

“Here’s Spain Looking at You”: Shifting Perspectives on North African Otherness in Galdós and Fortuny

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The violence directed against African immigrants in Spain in recent years has provoked shock and outrage in many quarters; some of the journalistic and academic treatments of these events would seem to imply that it is only now, as a result of new patterns of global migration, that Spaniards have been forced to confront their own racist sentiments. In fact, however, the conceptualization of race has always played an essential role in constructions of identity in Spain, particularly since the modern nation-state was founded upon a brutal effort to “purify” Spanish blood after eight centuries of Muslim, Jewish and Christian coexistence. Some periods of Spanish history, of course, have been characterized by a more pronounced obsession with racial issues than others. For example, race also moved to the forefront in the final decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, when the growing sense of national crisis that reached its apogee after the liberation of Spain’s last overseas colonies, and the concomitant debates over the urgency of Europeanization, coincided with a renewed colonialist impulse in North Africa. While the racist claims of criminal anthropologists and eugenicists, who sought to reverse the effects of a perceived social and biological degeneration, began to circulate in Spain, myriad Spanish politicians, essayists, and literary and visual artists struggled to characterize the precise nature of Spain’s African legacy, and to envision the nation’s future role in North Africa. Many of the resulting texts demonstrated a tremendous anxiety concerning Spanish identity, including the presumed racial make-up of Spaniards. Joaquín Costa, for instance, reappropriated

the superimposition of earthly and human terrain common to colonialist rhetoric, defending the legitimacy of Spanish predominance in Morocco by transposing the derogatory geographical metaphor coined by the French “Africa begins in the Pyrenees,” into a passionately affirmative corporeal one—“el Africa, para cada español, empieza en las plantas de los pies y acaba en los pelos de la cabeza” (“Los intereses” 160). Initially, Costa took great pains to define his romantically idealized “African” Spaniard as Ibero-Berber (white) rather than sub-Saharan (black), but in later texts the Berbers also came to be associated with racial decadence, and Costa’s bias emerged in even more virulent fashion as he exhorted his fellow Spaniards to exorcise the African within, or even (employing a curiously multivalent and disturbing image) to “mudar de piel” (“El actual problema” 219; “Quiénes” 261).

The deeply conflicted nature of this socio-political discourse could not help but surface in contemporaneous Spanish cultural representations of North Africa. That is, if Spaniards demonstrated ambivalence concerning their own “African-ness,” then their artistic and literary depictions of Africa and Africans—oftentimes linked to the neo-colonialist project—might be expected to reveal acute tensions as well. This article will begin to tease out some of the com-

plexity of those depictions through the analysis of a number of paintings by Marià Fortuny and several historical novels by Benito Pérez Galdós, set in the Spanish-Moroccan War of 1859-60. Despite the roughly forty-year interval in time of production (Fortuny’s paintings were created in the 1860s, while Galdós’s novels appeared in 1905), and despite the difference in artistic genre, the works are in fact remarkably similar, for they repeatedly attempt to deploy established Anglo-European colonialist rhetorical strategies to depict Morocco, only to meet with resistance. And this resistance, as we shall see, becomes most intransigent when effort is made to represent the female “other,” especially when she is marked as racially different.

In early 1860, the Diputació de Barcelona sent the promising young painter Marià Fortuny to North Africa to document the Spanish-Moroccan War, charging him in particular with immortalizing the heroism of General Prim and his Catalan volunteer soldiers.¹ To facilitate Fortuny’s task, the Diputació funded an additional trip to France so that the artist might study consecrated military paintings by Northern European artists, particularly French depictions of the Egyptian and Algerian campaigns. Yet once Fortuny had experienced both the horrors of war and the beauty of



Fig. 1. Marià Fortuny, *Battle of Tetuán* (ca. 1863-73). Oil on canvas, 300 x 972 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Barcelona.

the Moroccan landscape, people and culture, he found himself unable fully to comply with his official imperialist nation-building duties. Over a period of several years he struggled in vain to complete his *Battle of Tetuán*, and the unfinished painting was only acquired by the Diputació after Fortuny's untimely death in 1874 (Fig. 1). For a number of art historians this immense work—three meters tall, by ten meters wide—signals the futility of the didactic historical painting that dominated the Spanish Academy at the time. María de los Santos García-Felguera, for example, argues that the painting:

viene a ser una constatación de la imposibilidad de hacer Pintura de Historia a mediados del siglo XIX, la impotencia de la pintura para crear grandes máquinas históricas a la manera tradicional. (272)

In Fortuny's work, the nearly featureless figures of major military leaders such as Prim and O'Donnell barely emerge from the vibrantly chaotic brushstrokes that portray the mass of Spanish soldiers in the painting's background. Yet this obfuscation of the epic heroism prescribed by academic historical painting is not the only notable feature of the *Battle of Tetuán*. Here it is helpful to compare Fortuny's work with one of the "grand historical machines" of the Orientalist school, such as Louis-François Lejeune's *Battle of the Pyramids* (1806), which the Spanish artist would have had occasion to see on his government-financed trip to France (Fig. 2). The calm and rational organization of the victorious French troops on the right is opposed to the disorder of the Turkish soldiers on the left as they are driven into the Nile along a horizontal axis (Porterfield 61-63), a standard composi-

tional strategy in panoramic battle paintings that works to inscribe the viewer into a position of illusory objectivity. Fortuny's work, by contrast, in effect situates its viewers on the side of the Moroccan soldiers, confronting them in startling fashion with a mad rush of fleeing troops, even as it foregrounds the sad plight of many of the vanquished. Through this dramatic manipulation of perspective, ideological iconoclasm accompanies formal experimentation.²

Benito Pérez Galdós considered Fortuny "el pintor más original y más aplaudido de estos tiempos, maestro de su época" (Shoemaker 51), and it is perhaps not coincidental that when for his part the renowned literary master turned to portray the Spanish-Moroccan War in his fourth series of National Episodes, he employed aesthetic and ideological strategies similar to Fortuny's. In *Aita Tettauén*, published in 1905, Galdós undertakes a sophisticated exploration of issues of perspective, in both the narratological and political sense. Moreover, the novelist, like the painter before him, eventually shifts the focus entirely from battlefield to bedroom, in an effort to reframe the terms of the Spanish neo-imperialist project. In effect, the visual and verbal texts to be considered here begin to dismantle the dominant structures of vision and power within the colonial context, and to undermine as well the cultural construction of racial difference.

Aita Tettauén is divided into four sections: an omniscient narrator takes charge of the first, second and fourth sections, following closely the adventures of the makeshift Spanish war correspondent Juan Santiuste, while the third section presents a first-person account of the military conflict, ostensibly from a Moroccan perspective. The bloated rhetoric of nationalistic war-



Fig. 2. Louis-François Lejeune, *Battle of the Pyramids* (1806). Oil on canvas, 5 ft. 8 in. x 13 ft. 8 in. Musée National du Château, Versailles.

mongering dominates the first section, set in Madrid. Juan Santiuste and his friends in the Ansúrez family are swept up in the growing enthusiasm for the Moroccan campaign, which re-ignites the desire for conquest and imperial expansion; as Santiuste exults, “[d]el Pirineo al Atlas, todo será España” (*Aita* 24). Only the eldest member of the Ansúrez family, grandfather Jerónimo, provides an alternative viewpoint, labelling the conflict a civil war since he sees Moroccans and Spaniards as brothers: “¿Qué es el moro más que un español mahometano? ¿Y cuántos españoles vemos que son moros con disfraz de cristianos?” (*Aita* 13).

Even when Santiuste himself begins to recognize that the war has been manufactured by politicians to distract Spaniards from internal crises, he characterizes it as positive nonetheless, as an “[e]spectáculo admirable, sublime, que nos consuela de las vulgaridades y miserias de la política” (*Aita* 23). Indeed, the Ansúrez family moves from one apartment to another in Madrid so that their sickly son Vicentito might enjoy a better view of that spectacle: their new resi-

dence overlooking the Calle Mayor provides the perfect “miradero,” from which the boy observes the colorful troops marching in formation as they prepare to leave for war (*Aita* 11). Moreover, for the days on which Vicentito is too ill to venture out onto the balcony, his father offers him a tantalizing substitute for the Spanish military spectacle: a stereoscope with battle scenes from the French colonial campaigns in Algeria—precisely the images that Fortuny was encouraged to view before painting his *Battle of Tetuán* (19).

A number of contemporary cultural critics have asserted that this sort of creation and consumption of spectacle is in fact essential to the colonialist project. Mary Louise Pratt analyzes the “monarch-of-all-I-survey scene,” in which the representative of Empire, situated in an elevated position, creates a literal or figurative panoramic painting that seeks to justify the subjugation of a land and its people (204-05). For Timothy Mitchell, this aesthetic transformation of a particular geography into what he terms an “exhibition” also reproduces the

Panopticon's visually-based imposition of power (10-12, 23-26). Thus it is significant that once he arrives in Morocco, Santiuste climbs a rocky promontory to observe a battle, accompanied by a number of Spaniards, one of whom shouts at the top of his lungs, "Aquí está España mirándote" 'Here's Spain looking at you' (*Aita* 53). From his vantage point, Santiuste witnesses the indistinct mass of Moroccan soldiers, who first emerge from the earth "como nube de moscas," and then jump about the rough mountainside as if they were grasshoppers (*Aita* 52). After this characteristic reduction of the North Africans to insects, however, the archetypal "monarch-of-all-I-survey scene" undergoes a transfiguration. Although a friend attempts to guide Santiuste's perception of the military spectacle by pointing out the heroic Spanish leaders, the Moroccan landscape fails to cooperate, hiding key figures from view:

—¿Ves cómo se despliegan en línea? Allí está la izquierda; la derecha nos la tapa esa loma, que no nos deja ver el barranco del Infierno.

—¿Y tu general, dónde está?

—¿Echagüe? ¿Dónde ha de estar sino en el sitio de mayor peligro? Allí, en la derecha le tienes: no podemos verle. [...] ¿No ves a Zabala?...Allí, junto a la loma que nos tapa la vista del ala derecha. (*Aita* 52)

This frustrating conversation begins at the end of one chapter and carries over into the next, and demonstrates how the colonial gaze of mastery over the Moroccan terrain is thwarted; that terrain itself defiantly obscures the desired view of Spanish heroism. Galdós's text thus indulges in a tendency identified by Pratt, who affirms that "[t]he solemnity and self-congratulatory tone of

the monarch-of-all-I-survey scene are a virtual invitation to satire and demystification" (208).

Santiuste's subsequent descent from the mountain parallels a "descenso de su entusiasmo" (*Aita* 53), as he wanders about the battlefields littered with dead soldiers (*Aita* 54).³ It is here that Santiuste undergoes a dramatically abrupt transformation, apparently rejecting the colonialist perspective and echoing the oppositional viewpoint expressed earlier in the novel by Jerónimo Ansuérez. In a conversation with Pedro Antonio de Alarcón—and here Galdós converts the author of the immensely popular *Diario de un testigo de la Guerra de Africa* (1860) into a literary character—Santiuste insists on the constructed nature of national identity and patrimony:

Yo te aseguro que al ver en estos días el sinnúmero de muertos destrozados por las balas, no he sentido más lástima de los españoles que de los moros. Mi piedad borra las nacionalidades y el abolengo, que no son más que artificios. (*Aita* 68)

At this point it is Alarcón who carries on the imperialist rhetorical tradition, arguing that in the end patriotic values must dominate, and celebrating the fact that the Spaniards have managed to send a good deal of Moroccans to their maker (*Aita* 68-69, 71-72).⁴

It is not uncommon for critics to claim that Galdós's novel is innovative because it reveals opposing perspectives on the war. Juan Ignacio Ferreras, for example, argues that the work's "gran novedad, consiste en relatarnos una misma estructura histórica, desde diferentes puntos de vista," one of which is the Muslim perspective (164); similarly, Yolanda Arencibia observes that:

“[L]as partes segunda y tercera se centran en el meollo de los hechos guerreros desde las dos perspectivas: la española [...] y la perspectiva árabe” (527).⁵ It is true that the novel initially creates this impression. The third section is narrated by a man named El Nasiry who directs his missives concerning the war to an elderly benefactor, El Zebdy. El Nasiry punctuates his reports with invocations in praise of Allah, and his descriptions of individual battles sometimes directly reverse those presented by Santiuste in earlier sections of the novel. For example, while Santiuste saw the Moroccan soldiers as indistinguishable clouds of flies or grasshoppers, El Nasiry describes the Spanish troops as “flies” or “ants,” as an unindividualized “nube parda” (*Aita* 120, 143, 147-48, 150). Through their extended observations, however, both men apparently come to appreciate a certain common humanity, rising above questions of patriotism and national identity, although as we have seen Santiuste discovers that commonality in suffering and death, while El Nasiry finds it in individual acts of heroism, praising the bravery and intelligence of Spanish military leaders such as O’Donnell and Prim (*Aita* 124, 147).

As alert readers, we might identify El Nasiry as Jerónimo Ansúrez’s “renegado” or apostate son, the Muslim convert and Moroccan resident who has become a friend of the sultan himself, and who is described by his family members in Spain with a curious mixture of shame, pride and exoticising obsession in the first section of the novel.⁶ Yet at this point we will probably not doubt the authenticity of the man’s religious and cultural transformation, given his convincing imitation of Islamic rhetoric in the third section of the novel. In the fourth section, however, in typical Galdosian fashion, the

rug is pulled out from under us. In an illuminating conversation with Santiuste, El Nasiry reveals not only the insincerity of his conversion, but also his deeply entrenched racism:

¿Crees tú que es historia lo que escribo para El Zebdy? No, hijo; no es nada de eso, porque he tenido que escribirlo al gusto musulmán, retorciendo los hechos para que siempre resulten favorables a los *moríos*. Y cuando no me ha sido posible desfigurar el rostro de la verdad, hele puesto mil mentirosos adornos y afeites para que no lo conozca ni la madre que la parió. [...] Claro que el bestia de El Zebdy no verá más que la superficie de lo escrito; en el fondo no penetrará, porque su entender romo es incapaz de penetración, como el de todo musulmán que no ha salido de estas ciudades apestosas.

(*Aita* 205)

Here, of course, the imperialistic animalization of Moroccans returns with a vengeance. In his otherwise favorable analysis of the novel, Juan Goytisolo laments El Nasiry’s cynical final retraction, evidently wishing that Galdós had fully realized his presentation of a North African viewpoint (70). Yet this could also be considered one of the more brilliant gestures of Galdós’s text, one that suggests the impossibility of a Spaniard ever providing such a viewpoint.⁷ Ideally, too this is a strategy that may force many of us as readers to confront our own complicity with racist thought, as we are first lulled into a comfortable, self-satisfied respect for El Nasiry’s “other” perspective, only to discover the base distortions underlying that perspective in the end.

Our positioning as viewers before Fortuný’s *Battle of Tetuán* might be deemed

equally uncomfortable. José Yxart, whose 1881 book on Fortuny still provides the only truly in-depth analysis of this work, begins to capture its odd ambivalence of perspective when he concludes of Fortuny's representation of the Moroccans that:

si como español celebra su derrota, su corazón de artista está por ellos, y los traslada a la tela en fantástica atmósfera de colores para que inmortalicen su propio nombre en aquel cuadro, antes que con la fuga, con la victoria de nuestras armas. (86)

Spatially, the painting situates us on the side of the Moroccans, yet it employs a range of artistic styles to present an oddly multifaceted view of the North Africans' experiences. The horrifyingly naturalistic representation of the dead Moroccan utterly denuded by his fellow soldiers, the careful modelling of the placid calm exhibited by the domestic animals seemingly oblivious to their masters' fate, the impressionistically-depicted troops who flee on horses that oneirically hover above the earth in a cloud of dust, even as they appear to rush headlong towards the viewer—together, such images may provoke conflicting feelings of repulsion, sympathy, wonder and fear.

Fortuny never considered this painting complete, and never turned it over to the Diputació during his lifetime. Instead, the artist attempted to satisfy the demands of his governmental benefactors by negotiating an intriguing substitution. Shortly after returning from France, Fortuny sent a package to the Diputació in which he included a stunning painting of an Odalisque (Fig. 3 [see back cover]), which he asked them to accept as one of the commissioned military scenes:

Como una pobre muestra de los trabajos, que me propongo hacer sobre la guerra de Africa, tengo el honor de ofrecer a Vuestra Excelencia el cuadro que adjunto, una escena costumbrista de un interior marroquí. Si mi primera obra merece la aprobación de Vuestra Excelencia, le pido que me haga el favor de aceptarla como una de las pequeñas telas que representa los episodios de esta gran guerra. (qtd. in González López and Martí Ayxelà 1: 43)

Needless to say, the Diputació accepted the painting with enthusiasm. But in what sense might it be considered a representation of the Spanish-Moroccan War? In what is now considered a "cliché of colonial history," the native woman's body stands in for the colonized nation; her sexual subjugation figures the military and political subjugation of her homeland (Spurr 171). Thus, it might be argued that in Fortuny's painting, mastery of the nude female body displayed for the viewers (implicitly Spanish and male) in effect re-presents the Spaniards' conquest of the Moroccans. This is, in fact, how nineteenth-century European portraits of odalisques have come to be interpreted in recent years, since the publication of art historian Linda Nochlin's groundbreaking, if polemical, ideological analysis of Orientalist painting.

Interestingly, there is a similar displacement of the imperialist impulse onto the female body in *Aita Tettauen*. Juan Santiuste, deeply disturbed by the unrelenting brutality of the war, decides to "go native," adopting Moroccan dress and disappearing among the local population. His final transformation is preceded by yet another "monarch-of-all-I-survey scene," this time a panoramic view of the Valley of

Tetuán, which is feminized by Santiuste's guide, the military priest Don Toro Godo. As the two men feast their eyes on the beauty of "la opulenta Tetuán" stretched out before them, Don Toro expresses confidence that the Spaniards will conquer both valley and city (*Aita* 108). Significantly, this moment is embedded within a conversation concerning the fate of women during wartime, in which Don Toro argues that:

el *elemento femenino* está en el pensamiento del soldado, ¿me entiendes? [...] y ya sabe el soldado que para ser dueño de él, tiene que ir a buscarlo al campo y a las ciudades enemigas. (*Aita* 106; emphasis in the original)

Santiuste, in effect, will do just that. While critics have emphasized Santiuste's pacifism, and Juan Ignacio Ferreras, for example, has argued that through this character Galdós prefigures the contemporary mandate, "haced el amor, no la guerra" (164), the young Spaniard's actions in essence simply transfer imperialist power structures onto a new site.⁸ During his stay in Tetuán, Santiuste begins a sexual relationship with a beautiful young Jewish woman named Yohar. Despite his exaltation of religious tolerance, however, Santiuste insists that Yohar must convert to Christianity, to his mind the only truly civilized religion (*Aita* 189, 203). In fact, Santiuste's "conquest" of Yohar coincides with and reduplicates the Spaniard's conquest of the city, and the metaphorical language that he uses to describe the troops' penetration of the urban walls seeks to poeticize both acts of physical appropriation: "Entran con respeto, como hombres de buena educación que delicadamente se acercan a la desposada y le quitan los velos" (*Aita* 201).⁹ The omniscient narrator's description, by contrast, is decidedly more

crude: "La virginal [Tetuán] estaba ya hinchada de españoles" (*Aita* 201-02).

Thus far, it is evident that in both Galdós and Fortuny we find a breakdown in the imperial structures of looking traditionally present within scenes of colonialist military campaigns. It would also appear that in the work of both artists we find a re-trenchment of the colonialist gaze through the well-worn trope of the geography of the female body: the native woman, displayed before the colonizer's eyes like a panoramic landscape, doubles for the occupied territory as she is possessed and conquered. Yet in Galdós as well as in Fortuny, this compensatory gesture is also doomed to failure: in both, the native woman functions, surprisingly, as a site of resistance, a resistance that is linked, furthermore, to the representation of racial difference.

In Galdós's novel, the slippage between Yohar's body and the conquered city is enabled by an affirmation of the whiteness of both. Tetuán is continually referred to as "la blanca paloma," and the pale brilliance of the city's walls are invoked with frequency (for example, *Aita* 179, 185, 200, 207, 208). Similarly, the narrator insistently refers to Santiuste's new love interest—nicknamed "Perla"—as "la blanca Yohar" (for example, *Aita* 169, 171, 175; *Carlos* 13, 15). In all cases the Spanish adjective precedes the noun, suggesting that her color is deemed an essential characteristic. Recently, theorists have begun to dislodge the association of whiteness with a racial norm by analyzing how that whiteness is constructed through cultural discourse. As Rebecca Aanerud remarks:

Whiteness, like race in general, cannot be understood simply as a natural phenomenon. Rather, it is a highly orchestrated product of cul-

ture and nature. The recognition of whiteness as not a set condition of fact—that is, having white skin—but instead a product whose meaning and status must be sustained by a process of reproduction along preestablished lines is crucial to an interruption of whiteness as the status quo. (43)

In *Aita Tettauén*, paradoxically, Yohar’s racial identity is “colored” precisely by the relentless description of her whiteness. That is, it is the very emphasis on Yohar’s pale skin tone that signals her whiteness as constructed. In this, her characterization contrasts notably with that of Lucila Ansúrez (Vicentito’s mother) whose whiteness is nowhere explicitly stated but everywhere implied;¹⁰ Lucila is the racial norm against which Yohar must be measured.

It is also evident from Santiuste’s descriptions of Yohar that he has imaginatively recast his lover in the guise of Orientalist portraits of women that enjoyed such popularity at the time; Santiuste’s own visual repertoire clearly includes a plethora of depictions of Turkish bathers, odalisques, belly dancers and sensual Biblical heroines, drawn from the same artistic genres that initially captivated Fortuny as well (see for example, *Aita* 194-95). Even as he orientalizes her, Santiuste affirms her whiteness—remarking, for example, the “inmaculada blancura” of her limbs as she dances for him, undulating like a snake (*Carlos* 13).

In fact, this is in complete accordance with Orientalist pictorial conventions, where, curiously, the “exotic” object of desire is nearly always figured as white. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres’s *Odalisque and Slave* (1842) could be considered as archetypal in this sense (Fig. 4), although any number of paintings by Jean-Léon Gérôme would serve the same purpose (and Fortuny was well acquainted with the work of both artists [González López and Martí Ayxelà 1: 124]). In these paintings, the native woman’s whiteness tends to be marked in overdetermined fashion not only through a virtuoso modelling of pale flesh tones but also through contrast: black servants are ever present, sometimes discretely tucked into the background, other times placed in “startling” immediate juxtaposition to their mistresses. Richard Dyer has suggested that oftentimes within Western cultural texts in general the more women are coded as white, the more they are associated with inaction, and for Linda Nochlin the counter-positioning of active black servants in Orientalist



Fig. 4. Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Odalisque with Slave* (1842). Oil on canvas, 30 x 42 in. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

paintings clearly serves to underline the linkage of whiteness with passivity (Nochlin 126). Thus while the odalisque, market slave, or bather's nudity and her exotic environs indicate her sexual availability, and may even hint at a certain erotic voracity, her whiteness simultaneously serves as guarantee of willing submissiveness. Moreover, the construction of this figure as white facilitates her metaphorical consumption by European viewers, since she is aligned with a "safer" form of difference—only the superficial accoutrements of architecture, interior decor, jewelry, and, when present, costume, signal her as "other."¹¹

Indeed, in her study of the reception of Orientalist visual texts in late nineteenth-century Spain, Lou Charnon-Deutsch also reminds us that, as Edward Said first suggested, exotic representations produced by Europeans typically reveal more about European fantasies than about non-European social realities. For Charnon-Deutsch, feminine images that circulated in Spain "joined Spanish bourgeois women and exotic *other* women in a complex relation of similarity and difference" (177). While gazing with desire upon harem engravings, Spanish men may have enjoyed imagining their female compatriots as eager to bestow sexual pleasure, as naturally sensual and unfettered by the literal and figurative corsets of Western civilization, even as more conventional depictions of domesticity extolled the presumed spiritual superiority of European women. Although in her analysis Charnon-Deutsch ultimately emphasizes the contrast between representations of Southern darkness and Northern pallor (219-20), we might read Galdós's descriptions of Yohar as conjoining, rather than contrasting, the two, thus embodying the feminine ideal for the Spanish male: as both supersensual and

ultra-white, Yohar is at once enticingly other and reassuringly familiar.

Yet, as we shall see in a moment, ultimately Yohar will refuse to sustain this comfortable fantasy of the European woman who masquerades as exotic odalisque but offers herself up exclusively to her own white countrymen. And once again, we discover a similar dynamic operating in Fortuny's work. Although objectively the Spanish painter's *Odalisque* is neither blonde nor as impossibly pale as Ingres's, she was in fact modelled after a European woman named Martina that the artist met on the Spanish steps in Rome (González 35), and it is clear at first glance that the painting employs tried and true Orientalist tactics to construct her as white: Fortuny displays his masterful technique as he ventures to surround his odalisque with a white sheet that enhances her glow, while the luminous paleness of her skin contrasts notably with her own raven tresses as well as with the darker complexion of the musician who accompanies her. In this respect, Fortuny simply extends the Orientalist tradition. However, the relationship between the pale odalisque and the dark male figure that this painting portrays is in fact considerably more iconoclastic. Here a detailed comparison with the work of Fortuny's famous precursor is instructive. Ingres's black male eunuch is clearly situated outside the harem, at some distance from the odalisque; his duty, in fact, is to guard the harem from intruders. The work is structured so that, even if his gaze were not directed elsewhere, the eunuch would not be able to contemplate the odalisque's frontal nudity; that perspective is reserved exclusively for the painting's viewer, a furtive interloper to whom the harem guard remains oblivious. In this way, the guard serves to remind the viewer that

violation of the harem is forbidden, while remaining utterly incapable of preventing that violation. For her part, the odalisque, caught in a reverie, gazes at and turns her body slightly towards the female musician, whose eyes are pointedly upturned. Neither this deflected hint of lesbian desire (a standard feature within many Orientalist works), nor the shadowy presence of a male figure within the painting, are allowed to interfere with the viewer's symbolic possession of the odalisque. The mechanisms effected by Ingres's work are reproduced with varying degrees of sophistication in the scores of European Orientalist paintings that graced the pages of Spain's illustrated weeklies in the late nineteenth-century; for Channon-Deutsch, as odalisque after odalisque turns her back on the native male depicted within the work, in order better to display her body to the viewer, the powers of mastery "are imagined as legitimately belonging to the European gaze more properly than to the Arab man's gaze" (200, 202).

Fortuny's painting, however, modifies this mechanism. It is significant, first of all, that the two ancillary figures of Ingres's work have been collapsed into one: unlike Ingres's black eunuch, Fortuny's well-muscled male figure is seated within the private space of the harem, in a position similar to that of the earlier painting's female companion, and in unusually close proximity to the odalisque: her bare foot could easily brush against his loosely-draped lower limbs. In fact this intimacy would indicate that in this painting the handsomely-depicted and dark-complexioned man could not possibly be taken to be simply a servant. Here, then, the odalisque's dreamy contemplation of the musician, as she languidly fingers her narghile, resonates quite differently. The posture of Fortuny's odalisque is also altered

in a meaningful way. The torque in her body, the pressure of the fingers of her right hand against the cushions and the slight muscular tension and lifting in her right arm, along with the apparent gesture of beckoning in her left hand, all suggest that she is turning away from the viewer—in symbolic terms, she turns away from the European colonizer—and towards her Moroccan musician, who could be perceived as a lover or even a smitten husband.¹² In this sense, Fortuny's claim to the *Diputació* that this painting represents a typical Moroccan domestic scene, while still legible as a tongue-in-cheek nod to cherished Orientalist fictions, might also be read as more sincere than it would initially appear.

In Galdós's text, too, Yohar will turn away from the white European Santiuste, and towards an-other, as she rejects a position of passivity and rebels against the colonization of her body. Yohar seeks to pursue her own desire—a desire for religious freedom and economic stability, if not necessarily for sexual subjectivity—by abandoning Santiuste in order to marry a wealthy North African Sephardic Jew. And it is at this point that the precariously fantastic construction of her racial identity collapses. As another Jewish woman of Tetuán observes, by rejecting her white lover, Yohar has become black: "ya ella no es blanca, sino preta de su maldad. [...] Blancura de leche no tiene ya, sino sombra de noche oscura" (*Carlos* 23-24). Yohar's preference for a non-white partner suddenly disqualifies her from standing in for a sexually exoticized and objectified white European woman; now, she must be redefined, hastily, as black. The usual discursive slippage between racial identities and moral qualities is evident from the metaphorical references to blackness and whiteness here. Also lurking within the

shadows to which Yohar has been consigned, of course, is the specter of miscegenation: according to the racist ideas concerning biological degeneration circulating in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sexual contact with a non-white would in essence contaminate Yohar, “staining” her previously-described “immaculate” body with blackness (Stepan 107). In this sense, by turning towards other partners, both Galdós’s Yohar and Fortuny’s Odalisque reveal the more “dangerous” desires typically repressed through the convoluted mechanisms of Orientalist representation.

For his part, however, Santiuste is only temporarily disillusioned by his experiences with Yohar, and he continues to embrace and pursue the myth of an exotic whiteness, preserved and reserved for European possession. In his search, Santiuste ventures farther and farther afield; in fact, his wandering even carries him beyond the confines of the original novel, *Aita Tettauén*, and into the textuality of Galdós’s next National Episode, *Carlos VI en la Rápita* (also published in 1905). At the same time, Santiuste’s penetration into the Moroccan interior, as he travels overland from Tetuán de Tánger—yet another city-woman described as “toda blanca, recostada” (*Carlos* 51)—culminates in an attempt to breach the harem of none other than El Nasiry, the Spanish pseudo-apostate, whose only genuine adherence to Muslim practice, conveniently, involves jealously guarding his three wives from other men (*Carlos* 53). And once again, Santiuste is enthralled by whiteness, specifically, by the tantalizing glimpses of the “manos blancas” of his host’s wives as they serve dinner from behind a curtain; here, perhaps, the repositioning of the adjective “white” after the noun—implying that the color is no longer so clearly seen as

an essential characteristic—is significant. Moreover, these white hands remain disembodied, since beyond them Santiuste is able to distinguish “ningún pedacito de brazo, ni menos, de rostro” (*Carlos* 55).

The burgeoning European obsession with eugenics, or the insistence on the crossing of “superior” bloodlines in order to counteract racial degeneration (Stepan 114), is evident when Santiuste meets El Nasiry’s seven-year old daughter, and sees in her “otra raza escogida, superior” noting that her mother—apparently one of the owners of the white hands he has caught sight of—must be a great beauty. El Nasiry (the “nobility” of whose European racial identity Santiuste also remarks at this point) confirms that the girl’s mother is indeed as fair as an angel, before sternly reminding Santiuste that “[c]omo poeta que eres, podrás imaginarla; verla, nunca podrás” (*Carlos* 57). Thus inflamed by his malicious host, Santiuste longs to gaze upon the “sabroso espectáculo” of El Nasiry’s domestic enclave (*Carlos* 58). But the full meaning of El Nasiry’s insistence that Santiuste may imagine but never see his fair wife is only apparent to the reader after Santiuste does in fact catch sight of her. Left alone one day in the patio of El Nasiry’s home, Santiuste hears screams emerging from the second-floor harem; secretly hoping to witness a catfight, Santiuste manages to convince himself that the harem must be on fire, and he rushes through the door at the bottom of the stairs leading up to the forbidden quarters. Before he is bodily ushered out by an elderly female slave, Santiuste glimpses El Nasiry’s wife: “vi en lo más alto de la escalera una mujer de gigantesca estatura, negra como el ébano, de hocico largo y labios bozales” (*Carlos* 60). Subsequently, Santiuste will refer to her with

phrases such as “la mujer de hocico de mona,” “aquella gigante jimiosa,” and “verdadera mula en dos pies” (*Carlos* 61).

This is a radically disturbing moment in Galdós’s text that may recall any number of archetypal “scenes of horror.” Santiuste’s position at the bottom of a long, steep staircase, gazing up at the woman who represents a terrifying difference, restages the Freudian scenario of the origin of fetishism as a response to castration anxiety (Freud 155). Yet here the woman’s sexual difference, while of exceptional significance, is all but eclipsed by her racial difference. Clearly, Santiuste’s characterizations of El Nasiry’s wife as simian evoke the most virulent of racist epithets, so predominant within nineteenth-century scientific and colonialist discourse; moreover, by also referring to her as a mule—the linguistic origin of the term “mulatto”—Santiuste reproduces the “classic example” cited by degeneration theorists who equated interracial mixing with the infertile and improper crossing of species (Sander Gilman; Stepan 105-06). His fearful descriptions may also call to mind the “monstrous races” depicted on medieval maps (Friedman), images that served to mark out the frontiers of the known world, and by extension, the very limits of signification.¹³ Santiuste’s geographical explorations of the North African terrain have been driven by his desire to survey a feminized Moroccan landscape imagined as wide open, filled with light, and easily apprehended, mapped and possessed. Instead, that landscape, as we have seen, has consistently revealed itself to be crisscrossed by dark shadows and riven with sinister cracks and crevices, out of which may emerge monstrous beings. The folding in upon itself of space, in this moment in which Santiuste’s venturing out through Morocco

has landed him at the ostensibly impenetrable borders of the innermost confines of the harem, might remind us of Derrida’s description of “invagination,” or the textual pocket that, like any number of internal spaces of the body, but most particularly like the vagina, is formed through a folding-in of externality. Derrida suggests that by invalidating the distinction between inside and outside, the invagination marks the site of a crisis in all laws of difference, which are typically produced through relationships of negativity (243). Thus, in this Galdosian invaginated space, as Santiuste tumbles down the harem stairs, the structural oppositions upon which he has erected his racist Orientalist fantasies also come tumbling down. Signs now fail to function for Santiuste in the accustomed way, and the metonymical chain of meaning is also broken, since white hands are no longer linked through contiguity to white bodies, and white girls are not necessarily generated by white mothers.¹⁴

Santiuste indulges in one last pathetic bid to reinstate the oppositions that subtend Orientalist aesthetics and ideology. Having perceived the ebony blackness of El Nasiry’s favorite wife enables Santiuste imaginatively to construct the remaining two wives, whom he has not seen, as even more fantastically white (*Carlos* 62). Once again, he glimpses one of the other wives’ “blancos dedos” gesturing to him through the harem’s latticework window; this time, however, Santiuste must quickly correct himself:

no eran blancos, como he dicho, sino amarillos los dedos [...] la natural blancura desaparece bajo el tinte que se dan las moras en manos y pies con una hierba llamada *henna*. (*Carlos* 62)

In this ultimate disillusionment, the white flesh that Santiuste imagines as “naturally” present beneath the henna dye literally erodes away, since it is soon disclosed that this most unfortunate of El Nasiry’s wives suffers from what would appear to be an advanced case of syphilis; Galdós’s text discreetly avoids naming the disease, but the list of symptoms—including gum degeneration and tooth loss, blindness, dementia, and of course most notably, massive skin lesions—all correspond to medical textbook descriptions of secondary or tertiary syphilis (*Carlos* 68-9). The absolute breakdown of white flesh is accompanied as well by an absolute breakdown of the powers of signification, as Santiuste finds himself incapable of understanding the “oscuro lenguaje de los amarillos dedos” (*Carlos* 62), or of penetrating the Arabic missive, scrawled in red letters, that the woman sends to him; the colored ink, rather than communicating meaning, simply confounds the clarity of the white page: “No acertaré a expresar cuánto me estorbaba lo negro, diré mejor, lo rojo de aquellos trazos” (*Carlos* 66).¹⁵ Santiuste can neither comprehend these radically different signs, nor even properly express his lack of comprehension.

We might find a similarly self-conscious breakdown of the powers of signification in Fortuny’s Moroccan-inspired work as well. Although the artist completed several odalisques in the early 1860s, it would seem that his growing preoccupation with questions of authenticity soon led him to abandon this most artificial of Orientalist genres. During this time, when he publicly criticized Spanish artists who depicted North African scenes without ever having left the peninsula,¹⁶ Fortuny began to paint only the Moroccan women to whom he had

access as models—that is, only those who were not confined to the harem—producing several fine portraits of Jewish women, for example, and an exquisite watercolor of a dark-skinned adolescent (fig. 5 [see back cover]). Although Spanish-language sources consistently refer to the subject of this unique painting as a “Joven judía”—a particularly interesting appellation if we recall the racial construction of Yohar in Galdós’s novels—elsewhere (including at the Meadows Museum in Dallas, where the work is housed) she is known simply as a “Girl” or “Young Moroccan Woman.” In fact, the ornamental motifs of her jewelry could suggest that she is either Berber or Jewish—or that she is both; in this sense, she exemplifies the “disruptive” hybridity of religious, ethnic and racial identities in Morocco.¹⁷ Critics have praised the brilliant depiction of the scintillation of the jewelry and the lovely modelling of her skin tones (Jordan 70). In particularly modern fashion, however, the painting appears unfinished; the outlines of the young woman’s right hand—like a ghostly trace of the disembodied white hands that so obsessed Galdós’s Santiuste—trail off into the blank whiteness of the paper, as if signalling once again the limits of representation. Indeed, the blankness of the white paper or canvas serves as an apt metaphor for Fortuny’s representation of Moroccan women from this point on, since by the mid 1860s the female figure all but disappears from his North African work; perhaps given the overwhelming hegemony of the European Orientalist iconographic tradition, the endeavor simply seemed too fraught. To paraphrase Galdós, though Fortuny may have been a poet of images, ultimately he recognized that he could neither see nor imagine the North African woman.

Notes

¹ Unfortunately, the complex intersection of constructions of North African and Spanish regional identities remains outside the scope of this article; it is a project I do undertake in the book manuscript from which the article has been excerpted.

² Montse Martí Ayxelà is perhaps the only contemporary commentator to remark (briefly) on this aspect of the painting's compositional strategy, although she prefers to emphasize the Romantic manner in which it works to dramatize the gore of battle and the fear on the faces of the vanquished Moroccans (42).

Fortuny probably found initial inspiration for his placement of troops in Horace Vernet's famous and even more monumental *Battle of Smalah/Capture of Abd-el-Kader's Train by the Duc d'Aumale* (1843), which was displayed along with Lejeune's painting (and scores of other battle scenes) in the Palace of Versailles, and which the Diputació had been particularly concerned that the young painter view. Despite its somewhat unusual composition, however, Vernet's painting—which features frozen, tableaux-like groupings, and highlights the serene benevolence with which the French military leader, the Duke of Aumale, treats the vanquished Algerians (Geffroy 102-03)—is still informed by the classical aesthetics and ideology that Fortuny, for his part, would reject.

³ Santiuste literally and figuratively reaches his lowest point in a later battle when he is caught off guard by a sudden retreat, falls to the ground amongst the dead soldiers, and is trampled. Later, when he manages to pick himself up, his perception of spectacle could not be farther from the imperialist ideal: “Sintió escalofrío ante el espectáculo de tantos muertos caídos en trágicas posturas” (*Aita* 81).

⁴ Most critics assert that the reformed Santiuste is juxtaposed to Alarcón in the novel; the former is the “poeta de la paz,” the latter the “poeta de la guerra” (see for example Ferreras 164; Goytisolo 65). Stephen Gilman, however, intimates in passing that there may in fact be more similarities than differences between the two char-

acters (35n12)—an opinion I share, for reasons which will become clear later in this paper.

⁵ For his part, Gregorio Torres Nebrera presents a similar argument, although he does note that the commentators on each side of the war—Santiuste and El Nasiry—are clearly cognizant of the ideological forces that shape their respective discourses (386).

⁶ Early in the first section, Jerónimo Ansúrez mentions his son Gonzalo's full adopted Arabic name—Sidi El Hach Mohammed Ben Sur El Nasiry—which is identical to that of the narrator of the third section (*Aita* 18, 119). In the second section, Jerónimo's other son, Leoncio, who has joined the Spanish cause in Morocco, confuses the issue somewhat: wounded and in a feverish state, he insists to Santiuste that while in the battlefield he saw his brother Gonzalo fighting—and dying—for the Moroccans (*Aita* 85). Later, however, Santiuste appears to recognize Gonzalo in the El Nasiry who narrates the third section (see for example *Aita* 132, 180), and his suspicions—and the readers'—are finally confirmed in the last pages of the novel.

⁷ For those familiar with Goytisolo's own novels, it is understandable that he would support the notion that it is indeed possible to represent “another” subjectivity. Recent critical work on Goytisolo, however, has emphasized the tremendous difficulty of that effort (see for example Epps, particularly ch. 1).

⁸ The critical emphasis placed on Santiuste's “pacifism,” seen as inspired in Leo Tolstoy's conversion, has distracted attention from the less laudable characteristics of this character's transformation (for the link with Tolstoy, see for example Colin).

⁹ Here, too, Galdós draws upon pre-established Orientalist clichés: this passage echoes Edward William Lane's description of his entrance into Egypt:

As I approached the shore, I felt like an Eastern bridegroom, about to lift the veil of his bride, and to see, for the first time, the features that were to charm, or disappoint, or disgust him. (qtd. in Kabbani 67)

¹⁰ Similarly, when Lucila's children decide to dress up as Moors and play war games, they must blacken their faces with soot from the kitchen (*Aita* 36), and the narrator later describes them as "mulattos" when their sooty faces are smeared with tears as they learn of their father's sudden death (*Aita* 37).

¹¹ Rana Kabbani discusses the significance of this whiteness in her analysis of the representation of odalisques:

The desirable woman in Orientalist painting was hardly ever 'foreign' looking. She conformed closely with conventional standards of European beauty. The more desirable prototypes were Circassian (the fair-skinned descendents of the Circassian subjects of the Ottoman Empire) since they were exotic without being unappetisingly dark. The light-haired Circassians were made (as the Europeans liked to imagine) precisely for sensual gratification. (81)

¹² In fact, this is how the Moroccan feminist scholar Fatema Mernissi read this image (as a representation of a woman with her husband) when I first shared it with her; for her, Fortuny's painting was decidedly different from the Northern European works she had been analyzing for a book on representations of the harem.

Another exuberantly romantic Orientalist painting that Fortuny produced at this time—his *Dream of the Odalisque*—also depicts the pale odalisque's desire for a North African partner. In this work, the woman writhes in bed with her white breasts exposed; her face is flushed and an overturned cup rests near one of her hands. The upper portion of the canvas depicts her dream, in which she is seen embracing and kissing a darker-skinned, turbaned man.

¹³ I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Ricardo Padrón, whose perceptive reading of an earlier version of this essay, and in particular whose suggestions concerning the relationship between the cartographic "monstrous races" and Galdós's descriptions, proved essential to the final reworking of my argument.

I would also like to thank my dear friend and colleague Kathleen Davis for first calling my attention to *Aita Tettauen*, and David Gies for his helpful comments concerning the earliest incarnation of this paper, which was presented at the Asociación Internacional de Galdosistas' session during the 1998 MLA Convention.

¹⁴ In her book *Continental Drift*, Emily Apter develops a similarly spatialized metaphor for this process that, because of its specific ties to Orientalist imagery, also proves particularly resonant for Galdós's novel. Linking the paradoxes of the Möbius strip [reminiscent of the Derridian invaginated space] to the undulations of the snake-like, exoticized dancer, who appears to promise a "palpable collision with the real" (176), Apter explores how serpentine shapes and movements function as a "metaphorical way of talking about the epistemological limits to knowing culturally 'other' subjects" (171).

¹⁵ In her article on Delacroix's painting *Massacres of Chios*, Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby notes that in French colonialist texts of the nineteenth-century, mulattos were oftentimes described as "red"; assuming this color had a similar resonance in Spain, the association of El Nasiry's horrifyingly diseased wife with redness at this point in Galdós's text might once again suggest the perils of racial mixing (691, 704n54).

¹⁶ Fortuny was particularly angered by a theatrical representation of the Battle of Tetuán, which bore no resemblance to his own eye-witness experiences; several years later, he also refused to participate in a competition of paintings on the African War organized by the Duque de Fernán Núñez, since the majority of the artists vying for the prize had never even set foot in Morocco (González López and Martí Ayxelà 1: 40, 64).

¹⁷ Jim Housefield very generously detailed to me his theory that the young woman's fibula—the elaborate pin that fastens her tunic just below the shoulder—is Berber in design, thus suggesting that she, too, is Berber. A recent exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York also included fibulae quite similar to the one depicted in Fortuny's watercolor; in the exhibition cata-

logue, descriptions of the pieces explain that in Morocco both Berber and Jewish rural women fasten their clothing with fibulae, which are typically created by Jewish silversmiths (Mann 157-58). Moreover, Berber and Jewish identities are not mutually exclusive: an extended essay in the catalog by Oumama Aouad Lahrech documents the presence of Berber Jews in Morocco—a community antedating that of the Sephardic Jews by many centuries (Mann 68-69).

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