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The Spanish Civil War stimulated the involvement of a remarkable number of future Nobel Prize winners in literature—François Mauriac, Albert Camus, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, Claude Simon, and Ernest Hemingway—who were all fervently pro-Republican. Only the Spaniard Camilo José Cela was pro-Nationalist. The war continues to fascinate a wide variety of writers and scholars. In *Mosaic Fictions*, Emily Robins Sharpe approaches the Spanish conflict from the perspective of a specialist in English-language fiction, particularly North American poetry and prose. She is particularly interested in contemporary Canadian, especially Jewish Canadian, literary involvement with the Spanish conflict, and she considers its output from the perspectives of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Her critical apparatus is often extremely insightful, even if it is not always based on accurate historical knowledge.

Sharpe points out that “the Spanish Civil War would be the first war in which Canadians participated independently of their colonial obligations to Britain,” and she sees the Spanish conflict as part of the transition from a generic British to a more multicultural and cosmopolitan Canadian identity (p. 5). Commitment to fighting fascism in Spain implied “reframing citizenship in North America to include immigrants, Jews, and other marginalized groups” (p. 24). “To create an inclusive, ethically constructed nationalism ... remains an important project” (p. 28). Her chapter titles, “Love,” “Sympathy,” “Community,” and “Inclusion,” make the volume’s ethical commitment clear.

The authors whom she examines in some way represent the path forward to a more caring and diverse nation. Sharpe views Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), one of the great best sellers of the period, as representative of Spanish Civil War romance novels. “The white, gentile North American male protagonist travels to Spain as a volunteer soldier and enters into a relationship with a woman from another country. The growing romance prevents him from fully committing to his leftist politics, but rather than reject her, he escapes the relationship through a *deus ex machina*.... Freed of his romantic obligations, the male protagonist re-enters the war with renewed commitment to self-sacrifice on behalf of the Republic” (p. 31). For Jewish North American authors, the Spanish conflict offered them the opportunity to showcase brave, masculine Jews who conformed to normative heterosexuality and were
therefore worthy to be included in the national community.

These novels’ rather conventional and earnest narratives are contrasted with Mordecai Richler’s “satirical, critical writing [which] relentlessly questions received ideas regarding what makes a country, a Jew, or a Canadian” (p. 46). His *Joshua Then and Now* (1980) mocks Jews’ marginalized status and Canadian antisemitism during the 1930s and 1940s by including a rendition of “Safe in the Arms of Jesus” sung in Yiddish at the Memorial Society of William Lyon Mackenzie King. King, notorious for his friendship with Adolf Hitler and his refusal to admit all but a handful of Jewish refugees, was the longest-serving prime minister in Canadian history. Richler also satirizes Hemingway’s obsession with manliness. One of the characters in *Joshua Then and Now* reflects: “I wanted to fight on the Ebro. Come back with a wound, maybe. Nothing serious. I mean, not like Jake Barnes. But enough so that people would point me out even now. Sure he’s in knitwear, but you know that limp, he got it in Spain. Do you understand?” (p. 49). Joshua is convinced that his Spanish-French mistress is attracted to his semitic features: “You had such big ears. And your nose! My God!” She is disappointed when she discovers that his large facial features were not indicative of other, more private, physical characteristics. Richler creates a Jewish comic version of Robert Jordan’s love affair in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, “[Joshua] never necked with a girl without wondering, if never daring to ask, O Riva Mandelbaum, O Hanna Steinberg, *But did thee feel the earth move?* ‘Yes. As I died. Put thy arm around me, please.’ *No. I have thy hand. Thy hand is enough’” (p. 50). Sharpe astutely perceives that Richler criticizes “previous novels’ unquestioning belief in the Spanish cause,” and “Joshua’s longing to be a genuine hero of the International Brigades throws into sharp relief the society that produces such an ideal” (pp. 53, 51).

In contrast to male authors’ focus on heterosexual relationships, female writers—Lillian Hellman, Martha Gellhorn, African American nurse Salaria Kea, and others—focused instead on female friendships in women-led communities. The first two, white and Jewish, had large audiences, but their writings reminded readers of women’s vulnerability in the 1930s. Kea’s public exposure was more limited and, in Sharpe’s account, much more determined by discrimination and victimization. Female authors sought “alternative modes of community formation as well as broader potential roles for women” (p. 116). They did not dispense with the concept of the nation but, like the male authors discussed, attempted to make it more inclusive.

The special difficulties of women in the macho environment of war make the author sympathetic to Dolores Ibárruri, better known as Pasionaria. Sharpe’s uncritical take on this female Communist leader omits the fact that she was a favorite of Joseph Stalin. Like Pasionaria, the women mentioned were supposed defenders of “the Spanish people” (pp. 106, 111). This kind of language mirrors that of the Nationalists who repeatedly sloganized that their enemies were the “anti-Spain.” Sharpe does not incorporate important literature questioning the sincerity of the internationalism of the International Brigades who were seen by some dissident brigadiers as mere tools of Stalin’s foreign and domestic policies.[1]

The final chapter, “Inclusion,” concentrates on Federico García Lorca, who embodied “the intersections of Jewishness, queerness, cosmopolitanism, nationality, and modernity.” The Granada poet inspired Leonard Cohen, Philip Glass, and others who are less famous. Lorca’s life and death stimulated some fellow poets to “queer the tropes of war literature” (p. 150). Sharpe finds that “Lorca was fascinated by the possibility that he had Jewish *converso* ancestry” and thus was a “potential member of the tribe” (pp. 120, 129). However, the claim to have some Jewish blood is
not uncommon in Spain and, in my own experience, sometimes serves as veil for antisemitic attitudes. Rejection of Jews is not only a result of “othering” but can also be a variety of self-hatred. Of course, Lorca’s alleged identification with Jews was much less important than the gay martyr that he has become in the last several generations. Sharpe tries to bridge the differences by “collapsing distinctions between homophobia and antisemitism” (p. 128). Yet homophobia, racism, and misogyny are hatreds of persons for what they are. Jews though are hated for what they supposedly have—power, money, privileges, and honors.[2] Furthermore, since the 1960s a new type of antisemitism has developed, based on resentment of the attention given to the Holocaust. What the Europeans call “competitive victimization” has led to a situation where groups who intensely resent Jews want their victimhood to be recognized as equal or surpassing the Shoah.[3]

Francisco Franco’s attitude toward Jews and Muslims was more opportunistic and variable than Sharpe allows. She asserts that “Franco was willing to self-servingly praise Spain’s Muslim heritage, but he did not acknowledge Spain’s third major religion” (p. 17). Certainly antisemitism permeated the Nationalist zone and Judaism was—along with Masonry—considered a principal foe of the insurgents and their church, but at the beginning of the pronunciamiento, when Franco arrived in North Africa, he called for the unity of the three faiths and received the support of Jewish businessmen under Nationalist control.[4]

It is uncertain that Sharpe’s postcolonial position promotes an understanding of Spain’s relationship to its North African colony. Her statement that “Franco promised independence in exchange for Moroccan mercenary support” is likely baseless. It certainly is without any source reference. The assertion that “the Spanish Republic’s refusal to decolonize sustained the oppressive conditions that allowed Franco to galvanize Moroccan support” is also questionable (p. 60). She follows much of the historiography that condemns the failure of the republic to adopt enlightened policies and offer Morocco its independence. Thus, it is assumed, a commitment to grant independence would have induced the moros to support the Loyalists. Yet even if the republic had backed Moroccan nationalists, they were too weak and divided to impede Spanish Nationalist recruitment of soldiers. In fact, Moroccan nationalists, including their leader Abdeljalak Torres, cooperated closely with the Nationalists in many areas. The Fityanes, the youth group of Torres’s Partido Reformista Nacional, adopted fascist practices. Its members paraded in Tetuán wearing green shirts, giving the Roman salute, and shouting “Allah Akbar!” Like other Arab nationalists, Moroccan nationalists opposed British and French imperialism, admired the Nazis, and despised Jews.

Rank-and-file Moroccan troops and their Spanish officers shared a common and occasionally murderous antisemitism.[5] The moros were enthusiastic to go to Spain since they had “not been able to fight Jews for some time.” “The Moors have a powerful African loathing for the reds. They call them bad Spaniards and nothing more than Jews, the greatest insult that a Moor can utter.” Like their Spanish Nationalist officers, they deliberately confused Jews with “reds.” According to a Jesuit chaplain in the Legion, the Moors were happy to fight a holy war against atheists and “international Jewish scheming.” Their local military and spiritual leaders continually harped on the latter “scheming” theme. The constant propaganda seems to have convinced many rank-and-file Moroccan soldiers to identify Judaism with atheism and communism. In a demonstration in Larache, Arabs celebrated the Nationalist conquest of Málaga in February 1937 by chanting “death to the Jews.” In August 1937, twenty-three Jews—the majority women and children—were injured during a pogrom by Moorish soldiers in El Ksar.[6] Nationalist authorities responded by fining the Jewish community.
The central problem of Sharpe’s treatment of Moroccan fighters is that she regards them as a victimized or, in her language, “marginalized” group, similar to African Americans, Jews, women, etc. Thus, she claims erroneously that Franco “mistreat[ed]” his Moroccan soldiers (p. 61). Regulares—Africans in Nationalist ranks who were not always Moroccan—became well-paid elite troops, whose salary jumped from three pesetas at the start of the war to five pesetas in 1937 and more in 1938. Almost all Moroccan soldiers interviewed by historians fondly remembered the abundance of food, which contrasted with the reigning hunger both in Morocco and in large parts of the republican zone. Republican authorities tried to counter-bribe prominent Moroccans who were more than willing to take the kickbacks but reluctant to switch from their comfortable relationship with the camp they correctly projected to win.

Rather than “mistreat” their African fighters, the Spanish Nationalists privileged them. During rest and recreation, Moroccans could purchase pleasure from North African professionals. In a macho culture where maricón and marica were among the worst insults, Franco’s officers were told to tolerate the practice of sodomy among Moroccans. In another example of multiculturalism avant la lettre, the Nationalist Seville radio broadcasted an Arab-language program of news and music. Franco did whatever possible to prevent offense to Islamic religious sensibilities throughout the conflict and intervened to prohibit all attempts by priests, nuns, and charity women to proselytize in Christian and Muslim facilities. His order banning conversions was posted in large print inside the hospitals of the Nationalist zone. Supplying beverages, food, entertainment, and looting possibilities may have been more important to the continued Moorish participation on the Nationalist side than—as Sharpe and others insist—promising Morocco independence. Sharpe cites approvingly Langston Hughes’s alignment of Moroccan enlistment with the transatlantic slave trade but the differences far outweigh the similarities. Neither Hughes nor Sharpe understands “what drew Moroccan soldiers to [Spain’s] battlefields” (p. 81).

Other errors also display an unfamiliarity with recent historiographical debates. New evidence of intimidation and manipulation of results by Popular Front militants after the elections of February 16, 1936, challenges Sharpe’s assumption that the Popular Front was a “democratically elected leftist government” (pp. 5, 151).[7] Even if, as a number of serious historians have argued, the postelection violence and vote rigging would not have significantly altered the Popular Front majority, the Second Spanish Republic was hardly a conventional Western parliamentary democracy during much of its history, and its development during the civil war resembled in some significant ways the “popular democracies” that would emerge in Eastern Europe after World War II.

To summarize, I found the volume under review stimulating and creative as literary criticism. Unfortunately, a lack of historical reflection diminishes its valuable contribution to North American and Canadian cultural studies.

Notes
[5]. Except where otherwise noted, the following is based on my The Victorious Counterrevolution: The Nationalist Effort in the Spanish Civil


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