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GRIEVE (Patricia), « Reading *Flores y Blancaflor* in Early Modern Iberia and the Spanish New World », *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes / Journal of Medieval and Humanistic Studies*, n° 38, 2019 – 2, p. 351-366

DOI : [10.15122/isbn.978-2-406-10454-4.p.0351](https://doi.org/10.15122/isbn.978-2-406-10454-4.p.0351)

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GRIEVE (Patricia), « Reading *Flores y Blancaflor* in Early Modern Iberia and the Spanish New World »

RÉSUMÉ – *L'Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor*, imprimée plusieurs fois en Espagne au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, a été diffusée dans le Nouveau Monde. Elle reflète le contexte historique de coexistence entre Chrétiens et Musulmans/*moriscos* et peut être perçue comme un précurseur de la “maurophilie”. Souvent lu comme un récit d’histoire ancienne, le texte peut être mis en relation avec les comparaisons de l’assimilation des *moriscos* en Espagne aux efforts pour convertir les populations indigènes.

MOTS-CLÉS – *Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor*, réception, Espagne, Nouveau Monde, Morisques, Indigènes

GRIEVE (Patricia), « La réception de *Flores y Blancaflor* dans la péninsule Ibérique et dans le Nouveau Monde espagnol de la première modernité »

ABSTRACT – *Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor*, printed multiple times in sixteenth century Spain, was also popular in the New World. The text reflects sixteenth century historical context of Christian-Muslim/*morisco* co-existence. We may see it as a precursor of the tradition of “maurophilia”. Many read the story as Spain’s early history, but I also place it within the context of the Spanish colonial public’s tendency to compare the assimilation of the *moriscos* in Spain to the efforts to convert indigenous peoples.

KEYWORDS – *Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor*, reception, Spain, New World, Moorish, Indigenous

## READING *FLORES Y BLANCAFLOR* IN EARLY MODERN IBERIA AND THE SPANISH NEW WORLD

*Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor*, the Christian-Muslim love and conversion story known to so many countries and time periods, was printed multiple times in sixteenth-century Spain, and was also a most popular book in the New World. But, why so many printings? Typically side-lined from serious critical discussion as but a charming, sentimental tale, I will argue that *Flores y Blancaflor* reflects sixteenth-century Spain's historical context of Christian-Muslim/*morisco* conflict and co-existence, and Mediterranean conflict, especially that of the slave trade. I will suggest that we might see Flores, albeit anachronistically, as the "earliest and ideal *morisco*", and that the story remains relevant for its beliefs in the possibility of conversion and assimilation, at a time when assimilation was hotly debated, and at a time when Spain once again trembled at the military might of Islamic forces, this time the fear of the Ottoman Turks. I suggest that we may see *Flores y Blancaflor* as a precursor of the literary tradition of "maurophilia", which portrayed "the Noble Moor" at the same time as the *moriscos*' (converts to Christianity, especially sixteenth-century descendants of Muslim converts) most violent clashes with Spanish Christian society. This brief study also considers the sixteenth-century *falsos cronicones*, "false chronicles", invented histories of Spain's ancient past, which thrived in Spain and the New World. I will argue that many read *Flores y Blancaflor* as a story of Spain's early history, both in Iberia and in the New World, but I also place the story within the context of the Spanish colonial public's tendency to compare the conversion and religious assimilation of the *moriscos* in Spain to the efforts to convert indigenous peoples.

In *Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor* (Alcalá de Henares, 1512; Sevilla, 1524; Sevilla, 1532 – two distinct runs; Burgos, 1562

and 1564; Alcalá de Henares, 1604), the Iberian Muslim Prince Flores' beloved Blancaflor, his father's aristocratic Christian captive from Rome and object of forbidden love, had been sold by the Iberian King into slavery, to the harem of the "Almiral" (emir) in Cairo. Flores, smuggled into the harem in a basket of flowers, reunites with Blancaflor, and, after a trial, a shipwreck, and Flores' conversion to Christianity, the two lovers marry and return to Spain, where the newly-crowned Flores converts his entire kingdom to Christianity. Flores and Blancaflor have a son, Gordi3n, and they go to Rome, where Flores becomes the Holy Roman Emperor, and Gordi3n rules over Spain.

While re-reading the sixteenth-century Spanish prose romance, *Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor*, for the first time in over 20 years since the publication of my 1997 comparative study of European versions of the love story, how I now read the prose romance took me completely by surprise. My book had concentrated on the themes of pilgrimage and conversion, and how the many texts, with increasingly Christianized transformations from country to country, were themselves pilgrims and converts<sup>1</sup>. I have contributed to, and been influenced by, new trends in medieval and early modern scholarship since 1997, and I now saw a completely new book project, as I explain below. In all of the sixteenth-century Spanish printings of *Flores y Blancaflor*, the anonymous author or the printer/editor, summarizes at the beginning of story the main issues: their lineages, forbidden love, steadfast loyalty, many trials and tribulations all because Flores was Muslim and Blancaflor Christian, how Flores converted to Christianity by God's will and by Blancaflor's intercession, and how they ruled over Spain, converting the subjects to Christianity<sup>2</sup>.

Young people in love who cross confessional lines, Christian-Muslim conflict, armed and otherwise, in Iberia and the wider Mediterranean Basin, slavery, ransoming of captives, commercial trade, shipwrecks – these reflect sixteenth-century Iberia and the Mediterranean world.

1 P. E. Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

2 I would like to thank Sofia Lod3n, Vanessa Oby and Anne R3ach-Ng3 for their kind invitation to contribute to this special issue. My article is an introduction to a new book project on sixteenth-century printings of the love and conversion story in Spain, England, France, and Italy, tentatively titled *The 16<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean and Transatlantic Worlds of Flores and Blancaflor*.

I now saw the enslavement of Blancaflor in the harem in a different, more historical, light. Historian Robert Davis estimates that, from the beginning of the sixteenth century into the eighteenth century, 1-1.2 million Christians fell victim to the Mediterranean slave trade<sup>3</sup>. For an Iberian – and we will see – Colonial Latin American reading public – *Flores y Blancaflor* would not merely entertain, but reflect contemporary issues and fears on the part of Church, Crown, and subjects alike. Indeed, while almost all Western European countries produced multiple versions of the lovers' tale, because they all take place mainly in Muslim Spain, only the Spanish versions, the late thirteenth- or early-fourteenth-century Spanish manuscript *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* and the sixteenth-century Spanish prose romance *Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor* can reflect the actual historical reality of Christian-Muslim conflict on Iberian soil<sup>4</sup>. I now read the text through the lens of more recent emphases on Spain's Islamic context, the history and legacies of al-Andalus, and the sixteenth-century acute “*morisco* problem”, in which the Spanish Church debated whether assimilation into Christianity was even possible, fearing that *moriscos* were not true converts to Christianity, but secret Muslims, conspiring to incite an Ottoman conquest of the Peninsula. As several sixteenth-century writers put it, by believing in Muslim assimilation, Spain was “nurturing a viper in its bosom”<sup>5</sup>.

*Moriscos* was the word used in the sixteenth century to designate Muslim converts to Christianity and descendants of those converts. In the fifteenth century, the co-existence of Jews and the *conversos* (Jewish converts to Christianity) posed a threat to Church and Crown. Authorities feared that *conversos* were either crypto-Jews or likely to remain tainted by Judaizing practices, cultural and religious. Such proximity, since

3 R. C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

4 I do not mean that no other Western European country experienced Christian-Muslim conflict in their own countries in the Middle Ages. Rather, given that all the Western European versions of the story of the multiconfessional lovers situate the conflict in Muslim Spain, the Spanish medieval and early modern versions, then, are unique in inviting the reader to consider the story within the context of its own Iberian history. See Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance*, and F. Bautista, *La materia de Francia en la literatura medieval Española: la “crónica carolingia” Flores y Blancaflor, Berta, y Carlomagno*, San Millán de la Cogolla, Cilengua, 2008.

5 P. E. Grieve, *The Eve of Spain: Myths of Origins in the History of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Conflict*, Baltimore, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 159.

*conversos* in cities typically continued to live in the Jewish quarters, precluded the ideal of assimilation of the convert into Spanish Christian society. There were plenty of signs and laws about the role of Jews or *conversos* in this society that contradicted the goal of assimilation, and not everyone wanted it or believed it possible. The expulsion of the Jews in 1492 was at first an economic boon for the Crown, since they confiscated the wealth of the expelled. Nevertheless, the main reason given for the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 was the protection of Spain's *converso* subjects, who could never be fully and purely Christian while the Jews remained in Spain<sup>6</sup>.

Similarly, then, Church and Crown officially promoted the ideal of assimilation of the *moriscos* into Spanish society, but there were always many political and ecclesiastical opponents to this goal. In order to move *moriscos* away from their practices, laws were enacted but often not enforced, against wearing Moorish clothing, eating Moorish cuisine, and speaking and then later teaching Arabic. Adding to the confusion, different provinces of the country enacted bans at different times, some enforcing them, others not<sup>7</sup>.

The Muslims soon found that the guarantees of religious freedom that had been the promise of Fernando and Isabel during the 1492 negotiations of the surrender of Granada were forgotten. As Harvey tells us:

Forcible conversion of Muslims came at different times for the various kingdoms into which Spain in the sixteenth century was divided: first to suffer were the lands of the Crown of Castile in 1500-1502, then Navarre in 1515-1516, and finally the lands of the Crown of Aragon (i.e. Catalonia, Aragon, and Valencia) in 1523-1526<sup>8</sup>.

Early sixteenth-century revolts by the inhabitants of the mountainous Alpujarras region in Granada were quickly suppressed. But, after the uprising of the *moriscos* living in Granada, often called the War of the Alpujarras in 1568-1571, who protested the restrictions on their freedom

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6 On the Jews and *conversos* in Spain, see for example, H. Kamen, *Spain, 1469-1714: A Society of Conflict*, London, Routledge, 2014, and J. Ray, *The Jew in Medieval Iberia*, Boston, Boston Academic Studies Press, 2012 and *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry*, New York, New York University Press, 2014.

7 For an excellent, comprehensive study of *moriscos* in Iberia, see L. P. Harvey, *Muslims in Spain: 1500-1614*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005.

8 Harvey, *Muslims in Spain*, p. 14.

and the laws that prohibited any remnant of an Arabic or Islamic culture, and the bloody suppression by the King's forces, debates began in earnest about expelling the *moriscos*, which spurred renewed debates about the potential for the socio-religious assimilation of the *moriscos* into the fabric of Christian Spanish society. Those who thought that assimilation was not achievable argued that the main, possibly nation-destroying, threat was that the unassimilated *moriscos* would betray Spain and combine forces with the dreaded Ottoman Turks. The fact that so many *moriscos* lived along the coasts of Spain aided in this belief, as well as the knowledge of Ottoman raids along the coasts of much of the Mediterranean. This is, of course, a complex, nuanced debate. Even those who believed assimilation was possible into the fabric of Christian society, often feared the threat of "sameness" to their own perceived social superiority; that is, they wished to maintain separations in the society, to protect their own social status, and they worried that the *moriscos* were perhaps not as different from Old Christians as the Old Christians liked to believe<sup>9</sup>. Others believed, for various reasons, that assimilation was not possible at all. The powerful voices that believed either that the *moriscos* were intentionally clever deceivers or that conversion to Christianity simply did not take, prevailed over the political and ecclesiastical voices who argued for one shepherd, Jesus Christ, and one flock, comprised of different kinds of sheep. The Crown began an expulsion of the *moriscos*, first from Valencia, the closest province to the Ottoman Empire, in 1609. Waves of expulsion followed, ending in 1614.

As I mentioned earlier, in the printed work itself, *La historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor*, in addition to the story of the lovers, there is a summary of the tale at the beginning of the work. The anonymous author of the sixteenth-century printed editions spells out exactly what he expects the reader to come away with. But the summary, which starts with their lineages and their mutual love and unwavering loyalty, mostly focuses on the issue of conversion, Flores' individual conversion "to God's commandments and to the Holy Mother Church" by the will of God and by Blancaflor's intercession, and that they ruled over a now Christian Spain<sup>10</sup>. We know that the printer of the earliest edition

9 This is the thesis of C. H. Lee, *The Anxiety of Sameness in Early Modern Spain*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2016.

10 "a los mandamientos de Dios y de la santa madre Iglesia". *La historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor*, *Narrativa popular de la Edad Media*, ed. N. Baranda and V. Infantes,

of the sixteenth century, Arnao Guillén de Brocar, printed very few literary texts. But shortly after moving his press from Logroño to Alcalá de Henares, Guillén de Brocar printed eight books, including *Flores y Blancaflor* in 1512, during the years of the forcible conversions of the Muslims to Christianity, painting a picture of a completely Christian Iberia. We might consider the work as speaking to assimilation or peaceful coexistence, for the story exemplifies, albeit anachronistically, assimilation through the figure of the ideal *morisco*, Prince Flores, with both a ready inclination to Christianity, and the zeal to convert all of Spain from Islam, which, according to the story, occurred without protest on the part of the subjects, again exemplifying the ideals of conversion and social assimilation. There is another possibility, which I will discuss shortly, that suggests a reading of *Flores y Blancaflor* as history.

Even though *Flores y Blancaflor* has a happy ending for the lovers, for Spain, and for Christianity, there are darker aspects of the work that would resonate with readers of the time. The fearsome historical figures of the pirate and the *renegado* in the early modern Mediterranean were often *moriscos* who turned their backs on their country and their new religion, or Old Christians who had been captured, and then forced into conversion to Islam, or who voluntarily did so, usually to better their conditions. They betrayed their countrymen by using their superb knowledge of the Spanish coasts to abduct Old Christians and *moriscos* alike in the service of the Algerian slave trade, and often providing Christian women to Muslim men. Captivity during Mediterranean Sea journeys, abduction from coasts, forced conversions and/or slavery were historical realities<sup>11</sup>. A major triumph of the Spanish capture of Oran in North Africa in 1509 was the freeing of 15,000 Christian slaves<sup>12</sup>. For women captives, fears of forced interreligious sexual relations or forced conversions and marriage to Muslims were real. We see in *Blancaflor's* situation a historical reflection of early modern Mediterranean abductions and human trafficking, the selling of Christian women, and the ongoing

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Madrid, Ediciones Akal, 1995, p. 84-127, at p. 85.

11 See, for example, M. A. Garcés, *A Captive's Tale: Cervantes in Algiers*, Nashville, TN, Vanderbilt University Press, revised edition, 2005, and my article "Conversion in Early Modern Western Mediterranean Accounts of Captivity: Identity, Audience, and Narrative Conventions", *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 47, 2016, p. 1-19. See also Davis, *Christian Slaves*.

12 Davis, *Christian Slaves*, p. XIV.



threat of sexual exploitation by Muslim abductors or slave owners, in this case the Admiral in Cairo. This historically verifiable early modern repugnance of interreligious sexual relations may be reflected, perhaps, even in Blancaflor's rejection of consensual sex with Flores before he converts to Christianity. Interestingly, printer Arnao Guillén de Brocar of the 1512 printing of *Flores y Blancaflor* published only two years earlier, in 1510, *Historias de la divina victoria de Orán* by Martín de Herrera, at the press in Logroño, shortly before moving his business to Alcalá de Henares. Therefore, not only did this military victory warrant a versified account of it, but the historical release of the Christians enslaved by Muslims, clearly something an audience would know about, could make palpable a recognition of the danger that Blancaflor had been in, and underscore the victory of her recovery.

Literary historians and critics have postulated French, Arabic, Byzantine, and Hispano-arabic origins for the tale of the lovers, and have categorized the sixteenth-century Spanish prose romance as a Greco-Oriental entertaining diversion, a courtly romance, a *roman idyllique*, or a sentimental tale<sup>13</sup>. I believe that we should consider the text as the precursor to the later 16<sup>th</sup>-century literary tradition of "the Noble Moor" – courtly and with Christian values –, in the *novella morisca*, "maurophile literature", in which Iberian texts focus on friendship, chivalry, and respect for the "moors", whether they convert to Christianity or not<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, I would argue that later sixteenth-century printings of *Flores y Blancaflor* in 1562 and 1564 place the work right at the start of the popularity of maurophile literature, with the appearance in 1561 and 1565 of *Historia del Abencerraje y la hermosa Jarifa*, one of the three most famous works of the maurophile literary canon<sup>15</sup>. Mateo Alemán included a novella, "*Historia de los dos enamorados Ozmín y Daraja*", within his otherwise dark picaresque work *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599). These stories of love, friendship, and chivalry reflect a deep sympathy and

13 For a discussion of origins and transmission of the versions, see my *Floire and Blancheflor*, p. 1-50, and the introduction to Baranda and Infantes, *Narrativa popular*, p. 20-26.

14 Maurophile literature is a term coined by Georges Cirot. See "La maurophilie en Espagne au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Bulletin Hispanique*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1938, p. 150-157.

15 *Historia del Abencerraje y la hermosa Jarifa* circulated in an undated sixteenth-century manuscript, within a pastoral romance, *La Diana*, by Jorge de Montemayor (1561), in a printed edition in 1561, and also within a work, *Inventario*, by Antonio de Villegas in 1565.

respect for the Muslim protagonists, whose values mirror Christian ones. In *Abencerraje*, the main Muslim character develops a strong friendship with a Christian knight, and in the end, is reunited with his Muslim love, Jarifa. In the case of *Ozmin and Daraja*, captured by Fernando and Isabel, the lovers mask their relationship until such time as they convert to Christianity and marry. So, in one case, the good Muslims remain good Muslims, while in the other, the good Muslims convert to Christianity. The third work is the extremely popular historical romance *Guerras civiles de Granada* by Ginés Pérez de Hita (1595), which recounts in idealized fashion the elegance and courtliness of the Granadan court before the conquest of Granada by Fernando and Isabel in 1492.

Critics have debated the nature and inspiration of Spanish maurophilia, but further analysis of the place of *Flores y Blancaflor* as precursor to, and then participant within, the literary tradition, is beyond the scope of this article, but it will form part of the new book project. Christian Spain had tremendous fear of the Ottoman Turks, with good reason, and they feared that the *moriscos* were simply Turks in training, waiting for their opportunity to turn on Spain and ally themselves with the vast Ottoman Empire. These maurophile works mask fear of a powerful other, particularly if in league with the Ottoman Turks, but they textually disempower the Muslim characters by effacing difference, rendering them non-threatening and able to be controlled, praising them insofar as the characters either mirror Christian values or actually convert to Christianity. In this light, Flores is the ideal Muslim, with a ready inclination to Christianity, and the zeal to convert all of his subjects, demonstrating, for probably both the Iberian and New World contexts, the ideals of conversion and easy religious assimilation of converted peoples<sup>16</sup>.

Another approach to understand Iberian reception of *Flores y Blancaflor* is through the porous cloth of history and fiction: 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spain was flooded both with fictionalized history and with invented fictions

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16 This is a topic that requires a more nuanced approach than I have given it above, since it is complex. For example, Barbara Fuchs' excellent study, *Exotic Nation: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, demonstrates in fine detail the complicated relationship between Christians and *moriscos*, and the dominant Christian society's fascination with Moorish fashion and customs at a time of historical conflict. My suggestion is to see how the discussion might change, if we include *Flores y Blancaflor* in the mix.

touted as history, known as false chronicles, “*falsos cronicones*”, usually purporting to be real accounts of early Iberian history<sup>17</sup>. I believe that some of the Iberian public read *Flores y Blancaflor* as a real part of the Peninsula’s distant past. As we know, another work, the highly fictionalized story of the historical loss of the Peninsula by King Rodrigo in the eighth century was read as true history, even in its most implausible claims<sup>18</sup>. For the Iberian reading public, *Flores y Blancaflor* may have reflected issues of their current situation with the *moriscos*, but, at the same time, a nostalgic view of the history of one brief shining moment after the fall of Spain in 711 to the Muslim invaders, when the Muslim Prince Flores restored the conquered Peninsula to Christianity, before it fell again. Let us continue the discussion of fiction and history, but in the context of the transatlantic book trade and possible reception of *Flores y Blancaflor* in the Spanish New World.

Spain was, in the sixteenth century, deeply engaged in the ongoing conquest and colonization of the New World, with the official proclamations that this was an altruistic venture to save souls. Pope Alexander VI had named Fernando and Isabel “the Catholic Monarchs” for their devotion to the faith and their zeal to rid Spain of the Jews through expulsion and untrue converts through the mechanism of the Inquisition<sup>19</sup>. This zeal intensified in sixteenth-century Spain, first under King Charles I of Spain, more commonly known as Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, in the first half of the century, then by his son Philip II, who ruled from 1556 until his death in 1598. The Peninsula itself suffered bankruptcies, there was widespread poverty, and discontent by people of all social classes. Gold and silver from the New World, the unacknowledged *desideratum* of colonization, when not stolen by English pirates, served to finance an economy of war. Many people of standing complained, as we can see from correspondence emanating from the New

17 The classic study of the *falsos cronicones* remains José Godoy Alcántara, *Historia crítica de los falsos cronicones*, Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 1868. Two modern, excellent studies on the topic are Julio Caro Baroja, *Las falsificaciones de la historia (en relación con la de España)*, Barcelona, Seix Barral, 1991, and Katrina B. Olds, *Forging the Past: Invented Histories in Counter-Reformation Spain*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2015.

18 As I argue throughout *The Eve of Spain*, the fact of competing and contradictory versions of the Fall of Spain in 711 and its aftermath did nothing to diminish the prevailing view of accurate national history.

19 See Kamen, *Spain*, p. 37.

World, about the lack of effective governmental control and authority in the New World, and about Philip II's increasing reclusiveness in the later decades of the sixteenth century, while maintaining at the same time, an economy of war with ongoing conflicts with England, France, and North Africa.

*Flores y Blancaflor* was one of the most popular textual travelers of the transatlantic book trade, according to the surviving ship registers and other evidence. In his study, *Books of the Brave*, Irving A. Leonard utilizes a variety of primary documents in order to begin to assess the transatlantic book trade from Spain, and the printing presses' earliest founding in New Spain (Mexico) and the Viceroyalty of Peru in the sixteenth century<sup>20</sup>. One can discover a world of transactions and of reading preferences (and prohibitions against certain kinds of books) in book shipments to the New World, bills of sale, wills and testaments, inventories of local colonial libraries or private collections, the National Archive of Peru, holdings in Mexico City, and in archives in Seville, Spain. In his list of romances of different subgenres, in order of popularity with colonial readers, at the top of the list is *Flores y Blancaflor*<sup>21</sup>. In Mexico City itself, the son of Juan Cromberger of the Cromberger family in Seville, bought the press from its founder in 1539. At Cromberger's death the next year in 1540, the inventory of his stock showed 194 copies of *Flores y Blancaflor* as the leading romance<sup>22</sup>. As Leonard explains, many of the books on the inventory are in numbers under 10 or even five. This is not an indication of stalled sales for *Flores y Blancaflor*, but rather an indication that the publisher was encouraged to keep a large available stock of the surefire bestsellers. In another case, in San Juan de Ulúa, an island near Veracruz, Mexico, two Franciscans in 1605 interrogated the arriving passengers and crew from a ship. One Alonso de Dassa brought with him 5 books: *Don Quixote Part I*, which had been

20 I. A. Leonard, *Books of the Brave: Being an Account of Books and of Men in the Spanish Conquest and Settlement*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1949; see *Books of the Brave* in the University of California ebook series, which can be accessed through UC Press E-books Collection, 1982-2004. For a more recent study, see M. Marini, "La espada, la cruz, el libro: los Junta y el comercio de libros en Nueva España (ss. XVI-XVII)", [http://www.uba.ar/aihbuenaosaires2013/actas/seccion5/La%20espada,%20la%20cruz,%20el%20libro\\_MARINI,%20Massimo/La%20espada,%20la%20cruz,%20el%20libro\\_MARINI,%20Massimo.pdf](http://www.uba.ar/aihbuenaosaires2013/actas/seccion5/La%20espada,%20la%20cruz,%20el%20libro_MARINI,%20Massimo/La%20espada,%20la%20cruz,%20el%20libro_MARINI,%20Massimo.pdf) (consulté 15/01/2019).

21 Leonard, *Books of the Brave*, p. 109.

22 Leonard, *Books of the Brave*, p. 194.

published earlier that same year of 1605, *Flores y Blancaflor* (perhaps the 1604 edition?), and three devotional books. Although there were other books left behind on the ship, which were part of the prohibited books of fiction, no one claimed ownership of them<sup>23</sup>.

Before continuing the discussion of the book trade, I will briefly summarize the plot of another frequent transatlantic traveler, Pedro de Corral's fifteenth-century, highly fictionalized "history" of the fall of Spain to the North African Berbers in 711, *Crónica del Rey don Rodrigo*, first printed in 1499 and then reprinted several times in the sixteenth century<sup>24</sup>.

In eighth century Spain, Rodrigo ruled the Iberian Visigothic kingdom in the capital of Toledo. His most trusted military adviser, Count Julian, who was governor of Ceuta in the southernmost part of the Peninsula, sent his daughter La Cava to the court. The king pleaded with La Cava to have sex with him, she refused, and he raped her. Out of hubris, the king had also violated a prohibition against opening an edifice called the House of Hercules. Rodrigo entered the building, opened a chest, and saw a cloth with figures of men with beards and turbans, and the prophecy that whoever opened the chest would be the cause of the fall of Spain. Upon learning of his daughter's rape, Count Julian calls upon the Berbers of North Africa to help avenge this dishonor, thus sparking the invasion across the Strait of Gibraltar and the defeat of Rodrigo's forces in July of 711. Spain fell to the Muslims, and emirs, a caliph, and Muslim kings ruled over much of the peninsula for centuries. La Cava had been voiceless and a clear victim in all of the earlier chronicles, but is given a voice by Pedro de Corral. She uses it to denounce herself as the cause of the fall of Spain, while the first-person narrator labels her *fija de Satanas*, "daughter of Satan".

Leonard makes the point that colonial readers showed an uncritical acceptance of fictional works, often reading them as history:

Colonial readers displayed a mild partiality for what they believed was history. The hazy line between fact and fancy, which invested the "lying histories" of Amadis and his kind with so much authority, probably accounts for the fairly

23 Leonard, *Books of the Brave*, p. 271.

24 For a modern edition of Corral's work, see *Crónica del Rey don Rodrigo (Crónica sarraquina)*, ed. J. Fogelquist, vols. 1-2, Madrid, Castalia, 2001. I draw the summary of the story from this edition of the work.

steady demand, particularly during the last decades, for works purporting to be factual accounts. The more popular titles on contemporary book lists were often little more than historical novels. Most of them borrowed the well-worn technique of the romances of chivalry by alleging translation or adaptation from authentic accounts. Various early chronicles in printed form recur in modest numbers, of which the most common is, perhaps, the previously noted *Chronicle of King Don Roderick, with the destruction of Spain*, by Pedro del Corral<sup>25</sup>.

Since “historia” could mean both history and story, if the works seemed based on historical material, especially of a Spanish past, the tendency was to read them as having some basis in fact, however much some fantastic or fanciful material might be included. The story of Rodrigo goes a step further, by always using the title of chronicle, *Crónica del Rey don Rodrigo*. After the first printing in 1499, all sixteenth-century printings add a subtitle: *con la destruyçion de España y como los moros la ganaron* [“with the destruction of Spain and how the Moors won it”, translation mine]. More relevant than Leonard’s observation on history and fiction is the work of Bruce Wardropper in 1965, who studied the genre now called “*falsos cronicones*”, rewritings of history, usually Spanish history, which knowingly invented material, and sometimes unknowingly incorporated material from other sources, that was untrue<sup>26</sup>. Wardropper signals the importance of Pedro de Corral in this literary exercise:

[S]ince the fifteenth century historians had been busily engaged in the deliberate falsification of history. Pedro de Corral, in the *Crónica sarracina*, which he wrote about 1430, was so inventive that his contemporary Fernán Pérez de Guzmán said that rather than a chronicle “*más probablemente trufa o mentira paladina*” [“more likely a fib or an outright lie”, translation mine]. Modern critics, more charitably but less accurately, call the work the first Spanish historical novel. The important fact is that it pretended to be history and was accepted as such by later historians. The work was printed in 1499 and ran through a large number of editions down to Cervantes’ day. Pedro de Corral started a vogue for what has been called “*la historia novelesca y fantaseada*” [“novelesque and fantasized history”, translation mine]<sup>27</sup>.

25 Leonard, *Books of the Brave*, p. 117.

26 B. W. Wardropper, “Story or History?,” *Modern Philology*, 63, No. 1, 1965, p. 1-11.

27 Wardropper, “*Don Quixote*”, p. 7. When Corral’s manuscript circulated in the second half of the fifteenth century, before it was first printed with the title of *Crónica*, it was known as *Crónica sarracina*.

Thus, both *Crónica del rey don Rodrigo* and *Flores y Blancaflor* engage in the practice of rewriting Spanish history. *Rodrigo* contains much fiction, including the two episodes that are most memorable and iconic, the penetration of the House of Hercules and the rape of – or even existence of – Julian’s daughter La Cava. In spite of the most valiant efforts on the part of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish critics and historians who defended, as if their lives depended on it, that this story and these episodes were historical and Christian and most certainly not from Islamic sources, more objective scholars have shown through research of Arabic texts that both these episodes come from Arab historians, the earliest writing in Egypt, then transmitted to al-Andalus, when they began to be incorporated into Christian chronicles that had not, until the twelfth century, included them<sup>28</sup>.

The story of Flores and Blancaflor imaginarily reverses the fall of Spain in 711. Moreover, “when we study extant chronicles from the eleventh through the sixteenth centuries, we see that they portray a revisionist history that recasts both early and late Medieval Spain as subject to a wave of spiritual falls and redemptions during the continuing conflict with the followers of Islam”<sup>29</sup>. To return briefly to the subtitle of *Crónica del Rey don Rodrigo con la destruyçion de España y como los moros la ganaron* and the brief plot summary at the beginning of *Flores y Blancaflor*, both works mention the Muslim/Christian conflict. Ultimately, however, Rodrigo’s story can only be the loss of Spain and the Muslims’ gain, while the additional material in the plot summary of *Flores y Blancaflor* highlights conversion and recovery of Spain for Christianity. Although *Crónica del Rey don Rodrigo*’s subtitle does not mention a woman, this is the first version of the legend in which the rape victim speaks in order to denounce herself, and is clearly blamed by others in the work as a womanly instrument of the devil. Rodrigo loses Spain because of a woman, but *Flores y Blancaflor* posits that Spain is recovered from the Muslims by the love of a Christian woman for a Muslim who is willing, even eager, to convert to Christianity. Indeed, both stories depend on a fall, Rodrigo through the rape of La Cava and the penetration of the House of Hercules, followed by the very real loss of his kingdom; and Blancaflor through the *felix culpa* of her parents’ decision to go on

28 Grieve, *Eve of Spain*, p. 40-45.

29 Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor*, p. 187-188.



pilgrimage. Though killed (Micer Persio) and enslaved (Topacia and Blancaflor), a fall from grace for these noble people, it is this tragedy, along with Blancaflor's further fall in being sold and sent to a harem, which allows Flores and ultimately Spain, to be returned to Christianity.

I am suggesting, therefore, that both in Spain and the New World, these two books may have been read as companion pieces, of a fall of Christian Spain and a time of conversion and restoration of Christianity. We have already seen how popular *Flores y Blancaflor* was in the New World. In addition to citing *Crónica del rey don Rodrigo* as another example of the most popular works in the New World, Leonard mentions that it was one of the earliest to find its way there. Its first 16<sup>th</sup>-century printing in 1511 arrives in the New World soon after. In another instance, he points to a ship log in 1549, now found in the National Archive in Lima, Peru, which specifically names *Crónica del rey don Rodrigo* as part of a collection of 79 books received in the capital, while it goes on to list only vague terms, such as "9 novels of chivalry". As a sign of how important the transatlantic book trade was, Leonard points out that this trade occurs only 15 years after the founding of Lima<sup>30</sup>.

Considering, again, *Flores y Blancaflor*, although Leonard joins other critics in dismissing the story as a sentimental trifle, I think it makes sense to consider a more significant appeal than the love story alone. I would argue that *Flores y Blancaflor*'s popularity in the New World might share some of the same reasons for its Iberian popularity, but also have some differences. First of all, the work could serve as inspiration to evangelize and convert the indigenous peoples. Second, the noble Flores and his comportment (he never sneaks around disguised as a merchant, he is always a prince and knight) could serve as a model of conduct in courtliness and bravery for the conquistadors. Third, as in Spain, the work again speaks to the idea of an open receptivity to Christianity on the part of non-Christians, and the potential for a seamless transition from indigenous religions to Christianity, if not complete assimilation to Spanish culture. Moreover, we know the Colonial public drew a comparison between the conquest of the indigenous peoples and the conquest of the "Moors"<sup>31</sup>. Indeed, to this day Latin American towns

30 Leonard, *Books of the Brave*, p. 102.

31 As Rolena Adorno explains in the introduction to the ebook of *Books of the Brave*: "A historical topic of much more apparent interest in the Indies was the mission of 'combatting



celebrate Festivals of Moors and Christians, re-enacting the victories of Christians over the Muslim foe<sup>32</sup>.

David Quint's study of the differences between what he calls epic and romance boats can serve us here: "The romance boat often travels to a series of islands and discrete episodes... In epic narrative, which moves towards a predetermined end, the magic ship signals a digression from a central plot line, but the boat of romance, in its purest form, has no other destination than the adventure at hand"<sup>33</sup>. Quint makes the point, further, that Tasso's boat in *Gerusalemme liberata* is not a romance boat, but the renaissance boat of discovery "that prefigures future voyages of discovery that carry out God's plot for history"<sup>34</sup>. In the case of *Flores y Blancaflor*, it is only after the shipwreck that Flores gives the matter of conversion deep thought. In spite of much religious material throughout,

the boat is the single feature that crystallizes the intentions of the work to move away from romance to another genre... The shipwrecked boat... symbol of romance adventure, is instead a part of God's plan for the Christianization of [Muslim] Spain. As a symbol in a kind of founding legend, therefore, it is an epic, rather than romance boat... The author of the Spanish prose romance clearly intended to integrate this love story into the history of the Christianization of Spain. Thus, the significance of the ship (and shipwreck) that occurs in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century prose romance, [which differs so markedly from the clearly romance boat of Boccaccio's *Filocolo*] may indeed bear more than a passing resemblance to Tasso's ship, and may form part of a much larger historico-literary context in which [early modern] Spain was engaged: the bringing of the Word to the New World, the Christianization of a new set of pagans<sup>35</sup>.

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infidels,' as Francisco López de Gómara put it, a mission modeled on and memorialized by Spain's internal struggle against the Muslims. Significant here are Leonard's observations about the popularity in Spanish America of historical and fictional works concerning the defeat of the Moors and Moriscos. The church often taught native Americans the lesson of the triumph of Christianity over rival traditions by having them dramatize the Spanish defeat of the Muslims, a performance tradition that persists in Latin America still today. Clearly, the Reconquest of Spain was considered a holy war, and for ideological reasons alone, works that exploited its themes would have been promoted and requested", p. xxiv.

32 See, for example, M. Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2000.

33 D. Quint, "The Boat of Romance and Renaissance Epic", *Romance: Generic Transformations from Chretien de Troyes to Cervantes*, ed. K. Brownlee and M. S. Brownlee, Hanover, University Press of New England, 1985, p. 179.

34 Quint, "The Boat of Romance", p. 181.

35 Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor*, p. 163-164.

In terms of differences between Iberian and Colonial Latin American reception, I think the case of the New World provides a view of intermarriage that differs from that of Spain, but this discussion is beyond the scope of the present article. Future research for the book project will include a deeper study of the transatlantic book trade, including the popularity of the works in the maurophile literary canon in Colonial Latin America, the translation of the Spanish prose romance *Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor* into French, with multiple reprintings in sixteenth-century France, and the popularity of translations of Boccaccio's *Filocolo*, or at least part of it, in sixteenth-century Spain, France, and England.

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