Hybridity in Spanish Culture
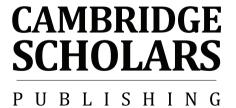
Hybridity in Spanish Culture

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PREFACE

Hybridity shatters the possibility of clear, absolute categories. The concept of pure is a construct, a chosen perception, a psychic imposition on experience. Implicit within the concept of hybridity is a fusion of two or more separate factors, entities or concepts, but the essential aspect of this fusion is that the hybrid text is now an original. Although it is a mixture of two or more known elements, and precisely because of that fusion, a new art object is created. Hence, hybridity, like parody, nods to the past, but points to the future. Implicit within hybridity is tension and a conflictive relationship between the hybrid progeny and the "discrete" or "purebred" progenitor as well as between the viewer, reader or audience and the hybrid work.

This anthology *Hybridity in Spanish Culture* attests to the pervasive phenomenon of hybridity throughout Spanish literary history. We, as editors, have attempted to provide an assortment of lesser known works with those that have received popular or critical acclaim. Each of these works is a conundrum, a text that can be understood at one level—superficially—but whose complexity requires rigorous analysis and effort on the part of the reader. Hence, the object and relevance of this volume on Spanish hybrid literature is that, in spite of the fact that a hybrid is a transmuted form, a new entity unlike its progenitors, hybridity itself has permutated, persisted and permeated throughout the centuries until the current era.

In its inception, the term "hybrid" has been deemed a foul crossbreed, a polluted mixed entity. The collection of essays that the reader currently holds will dispel the pejorative connotation of the term's etymology and, instead, will vindicate the concept as a blend, an original filled with promise that can be viewed in a positive light. In today's world characterized by the energy crisis, economic instability and the need for sustainable resources, we are all most familiar with hybrid vehicles and the need to find, drawing from previous forms, new ways in which to move forward literarily and metaphorically. This is precisely what each of the essays contained within carries. Each example of hybridity blends previously accepted categories to produce an original that will forever modify how the incorporated texts or genres are viewed.

The term hybrid has been and is used in a plethora of disciplines. In biology, the noun refers to the offspring or progeny that result from crossing parents of different species or sub-species (http://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Hybrid). The level of biological hybridity seems endless as there are single cross hybrids (first generation crossbreeds of pure-bred parents), double cross hybrids (crosses between hybrids of single cross), three way crosses (crosses between a hybrid and an inbred), triple crosses (crosses between two different three-way cross hybrids). The possibilities are infinite; but what is, then, thrown into question is the concept of purity.

Our purpose is not to look for more nomenclature or to taxonomize, for that would boast a desire to categorize, to stabilize and to impose order. Rather, we wish to point out that hybridity is a reality that subverts the imposition of structure and reveals categories of purity as constructs. Hybridity in and of itself problematizes and polemicizes absolute categorization. Is purity a reality or a construct? Is it desirable to be able to identify discrete phenomena, to be able to categorize and to eliminate the need to analyze, scrutinize and discern? Or is there more value in learning to appreciate ambiguities, gray areas, indefinable and inexplicable multiplicities?

In a sociolinguistic light, we must contemplate the value (pejorative, palliative or neutral) assigned to a term. The noun "hybrid" is synonymous with "crossbreed" but also with "mongrel," the latter of which is pejorative, colloquial and, frankly, denigrating. Linguistically, a hybrid word is one that is composed of parts originating in disparate languages. For example, the Greek prefix "mono-" and the Latin root "lingua" are combined to form the adjective "monolingual" (wordnetweb.princeton. edu/perl/web). Linguistic hybridization is also known as "barbarism" (http://grammar. about.com/od/fh/hybridterm.htm) which refers to "an incorrect use of language. More specifically, a word considered 'improper' because it combines elements from different languages" (http://grammar.about.com/ od/ab/barbarismterm.htm).

The concept of hybridity raises a polemical and, oftentimes, heated discussion. In the current day we seek out hybrid forms in different areas, such as food or energy production, which are crucial to the survival of the human race; yet there is no consensus. Let us consider the practice of genetically modifying or engineering foods. For some, it is a proposed solution to world hunger as our planet's population increases. For others, it connotes a dietary heresy that blasphemes the sanctity of organic produce and an eco-friendly means of existing without negatively impacting the world we share.

Although foreign and perhaps threatening, or ambiguous and disturbing, the hybrid can also be viewed as a promising entity, as a step forward in evolution, as a product of positive traits from unrelated sources. Let us return to the field of biology for what we will consider a most constructive synonym: "heterozygote." A zygote is a fertilized egg (product of the chromosomes and genes of its parents), but the prefix "hetero" communicates that the parents are of different genotypes. What stands out are several concepts apt for our study. A heterozygote has been fertilized. In other words, it is viable, it can exist and thrive. It is a genetic combination that can work and contribute to the evolution of its progenitors' species. Change comes out of this blending. Hybridity is the result of adaptability and hence, survival; it is a testament to the ability to continue living throughout time and space. Precisely because of the transmuted form, hybridity passes on traits and becomes a legacy of the past or the previous to the present and the future.

To employ yet another biological-scientific concept for our analysis, we must consider a fusion-fission hybrid in radiobiology. It is a "proposed nuclear reactor relying on both fusion and fission reactions" (www.mondo facto.com/facts/dictionary?fusion-fission+hybrid). This particular hybrid can elucidate the significance and relevance of all hybrids. If at first blush, hybrids are heterozygotes, offspring of different types of parents, in other words altogether different from either parent; upon closer scrutiny we must understand that hybrids are simultaneously, paradoxically, different and yet similar. They are proof of the contradictory coexistence of fusion (combination) and fission (division or separation).

Paradoxes are boggling. They disrupt the imposed intellectual or conceptual order that has been mandated since the dawn of Western civilization, since antiquity when it became de rigueur to view existence as structured within a hierarchy of binary oppositions. Hybridity is unsettling for one cannot easily categorize, catalog, pigeonhole or label. Rather, a hybrid forces intellectualization and analysis. It agitates and, upon discomforting, obligates one to scrutinize not solely *what* the hybrid is, but also *how* and *why* it is what it is.

Perhaps we could say that this volume looks to understand what could be termed the grammar of hybridity. This grammar can be illuminated with two dyads of conjunctions: "either/or" as well as "and/but." The hybrid reality undermines, subverts and makes impossible either/or thinking which forces or limits experience into only two categories. In other words, the conjunctions "either/or" mandate binarism. Instead, hybrids underscore the conjunctional unit "and/but." A hybrid is not X or Y. Rather a hybrid is

X, but also Y—and at the same time neither of them. Hence, to understand hybridity one must appreciate value, nuances and depth of meaning.

Homi Bhabha's (1994) theories on post-colonialism, Linda Hutcheon's (1989) ideas on parody, Jean Baudrillard's (1984) views on simulacra, Gloria Anzaldúa´s (1987) on *mestizaje* all point to what Adrienne Rich (1976) has termed a "re-vision," a new way of regarding what has previously been perceived by a hegemonic center. Although Rich re-views that which is phallologocentrically prescribed, the scholarly vantage point here proposed is a re-vision of what has previously been hegemonically prescribed as central, pure, canonical, dominant or official. As the essays contained will show, hybridity is iconoclastic and as such, subverts, de-inferiorizes, de-hierarchizes.

The hybrid texts studied in this volume blur or erase the boundaries between definite categories, between history and fiction, between disparate genres, between cultures, between languages, between eras, between male and female, between story and History, between national and transnational, between subjectivity and objectivity. They are texts that prove to be ironic for they defy expectations. Furthermore, as with parody, hybridity demands intellectual and analytical engagement on the part of the reader for he/she must make sense of the blending and blurring, the paradoxical uniting and splitting, unifying and fragmenting that constitute the essence of hybridity. If the reader permits the neologism, hybridity "chaoticizes" established order or categorization in order to reveal a new sensitivity that more accurately discerns multi-prismatic and multifaceted realities.

Although the voice of Homi Bhabha (1994), it seems, might at times carry the tune in the discussion on hybridity, we, as editors find ourselves in the difficult position of drawing from his theories as applied to post-colonial studies, and expanding them as we apply them to the Spanish context. Although Bhabha was most interested in analyzing colonial societies, specifically India, his theories are easily applied to any society in which there are oppressors and oppressed, those with power and those without power, which is, really, any society. Hybrids, according to Homi Bhabha (1994), inhabit interstitial space:

> These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (Bhabha 1994, 2)

Most significantly, hybridity "displaces the binary logic through which identities of difference are often constructed" (Bhabha 1994, 5). In other words, hybridity de-hierarchizes and, hence, de-inferiorizes that which has

been marginalized by the dominant discourse. Bhabha (1994) avers that hybridity emerges, not from an either/or paradigm, not from this or that, but from a Third Space, "an assimilation of contraries." Hybridity, then, is "in-between," in an interstitial space that defies the imposition of previously conceived categories.

As Belén Atienza observes in "Entre el vidrio y la carne," this interstitial space has been explored much more in the North and Latin American rather than in the Spanish context. Despite the fact that analyses of hybridity in Spain are both appropriate and necessary, one could say they are lacking. Consider, for example, that the Middle Ages have been described as a period of tolerance and cohabitation by Muslims, Jews and Christians as indicated by María Menocal in *The Ornament of the World* (2002). Consider also the fact that modern-day Spain finds itself in some ways reliving this medieval past, as many African immigrants attempt to make their home there. However, as we embark on this study of hybridity in the Spanish context, it is of particular importance for us to recall those North and Latin American predecessors. Probably the two most famous contributors to the discussion of hybridity in the Americas are Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and Néstor García Canclini (1995). In 1987, Anzaldúa published *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, in which she explores the cultural hybrids known as "Chicanos" and "Latinos." In her genre-bending book (which incorporates essays and poetry), Anzaldúa (1987) paradoxically comes to feel "at home" in the "'alien' element," that is, in the United States:

> Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an 'alien' element […] And yes, the 'alien' element has become familiar–never comfortable, not with society's clamor to uphold the old, to rejoin the flock, to go with the herd. No, not comfortable but home. (Preface)

This pull between tradition (the "clamor to uphold the old") and modernity is not exclusive to Chicanos or Latinos, but, according to Canclini, definitive of Latin American cultures in general, which are described in *Hybrid Cultures* (1995) as simultaneously (still) traditional and (not entirely) modern. Both Anzaldúa (1987) and Canclini (1995) highlight that hybridity is not (just) about a third or in-between *space*, as Bhabha avers, but that it is (also) about movement between "then" and "now." A hybrid identity, as Anzaldúa (1987) proposes, and this collection corroborates, is one that is "shifting."

The essays in this collection defy numerous purportedly defined categories or concepts such as History, religion, national-ethnic identity,

language or gender. In a literary context, critical readings of the primary texts, propose a re-vision or re-evaluation of pivotal literary concepts-categories, namely genre, canon, reader-writer-author relationship. As cleverly stated by Victoria Ketz in her essay included in this tome,

> By rethinking the boundaries or margins of what is designated as a 'genre,' there is a questioning of the limits of fiction itself and this interrogation leads to the establishment of the uncertainty of 'reality.'

It is precisely such border and boundary crossings, favored by Edward Said (1985, 4), that engage the intellect. For example, when history is fictionalized, the reader must discern the tension between the official history and the story being told as well as between the act of writing what has been accepted as historical truth and the act of creating what is touted as historical fiction. As Mindy Badía discerns in her essay in this collection,

> The hybrid nature of the adaptation shatters the absolute categories on which the polarization inherent to these three overlapping symbolic orders rests, opening up a space from which resistance to such oppositions, and to their concomitant hierarchies, might emerge.

Does or should the reader or the viewer of the hybrid works experience cognitive dissonance? Does the reader's/viewer's mind desire to confabulate, fill in the gaps or superimpose what he or she expects onto the work? Or is the reader or critic, when faced with an unsettling work, simply apt to disregard it or consider it inferior for not adhering to his/her expectation of what is canonically mandated or prescribed? If a condition is not simplistic and hence, defies definition—or at least challenges a facile definition—it can lead to neglect or omission from study. Therefore in this volume we aim at bringing to the forefront works or aspects of works whose blurry, unclear and perhaps ambiguous categorization has led to ambivalence, uncertainty, or rejection on the part of readers or critics.

This collection of essays, *Hybridity in Spanish Culture*, attests to the pervasive phenomenon of hybridity throughout Spanish literary history. The essays contained within investigate hybridity from the dawn of Imperial Spain to that of the twenty-first century. María del Mar Rosa-Rodríguez investigates *Aljamiado* writings that reflect multiplicity and blending of religious, linguistic and cultural identities in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain. Mindy Badía explores the transatlantic hybridity of contemporary Spanish director César Oliva Olivares' adaptation of Lope de Vega's seventeenth-century *La dama boba* (1613), a performative

text that problematizes the tension between the Old World and the New, particularly with the salsa rendition of two Lopeian ditties. Belén Atienza scrutinizes the tension in the juxtaposition between antithetical identities in Cervantes' exemplary novel *El licenciado Vidriera* (1613). Victoria Ketz and Ana-María Medina analyze contemporary texts that revisit Spain's fratricidal past. Both studies evince that fictionalized history offers a parodic twist to the "official hi/story" (Hutcheon 1989, 50). Medina's study of Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2003) underscores the fusion and confusion between reality and fiction, in other words between monumental History and personal stories, while Ketz provides an in-depth study of the popular, mass and high culture references in Ruiz Zafón's *Shadow of the Wind* (2001), references that cross the boundaries of time, space and genre; hence, Ruiz Zafón's filmic, mythological and literary allusions result in a parodic hybrid. Maureen Tobin Stanley's reading of José Ángel Mañas's Gen-X novel *Historias del Kronen* (1994), like Ketz's, highlights how the intertextuality and parody of film, music and pulp fiction become the building blocks of hybridity. Emily Knudson-Vilaseca, in her analysis of Pablo Aranda's *La otra ciudad* (2003), observes examples of cultural hybridity—reimagined identity, redefined society—occurring in modern-day Spain as a result of contact between modern-day Moroccan immigrants and Spaniards. Hybridity is also a crucial component of Spanish television, as demonstrated by Tajes's exploration of interstitial identities associated with migration on the 2002 television series *Vientos de agua*. As is evident, the phenomenon of hybridity proves quite relevant as it spans Spain's literary and cultural history.

In her chapter entitled "Golden Age Religiosity in Transit: Religious and Linguistic Hybridity," María del Mar Rosa-Rodríguez analyzes *aljamiado* texts as manifestations of religious and linguistic hybridity. These are texts written in one language with the alphabet of another and authored by the crypto-Muslim and crypto-Jewish communities living in Spain during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Rodríguez argues that the multicultural form of *aljamiado*, a linguistic cross-breeding in itself, deconstructs the deep relationship between language and religion while providing a narrative of the unnamed, the undefined, and the impure. These texts represent a testament not only to *convivencia* but to a subversion of the literal and figurative dominant Spanish discourse in which Catholicism, Spanish monolingualism and hegemonic Castilian culture were enforced, whereas, Islam, Judaism, Arabic, Hebrew, and all signs of cultural hybridity were debarred. Yet, Rosa-Rodríguez's study of *aljamiado* texts reveals that disparate religiosities simultaneously transit the realms of two different religions, transcending superficial syncretism

and establishing hybrid religiosity as the norm of daily life. This phenomenon that characterizes Spanish Culture has been largely neglected in Spain's official history.

In "Entre el vidrio y la carne: hibridez, contaminación y pureza en *El licenciado Vidriera,*" Belén Atienza looks at the representation of identity as hybrid in Cervantes's *El licenciado Vidriera* (1613). Vidriera's hybrid identity (half human being, half glass object) is related to other themes of the novel such as purity and sin, the "hybrid" identity of *conversos* and *moriscos*, madness and language. Atienza investigates the limits between textual space and psychic space in the *novella*. Cervantes's exploration of the theme of hybridity is seen in the larger context of the religious and social conflicts in Early Modern Spain. Vidriera's mysterious identity, his satirical comments, his shame and his traumas conform a complex hybrid narrative, where the picaresque genre is blended with other traditions such as religious writings, alchemical treatises and others. Ultimately Atienza proposes a new reading of *El licenciado Vidriera* as an open-ended novel in which Cervantes opens questions about the nature of identity, the human ability to transform oneself, and the decadence of the Spanish Empire.

In "'Viene de Panamá': Caribbean Music, Commodification and (Post) Colonialism in César Oliva Olivares's 1996 Adaptation of *La dama boba,*" Mindy E. Badía studies the contemporary performance of this Baroque *Comedia* as a hybrid transatlantic cross. The 1996 staging of *La dama boba* by students from University of Murcia at the Chamizal National Memorial, in El Paso, Texas, remained relatively faithful to Lope's text with one striking exception: two musical numbers during which the actors perform a salsa dance and sing to Caribbean music of a song from Act III of the original script. Badía argues that Oliva Olivares's use of Caribbean music makes of the stage what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) has termed a "contact zone," a movable space unbound by national borders in which performance replicates metonymically the processes whereby cultures connect, conflict and co-mingle. The adaptation is both a *text* (an independent object of inquiry) and a *context* (a framework within which the seventeenth-century song and the twentieth-century music and dance acquire additional meanings). Badía's analysis contests any notion of cultural fixity resulting from the contact between Spain and Latin America, while exploring the ways in which the encounter provides an imaginary framework of ambivalence caused by early modern Spanish anxieties about economic, social and artistic change.

In "Las voces del exilio: Su remembranza mediante la construcción literaria híbrida," Ana-María T. Medina analyzes the manners in which

Dulce Chacón's novel *La voz dormida* (2002) initiates a reevaluation of official History and historical memory, and, as a result, takes part in what Homi Bhabha (1994) has termed the Third Space. Medina underscores the reconciliatory approach in that the work moves beyond an us-them antagonism, as the characters, inside and outside the confines of Ventas women's prison in Madrid, meld and enmesh their personal histories and subjective testimonies with the purportedly objective events of the immediate postwar period in the conquered capital of Franco's New Spain. Medina explores how the human reality of war—with its purportedly clear demarcation between the victorious and the defeated—is experienced and revealed at the individual level, regardless of the side of the political fence on which the individual finds herself.

In "Blurring the Boundaries: Genres, Intertextuality and Metafiction in *The Shadow of the Wind*," Victoria Ketz explores the literary and historical hybridity in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's 2002 novel that narrates the story of the young protagonist, Daniel Sempere, who at the Cemetery for Forgotten Books, discovers a novel entitled, *The Shadow of the Wind* written by Julián Carax. As Daniel begins a labyrinthine, intertextual and metafictional quest for the author and his works, he uncovers past secrets. This complex text contains the echoes of many genres including a *bildungsroman*, a gothic romance, a mystery novel, but also a historical novel and a metafictional novel. The interweaving of different narrative genres gives rise to a hybrid novel, described by Linda Hutcheon (1989) as one that addresses and subverts

> fragmentation through [the] pluralizing recourse to the discourses of history, sociology, theology, political science, economics, philosophy, semiotics, literature, literary criticism. (21)

Ketz points out the rich variety of genres which the text bridges and studies the process by which these different genres are fused through intertextuality and self reflective elements to create one seamless text, and, in so doing, challenges the concepts and limits of fiction.

In "La hibridación y mediatización de la violencia: El sexo, las drogas y el "rocanrol" en *Historias del Kronen* (1994) de José Ángel Mañas", Maureen Tobin Stanley analyzes the relationship between José Ángel Mañas's (1994) narrative and the consumption and incorporation of cultural products. *Historias del Kronen* constitutes a hybrid work that intertextually weaves—or perhaps more aptly stated cannibalistically consumes—works from vastly disparate genres. The common thread that links these borrowed works is the theme of violence and its Anglo-American origins. This hybridity, also characteristic of the Gen X in

general, is based on genres and texts that exalt violence. Although at first blush *Historias del Kronen* might appear to desensitize to both mediated and true violence, under closer scrutiny it becomes discernable that this novel emblematic of the Gen X raises consciousness regarding the consumption of violence in culture, be it high, popular or mass culture. The intertextuality heightens knowledge of the cultural corpus—familiar fragments of literature, film and music—that it has appropriated, transcontextualized and (com)modified, in order to create an original work from these recognizable clips. Hence, intertextual hybridity (by being a re-vision in its etymological sense) exacts that the reader not only *see* the original text *again*, but also that s/he *see* it *in a new fashion*.

In "Quiero contarte una historia: Migración e hibridez en *Vientos de agua* de Juan José Campanella," María P. Tajes explores the portrayal of two generations of transatlantic im/migration in director Juan José Campanella's television series *Vientos de agua* as a hybrid space between cultures, customs, national and personal identities. This space is achieved in the series though different techniques such as the combination of fictional characters and situations with historical events both in Spain and Argentina, a departure from linearity through fragmented sequences, which constantly move in space and time, and the presence of different accents and dialects (Bable, Italian, Criollo Spanish). In addition, there are two paradoxically concurrent story lines, one centered on the migration of Spaniards to Argentina in the 1930s, the other exploring the subsequent migration of a second generation of Argentinean descendants to Spain in the beginning of the twenty-first century. The intradramatic cultural hybridity exemplified on screen is further compounded by the extradramatic reality in that the actors are themselves hybrids: children of immigrants, returnees, exiles and double exiles. Hence, Campanella's work, with its exponential degrees of cultural, linguistic and geographical hybridity, interrogates the complex and nebulous nature of personal and national identity in the twenty-first century.

In "The Un/Home Embodied: The Role of Moroccan Immigrant Nadia in Pablo Aranda's *La otra ciudad*," Emily Knudson-Vilaseca examines Homi Bhabha's notion of "unhomeliness" as a precursor to the development of cultural hybridity. In the modern-day Spanish context, the "unhomely moment" occurs in the uneasy, even frightening, experience of encountering within Spain the strangely familiar Moroccan immigrants, perceived by many Spaniards as new "*moros*," that is, as ghostly reincarnations of medieval invaders. On the other hand, unhomeliness is also often experienced by immigrants themselves, as they struggle to feel "at home" in a foreign environment. Knudson-Vilaseca writes against the notion of

home as fixed, separate from the foreign and as unequivocally friendly, comfortable and familiar. In the novel, the fetish and the façade are shown to relate to the notion of home, in particular, to its status as something desired but not necessarily entirely achievable and as something unstable and inconstant. Knudson-Vilaseca outlines the unhomeliness experienced by three characters in Aranda's novel: a young Moroccan woman, Nadia, her Spanish boyfriend, Paco, and his sister, Lucía. Out of these experiences, two different kinds of cultural hybridity are seen to occur: Paco elaborates a new sense of self (and if he is taken as a metonymy of Spain or Spaniards, this may be understood as a reimagining the definition of Spanish society); and Nadia and Paco together reappropriate the negatively charged word "*moro*," using it to refer to their much-loved and -desired unborn child, thus redefining "*moros*" not as undesired Others but as integral to Spanish society.

As editors, we present to you a "meta hybrid" book, a collection about hybridity that is a hybrid in itself. Hoping to blur borders and dissipate taxonomies, we have selected a group of authors who contribute varied national, cultural, gender, linguistic and scholarly identities to articles, written both in Spanish and English, and published by a British Press. Each of the essays described above points to the value of understanding hybridity in a particular cultural work. Each is a piece of the greater, more intricate reality which this volume as a whole investigates: the enduring phenomenon of hybridity in Spanish letters and culture. Let us not forget that hybridity is a testament to evolution, to change, to progress, but most importantly to the future that draws from the past. Hybrid works are self-conscious and breed awareness. The fact that they blend two or more dissimilar progenitors becomes a constant reminder—and, hence, affirmation—of the past "generation," while nodding toward the future. Hybridity bears witness to adaptability, survival and persistence throughout time and space. Each time we read or view a hybrid work, we will not only recall from whence it came, but more importantly, we will be provided with a framework that places the growing diversity in twentieth century Spain in a historical continuum. To this respect, the book contributes to current inquiries and dialogues within the field of Spanish cultural studies on such relevant topics as national identity, historical memory, migration and displacement, and religious plurality. It is our hope that this volume has effectively revealed and underscored the continuity of hybridity from the dawn of Imperial Spain until our present day.

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CHAPTER ONE

GOLDEN AGE RELIGIOSITY IN TRANSIT: RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC HYBRIDITY

MARÍA DEL MAR ROSA-RODRÍGUEZ

The dominant discourse of the Spanish Golden Age Empire evinced a strong desire to define national identities and, hence, to establish clear categories for the "Spanish subject" as *castizo* and *cristiano viejo*.[1] Particular individuals raised their voices to define their "selves" otherwise.[2] Rather than what the dominant ideologies preferred, these voices were plural, multifaceted and defied simplification. As such, the religious subjective identities I will examine in this study are defined as hybrid, "in-between" and "in-transit" between Islam, Judaism and Christianity. As we will see later, the "hybridity" discussed in this article is consistent with Homi Bhabha's notion of hybrid subject positions in the colonial and postcolonial worlds. In "The Commitment to Theory," he defines hybridity as that which "is new, neither the one nor the other, something that emerges from a third space: an assimilation of contraries (28)." To define the fluid notion of hybridity, he uses such terms as "in-between," "translation," "negotiation," and "cross-reference." The subjects presented in this study are in-between three cultures, three religions and three languages. This article seeks to reveal how the hybridity of language in *aljamiado* writings relates to the hybridity of religion of the peoples of Spain during the sixteenth century.[3]

This article will focus exclusively on *aljamiado* literature, which has been excluded from the official Spanish Golden Age canon. There are many language-alphabet combinations in what will be referred to as the "*aljamiado* phenomenon."[4] The most common combination is Spanish language written with the Arabic alphabet.[5] The following combinations also exist: Spanish language texts written with the Hebrew alphabet, Hebrew language texts written with the Spanish alphabet, and Arabic language texts written with the Spanish alphabet. These popular texts circulated broadly in the Iberian Peninsula during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A vast number of *aljamiado* texts are located in

different archives in Spain in addition to the references to these writings in other texts.[6] In Cervantes' 1605 *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, one learns how the story of Don Quijote originated in "some" found *aljamiado* folios that "some" Moor helped transcribe in Toledo. This demonstrates that *aljamiado* writings were widely known in spite of the Inquisitorial rule.
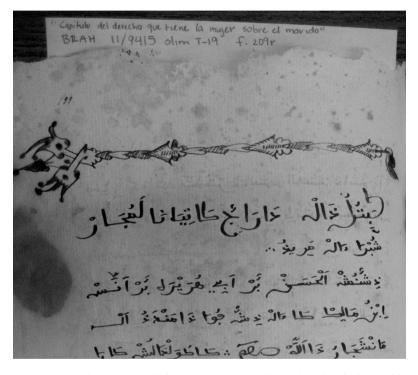

IMAGE 1. This document is in the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid, Spain. Codex number BRAH 11/9415 olim T-19 folio 209r. It is titled "Sobre el derecho que tiene la mujer sobre su marido". It is written in Spanish language with Arabic alphabet and some Arabic vocabulary.

The authors of *aljamiado* are believed to be crypto-Muslims and crypto-Jews living in Spain from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The corpus of *aljamiado* writings is extensive, ranging from literary and religious texts to grocery lists and personal letters. The purpose of writing in this hybrid manner is debated among scholars. I believe there can be many reasons why these minorities decided to write in Spanish using

Arabic or Hebrew alphabets. I like to think that when, for example, a *morisco* writes Castilian with Arabic graphical signs and some Arabic words he is resisting the Castilian culture imposed on him but at the same time he is transiting towards it. It is a nostalgic act towards a lost Arabic language, but it is also an act of acceptance of the Castilian language, as long as it looks like Arabic. Thus, as Homi Bhabha explains it is a new product because it is not Arabic, and it is not Castilian Spanish either. It is an in-between language product of an in-between culture.

Until now, this hybrid literary corpus has not been deemed central to the cultural production of the Spanish Golden Age. Nevertheless, *aljamiado* does not represent the only case of hybridity within the "Golden Age Canon." One need only consider works such as Cervantes' *Don Quijote* or Tirso's *Don Juan* to witness the slippery and displaced identities of the complex protagonists. A stronger sense of hybridity appears in the writings of San Juan de la Cruz and his Semitic conception of poetry, which brings him closer to the Sufi tradition of Ibn al-'arabi than to his fellow Catholic writers.[7] Hybridity also appears in the writings of Teresa de Jesús where she describes her soul as an "Inner Castle" (*Castillo Interior*) of Muslim architecture, portraying a conception of spirituality that is neither purely Catholic nor totally Muslim.[8] These writers, as well as many others from the Spanish Golden Age, such as Lope de Vega, Fernando de Rojas, Francisco Delicado and Mateo Alemán, highlight the presence and meaning of hybridity in a time and place in which such diversity was banned, persecuted and frequently prosecuted.[9]

What this study brings to the discussion of hybridity in Spanish culture is neither an account of the hybrid aspects of the canonical works of the Spanish Golden Age, arduously studied by Luce López-Baralt (1992), María M. Carrión (1994), Giancarlo Maiorino (1996) and others, nor an account of the hybridity of cultures studied by María Rosa Menocal (2002), Barbara Fuchs (2001), Lourdes Álvarez (2007), Ross Brann (2004), L.P. Harvey (1972), and others. Instead, it discusses a deeper notion of the hybridity of language and the hybridity of religion in an excluded literary corpus, such as *aljamiado*. I will argue that the linguistic hybridity of *aljamiado* writings signifies and embodies a religious subjectivity that is not Muslim, Jewish or Catholic, but rather a religiosity in transit among the three. In this article, *religiosity* is considered as the way in which a religion is lived on a daily basis and the manner in which a subject translates his/her belief into the context of his/her quotidian activities.

The covert gestures of linguistic hybridity in *aljamiado* writings defy and subvert Antonio de Nebrija's discourse on the purity of language. The religious hybridity contradicts and undermines the Inquisitorial imposition

of strict Catholicism. The undefined, unnamed and impure characters represented in and representative of *aljamiado* writings portray hybridity in both form and content. The linguistic hybridity encrypted in these texts works at various levels: as a deconstruction of sacred languages, as simulacra of religious purity and as a portrayal of religiosities in transit. Thus, hybridity works as the trigger and reactant of the subversive manifestations of the *aljamiado* phenomenon.

The following pages explain the manner in which language relates to religion and explore the implications of hybridity in sacred languages. Two *aljamiado* texts: *Libro de las luces* and Manuscript *BNM 5302* will then be discussed and the mixture of religious traditions and the overlapping of religious characters in both texts will be analyzed. The final section will discuss a 1504 *fatwa*, or legal Islamic response, written to the *moriscos* in Spain illustrating how the *moriscos* were practicing religiosities in transit.

Deconstructing Sacred Languages

In the specific context of sixteenth-century Spain, Arabic, Hebrew and Castilian Spanish languages represented Islam, Judaism and Christianity respectively. Because of their referentiality, they were considered sacred languages. In his study on *aljamiado* texts, Ottmar Hegyi (1981) describes the intersection of language and religion: "La génesis de las grandes corrientes espirituales siempre se acompaña de una simbiosis estrecha entre lengua y cultura" ("Entorno" 125).[10] For him, it is necessary to assume the close connection between language and religion in order to fully understand all the implications of the *aljamiado* phenomenon. If spirituality is inextricably linked to language and culture, it is most important to analyze the symbiosis between Arabic and Islam, Hebrew and Judaism, and Spanish and Catholicism in the context of Golden Age Spain.

The referentiality of Arabic, Hebrew and Spanish develops differently in each tradition, but the coexistence of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity in Spain, on one hand, helped to accentuate the sacred meaning of Arabic and Hebrew and, on the other, helped to give Spanish a sacred meaning.[11] The coexistence of these three religious cultures cannot be ignored in the study of the development of beliefs, dogmas and codes of conduct. Beliefs that influence other beliefs, dogmas that evolve from other dogmas, practices that emerge in response to the practices of another religion performed next door, and conversions between the three religions are elements that must be considered when explaining religiosity in this period.

Arabic language plays a fundamental role in Islam. According to Islamic belief, God himself revealed the Holy Qu'ran to Muhammad in a perfect and untranslatable language, namely Arabic. Because it is untranslatable, what we assume to be translations of the Qu'ran always specify that they are interpretations of the meaning of the Qu'ran in a foreign language and thus do not possess the sacred meaning that Arabic conveys as the language of God. Muslims argue that an Arabic word can have multiple meanings, which makes accurate translations impossible. Unlike other religions, in which the main prophet performed many supernatural miracles, Muhammad's only miracle was that he wrote the inimitable language of the Qu'ran or the language of God, known as الأعجز/ [al-i'jazz] and he was a simple illiterate man. Therefore, Arabic was a timeless miracle that could be appreciated and experienced by all men and women until the end of time. Because of these beliefs and dogmas, Arabic has been deemed transcendent. Having gone beyond being a mere language, it became a sacred symbol of Islamic identity.

If Arabic is conceived as the inimitable and untranslatable language of God, which stands as the ongoing Islamic miracle for all future generations, we must ponder what happens in the case of the *aljamiado* Qu'ran that is written in Spanish language with Arabic alphabet. This *aljamiado* Qu'ran does not characterize itself as an interpretation or a translation; it is simply an *aljamiado* Qu'ran. Where is the sacredness of the Arabic language for the *moriscos* in Spain that were writing in this hybrid manner? Is it in the graphical sign, is it in the sound of the language, or is it in both? What can this *aljamiado* Qu'ran represent for the notion of the Holy if it only reproduces the empty sign of a sacred language to represent the sacred language of another religion? Possible answers to these questions will be addressed after discussing the sacredness of Hebrew and Spanish.

Like Islam, Judaism also shares the notion of a holy language. In his article, "Jewish Languages, Are They Sacred?," Benjamin Hary (2004) explains how the Jewish Diaspora produced an overlap between what was Hebrew and what was Jewish. For these exiles, language was a distinction of their culture and religion. Hary explains,

> in order to become a symbol of Jewish identity and an actual obstacle to assimilation, the language had established itself as Jewish with its Hebrew script and Hebrew and Aramaic linguistic elements. (2004, 226)

It is important to underscore the fact that we are not discussing the Hebrew language but instead the Jewish languages. In other words, Hebrew and its derivative dialects are the languages of Judaism. Thus

language acquires a religious nuance. It becomes sacred because it signifies and defines a religious and cultural Jewish identity.

Consuelo López-Morillas (2000) argues that the relationship between the Hebrew language and Jewish religion and culture is not unlike Arabic's relation to Islamic religion and culture. López-Morillas (2000) explains:

> Centuries of acculturation to Arabic literary and linguistic ideas had conditioned Jews to think of Hebrew not simply as the language of religious expression but as a language of religious and cultural prestige, by analogy to the Arabo-Islamic cultural idea of arabiyya. (*Languages*, 52)

Hence, López-Morillas (2000) makes a social-competition argument. When two different societies share the same space, cultural competition takes place. If language X represents the sacredness of religion X, then in order to successfully compete with culture X, culture Y should give a sacred meaning to language Y. So if Arabic is a holy symbol of Islam, then Hebrew, in parallel fashion, is a holy symbol of Judaism.

This social competition also affects the Spanish language in relation to the Catholicism of sixteenth-century Spain; however, while Arabic and Hebrew had a special standing prior to their coexistence in the Iberian Peninsula, the prestige of Spanish was entirely constructed in and because of the Golden Age context. The politics of the "language as the Empire's companion" introduced by Nebrija, gradually generated the prestige of a sacred language for Spanish.[12] The construction of a discourse on and about language was part of the imperial agenda, and since Church and State were one, it is reasonable to suggest that the promotion of the Spanish language was part of the Spanish church's agenda.[13]

The political and religious aim of the Spanish Empire was to unify Spain politically and religiously as one Spanish Catholic Nation. All subjects within Spanish territory had to convert to Catholicism and had to speak in Spanish.[14] Both in the American colonies and on the Peninsula, Spanish language represented the Spanish Empire, Catholicism and the Holy Office. It was the language used to convert infidels inside and outside of Spain. A familiar saying of Emperor Charles the Fifth of Germany and the First of Spain[15] illustrates how the prestige of the Spanish Language evolved during this time. He said that he used French for philosophical matters, Italian for speaking to ladies, but to speak to God it was necessary to use Spanish.[16]

Antonio de Nebrija, a pioneer of linguistics in the sixteenth century and author of the first grammar of a Romance language, writes in his prologue to the *Gramática de la lengua española*:

porque la lengua siempre fue compañera del Imperio; y de tal manera lo siguió, que juntamente comenzaron, crecieron, y florecieron, y después junta fue la caída entrambos. (13)[17]

Nebrija, as a faithful defender of the political importance of language, argued in favor of the conservation and purity of Spanish. The Prologue of his *Gramática* developed an imperial discourse of the splendor and necessity of the Spanish language. Nebrija stresses the relationship between language and empire by arguing that if all other empires had their own glorious languages, the Spanish Empire needed its own language, distinct even from Latin since Latin was the language of the Roman Empire.

Nebrija further acknowledges the grandeur of Arabic and Hebrew:

poco más hay que hacer con ella [the Spanish language] que con la arábiga. Lo que dijimos de la hebraica, griega y latina [how they were raised with their respective empires], podemos muy más claramente mostrar en la castellana. (2004, 14)[18]

These examples illustrate the construction of a discourse that created Spanish linguistic prestige that later evolved into a conception of the Spanish language as holy in the context of Imperial Spain.

Let us attempt to understand the formation of a sacred language or the sanctification of the Spanish language in the context of religious persecution. The accusation of heresy came to strike terror in the hearts of the inhabitants of Imperial Spain. There are many studies on the definition of heresy, especially its ability to over-signify actions during sixteenth-century Spain.[19] The question of how the Spanish language acquires more significance due to the issue of heresy is central to the question of hybridity in *aljamiado* texts. In 1611 the linguistic authority Sebastián de Covarrubias defined heresy in *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* in the following way:

En nuestra lengua castellana, y en todas las de los católicos que militan debaxo de la santa Yglesia Católica Romana, [la herejía] siempre significa deserción y apartamiento de la Fe, y de lo que tiene y cree la dicha santa madre Yglesia. [...] significa falsa y dañada doctrina que enseña lo contrario de aquello que cree y enseña la Fe de nuestro Redentor. (2003, 683)[20]

According to this definition, every act and belief that went against Catholic faith, doctrine and the interpreted beliefs and teachings of "our redeemer" was considered heresy. Hence, within the context of religious

and linguistic supremacy, the usage of Arabic and Hebrew was considered heretical because it went against the Catholic doctrine. If using Arabic and Hebrew was heretical and represented desertion from the Catholic Faith, then using Spanish meant being Catholic and following the holy doctrine. All illegal acts became sinful or heretical acts, as Bartolomé Clavero (1990) explains in his article "Delito y pecado: noción y escala de transgresiones." The use of a specific language enters the debate of legal/illegal and thus enters the realm of heretical/sacred. Language was the rubric used to identify heresy in sixteenth-century Spain. One who spoke Arabic or Hebrew was breaking the law and was thus considered a heretic. One who spoke Spanish was thought to act in accordance with the law and the sacred. Spanish began to assume a sacred place thanks to its legality. This heresy phenomenon imbues language with power and places Arabic, Hebrew and Spanish as referential signs of prohibited religions (Islam, Judaism) and the official religion (Catholicism) respectively.

It is within the context of the "language-religion referentiality" that the linguistic hybridity of *aljamiado* writings raises profound issues. The definition of the Spanish subject through "purity of blood"[21] and the preservation of Spanish through the "purity of language" are both threatened by the *aljamiado* phenomenon. The authors of *aljamiado* literature were Spanish subjects living in Spain who had probably converted (truthfully or not) to Catholicism.[22] Even when the attempt was made to establish the Spanish sense of nation as "*cristiano viejo*" (old Christian) and of pure blood, *aljamiado* writings proved the continuous existence of hybrid subjectivities that were not old Christian, Arabic, or Hebrew, but something in-between the cultures. The *aljamiado* phenomenon brings into question the role of culture as a homogeneous space. It also brings into question the discourse of the purity of language since the languages, alphabets, syntax and grammar of the languages used in *aljamiado* writings are mixed, hybrid, non-uniform and without rule. The phenomenon itself is impossible to define or categorize under a clear definition.

The form of *aljamiado* texts plays with the conception of the sacred and mixes the notion of the "holy" of the three religions that it involves. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard explains that symbolization comes to a point where the sign itself acquires the importance of the thing signified, and that, when this happens, a simulacrum occurs. The *aljamiado* texts of sixteenth-century Spain represent a similar transformation of meaning: the moment when the sacredness of these languages is passed on to their alphabets. These languages that supposedly represented their respective religions go through a process of transition and displacement because the sacredness of these languages is transferred to their alphabets.

At the same time, these alphabets represent a foreign language, which is the sacred language of another religion. For example, in the *aljamiado* Qu'ran in Spanish language written with the Arabic alphabet, the sacredness of the Arabic language (the miracle of Islam) is shifted to Arabic graphical signs. Yet, those Arabic letters represent the Spanish language, a referential sign of Catholicism and thus the Catholic belief system in this period, contradicting the Islamic belief system. This particular text uses a sacred Muslim alphabet representing a sacred Catholic language that tells a Muslim story. This fusion and confusion of languages and religions reveals another Spain, a Spain that reflects the reality of its hybridity and transit.

Let us consider the hybrid condition of some *aljamiado* texts. When an *aljamiado* Qu'ran is written in Spanish with the Arabic alphabet,[23] when the Ten Commandments[24] and the Hail Mary[25] are written in Arabic with the Spanish alphabet, or when the Jewish Pentateuch[26] is written in Hebrew with the Spanish alphabet, it becomes significant that these texts move between the sound of one language and the alphabet of another sacred language. In these texts, two sacred languages transit the realms of two religions, two traditions, and two cultures, and hence a new product is born. It is not a pure but instead a mixed product whose hybridity transits in between Islam and Christianity, or Judaism and Christianity, or Islam and Judaism. In other words, an *aljamiado* text is much more than a linguistic cross-breed. The *aljamiado* phenomenon, by melding and overlapping two existing religious traditions, subverts the "purity" imposed by the religious hegemony. As a cultural hybrid, these texts undermine the hierarchical thinking exemplified by either/or. Rather, *aljamiado* writings reflect the diverse reality of Reconquered Spain while disproving the impossibility of the realization of the forced construct of religious, cultural and linguistic "purity."

Crossbreeding Religious Fictions

The content of *aljamiado* literature is as hybrid as its form. In the Spanish-Arabic legends and the Judeo-Spanish short stories, one finds a fusion of religious traditions and religious characters. Sometimes, the Islamic figure of Amina, mother of Muhammad, is fused with the Catholic conception of Mary, mother of Jesus. The Spanish-Arabic *aljamiado* legend, entitled *Libro de las luces*, found in manuscript BRAH T-18,[27] narrates the life of Muhammad and his ancestors and provides an interesting variation on the figure of Amina, mother of Muhammad. It characterizes her as follows: "Amina, de buena ventura eres sobre todas

las mujeres" (103r), which may be translated as "Amina, full of grace, blessed art thou among women." This excerpt clearly reflects the traditional Catholic epithet for the Virgin Mary word for word, as shown by the opening line of the Hail Mary in Spanish: "Dios te salve, María, llena eres de gracia/ el Señor es contigo, bendita entre las mujeres / y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre, Jesús."[28]

The causes of this overlap are complex and may be many. One might argue that the overlap is the product of simulating a Catholic prayer. When crypto-Muslims were forced to repeat the Hail Mary out loud, they may have been thinking about Amina in a covert gesture. These legends were written by *moriscos* in Spain, possibly in an attempt to remind the secret followers of Islam about their traditions and the life of their prophet. Nevertheless, the notion of Amina that they were spreading is influenced by the simulation of Catholic practices and the Catholic figure of Mary. Even when the intention is to maintain a Muslim faith through a forced Catholic prayer, the ritual act of praying the Hail Mary is influencing the idea and the perception of Amina, the mother of Muhammad for these *moriscos*. This Amina is not Mary, but it is not the traditional Islamic Amina either. The result of acts like this one is a hybrid conception of a religious character. This is but one of the many examples of intertextuality among *aljamiado* literature indicating a discursive religious hybridity.[29]

One of the most curious examples of *aljamiado* hybridity is found in manuscript BNM Ms. 5302 of the National Library in Madrid, entitled *Discusiones y opiniones sobre nuestro Señor Jesucristo*.[30] This text is a clear example of the impossibility of defining *aljamiado* writings under one religion or under any "pure" tradition. The confusion of the librarians throughout the centuries regarding this specific sixteenth-century manuscript is particularly interesting. This document was first titled by a librarian of the Archive *Discusión y opiniones sobre Nuestro Señor Jesucristo*. It is written in Spanish with Arabic characters. Initially one might think that it is a hybrid between Islam and Catholicism. Upon reading the document, however, one discovers that it addresses neither the Islamic conception of Jesus as a prophet that prepared the way for the great prophet Muhammad, nor the Christian notion of a messianic Jesus. Instead the description of Jesus is in line with the Jewish notion of him as a "false prophet" who tries to change and modify God's Word and Law. The hybridity of this text underscores the ironic tension between content and form. The content of the document concurs with the Jewish tradition, but the Spanish language appears to affirm the Christian tradition while the Arabic graphical signs validate the Islamic tradition.