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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism*

The image of Islam in contemporary Spanish orientalist discourse: A critical study in the Light of Juan Goytisolo's reading

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This research discusses the image of Islam in Spanish Orientalist discourse as the product of a long history of accumulated representations. It emphasizes the uniqueness of the Spanish case due to the Andalusian experience and the religious and political clashes that followed, which led to the emergence of Spanish Orientalism within a context of ecclesiastical polemics linked to the Reconquista and the Inquisition, resulting in the entrenchment of charged representations in theological, literary, and historical writings. However, the study refuses to treat this discourse as a monolithic whole, distinguishing between a polemical and prejudiced trend and a more objective scientific trend that emerged in the nineteenth century.

The research formulates a central question about how the image of Islam is formed in contemporary Spanish Orientalism and the extent to which it can be re-evaluated through a reading of Juan Goytisolo, branching out into identifying the characteristics of the polemical trend and explaining what the academic trend accomplishes in 'redistributing meaning' within the Spanish cultural field. It adopts a historical-critical discourse analysis approach by tracing polemical models, comparing them with the academic trend, and then testing the deconstruction tools proposed by Goytisolo.

In its analytical summary, the research defines the structure of the polemical trend through three major mechanisms: transforming historical phenomena into a 'fixed essence' (essentialism); generalising normative judgements about Islam as a single entity; and reproducing exclusion in theological or nationalist forms, so that the image of Islam is constructed through presuppositions that determine the field of vision and the limits of interpretation, rather than through a fair internal reading of Islamic texts.

This corresponds to a philological-historical shift that introduced epistemological tools such as source criticism and investigation, and institutional tools such as the JAE/CEH networks, with a thematic expansion towards cultural history and the history of ideas. However, the research points out that academic transformation does not automatically remove the symbolic layer of the image from the cultural imagination. Here, Goytisolo is read as a critic of the structure of image production rather than merely a corrector of information. He sees the image of the 'Moro' as the product of an 'accumulation of inherited stereotypes,' and holds that what matters most is to understand the mechanism by which representation passes from historical facts to symbolic mythologisation, rather than issuing a comprehensive categorical judgement on the field.

KEYWORDS: image of Islam, Spanish Orientalism, polemical trend, academic/philological shift, cultural imagination and mythologisation, Juan Goytisolo

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Introduction

The imagined image of Islam in the European consciousness has, since the Middle Ages, been one of the central axes around which Orientalist discourse took shape. Yet the Spanish case acquires a historically and epistemically distinctive character, by virtue of the Andalusian experience and the deep religious, political, and cultural transformations that followed in its wake. Spanish Orientalism emerged within an ecclesiastical-polemical context bound up with the Wars of Reconquest, the tribunals of the Inquisition, and the religious-political conflict between Muslims and Christians — a context that gave rise to charged representations of Islam and its Prophet embedded throughout theological, literary, and historical writing. And yet this discourse was never a single, homogeneous bloc: it traced multiple trajectories, in which a polemical and prejudiced tendency intertwined with a more scholarly, objective one that emerged gradually from the nineteenth century onward. The study of European Orientalism in general has witnessed a notable development since the second half of the twentieth century, moving from descriptive approaches focused on cataloguing the Orientalist output, to analytical approaches that dismantle its discursive structure and epistemological patterns. Yet the Spanish field has received comparatively less attention than French, British, or German Orientalism, despite its distinctive historical character rooted in the Andalusian experience, the fall of Granada, and the Inquisition. Spanish Orientalism was marked by the interpenetration of the theological-polemical dimension with the later academic dimension, producing a discourse of dual structure: an ecclesiastical and prejudiced discourse shaped in the context of religious conflict, and a scholarly discourse that emerged gradually with the development of Andalusian studies.

In this context, the reading of Juan Goytisolo stands out as a critical attempt to dismantle the inherited stereotype of Islam in Spanish culture — questioning the polemical myths and exposing the ideological backgrounds that contributed to their formation. And yet the Arabic studies that have engaged with Goytisolo have, for the most part, confined themselves to presenting his positions, without employing his reading as an analytical framework for re-evaluating the Spanish Orientalist discourse itself in its structure and transformations.

I. The Significance of the Study

This study seeks to move beyond defensive or accusatory approaches, toward a balanced analytical reading that distinguishes between the currents within Spanish Orientalism and revisits the discursive structure that shaped the image of Islam — thereby contributing to the development of critical Orientalism studies within a rigorous academic horizon. The significance of this study manifests at three levels:

- **The epistemological level:** it contributes to filling a research gap concerning the Spanish particularity within the field of Orientalism studies.
- **The methodological level:** it presents a model for deploying a critical reading internal to Western culture (Goytisolo's) in the analysis of its own Orientalist discourse, without falling into the binary of condemnation or glorification.
- **The civilisational level:** it contributes to rebuilding a more balanced epistemic dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean, grounded in the dismantling of stereotypes rather than their reproduction.

II. The Research Problem

The study revolves around the following central question:

How was the image of Islam formed within contemporary Spanish Orientalist discourse, and to what extent is a re-evaluation of this image warranted in the light of the critical reading offered by Juan Goytisolo?

From this central question, several subsidiary questions branch out:

- What are the distinguishing discursive features of the polemical trend in contemporary Spanish Orientalism?
- How does the academic trend, as manifested in the writings of Juan Goytisolo, contribute to the redistribution of meaning within the Spanish cultural field?
- To what extent can Goytisolo's approach be considered a deconstruction of the inherited stereotypes of Islam in Orientalist discourse?
- What are the limits of the transition from polemical to critical discourse within Spanish Orientalism?

III. Research Methodology

This study follows the method of historical-critical discourse analysis, tracing representations of Islam in selected examples from the polemical trend, then comparing these with the academic trend, before testing the deconstruction tools that Goytisolo proposes. The study does not proceed from a defensive or accusatory position, but from an objective analytical approach that seeks to understand the mechanisms of image production within the Spanish cultural field.

IV. Prior Studies

The works of Juan Goytisolo have attracted considerable attention in Hispanic and Anglophone scholarship, though this attention has for the most part been directed toward the analysis of his narrative project or his stance on Spanish identity, rather than toward the deployment of his reading as an analytical framework for re-evaluating the Spanish Orientalist discourse itself in its structure and transformations.

Among the most notable studies in this context are the following:

First Study: Robert Richmond Ellis (2005)

Ellis's study, 'A Passage to the Self: Homoerotic Orientalism and Hispanic Life-Writing,' published in the *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* (2005), addressed the relationship between Oriental representation and autobiographical writing in Goytisolo, demonstrating how 'the East' is rebuilt within a discourse of individual identity. This study derives its importance from its focus on the mechanisms of representation; yet it remains directed toward analysing the narrative and symbolic dimension in Goytisolo's writings, without dismantling the historical structure of the Spanish Orientalist discourse that he takes as his critical object.

Ellis himself, in an earlier study titled 'The Queer Birds of Juan Goytisolo and Reinaldo Arenas' (*Romance Quarterly*, 1995), offered an analysis of the self-other structure in Goytisolo's texts, foregrounding the deconstructive character of his cultural project. Yet this approach, despite its importance in highlighting the critical dimension of Goytisolo's thought, did not move toward studying the image of Islam in Spanish Orientalism as a self-standing discursive structure.

Second Study: Stanley Black (2001)

Black's study, 'Mysticism, Postmodernism and Transgression in La cuarentena by Juan Goytisolo' (*Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 2001), focused on the intersections of mysticism and postmodernism in Goytisolo's works, illuminating the mechanisms of symbolic transgression of the dominant cultural pattern. Yet this analysis remained bound to a specific literary text and did not expand its scope to encompass a re-evaluation of the multiple currents within contemporary Spanish Orientalist discourse.

What emerges from these studies is that academic interest in Goytisolo has been directed principally at the analysis of his literary and identity project, and at foregrounding his deconstruction of Spanish national narratives — while there remains a notable absence of a study that deploys his critical reading as an analytical framework for re-evaluating the image of Islam within contemporary Spanish Orientalist discourse. This is what distinguishes our study from what has preceded it: it treats Goytisolo not merely as an object of study, but as a methodological instrument for re-interrogating a broader representational structure.

V. Key Concepts

Cultural Imagination (al-Mukhayyal al-Thaqafi)

An unconscious system of images, symbols, myths, and beliefs that a human community constructs historically in order to understand and interpret its reality. It functions as a collective reservoir that provides meaning and social cohesion, shaping collective identity and the community's perception of itself and the other. It is a symbolic framework that guides behaviour and representations.¹

Discourse Analysis

A linguistic and social research method that studies language in its actual context — written, spoken, or signed — going beyond the level of the sentence to embrace text and context. It seeks to understand implicit meanings,

ideology, and power, through the analysis of discourse structure and its social, political, and pragmatic functions.²

VI. Structure of the Study

The study is divided into two main sections, each comprising two sub-sections, as follows:

Section One: The Nature of the Image of Islam in Contemporary Spanish Orientalist Discourse

Sub-section 1.1: The Concept of the Image of Islam in Spanish Orientalist Discourse

Sub-section 1.2: The Orientation and Transformations of Spanish Orientalist Discourse

Section Two: Juan Goytisolo's Reading and its Re-evaluation — Toward a Synthetic Reading of the Image of Islam in the Spanish Discourse

Sub-section 2.1: Dismantling the Orientalist Imagination through Direct Comparison with the Polemical and Academic Models, via Juan Goytisolo's Reading

Sub-section 2.2: A Critical (Synthetic) Reading of the Image of Islam in Contemporary Spanish Discourse

Followed by: Conclusion (including findings and recommendations); Bibliography.

Section One: The Nature of the Image of Islam in Contemporary Spanish Orientalist Discourse

Studying the image of Islam in contemporary Spanish Orientalist discourse represents an essential entry point for understanding the manner in which Western conceptions of Islam and Muslims were formed within the Spanish cultural and intellectual context. The historical relationship between the Islamic world and Spain has been bound up with complex contexts of civilisational interaction, political conflict, and cultural exchange — circumstances that were clearly reflected in modern Spanish Orientalist writing, whether in academic studies or in intellectual and cultural discourses.

Setting out from this, this section seeks to examine the nature of the image of Islam as it manifested in this discourse, by analysing its features and its epistemological and contextual dimensions, through two principal sub-sections that address the conceptual framework of this image and its most prominent representations in modern Spanish Orientalist studies.

Sub-section 1.1: The Concept of the Image of Islam in Spanish Orientalist Discourse

In order to illuminate the image of Islam in Spanish Orientalist discourse, this sub-section is divided into several branches as follows:

Branch 1: The Concept of Image as a Representational Construction

By 'image' in this study, we do not mean a mere mental impression or personal opinion, but rather the complex cultural representation that takes shape through a network of texts and accumulated narratives within a specific historical context. The image is not a natural given; it is a symbolic construction produced within a discursive space, and reproduces itself through repetition and institutional circulation.

In this sense, the imagined image of Islam in Spanish Orientalist discourse is not a direct reflection of Islam in itself, but a cultural representation shaped within specific historical, theological, and political contexts — the product of a process of framing representation in which theological, political, and cultural considerations interweave, and which is formulated within an epistemological structure that extends beyond individuals to what might be called a representational system.

Branch 2: Discourse and Power in the Light of Gilles Deleuze

In contemporary philosophical approaches, discourse is not understood as mere organised speech, but as the production of meaning within a network of forces. Gilles Deleuze demonstrated that power does not operate solely as an external apparatus of repression, but manifests within the very networks of discourse production — distributed through what he calls 'multiplicities' (*multiplicités*), in which knowledge, desire, and institution intersect.³

² Mūsāwī, Farida. (2019). The Concept of Discourse Analysis in Zellig Harris. *Journal of Ishkālāt fī al-Lughā wa-l-Adab*, 8(4), 97–112.

³ Gilles Deleuze, Foucault, Paris: Minuit, 1986; see also: *Différence et répétition*, 1968 (on multiplicities and difference as a productive structure).

Discourse, on this conception, is not a reflection of the structure of power but one of its modes of operation. The study of Spanish Orientalist discourse therefore does not mean the analysis of separate texts, but the analysis of a system of meaning production about Islam in which the following are intertwined:

- Ecclesiastical theology.
- Andalusian historical memory.
- National narratives.
- The modern academic institution.

In this sense, the imagined image of Islam as produced by Spanish Orientalist discourse becomes the product of a distribution of forces within the Spanish cultural field — without this implying that Islam itself is a mere product of this discourse, rather than the result of individual prejudice.

Branch 3: The Particularity of Spanish Orientalism as a Discursive Structure

Spanish Orientalism differs from classical colonial models in that it emerged within a context of internal conflict bound up with the history of Andalusia, the fall of Granada, and the Inquisition — that is, within a space of religious-civilisational contestation that preceded modern colonial expansion. Its discursive structure was therefore shaped, in the first instance, within a defensive-polemical framework, before assuming an academic character in the nineteenth century.

Yet this transformation did not entirely erase the earlier structure; it sometimes reproduced it in new forms. This is where the importance of Juan Goytisolo's reading becomes apparent — a thinker who did not merely describe the distortion, but sought to expose the imaginary roots of the image that Spanish discourse had constructed of Islam, arguing that many Spanish texts on Islam 'go back to the history of the Western imagination about Islam more than to the history of Western thought.'⁴

The deployment of this reading does not aim to adopt it as a final verdict, but to test its capacity to dismantle the polemical discursive pattern and to bring out the tension between the two tendencies within contemporary Spanish Orientalism.

Sub-section 1.2: The Orientation and Transformations of Spanish Orientalist Discourse

This sub-section aims to illuminate the orientation and transformations of Spanish Orientalist discourse by dividing it into two branches as follows:

Branch 1: The Polemical Tendency in Spanish Orientalist Discourse

The polemical tendency in Spanish Orientalism is not to be understood solely through general judgements upon it, but through a reading of the texts that established its representational logic. It is not sufficient to say that this tendency is 'prejudiced' or 'exclusionary'; one must show how the text produces this image — through what vocabulary, what argumentative structure, and in what pragmatic context.

1. The Theological Roots of the Negative Image

The primary structure of the polemical image goes back to the medieval polemical writings that arose in the context of religious conflict. Among the most prominent examples is the book *Sobre la secta mahometana* by Pedro Pascual (d. 1300), in which Islam is depicted as a '*secta*' (a deviant sect or faction), its founder described as having introduced '*una ley falsa*' (a false law), and his followers as adhering to '*doctrina errónea nacida del engaño*' (a doctrine born of deception).⁵

This discourse does not rest upon an analysis of Islamic texts in their context, but proceeds from a prior theological axiom that Islam is invalid, then builds a comprehensive judgement upon it. Here the mechanism of **prior normativity** becomes manifest: the image is produced before examination, the verdict precedes the analysis.

The book *Sobre la secta mahometana* represents a paradigmatic example of the medieval polemical phase. The importance of this text lies not only in its content but in its very title: the choice of the word *secta* does not present Islam as an independent historical religion, but places it from the outset in the category of

⁴ Juan Goytisolo, *Crónicas sarracenas* (Arabic translation: *On Spanish Orientalism*), p. 28.

⁵ Pedro Pascual, *Sobre la secta mahometana*, critical edition, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos.

deviation from religious truth. And so the polemical operation begins before any detailed discussion: the very naming is a prejudgement.

This textual threshold reveals a central mechanism of polemical discourse — that the text does not approach Islam as an object of understanding, but as an object of refutation. Language is therefore directed toward producing a closed normative image, in which ‘the other’ is determined in advance within a theological horizon that allows no fair internal reading. The methodological problem in this type of text is therefore not merely its manifest hostility, but that it grounds knowledge on the negation of its object before analysing it.⁶

In *Sobre la secta mahometana*, the text describes certain Islamic practices as «*heregía nesçia e vil*», and as what «*fazen todos los moros*» — a formulation that reveals two clear mechanisms: prior evaluative description, since the text does not begin from understanding but from condemnation; and collective generalisation, whereby the practice is attributed to ‘all Muslims,’ converting the particular into a universal attribute.⁷

2. Rational Polemic and Its Limits: Ramon Llull

Ramon Llull (1232–1316) represents a more complex phase: he sought to argue against Muslims within a rational framework, as in *Liber de gentili et tribus sapientibus*. Though his language is less strident than the abuse-laden discourse, his argumentative structure proceeds from the assumption of the superiority of Christian doctrine and directs the dialogue toward a predetermined conclusion.

Here the mechanism of **argumentative containment** becomes apparent: ‘the other’ is granted a dialogical position, but within a closed demonstrative system that does not allow for genuine epistemic equality. And so the polemical image is reformulated in rational language, without its deep structure being dismantled.

A more elaborate formulation appears in Llull’s *Libre del gentil e los tres savis*, where he devotes an entire section to what he calls «*la creença dels sarrahins*», including a subsection titled «*Que Mafumet sia propheta*». Although the text takes a dialogic form, this very organisation indicates that Islamic doctrine is presented within a pre-structured polemical framework, not within a horizon of mutual recognition. Islam appears here as ‘a doctrine presented for comparison,’ not as a religious system to be understood from within — revealing that the polemical structure does not disappear with the dialogic form, but may be reformulated in a more refined guise.⁸

3. The Migration of the Pattern from Theology to Nationalism: Menéndez y Pelayo

With the nineteenth century and the rise of Catholic nationalism in Spain, the polemical structure was reproduced in historical-nationalist language. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856–1912) is a telling example. In *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, he describes the Andalusian period as:

“*una dominación extraña a la esencia cristiana de España*” (*a domination alien to the Christian essence of Spain*).⁹

And elsewhere he adds that Islam:

“*no pudo arraigar en el espíritu nacional español*” (*could not take root in the Spanish national spirit*).¹⁰

Here Islam is no longer presented merely as a doctrinal deviation, but as an element alien to the ‘essence’ of the nation. Three central discursive mechanisms emerge:

- **The essentialism of national identity:** defining Spain in an essentialist Christian manner.
- **The delegitimisation** of centuries of Islamic presence.
- **The conversion of civilisational interaction into a narrative of conflict and pure identity.**

⁶ li-l-Nashr. Ashhab, Muhammad Bilal. (2015). The Image of the Prophet Muhammad in Contemporary Spanish Thought: Self-Vindication and the Disparagement of the Other. Dar Nun

⁷ Muñoz, F. G. (2011). Un testimonio de la Hispania medieval sobre el rito de Las Fadas. *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia*, 8, 207–215.

⁸ Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes. (n.d.). *Libre del gentil e los tres savis*, by Ramon Llull. <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/libre-del-gentil-e-los-tres-savis--0/html/>

⁹ Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, Madrid, 1880–1882.

¹⁰ Ibid.

And so the polemical structure migrates from explicit theological form to cultural-nationalist form, without abandoning the logic of symbolic exclusion.

4. The Persistence of the Image in the Cultural Imagination

The persistence of this structure does not imply the absence of academic transformations, but it does indicate that the polemical image remained present in cultural memory. Juan Goytisolo observed that the image of the ‘Moro’ in Spanish culture is the product of ‘*acumulación de tópicos heredados*’ (an accumulation of inherited stereotypes), such that the imagined image of Islam becomes an element exterior to identity in the Spanish imagination — even though Islam, historically and civilisationally, is part of medieval Spain’s trajectory and its civic interactions.¹¹

What we may conclude from the foregoing is that the polemical tendency in Spanish Orientalist discourse rests upon a coherent representational structure, manifested in the conversion of historical phenomena into a fixed essence (essentialism), the generalisation of normative judgements about Islam as a single entity, and the reproduction of exclusion in theological or nationalist forms.

The image of Islam in this tendency was therefore not constructed through an internal reading of Islamic texts, but through a network of prior assumptions that determined the field of vision and the limits of interpretation.

Branch 2: The Philological-Historical Academic Shift in Spanish Arabism

The emergence of modern Spanish Arabism (*arabismo español*) from the second half of the nineteenth century represents a qualitative transformation in the approach to Islam and Andalusia within Spanish culture. This transformation is not limited to a change in ‘tone’ from polemic to moderation; it connects, at a deeper level, to a shift in the conditions of knowledge production — from a theological/nationalist discourse operating by the logic of prior judgement, to an academic field that employs the tools of philology, source criticism, textual editing, and scholarly publication. Yet this transition does not mean the absence of tension between knowledge and identity — which demands a double reading: acknowledging the gains of the academic transformation, while questioning its limits.

1. From Polemic to Philology: A Transition in Source, Question, and Function

The academic tendency in Spanish Orientalism appears as a transition at three interrelated levels:

- **Transition of source:** from secondary polemical texts to direct engagement with Arabic manuscripts and historical documents, making Islam an object of historical verification rather than material for symbolic accusation.
- **Transition of question:** from ‘is Islam legitimate?’ to ‘how do we understand the formation of Andalusia, its institutions, and its culture within the history of the Iberian Peninsula?’
- **Transition of function:** from dogmatic defence or the consolidation of a pure identity, to the construction of knowledge that is open to revision and refutation through the tools of research.

Recent literature on the history of Spanish Arabism suggests that one of the functions of this transformation was the re-inscription of Andalusia within Spanish cultural history as a complex epistemological given, rather than an ‘exception’ to be excluded. In this framework, the works of Manuela Marín stand out — she insists on the necessity of reading the trajectory of Arabism as a history of the formation of ‘scholarly traditions’ that underwent processes of renewal and sometimes symbolic ‘appropriation,’ depending on context.

2. The Institutional Foundation of the Field: JAE (1907) and CEH (1910)

One of the most important distinctions between the polemical and academic tendencies is that the latter did not remain confined to individual initiatives, but transformed into an institutional structure within the modern state. The founding of the *Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas* (JAE) in 1907 represents a central moment in the modernisation of Spanish scientific research¹² — as the Centro de Estudios Históricos

¹¹ Juan Goytisolo, *Crónicas sarracenas*, Barcelona: Seix Barral, pp. 27–31.

¹² “Historia,” JAE/CSIC (Proyecto JAE 2010), confirming that the JAE was established by royal decree of 11 January 1907.

(CEH) was born on 18 March 1910 as part of the JAE's programme of establishing national research centres.¹³ Historical studies on the CEH confirm that its founding marked a milestone in the construction of a national research infrastructure in the humanities, within a broader scientific-reform project.¹⁴

Of particular relevance to our argument is that Arabism was not marginal in this institutional construction, but entered at its very core — through central scholarly figures (notably Julián Ribera and Miguel Asín Palacios) and through research, training, and publication networks. Manuela Marín notes that Ribera was among the first active members linked to the Junta (1907), and that the establishment of the CEH (1910) placed Ribera and Asín at the forefront of its research sections.¹⁵

3. Codera: Source Criticism and the Conversion of Andalusia into a Verifiable Historical Object

Francisco Codera y Zaidín is one of the pioneers of the academic shift in modern Spanish Arabism. Reference records in the Spanish National Library identify him as a historian, Arabist, and numismatist.¹⁶ The value of his project is clearly visible in his book *Estudios críticos de historia árabe española*, published in Zaragoza in 1903 — a work that announces from its very title a methodological orientation toward the critique of narratives and the interrogation of Arabic material.¹⁷

From the perspective of discourse analysis, the transformation here manifests in a shift in the criterion of 'truth': from normative truth (theology/identity) to procedural truth (document/text/critique); and a shift in the 'image of Islam': from a global moral image to a multifaceted historical object — states, institutions, texts, agents, interactions.

4. Ribera: Expanding the Subject from Political to Cultural History

Julián Ribera y Tarragó (1858–1934) belongs to the generation that worked on integrating Andalusia into the cultural, artistic, and scientific history of Spain. The card of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) notes his pioneering role in the study of the music of the Cantigas and his inauguration of a series of studies on Arabic music within his Arabist project.¹⁸

His presence within the JAE and CEH networks is directly documented in the official founding records of the JAE, which confirm his appointment as a member of the Junta by the decree of 11 January 1907.¹⁹ Written histories of the institution (CSIC) confirm that he headed a research section within the Centro de Estudios Históricos between 1910 and 1916, under the heading: 'Social Institutions of Muslim Spain.'²⁰

The significance of Ribera is that he represents an expansion of the fair academic tendency: from 'establishing facts' to 'understanding cultural patterns,' and from 'the narrative of conflict' to 'the narrative of interaction and exchange' — beginning to dismantle the polemical mechanism that reduces Islam to collision.

5. Asín Palacios: The History of Ideas, Comparison, and the Limits of Neutrality

Miguel Asín Palacios represents an additional step — moving from textual editing toward the horizon of the history of ideas and comparative approaches that trace the transmission of religious concepts across civilisational boundaries, particularly in matters of mysticism, the afterlife, and the trajectories of cultural influence between Islam and Christianity.²¹

His book *La escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia* (1919) is among his most famous and representative works.²² A balanced analysis, however, requires distinguishing: the epistemological gain of introducing Islam into the heart of a debate about the 'origins' of one of the pillars of the European heritage; and the limits of the field, where comparative works may be deployed within cultural narratives about 'authenticity' and 'influence.' The reception of Asín's book provoked a decisive objection within academic circles, because the hypothesis of influence seemed to many Dantists a threat to the merit of Dante's 'originality,' reducing him to a

¹³ "Centro de Estudios Históricos (CEH)," JAE/CSIC (Proyecto JAE 2010), noting that the CEH was born on 18 March 1910 as part of the JAE programme.

¹⁴ José María López Sánchez, Tradición y cultura españolas. La historia del Centro de Estudios Históricos (CSIC/Institución Fernando el Católico, PDF).

¹⁵ Manuela Marín, Reflexiones sobre el arabismo español: tradiciones, renovaciones y secuestros, Hamsa: Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies 1 (2014): 4.

¹⁶ Biblioteca Nacional de España, Codera y Zaidín, Francisco, author file: historiador, arabista y numismático.

¹⁷ Biblioteca Digital de Andalucía, Estudios críticos de historia árabe española / por Francisco Codera, bibliographic record: Zaragoza, 1903.

¹⁸ Real Academia Española (RAE), Julián Ribera y Tarragó | Académico, noting his pioneering role in the study of the Cantigas music.

¹⁹ Real decreto creando una Junta para ampliación de estudios e investigaciones científicas (15 January 1907): Vengo en nombrar Vocal... a D. Julián Ribera y Tarragó.

²⁰ CSIC, La Historia y los historiadores en el CSIC (1910–2020): con Julián Ribera al frente, hubo una sección entre 1910 y 1916 dedicada a Instituciones sociales de la España musulmana.

²¹ Rafael Ramón Guerrero, Miguel Asín Palacios y la filosofía musulmana, Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval 2 (1995): 17.

²² Carmela Baffioni, Dante y el pensamiento árabe: filosofía y viajes al ultramundo, Historia y Grafía 32, no. 63 (2024): 82.

6. An Internal Critique of the Academic Tendency

Despite the scholarly value of the academic tendency, converting Islam into a ‘historical object’ does not automatically neutralise the ‘image’ from the cultural imagination. Islam may become ‘heritage material’ invoked to define national identity (whether by inclusion or exclusion), and the binary ‘we/they’ may be reformulated as ‘historical layers’ arranged within a national narrative.

The methodological value of Manuela Marín’s work is that it calls for writing the history of Arabism as a history of research questions formed within successive historical and cultural contexts — not as a ‘neutral’ inventory of names and publications.²⁴ Recent readings have also re-interrogated ‘Arabic/Andalusian studies’ as an epistemological field with both achievements and limits, critiquing Eurocentric reductions in the study of Andalusia.²⁵

In sum, the academic tendency rearranged the image of Islam within Spanish Orientalist discourse through epistemological tools (source criticism and textual editing), institutional tools (JAE/CEH), and thematic expansion (from political to cultural history and the history of ideas). Yet this shift — however significant — does not obviate the need to interrogate the ‘symbolic layer’ of the image in the imagination: the layer toward which Juan Goytisolo will direct his critical attention — not as an academic contribution within the field of Arabism, but as an internal critique of Spanish culture itself.

Section Two: Juan Goytisolo’s Reading and its Re-evaluation — Toward a Synthetic Reading of the Image of Islam in the Spanish Discourse

Goytisolo’s reading is marked by a degree of critical engagement with and revision of Spanish historical memory, particularly as regards the legacy of Andalusia and the relationship with Islamic civilisation. He sought to illuminate the shared civilisational dimensions and to revise the representations that had obscured the role of Islam in shaping Spain’s cultural identity. Yet this reading remains in need of a critical analysis that balances its arguments against their intellectual and cultural contexts — so as to permit a more nuanced understanding of the image of Islam within contemporary Spanish discourse.

From this point, the section seeks to study Juan Goytisolo’s reading of the image of Islam, analyse its intellectual underpinnings, and then re-evaluate it in the light of a synthetic approach that seeks a deeper understanding of the representations of Islam in contemporary Spanish discourse — through two sub-sections detailed below.

Sub-section 2.1: Dismantling the Orientalist Imagination through Direct Comparison with the Polemical and Academic Models, via Juan Goytisolo’s Reading

This sub-section examines the dismantling of this imagination through Goytisolo’s reading, through a series of branches that address the characteristics of each model and the manifestations of its presence in Spanish Orientalist discourse, as follows:

Branch 1: Goytisolo’s Position — Neither ‘Arabist’ Nor ‘Historian,’ but a Critic of the Structure of Image Production

The essential difference between Goytisolo and academic Arabism is that he is not principally engaged in ‘correcting partial information,’ but in critiquing the representational system that produces the image of Islam and renders it capable of perpetuation and circulation. He maintains that the representation of ‘the other’ never escapes the mark of the culture that produces it, and that the production of the image rests upon an accumulated stock of myths and stereotypes that rise to the surface within writing even when neutrality is claimed.²⁶

Research readings therefore present him as a critic of the Spanish cultural imagination connected to the image of the ‘Moro/Muslim’ — as is apparent in the structure of his book *Crónicas sarracenas*, which brought together essays explicit in their analysis of ‘the manufacture of the image’ and in their interrogation of Spanish

²³ Baffioni, Dante y el pensamiento árabe, p. 48: the reception provoked una oposición decisiva e incluso escandalizada.

²⁴ Manuela Marín, Reflexiones sobre el arabismo español, Hamsa 1 (2014): 2.

²⁵ Javier García Fernández, Más allá del medievalismo y el arabismo: Al-Ándalus en perspectiva poscolonial, Estudios de Asia y África 57, no. 1 (2022): 61, 64–65.

²⁶ Fawzi Shafik El Sharkawy El Kahwagy, La visión del mundo árabe en la narrativa de Juan Goytisolo (doctoral thesis, Universidad de Murcia, 2000), p. 382.

Arabism itself.²⁷

The conclusion to be drawn is that Goytisolo does not compete with the Arabist school on its own terms (philology/textual editing), but rather prosecutes the ‘imagination’ operating behind the texts: how facts are converted into founding myths that redefine the self by negating the other.²⁸

Branch 2: The First Mechanism of Deconstruction — ‘Founding Texts’ and the Conversion of History into Identity Dogma

In his celebrated analytical essay ‘The Founding Myths of the Nation,’ Goytisolo puts his finger on the core of the modern polemical structure: the national myth (Covadonga, Saint James, the ‘Reconquista’) — when it passes from a narrative element to a symbolic apparatus for the production of identity, then is deployed politically. He states that the use of these ‘founding myths’ served to construct a narrative of ‘salvation/holy war’ in the Francoist era, and linked it to the tragedies of the Civil War.²⁹

Here the difference becomes clear between classical polemic — which produces the image of Islam through a direct theological/moral criterion — and modern (nationalist) polemic — which produces the image through the mythologisation of history and its linkage to a national essence. For Goytisolo, this functions as a symbolic economy of identity: Islam is not an ‘object’ but a ‘function’ within a narrative of self-constitution.

Branch 3: The Second Mechanism of Deconstruction — Revealing the ‘Chain of Mediations’ that Transmit the Image

The distinctive quality of Goytisolo’s reading is his focus on the fact that the image of the ‘Moro/Muslim’ does not live in books alone, but is transmitted through overlapping channels of circulation: school curricula, ecclesiastical memory/preaching, popular literature (myth, story, the *romancero*), and national narratives (such as the narrative of the ‘Reconquista’). This renders the ‘image’ a network of social and symbolic circulation, not an individual opinion or an isolated epistemological judgement. Some studies note explicitly that he ‘undermines’ a particular myth about Islam/the Moor within the Spanish imagination by tracing its manifestations in myth, the *romancero*, historiography, literature, and the collective unconscious.³⁰

In this context, we borrow Deleuze’s insight: what matters is not the existence of a ‘centre’ producing the discourse, but the existence of a network through which force is distributed across institutions and media. The image of Islam is produced by intersecting relations (school/book/ritual/journalism/politics).

Branch 4: A Direct Comparison — Between the Achievement of the Academic Tendency and Goytisolo’s Work

The academic tendency (Codera/Ribera/Asín Palacios...) accomplished an important epistemological transition: textual editing, source criticism, the scientific integration of Andalusia into the history of Spain. But this does not guarantee — necessarily — the dismantling of the ‘founding myth,’ because the myth operates at a different level: the level of ‘national memory,’ not the level of ‘academic footnotes.’

Yet Goytisolo went further — interrogating the polemical tendency through fundamental critical questions, most notably: shifting the centre of the question from ‘Is Andalusia part of our history?’ to ‘How and why do we need to deny this part in order to consolidate a certain identity?’; converting the object of Orientalism from an archive to a politics of meaning; and explaining the persistence of polemic despite academic modernisation — that is: why can a society possess more precise academic knowledge about Andalusia, and yet the polemical myth continues to operate in public consciousness?

This meaning is supported by academic dissertations that have studied Goytisolo’s project and its relationship to the image of the ‘Moro’ in literature/culture.³¹

27 El Sharkawy, *La visión del mundo árabe*, p. 531.

28 Aurora Rivière Gómez, *Orientalismo y nacionalismo español*, p. 24 (footnote 21).

29 Juan Goytisolo, *Los mitos fundadores de la nación*, *El País*, 14 September 1996.

30 Fawzi Shafik El Sharkawy El Kahwagy, *La visión del mundo árabe*, p. 301.

31 Dissertations: El Sharkawy (Murcia, 2000); Marta Jordana Darder, *Contra la España Sagrada* (UAB, 2024); Rachid Khatib, *Juan Goytisolo entre sufismo y misticismo* (Salamanca, 2016).

Logic 1: Decentring Andalusia

Among the contemporary Spanish writings that treat Andalusia as an ‘inflated myth’ in the modern consciousness, there is a tendency that seeks to decentre its symbolic status. This appears clearly in Serafín Fanjul’s book *Al-Andalus contra España: la forja del mito* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2000), presented as a critique of the ‘mythologisation/idealisation of Andalusia’ shaped by nineteenth-century Romantics and converted into contested ‘inflated’ images in the representation of Spanish history.³²

A critical review confirms that ‘the focus of the book is on attacking the idealisation of Andalusia and attempting to put an end to it, while highlighting its political contemporaneity.’³³

This tendency does not necessarily return to the old theological polemic, but it reproduces a new polemical function: not the ‘condemnation of Islam,’ but the re-calibration of memory by negating what it regards as a ‘comfortable myth’ about Andalusia.

Logic 2: Andalusia as a Scholarly Object within Spanish History (The Arabist/Academic School)

In contrast, the academic Arabist school — in its fair manifestation — represents a transition from the manufacture of a ‘myth’ to the management of an ‘archive’: manuscripts, inscriptions, literature, documents, linguistic and historical analysis. In the literature on the historiography of contemporary Spanish Arabism, a telling statement appears: that the Arab phenomenon is not alien to the historical reality of Spain, and that studying it touches the ‘core’ of understanding Spanish cultural history, not its margin.³⁴

The difference here is not in the ‘judgement’ on Andalusia, but in the type of question. The academic school asks: what is the nature of Andalusian texts? What were the transformations of its institutions and its social history? How do we write a verifiable history? And so the image of Andalusia in this logic is not built on the binary ‘paradise/catastrophe,’ but on a historical dismantling that accumulates knowledge and reduces generalisations.

Logic 3: Goytisolo — Andalusia as a Site of Mythologisation within National Memory

Goytisolo’s logic may be read as understanding Andalusia not as a mere ‘historical chapter’ that is misunderstood, but as a **site of mythologisation** within national memory: an image re-formed and circulated because it has an identity function. In his text ‘The Founding Myths of the Nation,’ he establishes a general methodological rule to the effect that national narratives are built upon foundational myths, and that the danger begins when these myths are managed without critical restraint and become instruments for the exclusion of the other and the falsification of history.³⁵

And because Andalusia is directly connected to the narrative of the ‘Reconquista/Recovery,’ Goytisolo places elements such as ‘Covadonga’ and ‘la Reconquista’ among what he calls the **founding texts** that have been politically deployed to furnish a narrative of salvation.³⁶

Goytisolo discusses Andalusia not merely as archival material, but as a symbolic function in the construction of the self: when Andalusia is presented as a lost paradise, it is used to produce cultural nostalgia; when presented as a catastrophe or ‘invasion,’ it is used to produce an identity grounded in negation and recovery. In both cases, Andalusia becomes a ‘stage’ onto which ready-made images are summoned.

Branch 6: Synthesis of the Comparison — What Do the Three Axes Reveal?

The essential differences may be summarised in three points:

First: In the Modern Cultural-Polemical Tendency

The tendency that raises the banner of ‘critique of mythologisation’ sometimes presents Andalusia as an exaggeration that must be dismantled. Yet this dismantling may itself slide into a counter-narrative producing a new reduction. Serafín Fanjul affirms that the ‘mythologisation of Andalusia’ in the modern era produced two

³² Serafín Fanjul, *Al-Andalus contra España: la forja del mito* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 2000), publisher’s presentation.

³³ El libro de Serafín Fanjul tiene como punto de mira precisamente la idealización de al-Andalus, *Revista de Libros* (review).

³⁴ Ángel Cortabarría Beitia, *El arabismo en la España contemporánea*, *Estudios Filosóficos* 17, no. 44 (1968).

³⁵ Juan Goytisolo, *Los mitos fundadores de la nación*, *El País* (Opinión), 14 September 1996.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

inflated images tending toward the exclusive representation of this period.³⁷

Second: In the Academic Tendency

Andalusia is treated as an object open to verification through the transition from the level of judgements to the level of documentary material. Yet this transformation alone does not guarantee the disappearance of myths from the public sphere; the mythological images may remain operative in media, educational programmes, and cultural politics, even after having lost their credibility within specialised scholarly research.³⁸

Third: In Goytisolo's Reading

Andalusia is understood as an 'imaginary knot' within national narratives, not merely a historical chapter to be corrected by information — because the problem, in his view, is the persistence of the mechanism of mythologisation that recycles the image to serve contemporary politics of meaning. This logic appears in his text 'The Founding Myths of the Nation' when he addresses the construction of identity through founding myths/texts that become instruments of exclusion and the falsification of historical memory.³⁹

Academic dissertations reading his project support this analysis, demonstrating that Goytisolo operates at the level of the image within the cultural corpus (myth, the *romancero*, historiography, literature, and the collective unconscious), which explains why the myth remains operative outside the academic field even as scientific knowledge improves.⁴⁰

Sub-section 2.2: A Critical (Synthetic) Reading of the Image of Islam in Contemporary Spanish Discourse

If the preceding analysis demonstrated the plurality of patterns of representation of Andalusia (polemical, academic, deconstructive), then critical re-evaluation requires the transition from description to synthesis: what is the nature of the imagined image of Islam in the Spanish discourse today? Has the polemical structure truly been transcended, or has it been reproduced in updated forms?

Branch 1: Dismantling Historical Essentialism

One of the most important gains of the fair academic tendency is the dismantling of the essentialism that marked polemical discourse — Islam is no longer defined as a 'conflictual essence,' but as a multi-dimensional historical experience within Andalusia. Yet the comparison demonstrated that essentialism may return in a new form: not the description of Islam as a 'deviant essence,' but the description of Andalusia as an 'ideal essence' invoked to feed contemporary narratives.

The transition from negative essentialism to romantic essentialism therefore does not signify the transcendence of the representational structure, but its redistribution.

Branch 2: The Distinction between Knowledge and Imagination

The comparison demonstrated that epistemological progress (manuscript editing, historical studies) does not automatically cancel the operation of the cultural imagination. Here the value of Goytisolo's reading becomes apparent: he draws attention to the fact that the 'founding texts' operate at a different level from academic studies. Popular/pedagogical/political discourse may continue to produce the image of Andalusia according to the logic of myth, even after the accumulation of more precise scientific knowledge.

This means that critical re-evaluation cannot be restricted to the correction of facts, but must extend to the analysis of the mechanisms of cultural circulation of the image.

Branch 3: The Image of Islam between Symbolic Integration and Exclusion

In the academic tendency, Andalusia was inscribed within Spanish history as a cultural component. But in the general cultural discourse, its position remains oscillating: it is invoked as 'a chapter of the past'; or used as 'a point of rupture' affirming a subsequent identity; or deployed as 'cultural capital' in the context of civilisational dialogue.

37 Serafín Fanjul, *Al-Andalus contra España* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 2000), editorial synopsis.

38 Ángel Cortabarría Beitia, *El arabismo en la España contemporánea*, *Estudios Filosóficos* 17, no. 44 (1968): 5–6.

39 Juan Goytisolo, *Los mitos fundadores de la nación*, *Historias* (INAH, México), no. 35 (March 1996): 18–23.

40 Fawzi Shafik El Sharkawy El Kahwagy, *La visión del mundo árabe* (Murcia, 2000), p. 383.

The imagined image of Islam in contemporary Spanish discourse cannot therefore be reduced to a binary — negative/positive — but is distributed between a critical representation that attempts to dismantle the myth, an academic representation that accumulates knowledge, and a cultural-political representation that re-employs the past.

Branch 4: The Limits of Goytisolo's Reading

Despite the deconstructive value of Goytisolo's reading, it remains a literary-cultural reading, not a specialised historical study. The excessive generalisation of it may therefore lead to falling into a counter-image: the perception of all Spanish discourse as governed by myth — which the institutional facts of modern academic research do not support.

The optimal methodological use of his reading is therefore: to regard it as a tool for dismantling the imagination, not as a final verdict on the entire Orientalist field.

Branch 5: Applicative Indicators of the Persistence of the Representational Structure in Elite Discourse

To demonstrate the persistence of the representational structure in contemporary Spanish Orientalist discourse, it is not sufficient to point to the presence of certain concepts or narratives; it is necessary to test the manner in which these concepts pass through the different levels of knowledge production — from the university institution to educational discourse, and then to the public sphere. Hence the importance of the structural approach, which regards discourse not as a neutral reflection of reality, but as an apparatus for the production of meaning and the distribution of symbolic positions within it.

1. The Institutional Structure as an Apparatus for the Production of Meaning

Aurora Rivière's study demonstrates that the founding of Arabic and Hebrew studies at the University of Madrid (1843–1868) was connected to a cultural-national project of reorganising the past within the framework of the modern liberal state.⁴¹ The inclusion of Arabic in the university was not merely an epistemological expansion, but part of a redefinition of Spanish identity through the framing of its complex past within a coherent national narrative.

This is consistent with Goytisolo's observation that official Spanish historiography rested upon an 'act of amputation' of the Islamic and Jewish dimensions from national memory.⁴² The problem is not in the existence of knowledge, but in the pattern of its inscription within a closed system that reproduces a specific cultural centrism.

Structural conclusion: The representational structure takes form at the level of the institutional production of knowledge, not only at the level of its circulation.

2. Educational Discourse as an Apparatus of Reproduction

In Vélez Peña's analysis of secondary school textbooks (n=14), the concept of 'Reconquista' appears as a predominant interpretive framework within an official educational corpus spanning 1977 to 2021.⁴³ Despite some attempts to dismantle the concept or replace it with vocabulary carrying less normative weight, the critical tendency remains less represented than the normative presence of the term.⁴⁴

Here the precision of Goytisolo's observation becomes apparent — his contention that 'Reconquista' is not a neutral description, but an ideological construction that grants the past a retrospective meaning justifying an exclusionary identity.⁴⁵ The issue is not purely historical, but connects to the mechanism of identity production through language.

Structural conclusion: Educational discourse does not reflect the transformations of academic research automatically, but reproduces the most entrenched symbolic structure.

⁴¹ Aurora Rivière Gómez, *Orientalismo y nacionalismo español* (Madrid: Instituto Antonio de Nebrija, 2000), pp. 19–23.

⁴² Juan Goytisolo, *España y los españoles* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1969), p. 112.

⁴³ David Vélez Peña, *La Reconquista a través de los libros de texto de Bachillerato*, *Revista Historia Autónoma* 24 (2024): 173–174.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 172–173.

⁴⁵ Juan Goytisolo, *Contra las sagradas formas* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1975), p. 87.

3. The Public Sphere and the Redistribution of the Structure

García-Sanjuán analyses the persistence of two dominant models in the representation of Andalusia within the contemporary academic and media sphere: an exclusionary model that re-centres the ‘Reconquista,’ and a romantic model that integrates Andalusia into the national imagination without dismantling its mythological structure.⁴⁶

From a structural perspective, the two models represent different forms of reproducing the same structure. This is what Goytisolo was warning against when he wrote that Spain cannot reduce Andalusia to ‘folkloric decor,’⁴⁷ because this reduction does not dismantle the structure, but beautifies it.

Structural conclusion: Partial academic transformation does not automatically lead to the dismantling of the deep structure, but may be re-absorbed within it.

4. Theoretical Synthesis in the Light of Deconstruction

If the three indicators are brought together, the representational structure operates through three interrelated mechanisms: institutional founding (the regulated inscription of the past within a national project); educational reproduction (the repetition of normative concepts within an official school corpus); and public redistribution (the circulation of the narrative within the media and political sphere).

In the light of Goytisolo’s reading, the problem is not reduced to the existence of a ‘negative’ or ‘positive’ discourse, but to the persistence of a representational pattern that redefines Islam as an external or decorative element, rather than a constitutive component.

Critical re-evaluation of the image of Islam in contemporary Spanish Orientalist discourse therefore requires the analysis of the structure that produces the image, rather than the mere correction of its content.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the imagined image of Islam in contemporary Spanish Orientalist discourse cannot be understood through the binary of prejudice and fairness alone, but must be grasped through an analysis of the structure that produced this image across multiple levels: theological, nationalist, academic, and imaginary. The polemical tendency — in its medieval and modern forms — revealed that Andalusia was not merely a historical event, but a symbolic element in the construction of identity, where history was converted into a founding myth that redefines the self through the representation of the other.

In contrast, academic Arabism represented a genuine transition in the conditions of knowledge production, re-integrating Andalusia within Spanish history through philological investigation and documentary criticism. Yet this epistemological transformation did not automatically lead to the dismantling of the cultural imagination — which continued to re-employ the image of Andalusia within contemporary narratives, whether in romantic-idealistic form or in a corrective counter-form.

Here the importance of Juan Goytisolo’s reading becomes manifest — a reading directed not so much at the revision of historical facts as at the exposure of the mechanisms of mythologisation that grant the image of Andalusia its continuity within national memory. The problem is not a deficit of knowledge, but the persistence of representational patterns that extend beyond the academic field into the cultural and political sphere.

The critical re-evaluation proposed in this article therefore does not rest on replacing one image with another, but on analysing the very conditions of the production of the image, and on distinguishing between scientific knowledge and the mechanisms of circulation of the imagination. In this sense, understanding the image of Islam in contemporary Spanish discourse requires the combination of studying the institutional transformations of academic research and analysing the symbolic economy that re-forms the past within the conflicts of the present.

I. Findings

The findings of the study may be summarised as follows:

- Spanish Orientalist discourse was not a homogeneous bloc, but manifested a clear differentiation between a polemical tendency and a fair academic tendency.

⁴⁶ Alejandro García-Sanjuán, *Rejecting al-Andalus, exalting the Reconquista*, *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2018): 127–145.

⁴⁷ Juan Goytisolo, *Crónicas sarracinas* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1982), p. 54.

- The academic transformation of the nineteenth century represented an important shift from doctrinal debate to historical investigation, but it did not entirely eliminate the symbolic structure that had shaped the image of Islam in the cultural imagination.
- Juan Goytisolo's reading reveals a deeper level in the production of the image, where Andalusia is reformulated within national identity narratives — whether in an idealistic or exclusionary form.
- Critical re-evaluation requires the combination of the analysis of academic knowledge and the analysis of the mechanisms of circulation of the imagination, rather than restricting attention to only one of these levels.

II. Recommendations

Based on the foregoing findings, we recommend:

- A call to expand Arabic studies on Spanish Orientalism as an independent field with its own historical and cultural particularity, and to avoid limiting the study of the image of Islam in Western discourse to the French, British, or German models.
- Encouraging comparative textual studies between old Spanish polemical texts and modern academic writings, so as to trace the elements of continuity and transformation in the image of Islam, and to reveal the manner in which certain representational structures pass from theological to cultural or nationalist discourse.
- Attention to the analysis of contemporary Spanish educational and media discourse, and not restricting research to specialist Arabist texts alone, because the study's findings demonstrated that the cultural imagination continues to operate outside the academic field, through schools, journalism, and public narratives.
- Making use of critical readings internal to Western culture, such as Juan Goytisolo's, as methodological tools that help to dismantle the stereotype from within its cultural structure — with the necessary precaution against converting them into comprehensive final verdicts on the totality of Spanish discourse. A methodological distinction in future studies between Islam in its religious, civilisational, and historical reality, and its imagined image in Western discourses — so that the critique of Orientalist representations does not lead to a confusion between the object of study and the image that the other has produced of it. Encouraging the editing and translation of Spanish polemical and academic texts relating to Islam and Andalusia into Arabic, since many of these texts remain of limited circulation in Arabic research.
- A call to build interdisciplinary approaches combining history, discourse analysis, cultural studies, and the history of ideas — so as to understand the image of Islam not merely as an epistemological given, but as a symbolic structure in which memory, identity, and politics interweave.

Reconsidering the reductive narratives of Andalusia — whether those presenting it in a purely romantic-idealistic image, or those reducing it to an exclusionary-conflictual image — and working instead to develop a nuanced historical reading that respects the complexity of the Andalusian experience and the multiplicity of its civilisational levels.

- Openness to the more balanced contemporary Spanish studies in addressing Andalusia and Islam, and deployment of their scholarly achievement in building an Arab-Spanish academic dialogue that is more precise and nuanced, removed from the logic of defensiveness or prior accusation.

Directing future research toward the study of the mechanisms of circulation of the image in the collective imagination — particularly through school curricula, national memory, and literary and cultural production — because the dismantling of the image is not achieved through the correction of information alone, but through an understanding of the media that reproduce it socially and symbolically.

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