus flores,
claras sus aguas y su ambiente grato.
Que otras nuevas conquistas
no me brindaran de la gloria el lauro.
Aquí mi residencia fijaría.
Aquí pasará [sic] mis mejores años. (779)

Along with his general appreciation for the beauty of the landscape, the King’s desire to go no further, to engage in no more battles—not even to take more Iberian territory, as a “crusading” mentality would entail—indicates that the primary and singular purpose of their mission in Válor was to (re)gain residency. It also pivotally alters the dynamics of Muslim-Christian interactions going forward, breaking the repetitive cycle of struggle and conflict that had for so long gripped the region and both groups. Furthermore, the Rey moro’s complete lack of interest in further pursuing the Christians once he has pushed them from Válor demonstrates that neither defeating nor eliminating an “enemy” religion formed part of his military objectives. Now that the Moors are able to reclaim residence in Válor, even with Christians also close at hand, perhaps even just one town away, the movement toward a future, previously frozen by the cyclical repetition of the conflict between these Iberian Moors and Christians, can now commence.

For this reason, the emphasis on re-residing in Válor is the only preoccupation of
the Moors, until they have an experience with the Santo Cristo image and with Mary as intercessor. It is the Christians that have a more bloodthirsty, Reconquest-minded mentality which serves to highlight the moderation of the Moors and re-situate their true purpose. While rhetorical threats of carnage and destruction fly on both sides, only the Christians express a particular fondness toward bloodshed and a specific desire to annihilate all traces of their enemy. As the Christian King asserts before battle: “Yo también la guerra ansío / y mis valientes soldados / sé que están entusiasmados” (768).

Both monarchs rally their troops with promises of what is to be gained in victory, but only the Christians are motivated by the possibility of wiping out the Moors. The Christian King animates his troops in this way:

> En vuestras frentes leo
> la ardiente sed de sangre que os devora.
> Y en vuestros ojos brilladores veo,
> que ansíais exterminar la turba mora. (772)

In contrast, after the Moorish victory, the Rey moro and his men are content to have pushed the Christians from Válor, and seek neither to gain more territory nor to further punish their rivals. Instead, they rest and celebrate their victory. Even when their prized captive, the Christian Captain, manages to escape, the Moorish King decides not to pursue him, not because he is unable, but because his goal was always to control this specific territory—not all of Iberia—and not to kill Christians or take them captive. This specific motivation to residence, not destruction, comes not only from a desire to vindicate their forefathers, but more importantly, from their connection to the land and their feeling, because of this connection, that Válor was theirs all along. Their failure to
pursue the defeated Christian army suggests that this is furthermore not a zero-sum game. Perhaps both sides might live peaceably side-by-side in the larger region. It is only when exhorted by the Christians to leave the land immediately that the Moors insist not only on their equally legitimate claim to residency, but also on the fact that if any group is the usurper, it is the Christians.

When the Christian Ambassador comes to implore the Moors to surrender their newly won territory, he wishes the king “Salud y honores disfrutéis / allá en tu reino!” The King replies: “Éste es el que yo gobierno,” exclaiming definitively that here, he is host (781). The Rey moro continues, after the Christian Ambassador suggests he give up and leave, “¿Marcharme yo de la España, / herencia de mis mayores” (783)? He insists that it would be foolish to leave this home and that it has been a defensive endeavor to fight; the usurping forces are not the Moors but the (Castilian) Christians who pushed them out.

Si ambicioso me has supuesto
porque conquisto el país
donde se miró feliz
la raza que represento,
mejor puedo yo culpa[r]
tu estirpe de usurpadora
de tiranía invasora
que nos arrojó a la mar. (784)

This characterization of exile as usurpation especially supports the underlying context of the fiesta as the Morisco Expulsion. As demonstrated by the fact that the Moors are
unconcerned with recapturing the Christian Captain after he escapes, or pursing the entire group further once they have won their “right” to residence, from the perspective of the Moors, there is no harm in jointly residing in the space; their efforts have been focused on their own presence there rather than disallowing it to the Christians.

As compared with other more ideologically driven fiestas, the Válor relación presents a more-nuanced depiction of both Christians and Moors that questions, plays with, and overtly rejects a monolithic Reconquest ideology as well as the notion of limpieza. Instead, it presents a group of imperfect Christians and a sympathetic group of Moors who have suffered unjust hardships and, battered and beaten, simply want to return home, thereby ending the cycle of conflict in which both groups have been embroiled for centuries. Thus, when the Christians return in the second half of the drama to attempt to recapture Válor, the Moorish King makes clear that this battle will not represent a re-initiation of that cycle. After the Christian Ambassador’s suggestion that he surrender, the Moorish King declares that he will not, but that neither will he drag out the conflict into subsequent battles. He elects to take the outcome of this upcoming one as definitive.

Más si acaso me propones
la batalla decisiva,
ella será la que diga
de quién son estas regiones. (784)

After the Moors’ loss at the hands of the Christians, the conclusion of the fiesta in its voluntary conversion presents a neat and tidy way to re-do the conversion of mudéjar citizens forced after the Pragmatic of 1502 and thereby re-integrate these historically
marginalized and exiled citizens into the Christian fold.

Conversion: Already Christians?

After the Christians have won back the plaza and castle, the two kings dialogue about what is to be done. Assuming that he is about to meet his death, the Rey moro asks that his punishment be meted out quickly. However, the Christian King has other plans and he declares that he has a noble mission charged to him by God. As he says, “respetando tu existencia,” he asks the Moorish King and his men to leave Válor and go back to Morocco (786). This is so surprising to the Moors that the Rey moro asks for clarification. Such clemency, he remarks, “turba mi alma” (786). Only then does the idea of their conversion arise, unlike in other moros y cristianos in the region and elsewhere, in which conversion is the only alternative to death, if and when there is an alternative.44

In Válor, the opportunity of conversion is not presented as an ultimatum, but as a sincerely hoped for possibility that will end the conflict harmoniously. Once he has piqued the interest of the Rey moro with his kind words and clemency, the Christian King suggests: “la dulce religión de cristo abraza, / y serás desde hoy mi más tierno hermano, / y franco asilo te dará mi patria” (786). Too proud to accept this offer immediately, and aware of the implications such a decision would have for his honor as a Muslim, the Moorish King declines, asserting, “jamás la perjura apostasía / deshonrará los hijos de mi

44 In Albondón, the Turkish King manages to stay by asking for conversion, and in Juviles and Atalbétar, the Moorish King likewise converts in order to avoid execution, after renouncing Islam and Muhammad as false and lamenting ever having been a Muslim. Some other representations in the region of Granada do not even portray the conversion, but rather end in death. In Laroles, festeros depict the death of Aben Humeya. In Jáen, the Rey moro is arrested and dragged behind the procession, and in Iznalloz, the performance ends abruptly at the end of the last battle with “y mueran esos malvados [moros]” (Gómez García, “Religión y política” 100-02).
raza” (786). The Christian King implores him, however, emphasizing that such an act would not, in fact, be apostasy:

No lo es por cierto,
y si hasta aquí has vivido
sin hallar la verdad en tu ignorancia,
hoy en tu noble corazón se agita
de la luz de mi fe la ardiente llama. (786)

According to the Christian King, conversion would rather represent the coming to a further revelation of what the Muslim King has already felt in his heart, as well as a solution that would allow them to live together in Válor as brothers. Furthermore, given the subtext of the Morisco Expulsion, this is doubly true; the Moriscos converted and so their descendants, then, do have Christian blood.

In fact, his conversion is characterized not so much by a rejection of one faith for another, but instead as is a coming to true faith in the one God, to which he has been exposed, in one way or another, by his forefathers. Throughout the relación, the Rey moro uses the names of Allah and Muhammad only superficially, at the beginning of addresses to his men. He does not pray or attribute military victories to God, as do the Christians. Instead, he states that it is luck—and military prowess—that allows for his initial conquest of Válor. After the first battle, the Moorish King tells his men to celebrate their good fortune: “Gozad pues de la alegría / que os da la suerte” (775; emphasis mine). He praises the beauty of the land and his good luck to finally reside there “porque la suerte / favores por doquiera / me está brindando” (780; emphasis mine). In their discussion at the end, then, the Rey cristiano suggests that conversion would simply represent the Rey
moro’s coming to a further understanding of and closeness to the one god. The Christian King continues, indicating that it is not just a conversion to Christianity to which the Muslim King is called. In fact the rey cristiano asserts, “el inmortal Salim por mi te llama” (787). Choosing to use this Arabic word—“Salim” probably meaning سلام or peace—that has the same root as “Islam” and “Muslim,” the Christian King highlights the fact that this is a call not from Jesus but directly from the one God, about whom the Muslim King has heard through Islam. This is also fitting with the setting and staging of the drama, for the castle’s inscription declares, in Arabic, that only God is victorious, which suggests the indivisible identity of God, whether invoked in Arabic or Castilian. When the Rey moro, still incredulous, asks whether God would listen to him and accept him as part of the faithful, the Rey cristiano enters into a long loa to the land and explains that if his companion has been moved by the immense beauty and majesty of the land and environment around Válor, that this is only a fraction of the majesty of God and Mary. Finally, they discuss the figure of Mary, about whom the Moorish King has been curious throughout the drama.45 The Christian King declares that she is not only intercessor for Christians, but rather, “dulce madre de la raza humana” (787).

Though not quite so celebrated in the Islamic tradition as in the Christian, Mary, the Virgin mother of Jesus is an important and distinguished figure in the Qur’an and would have been known to Muslims. Furthermore, Islam has its own comparable maternal figure, Fatima, who is also beloved as “the primal mother figure, immaculate

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45 This intervention of Mary in the conversion of a Muslim is strongly reminiscent of Alfonso X’s Cantiga XVI. However, to my knowledge, no one has sufficiently examined the use of the Cantigas as a source for this particular text or any fiesta de moros y cristianos, though Brisset Martín has enumerated the intervention of Mary and the saints as a standard moros y cristianos trope (“Clasificación”). Though beyond the scope of this chapter, it would be interesting and fruitful to analyze the implications of the Cantigas as a major source for the moros y cristianos, taking into account the nuanced politics of thirteenth-century Castilian-Grenadine relations out of which the multimedia text emerged.
and sinless…the object of prayer and petition” (Esposito 112). As the Christian God’s identification with the God of Islam—as the God of all—as well as Mary’s connections to the grandeur of the Válor landscape are made explicit, this option to continue to reside in the space, and come to know better the one God who created and blesses it draws the Muslim King to conversion. Following this universalized conception of God presented by the Christian King, he does not need to reject Islam to convert, as do many other Moorish Kings in Alpujarras moros y cristianos. The action instead is one of embracing: “resistir no puedo tus palabras. / Tu ley abrazo y me declaro hijo / de esa Madre de Dios Virgen y casta” (788; emphasis mine). Thus, the Arabic writing on the castle, “Only God is victorious,” takes on new meaning as all parties come to recognize the authority of the one God, who makes good on this declaration of universal victory. Within the context of Spain's Moriscos, this scene clearly evidences a cultural fantasy of historical openness and religious clemency. Through the conversion episode of its fiesta de moros y cristianos, Válor uses this fantasy in an attempt to heal the historical wounds of the Morisco Expulsion. This attempt at a re-do, however, occurs specifically from within Spanish Christianity's monologue with itself, and thus the only wounds healed are the ones that resulted from the anti-theological stance taken by limpieza that new converts were not, in fact, full Christians.

Furthermore, within this more-sympathetic-to-Mudéjares narrative re-do, the concepts of Muslim and Morisco are conflated and mutually subsumed under the category of “Moor.” The text purports to present expelled Muslim citizens coming back to reclaim their territorial legitimacy in Válor, but in doing so within the framework of the moros y cristianos genre, it glosses over the historical reality that large swaths of this
population had in fact already converted to Christianity. The conversion episode attempts in part to reconcile this by presenting a non-specified and inclusive notion of God—though a very specific notion of Mary—and suggesting that the conversion is not an act of leaving behind one religion but fully embracing another which is already familiar. This is an extremely neat and tidy way to deal with the problem of mass conversions instituted after the Pragmática that, on the one hand, manages to whitewash the entire historical reality of forced conversions—for here the Moors want to convert, of course—and on the other, hints at the fact that many Grenadine Muslims did convert through the idea that the drama's Moors already know about the Christian God. At the same time, it presents an amenable reification of a more harmonious version of the Pragmática—though they do so willingly, the Moors still need to convert to reside in Válor—and thereby a reification of the notion of the Spanish community as willingly and harmoniously Christian.

The final conversion, however important in solidifying the unity and blurring the distinction between the two groups, seems to be in many ways only a technical necessity that makes official the deep connection and camaraderie implicit in the groups based on their shared connection to and history in the land. The relación in its dialogue, characterization and structure all work toward an identification between the two groups, despite the religious difference that separates them until the end of the drama. The Moors may be Muslims, but they have also equally been guests and hosts in this region; they share a deep emotional and historical connection to the land in the same way that the Christians do.

Dramatic Structure

One of the characteristic elements of Iberian moros y cristianos representations, at
least in those with two main dramatic acts, is that the action in the first act is essentially mirrored in the second. This is certainly the case for the Válor performance; not only do both sides have an opportunity to wage an offensive in order to control the plaza and the castle, but until the final conversion and reconciliation, the two acts are almost identical in both form and content. Each begins with a speech by the king, praising the beauty of the land and his good fortune to be able to reside in it. These speeches occur during celebration festivities by each group, and are interrupted only by the presence of a messenger who alerts the regent to potential trouble. Next enters an emissary from the opposing side with an offer to avoid military hostility if the group in control of the plaza and castle will simply surrender it. This offer is refused, of course, and results in a series of rhetorical flourishes: claims to legitimacy of territory and threats of inevitable defeat (from both sides) as well as mentions of historical victories (Christians) and past offenses and hardships (Moors). Then, the emissary leaves and soon a battle ensues, lasting for approximately ten minutes and ending with the “throwing” of a member of the losing side from the top of the castle: the Alcalde for the Christians and the Gracioso for the Moors. While Gómez García has described this doubling of action as simply reflecting the overall legitimizing function for Christians—“la acción conforme a un esquema invariable, reforzando la tesis central” (“La mala conciencia” 133)—this mirroring may be more correctly interpreted as a reflection of the underlying sameness of each side, and their equal claims to the land and to the title of “Spanish.”

Besides the conversion and

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46 This doubling also reflects what Flesler identifies as their positions as both “guest” and “host” in Iberia, a concept I have referred to briefly in previous sections of this chapter. Flesler calls upon Sarah Ahmed’s reading of Derrida to propose that within the “third space” of the performance, it becomes clear that both Moors and Christians are equally “guests” and “hosts” through the parallelism and turn-taking—one side wins the plaza, then the other side does—characteristic of the fiesta (Return 103).
reconciliation at the end, the one scene that notably departs from the dramatic doubling is the beloved comic “diálogo de espías” (in Válor they are Graciosos). This departure draws attention to the scene as the center point of the entire performance both structurally—since it falls between both acts—and thematically.

The Spy Dialogue and the Festival’s Comic Core

This comedic interlude—in which, as I have indicated, the concept of Old Christian is ridiculed and the affinities between the two graciosos emerges—forms the center of the spectacle and is framed by the battles (and not vice versa). With this as centerpoint, the entire performance takes on a comic and playful tone that is reinforced even through the battle scenes. Equally important in any public ritual or spectacle as the official, ideological element is the ludic and comic element which often works to destabilize or undermine the pedagogical processes. Those readings of the fiesta de moros y cristianos as wholesale legitimating of state ideology—“la función genérica legitimadora”—often overlook the way this element works from within the festival text as well. The element of laughter “mimic[s] serious rituals” and creates another plane—Bakhtin calls it a second “world”—of human interactions that is specifically “nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapitical” (5, 6). Festive laughter and the comic have always been integral aspects of even the most official festivals, and Bakhtin traces the interpenetration of the official and the carnivalesque in public rituals from antiquity. Thus, it is necessary to a nuanced analytical reading of the Válor fiesta to explore the moments of laughter, ambiguity, and contestation always already embedded in the moros y cristianos drama.
I have already described the way that the playful commentary on the notion of cristiano viejo undermines this important social category, as well as the fact of the friendly relationship between the Moorish and Christian Graciosos, whom, it is clear, would get along famously and live happily in Morocco as Muslims, if only they could drink. These Graciosos playfully portray the spirit of cooperation and competition and their underlying similarities. The double structure identifies rather than differentiates between the Moors and Christians, and the framing battle scenes also can and should be read with this spirit of playful competition and mutual cooperation that has been previously overlooked.

Baumann describes his experience participating in the fiesta as being one in “the real community of armed brothers” (213). This brotherhood extends beyond “military” lines, and he highlights the fraternal spirit shared by all festeros during the entire festival weekend, regardless of their “side,” during the battles, the dialogues, between acts, and after the drama is concluded. As an observer, I easily identified the battle scenes not as war-like demonstrations, but instead as comic spectacles, given the general smiling and silliness exhibited on both sides. Soldiers gleefully grab on to the costumes of both “friends” and “enemies,” spinning them around in a spirited and light-hearted kind of dance that resembles a conflict only in that they fire their weapons. Even this aspect—the firing of weapons—seems to be more for the experience of the crowd of observers and

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47 This was historically most likely the dynamism of normative Muslim-Christian relations in medieval Iberia, and in particular, Nasrid Granada-Castilian interactions leading up to the final conquest of Granada (and its surroundings, i.e. Válor) by the Catholic Kings. Jerrilynn Dodds uses the paintings in the Alhambra’s “Hall of Justice” or “Hall of Kings” to explain this complex relationship. Ana Echevarría’s insightful perspective on the Order of the Band is equally informative regarding Castilian-Nasrid interactions.

48 As part of his field research, Baumann was able to don a Christian costume and participate alongside Válor citizens, though he had been hoping to be a Moor. See chapter seven of his dissertation “Making History in Válor.”
the fun of the soldiers themselves than for the creation of a warlike or even remotely conflictual atmosphere. In fact, small groups comprised of both moros and cristianos pinpoint obvious targets in the audience—those who seem most affected by the cacophony produced with gunpowder—and together make a point of further startling them. Baumann remarks that integral to the battle performance is always some intention to “harass” the public, and in particular anyone who seems especially new, surprised or affected by the demonstration (Moors and Christians 205). This is a goal toward which both Christians and Moors work jointly and in unison. Also present as a commonality among the festeros playing both sides is an equal desire to disregard or at least slightly belittle the organizers of the fiesta themselves, a clear indication of Maglessen’s “shared authority” between creators and participants, even in a scripted drama like this one.

The entire moros y cristianos drama is narrated by one of the mayordomos, the group in charge of the fund raising and organization of the whole festive weekend. After approximately ten minutes of each “battle,” the MC/narrator announces that the battle has concluded and asks the soldiers to cease firing their weapons. Each time, the response to this request is a chorus of gunshots and the continuation of the battle for a few more minutes. Even though before he makes the pronouncement it appears that the battle is in fact coming to a natural conclusion, the simple declaration by the authority that it be concluded incites the desire among the actors to contradict him.

Despite other critics’ readings to the contrary, it seems clear that the battle scenes are more of a representation of a communal spirit in opposition to official concepts of order than they are static, ideological representations of Christian dominance and Iberian inter-religious animosity. The real conclusion of the battles is perhaps the most
anticipated part of the whole performance: the “throwing”—really more of a lowering into the arms of his fellow soldiers—of one member of the losing side off the top of the castle. While carefully done, it incites riotous laughter on the part of audience and actors alike and is milked for as long as possible by the man daring enough to be dropped from above. When he finally arrives safely on the ground and he and his fellow soldiers slowly slink away in defeat, they are met with a deafening applause, most certainly the loudest of any ovation during that half of the dramatic performance.

Bakhtin describes festival laughter as being “universal” in scope, as “directed at all and everyone” (11). It is deep, philosophical, and utopian, and “penetrates the highest forms of religious cult and thought” (13). Given the structure of the fiesta as a dramatic doubling centered on a comedic moment framed by a group of friends playing at war, it is clear that the Válor moros y cristianos as a whole can be characterized as a comic spectacle, one that unites and identifies all parties—despite the supposed bellicose animosity between the Moors and Christians. The characterizations of each side, the doubling of dramatic action, and the overarching playfulness of the performance all support this reading of the Válor moros y cristianos as linking both groups in their mutual love for and claim to Válor as home and, thereby, their shared Spanishness. Connecting the text back to the Morisco Rebellion and Expulsion and the general atmosphere of tension between Granadan residents under the Nasrids and the under the Hapsburgs, the mutual layers of diversion and commonality expressed between the two groups in the fiesta manifest themselves in the shared connection both “old Christian” Castilians and newly converted Moriscos as citizens of the locale. The fact that Marqués de Mondéjar, having been born in Castile, was willing and able to lead his Morisco subjects in dramatic
mock battle against the “Christian” side not once but twice is indicative both of the possible camaraderie between Grenadine citizens of different ethnic heritage and of the fact that even in a historical moment rife with political tension of the ethno-religious variety, to play at war, and specifically, to play on the (victorious) side of the Moors, was not a forbidden or impossible act. As much as it is possible to read tension and resistance in Mondéjar's actions, it is equally possible and necessary to read play and joviality.

In the relación of Válor’s moros y cristianos, the recognition of the violence committed against the Moriscos goes hand in hand with their identification between Christian and Muslim Spaniards, even if the final conversion upholds notions of Spain's ultimate Christianity. This more sympathetic portrayal and attempt at re-writing the story of Spanish Moriscos allows for the possibility of a future free of this kind of religious conflict and acknowledges the mutual ties to the land of both groups, even before their union under Christianity. This cultural fantasy of harmony and camaraderie centers on the historical conflicts between Mudéjar and Morisco citizens through to their forced conversions and final expulsion as referent and subtext. Along with this historical reality underlying the relación, there is also a specific context of surrounding its creation—mostly likely in 1860—about which the relación likewise makes implicit mention and commentary. If the subtext is the fantasy of healing a wound created by a historical conflict, the context is the most recent instance of violent conflicts between the Spanish Christians and Moroccan Muslims who are the text's protagonists: the War in Africa. The sympathetic portrayal of the hardships suffered by Grenadine Moriscos before and during their expulsion acts as allegory to present a politically critical perspective on Spanish intervention in Morocco. Moroccans may be Muslims, and thereby always already
different, but they, like the relación's Moors, also share a cultural and geographical history with Spain, and they are an autonomous nation whose rights and privileges as such deserve to be respected.

The War in Africa as Context

Enriqueta Lozano de Vílchez—“La Safo granadina”—is generally considered to be the author or compiler of the relación used in the current moros y cristianos in Válor (Baumann, Moors and Christians 217-19; Checa and Fernández Soto 282). I suggest “author or compiler” since popular tradition indicates that Lozano did not create the text entirely from scratch but worked with the extant oral tradition, as well as other historical and literary sources, and placed the existing material into a romantic verse mold. Almost all scholars of the fiestas draw attention to the primarily oral tradition of the text, and Carrasco Urgoiti notes that if a written script does exist in many towns, it is most likely a relatively recent (“modern”) addition (478). Baumann’s thorough investigation includes the only published version of Válor's relación I have found—though Gómez García suggests that there are two (“La mala conciencia” 129)—and eighteen years after its publication, the Válor drama is extraordinarily faithful to this text. This suggests that performers no longer rely exclusively on oral tradition and that fidelity to the text—either oral or written—is of value to the performers. It seems clear that there is a rich textual tradition among Válor festeros, undermining Jerez Hernández’s and Checa and Fernández Soto’s write-off of the fiesta script as unimportant. Also, in his discussion, Baumann mentions the generalized insistence in Válor that their drama remains faithful to the text from its nineteenth-century compilation: “In Válor, tradition refuses to acknowledge that
the text suffered any modifications since the time of Enriqueta Lozano, if not since its
origin” (286-7). Embedded in the popular feelings about the relación is a deeply rooted
sense of historicity and connection with the text's historical roots. I have already
examined the historical referent and, consequently, subtext of the Válor moros y
cristianos as being centered on the Morisco conflicts. To focus exclusively on the
historical referent and antecedents to the contemporary drama, however relevant, would
be to leave out an entire textual layer equally important to the “meaning” of the fiesta and
its text.

As I have discussed, much of fiesta scholarship focuses on the ideology of
Spanish nationalism disseminated through the texts and their performance. This topic is
fitting given that the current version of many fiestas' relaciones date to the nineteenth
century, a period universally acknowledged in western historiography as the century of
the consolidation of this particular notion of statehood. Baumann, citing a Grenadine
newspaper from 1960, dates the writing of the relación to 1860, immediately after the
War in Africa (217). At the time of the writing of the relación, learned discourses were
often preoccupied with defining the essential Spanish character, juxtaposed with its
opposite and thereby permanent “Other,” the Moors.49 In many nineteenth-century
historiographies, all Muslims, but North Africans in particular, were considered the
successors of the usurping trend of the eighth-century Berbers, “herederos de los que se
recela[ba] continuamente ante el riesgo de una nueva invasion” (López García 142).

49 Here I use the term Moor intentionally, for this perceived threat of a Muslim foe defies any and
all contextualization, yoking together eighth-century Berbers with Umayyad rulers, Almohads, Almoravids,
Turks, and any other political threat from an Islamicate polity as one continuous cultural and ethnic
tradition, static and unswerving.
Nevertheless, this was not the universally held view, and a parallel trend in historiography existed that sought to highlight the importance and relevance of Islamicate cultures to the Spanish state, both in its formation and contemporarily, by suggesting (1) the important role that Muslims and Jews played in the history of the Spanish nation, (2) that studying Arabic texts and cultures from the Spanish Middle Ages could enrich contemporary Spain—e.g., translating medieval peninsular Arabic works on agriculture could improve modern agricultural practices—and (3) that it was necessary to revise and revisit Spanish history from new and diverse perspectives, particularly those of the vanquished or marginalized (in this case, Mudéjars and Moriscos) (142-44).

This parallel Arabist trend in historiography—and in particular, the renewed interest in Spain’s historical relationship with North Africa—occurred in conjunction with and was furthered by Spanish mid-century politics, both domestic and foreign. The desire to throw off the yoke of French influence and government, the internal tumult of the Carlist Wars and the necessity to encounter some common ground upon which to build a national identity, the threat of piracy and insecurity on the coastline, and the European race for colonial control of North Africa—England’s claim to Gibraltar from the early eighteenth century and the French invasion of Algiers in 1830—all contributed to Spain’s interest and involvement in North Africa and in particular, in Morocco. Spain had already established a unique relationship with Morocco in the previous century, and had solidified and maintained control over Ceuta, Melilla, Peñon de los Vélez and Alhucemas under the 1799 peace treaty between the two countries (O’Donnell 67). Periodic attacks on these Spanish holdings—an 1844 attack on Melilla led to the assassination of the Spanish consul—as well as continued maritime insecurity due to
piracy led to the consequent agreements of Tangier (1844) and Larache/Melilla (1845). This mixed political environment revived Spanish academic, cultural, political and military interest in the complex relationship between the two nations, past and present. The emergence of Arabic studies as a popular field introduced new questions about whether (medieval) Iberian Muslims were Spaniards in their own right or simply usurpers and destroyers of Spain, as the traditional Catholic historiography had stated. Several of the earlier Spanish Arabists are less well-known due to the generally unfavorable and nontraditional stance they took on Spain’s Arabic and Muslim legacy. Though often presenting a rather romantic and idealized version of Iberian “Arabs,” these scholars nonetheless opened up Spanish historiography to a new field of inquiry (López García 146). Among the more noteworthy and successful torchbearers of this new Spanish Arabism as it gained prominence were Pascual de Gayangos—named the very first chair of Arabic studies at the Universidad Central de Madrid in 1844—Gonzálo y Morón, who stressed the importance of the Cordoban Caliphal “Golden Age” as a pillar Iberian of learning and culture in the otherwise barren European cultural landscape of the time—and Francisco Fernández y González, whose prize-winning Estado social y político de los Mudéjares de Castilla, considerados en sí mismos y respecto de la civilización española (1866) explicitly included these Iberian peoples marginalized from traditional historiography in his definition of Spanishness. He opens his discussion with an identification of Moriscos as legitimately Spanish. According to him, they

…manteniale un sentimiento patriótico apegado al país natal…Españoles

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50 Of course, it could be argued that the same debate about Spanish identity was taken up in the twentieth century by Claudio Sánchez Albornoz and Américo Castro. While the terms of the debate have shifted slightly, it is the case that we can still, as Juliá has indicated, speak of two main notions of Spain and Spanishness.
Thus, along with a consolidation and furthering of the traditionalist Christian historiography of the Spanish nation, nineteenth-century historicism also introduced a new—though not as widespread—attempt to tell history from diverse perspectives, to recognize the importance and legacy of Jews and Muslims in Spain, and to redefine Spanishness from this more inclusive model, acknowledging the injustices suffered by marginalized and expelled groups and seeking to make historiographical amends.

Notions of these “two Spains”\(^1\)—one traditionalist Catholic and one more inclusive and religiously heterogeneous—existed simultaneously with a growing Spanish political vision of imperialism and a need to assert a strong and unified Spanish front to the world, particularly as Spain’s ally-competitors were flexing their own expansionist muscles in North Africa: “Los ‘Moros’ de antaño no serán solo una referencia de la historia sino criaturas de carne y hueso desde que Francia puso pie en Argelia en 1830” (López García 148).\(^2\) North Africa as Europe’s new expansionary theater revived (never-quietly-dormant) notions about Spain’s (historical) ties there. For some, France’s colonial designs in Algeria evoked a reading of Spain’s relationship with North African Muslims that emphasized Spain’s obligation to “give back” to the Moors—for their “civilizing” medieval invasion that brought grand cultural achievements—through a similar and

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\(^1\) Though certainly not the only scholar to refer to the (ongoing) historiographical debate as such, this subtitle is an explicit reference to Santos Juliá’s *Historias de las dos Españas* (2004).

\(^2\) O’Donnell maintains that the Spanish intervention in Africa was not, in fact, an imperialist project. Other scholars, however, disagree (Ginger; López García).
opposite intervention on their currently culturally “backward” state (Ginger 148).

Furthermore, Moroccan aggressions at sea and on Spanish holdings on Moroccan soil, however disorganized, opened up an entire political literature centered on promoting a Spanish imperialism whose manifesto declared, as a take-away from Roman imperialism, that “la Fontera natural de España, por la parte del Mediodía, no es el canal angostísimo que junta los dos mares, sino la cordillera del Atlas, contrapuesta al Pirineo” (Cánovas del Castillo 11). The War in Africa, as both a result of and impetus to these diverse trends and justifications, further complicated Spain’s relationship with Morocco, in some ways solidifying and in others blurring the lines of distinction between individuals of both nationalities, highlighting and exploiting their histories of political and cultural exchange. This conflict also forms the specific context for the relación of the Válor moros y cristianos. Seeds of both nineteenth-century historiographical strains about Spain and Spanishness are present in the Válor relación, but by far the most potent one is that put forth by Fernández y González when he identifies Moriscos as authentically and equally Spanish. The relación displays many of these contemporary-to-its-writing preoccupations and historiographical inquiries, and reading it in context with them is extraordinary revealing.

According to O’Donnell, the Spanish crown had been preparing for a possible campaign in Morocco since 1855, as a result of and response to the various influences and preoccupations cited above (67). A rouge (i.e. not state-sponsored) attack on Ceuta on August 10, 1859 caused Spain to present Morocco with an unequivocal ultimatum, in which the Spanish ambassador in Tangier, Juan Blanco del Valle, demanded reparations for “los ultrajes que al pabellón español se le han inferido por las hordas salvajes de
Anghera” (“Documentos” 1). It is clear, through this specific language that is employed verbatim several times in the correspondence between these two political figures, as well as the general tone of the letters, that the real offense committed was a perceived slight to Spanish honor and pride, rather than an actual threat to the general safety of Spanish citizens in Ceuta. Thus, the first of the requirements imposed by the crown in the ultimatum was that the Spanish coat of arms knocked down and damaged in the conflict be replaced and that the entire Moroccan army and the King himself publicly salute it, a gesture certainly meant to humble Morocco before Spain. The other reparations demanded by Spain included that a harsh punishment be exacted on those involved in the initial attack, that Morocco declare the Spanish Queen’s right to do whatever should be necessary to protect her own territory (albeit on Moroccan soil) and, finally, that Morocco approve of and assist with some additional construction to the fortifications in Ceuta (1).

Muhammad al-Khatib, the Moroccan minister of foreign affairs, promptly agreed to all of the conditions, pending official executive approval for the additional construction around Ceuta.

The problem escalated quickly, however, in regards to the timetable for these conditions to be met. After several prolongations—the original demands from September 5, 1859 stipulated that the conditions be met in a period of ten days—as well as a change in Moroccan leadership after the death of the King, correspondence between del Valle and al-Khatib became increasingly strained, with accusations of blame and disagreements over the specifics of the conditions to be met only thinly glossed over with diplomatic flourishes. Finally, Spain declared war on October 22, after receiving the go-ahead from England and France. On October 24, nine days after the grace period for the reparations
expired, del Valle proclaimed that the crown would move forward with impending hostilities and left Tangier with all his staff a few days later, “encomendando a la fuerza de armas y la satisfacción al ultraje inferido al pabellón nacional” (10).

Diplomatically, Spain had been preparing itself against possible protests by its European allies, and the Minister of State circulated at least two memoranda explaining a possible Spanish intervention in Morocco, one of which was sent on September 24, many days before Morocco’s grace period for meeting Spanish demands was set to expire. Militarily begun in December 1859, with the Spanish disembarking at Ceuta, the Spanish War in Africa (also called La Guerra de Tetuán or La Guerra de África) lasted for four months, until the Treaty of Wad-Ras was signed on April 10, 1860, after a failed attempt at peace in February. Spain had invaded and occupied Tetuán, which it continued to control for twenty-eight years after the treaty was signed, until Morocco finally paid the stipulated indemnity of 400,000,000 reales in 1888 (O’Donnell 41).

From the beginning, domestic support for Spain’s invasion in Morocco stemmed from a mix of political interest, cultural paternalism and xenophobia (López García 148-51; Ginger148). O’Donnell remarks that the causes were multi-fold and that, despite the diplomatic rhetoric about dishonor and injustice, securing a stronghold in Tetuán was always the main objective (68). The invasion was set to raise Spain’s prestige by reaffirming its position in Africa—both as a dominant colonial force and as a cultural relative and “big brother” ally—punishing previous offenses, setting up the foundation for Spain’s solid and lasting influence in Morocco, and North African politics in general, into the future, and consolidating a fractured Spanish National sentiment damaged by the Carlist wars and the preceding century of domestic political strife (O’Donnell 66-68).
this way, the popular political climate surrounding the War in Africa mirrored the historiographical one. Notions of protecting traditional Spanish Christian “honor,” as well as Spain’s superiority and jurisdiction over its “less-civilized” neighbors comprised a significant portion of the nation’s justification for the Moroccan incursion and its increasingly consolidated picture of its own history. At the same time, notions of Muslim Spanishness—historical, cultural and even present-day—were beginning to occupy a significant place in the political discourse, justifying Spanish military intervention in Morocco at the same time that they put forth a sense of camaraderie and shared history between the two nations. The War in Africa was used as a rallying cry to unite Spaniards with a strong sense of traditionalist Christian Nationalism, but it also sparked a renewed interest in “Arabic”—i.e. Islamicate—Iberia and the importance of that legacy for contemporary Spanish-Moroccan relations.

Ginger enumerates the mix of feelings of superiority to as well as identification with Morocco that surrounded the Spanish-Moroccan conflict. There was, as previously mentioned, the fear of outright invasion carried over from the seventeenth-century Ottoman threat and the belief that North Africans, as descendants of the Berbers that invaded Iberia in the eighth century, would have somehow inherited this “usurper spirit.” Furthermore, as Spanish Arabism grew, so did the Orientalizing and exoticizing fascination with Islamicate cultures (López García 142; 147-48 and Ginger 151-52).53 Also, given the liberal Romantic trend in Spain that highly valued independence and liberty, there is evidence of the Spanish incursion on Moroccan soil as being read

53We know, of course, that this nineteenth-century trend was not a new innovation in West-East [or rather, West-West (in its idea of the East)] relations, given Barbara Fuchs’s informative studies on Maurophilia in Golden-Age Spain.
problematically, for it recalled, for some, Spain’s own fight to be free of French rule. For the politically liberal, then, a justification of Spain's involvement that maintained in-tact the autonomous spirit of the Moroccan people was required so that Spaniards, finally free of the yoke of French rule and in a position to govern themselves, would not be turning around and imposing the same kind of external rule on Morocco (Ginger 149). Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, one of the most often-cited and studied chroniclers of the conflict, demonstrates this mix of superiority and identification, even in overtly colonizing texts.

Despite the overall colonizing spirit of his works, there are moments, particularly in Alarcón's poetry, in which this conflicntual identification between Spain and Morocco shows through. These are points at which Alarcón “expresses deep sympathy for the Africans and finds himself troubled by being at war with them” (Ginger 149). He declares “hondo pesar” for his participation in the conflict with “una gente que admiro y compadezco de todas veras” (149). As an Andalusian, he identifies doubly with Moroccans, for he believes strongly in the cultural parallels—and mutual historical inheritance and legacy—between Andalucía and Morocco: “Yo no sé ya quién soy, ¡oh Mahometano!” He writes in a poem to Chorby, a prominent Muslim literary figure, “Pienso que soy…el mismo que tú eres,” and he goes on to express their similarities as ex-patriot Andalusians (149). He expresses a sameness between Spaniards and Moroccans, in both their mutual history and their fight to express their autonomous identities against foreign forces at home. What Ginger finds in Alarcón’s observations, as well as in those of some of his artistic contemporaries who likewise traveled to Morocco to document the Spanish war efforts, is a coming together of multiple conflicting perspectives on Morocco and its relationship to Spain, in which the traditional, Christian
Nationalist discourse of Spanishness is engaged but not fully or exclusively expressed. What emerges is, rather, a sympathetic identification between the two nations, resulting in a “movement away from an interpenetration of North Africa as exotically passionate, violent, polychromatic, and sensual, and towards an emphasis on restrained dignity, [that] is intimately related to the inner independence and freedom of the spirit that is the essence of Moroccan autonomy” (153). There are glimpses of this identification between Spain and Morocco—and the link between the vibrant medieval cultural identity that corresponds to both—and a strong sense that Moroccans, even as part of an Islamicate state, deserve the right to self-governance, free from the territorial and political usurpation of external forces.

The Válor relación de los moros y cristianos also emerges from within this historic context. The identification of Iberian Muslims and Moriscos as authentically Spanish, and therefore the unjust treatment that they endured after Granada changed hands post-1492 forms the backdrop for and allegory of the subsequent conflictual relationship between nineteenth-century Moroccans and Spaniards.

Whether or not Lozano was the actual creator of the Válor relación, and barring possible significant changes the text may have incurred in the century and a half between its composition and present-day performances, it is clear that the Válor relación is deeply embedded with the aesthetic and political preoccupations of mid-nineteenth century Spain discussed above. Baumann dates the text at 1860, right at or after the end of the War in Africa (218-20). Checa and Fernández Soto have identified several other local towns whose relaciones are most likely related to if not derivations of the Lozano Válor relación, and Baumann notes that several of these texts make explicit mention of the Rif
Wars and/or the War in Africa as contemporary historical markers (Checa and Fernández Soto 282-83; Baumann 26). The dialogue of the Válor moros y cristianos includes a direct and specific reference to the Spanish incursion on Moroccan soil, that, like the sympathetic presentation of the Expulsion of the Moriscos, accounts for the War in Africa as another such violent and egregious affront on a group with historical ties to Spain and Spanishness.

Officially, the Spanish invasion of Morocco (1859) and its occupation of Tetuán (1860-88) were motivated by the need to restore Spanish honor and dignity after the “ultraje inferido al pabellón español,” not only from the attack on Ceuta, but also from the smaller offenses to Spanish pride and honor surrounding the attack and leading up to the invasion. As I previously discussed, this specific language was employed by the Spanish ambassador in Tangier to the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs on four separate occasions during their correspondence in September and October 1859, and was likewise presented verbatim in the Minister of State’s two addresses to Spain’s allies abroad as the primary justification for Spanish military intervention (“Documentos”). Thus, when this terminology appears in the Válor relación, it is reasonable to attribute to it the weight of the Spanish justification for the War in Africa and thus read it as an explicit reference to the conflict. In the Válor moros y cristianos, it is not used by the Christians to proclaim their rightful ownership and occupation of the castle and Válor in general, however. Instead, the Moorish Ambassador uses it to describe the offenses committed by the Spanish crown against his ancestors and himself. When he first arrives to exhort the Christian king to surrender without a fight—the embajada of the first act—the embajador moro legitimates the Moorish presence in Válor with a lament for the
cruelty of the Reconquest and Morisco Expulsion:

Tras largos años de terribles guerras,
de sangrientos y horridos combates,
don Fernando el Católico y su esposa
nos arrojaron de los patrios lares.
No hubo rincón en la florida vega,
que no regase la morisca sangre
teniendo que llorar en la derrota,
los más tristes y públicos ultrajes. (769; emphasis mine)

This use of the very (literal and official) reasoning for the Spanish incursion on Moroccan soil serves to (1) connect the horror of the Morisco Expulsion (the relación’s subtext) to the contemporary conflict between Spain and Morocco (the relación’s context), and (2) invert the narrative of Muslim offenses to Christians, demonstrating the latter’s aggression against the former. To further solidify the relación’s intertextuality with the War in Africa, the embajador cristiano refers directly to a “hypothetical” Spanish invasion on Moroccan soil, when trying to convince the Moors of their error in invading:

¿Qué hicieras tú si al África tu tierra
marchasen mis intrépidas legiones
sembrando por doquiera muerte y guerra?
Arrollando tu [sic] banderas y pendones?
Entonces tú como fiero mahometano
impávido empuñaras tu terrible lanza
y blandiéndola contra el soldado hispano,
tú mismo tomarías justa venganza. (783)

Given the dating of the *relación* as around the time of the conflict in Africa and most likely after the Treaty of Wad-Ras, this hypothetical invasion of Morocco can only be understood ironically;\(^{54}\) since this invasion was not, in fact, hypothetical, the *relación* clearly supports the Moroccan’s right to defend their own territory against Spanish occupation.

This mention of a hypothetical invasion accelerates the dramatic momentum of the entire representation, connecting the War in Africa to the cycle of conflict between Iberian Muslims and Christians at the same time that it sympathizes with and justifies the military counter-offensive of Moroccan Muslims as it did for the Moriscos in their expulsion. The subtext of the Morisco Expulsion as allegory for the context of the War in Africa inverts the nature of these cycles of conflict between Moors and Christians and places the blame on Christian Spaniards for their unfair treatment of the Muslim cultural brothers. Furthermore, the nineteenth-century Romantic insistence on individual autonomy and the emotional connections to the land expressed by the Moors influence and reinforce the *fiesta*’s reading of the Morisco Expulsion as unjust. It makes their connection to the land that much more potent, and allows their conversion to be a restorative act, though of course one that is a fantasy that ignores the historical reality of the conversion situation being re-imagined.

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\(^{54}\) We can be flexible in approaching these dates, since there is evidence of Spanish colonial designs in Morocco since the early 1850s and political incidents had begun occurring much earlier (O’Donnell 67).
Deep Time and a Vision of Future

The (historical) Valoreño Muslims' re-incorporation into the community through their voluntary conversions marks a change in the historiography of the region going forward. No longer is it necessary to continue with interminable battles between Muslims and Christians, both guests and hosts in the region, for all parties have happily and voluntarily united under the patronage of Santo Cristo and can remain in their beloved Válor. One of the citizens of Válor with whom I talked on the night of the procession (Saturday) described the festive weekend as “el grito del pueblo” and thus a performative act of communal unity that unites all residents of Válor, past, present and future. The declaration that ends the moros y cristianos, “que a esa Yedra de amor por siempre unidos, / vencedores seremos, jamás vencidos: / ¡Viva Santo Cristo de la Yedra!”—seems to be that very cry (Baumann 788). (Expelled Morisco) Moroccans as well as Christians can claim eternal victory under this patronage, as the Arabic writing on the castle suggests. As Bernabeu Rico explains, the festive act performs the comunitas, a “nosotros colectivo,” which in this case includes the recognition of a shared connection with the land and the voluntary acceptance of Mary and Santo Cristo's reign over it (73). The future fictional setting—versus the specifically past setting of most moros y cristianos—makes this drama not so much a reenactment but a future (re)imagining and re-incorporating of expelled citizens into the Christian fold. It cannot be overlooked that this re-incorporation requires conversion to Christianity and, as such, it does continue Christian Spain's monologue with itself about the nature of its citizens.

The contemporary context and commentary on the War in Africa, however, a conflict that ostensibly had nothing to do with religious affiliation, and the emphasis on
one's emotional connections to the land and the personal liberty to choose a place of residence and autonomous governance there further moves the drama's focus away from cyclical conflicts between Moors and Christians and suggests a new vision of future going forward. As Bakhtin concludes, “the feast is always essentially related to time,” and it is this time that creates a “second life of the people, who for a time enter the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance” (9). The rey moro's emphasis on his love for Válor as homeland in the broadest and least-political sense shifts the conversation away from a political timeline that is intertwined with nation and zooms out to a much deeper sense of time's extension and duration, much like the way that Dimock conceives of it. Deep time goes beyond (miniscule) political changing of hands that occurred (cyclically or otherwise) in the few hundred years that span Spanish national historiography and instead emphasizes the continuity of the space over millennia. The landscape is relatively unaffected by these political struggles, demonstrating their insignificance in the grand scheme as tiny bumps or just slight variations in patterning the extension and duration of deep time.

Dimock also accounts for religious systems in the broadest sense as threads that pervade, taking on different shapes and different characteristics at different moments. This broader notion of a religious spirit is approximated by the generalized, inclusive Christianity performed in the Válor moros y cristianos and the festival weekend as a whole. The ceremonial beginning of the festive weekend occurs with the lowering and raising of the patron in the Church on Saturday afternoon and in many ways, this and the procession on Saturday night represent the contemporary community's performance of the unity created by the conversion at the end of the moros y cristianos. The entire
community crowds into the little Church, spilling into the aisles and out the doors, hoping to get a glimpse of the large, gilded statue of Santo Cristo as it is skillfully and carefully taken down from its spot behind the altar, brought around to the front, and ceremoniously lowered and raised as the band plays the national anthem and the crowd applauds enthusiastically. During a break in the celebration, the pastor speaks of the importance of the festive weekend as the time everyone has been looking forward to for an entire year. It is the time in which divinity, “dormido” up until that weekend, comes down to walk and live among the people. The priest mentions how their patron has come with his arms outstretched, happy and ready to hug everyone, to hear their sorrows and to bring them joy and peace. Though of course an explicitly Christian notion of divinity, this characterization of the patron is perhaps the most undogmatic and inclusive image possible, and it conforms to the moros y cristianos’ reworking of the (historically) failed promise to Moriscos. This Santo Cristo is for all (Christian) community members, not just those who can demonstrate their limpieza. As the end of the sermon nears, the priest raises his voice more and more, clearly eliciting an emotional response from the entire congregation. This sermon ends with a rousing: “and let us say in one voice, all together, ‘¡Viva Santo Cristo!’” and the entire congregation shouts “¡VIVA!” Finally, after another series of raising and lowering, in which, with every raising, the crowd proclaims “¡VIVA!” and applauds, the ceremony comes to a close. Slowly, many make their way to the altar so they can have their photo taken with their friends and family by the image, resting prominently in front. After the ceremony ends, I see very few individuals whose eyes were not wet with tears. Nevertheless, the atmosphere is jovial and festive, full of reunions and greetings.
Saturday evening brings what for many represents the pinnacle of the fiesta, the procession of the patron. Beginning at the church, the image is carried slowly and solemnly through the town, preceded and followed by a long line of penitents and accompanied by the band. At regular intervals, the procession stops as spectacular displays of fireworks are set off at various places around the town. The streets are lined with the rest of the festeros and observers, sitting out on the terraces of the bars or simply mingling among the crowd, waiting for the arrival of the procession and in the meantime, enjoying the company of family and friends, new and old. What Bernabeu Rico expresses about the Villena fiesta seems to be equally true for the Válor festival as well: it presents a moment “en un tiempo distinto, en un lugar de paraíso, en el que la comunidad se siente y expresa con lo mejor que ella tiene de sí misma” (74). Smiles, hugs and laughter, along with a certain solemnity that comes with devotion to the patron, act as the universal festival language that transcends even the most solid barriers constructed by difference.

The evening of the procession, I share a bar table with a group of British ex-patriots, many of whom have lived in Válor for a decade or more but speak very little Spanish. They all participate in the festivities with equal alacrity, greeting their neighbors in a broken Spanish that nevertheless communicates the spirit of community and friendship that pervades the evening. Even linguistic barriers seem to dissipate in the festive act of the procession, and all are festeros, participants in the festive performance, whether joining in the march or simply contributing to the festive atmosphere as observers.

That evening, I have the opportunity to talk with several Valoreños, all of whom expressed a similar sentiment about the importance of the fiesta weekend, though in different ways. Arancha, a native Andalusian who moved to Válor as an adult,
underscores the importance of the tradition of the festival in all its parts: the solemn, religious, spectacular, and carnivalesque. “La gente está muy arriagada a sus tradiciones,” she proclaims. Their faith and traditions are intimate, communal and “suyo.” She describes the festival weekend as the time by which the rest of the year is measured, its pinnacle and center point. The fiesta weekend opens up a special, transcendent temporal space looked for all year long, by the religious and the non-religious, the young and old, natives and immigrants alike; the sum total of the community's positive hopes for the future.

The moros y cristianos is a central aspect of the festive weekend that performs this future-oriented spiritual temporality as it manifests and resolves historic tensions. Rather than monolithically supporting a Reconquest ideology, the moros y cristianos in Válor re-presents various factors at play in the making of these ideologies, revisiting and, to a certain degree—though not completely—reversing the historical circumstances and thereby finally bringing to a close the repetitive cycle of conflict. Here, the direction of the aggression is the opposite of that of the War in Africa and the final conversion allows for full membership into the religious community rather than creating a new racial group to be singled out for stigmatization. The drama reincorporates expelled Moroccan Moriscos into the Spanish Christian Valoreña community, recognizes Morocco's political sovereignty and shared history with Spain, and emphasizes the duration and extension of the majestic Iberian landscape over smaller political divisions and changes. Finally, through this second attempt at the Morisco conversion, political and ethnic differences manage not to interfere with the reality of sincere conversion. This Christian festive time is connected to various pasts but not always already rooted in them, as with so many
cyclical presentations in other *fiestas*. The festival weekend, and the *moros y cristianos* in particular, performs a communal present—Chakrabarty’s “shared and constant ‘now’”—through its collective rethinking that makes the nation’s political and religious concerns, historical and contemporary, present in a literary “future” setting. It finally ends the cycles of conflict as all are joined in their voluntary Christianity and emotional connection to the land.
With the increased tension between Islamist groups and Western nations, the renewed success of the historical novel and the extraordinary popularity of medievalist television and films, there is currently a distinct trend in both political and popular culture focused on reviving and reinventing the Iberian Middle Ages. In this dissertation, I have focused on three texts that attempt to reinterpret and rewrite Medieval Spain through an imaginary medium that invites—and in the case of the fiesta, requires—participants to actively (bodily or mentally) perform new meaning for and through that medieval past.

Either implicitly or explicitly, all of the texts in my corpus purport to counter the monologic discourse and temporal framework of National Catholicism specifically and Western “objective” (political) historiography generally. The latter ideology manages to simultaneously other the Middle Ages as a “dark,” barbaric, and generally “unevolved” era while nevertheless accepting an oversimplified interpretation of the Medieval clash of cultures as the normative set of relations for West and East begun in the Middle Ages and carried through to the present day. Spanish National Catholicism likewise constructs a notion of a universal historical trajectory characterized by cycles of conflict against the (religious) other, whether that means Islam or simply non-Catholicism. Along with a particular understanding of Islam, the use, treatment and interpretation of women and
women’s bodies also forms a central mechanism of both these ideological stances. For the (secular-Christian) West, the articulation and protection of women’s rights stands as a point of pride and cultural “evolution” and a means by which the West continues to assert Islam’s “backwardness.” In Spain’s National-Catholic vision of the world, women serve a specific Marian function and are allowed no more or less than to meet this function of being meek, obedient, sinless childbearers. As such, the marginalized groups of Spanish Muslims and women form two important knots for contemporary historiographic critique and revision, two dominant thrusts at work in all of the texts I examine in this dissertation. Magdalena Lasala’s *La estirpe de la mariposa*, Ángeles de Irisarri’s *El viaje de la reina*, and the annual *fiesta de moros y cristianos* in Válor are all non-historiographic history texts that, in an overtly performative way, attempt a reconciling of the central historiographic and temporal questions put to History with an emancipatory gesture toward two groups both marginalized and appropriated by that very History.

Furthermore, each of the texts I examine unfolds in a narrative mode distinct from that of traditional historiography, making use of the fictive and the dramatic to undermine—among other things—the false presupposition of objectivity inherent to National-Catholic and other Western historiographies. Instead, they embrace the authorial, participatory and readerly subjectivity their own modes enjoy. In doing so, *La estirpe de la mariposa, El viaje de la reina* and Válor’s *fiesta de moros y cristianos* to some extent all engage in a kind of performative rendering of the past as present progressive rather than past perfect. This active engagement closes—at least partially and

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55 For more on women’s roles in Francoist cyclical time, see the chapter two of this dissertation.
momentarily—the emotional and temporal “distance” created by supposedly objective historiography and attempts to make new meaning from and out of that past.

Alternative History as A Critique or a Revision?: Summary of Arguments

Particularly with the (New) Historical Novel, but generally widespread in cultural production post-Structuralism, there is a tendency to be suspicious and critical of both the institution of History and the specific narratives it has created. Therefore, much of the more thoughtful cultural revivings and rewritings of the Middle Ages appearing presently focus to some degree or another on exposing the inherent biases and problems with (established) historical narratives and seek to “correct” or “replace” existing narratives with new ones. This latter is an understandable tendency that grows out of the former; in regard to both women and Muslims, Spanish History is a discipline marked—like that of much of its Western counterparts—for being predominantly male, “uniformly Christian and normatively white” (Lampert 393). The relative absence of women from much established historical narrative is commented on by both Lasala and Irisarri as motivation for their writing. Additionally, while Muslims certainly do have a presence in official (Catholic) histories of Spain, and contemporary historians and scholars of other disciplines are revealing a much more careful, sensitive and nuanced picture of religious tendencies and relations in medieval Iberia, there still exists a strong, totalizing cultural discourse that view Muslims in the static, imagined terms of the “Moor.” The growing population of Spanish Muslims—and particularly, those native-born citizens who

56 As I discuss more thoroughly in chapter two, de Groot maintains that this critical and subversive attitude toward historiography proper has always been present in the historical novel—to greater and lesser degrees—from the beginning.
converted to Islam, Moros nuevos—has been working to not only present Islam as indigenous to Spain but also to criticize the dominant narrative of the 711 Muslim invasion and supplant it with one that instead highlights the violence and trauma suffered by (Muslim) Spanish citizens throughout history. Clearly, the impulse to criticize extant historical narratives gives rise to the practice of replacing them with a more “correct” history. Nevertheless, these two thrusts when applied wholesale can be paradoxically incompatible, particularly when the specific and targeted critiques of historiography (the historico-critical thrust) that emphasize the fallacy of objectivity, among other things, are ignored or simply not applied to the supposedly “truer” or more “correct” narratives being presented (the historico-revisionist thrust). While both novels and the fiesta de moros y cristianos in Válor all engage in both moves, none of them fully accounts for the paradox of the moves’ coexistence.

Each of the two chapters in the body of this dissertation (two and three) has examined a revival of medieval Iberia from the perspective of or with a greater sensitivity toward one of these two groups that have been marginalized by Catholic (patriarchal) history but appropriated by the temporal logic that historiography invokes. The texts of the corpus attempt to supplant, alter or at least draw attention to the state of Catholic Spanish history as a monologue with itself, thereby both 1) criticizing the biased optic and temporal logic of National-Catholic narrative and historiographic practice and 2) fleshing out a new narrative vis-à-vis the group in focus.

In chapter two, I analyzed two historical novels by and about Spanish women. Both La estirpe de la mariposa and El viaje de la reina have been classified as part of the New Historical Novel movement and as such—and according to interviews with the
authors themselves—both attempt a kind of historical vindication of women’s role in Spanish medieval history. Despite these similar aims, the novels’ approaches and levels of success are quite distinct. Notwithstanding the strongly affective portrayal that draws the reader in to a new and personal experience, *La estirpe de la mariposa* only manages to reinscribe an essentialized, Francoist vision of women and their bodies. The allure of strong, confident and articulate women ultimately gives way and their final end is divinely inspired procreation that furthers a cyclical, conflictual vision of history. In contrast, *El viaje* rejects the appropriation and inscription of women’s bodies for the purposes of a (patriarchal and Catholic) cyclical divine plan. Instead, it binds women's historical protagonism up with questions of discursive power, self-critically emphasizing textuality and a kind of performativity of the past over (end-directed) temporality.

In chapter three, I presented an alternative perspective on a popular religious folk ritual that traditionally has been read as upholding and furthering National-Catholic ideology: the *fiesta de moros y cristianos*. Despite its Christianizing thrust, this particular festival takes a distinctly sympathetic point of view on Iberian Muslims and Moriscos. Like the historical novels, the Válor *fiesta de moros y cristianos* also recalls a religiously focused cyclical concept of time, though here it is based upon a notion of recurrent military conflicts with a religious enemy rather than a notion of regular religious renewal through rebirth. The Válor *Moros y cristianos* performs a sympathetic reversal of the Morisco expulsion as a way out of the temporal cycles of conflict that characterize other retellings and National-Catholic historiography at large. The *moros y cristianos* ends with a “solution” that, despite its Christianizing thrust, attempts to reverse the expulsion and re-work and re-institute the failed promise to the Moriscos upon converting. Through that
reversion/revision and an emphasis on the land itself, it manages to move away from the repetitive cycles of conflict toward a vision of a future. In a simultaneously “future” and retro-active move, the fiesta returns to key site of the cyclical conflict that haunts Spanish history to finally cauterize old wounds and move forward beyond them as a harmonized community.

By way of a coda, here in the conclusion I will present one additional example of a recently published Spanish text that once again (1) recalls the Spanish Middle Ages in order to (rewrite and) supplant established hegemonic National-Catholic historiography with a more nuanced and variegated vision of Spain’s medieval past (a historical revision) and (2) both implicitly and explicitly draws attention to the problematics of written history when approximating the truth of a diversity of lived experience (a criticism of historiography broadly). Párrafos de moro nuevo is a richly complex text that deserves critical treatment in its own right. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, it presents a fresh, self-reflexive and dynamic perspective that conveniently unites the main thrusts of the successful texts I examine in the previous two chapters (El viaje de la reina and the Válor fiesta de moros y cristianos). Párrafos de moro nuevo highlights the centrality and potency of textual discourse (like El viaje de la reina) and the capacity of a collective communal performance (like the Válor fiesta de moros y cristianos) to engage empathetically with a community’s past in order to carve out a distinct vision of its future apart from nationalist temporality.

57 I use the term “successful” as it relates to the texts’ aims of presenting an alternative history, both in terms of narrative and underlying logic. For that reason, I mostly exclude La estirpe de la mariposa from this final discussion except when it is useful as a point of contrast. I find La estirpe de la mariposa to be ultimately unsuccessful in providing an alternative narrative; rather, it reifies National-Catholicism’s appropriation of women for its providential thrust, with only a veneer of feel-good “feminism.”
Furthermore, Párrafos engages in these two lines of inquiry (into text and communal performance) while revealing and wrestling with the inherent paradox of the historico-revisionist and historico-critical projects engaged in jointly. This is something El viaje hints at in its self-critical irony but never explicitly states and the fiesta omits entirely: that the dual purposes of historico-revisionist and historico-critical texts are inherently at odds with one another. On the one hand, the desire to “correct” or at least nuance extant historiography gives way to a revision of history that presents a supposedly “truer” narrative. On the other, the same texts often also engage in pointed and meaningful criticism of some of the underlying problems historiography poses—i.e. the fallacy of objectivity, the temporal logic that works as a means of othering—and as such, they often undermine or explicitly reject the overarching structures that provide meaning and legitimacy to any historical or historiographical project, including the text’s own revision. In Párrafos de moro nuevo, this paradox—the seeming impossibility of accurately and empathetically transcribing a lived experience of the past and the simultaneous belief that certain failed histories are still nevertheless correctable—is recognized as fundamental to the historical project and reconciled only through a complementary text-based and communal spiritual experience. That is, Párrafos, like El viaje de la reina and the Válor moros y cristianos 1) indicts extant (National-Catholic) historiography and 2) offers a supposedly “more correct” alternative while 3) presenting a broad criticism of the historiographic project in general, including its own revision and 4) performing the past as present through a communal, text-based and spiritual experience.

Párrafos de moro nuevo is a text that specifically evades singular generic categorization and seeks instead to reflect on and give voice to a whole host of contextual
and theoretical concerns. Written by the prolific Muslim essayist Hashim Ibrahim Cabrera, it was published both online and in print in 2002 by Spain’s Junta Islámica. In addition to having written numerous books and a large amount of web content, Cabrera also works as Director of Content for the Junta’s online community Webislam, which offers—along with a detailed directory of resources for Spanish Muslims and a vibrant social network—historical, journalistic and philosophical articles with a focus on the contemporary concerns of Islam generally and Spanish Muslims in particular. Párrafos de moro nuevo presents a uniquely intimate perspective on the concerns, practices, and outlook of a growing group of native-born Spanish Muslims who converted from Christianity—and thus “Moros nuevos” as a play on the designation of “Cristiano nuevo” versus “viejo”—but also goes beyond this categorization. Along with its reflection on the religious, political and cultural experience of Moros nuevos, Párrafos has as strong literary and philosophical component.

Generic and temporal experimentation are two main techniques that reveal a central preoccupation with the concept of text. It moves almost seamlessly between an at-times dizzying array of generic frames: historical novel, autobiographical narrative, historiographic critique, revisionist historiography, philosophical treatise, poetic mysticism, and pilgrim’s narrative. Along with these distinct modes, there is an external frame comprised of a (mostly) third-person narration that depicts the entire process of imagining, writing, and revising the text itself. Given this array of frames and foci, the text does not read as a straightforward narrative in any respect. Instead, it is composed of generally—though not exclusively—chapter-length snippets of narratives, intellectual ruminations, historical and political statements, and descriptions of the writing process.
All the different components hinge on multiple incarnations of the character Hisham, whose name, Mazquiarán de Rodríguez points out, is intentionally close to the author’s name, Hashim. Hisham appears as a young boy in the historical novel (set in Caliphal Cordoba); as the narrative voice describing religious experiences on the hajj and in his daily practices as a Muslim; as an adult in contemporary Spain working on Webislam, attending Muslim conferences and speaking with a varied group of intellectuals; and as the “narrador literario” writing *Párrafos* itself as part of the contemporary narrative. Here I will focus on the areas of dialogue with the other texts in the corpus—the historiographic critique, historical revision, literary meditation and pilgrim’s narrative—though all the textual elements blend together without notable transitions. Chapters are designated with numbers and epigraphs rather than by theme or title. Given the intentional confusion between the various Hishams, it is often not obvious when one scene or discourse ends and another begins. Sometimes context is developed with a sentence or two and mediated, interrupted or juxtaposed with the philosophical reasoning of the “narrador operante,”—the most external (third-person) commentary on the entire process of imagining and writing—and at other times it is left out entirely. Characters and conversations appear and reappear with a recurring abruptness that by the end paradoxically results in a kind of fluid style that forces additional readings, reconsiderations, and general reader involvement in piecing together coherent narratives, thematic elements, and overarching ideas.

Given the variety of genres and focal points, the text is titled fittingly as “párrafos” and celebratorily “de moro nuevo.” As Abend and Domínguez Díaz both mention and as I discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, one of the central
themes pervading the public discourse of this mostly politically outspoken group of Muslim converts from Christianity is rescuing both the indigeneity of Islam to the Iberian peninsula and unearthing the violence and trauma these Muslims (have) experienced.

Much like Válor’s *fiesta*, *Párrafos de moro nuevo* specifically rejects the National-Catholic narrative of 711 Muslim invasion and turns that narrative on its head, asserting that violent and avaricious Christians were the true usurpers.

**Morisco Genocide and Crypto-Muslims: Párrafos’s Historical Revision**

Like the *fiesta de moros y cristianos*, *Párrafos* devotes a considerable amount of attention to Andalusian Muslims as a group native to Iberia but marginalized by National Catholicism. *Párrafos*’ initial frame that is presented in the very first chapter situates the (historical novel component of the) text in caliphal Cordoba, narrating the daily concerns of those historic Muslims—so often celebrated for their supposedly unprecedented civility and harmonious living—at the same time that it draws an explicit line between them (tenth-century Cordobans), the Moriscos unjustly killed and expelled in the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries (who the text presents as never actually converted in their hearts), and the Andalusian *moros nuevos* represented by the contemporary character Hisham and his colleagues. Much of this attention to the long line of Iberian Muslims comes with a pointed historical revision, both literary and journalistic. Though much of it revolves around a vindication of Iberian Islam—“el devenir de una olvidada identidad”—there are a few surprisingly critical interpretations ([36]).

The Caliphate under abd al-Rahman III and al-Hakam is not depicted in the idealized light shone upon it by writers like Lasala, though terms like *convivencia* are
discussed in reference to it. Instead, the text focuses on the problematic nature of empires—of any kind—and uses the Caliphate as a potent example of the decadence and destruction that are imminent when Muslim leaders focus their attention on achieving a worldly legacy rather than on supporting and fomenting the spiritual good of the *ummah*:

“Cuando los emires tienen vocación imperial y tratan de ejercer el dominio sobre los bienes, las personas y las conciencias de quienes les sustentan, dejan de serlo y se convierten en reyezuelos glotones y sentimentales, tan alejados de la épica como de la crítica” (Cabrera [239]). Instead of taking this supposed Golden Age of Islam in al-Andalus as the proud example of the importance of Islam to Iberia, *Párrafos* uses it as example of the problems of empire and proposes that Islam has a wider range and a longer legacy in the Peninsula than that for which it is often given credit; it goes beyond the “Golden Age” of Cordoba, a period too often both idealized and taken as the one standout Islamicate legacy in Iberia.

This revised interpretation of caliphal Cordoba is perhaps the least significant revision *Párrafos* presents. In one lengthy chapter, the present-day character Hisham meets with a local historian and owner of an extensive private archive, la Duquesa de Medina Sidonia.58 The Duquesa argues forcefully that the Catholic Kings, Carlos V and Felipe II falsified the majority of their documents in order to invent an imperial (military)

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58 Though she is simply referred to as the Duquesa de Medina Sidonia in *Párrafos*, there is little doubt that this character represents Luisa Isabel Álvarez de Toldeo y Maura, the 21st Duchess of Medina Sidonia known as “La Duquesa Roja” (1936-2008). Álvarez de Toledo was a Franco-objector, outspoken (PSOE) political activist and historian. Her family’s palace houses one of the most prominent private archives in Spain and she its careful curator and trustee. While researching in the archive, she found documents that convinced her that it was not actually Columbus that “discovered” the Americas. Lola Galán reports in *El País*: “Se convirtió en una historiadora autodidacta capaz de defender las teorías más sorprendentes basándose, decía, en lo que contaban los papeles. Así llegó a la conclusión de que Colón no había descubierto América, un territorio al que los escritores de la época seguían llamando África, y dio rienda suelta a una serie de revolucionarias interpretaciones que plasmó en una larga decena de libros.”
presence and assert the greatness of their “discovery” of the New World. In contrast to this latter commonly understood notion of Spanish history, the Duquesa points to Moroccan documents and others she has found in the her archive to assert that “hay una guerra que ha desaparecido de la Historia”: namely, a war for control of the Canarias which, she maintains, included Cuba and other “New World” territories that had already been “discovered” before Spain arrived on the scene ([38]). In this version of history, the National-Catholic narrative of the glory of the Spanish Armada is picked apart at the same time that and by the same methods with which Morocco specifically and medieval Muslims generally are elevated for their historical feats.

While such an interpretation contrasts so starkly with the generally agreed-upon narratives of Western history that it resonates more with conspiracy theory than historiography, Párrafos de moro nuevo presents the Duchess with an archival meticulousness that would belie reading her in such a way. She is rational and cogent and presents Hisham and his friend with a dearth of documentary evidence that leads them to believe that it is not her neurotic or paranoid interpretation, but in fact the documents themselves that reveal this (supposed) historical truth:

la alteración de los textos por razones políticas y religiosas había sido una constante en la Historia de España. Los grandes hitos sobre los que descansaba la memoria colectiva de los españoles, claves de la identidad de toda una comunidad, no sólo hicieron aguas, sino que sin remedio se ahogaron ante las evidencias, manuscrito en mano, que les presentó la noble señora. ([36])

She is even careful to separate her personal belief from that which is verifiable from the documents, mounting the sense of possible historical truth to be found in documentary evidence. Though it is a jarring revision, Párrafos appears to accept this alternate interpretation as entirely plausible, and it seems to lend legitimacy to the project of
establishing the indigeneity of Islam to Spain and to support the evidence that a consistent group of crypto-Muslims has been living in Spain from the arrival of Islam in the peninsula to the present day.

Like the Válor fiesta de moros y cristianos and the vision of the expulsion presented by Baumann, the Duquesa also argues that the expulsion of the Moriscos represented an unprecedented breaking of promises to and the eventual genocide of Spanish Muslims. Furthermore, she also asserts—though she admits that her sources in this case are inherited anecdotes from contemporary Muslims rather than historical documents—that those Moriscos that did manage to remain (and were not exterminated or expelled) maintained their beliefs and practices and passed them on to their children: “Eran musulmanes en secreto, musulmanes por tradición y me lo dijeron confidencialmente” ([43]). The introduction to Párrafos by Abdenur Prado and an unidentified Granadan Muslim’s recollection of his coming to the faith recounted earlier in the text likewise support this idea of latent Islam and its heritability, even in those who did not know to call themselves Muslim. The “hermano de Granada, musulmán,” recounts that, “siendo aún niño, estuvo junto al lecho de muerte de su abuela y ella le dijo ‘…el cristianismo no es tu religión. Cuando seas mayor, estudia la historia de tu país y descubrirás cuál es tu verdadera creencia’ ([23]). Through both its historical-novelistic representation and its explicit contemporary dialogue with historiography, Párrafos de moro nuevo attempts a revision of Spanish historiography in which the official History that “se ha convertido en pura política,” belies a reality of a Spain firmly rooted in Islam, from before its consolidation into a nation into the present day ([44]).
As with any historical revision and, in fact, any historiography, there are several problems with this (new) interpretation. First is the logical problem that follows the emphasis on documentation. The Duchess insists that the Spanish crown consistently falsified documents in order to present a dominant imperial front. This scrutiny of historical evidence does not stand up to those documents she presents as counter-examples to serve her own argument, however. Somehow, the official documents are skewed but those that speak to the Duchess’s theories are patently true. In an attempt to vindicate Islam in Iberia, from its arrival to the present day, the text both (a) allows for the possibility that Islam can be and is inherited, even by individuals who have no experience with it and therefore have not made a conscious profession of belief and (b) writes a new historiography that essentially glorifies the achievements of an Islamic empire along with its denunciation of a Catholic one. Additionally, in a move similar to but opposite of the Válor fiesta—which denies the coercive nature of forced conversion and the possibility of insincerity when converting—with this description of Moriscos (and, by extension, present-day Andalusians), Párrafos patently denies the possibility that any of these Morisco individuals could have been sincere converts to Christianity.

Along with these potent examples of historical correction—that are mentioned periodically throughout the whole of the text and not confined to the single early episodes described above—are fervent critiques of contemporary political practices with an eye to shifting the interpretation of current events. In one of the contemporary narrative episodes, Hisham describes a conference he attended in Libya in which he hears a speech by ousted Libyan leader Muamar Qaddafi. Hisham describes the infamous Libyan upon his initial entrance as “aquel hombre que había sido objeto de una de las campañas de
imagen más feroces perpetradas por los medios de comunicación de masas en ese milenio…” ([205]). Once Qaddafi has spoken, Hisham admits that “no respondía en absoluto Kadaffi a la imagen que la propaganda occidental había ofrecido de él. No era un lunático ni un extremista, no exhibía ninguna prepotencia ni mostraba una actitud desafiante” ([208]). In fact, he is an intelligent, humble, sincere and deeply faithful Muslim, who “no solo era un líder nacionalista o panarabista sino islámico” and that is most likely the reason he has been so threatening to and therefore vilified by the west ([208]).

Along with this alternative interpretation of late-twentieth-century global politics, Párrafos also does not shy away from treating one of the most critical events in the supposed clash between Islam and the West: the 9/11 hijackings and attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. This occurs in the final chapters and it enters into the text through an extended conversation between Hisham and his friends—fellow Webislam editors and writers—about how to address it. While they patently condemn the violence of the actions, Hisham also turns the condemnation toward Western political superpowers and their supposed War on Terror in response to the attacks, again highlighting the inequalities and the need for alternative interpretations: “La guerra no es contra el terror sino contra todos los pueblos que están en la lista de perdedores” ([262]). What begins as a meditation on the tragedy of 9/11 relatively quickly turns into an uncompromising political treatise that returns to the key theme prevalent in all the historico-political revisionism in Párrafos de moro nuevo. It calls out Western (national) hegemony and its systematic and systemic prejudice and violence against Muslims, historically,
historiographically, and presently, painting this war on terror as another in a long line of Christian nationalist on Muslim genocides.

This attempt at historical rewriting, while rightly critical of the homogenizing violence of Spanish National-Catholic historiography, nevertheless simply inverts the narrative of Muslim clashes against the Christian West into the Christian West’s systemic violence against a subjugated Muslim ummah. Early in the text, Párrafos accounts for its own project and that of many of his Webislam colleagues in terms of the final Capitulation of Granada and the end of official Muslim rule on the Peninsula:

Quinientos años después de aquel zafio incumplimiento [de los acuerdos de la Capitulación], unos nuevos muladíes —como antaño, moros nuevos de cristiano— trataban de cambiar aquella historia tejida con alambre de púa, modelada con las tecnologías de la tortura, la deportación y el genocidio, reescrita una y mil veces, ora borrando pasajes sospechosos, ora añadiendo hechos que legitimaran la sinrazón e hicieran más llevadera la decadencia. ([52])

Accordingly, this history of violence occurred in past events and in the transcription of the past. There is such a buildup of these references and critiques, particularly in the first part of Párrafos, that it at first seems to be working for not the total dismantling of a violent historiography but simply an inversion of the depiction of the violence, in which it is enlightened and savvy Muslims who experience constant sieges from a barbaric and constant Catholic foe. In this sense, Párrafos recalls the same temporality characterized by cycles of conflict and the same rhetorically charged us-versus-them ideology that many critics see the fiestas de moros y cristianos as sustaining and that forms an important foundation of National-Catholicism. Furthermore, this inversion achieves little more than the attempted feminist inversion of patriarchy in La estirpe de la mariposa; instead of undermining the particulars of an oppressive practice, it further solidifies the
fundamental logic upon which that practice is built. This problem is not unique to *Párrafos de moro nuevo* and *La estirpe de la mariposa* however, and it represents a pivotal problem in any attempt at historical revision or vindication that is affectively charged. What is interesting about *Párrafos de moro nuevo* and what makes it a useful tool for a concluding comparison of all the texts in this dissertation’s corpus is that it, unlike *La estirpe*, does not stop here, with this attempted historical revision.

Tied in with these attempts at historical revision and contemporary vindication are critiques not only of Spanish national-Catholic historiography but of historiography generally and the problems implicit in the historiographical enterprise. Once the text establishes this overarching criticism, it also turns that on itself, recognizing that the same problems are implicit in its own revisionist project. Immediately following the above fervent denunciation of 500 years of historical and historiographical violence is a recognition of the inherent problem with denouncing one (partial) version of history for another (just-as-partial) one: “Hisham sentía que aquella lucha desigual era difícil, que encerraba en sus lances mucha verdad, demasiada razón y sentido y que, tal vez, incluso fuese inútil, porque aquella no era sino la expresión actual de una antigua e irresoluble paradoja…” ([52]). This paradox is the problem inherent to the human recollection and writing of history: the desire and need for veracity coupled with the ultimate impossibility of recreating a historical moment in its fullness. This latter aspect is precisely the reason Hisham and his colleagues are drawn to revisit Iberian history to bring to light the legacy of Islam and it is also the reason that they, while sincere in their designs and likely correct in many assertions, will likewise fail in their attempts to “correct” Spanish history. What seems in most early passages to be an explicit criticism
of Western interpretations of history and a re-writing from a Muslim perspective gives way in the heart of the text to a more sweeping denunciation of the overarching system by which we collect, organize and document historical lives and events into chronological, rational chunks to tell just one coherent and ostensibly objective narrative:

La historia siempre ha sido mentira porque la historia que se puede narrar no es una sino muchas historias y pretender una sola lectura ha constituído la ocupación predilecta de esos poderes. Resulta absurda la pretensión de encontrar alguna objetividad en los relatos de los cronistas y biógrafos de reyes, príncipes, sultanes y califas, de quienes dejaron memoria de sus nombres en las piedras gastadas de la civilización y de las culturas. Ellos dieron testimonio de su presencia, de su continuidad y su genealogía, fe de su permanencia. Pero la genealogía es tan incierta y precaria como esa misma historia que tratan de mantener. ([242])

And this critique limits itself only to narratable history, drawing attention to the whole host of experiences and occurrences in the past that will never be accessible through our traditional means of communicating the past. *El viaje* takes this one step further when in it Gaudelia catalogs the full variety of her historical sources: “Mi madre me contó lo que oyera. Platiqué con clérigos doctos que revisaron los viejos cartularios de iglesias y monasterios, y me trajeron noticias de los antiguos reyes... Y hablé con gentes de toda condición. Y donde no llegó la memoria, ni el recuerdo, ni los diplomas, lo suplé yo” (387). While it is not novel, *Párrafos*’s criticism is nevertheless both true and potent. When properly applied by the “narrador operante” to his own text and not just official histories under the Spanish crown, it provides a necessary balance to the declarations against the West and its hegemonic anti-Muslim historiography that likewise form part of the text. Once this line of inquiry opens up with the initial expression of the “antigua e irresoluble paradoja,” of history-writing, one of the main thrusts of the text becomes acknowledging—and, to the extent that it is possible, overcoming—some of these
problems inherent to objective chronological historiography. \textit{Párrafos} executes this move through a series of small gestures that change the tone of the piece from revisionist history to literary-philosophical meditation and that ultimately reject reason and chronology as imposed. In their stead—like \textit{El viaje de la reina} and Válor’s \textit{moros y cristianos}—it employs a variety of literary and spiritual techniques to approximate a different kind of truth apart from that which imposes a cyclical, conflictive, and Catholic temporal logic.

The Failures and Powers of (History) Text: \textit{Párrafos} and \textit{El viaje}

From the beginning, \textit{Párrafos de moro nuevo} makes use of an experimental style and a changing repertoire of genres, including historical novel, mystical poetry, journalistic transcription, and accounts of religious rituals. Beyond the obvious benefit of flexibility in tone, narrative optic, and inventiveness, this generic mixing serves to highlight and when possible somewhat attempt to account for failures in more traditional chronological narratives, emphasizing (a) the primacy of text and (b) communal spiritual performance as organizing structures more potent than (and alternative to) rational linear chronology.

The variety of generic structures in place in the text hinge around the person of Hisham in his various manifestations, all of which are taken to be reflections in one way or another of the text’s author, Hashim. For that reason, Mazquiarán de Rodríguez refers to all of them as Hashim/Hisham, drawing attention to the autobiographical overlap between characters. The Hashim/Hisham characters are all central figures: a central character in the historical novel; the central protagonist in the contemporary narrative, the
one who speaks to the historian and goes on the hajj; the poetic voice experiencing and transcribing mystic visions in poetry; the “narrador literario,” one narrative frame removed from the contemporary character, who sits at the computer typing out the text; and, finally, the most-external narrative voice, that of the “narrador operante,” who comments on the process of writing and communicates the struggles and questions that come into the process along the way. These multiple frames represent an attempt to present the widest possible variety of perspectives and presences, and thus at least several of the “many histories” the text asserts to be necessary to accessing historical truth.

Nevertheless, the attempted multiplicity of angles is obscured somewhat by the seemingly unavoidable presence of Hashim/Hisham in his various manifestations. The text cannot but be sedimented with the presence of Hashim as author, despite the slight change in name; no matter what lengths he takes to avoid it, he can never fully escape his own perspective. Whether he attempts almost word-for-word transcription of conversations he hears or if he attempts to eschew this identity entirely in emotive, mystical meditation, his subjectivity belies any attempt at objectivity.

As Doubleday, Cohen and Denning all suggest, and as I state explicitly in the introduction to this dissertation, true objectivity is virtually impossible, and the guise of objectivity plagued the discipline of History for quite some time. As Doubleday approximates in his analysis of Bisson’s poetic history (“Re-Experience”) and Denning concludes outright, the closest to a veridical representation of history will be one that is conscious of its own contingency, its own subjectivity at all levels (e.g. craftedness, tone, focus, interpretation…). This is a perspective also taken by Párrafos de moro nuevo through its narrative proliferation of the text’s author into the multiple arenas the text
reaches as a history. Furthermore, when describing the work of some of Hisham’s colleagues in the contemporary narrative, the narrador operante affirms that a truthful history is one that is explicitly and consciously the result of a vivid experience, and as such, always already represents a kind of autobiography of its writer or compiler: “historia verídica…surge de la percepción cierta de los hechos, vivida y vivida al mismo tiempo, comprometida y, por qué no, soñadora y autobiográfica” ([227]).

Along with recognizing and embracing the inherent contingency (the authorial subjectivity) of any and all accounts of the past—both explicitly as stated above and implicitly through the persistent presence of Hashim/Hisham—Párrafos also points to two other key problems with historiography: the inevitable gaps and silences produced and the linear, logical chronology almost all historical narrative imposes. The novel makes explicit denunciations of the events and people left out of History—specifically Iberian Muslims and Moriscos—but it also engages in a subtle move to recognize on a theoretical level the gaps and absences that will inevitably occur in even the most rigorous and faithful attempt to record history, regardless of a writer’s intentions.

Rather than employing more traditional narrative markers of the passage of time that focus the attention on the events narrated—either through explicit description of dates and times (e.g. On March 8) or by marking the interval since the last narrated event (e.g. the next day)—temporal signposts in Párrafos draw attention to what is not recorded rather than what is. The text makes use of multiple ellipses to pinpoint long stretches in which the text was left unattended and it also explicitly describes these ruptures in the flow of writing. In chapter 27, the text drops in the middle of a sentence, there is an ellipsis, and then a statement that two years have passed since the last
paragraphs were written. The fact that *Párrafos de moro nuevo* took years to complete or that it was a project picked up and dropped various times over the course of those years is neither novel nor surprising. Nevertheless, the text’s recognition of that fact is interesting because it intentionally breaks the (artificial) continuity of a printed text in its final version to reveal the truth of an entire process at work behind the scenes. A final, polished narrative text can be (and most often is) read straight through, a practice which obscures the very non-continuous, non-linear act of the process of writing that is inevitably selective and homogenizing, smoothing over the ruptures and gaps to create a logically ordered chronology. After drawing attention to these gaps in the writing process, the narrador operante asserts that “Las rupturas suelen conllevar casi siempre un reaprendizaje, una vuelta a empezar,” drawing attention to the mental labor of reordering and recentering that is part and parcel of writing ([161]). Even still, the narrador operante laments, “Sufro por lo no escrito,” for those experiences, emotions and memories that were never given voice in his text ([223]).

The texts accounts for the messy, non-chronological and often illogical flow of the writing process through these interludes in which the gaps in composition are exposed, through the seamless flowing from one genre and temporal frame to another, and explicitly through the direct meditations of the narrador operante on the disconnect between the linear chronology crafted by a text and one’s lived experience. He points specifically to the way that narrative sequence leaves little to no room for the whims of memory and the peripeteias of feeling, these actual mental processes at work in which an individual, throughout any given period, might recall back to a potent memory, jump ahead to a future worry, experience a moment of mindfulness and lucidity, and then
become engrossed in everyday concerns. This temporal disjointedness, this nonsequentiality in thought and feeling is in fact the way humans experience the world, not through the evenly paced, linear, tape-measure narrative objective historiography purports to present. The narrador operante questions, “¿Cómo podía retomar el hilo, la secuencialidad de una historia, si los hechos no dejaban lugar para el sentido, ni el tiempo un hueco donde alojar el recuerdo?” (123). In Párrafos, chronological narration is not only an artificial structure imposed on the writing process; it is an artificial restructurings of human experience itself. For this reason, the narrador operante asserts his desire to move away from a horizontal (linear, ordered, artificial) temporality into a vertical, spiritual, experiential one, a temporality that reflects actual lived experience: “Cada vez le resultaba más evidente a Hisham que la determinación de romper la linealidad había sido una decisión acertada que ahora corroboraba la realidad” (142).

Making efforts to include or at least acknowledge absences, non-linearity, multiple genres and multiple versions of authorial subjectivity and its many resonances, “El manuscrito encajaba” (27). It encompasses and compiles, provides order, makes meaning, and creates a reality in itself. Because of this, in Párrafos—and also in El viaje, which ends accounting for its own writing—everything, even a discussion about how to edit/revise the work is part of the text itself: “cuando terminó de hablar se dio cuenta que el diálogo era en ese momento el propio material textual” (51). As with El viaje de la reina, text in Párrafos de moro nuevo becomes a repository of a host of meanings and is simultaneously a structured element—always already affected by the conditions and

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59 Dimock effectively employs the image of a tape measure in order to indict linear historiogriography for its failures and purposeful denial of coevalness to those societies, cultures, and structures that do not fall into line. For more on linear historiography as a tape measure and its failures, see the introduction to this dissertation.
intentions of its creation—and a structuring force that in its own right affects and creates reality. *El viaje* accounts for this in its ironic portrayal of its own creation as, eventually, the work of a Gaudelia Telléz de Sisamón compiling a myriad of sources—including her own invention—for the specific audience of Philip II. Along with *El viaje*’s tongue-in-cheek explanation of the process of historiography—also paralleled in *Párrafos*’s critique of historiography—is the assertion of the potent performativity of discourse. Despite one’s best intentions to faithfully transcribe events, peoples and experiences of the past, the process of historiography literally creates a past in its own right, and this past tangibly affects the present and future.

The result of this highlighting and effective dismantling of typical narrative chronology and the resultant exploration of what a text is and can be is not to eschew narrative altogether—not even an ordered, logical one—but rather to assert the concept of text itself as a potent entity. It is not simply a transparent vehicle of veracious representation that maintains a 1:1 correspondence with lived experience but an experience in and of itself. In this way *Párrafos* nicely resonates with *El viaje de la reina* in the latter’s assertion of the primacy of discourse in the creation of reality, historical or otherwise. In both *Párrafos de moro nuevo* and *El viaje de la reina*, the time of the text is an always already present time, and the textual space provides the theater in which diverse snippets of experience come to be meaningfully articulated as a unit when discourse manifests itself in reality.

*El viaje de la reina* asserts the presenting primacy of text through its empowering of women to protagonize discursively. In this way, the novel, like *Párrafos*, thereby provides an additional mode of historiography that complements and enriches—if it does
not entirely overturn—existing official histories, while maintaining a critical view of this latter. It simultaneously identifies the fallibility of (textual) discourse to transmit history as past while drawing attention to its own creative performative power to break with modernity’s sense of fragmented, progressive time. Just as *El viaje* builds up the centrality of (women’s) discourse as an alternative to (Francoist use of women in) cyclical time, so also does text act as one of the principle means through which humans eschew a fragmented, isolated and postmodern sense of existence in progressive Western time in *Párrafos de moro nuevo*.

Along with the historiographic critique that recognizes, as White noted, the content inherent to narrativizing (plot-making) history, *Párrafos* emphasizes that text (and its narrative) exist as a distinct entity, separate from the actual historical events it recreates. For this reason, among the various generic snippets that comprise the text of *Párrafos de moro nuevo*, a depiction of the very writing process that leads to the manuscript itself appears in all the types of snippets *and* as its own standalone category. As I have mentioned, *Párrafos* divides its textual space into episodes of historical fiction (of young Hisham in Caliphal Cordoba with his family), contemporary narrative (of adult Hisham as he meets with intellectuals—the Duchess, for example—and his Webislam colleagues and attempts to write and revise the text that becomes *Párrafos*), poetic mystic ruminations (on the nature of God, humankind, discourse and reality itself), a pilgrim’s narrative (a detailed present-tense recollection on the hajj), and a more-external description of and meditation on the creation of the text. Text and writing take a central focus in all of the contemporary episodes—Hisham is often described sitting at the computer considering what and how to write the manuscript of *Párrafos* itself—and the
additional frame of the narrador operante is not so much a further narrative frame as much as it is a way of accounting for those influences and actions on a text that often do not or cannot be narrativized.

The narrador operante plays a role in the text rather difficult to articulate, for he exists both as a character-narrator mentioned within the text itself and as a silent force that directs the whole of the manuscript. This narrator is most visible when the contemporary character of Hisham is described (in the third-person omniscient voice) ruminating on and making decisions about the generic direction of the Párrafos manuscript. For example, not only does the text vacillate between a historical-fictive present and a “contemporary” present, but it also dialogs with itself about the most fitting direction to take and about whether to return to a literary, a historical, an autobiographical, a political or another approach. Thus, in the midst of a more straightforward narrative the texts steps back and reflects on the previous section. After beginning with several chapters of historical novel, chapter four is almost entirely a reflection on the process of writing and its possible aims. “Si de verdad Hisham pretendía construir un discurso que expresara la realidad del islam en la Andalucía de su tiempo, no era necesario contar otra vez una historia que, en el mejor de los casos, sería a todas luces parcial e incompleta” ([16]).

The aim of the device of the narrador operante is to admit to the existence of these kinds of questions and dialogues as an integral part of the process of narrating and thus draw attention to the same non-linear experience mentioned earlier while also accounting for the mentalistic processes at work in narrating. An excellent example occurs during one of the many conversations (in the contemporary narrative episodes) between Hisham
as writer for Webislam and his friends and colleagues specifically about what kind of text he should write and how to do it. These become part of the text itself and must be narrated alongside the historiographic, spiritual, and even literary (fictional) episodes. At one point Hisham the contemporary character turns over a manuscript version to Nuri Samauati who then recommends that Hisham make a more solid outline and engage in some pointed revisions. Hisham attempts to explain that he would then have to include that outline and his thinking about and through it as part of the text itself. And “[c]uando terminó de hablar se dio cuenta que el diálogo era en ese momento el propio material textual” ([51]). This device of the narrador operante—that consists of the final narrative, stylistic, and editorial ruminations and decisions about the text—exists in order to approach the narrative process in as conscious and up-front a way possible, aware of the mental processes constantly and continuously acting on the text in a way that “objective” narratives—historical or otherwise—never would. The function of the narrador operante, essentially, is to both more explicitly connect and more fully reveal the connections between all the various kinds of episodes presented in Párrafos. As the most-external frame of the text, it represents an entity distinct from the other modes, but it is also the entity that links and unifies them. It also serves an additional and deeper function, however, to consistently bring the focus back to the enunciative, creative, and even performative function of discourse itself.

After Hisham explains to Nuri and the others that he will need to include that very conversation about style and editing in the manuscript, Nuri comments that that part, surely, would be edited out in the final version: “Pero eso... así... es un material en bruto que luego vas a pulir ¿no?” ([51]). Hisham is firm, however, that this is specifically the
opposite of his intentions. He admits, “lo que quiero es borrar los limites entre la realidad y la narración, cerrar esa herida sangrante” ([51]). With this he simultaneously draws attention to 1) the typical (invisible) constructedness of all narratives and 2) highlights the potency of text in its power to articulate and thus create a reality.

This latter power exists in ways that have already been expressed and somewhat denounced by the text: the status of (historical) documents as authenticators of truth— in that one may form a “valid” opinion about a past event provided that there is some kind of corroborating documentation—and thus the thing that in fact creates a “truth” itself. Once a sufficient number of years have passed and given certain tests to “authenticate” the date of the text’s creation, even a document publicizing known lies can become, in itself, an actual historical event and an object of study. Bearing in mind the episode with the Duchess, with reference to official historical documentation by the Golden Age Spanish monarchs, the (more than) implication is of course that what has become to be “known” about the Spanish empire began as a narrative trick. It is this sort of historiographic manipulation—and frequent denial of such—of the imbrication of text with reality that causes it to be a wound in the first place. There is a secondary component to this fuzzy or nonexistent line between narration and reality, and it surfaces within the spiritual dimension that pervades Párrafos.

Along with its more sinister capacities in the manipulation and making of history, text’s crossover into reality provides a kind of gateway to or reminder of what for Hisham forms the ultimate nature of reality itself. The Islamic tradition— much like the Christian tradition, though even more so—relates its spiritual truths in a particularly potent and concrete way with language as tangible in text. Just as in the Gospel of John
the Greek *logos* (here referring to Christ) is related as “word”—“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God…”—the story of Islam begins with the Angel Gabriel appearing to (an illiterate) Muhammad and commanding him to “recite.” The Qur’an is comprised of his recitation and, along with being the most important sacred text for Islam, it also forms one of the most beautiful and poetic examples of Arabic. The fact that Muhammad was told to specifically recite rather than simply “write” and that he then—without any training—composed such an eloquent work is both evidence of and part of the reason for Islam’s emphasis on the use of Arabic for all religious rituals. The idea is that God literally dictated the Qur’an in Arabic and thus it is in Arabic in which one can most uniquely communicate with God. John Esposito elucidates that according to Islamic tradition, the Qur’an is literally a book dictated by God and is the “book written in Arabic that exists in heaven with God” (19). As with other religious traditions, translations of the Qur’an, the Hadith and other central texts do exist and their use is encouraged, but unlike the use of the vernacular in the contemporary Catholic Mass, for example, the translations are considered inferior. Since God literally chose Arabic, Arabic is the best language in which to communicate with God. Esposito refers to what is called the miracle of inimitability; that is, that only through Arabic, and through the specific words revealed to Muhammad, can one most fully commune with the divine *tawhid*, or oneness: “The Quran is the literal world of God, the Creator’s immutable guidance for an otherwise transient world…the Book and the Prophet provide eternal principles” (31). Islam therefore places a particular emphasis on literal textual discourse and this is reflected in multiple ways in *Párrafos de moro nuevo.*
Párrafos’s unique preoccupation with text as its own entity and as it intertwines with and connects everything else resonates strongly with the overall emphasis on (particular) text in Islam. As reflected in the device of the narrador operante as well as in the specific goal set forth by Hisham to “borrar los límites entre la realidad y la narración,” the word exists and text is reality. Spiritual text in Arabic represents the ultimate reality within the parameters of a specific set of discursive circumstances, and it has a performative power that breaks with linear time entirely. These circumstances require both the recitation of a specific set of revealed words and a special frame of mind: “aquello no se podía explicar tan sólo como mera expresión de un rito. Se hacía necesaria una profunda actitud de abandono y sometimiento a la voluntad de Allah para poder soportar una prueba semejante y hacerlo sonriendo, hallándose en ello una vía existencial clara y abierta, donde el yo y el nosotros viven juntos” ([104]). Such a mindful recitation allows one to access the sedimented tradition of an entire world community—across centuries—and to experience one’s presence in the timeless divine unity.

Unity Through Liturgy: Párrafos de moro nuevo and Válor’s moros y cristianos

Key to the textual potential for harmonizing the paradox of historical revisionism for Párrafos de moro nuevo is not simply recognizing the primacy of text as creative of reality—as does El viaje—but also channeling that textual power through a ritual act of recitation in communion with others. It is through that act in which, like with Válor’s moros y cristianos, the oppressive and conflictual temporal ideology initially constructed dissipates into a harmonious act of presenting. Despite the initial construction of a timeline in which a victimized Muslim population suffers at the hand of oppressive
Christian world powers—in Spain and elsewhere—once the narrador operante meditates on the paradox of history (re)writing, the multiple modes and protagonists of the text are finally unified through participation in the religious community and the question of who treated whom badly in Spanish history becomes secondary, at best.

For that reason, it is only when the narrative shifts to describing Hisham’s spiritual path to taking the shahada—when the narrador operante expresses that “la narración estaba alcanzando eso que los físicos llaman ‘masa crítica’…Hisham emergía ahora de su propia memoria, en la época de su yahilía personal, de su ignorancia, antes de ser atravesado por la Recitación” ([181-2]; emphasis mine)—that the overarching narration finally takes on the first person with a unifying effect. Accordingly, the most transcendent moments of the text, in which Hisham achieves his stated goal of breaking horizontal time and thus escaping his own (limiting) desires for historical revisionism, occur when he joins with the global community of Muslims in carrying out their primary religious rituals: regular prayer (salat), fasting during Ramadan, and, most importantly, the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj). Though they are dispersed throughout the text in distinct narrative episodes, told “out of order”—the hajj is one of the first religious experiences described and Hisham’s path to taking the shahada is one of the last parts of the entire text—and intermixed with other generic episodes and types of discussions, taken together they form the climax and emotional core of Párrafos. These are acts that occur in a kind of non-temporal narrative temporality that represents Hisham’s ultimate spiritual ideal of tawhid as oneness in time and oneness of a community under the ultimate oneness of God. This vision of the extension of tawhid through earthly time contrasts sharply with
what Párrafos indicates is the “(post)modern” perspective of both civilizational progress and its resultant social fragmentation.

The salat (ritual prayer) is characterized as a moment of breaking free from the everyday and, however briefly, entering into an existence on a different level: “El tiempo de la azalá es un tiempo sagrado, ajeno al cómputo común de las cifras y de los transcurcos…” ([226]). These emancipatory spaces occur across a whole host of possible settings, from momentary prayers of gratitude to God in the midst of a mundane task—such as chopping wood—to more deliberate, mystic rumination. With all of them, large and small, text is the central medium and plays a starring role, either through a short recitation of a common Arabic prayer or in more meditative poetic musings. As Hisham writes during one entrancing episode in the style of San Juan de la Cruz, “Yo sé que te buscaba en las esquinas mínimas del tiempo, en los silencios largos de aquella noche oscura aguardando la presa…Me encontré contigo y era de noche aún…Así lo habías escrito y así me muestras las líneas imborrables de tu escritura” ([55]). As before, text pervades as the central ordering mechanism and the principle method for divining with God.

These brief snippets of breaking away reach a more profound level with increased staying power once Hisham embarks on the key ritual all able Muslims are called to undertake at least once in their lives: the pilgrimage to Mecca and the multiple rites included therein (the hajj). Hisham is taken aback when he first arrives in Saudi Arabia by the climate, the crowds, and the general atmosphere. Despite the physical discomforts—the heat, the crowded conditions, the smells—he immediately feels at peace among his many brothers and sisters in Islam. As he participates in the variety of
rituals that comprise the hajj, he experiences a transformative peace and calm that
pervades the crowded, rowdy atmosphere and unites all of the diversity of pilgrims in
God’s eternal tawhid.

Sintió que el cumplimiento de aquel ritual prescrito le ayudaba a vivir una
experiencia que estaba teniendo lugar no en el tiempo lineal, lógico y
descriptivo que construye la historia, sino en el tiempo profético en que
los siglos no tienen sentido, donde pasado, presente y futuro conviven
como pura conciencia, momento en el que ya no hay sujeto ni objeto,
conocedor ni conocido. ([99])

What the text’s generic blending and at-times stream-of-consciousness approach to
writing approximate for a criticism of historiography Hisham’s participation in this
central spiritual act fully achieves: a breaking away from the rational progression of time,
its false objectivity and its temporal ideology of repetitive conflict into an experience on
the true temporal plane of God’s tawhid. In Párrafos, as one limited temporality gives
way to the other divine one, the specific problems embedded in the former—objectivity
and subjectivity, the paradox of revisionism, the challenges of text and writing history—
likewise cease to be relevant. This kind of large-scale vision of time as constant in its
flux, and as unified in its diversity, recalls Dimock’s tapestry of deep time and the vision
of time articulated by Chakrabarty in “Time of History and Times of the Gods.” Dimock
poses the notion of religion as a world system that threads its way through the tapestry of
time’s extension and duration, uniting a diversity of individuals who live in distinct
circumstances and centuries. Chakrabarty suggests the importance of multiple temporal
perspectives as an alternative to Western timelines and uses Einstein’s relativity to
suggest that even in this celebrated Western conception, time is specifically relative.
Thus, depending on one’s physical position and perspective—and indeed God would
have a distinct perspective vis-à-vis Earth’s gravitational pull—time changes significantly.

In *Párrafos de moro nuevo*, as the members of the (heterogeneous) ummah participate all together in this transformative experience, the uniqueness and singular experiences of the many individuals that partake remain but the conflictual nature of those differences in contact through history—a central source of the need for both historical criticism and revision—dissipates:

Jamás había visto Hisham nada semejante. Pensó por un momento en los cientos de miles de historias personales que allí se entretejían. Cada uno de aquellos seres tenía sobre su conciencia el peso de una individualidad aunque no era posible mayor anonimato. Por momentos todos los rostros le parecían familiares, como si la dimensión exagerada del número le condujera al reconocimiento inevitable de toda la condición humana, a la disolución real de las particularidades: un misterioso sentimiento en el que todos aparecían únicos e iguales al mismo tiempo. ([100])

Participating in the ritual has the effect of not blurring the differences between individuals but making them (less than) secondary to the great unity that the pilgrimage enacts. They are not simply brought together, but interwoven, implying a more permanent result and of course resonating pointedly with the common etymology between tejer and text, the impetus for and medium through which the union takes place.

Whereas the *moros y cristianos* plays out a cathartic final battle before ending the cyclical conflicts and achieving communal peace going forward after conversion, the hajj as it is presented in *Párrafos* begins from the place of religious commonality—with a large degree of cultural variations, as are also present within the post-conversion Válor harmonized community. Both performances demonstrate the power of performing a designated spiritual text as ritual in further unifying a diverse group that maintains one core similarity, as well as the effect of that unifying text on the temporal concepts used to
construct meaning. For Válor, there is finally a vision of future apart from the repetitive

cycle of religious-military conflict and for the Muslim community as expressed in

_Párrafos_, there is also an escape from the conflict-ridden temporality of the everyday as

ey they approximate the eternal oneness of the divine. Nevertheless, there is not such a clear
distinction between the political and social conflicts that do exist in the everyday and the

expansive spiritual union achieved in recognition of one’s participation in the tawhid.

Beyond a Dichotomous Notion of Spiritual Time: Reconciling the Paradox in Tawhid

Given the treatment of spiritual texts and the rituals of the ummah, in contrast to

those moments described in _Párrafos_ that do not enact such a transcendence—

specifically, the political, social and historiographic troubles that call forth both historical
criticism and revision—it is tempting to construct a dichotomous vision of two temporal
planes: one being that of the mundane, day-to-day actions and political, familial and
cultural concerns, and the other being that of the spiritual, ritual, transcendent
connections with the divine. As Cabrera notes in his collection of edited interviews,

_Experiencias de lo sagrado mas allá de la dualidad_, the “postmodern” person has a

particular idea of what both sacred and profane are. The sacred represents an invisible,
indefable space whereas the not-sacred represents more of the everyday concerns and
experiences. Nevertheless, Cabrera warns against this tendency to create a duality
between sacred and non-sacred. He argues that the concept of temporal linearity and
progress—already revealed to be constructed—is what causes the sense of fragmentation
and isolation typical to contemporary people. Facing the false ideal of sequence, reason
and order that are supposed to be the centering principles of reality according to modern
thinking institutes the belief that there is a disconnect between one’s state in nature—as governed by some kind of rational principle and directed toward some progressive end—and one’s experience of the divine. Within this linear thinking, the spiritual, though present, is set in opposition to the basic (accepted) tenets of rational life. As such, even those personal, sacred experiences that one may accept as positive nevertheless are not and cannot be integrated into the ideal of a progressive logic of history.

Those who might attempt to accept both one’s personal experiences of the sacred and the “objective,” logical linearity of society across time must perforce view these two as separate planes of existence. For Cabrera, however, as expressed in his essays and in Párrafos, the truth is that all human experience occurs on the same plane, the same temporality, and in communion with the whole world civilization, past, present and future:

No hay acciones sagradas y acciones profanas. La experiencia de lo sagrado no es sino una experiencia de Unidad. Delimitarla y concederle un espacio ‘frente’ o ‘junto’ a otra cosa, conceptualizarla, implica precisamente una ‘desacralización’, una manera de olvidar nuestra verdadera naturaleza. Todo es sagrado en la creación divina, toda actividad humana es un acto de adoración, todo ser humano puede acceder a su divinidad interior sin intermediarios, cualquier lugar puede ser un lugar de oración, toda expresión o acontecer puede llegar a ser vivida como lo que en realidad es: una señal divina que le muestra su trascendencia. (Experiencias 4-5)

What appears in Párrafos to be the narration of experiences on two different planes—first, that concerned with social, political and historiographic justice and second, that concerned with the personal and spiritual—are actually just smaller and larger-scale views of the one overarching plane of tawhid in God. What he calls the “true nature” of human beings is that transcendent state of communion brought about by enacting God’s text in a conscious and performative way. That which falls short of this state of presence,
however—that which is concerned with the elements of the historiographic paradox, for example—is not a separate plane of temporality or reality but a state so concerned with the (nevertheless important) specifics of daily living that it forgets or momentarily ceases to view the larger picture of the global and transcendent nature of true reality. This may seem similar to a totalizing position where all temporality becomes subsumed to religiosity but as I will show, Cabrera’s position is in fact similar to Chakrabarty’s and Dimock’s views. Chakrabarty draws from physics to point to the differences in time depending on one’s position and perspective (“Time of History”). Dimock calls on fractal geometry and a discussion of coastal mapping to point to the fact that there are tangible differences in objective measurement depending on the scale of one’s perspective. The idea put forth by Párrafos is quite similar: revelation is ongoing, social justice is always relevant, and historical truth is an impossible ideal that is nevertheless worth striving for. All these things being true, they represent life on the small scale, and remembering the larger, deep perspective can have a far greater effect in creating lasting unity.

Párrafos de moro nuevo presents an anecdote about a bird that has threads in multiple episodes and is illustrative of the way that a focus on the nevertheless important struggles of daily living can, however justified, only reveal part of the true picture of reality. In the historical novel, the young Hisham longs to go hunting with his father Hussein, who values the process of the hunt and its spoils—a prized bird he has captured—seemingly above his own family. When chatting with his friends, Hussein meditates on the spiritual lessons imparted from observing the bird’s relentless singing—in captivity and otherwise—and comparing his life to it:

El pájaro, tanto si está enjaulado como si vive libre, canta porque tiene que cantar, no puede callarse…El hombre puede y debe ver la jaula cuando
está dentro, el pájaro no…Pero los seres humanos tenemos siempre ante nosotros la posibilidad de recordar o de mantenernos en el olvido. De ahí la responsabilidad y el hecho cierto de que somos juzgados por aquello que decidimos libremente. Allah le ha dado al ser humano la llave de la jaula. Puede estar dentro o fuera pero no puede excusarse diciendo que estaba encerrado o que no pudo refugiarse dentro...Dentro de la jaula estamos seguros, protegidos del ataque de las alimañas, pero no podemos volar. Los barrotes son las obligaciones que hemos de cumplir, las formas que debemos adoptar, las palabras que repetimos una y otra vez casi del mismo modo. Son la barrera entre el mundo interior y el mundo sensible, entre un dentro y un fuera que son consustanciales a esta vida y la articulan para que existamos como seres humanos ([64]).

Hisham cannot but work ceaselessly for the social justice concerns near and dear to his heart, including those related to Spanish historiography and the recognition of so much wrongdoing against medieval Iberian Muslims, Moriscos, and their contemporary legacy in Moros nuevos. He also ought to consistently and continuously engage meaningfully with the truth of reality outside his specific circumstances, for it is there that he, and all humans, can fly.

It is through this view of human reality as both including as important historical specifics and moving beyond them into the deep text of spiritual community—a move very akin to Dimock’s conception—that Párrafos attempts an at least partial reckoning of some of the core challenges in the historiographic paradox. While they represent a central pull for him within his personal circumstances, they are just that, and he ought to continually return to the performative text of his deep religious community in order to truly flourish as he returns to his day-to-day task, his version of the bird’s song. Just as Párrafos emphasizes the reality of tawhid as temporally transcendent, it also continues to emphasize the specifics of historical circumstance as important.

As such, God’s revelation is not fixed, despite the unity of the tawhid’s timelessness, and it ought to continue to change and be reinterpreted through the ages.
Any leader who attempts to ossify an interpretation of the Qur’an as definitive misses the vital importance of historical specifics and cuts of the future possibilities of the ummah as a complex and dynamic entity: “La historia está plagada de imágenes de ellos, que son precisamente quienes tratan siempre de petrificar la revelación, fijando la interpretación más conveniente a sus propósitos e intereses y negando con ello el poder que tiene Dios de revelarse en el corazón de quienes viven sometiéndose a la realidad” ([239]). As Chakrabarty notes, one’s experience of time is related specifically to one’s physical position and the effect of Earth’s gravitational pull. So while the experience of God’s tawhid—a truly non-earthly perspective not bound by gravity—will approximate timelessness, humans still live on earth and experience the passing of time. Thus their specific interpretations of God’s revelation do and should change, at the same time that the overarching reality of oneness remains constant.

Returning to the hajj as Párrafos’s central example of communal textual performance that unifies, the scope and effect of this performance is distinct compared with that of the fiesta de moros y cristianos in Válor. While both begin with a heterogeneous grouping that becomes united through a heart-felt ritual performance, Válor’s takes place on the scale of the historically specific, addressing more directly Spain’s ongoing history of conflict and confrontation that centers around its Muslim citizens. The solution, therefore, is also far more specific and presents a kind of viable option for moving on as a harmonized community in some not-so-distant future. While Párrafos de mo ro nuevo addresses similar concerns about the violence and hardships suffered by Spanish Muslims, its “solution” is to take a broader, deeper view of temporality itself. Though this represents a space of communion with members of the
ummah past and future, as well as present, it does not provide the same sort of concrete way forward on the small scale. Despite the deep, transcendent feel of Hisham’s experience of the tawhid in the hajj and with other religious rituals, and Párrafos’s overt recognition of the changing nature of God’s revelation over human time, the texts provides few specific or tangible possibilities to address the fundamental concerns of the small scale; instead, it recognizes them as important and then adjusts the optic to a wider lens. What both the Válor performance and the spiritual exercises as depicted in Párrafos de moro nuevo have in common, however, is that in practice, they speak primarily to and for groups that are fundamentally united. As such, the concrete possibilities for actual change based on an alternative to a historical vision of conflict are, in fact, limited. El viaje, the Válor moros y cristianos and Párrafos de moro nuevo all address the vision of Spanish history as carried out through cycles of conflict that appropriate a marginalized group for the purposes of that vision. The nature of much of the rewriting, however, is such that they are in many ways written by, for, and about a group that least seeks to benefit or that will, by its nature, remain unchanged by the revision.

Performing Monologues: The Potentials and Limitations of Historical Performance

In this dissertation, I have investigated the possibilities and limits of select non-historiographic texts to (re)envision Spain’s medieval past in various performative modes. The second chapter explores the types of historical performance and revision made possible or impossible in explicitly revisionist historical fiction. The third takes an almost opposite approach and examines the harmonizing and rectifying potential of an otherwise explicitly ideological dramatic performance. In this final section, I have
explored a multifaceted text that employs and unifies through its own treatment the thematic focuses and practical concerns of the other two. All three texts, in their distinct foci effectively both perform and reflect on the performance of Spain’s medieval past in regards to a particular marginalized group. They challenge not only the specific past created by normative National-Catholic historical discourses, but also the concepts of temporality that underlie those narratives of the past. They take as their point of departure the stereotyped but still very-much present temporal ideology of the Middle Ages as characterized by cycles of conflict between Muslims and Christians and Islamicate cultures as “stuck in” or “still” plagued by this impulse.

Along with presenting an alternative or revised version of the past, two of the four texts paradoxically wrestle with the theoretical quandary of how to write and experience the past and the role that text plays in this endeavor. In Párrafos, History represents a source of constant tension and disunity, a struggle to present a collective and unified truth from an infinite multiplicity of perspectives and within unequal dynamics of discursive power. El viaje also highlights the challenges posed when attempting to discursively articulate a polyphony of voices and concerns. An interrogation of these texts reveals the imbrication of the past in concerns about the present and future, and the paradoxical challenge of attempting to correct, right, or otherwise account for errors in historical understanding without becoming eternally trapped in the problematic endeavor of (w)ri(gh)ting that past. Both El viaje de la reina and Párrafos de moro nuevo also recognize the performative function of text vis-à-vis reality itself and find this both problematic and liberating.
Three out of the four texts—all but *El viaje*—triumphantly maintain a celebratory and feel-good tone that presents a final vision of a community united at its core moving toward a kind of future. An important problem with this approach is that this affecting performance of unity and harmony within a community—whether it be Válor’s or the entire Muslim ummah—takes as a jumping-off-point a prerequisite of some kind of underlying commonality and a positive, affective drive to maintain and enlarge that shared trait, though the fact of that actual unity is certainly a kind of performative fiction. The characterization of these presenting performances of some past event—and the hajj is as much that as is a historical reenactment—as inclusive of differences provides an important veneer of acceptance and resolution. With a different structure of power and a different interpretation these kinds of communal performances might be easily reworked to be explicitly ideological. As they stand they must also be understood to be a monologue of a community to itself. For Válor, this unity stems from a shared territorial heritage that gives way to religious unity whereas the community of pilgrims on the hajj begins from a religious commonality and further solidify it in the act. The contextual specificity of the Válor performance makes the possibility of a harmonized future seem more viable than the intentionally broad perspective of the entire Muslim ummah as presented in *Párrafos*, which does not provide concrete solutions for the working out of day-to-day struggles, despite the sense of unity through time communicated in the act of pilgrimage.

*El viaje de la reina* is the only one of the texts I have examined in this dissertation that explicitly acknowledges the monologic nature of any given discourse about the past. Despite the generalized critique of History—and of course, Spain’s National-Catholic
History in particular—as homogenizing and silencing, all the texts in effect create their own type of monologue, for as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, no text can help but be contingent on its writer’s experience.

Much of this dissertation has delved into the benefits of personal, affective, affecting and performative modes in the (re)creation of the past. As is evident with *La estirpe de la mariposa*, feel-good texts and warm, communal sentiment are powerful but not always helpful; they represent a seductive space in which one might easily slip into assenting to the rhetoric of ideology. In “The Re-Experience of Medieval Power,” Simon Doubleday wrestles with the balance between the interpretative but empirical endeavor of the historian and his ethical imperative. It is that ethical imperative that leads him to embrace a personal, performative space for the crafting of history and it is within that space which all of the texts analyzed in this dissertation attempt to recreate and reinterpret medieval Iberia. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see the potential dangers of an affective, rhetorically charged performance of past. There is a seemingly impossible balance to be achieved: the more a narrative of past sacrifices affect for objectivity the closer one gets to a historicist ontology rooted in distance and (albeit impossible) objectivity. Similarly, an extremely affecting performance can be quite powerful and potentially restorative but can also create the kind of intellectually complacent body of performers ripe for the picking of ideological rhetoric. *La estirpe de la mariposa* is a clear example of an affecting, *presenting* narrative of the past that manages to reify ossified patriarchal values and structures. Among all the texts in the dissertation, *El viaje de la reina* is the only one that is successful at maintaining a critical balance between employing the affective potential of the novel and acknowledging the monologic power.
of discourse itself, though it must do so at its own expense. Like *El viaje*, Párrafos de moro nuevo presents a refreshing voice in that, despite its own pitfalls and problems, explicitly recognizes the paradoxes implicit in thinking and writing the past.

The four chapters of this dissertation work in tandem to explore the possibilities of non-historiographic history texts to provide alternatives to predominant narratives of the past. Like much contemporary popular and political discourse, they take up the Iberian middle ages in general and al-Andalus in particular as a historical knot that remains starkly and poignantly relevant. Western Historiography has often employed an end-directed, progressive temporal logic as a means of othering both its own past as “unevolved” and its outgroups as civilizationally inferior. Positioned as Islamicate, the Iberian Middle Ages have often served as the crux of these politically charged historiographical maneuverings, used as a tool for othering at the same time that they—homogenized into a unit—have been considered inferior to the present and (potential) future. In the wake of a renewed interest in al-Andalus for both political and popular reasons, in this dissertation I have examined four texts that, like their popular and political counterparts, revisit, reinterpret, and rewrite medieval Islamicate Iberia, but from performative and non-historiographic modalities. As such, in a more concrete way than explicitly historiographic texts, they attempt to consciously create new meaning from those specific historical circumstances in order to contrast with both extant (totalizing) historiographies, and the concepts of temporality that give rise to them. *La estirpe de la mariposa*, *El viaje de la reina*, the *fiesta de moros y cristianos* in Válor and Párrafos de moro nuevo all reject or attempt to reject National-Catholic praxis on the Iberian Middle Ages and in some way, emancipate two groups effectively appropriated and othered by
such discourses and the notions of time embedded within them. Through their continued interrogation of medieval Iberia, at the crux of mounting political tension between “West” and “East” and at a peak of cultural exoticism surrounding the medieval, these texts recreate—in more profound, poignant, and inclusive ways than their National Catholic historiographic counterparts—an al-Andalus that is very much present.
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Julia C. Baumgardt, Ph.D.
Curriculum Vitae
400 Hanson Avenue, Fredericksburg, VA 22401
jcbauumgardt@gmail.com, (215) 776-9219

EDUCATION

Degrees:
- Ph.D., The Johns Hopkins University, September 2015, Focus: Contemporary Peninsular Literature
- M.Ed. coursework, Holy Family University, 2008-2010, Elementary Education
- B.A., The Catholic University of America, 2008, English and Spanish Languages and Literatures

Academic Affiliations:
- Phi Beta Kappa member, from 2008
- Sigma Delta Pi (National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society) member, from 2008
- MLA member, from 2012

PH.D. DISSERTATION:
- Advisor: Nadia Altschul; Title: The Times of al-Andalus: Performing Alternative Temporality in Spanish New Historical Novels, Festive Reenactment and Conversion Narrative

HONORS, AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:
- B.A. GPA: 3.92
- Helmut Hatzfeld Award (Outstanding Student in Spanish), 2008
- H. Edward McCain Award (Outstanding Student in English), 2008
- Honors distinction on B.A. Comprehensive Examinations
- “High Pass” distinction on Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations

GRANTS:
- JHU Center for Educational Resources Technology Fellow, Summer 2013

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Spanish Instructor UMW, Fall 2015

COURSES TAUGHT:
- Spanish 102 and 201

RESPONSIBILITIES:
- Design course (syllabus, assessments, course structure, lectures and activities) according to standardized course objectives; independently plan, organize and teach each class; evaluate student readiness, participation and achievement;
differentiate plans, activities and assessments according to diversity of student needs; coordinate with undergraduate advisor to assist in scaffolding and otherwise supporting students

**Graduate Teaching Assistant: Culture**  
JHU, Fall 2014

**COURSE TAUGHT:**
Modern Spanish Culture

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**
Design course (syllabus, assessments, course structure, lectures and activities) according to standardized course objectives; independently plan, organize and teach each class; facilitate and assess student readiness, participation and achievement; consult with advisor about course effectiveness

**Graduate Teaching Assistant: Literature**  
JHU, Spring 2012 and Spring 2015

**COURSE TAUGHT:**
Introduction to Literature in Spanish

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**
Design course (syllabus, assessments, course structure, lectures and activities) according to standardized course objectives; independently plan, organize and teach each class; facilitate and assess student readiness, participation and achievement; consult with advisor about course effectiveness

**Intercession Course Instructor**  
JHU, January 2012

**COURSE TAUGHT:**
The U.S. Latino Experience in Fiction

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**
Design course; plan and teach each class; provide conceptual framework (lectures) for class discussion; manage student participation and achievement; evaluate and provide feedback on student learning

**Graduate Teaching Assistant: Language**  
JHU, Fall 2010, Spring 2011, Fall 2011, Fall 2012, Spring 2013

**COURSES TAUGHT:**
Spanish Elements I, Spanish Elements II, Intermediate Spanish I, Intermediate Spanish II

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**
Organize and independently teach each class; manage student participation, engagement and achievement; create lesson plans for group and individual use; evaluate student progress (on daily basis and through official assessments); work
cooperatively with coordinator and other GTAs; collaborate on daily plans, student assessment and general course effectiveness

**Achievements and Recognition:**
Consistently evaluated as providing excellent instruction in bi-semester evaluations; consistently achieved highest score for semester-end assessments by coordinators; received enthusiastic and excellent student evaluations (evaluations and teaching DVDs available upon request)

**OTHER TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**Sixth-Grade Teacher** Philadelphia School District, 2008-2009

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**
Plan, organize and teach daily classes in Math, Reading, Social Studies and Science; cooperate with administrators and coaches; implement district standards and teaching objectives through engaging and differentiated plans

**RESEARCH INTERESTS**
Contemporary Spain; Al-Andalus; Muslims, Moriscos and Religious Difference in Medieval and Early Modern Spain; Immigrant Issues; Postcolonial theory; Women’s studies; History and Historiography; U.S. Latino Communities and Literatures

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Editorial Assistant, *Modern Language Notes, Hispanic Issue*  
Publication of the Spanish section of the Department of German and Romance Languages and Literatures  
Johns Hopkins University, 2012-2013 and 2016 (Volumes 128, 129 and 131)

Commenter, Colonial Panel  
*Rethinking Law and Legality: Critical Approaches to Law and Lawlessness in Latin America*, Annual Conference of the Program in Latin American Studies  
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, April 27-9, 2012

**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

"Playing Scheherazade: Performing Non-Linear Time in *La estirpe de la mariposa* and *El viaje de la reina*"  
International Society for the Study of Medievalism, 49th International Congress on Medieval Studies  
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, May 8-11, 2014
“Spread it Around: Re-Establishing Feminine Fecundity, Currency and Alterity in Ema, la cautiva”
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Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, 16-17 March 2012

“‘Celebro mi triunfo, mi silencio’: Autography and the Paradox of Self-Writing in the Hour of the Star and Mano de obra”
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University of Maryland, College Park, MD, Nov 10-11, 2011