The Historic and the Imaginary: Seville's Medieval and Early Modern Monuments in Film and Television

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Stylistic and religious hybridity have formed the backbone of scholarship on Iberian artworks of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with scholars often referencing terms such as *convivencia* (literally "living together") and *mudéjar* to define the unique cultural and religious milieu. Thomas F. Glick writes, in the introductory note to the book *Convivencia*, that the term that serves as the title of the volume is complicated, contentious, and continually in need of refinement and scholarly update (1992: 1-11). Traced back to Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1869-1968), and redefined by Américo Castro in 1948, convivencia was meant to indicate the level of cultural interaction and cooperation among Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages. A similar debate has occurred around the usage of *mudéjar*, a qualification for ornament deemed Islamic in style but appearing within a Christian Iberian context. Scholars have observed that the classification of such elements as *mudéjar* marginalizes them, as their meaning has already been decided through their stylistic qualification.

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The art and architecture of late fifteenth-century Seville feature a profusion of elements traditionally considered *mudéjar*, including tiles, woodworking, stucco, and painting. Certain technical innovations —for instance specific types of ceramics and tile-based ornament— are specific to the city and its surroundings. The consistent repetition of certain types of patterns throughout the city's various and distinctive media, coupled with the lack of such profuse motifs and patterns in other areas of Christian Iberia, makes them recognizably Sevillian. This is consistently ignored by anglophone filmmakers who instead treat the city's architecture not as a byproduct of centuries of exchange and stylistic development particular to this location, but rather as a generic imitation of Islamic visual culture, the Arabian Peninsula, or an even more generic "East".

The city of Seville has been used as a filming location for over a hundred television programs and movies, with only a small handful of these representing either a realistic or fantastical Middle Ages. Largely, these productions depict the medieval and early modern monuments of the city (the Alcázar, the Giralda, and the Casa de Pilatos among others) not as locations in the Iberian Peninsula but as stand-ins for the Middle East. Spanish films and shows tend to use the architectural landscape of Seville as an actual part of the modern or historical city, while anglophone productions reflect a prevailing "exoticization" of medieval multicultural structures. Rather than these heritage sites being represented as palimpsests of styles and construction campaigns associated with various cultures, they are a standard of "Eastern" authenticity, whether this be a form of religious or regional stereotyping. This paper compares the visual strategies of three English-language film and television productions to Spanish-language productions like the series *La Peste* (2018-2019), which instead are aimed at audiences for whom the medieval monuments of Seville are more readily recognizable.

The medieval and early modern architecture of Seville in the anglophone productions under study is imagined as tied solely to an exotic or geographically Middle Eastern history and culture. The Alcázar and the Casa de Pilatos frequently serve as the background for historical

and ahistorical characters who are often Orientalized. In the tradition of Orientalizing art and literature, these productions essentialize their imagined "Eastern" cultures, yet they unexpectedly depict Christian Europe as regressive and malevolent. Any Western medieval history tied to the monuments is either erased or downplayed. The Christian and Iberian visual aspects of these monuments are often dimly lit and shown as bland and colorless, while characters who are Christian Spaniards are often represented as cartoonishly evil. Actual Christian and/or Western medieval elements are thus completely disassociated from the buildings, casting the history of the buildings as one-dimensional. As the locations in which a simplified version of the Middle Ages unfolds in these productions, the monuments of Seville are reduced and stripped of their multicultural and multidimensional nuances. Medieval Spain and its inhabitants are likewise stereotyped by these productions. On the one hand, Christian Andalusia is superstitious and backward. On the other hand, Islamic Andalusia is exotic, passionate, and fiery, but nevertheless enlightened. The architecture of Seville is used in a way that bolsters these stereotypes.

Seville, as one of the most popular filming locations in southern Spain, presents filmmakers with a wealth of architecture in which to create historical and fantastical stories. With structures dating from the Roman period through to the contemporary, the city is an attractive option for Spanish and foreign productions alike. As of 2023, Andalucía Destino de Cine, an online project of the Andalucía Film Commission, lists forty-three separate locations and the films/shows in which they appear. Of the twenty-eight movies and shows filmed in Seville and highlighted by the website, nine are American or British productions. These works invariably do not show Seville or its architecture as belonging in the city itself; instead, they use Seville as a substitute for various locations in the Middle East, as a replacement for other locations in Andalusia, or as an entirely imaginary and fantastical city. Seville's depiction in these anglophone productions as non-modern, non-Spanish, exoticized, and exclusively tied to Islam ignores not only Spain's pluri-religious history and Seville's place within it, but also the problematic tradition of aligning styles and techniques with single faiths.

SEVILLE AS THE MIDDLE EAST

Ridley Scott's 2005 film *Kingdom of Heaven* is the heavily fictionalized story of Balian of Ibelin. The movie's protagonist bears little resemblance to his historical counterpart and is depicted as a bastard French blacksmith. The film begins with Balian's father, the Baron of Ibelin, tracking him down and taking him to Jerusalem after the Second Crusade of the twelfth century. At first reluctant, Balian accompanies his father to the Holy Land, fighting to defend the city and eventually surrendering it to the Muslim sultan Saladin. Scott chose multiple filming locations to represent both the European homeland of Balian and his Holy Land adventures. At least five Spanish cities appear in the movie as stand-ins for France and Jerusalem, including Huesca, Ávila, Palma del Río, Segovia, and Seville. The Casa de Pilatos and the Real Alcázar de Sevilla serve as the main filming locations in the city.

Kingdom of Heaven opens up with a gray desolate landscape meant to represent twelfth-century France. Huesca, where this scene was filmed, was chosen for its medieval castle, vast panoramic views, and the impression that the landscape had not changed since the twelfth century. The director of photography, John Mathieson, wanted the location specifically as he believed it aptly represented the Middle Ages as "dark" (Lauzirika 2008). Viewers first encounter Balian in this setting, which matches the tone of a man grieving the loss of his wife, who died of suicide. The town priest has gleefully beheaded her, stolen her crucifix, and taunted Balian. Fueled by his rage and grief, Balian murders the priest and seeks a new start in Jerusalem.

The scenes filmed in Huesca are gray and dull and provide a perfect background to the character's motives for traveling to the Holy Land. The film's opening sequence sets up the dichotomy found in nearly all the English-language productions analyzed in this paper. The European Middle Ages are above all the "Dark Ages". They are characterized by religious intolerance, a desperate desire for power, and dogmatic adherence to backward thinking. Balian's world is one fully devoid of color, happiness, learning, or knowledge. There is no twelfth-century Renaissance in *Kingdom of Heaven*'s France, for instance.

The filming locations used for the Holy Land stand in stark contrast to those in Huesca. Largely filmed in Seville, these areas are lively, more colorful, and distinctly "exotic". The Alcázar was chosen to duplicate the castle of Baldwin IV (1161-1185) and the Casa de Pilatos served as the offices of Raymond III "Tiberias", the Marshal of Jerusalem. These sites matched Scott's Orientalist vision of the medieval Holy Land. While the documentary produced on the film, *The Path to Redemption* (2006), acknowledges that the construction dates of the filming locations were not contemporary with the Second Crusade, the production team believed they were still chronologically close enough to be "representative" (Lauzirika 2008). Some of the rooms used for filming in the Alcázar and the Casa de Pilatos date to nearly two centuries after the events of the movie, marking them as anything but period appropriate.

The choice of Sevillian locations rested heavily on the filmmakers' inclination toward a style typically understood as "Islamic" and one thus not European, despite the historical presence of Islam and Muslim-associated architecture in the medieval West. This is in line with the desires of the film's production designer, who stated that they were not interested in recreating the Middle East of the Crusades, but rather the ideas and romance demonstrated by Orientalist painters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Lauzirika 2008). Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* sets out many features of the practice (1973). These include stereotypical representations of various peoples as lazy, effeminate, weak, or backward. While the productions under discussion here generally do not use these stereotypes so common to Orientalist paintings, they do use different strategies that undervalue cultures in order to create a contrast between East and West.

Linda Nochlin's "The Imaginary Orient" enumerates many of the methods by which painters of Orientalist works casted the East as the "other" (1989). Through the depiction of hyper-realistic detail, artists like Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) highlighted not only magnificent tiles and Turkish carpet patterns but also the cracks and repairs of architecture. This level of "realism" allows the Western viewer to look past the painting as a work of art, accepting

it instead as "authentic" documentation of the East. A realistic view that highlights the disrepair of buildings also bolsters European understandings of the Orient as corrupt or lazy and unable or unwilling to effectively care for their own cultural patrimony. Other paintings demonstrate a timelessness that removes the reality of the Middle East as a place coeval with the rest of the world. Still more characterize it as wantonly lascivious. Orientalist painters also viewed the East through a demonstrably European romantic and chivalric lens.

The 125 paintings of the Crusades Rooms at the Palace of Versailles served as the inspiration for the *Kingdom of Heaven*'s flags, banners, and costuming for instance. These rooms include works by Granet, Blondel, Delacroix, Lariviére, and Signol, among others, and cover a period ranging from the eleventh century to the eighteenth. Commissioned by Louis-Philippe in 1843, the paintings depict moments deemed significant from the various crusades to the Middle East. The fifty-five commissioned artists relied on contemporary and historical scholarship to furnish information about the episodes they painted. The painters may also have looked at chivalric romances like the *Chanson d'Antioche* (1180) and the *Chanson de Jérusalem* (twelfth century). Romances like these depicted Saladin as an almost Christian-like chivalrous hero.

The movie *Kingdom of Heaven* has been accused of doing much the same to Saladin's character, painting him as a Western-style protagonist devoid of any religious conviction. In his article addressing the colonialism on display in the movie, Matthew Richard Schlimm draws on Edward Said's theories, critiquing the way that Saladin is characterized "as a pseudo-incarnation of post-Christian religious belief" (2010: 143). The film strips Saladin of any Islamic motivation and contrasts him with a fanatical Islamic cleric who does argue for religious conquest. When Balian informs Saladin that rather than yield Jerusalem he would burn all the holy places in the city, Saladin replies, "I wonder if it would not be better if you did?" Schlimm notes that this is far from the attitude shown by the historical Saladin when he chose to preserve the holy Islamic sites at the expense of nearly all else.

Fig. 1. Palaca façade, Alcázar, Seville (Spain),
1364-66 (photograph: Nina Gonzalbez).

Fig. 2. Salón de Embajadores, Alcázar, Seville (Spain),
1364-66 (photograph: Nina Gonzalbez).

The Alcázar finds its origins in the ninth century under Emir Abdul Rahman II as a military stronghold (Figure 1). It became a governor's residence under Caliph Abdul Rahman III (r. 929-961). Many of the original areas of the site were destroyed or altered under the subsequent Christian leaders after Seville's conquest by Ferdinand III (r. 1217-1252) in 1248. Major renovations occurred under Pedro I, who built his palace at the Alcázar. Built between 1364 and 1366, the palace includes the Salón de Embajadores, which serves as a popular filming location in many of the productions under discussion (Figure 2). The structure of the room dates to the eleventh century, but it was redecorated by Pedro in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (Nuñez and Morales 1999).

Through this romantic, exoticized, areligious, and ahistorical lens, the Alcázar appears as a true Arabic palace. In this location, the viewer first encounters Balian's love interest, the king's sister, Sibylla. Played by Eva Green, she is distinctly non-western in her introduction. She wears bright colors, embroidered headdresses, an abundance of jewelry, and extensive makeup. She is likewise the only non-Arabic character who speaks the language. Her role in the movie is severely limited and, after having an illicit sexual encounter with Balian, she disappears only to reappear towards the end of the movie, shorn of all the things that once marked her as exotic. She leaves with Balian after Saladin wins Jerusalem, and in France she transforms from the exotic queen in "Eastern" garb to a European wife. Meriem Pagés argues that Sibylla's character appears to be an embodiment of Jerusalem at the beginning of the movie, stating that Sibylla is the "very personification of the East: commanding, rich and mysterious" (2018: 698).

In contrast to the historical record, the Sibylla of *Kingdom of Heaven* seems to despise her husband, Guy de Lusignan. In one of Sibylla's first scenes, she enters Baldwin III's palace (the modern-day Alcázar) at her husband's side. She wears a white headwrap, her characteristic heavy makeup, and embroidered orange robes with a gold sash. She is thoroughly exoticised. By contrast, Guy de Lusignan resembles a prototypical European crusader, dressed incorrectly in the uniform of the Knights Templar. As the film's antagonist,

Guy de Lusignan is almost villainy incarnate when compared to the inaccurately moderate characters of Baldwin IV, Sibylla, Saladin, and Balian. Sibylla relinquishes all agency and power in his presence, fulfilling the role of "damsel in distress". The juxtaposition is clear: Guy represents the overbearing and unenlightened religious fanaticism of the West, while his wife represents the moderate, enlightened, and beleaguered East. Her connections to Baldwin and Balian further these associations.

The Alcázar, in the guise of Baldwin IV's Jerusalem palace, and the Casa de Pilatos, in the guise of the Marshall of Jerusalem's office, serve as the background to the film's various plots. Baldwin IV and the Marshall are both in line with Balian's moderate thinking and espouse beliefs presented as honorable and tolerant. Their settings are portrayed as authentically Arabic though both buildings are Andalusian and have very little in common with the crusader architecture of the period. While the buildings appear to have a combination of Islamic and European elements, the architectural forms are not strongly related to those found in either the Middle East or non-Andalusian locales in the twelfth century.

Seville as Andalusia

Ridley Scott's first sojourn to Seville as a filming location occurred in his 1992 film *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, in which he condensed Christopher Columbus' expeditions to the Americas. Seville, despite representing a city in Andalusia, is effectively "othered" and used as a stand-in for Granada. In the film, Columbus travels to the city, where he meets with queen Isabella shortly after the fall of the city to the Catholic Monarchs' forces. The Alcázar provided the rooms where this meeting takes place, and further filming occurred in the Casa de Pilatos. The Spanish characters in *1492* are exaggeratedly evil, unintelligent, or some combination of both. Coupled with the infantilization and dehumanization of the film's Indigenous peoples, these representations paint the medieval Spaniards as unrelenting in their quest for wealth while presenting Columbus as

the oppositional and forward-thinking "modern" man. The depictions of the Alcázar as the Alhambra aid in this vision.

The architecture of Seville in *1492* serves largely the same purpose that it does in the later *Kingdom of Heaven*. While more geographically and temporally authentic to the film's narrative, the architecture in *1492* nonetheless operates variously as a backdrop for the "Dark Ages" as well as a kind of visual metaphor for enlightened thinking. Scott readies the viewer for this in the film's written prologue. Before the movie begins, text on the screen reads "500 years ago Spain was a nation gripped by fear and superstition ruled by the Crown and a ruthless Inquisition that persecuted men for daring to dream. One man challenged this power. Driven by his sense of destiny, he crossed the sea of darkness in search for honor, gold and the greater glory of God".

The film creates a direct comparison between the Christian conquest of Granada and the impending conquest of the Americas. As they approach the captured city, they ride through a field in which a large contingent of vanquished Muslims are called to prayer. Columbus' at-first ally, Santangel, exclaims as they ride their horses through the newly conquered Granada, "It's a tragic victory. We're losing a great culture. Every victory has its price, doesn't it, Señor Columbus?" The scene is intercut with the procession of a cross and the removal of a crescent moon spire from the top of a building.

There is a clear throughline drawn between Santangel's declaration of loss concerning Granada, the darkness of European Christianity, and the illumination of forward-thinking like that of Columbus. After his entrance into the recently defeated city, Columbus makes his way into queen Isabella's quarters at the Alhambra. Despite being the driving force behind the "tragic victory", Isabella represents the enlightened path forward as she grants Columbus' requests and serves as his champion. She herself, however, suffers a similar treatment to Sybilla's character in *Kingdom of Heaven*.

The film version of the queen lacks any resemblance to her real-life counterpart. While she is a champion of Columbus'

adventures, her motivations for supporting them are related to her interest in Columbus personally and not in the proliferation of trade routes, the increase in Spanish power and wealth, or the possibility of saving souls. After Columbus' disastrous installation of Spanish rule in the Americas in the earlier part of the movie, the queen grants his request to continue attempting to find the mainland, stating to Sánchez's character that she knows she should not "tolerate his [Columbus'] impertinence" but does so "because he's not afraid of me". The film characterizes her as a charmed woman first and a powerful queen second —one who only grants his request because he challenges her power—. This characterization is also heightened through visual means.

When the viewer is first introduced to Isabella, she is shown in an ahistorical style that is seemingly meant to emphasize her sexuality. Her hair is down and wildly curly. Her dress is cut quite low and off the shoulder with a low waistline. In her hair, she wears an openwork headpiece without clear historical precedent. While dresses from the 1490s could be cut low, Isabella's neckline would have been higher and certainly not off the shoulder. A variety of hairstyles and headwear would also have been available to the queen, but as a married adult woman, she would not have appeared with her hair down and uncovered. The sexualizing effect is heightened when comparing the queen to her lady in waiting, who is appropriately dressed for the period with a "proper" neckline and mostly covered hair. Isabella is later shown in a looser and more relaxed dress, perhaps more in line with the *habito* style, which was a favorite of the queen. This style of dress, however, would not have been worn to receive company. She is clothed reasonably appropriately only when shown in the cathedral, where she covers her head and wears a dress with heraldry of the Spanish kingdoms. The Spanish production *Isabel* (2011-2014) treats this same period in the queen's life and, while not wholly accurate, does a better job of demonstrating the historical relationship between Isabella and Columbus. Unlike *1492*, the scenes in Granada are filmed in the Alhambra. When Columbus meets Isabella here, she is veiled, and

though he is not entirely deferential, her reaction is one of anger and not one of intrigue and flirtation.

Hand-drawn sketches from an online auction from the archive of Charles Knode, the costume designer for *1492*, show various images of Isabella's costuming. The designer indicated that two of the sketches demonstrated the "Queen in private". One of these drawings shows Isabella in the costuming she wore when Columbus first encounters her. The viewer's, and Columbus', introduction to the queen is situated inside a private though seemingly appropriate Eastern-style room demonstrating a connection between her laxity in dress, her ability to be charmed by Columbus' candor, and the Granadan "great culture" of which Santangel spoke. While Isabella is not Orientalized as Sybilla had been, she inhabits a middle ground where, through costuming and set, she is conflated with the vanquished culture and its various associations. The architecture of the scene thus symbolizes not only Isabella's femininity but also her role as an intermediary between the strictures of the Old World and the inventiveness of the New.

The Alcázar of Seville stands in for Isabella's apartments in the Alhambra and the vanquished "great culture". The scene in which Columbus and Isabella meet sets up a visual connection between the conquered and vanquished Islamic culture and the similarly forward-thinking ambition of Columbus. The close aesthetic connections between the Alcázar and the Alhambra facilitated Scott's substitution of one for the other. The Alcázar, for instance, served as the inspiration for the Alhambra's Patio de Leones, and the ruler of Granada sent craftsmen to Seville to complete works at the Alcázar for the Castilian king (Ruggles 2004: 91-92). King Pedro's alterations to the palace during his reign have often been attributed to his close relationship with the displaced Muhammad V, the ruler of Granada. Muhammad, while exiled, stayed with Pedro at the Alcázar before reclaiming his throne in Granada three years later. Pedro's changes to the older palace began with the construction of a new monumental entrance that combines wood, tile, brick, and plaster, each used in the styles most prevalent in Seville at the end of the fourteenth century.

The film sets up a dichotomy very early on between the bareness and darkness of the Christian Middle Ages and the brightness and lushness of the new era, which Columbus is attempting to usher in. In a series of early scenes, we see Columbus teaching his son that the world is in fact round. This supposed heresy is entirely ignored only a few scenes later when a Church representative states the assumed circumference of the earth. Columbus also rampages through a dimly lit medieval monastery, upending manuscripts in his rage against their scientific ignorance. Later, he ushers his son from a public square where three heretics are being burned at the stake by the Inquisition. Color is completely drained from the Spanish world as well. The scenes at the Universidad de Salamanca, for instance, are overwhelmingly brown. Students wear brown or gray cloaks and run around a dust bowl of a courtyard surrounded by bare stone. The cathedral is likewise devoid of any color outside of the red cloaks of some of the clergy.

Fig. 3. Courtyard, Casa de Pilatos, Seville (Spain), 1482-1538 (photograph: Nina Gonzalbez)

The Palacio de San Esteban, popularly known as the Casa de Pilatos, built in the mid-fifteenth century, serves as the courtyard for queen Isabella's residence at the Alhambra (Figure 3). As it was subject to continual renovations and changes for decades after its construction, large parts of the home do not conform to the Granadan style of the same period. Work on the home began in 1483, under the auspices of the Christian nobles Catalina de Ribera and Pedro Enríquez, who purchased the plot on which it was built and where likely there had been an older home that was demolished to make way for the new (Aranda Bernal 2011). The demolition and the first stages of construction occurred from 1483 to 1491. Catalina's husband died in 1491 and she continued overseeing the construction and decoration. Catalina died in 1505, at which point the house passed to her son Fadrique de Ribera, who completed his interventions in the building.

Scott makes no effort to hide or obscure elements that are glaringly out of time and place for the scene. The courtyard of the Sevillian home was decorated by Fadrique de Ribera in the early sixteenth century, when he had the walls covered with Renaissance tiling. He installed a fountain and columns of Genoese production in 1529. Between 1536 and 1538, a large number of walls in the home were covered in tile produced by Juan and Diego Polido, whose kiln operated out of the Triana neighborhood in Seville (Aranda Bernal 2011). Columbus and his small entourage move through the courtyard and into a heavily tiled side room. Few elements in this scene read as Granadan and the filmmakers seemingly rely on a contingent of men dressed in a variety of "Eastern" costuming to lend authenticity to the space. The sense of legitimacy is bolstered by the scene's movement into the Alcázar's Patio de las Doncellas, whose stucco decoration and tiled dados are more stereotypically Andalusian.

The new world Columbus encounters is starkly contrasted against the European world he left. It is a green paradise full of light. Here, the viewer is presented with the possibility of a new beginning, although the possibility is quickly stymied in the second

voyage, where Columbus and his kindly ways are shown to be powerless against the evil of the Spaniards. The film introduces the fictional character of Moxica, an embodiment of all the associations with the Western medieval world built up in the movie thus far. The black-clothed Spaniard perpetrates various atrocities. Under Columbus' sad gaze, a contingent of enslaved Indigenous people are led away to be controlled by Moxica's mining operations. Later, Moxica orders the chopping of hands as punishment and expresses sadistic glee at having this punishment carried out. While the historical Spanish were not innocent, the film takes pains to cast Columbus as the hero and protector of the natives in opposition to the brutish Spaniards.

In their chapter on *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, authors Sonya Lipsett-Rivera and Sergio Rivera Ayala draw attention to another function of the Moxica and Columbus dynamic (1997). Moxica is the aristocrat to Columbus' democrat. They highlight that this corollary has been used to defend colonization before. The dichotomy is first hinted at in the movie when the two are seen engaged in a fencing match, with the courtyard of the Casa de Pilatos serving as the background.

Seville as Seville

In contrast to *1492* and *Kingdom of Heaven*, the Spanish-produced television series *La Peste* uses contemporary Seville as a filming location for a sixteenth-century Seville in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The production depicts a city existing between, but also comprising, two opposite realities: the colorless, poverty-stricken, and sullen city of the destitute in the Middle Ages, and the exotic Andalusian city of unimaginable post-Columbus wealth. The first shots of the isolated plague village outside of the city's boundaries are set against subsequent character dialogue and the imagery of the city. In an interview concerning the creation of the series, the screenwriter, Rafael Cobos, states that he wanted to make "una máquina del tiempo catódica para sumergir al espectador

en una Sevilla de contrastes…" (Medina 2017). From the start, the creators were concerned that the viewer feels drawn into a historical Seville that has long since disappeared.

As the main character, Mateo Núñez, enters Seville, his guide introduces him and the viewer to the city. The guide states that you could build a bridge of gold bars from Seville to the New World and that the city was more glamorous than even Paris or Rome. When our protagonist sees the Seville Cathedral, he asks if it is larger than Rome's. The question is left unanswered, but viewers who know the cathedral's history would be aware of the answer. Likely spurred on by damage as the result of multiple earthquakes in 1356 and 1395, the old mosque-cathedral of the city was dismantled and replaced with a Gothic structure. An apocryphal story holds that a canon of the church excitedly told all, "Hagamos una Iglesia tan hermosa y tan grandiosa que los que la vieren labrada nos tengan por locos" (Martín 2013: 187). Building works commenced in 1434, and in 1506 the enormous five-aisled Gothic cathedral was completed.

The quickly established "haves" and "have nots" of the show's world demonstrate not just the deep economic inequality between the poor and the rich but also the multiculturalism and worldliness of the city. Within the first two episodes of the series, characters discuss locales such as Paris, Rome, Moscow, Genoa, and Ireland. They mention exotic foods like chocolate and tomatoes. One of the wealthier characters to whom we are introduced is Luis de Zúñiga. The very wealthy man lives in an opulent home with his pet parrot and tells Mateo, "En Sevilla, no hacemos las cosas a medias", highlighting the opulence of the city. Even if dramatized, the Seville of *La Peste* is understood as a real and legitimate historical place. Unlike the anglophone productions, the show's use of Sevillian architecture, even when not wholly accurate to the narrative, builds a nuanced and realistically palimpsestic image of sixteenth-century Seville.

Zúñiga's home, for instance, is the Palacio de los Marqueses de las Salinas. Built in the nineteenth century, the structure is certainly not a late medieval or Renaissance home. It was built in

the *neo-mudéjar* style, however, making it a reasonable set piece in atmosphere and sentiment if not in date. Scenes in the home occur in a heavily tiled room full of intricate wooden carved décor. These elements were abundant in late medieval Seville and the city was known for its excellent tile-making. While the *neo-mudéjar* home is a romanticized version of Seville's medieval architecture, the show is emphatically not a romanticized version of medieval Seville, making the architectural settings far more believable.

Seville as the Medieval Imaginary

In addition to its uses in historical narratives, Seville's architecture has appeared as a fully fictionalized location in films and series categorized as fantasy and science fiction. The Plaza de España, for instance, serves as queen Amidala's palace on the planet of Naboo in the *Star Wars* film *Attack of the Clones* (2002). Various locations also appear as the kingdom of Dorne in the series *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019). Like the two Ridley Scott films previously discussed, *Game of Thrones*' fictionalized Middle Ages sets Dorne as the exotic, passionate, and "Eastern" against the show's other power-hungry and fanatical kingdoms, which are meant to call to mind the medieval West.

Game of Thrones, despite its status as a fantasy series, has been studied by various medievalists as a simulacrum of the Middle Ages (Larrington 2016 and 2021; Pavlac 2017). George R. R. Martin, the author of the books on which the series is based, has stated that the kingdom of Dorne is an amalgamation of various influences including Wales, Spain, and the Holy Land. Martin relates that the closest actual counterpart to the fictional kingdom of Dorne "would be the Moorish influence in parts of Spain" (Westeros.org). Unsurprisingly, southern Spain served as the shooting location for many of the Dornish scenes in the HBO adaptation of the books. In addition to filming in Granada, the series was also shot in Seville using the gardens of the Alcázar as the Water Gardens of the palace in Dorne.

Dorne and its inhabitants do not play a significant part in the world of *Game of Thrones*, but their characterizations are clear. They are sexual, exotic, passionate, and severely blinded by emotion and their desire to seek pleasure. The show's Orientalism, exoticization of people of color, and presumption of a racially segregate medieval globe have all been criticized by various scholars, who take the show to task for its many missteps in depictions of the Dothraki, the Essosi, and the Dornish (Carroll 2017; Mudan Finn 2019). While the show's dialogue and plot lines "other" both Dornish men and women, the female characters suffer the brunt of the exoticization.

The women of Dorne fall easily into the stereotype that similarly characterizes Sibylla —as Arthur Lindley puts it, that of "the feisty, exotic, horseback-riding, sexually aggressive Asian babe" (2007: 25). The Dornish women in the show, Ellaria Sand, Tyene Sand, Obara Sand, and Nymeria Sand, are passionate, violent, and sexually aggressive. Ellaria kills an innocent teenager, Princess Myrcella, with a poisonous kiss. Obara and Nymeria ruthlessly murder the teenager's Dornish fiancé, Trystane Martell. Tyene Sand spends a good part of her first plotline poisoning a man, seductively exposing herself to him, and asking him repeatedly if she is beautiful before finally giving him the antidote.

The thought behind much of the costuming of the Dornish people demonstrates the show's Orientalizing tendencies as well. Michele Clapton, the costume designer for the show, took inspiration from Indian dress for the men of Dorne. In interviews, Clapton has explained the connection between the Dornish costumes and a sense of free sexuality, stating that for the Sand Snakes she wanted clothing that exuded sexiness and was demonstrative of the liberal society in which they lived. The non-Dornish Myrcella is engaged to a Dornish prince and is dressed in the Dornish fashion. For her, Clapton wanted a light gown that looked as if "one little pull of a strap and it would just drop to the ground" and that was meant to scandalize the girl's Westerosi uncle (Wischhover). For Dornish male armor, Clapton chose to create studded leather over padded velvet as it was a "sensual way of wearing armor" demonstrating

again the Dornish society's obsession with sex (Wischhover). The costumes, along with the settings, enhance the stereotype of Middle Easterners as passionate and violent.

Conclusion

A survey conducted in 2022 asked a small sample size of Sevillian citizens about their reactions to seeing Seville on screen. While none expected to see a "nuanced and holistic portrayal", they did believe that there was room for improvement in what and who is filmed (Castro 2022: 7). The abundance of depictions of key landmarks, like the Giralda and the Plaza de España, were engaging and pleasing to the group interviewed, but the strong focus on the specific heritage sites meant that there was little focus on the remainder of the city. The group also related concerns that tourists who came to Seville would be in search of a city that no longer exists or never did.

British and American entertainment productions rarely conceive the city as it was or as it is. In 2005, after Dan Brown published spurious statements about the number of tourist deaths in Seville in his novel *Digital Fortress*, the city issued an invitation for the writer to come to the city and correct the types of assumptions that paint the city as a dangerously exotic place (Nash 2005). Drawn in by the allure of these same assumptions, anglophone productions tend to depict the medieval and early modern monuments of the city (the Alcázar and the Casa de Pilatos, among others) not as locations in the Iberian peninsula but as stand-ins for the Middle East. Through the prevailing "exoticization" of medieval Iberian architecture, the city's multicultural heritage sites lose their complexity, instead becoming standards of Arabic authenticity.

These anglophone productions Orientalize Andalusia, though not always in the manner of a Eugène Delacroix or Jean-Léon Gérôme painting. *Game of Thrones*, for instance, plays off the tropes of overt sexuality and extraordinary predilection toward violence. *Kingdom of Heaven* toys with the idea of an intellectually

dim Middle Eastern people, as it has its French protagonist teach an overjoyed group of villagers how to successfully farm and irrigate their own land. Despite these more conventional forms of treating an abstract "East" as inferior, these movies and shows present characters and architectural spaces that are deemed beautiful, tolerant, and/or learned. These characters, while far more acceptable to a modern audience, lack depth and are nevertheless essentialized, limited to the characteristics that place them in opposition to the West and its ideals. *Game of Thrones* sees its Dornish leader assassinated for choosing to be moderate and non-violent. *Kingdom of Heaven* strips religious conviction from its antagonist. In *1492*, viewers see Columbus baffle his compatriot as he navigates by the stars "the way the Moors do", a technological innovation that is supposedly unknown to the West. Islam is then the "light" that can undo the "Dark" Ages.

The history of Spain has continually thwarted efforts to create a false divide between an Islamic East and a Christian West. The historical context of religious and political conflict, or lack thereof, among Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the Iberian Peninsula has led to extensive scholarly debate among Spanish historians (Hillgarth 1985). It should not be surprising then that Orientalizing uses of Iberian architecture often take non-standard forms, differing from other Orientalizing artworks in that they sometimes depict an unremarkable "West" rather than an exotic "East". Like the historiography of Spain itself, the claims advanced through images of Seville, especially those aimed at audiences outside the Peninsula, depend on the misleading selections and treatments of visual evidence. Such productions ignore a history of art and architecture in which the region's styles, techniques, and centuries of modification defy straightforward categorization.

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