CHAPTER 7

Monumental Heritage and Past Conflict

The Ambiguous Role of Al-Andalus in Modern Spain and the Role of Art History

Elena Paulino Montero

In December 2018, the Spanish far-right party Vox entered the Andalusian parliament after unexpectedly obtaining a high number of votes in the regional elections. In May of the following year, it obtained multiple victories in local elections across Spain and entered the Spanish parliament as a powerful new political force. Between these two dates, and among other changes to their communication strategy, the party increased the use of historical references – medieval to be precise – in their campaigns. In 2019, the leader of Vox, Santiago Abascal, launched his presidential campaign in front of the statue of Don Pelayo – the legendary nobleman who represents the link between the Visigothic and Asturian royal lineages – in the town of Covadonga, the mythical location of the first battle in the so-called *Reconquista* or war of Reconquest. Abascal framed his new political campaign in terms of 'reconquering' the country. By means of advertisements in the media and tweets containing a variety of references to visual culture, including *The Lord of the Rings*' soundtrack and clips from the TV period drama *Isabel*,[1] Vox aligned its identity with the Christian – Visigothic – Roman tradition which had been carefully crafted as part of the national-Catholic discourse since the nineteenth century.

Reframing current political issues in terms of popular medieval precedents is not new. Since the early modern period,[2] the Middle Ages have been revisited, mythologised, decontextualised and assigned new meanings. The colonial and Eurocentric implications of medievalism have been pointed out by Kaufman (2010), Altshul (2020) and others. The crusades, the Spanish Reconquest, Joan of Arc, the Vikings or the Templars are common examples of what Elliot (2017) has called 'mediated medievalism' in today's world. This form of medievalism is neither a quotation – however inaccurate – of the medieval context, nor an attempt to point out the cultural otherness of a bygone age. It is a space for

1 https://twitter.com/vox_es/status/1080418155992940545 [accesed 01/07/2021].

2 For a study of some of these early modern visions of the past in the context of the Iberian peninsula, see Arciniega, 2013; Urquízar, 2017.

identification and assimilation whose effectiveness relies on its significance to a certain audience that can use it to criticise the present (Kaufman 2010, 5; Elliot, 2017, 15–16). This is not a unidirectional process. Modern aspirations, anxieties and desires have been projected onto the study of the past throughout history, while intellectuals, antiquarians and historians of every period have actively taken part in the creation of what Pierre Sorlin (2001, 38) has called 'historical capital': the basic knowledge of our historical culture which we then use to anchor our notions of identity and tradition, our sense of self and our perception of the other.

A couple of months after the 2019 elections, one of the newly elected councillors in Cadrete, a small town in the province of Zaragoza, decided to remove a bust of Abd al-Rahman III, founder of the local castle. The statue had already been vandalised by far-right groups and its removal was one of Vox's electoral promises in its regional election campaigns as a token of the *Reconquista* spirit. The decision had an impact on public opinion at national level. The councillor declared that only symbols 'with which all residents could identify' should be exhibited in the main town,[3] an obvious indication of his party's refusal to recognise al-Andalus as part of its own past. Other political parties accused the mayor of historical negationism, arguing that the statue symbolised a piece of Cadrete's history.[4] The statue had been installed in 2016 in the wake of a celebration recreating the foundation of the castle by Abd al-Rahman III, with the aim of actively fostering the integration of that historical period into the town's civic identity.

As historians entered the debate, one declared to a newspaper that 'Vox knows nothing about history. Abd al-Rahman III was more Spanish than the Visigothic kings. He was the son, grandson, great-grandson and great-great-grandson of Spaniards'.[5] Others pointed out that Abd al-Rahman was an educated monarch who owned a vast library full of Arabic and classical texts and transformed Cordoba into the cultural capital of Europe at the time. Blogs and editorials, sometimes illustrated with Orientalist nineteenth-century paintings, recalled Abd al-Rahman's notable contribution to the political and cultural history of Spain, his red hair and his Basque blood.

This case is significant because it shows how the main narratives institutionalised in the nineteenth century about the role of al-Andalus in Spanish

3 https://elpais.com/politica/2019/06/18/actualidad/1560861185_830478.html [Accesed 01/07/2021].

4 https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20190618/cadrete-retira-una-estatua-de-abderraman-iii-por-orden-de-un-concejal-de-vox-7511322 [Accesed 01/07/2021].

5 https://www.eldiario.es/aragon/alguna-vox-abderraman-iii-visigodos_1_1494350.html [Accesed 01/07/2021].

history are still with us today, both in academic discourse and in popular opinion. These narratives, developed by historians and Arabic scholars, can be grouped into three essentialist models: The *Reconquista* paradigm, the integrative paradigm and the *convivencia* paradigm (García Sanjuan, 2012; 2016; 2017; Manzano, 2009 and Viguera, 2009).

The *Reconquista* paradigm claims that Spain has always been fundamentally Catholic, Visigothic and Roman, and that al-Andalus was an anomaly, an invasion by a foreign power, which came to an end with the conquest of Granada in 1492. The integrative paradigm was largely developed by the pioneers of Arabic studies in Spain – a scholarly circle whose work mainly focused on the study of the Iberian past and the history of al-Andalus. They championed the idea of a 'Muslim Spain', highlighting the pre-Islamic roots of political and cultural organisation in al-Andalus, a territory which was both culturally and biologically dissociated from the rest of the Islamic world (Domínguez, 2021). Nowadays these two models seem to be diametrically opposed and have been incorporated as such into the historical capital of different political parties, but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they were shared by both liberals and conservatives. For instance, the historian and republican minister Claudio Sánchez Albornoz and the Franco regime used one or the other paradigm at their convenience (García Sanjuan, 2017b).

The integrative discourse engendered a third paradigm in the second half of the twentieth century. The *convivencia* myth of a golden era of tolerance and harmony in which the arts, sciences and literature flourished, made a deep impression on the political discourse of the left, as well as on tourism advertising and, as the Cadrete example shows, on popular opinion. Conversely, the right-wing parties dissociated themselves from the integrative model and have since capitalised on the *Reconquista* paradigm, revisioning it under the umbrella of the 'clash of civilisations' discourse in the twenty-first century (García Sanjuan, 2020: 147–163).

The case of the Cadrete statue is significant in a further sense. The removal of the statue undoubtedly sparked a debate, but it was a modern debate focusing on the mediated and contemporary views of al-Andalus, embodied by the bust, rather than on the historical past, let alone its physical remains.[6] The castle of Cadrete itself and its management were never the subject of political discussion. This lack of discussion around monuments from the al-Andalus period is far from exceptional. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the potential ambiguity of Spain's monumental heritage posed a challenge for

6 This is an example of what Kaufman defined as 'medievalism doubled up upon itself' (2010, 4).

the clear-cut interpretations developed by historians and orientalists.[7] The presence of such works in particular urban landscapes, their daily use, their meanings to local people and their significance to foreign travellers went far beyond scholarly theoretical constructions.

Prominent buildings, such as the Alhambra in Granada, or small reminders, such as the mosque of Bab al Mardum in Toledo, have been part of Spanish everyday life from the Middle Ages to the present day, and have always mediated the memory of the past. The visibility, accessibility and even the state of conservation of these monuments has changed greatly over time, and those changes have been deeply entangled with political and historical debate, local identities and locally produced historical discourses.

As Urquízar has pointed out, theories on the role of al-Andalus in Spanish identity developed from the early modern period and were closely linked to discourses on art and architecture, but this debate took place only within the sphere of history, to the exclusion of any other scholarly fields (Urquízar, 2017: 191–192). This situation changed in the nineteenth century as new disciplines – especially Arabic studies and modern architectural theory – engaged in heated arguments around the significance of al-Andalus and its monumental heritage to the modern Spanish nation. Paradoxically, the emerging discipline of art history remained on the fringes of the debate.

In this article, I explore the question of how the main discourses generated by historians and Arabic scholars were progressively dissociated from their counterparts in the fields of art history, restoration and cultural management in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through the paradigmatic example of the Alhambra of Granada, I analyse how different disciplines handled the potential ambiguity of monumental heritage, and how contradictory perceptions of aesthetic and historical identity were built. As one of the most important preserved monuments of al-Andalus, the history of the reception, management and study of the Alhambra in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been researched in depth.[8] It therefore provides a particularly appropriate context in which to question why such monuments posed a conflict for theoretical constructions in the art history field and how the multi-layered meanings associated with these works drew theoretical and material approaches apart.

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7 For the long history of tensions created by the ambiguity of Islamic heritage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Rodríguez-Mediano 2009; Urquízar 2017.

8 Among others, see Calatrava, 2008 and 2014; Barrios, 2008 and 2016; Rojo, Muñoz and González, 2016; Giese and Jiménez, 2021.

1 The Place of Al-Andalus in Nineteenth Century Intellectual Discourse: Towards a Disciplinary Differentiation

It is a well-known fact that the Romantic appreciation of the Alhambra by foreign travellers altered its perception and management in the 1800s (Barrios, 2016). But beyond this Romantic gaze, the former Nasrid palace sparked new scientific interest at the end of the century. In 1834 Owen Jones and Jean Goury had travelled to Granada with the goal of contributing to the contemporary debates about oriental architecture, ornamental taxonomies and the role of polychromy in buildings (Ferry, 2007, 239). However, the work they published as a result, *Plans, elevations, sections and details of the Alhambra …*, offered a new approach to the palace in its attempt to extract general conclusions about its structural and compositional design (Calatrava, 2010 and 2011). The book, published between 1842 and 1845, not only was revolutionary in the realm of architectural theory but also contained insights relevant to the Spanish vision of al-Andalus. Its foreword by the Spanish scholar Pascual de Gayangos provided an abridged version of his *History of the Mohammedan Dynasties,* focusing on the Nasrid dynasty, who had built the palace complex. Gayangos also translated many of the inscriptions that populated the Alhambra and were included in the text with their illustrations. The inclusion of translations from the Arabic suited Jones's British language-based approach to oriental studies. To the Spanish mindset, however, the translation of Arabic sources in connection not only with the study of the building itself but also with the historical analysis of the Nasrid kingdom, was an innovation. Indeed, Gayangos is considered the founder of Arabic studies in Spain (Álvarez and Heide, 2008), but his interest in the language was directly linked to his work on medieval history and to his wish to encourage a scientific approach to the field. Even so, his writing was criticised by some positivist scholars (Marín, 2008, 76–69, Santiño, 2018).

Gayangos also wrote about art history. He was the author of the article on Moorish architecture included in *The Penny Encyclopaedia*, published in 1839. In this work he adhered to the old eighteenth-century discourse which connected the origin of Gothic to Islamic architecture through the link of al-Andalus. In the 1850s, Gayangos visited several cities and monuments on behalf of the Spanish Royal Academy of History. Although most of these journeys were 'literary travels', for the purpose of locating and preserving the documentary legacy of dissolved monasteries, he also inspected several archaeological sites and briefly participated in the excavations at Medina Azahara (Álvarez Ramos, 2018, 196–199). Gayangos exemplifies the intellectual change that came about among Spanish scholars, who were increasingly interested in the history of

al-Andalus and in gradually incorporating the study of written Arabic sources into historical analyses of medieval Iberia.[9] These two elements – written sources and historical analysis – played a crucial role in the positive reassessment of Andalusi art and architecture. The study of the Alhambra and other representative monuments was part of a long journey towards new contextualised studies and positivistic approaches which had started in the eighteenth century. The insertion of Islamic heritage in historical settings was indeed an innovation and departure from the traditional non-historical treatment of this legacy.

In 1789 and 1804 the Real Aademia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando had published the two volumes of *Antigüedades Árabes de España*, clearly showing that anybody with an interest in the national heritage must not neglect the Islamic legacy, although it was not well understood and had never been analysed within its own logic (Calatrava, 2008, 69). In 1829 Ceán Bermúdez published his well-known *Noticias de los arquitectos y la arquitectura de España*, ten years before Gayangos' article for *The Penny Encyclopaedia.* Despite Ceán's limited interest in these buildings – he did not attempt to study or contextualise them – their inclusion as part of the national patrimony, as 'one of the eras of Spanish architecture', signalled a conceptual shift in scholarly approaches to Islamic architecture (Cera, 2019, 210–225). The Enlightenment idea that a nation's progress was linked to the defence of its artistic heritage – an idea Gayangos fully shared at the middle of nineteenth century – forced Spanish intellectuals to face the material remains of al-Andalus. After Gayangos' death, however, Spanish orientalists rarely directed their studies to the field of Islamic art, focusing instead on history, literature, philology and law. A case in point is one of Gayangos' disciples, Francisco Codera, who pursued the study of the history of al-Andalus because of its connection to his work of translating written sources but, since his main concern was political history, he did not include the arts in his studies (Viguera, 2004). His work on epigraphy focused mainly on numismatic sources for historical research purposes (Viguera, 2009, 29). By the middle of the nineteenth century, Arabic and art history scholars had begun to develop separate paths.

Francisco Codera is considered the founder of the modern school of Spanish Arabic studies, having charted a course that was followed by his disciples until the final decades of the twentieth century. As several scholars have pointed out (Manzano, 2009; Viguera, 2009), oriental scholars in Spain have traditionally

9 The growing interest in al-Andalus among European orientalists, particularly French but also from other regions, and their relations with Spanish scholars are explored in Martínez Gros 2009; Marín, 2009; Marín, 2018.

been more motivated by the Islamic presence in the Iberian Peninsula than by the colonial contemporary agenda, although the latter should not be neglected (González Alcantud, 2010; Marín, 2013–2014). As a consequence, Arabic scholars tended to steer their studies towards the history of al-Andalus, while medieval historians focused mostly on the Christian kingdoms (Manzano, 2000; Viguera, 2009). This disciplinary split in the study of the history of Spain brought about two apparently contradictory ways to negotiate Iberia's Islamic past: the *Reconquista* ideal, based on the Christian notion of the Spanish nation, and the integrative paradigm of Muslim Spain defended by Arabic scholars.

The study of Andalusi art and architecture was the realm of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes. By the mid-nineteenth century, several scholarly publications, such as *Monumentos arquitectónicos de España* or the journal *Boletín Español de Arquitectura,* revealed a renewed nationwide interest in the legacy of al-Andalus (Schweizer, 2021, 134–141). At the heart of such publications was a small group of polymaths, including Manuel de Assas and José Amador de los Ríos, both of whom participated in the debate on history, culture and Spanish identity which was to mould new interpretations of the artistic legacy of al-Andalus. Assas and Amador de los Ríos coined the term '*Mudéjar* style' (Nistal, 2014, 200–2007) which sat at the crossroads between the *Reconquista* and integrative paradigms and the art-historical interpretation of medieval monuments. The term *Mudéjar* was fully incorporated in artistic vocabulary after Amador's acceptance speech as a new member of the *Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* (Amador de los Ríos, 1859). The term was used to define monuments built by Christian patrons using Islamicate ornamentation and was praised by Amador de los Ríos as the authentic 'national style', without parallel among other European nations (Ruiz Souza, 2009, 279–280). It merged the *Reconquista* and integrative models, taking pride in the heritage of al-Andalus while establishing Spain's artistic identity as essentially Christian (Urquízar, 2009–2010). The idea of *Mudéjar* art shaped public perception of Spain's visual identity (McSweeney, 2018), but it was never integrated into the debates of historians and Arabic scholars.

In the meantime, other thinkers, such as Gayangos' son-in-law Juan Facundo Riaño, devoted themselves to the study of Islamic architecture in al-Andalus. Riaño, a student of Arabic himself and a professor of history of art in Madrid, published *Orígenes de la arquitectura arábiga, su transición en los siglos XI y XII y su florecimiento inmediato* in 1880, and *Palacio árabe de la Alhambra* in 1882. In these works, he argued for a new positivist approach to Islamic architecture, which should be studied as a separate artistic tradition with its own evolution and temporal scale (Isac, 2017, 60–62; Schweizer, 2021, 145–149). This positivist approach was very much in tune with his contemporaries' ideals of history and

philology and was quickly incorporated in the theoretical discourse on Islamic art both in the Academia and the universities. However, restoration practices and eclectic architectural theories, as well as certain ambiguous discourses on national and local identity attached to the physical monuments themselves, followed a different route. The art historical discourse was only one of several divergent conceptualisations of Andalusi heritage.

2 The 'Genuine' Alhambra: Orientalist Restorations and Visual Identities

In 1847, two years after the publication of *Plans, elevations, sections and details of the Alhambra*, Isabella II, queen of Spain, appointed Rafael Contreras as *restaurador adornista* (ornamental restorer) of the Alhambra. After two hundred years of neglect, the Crown's interest in the Alhambra had been growing since Isabella's mother, María Cristina de Borbón, brought a new cultural sensibility – more attuned with the European Romanticism of her time – to the Spanish court (Panadero, 2020, 201). The 1830s were a momentous decade for the Alhambra. A budget was allocated for repairs to the palace, Washington Irving published his *Tales of the Alhambra*, and decorated in Orientalist-fantasy style for the occasion, it welcomed the royal princes on an official visit (Barrios, 2008b, 138–143). The new interest awakened by the Alhambra, coupled with its superintendents' concerns about the condition of the building and the critical remarks of foreign travellers, prompted the Crown to commission structural repairs to the monument. At this point, the Queen's main consideration was the preservation of the Crown's patrimony (*the restoration of this glorious monument property of the kings of Spain*),[10] as well as to respond to the accusations of backwardness and lack of cultural sensitivity aired by some foreign travellers. As a result, the works did not follow a systematic plan and failed to develop the Alhambra's potential role in the creation of an external image of the nation.

This state of affairs changed in the 1840s thanks to the growing Romantic sensibility among intellectuals both in Granada and Madrid, and even within the royal family, together with the Alhambra's increasing popularity as a destination for European travellers. Several restoration plans were designed in Granada and sent to Court in Madrid for approval and funding. The plans, which were only partially executed, evinced an intention to rebuild rather than limit the intervention to conservation, and an extremely aggressive attitude to the original remains (Barrios, 2008b, 145 ff.; Barrios, 2009, 69–70). For instance,

10 AGP, Administraciones Patrimoniales, Granada, C.º 10938/9. Cited in Panadero, 2010: 201.

in 1846 the newly appointed architect, Salvador Amador, suggested demolishing the *Patio de los Leones* and rebuilding it from the ground up (Barrios, 2009, 48). He also proposed the addition of small domes onto the pavilions in the *Patio de los Leones*, which proved to be a highly successful idea, as we shall see below.

The tear-down-and-rebuild approach was not exclusive to the Alhambra or to Spain at the time, but the former Nasrid palace was in a class of its own due to certain peculiarities. Unlike interventions in Gothic castles or cathedrals, which could rely on in-depth knowledge of their architectural features, this kind of know-how was unavailable in the case of the Alhambra. Architects lacked specific training and as mentioned above, few works in the field of art history had addressed the palace. Given the dearth of systematic academic literature until the 1920s, the positivist approach to the study of the monument was scarcely more than wishful thinking during the second half of the nineteenth century. The lack of a theoretical foundation for the works, combined with the new Romantic ideals and expectations about the monument among both local and foreign audiences, paved the way for an 'ornamental' intervention.

These architectural and social trends reached a climax in 1847, when Rafael Contreras was appointed as 'ornamental restorer' and ordered to work shoulder to shoulder with Amador, the architect in charge. Rafael was the son of José Contreras, who had managed the previous round of works. In his efforts to secure the Queen's patronage, he had given her a model of an ideally reconstructed *Sala de Dos Hermanas,* which pleased her (González, 2017, 36) and led to a commission for an Alhambra Room (*Gabinete Árabe*) to be built by Contreras in the royal palace at Aranjuez (Panadero, 1994). She also encouraged him to combine his new restoration work with the production of small-scale replicas of the Alhambra, which he soon transformed into a lucrative business, in tune with the photographic studios targeting the new tourist market (Piñar, 2006).

Isabella II made an interesting speech when she appointed Contreras as the Alhambra's restorer urging him

> [...] to endeavour particularly to restore the ornaments of that most beautiful of Spanish memorials to the exact form they had at the time of the conquest [...] when the Catholic Monarchs waved the standard of the Cross [...] It is Her Majesty's pleasure that, as her illustrious ancestor Isabella I was the conqueror of the Alhambra, Isabella II be known to posterity as its restorer.[11]

11 Archivo General de Palacio, Personal, caja 16808, exp. 2. Cited by Gonzalez, 2017: 30.

In her speech, Isabella II added an extra layer of national pride to the preservation of the Alhambra by aligning her discourse with the *Reconquista* paradigm, in which monuments like the Alhambra were considered spoils of war and as such embodied the Catholic Monarchs' victory. Her speech, however, contains internal contradictions which can also be perceived in her decisions regarding the management of the palace. From Isabella's point of view, the original shape of the Alhambra was its Christianised form – the only possible ideal deserving to be recovered, but for her it was not a fortress, origin of a military victory, but a palace in which the oriental decoration was the defining element. While the Orientalist reconstruction of the original Alhambra might have a war booty connotation, the model of the *Sala de las Dos Hermanas* and the *Gabinete árabe* in her Aranjuez palace showed a clear mismatch between the Queen's aesthetic appreciation and her nationalistic rhetoric, which singled out the Christianised identity of the Alhambra as the only valid option. Her aesthetic preferences were shared by the Spanish aristocrats who refurbished their palaces at the time and should be seen in a wider context including the Moorish revival in Europe (Giese and Jiménez, 2021, 216–217).

Contreras's actions and discourse display similar inconsistencies. He worked on the monument for over forty years, first as *restaurador adornista* (ornamental restorer) and from 1868 as director of works (Rodríguez, 1998, 49–55). Although his work evolved over the years,[12] his approach to the Alhambra remained unchanged, prioritising decoration over structural repairs and aiming for the ideal of 'image reintegration' (Orihuela, 2008, 136–141). While his work on the *Sala de las Camas* and the *Patio de los Leones* was strongly criticised in the following decades, it was also highly appreciated by both foreign and local visitors, who enjoyed the orientalised image of the monument he had created, with highly charged polychromy, small domes, and coloured tiled in a Persianate fantasy style (González Alcantud, 2008, 265). Contreras reified this image of the Alhambra in Europe through his production of souvenirs, plaster casts and models (González, 2018), and at local level his restorations were very well received. Subsequent replicas of the Alhambra, both at home and abroad, included the domes added by Contreras and soon the image he created of the *Patio de los Leones* became the 'genuine' image of the Alhambra (González Alcantud, 2018, 265–268).

Interestingly, Contreras's actual interventions contrasted sharply with his written work. In his *Estudio descriptivo de los monumentos árabes de Granada, Sevilla y Córdoba* (1878), he stated that, to truly appreciate the remains, they should be analysed on their own and 'oriental fantasies' should be eliminated

12 For a comprehensive study of Contreras interventions see Rodríguez, 1998.

(Calatrava, 2008, 87–88). He encouraged a positivistic and rational approach to the architecture of the Alhambra based on the study of its geometry and plans, and he explicitly claimed that this approach was the basis for his restoration works. The reality of his material interventions, however, proved otherwise. Theoretical discourse on restoration, national identity and heritage management was immersed in the same debates as historians and Arabic scholars. In the meantime, material practices, aesthetic appreciation and the development of national and local visual identities took a divergent path.

3 Aesthetics and Archaeology in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Scholarly Approaches Clash with Local Identities

In 1907 Modesto Cendoya was appointed to succeed Rafael Contreras and his son Mariano – who had only been in post for a few years – as the architect in charge of the Alhambra. The new century had also ushered in a new scientific debate about restoration. The theories developed as a result not only conditioned the work of both Cendoya and his successor, Torres Balbás, but contributed to redefining the respective roles of art history, archaeology, history and Arabic studies in the study of Andalusi heritage. Cendoya's works were highly controversial. He was in communication with art historians and restorers such as Vicente Lampérez, and advocated the 'restorative' – that is, reconstructive – approach to the Alhambra. In contrast, the official institutions defended the so-called archaeological approach, which limited intervention to a minimum and focused on structural conservation of the remains (Álvarez Lopera, 1977, 56–82).

Cendoya had local public opinion in his favour, but eventually fell from grace on account of his inability complete his interventions and his endless archaeological explorations (Álvarez Lopera, 1977, 67). Nevertheless, he was able to retain the endorsement of certain sectors of the press and local public opinion because his traditional approach supported the restitution of lost elements, following the previous 'ornamental' restorations, which were considered part of the visual identity of the monument. At this stage, a new element entered the scene. The profits of the tourist trade added a new level of complexity to society's perception of the Alhambra and, from that point forward, the historical heritage of al-Andalus. The Alhambra had been a very early focal point for the tourist market, and photographic studios and printing workshops had become an important source of income since Contreras's time (Piñar, 2006; González, 2017, 282–318). In 1911, the Crown issued regulations for visiting the monument and introduced admission fees.

Local identities, traditional ornamentalist restoration practices, new theoretical debates, national image and business profits had contributed to the resignification of the Alhambra since its rediscovery in the late eighteenth century. As we have seen, this combination of factors increased the Alhambra's presence both in the public mind and in academic discourse from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards and reached a turning point in 1927 with the appointment of Leopoldo Torres Balbás as Cendoya's successor. Torres Balbás' restoration works and theoretical background have been analysed in depth.[13] He is well known for developing a scientific approach to the Alhambra based on his own studies as an architect, archaeologist, and researcher with an interest in methodological innovation in the international arena (Henares Cuéllar, 2013, 344–348). His interventions changed the perception of the palace among tourists, local agents and academics and still determines its image to this day. Although his restorations have been praised by modern historiography for their modernity, accuracy, respect and scientific foundation, they were at the centre of a bitter controversy in his time because they clashed with the visual identity that had been built around the monument.

The newly appointed architect criticised Contreras's work and dismantled some orientalising features that had no scientific basis, such as the tiled domes that crowned the pavilions in the *Patio de los Leones* since the previous century. Rafael Contreras's interventions had enjoyed strong support in Granada. He had consolidated his own vision of the Alhambra by multiplying it in the form of photographic souvenirs, plaster casts, lithographs and models, raising expectations about the monument among foreign travellers and local audiences. The Spanish pavilion at the Brussels Universal Exposition held in 1910 was modelled on the Alhambra, showing how official institutions used this monument – as an embodiment of al-Andalus and the Islamic past – to fashion the international image of Spain (McSweeney, 2018). The pavilion was built by Modesto Cendoya and included one of Contreras's domes, a motif Cendoya used again in the Alhambra Palace Hotel, built a few years later.

The people of Granada were outraged when Torres Balbás decided to remove the Alhambra's cupolas on the grounds of his own research, to the point that he had to fight back in the local press (González Alcantud, 2018, 265–271). He also demolished two hubs of *Alhambrismo* culture and social life in Granada: the Siete Suelos Hotel, which partially overlooked the homonymous gate, and the tavern belonging to Antonio Barrios, alias 'El Polinario' (González Alcantud, 2016). While the aim of these demolitions was to recover the Nasrid palace and

13 See Vílchez, 1988; Muñoz, 2014; Martín, 2008 or Villafranca, 2013.

its space in the urban landscape, the decision clashed with the local population's identification processes and memories surrounding the monument, not to mention the financial profits derived from a commodified Orientalist image of the building complex.

Torres Balbás' position as restorer of the Alhambra came to an end with his removal by the Franco regime after the Spanish Civil War. As was often the case, national politics aligned with local issues to prevent his return to Granada due to the antagonism of the local elite. The new appointee was Francisco Prieto-Moreno, one of Torres Balbás' disciples whose work largely followed the guidelines laid down by his predecessor. It is worth noting that the main feature of Islamic period archaeology and heritage management during the Franco regime was continuity (Lorenzo, 2017, 222–223). Regarding the place of al-Andalus in history, National Catholicism adopted both of the nationalist paradigms crafted during the previous century – the exclusivist model, which celebrated the *Reconquista*, and the integrative (García Sanjuan, 2017). Archaeological findings and monumental remains could lend material reality to an idea of 'Spanish Muslims' that might suit the purpose of shaping an image of national grandeur and originality, with the extra potential for interpretation linked to the ideas of *Reconquista* and victory in war. This ambiguous potential was especially important in the case of the Alhambra on account of its increasing ideological significance since its rediscovery (Hertel, 2016, 44–58).

4 The Heritage of Al-Andalus in Scholarship during the Franco Dictatorship and its Aftermath: An Uncomfortable Place for Art History

After his removal as restorer, Torres Balbás continued to develop his two other lines of work, as a professor of art history at the School of Architecture in Madrid, and as a researcher in collaboration with the Arab Studies Department at the newly founded Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. The so-called Beni Codera – a group of Arabic scholars who had followed in the footsteps of Francisco Codera – were his contemporaries. They refined the integrative paradigm, developing the idea of 'Hispano-Muslim' culture and advocated the incorporation of al-Andalus as a period of Spanish history. Their research focused on cultural history and literature and many of their publications were devoted to highlighting connections and exchanges between al-Andalus and the Christian kingdoms, as well as their mutual roots in the

classical world (Viguera, 2009, 68–70). Torres Balbás collaborated in their journal *al-Andalus,* which published his research on the subject as well as his reviews of European – mainly French – publications on Islamic art.

Torres Balbás was a prolific researcher, with over 300 articles and 13 books, most of them on the art and archaeology of al-Andalus (Almagro, 2013, 33–35). He had studied archaeology with Manuel Gómez-Moreno, and the two of them can be considered pioneers in the study of the material heritage of al-Andalus (García Cuetos, 2011). However, the institutional changes implemented by the Franco regime contributed to a fragmentation of disciplines that progressively divided the field of art history. During the Republic, the Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios (JAE) and its Centro de Estudios Históricos (CEH) had a marked multidisciplinary orientation which allowed Gómez-Moreno to develop a theoretical foundation for his research on medieval Iberian architecture and the material interconnections between al-Andalus and the Christian kingdoms (Rodríguez Mediano, 2013, 41; Moreno, 2020). This multidisciplinary approach was lost in the aftermath of the Civil War as the JAE was abolished and replaced with the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC).[14]

The Department of Art History and Archaeology at the JAE, led by Elías Tormo and Manuel Gómez-Moreno, became the Instituto Diego Velázquez de Historia del Arte (Cabañas, 2007; Pasamar, 1991). A new Instituto de Filología was created which included a department of Arabic Studies, with an Arabic Art and Archaeology section. Thus, the art and archaeology of al-Andalus were integrated into the academic sphere of Arabic studies but severed from other areas of art history research and were absent from theoretical debates in the field. After the death of Gómez-Moreno, who had continued to work as an honorary researcher at the Instituto Velázquez, all research on material culture in al-Andalus was linked to the department of Arabic Studies. Torres Balbás' publications are a good example of this split: while all his works on medieval Christian art were published in *Archivo Español de Arte y Arqueología*, the journal of the Instituto Diego Velázquez, his studies on Islamic art and archaeology appeared in *al-Andalus*, the scholarly journal published by the department of Arabic Studies at the Instituto de Filología (Almagro, 2013, 351).

Although this artificial separation could sometimes be overcome by personal bonds between scholars, these exchanges could not replace institutionalised multi-disciplinarity. The study of al-Andalus had developed through both architectural and archaeological approaches and it was not until the final decades of the twentieth century that other avenues emerged which led to the

14 About these changes and their repercussions in the realm of medieval studies see Escalera, Jular and Alfonso, 2017.

incorporation of the different theoretical paradigms developed in the field of art history over the past hundred years. The split also affected the development of Art History, both in terms of research and teaching. It also explains the inertial use of obsolete terminology as late as the early twenty-first century, including terms such as 'Hispano-Muslim art', which belonged in the integrative model abandoned by Spanish Arabic scholars in the 1970s and 80s (Viguera, 2009, 80); or *arte mudéjar*, a term so loaded with ideological connotations that it cannot be understood outside the nineteenth century debate on national religious identity (Urquízar, 2009–2010).

In the twenty-first century, the field of medieval history has been criticised for its residual use of the *Reconquista* paradigm (García Sanjuan, 2016; Rodríguez Mediano, 2020, 25–26), while the integrative model of Muslim Spain has disappeared from academic discourse. Arabic scholars and a new generation of art historians dealing with al-Andalus have shown their interest in new research fields that do not necessarily engage with the reductive problem of al-Andalus and Spanish identity (Viguera, 2009, 26). This evolution is exemplified by the history of the Museum of the Alhambra. Although artworks and archaeological artefacts belonging to the Alhambra had been exhibited in the palace since the mid nineteenth century, no systematic attempts were made to create a coherent collection for public viewing until the twentieth century (Marinetto, 2017, 283–285). In the early 1900s, Manuel Gómez-Moreno and other members of the Patronato de la Alhambra promoted the creation of a *Museo arábigo español* (Hispano-Arab Museum). This idea was then transformed into a project for a *Museo de arte islámico español* (Museum of Spanish Islamic Art). The museum finally opened in 1962 as the *Museo Nacional de Arte Hispanomusulmán* (National Museum of Hispano-Muslim Art) following the rhetoric of the Beni Codera group. In 1994, the museum was refurbished and reopened with the more neutral name *Museo de la Alhambra* (Museum of the Alhambra), which also exhibited artefacts from other areas of the Mediterranean (Marinetto, 2017, 295).

The Alhambra illustrates how the essentialist interpretations of monumental heritage dominant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are no longer considered appropriate from the institutional and academic points of view. Nevertheless, the Alhambra still embodies the ambiguous status of Islamic heritage in Spain. Economic interests, local identities, nationalistic constructions and historical concerns are at odds with each other and have not always been aligned with scholars' theoretical models for interpreting the past. For the past two centuries, local identity and political discourses have never abandoned the Christianised reading of the Alhambra, from Isabella II projecting herself as the successor of her fifteenth-century namesake, to the

video-illustrated proposal by the far-right party Vox to adopt the anniversary of the conquest of Granada as Andalucía's regional holiday.[15] Meanwhile, the visual identity of the city and the monument has been established as Islamic for centuries and frequently orientalised. As Jesús Bermúdez – former director of the Museo de La Alhambra – remarked, the Alhambra's successful image is not necessarily based on archaeology, but on aesthetics and historical imagination (González Alcantud, 2018, 273).

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15 https://m.facebook.com/voxespana/videos/399743101351578.

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