

North American desire for the Spanish Other: Three film versions of Blasco Ibáñez's *Blood and Sand*

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Abstract:

There are three film versions of Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's taurine novel *Sangre y arena* (1908). All are entitled *Blood and Sand* and feature male and female actors who epitomise the erotic possibilities of the North American fascination with Spanish stereotypes: Rudolph Valentino in 1922, Tyrone Power and Rita Hayworth in 1941, and Sharon Stone in 1989. By comparing the three film versions of *Blood and Sand* to *Sangre y arena*, it becomes clear that the North American appropriation of Spanish stereotypes displaces Blasco Ibáñez's theme of class conflict onto a safely diffused locus of erotic desire. Included are discussions of stereotypes in North American literary and film culture, Hollywood and North American audiences, and the *españolada* tradition compared to other North American genres.

Key words: Blasco Ibáñez; *Blood and Sand*; *Sangre y arena*; Bullfighting; Culture Criticism; *Españolada*; Spanish Stereotypes.

Although styles in popular culture come and go, North American audiences have never lost their desire for artistic representations of the exotic Spanish Other. «Desire» in this sense, is composed of both an erotic longing projected into a safe, fantasy world, and a need for an exotic stereotype against which to read one's own identity. The romantic hero with flashing eyes and a taste for danger, whether manifested as a Conquistador, gypsy, or «Latin Lover», always seems to return to the popular imagination. For instance, as these lines are being written (summer, 1998) one of the top films showing in North America is *The Mask of Zorro*, starring Antonio Banderas, a Spanish actor who has developed a cross-over career in Hollywood by capitalising on the latent desire of North American audiences for a new embodiment of this familiar stereotype. While variations on the Spanish Other have populated stage, screen, and popular literature in many forms, this paper will examine one particular manifestation: the bullfighter protagonist in three English-language film versions of *Blood and Sand* (1922, 1941, 1989) based upon Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's novel *Sangre y arena* (1908).

First, however, it will be necessary to consider two aspects of North American cultural history which frame the discussion: 1) North American

Stereotype formations and the artistic genres which capitalise on them, and 2) the marketing and distribution systems of Hollywood films which have, in effect, created an imaginary, monolithic, Caucasian audience, while ignoring, until very recently, the multiracial and multicultural population of the United States and international markets to which North American films are sold. The consequence of these two phenomena is to allow the film industry to posit a greatly simplified marketplace in which the perceptions of the audience are expected to conform to whatever vision of «America», «Spain», or «the West» is presented on screen. That audiences have quietly, even enthusiastically, conformed to Hollywood film «reality» over almost a century of filmmaking is testament to the effectiveness of the stereotypes which support literary and film genres in North American culture.

1. Stereotypes and Genres in North American Culture

The construction of exotic Otherness found in literature and the visual arts is based upon racial stereotyping in the larger culture. Those who appropriated, explored, and settled the North American continent needed stereotypes to confront the range of enemies they found in the New World. The difficulties of leaving the «civilisation» of Europe for the «wilderness» of North America required the ordering of alien people into predictable and comfortable formulae. Social psychologists have theorised that one of the principle purposes, for the individual, of racial stereotyping is to simplify and systematise perceptions, as well as to enforce one's own value system. Furthermore, at a collective level «stereotypes serve groups by offering culturally accepted explanations for events, by justifying group actions, and by providing a means to differentiate groups positively from other groups» (Tajfel quoted in Macrae, 1997:19). Thus the ability to describe Indians, Mexicans, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Africans, and slaves in cryptic, predictable terms, not only lent a perceived stability to the environment, but permitted the competition, exploitation, and genocide that enabled the Caucasian to become dominant in North America. For example, if the indigenous tribes who occupied the new land could be seen as savages who had no coherent signifiers for «civilisation» such as written language, cities, or trade, then the white settlers considered themselves justified in subjecting tribal people to their version of civilisation while taming the wilderness for their own religious freedom and commerce. Thus the formation of stereotypes was essential in order to dehumanise and distance the Others who were in the way of settlement, and to reinforce identity and values brought from Europe to America.

These racial stereotypes, upon which Otherness is constructed, have a universal quality since, as F. B. Pike points out in *The United States and Latin America: Myths and stereotypes of civilisation and nature* (1992), racial stereotypes are strikingly unoriginal. Such terms as «passionate», «volatile», «lazy», «irrational», «lascivious», and «sly» could describe every group of Others who have inhabited the North American continent: African slaves in the Antebel-

lum South, American Indians or Chinese railroad workers during the westward expansion, Mexicans during the Mexican-American War and Southwest settlement, immigrants from Ireland, Italy, or Eastern Europe during the late nineteenth century, or recent immigrants from Indonesia, Vietnam, Haiti, Cuba, or Puerto Rico. Pike demonstrates that these same terms were used not only by the Caucasian Other attempting to assert dominance in North America, but by virtually all colonials in relation to the colonised (1992: 45). The colonised people were equally adept at stereotyping their oppressors; «Yanquee», «gringo», «Ugly American», «pale face», and «blue-eyed devil» are slurs that carry with them an abundance of stereotypical characterisations which served to support the identities of people colonised or oppressed by the Caucasians.

These stereotypes are at the core of most popular culture genres in North America. Consider the cowboys and indians of American westerns, the «wiseguys» and *Mafiosi* of gangster films, the «loner» detectives of *film noir*, and even the aliens and out-worlders in science fiction franchises such as *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*: all present images of strangeness and isolation —some directly referenced to race or nation as in westerns and gangster films, others presenting imaginary races, nations, and species— over and against which North Americans can read their own identities and experience belonging in the larger community.¹

Furthermore, when these genres are examined more closely they reveal a doubleness which accounts for both positive and negative images within the construct of Otherness. Cowboys come in two varieties, for example: the white hats, who are the sheriffs and «good guys», and the black hats, who are the renegades and «bad guys» who have to be hunted down for the sake of civilisation. In more racial manifestations, cowboys are the civilising good guys (read as white,) while indians are the wild and lawless bad guys (read as non-white). But whether the doubleness exists naively in groups of good and bad, or with more complexity in a single figure, such as the «Godfather» who is at once corrupt and honourable, the exotic Other is energised by the tension between good and evil defined, in F.B. Pike's formulation, in terms of «civilisation» and «nature» the degree to which one's natural, wild instincts are conquered by civilising influences.

Some versions of Spanish stereotypes display the two poles of wildness and civilisation in terms of the aristocratic, pure blooded Spaniard and the lower class, mixed-blooded Mexican, an ambiguity most clearly represented in the folk hero El Zorro, who is an aristocratic Californian vowed to defend the oppressed Mexicans from his own class. But as we shall see in the discus-

1. Although the term «North American» shifts in its racial content with the population of the nation at any given time, the assumption by filmmakers that audiences either are or are attempting to become «American» throws a blanket of uniformity over the whole, as we shall see in the next section.

sion of *Blood and Sand*, where the setting is Spain rather than North America, the transformation of Ibáñez's complicated, naturalistic characters into exotic Others requires the imposition of racial stereotypes about Spaniards in which their ambiguity is based upon the tension between their virtues of passion, faith, and loyalty, and their concomitant failings of passion (read as lasciviousness), faith (read as superstition) and loyalty (read as obsession). *Blood and Sand* uses class conflict in place of the radicalised tension between the Mexican and the conquering Spaniard to establish the poles of civilisation versus unbridled nature, yet the stereotype retains racial assumptions about the fiery, tempestuous Spaniard over and against the rational, deliberate North American.

This stereotype of the exotic Spaniard can be seen to have crystallised for North Americans in Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra*, a series of tales and sketches of the Moors and Spaniards (1832) which features gypsies, brigands, inquisitors, and knights, all set against the Moorish backdrop of Granada and southern Spain. Irving's interest in Spain and the popularity of his sketches was not surprising when one considers that the territory of New Spain at the time of the American Revolution in 1776, was far greater than that of the original thirteen colonies, and that the Louisiana Purchase, negotiated between Napoleon Bonaparte and Thomas Jefferson in 1800, was the first time the Spanish presence on the continent was diminished—an event well within the memory of Irving and his readers. As the concept of «manifest destiny» developed, (the conviction that the United States should stretch «from sea to shining sea»), and as the Spanish presence was gradually replaced by the Mexican Republic, Spain became increasingly distant and exotic. While settlers had to engage in bloody war with the Mexicans and expel the last remnants of Spain—the Californian rancheros—from their lands, the Spaniard was restored in the North American imagination to the romance of distant Europe, retaining the nobility of the Conquistador on the one hand, and the wildness of the gypsy on the other. Since Spain was no longer a competitor for North American territory, the constructs of «Spaniard» and «Spain» became a safe field for the projection of American nostalgia and desire, just as the western became a predominant genre as the American west was settled, tamed and, in terms of its wildness, lost.

One of the most fruitful areas in which to see this development is in the history of film production. Fewer than ninety years elapsed between Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra* and the development of silent films; and while the literary production of stories, novels, and popular romance certainly shows the same trend in the use of Spanish stereotypes, film is a genre which reflects group fantasy more concretely than any other. Reading magazines and books permits the construction of stereotypes in the individual mind—those stereotypes which simplify the perceived world and maintain values—whereas attending a film is a public act in which groups agree together upon constructed stereotypes: those collective forms which offer culturally accepted explanations for social difference and provide a means to differentiate groups

positively from other groups. Movie stars are those upon whom the greatest number of film goers can project the most commonly held fantasies of Otherness and with whom filmmakers can create images that appeal to the widest audience. Thus it is significant when a single story, such as Blasco Ibáñez's *Sangre y arena* so captures the Otherness of a popular stereotype that it is filmed three times in the course of sixty years. Something about the torero, Juan Gallardo, enabled North American audiences to experience identity through the strange and familiar exoticism of a doomed bullfighter.

2. Hollywood and the North American Audience

The Hollywood dream machine has had little reason to treat North American audiences in terms of their diversity since the nature of stereotyping is to target the strangeness of the Other in order to endow perceivers with a sense of belonging. In a nation largely composed of assimilating immigrants eager to belong to the dominant culture, Hollywood has been free to imagine a homogeneous audience that would project its nostalgia and desire on a variety of exotic Others. Film-going audiences have always been far from homogeneous, in fact, but no attempt was made by Hollywood directors to reflect that variety as long as films were profitable. Indeed, as John Izod demonstrates in his study *Hollywood and the box office 1895-1986*, the accounting structure of film production and distribution in the United States has, until recently, virtually eliminated the possibility of making films that attempt to appeal to racially or culturally distinct groups.

Though Academia has come to think of film as art, the American Studio system has always been a business with the primary goal of making profits. At each stage of film development, from silent films to «talkies» to «blockbusters», the industry has offered an increasingly predictable product to the public. Technical innovations such as sound and colour were welcomed as methods to increase audience revenue, but content innovation was discouraged in favour of proven formulae, either in terms of genres such as westerns and historical romance, or in terms of movie stars, whose films were «vehicles» for their particular images. *Blood and Sand*, for instance, has been a star vehicle for Rudolph Valentino and Tyrone Power, but, in the absence of famous stars in its latest manifestation, it was a production based upon genre appeal (despite the presence of Sharon Stone, who was not yet a star player in 1989).

Hollywood's method of distributing films to theatres effectively controlled what audiences would see, since the production companies either owned or had exclusive contracts with the distribution companies that owned the theatres. This enabled Hollywood studios to engage in «block booking», a practice of selling theatre managers an entire year's worth of films, sight unseen. In order to acquire the star vehicles that their audiences demanded, the managers were forced to buy an array of genre films which were often sloppily produced. While this system guaranteed Hollywood a steady flow of income and theatre owners a steady flow of product for their screens, it sti-

fled any independent film making efforts which might have reflected the multicultural dimension of the North American audience. It also blocked the importation of foreign films since the major studios and distributors preferred to supply each other rather than to allow competition from outsiders. It is interesting to note here that Hollywood preferred its own construction of foreigners to the authentic foreign product. At the same time that European films were being excluded from the North American marketplace, the architects of the new «film palaces» were doing everything they could to conjure up the atmosphere of foreign locations, while script writers and directors were setting their projects in exotic places all over the world.

Although the monopoly between the studios and distributors was broken by the United States Supreme Court in 1949, the effect was for the studios to turn even more resolutely to the «sure thing» —the predictable formula that would produce profits. Even though *Blood and Sand* was produced for three very different North American audiences, those of 1922, 1941, and 1989, which were composed of groups in different stages of participation in the common cultural life, different levels of education and social acceptance, even different levels of English language acquisition, the filmmakers perceived their audiences monolithically, as consumers who would continue to buy a reliable product. As long as Rudolph Valentino was presented in an historical romance, for instance, he was a predictable source of profits and was presented again and again to audiences as the exotic Other, whether Arab, East Indian, Spanish, Italian, or French. Likewise Tyrone Power was a predictable profit centre for whom suitably dashing exotic roles were found (including El Zorro in *The Mark of Zorro*, 1946).

Before the advent of television and other forms of home entertainment, feature films were supplied to North American theatres at the rate of two per week, selling the «American Dream» to the film-going public in the form of exotic stereotypes. It is an interesting irony, as Neal Gabler points out in *An empire of their own: How the Jews invented Hollywood*, that the purveyors of the American movie dream were themselves exotic Others who formed part of a striving group of assimilating immigrants. Since the logic of alterity is that stereotypes enable a sense of belonging, this phenomenon makes perfect sense. By 1989 the grip of the studio monopolies had been broken for over twenty years so that independent and foreign films could find a market in North America either in independent «art houses» or in the direct-to-video market. The Spanish-produced English language version of *Blood and Sand*, though not popular in theatres, found a market in video stores where it has had an ongoing life (along with its two predecessors) as both profit centre and repository of images of the exotic Spanish Other.

3. B1asco-Ibáñez's *Sangre y arena* (1908)

It is perhaps ironic that the three film versions of *Blood and Sand*, all featuring actors who embody the erotic possibilities of North America's need for

the exotic Spanish stereotype, is based upon a novel that few North Americans read when it was published in 1908 and translated into English in 1911. However, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's taurine novel, *Sangre y arena* provides an apparently «classless» democratic society of North Americans with the fascinating tension of aristocratic class distinctions. Although the racial stereotypes that support film and literary genres in North America form a clear class hierarchy, the absence of a king, court, and aristocracy has always provoked a fascination and longing for class distinctions based upon blood as opposed to merit —the aristocracy rather than the meritocracy. *Sangre y arena*, with its conflict between a low-born protagonist rising from poverty on skill and courage and a high-born *femme fatal* who toys with his affections, provides the ideal setting for an North American morality tale told in mantillas and *trajes de luces*. Nevertheless, the class conflict which distinguishes Blasco Ibáñez's novel, and which shows the poor Gallardo humiliated and exploited by his aristocratic «better» is transposed in all the film versions of *Blood and Sand* onto a diffused locus of erotic desire. North American audiences automatically identify with the humble protagonist since they live in a culture that valorises the «ordinary man», and prefer to see him struggle with love rather than with an inherent inferiority in which they do not really believe. Furthermore, of the three films under consideration the most recent —the Spanish production of *Blood and Sand* filmed in 1989— shifts alterity from a Spanish Other in the North American landscape to a North American Other in the Spanish landscape. This shift in the exotic focus restores some of Blasco Ibáñez's major themes lost in the two earlier Hollywood films.

Sangre y Arena was Blasco Ibáñez's fourteenth novel and the third in his so-called «psychological» group. As a political renegade who was always interested in the dilemmas of the poor, Blasco Ibáñez gives *Sangre y arena* a powerful dimension of class tension as his protagonist, Juan Gallardo, escapes life as a cobbler's apprentice in Seville for the danger and potential of the bullring. Blasco Ibáñez offers a dramatic and detailed description of the pressures on Gallardo to support a large following as well as to control his own dread of the bullfight itself. Yet, as he gathers wealth, stature, and confidence, Gallardo seems to have conquered the limitations of both his low birth and his superstitious personality.

When he meets the daughter of a famous bull breeder, however, Gallardo begins an affair which undermines his social and emotional stability. Doña Sol is so far beyond Gallardo's social understanding that his increasing intimacy with her does not bring familiarity or support.² Doña Sol sexually exploits the torero and finally leaves him when his career begins to fail after he suffers a debilitating injury in the ring. Though Blasco Ibáñez does not attribute Gallardo's ultimate defeat either to his affair with Doña Sol or to

2. For instance, she will not permit Gallardo to address her in the familiar *tú* form, even when they are lovers.

moral weakness, Doña Sol becomes a metaphor for all the ways in which Gallardo misjudged and mismanaged his opportunities in life. One of Blasco Ibáñez's themes is the manner in which the poor are held down by tradition and class distinctions. The inability of an uneducated boy to manage either the pressures of his success or the pressures of his tradition-bound family is one of the main themes in *Sangre y Arena*. In this context, Gallardo's wife, Carmen, becomes a signifier of the traditional class limitations that he cannot escape.

Blasco Ibáñez was accused by his critics of writing an *españolada* —a local-colour folklore story designed to satisfy the foreign market. There are some grounds for this claim. According to the Spanish film historian Romà Gubern (Kinder 1993), the *españolada* incorporates such themes as Spanish religious superstition, feudal relationships between the landed gentry and the agrarian peasantry, as well as exotic elements expressed in flamenco, gypsy life, the cult of masculinity, and bullfighting. Blasco Ibáñez incorporates all of these themes in *Sangre y arena*, attributing a great deal of Gallardo's ongoing anxiety to his superstitious nature and his inability to move beyond the limiting traditions of his class.

Yet the novel can be read as deliberately employing these themes, not to exploit the *españolada* tradition —though the Spanish have been most adroit in appropriating and enlarging these themes as a national export— but to critique the human actualities that provide the subtext for *españolada* stereotypes. Blasco Ibáñez calls attention to the traditions of the past that stifle the developments of the present and dramatises the effects of these limitations in his characters. *Sangre y arena* is most properly read as a condemnation of bullfighting rather than an endorsement of the tradition. Susan F. Beegel, in her source study for Hemingway's «The Undefeated», characterises *Sangre y Arena* as «a profound indictment of the Spanish national spectacle» in which «Gallardo, the poor son of a shoemaker's widow manipulated by wealthy aficionados, is both the representative of his class and the victim of its lust for spectacles». (1994: 81)

This reading of *Sangre y arena* absolves Blasco Ibáñez from the accusation that he exploited his subject as an *españolada*, but Hollywood cannot be prevented from making use of it as though he had. No country in the world is more adept at selling a fantasy version of itself for foreign consumption than the United States. The «Ozzie and Harriet» or «Brady Buch» construction of North American family life, no less than the rigid conventions of the North American western in *Shane*, *High Noon*, or *The Virginian*, form as strong a tradition of self-parody, as anything seen in Spain. And just as the terms of the *españolada* were crystallised by an outsider, the Frenchman Bizet in his opera *Carmen*, so the most «American» of North American stereotypes have been epitomised by outsiders such as Sergio Leone in the «spaghetti westerns» that established Clint Eastwood as the quintessential cowboy loner, or Roman Polanski, in *Chinatown*, which defined the terms of Dashiell Hammet's hard-boiled detective better than the novelist himself. It is no surprise,

then, that Blasco Ibáñez's complex and nuanced novel has yielded to the stereotyping of the Hollywood dream machine.

4. Conquered by Eros: *Blood and Sand* (1922)

When *Sangre y arena* made its first transition to film in the 1922 version of *Blood and Sand*, the greater part of Blasco Ibáñez's class subtleties was lost. Nevertheless, this early silent film is most true to Blasco Ibáñez's original story, retaining the «Plumitas» subplot in which the life of a notorious outlaw is told as an instructive and emotional parallel to Gallardo's. Since the film was made for North American audiences and starred Rudolph Valentino, however, its primary focus was erotic. Valentino was the quintessential Latin Lover of his generation. His audiences paid to see him in all versions of exotic otherness, from an Arab sheikh to a polo-playing rajah. In *Blood and Sand*, both his physical energy in bullfighting scenes, and his sexual energy with Nita Naldi's Doña Sol, were designed to liberate North Americans from their common mores. In the magical world of an imaginary Spain ordinary rules of conduct do not apply, making possible a passion that was not permitted in the Puritan and Deistic traditions of the United States. It was also true that eroticism on screen was good business, since, as Izod observes, «films that showed sexual behaviour at variance with accepted mores had a good chance of attracting both those who would approve and others who condemned such conduct» (1988: 64).

Furthermore, class differentiation between Gallardo and Doña Sol is blurred since, to North American audiences, all Spaniards constitute the exotic Other regardless of their social class. Thus distinctions of class hierarchy are necessarily transferred to the only terms in which North Americans can interpret class issues from experience: wealth, and the material and sexual pleasures that wealth can provide. In the film, Doña Sol's superiority and sexual passion are enacted in the classic body language of the silent film star, in which the highly exposed white skin of the seductress is displayed to her victim, Gallardo, as she drapes herself over a richly appointed couch, at once an invitation and a warning. Since North American film makers had discovered early that extravagance and luxury reinforced consumerism by increasing the material desires of its audiences, directors seized every opportunity to display the trappings of wealth.

In a key scene from this version of *Blood and Sand*, Gallardo and his manager come to Doña Sol's lavish home for a visit. The visual device that frames the exoticism of Doña Sol through all three film versions is a setting reminiscent of the Alhambra, an interior patio with a fountain at the centre. This was a metaphor that was likely to have been materialised, in 1922, in the original movie palaces of the era. «Atmospheric architecture drew moviegoers ever more deeply into dreamland» by creating a setting in which «one took one's seat apparently in an amphitheatre, Persian court, or Spanish patio —this under an open sky that constantly changes, starlight succeeding fluffy clouds

or splendid moonlight, all created by intricately programmed effects lights» (Izod: 41). Thus Doña Sol's erotic Otherness is signalled to the audience before the film ever begins, a trope that is further emphasised when she is first seen reclining like an odalisque, listening to the lute-playing of a dark-skinned Arab youth wearing a turban. Valentino's Gallardo is immediately placed in the throes of a moral dilemma brought on by the conflict of his sexual attraction to Doña Sol and the fact that he is married and has left his wife, Carmen, at home.

While this conflict does not form an element in Blasco Ibáñez's novel, filmmakers of 1922 did not believe that North American audiences would accept the seduction of a married man without an internal moral struggle on the part of the protagonist. As Doña Sol rises from her couch to welcome the visitors, she excuses herself to change her clothes into something more revealing. Gallardo's manager understands that she wishes to be alone with the torero, and so he leaves, allowing Doña Sol to display her full vocabulary of seduction for the hapless Gallardo: she plays the harp, extending her bare, white arms and expressive hands; she sighs, palpitating her highly exposed bosom for his benefit; she droops her eyelids, gazing at Gallardo in the universal silent language of desire. Gallardo extends his own hand to touch her bare shoulder, but after an emotional struggle, enacted entirely in the contours of his face, his moral instincts prevail and he starts to leave. Doña Sol grinds her foot on his white boutonniere where it has fallen to the floor as she follows him out, replacing the flower in his button hole with a red rose.³ Gallardo tries to resist her embrace but, after an intense struggle in which he turns away from her, face muscles working dramatically, he succumbs at last and kisses Doña Sol passionately.

Gallardo's attempts to escape this seductress are destined to failure, as audiences in 1922 would have known from seeing his white boutonniere crushed under Doña Sol's shoe and replaced by that uncomplicated symbol of lust, the red rose. But like Blasco Ibáñez's bloodthirsty crowds in the *corrida*, which he called «the true and only... wild beast», the North American public in the 1920s had an ambivalence toward their own projected desires that reflected the transition from Victorian mores to the Jazz Age. Hollywood producers had discovered that the way to please everyone was to offer sex on screen as long as it was firmly punished. By extension, the movie star, as signifier in reality of the exotic stereotype on screen, was quickly punished if any scandal arose in his or her private life. Alexander Walker, in his biography of Rudolph Valentino, observes that «all kinds of morality groups, lay and religious, were focusing their indignant sights on the lives led by Hollywood stars» (1970: 90) because of a series of sex, drug, and manslaughter cases that had arisen during this era involving stars such as Fatty Arbuckle

3. Even in a black and white film the audience is certain, by the force of symbolism, that the flower must be red.

and Charlie Chaplin. The fear that audiences would be inspired to imitate passion rather than be exorcised of it was motivating leaders of society to impose moral standards on filmmakers. Thus in 1922, the passion between Gallardo and Doña Sol is necessarily punished by the torero's failure in the bullring. As he lay on his deathbed, however, he is redeemed by repentance and reconciliation with his wife, the pure and loyal Carmen, who, in this transformation of Blasco Ibáñez's story, no longer represents the «dead hand of tradition» class-based behaviour that holds Gallardo down.

5. A blameless boy: *Blood and Sand* (1941)

By 1941, when the second version of *Blood and Sand* was filmed, the self-imposed code of conduct governing Hollywood studio filmmaking was firmly in place. The movie company presidents had formed the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America in 1922, hiring Will Hays, a politically connected Republican, to be the director. His job was to fend off government imposed film censorship by developing a code of self-censorship for the industry. That code, known simply as «the Production Code», remained in effect for forty years, imposing a moral sameness on North American film that became a characteristic element in Hollywood productions. The Production Code imposed conservative standards of representation under headings such as «Sex», «Vulgarity», «Obscenity», «Profanity», «Dances», «Costume», and «Religion», declaring as a general principle that «No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it». Under the heading of «Sex», for instance, the Code required that «the sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing» (Leff, Simmons, 1990: 284). Thus the earlier version of *Blood and Sand* in which the details of illicit passion are depicted, however punished, was no longer a profitable or permissible approach.

The United States was on the very brink of entering the Second World War, so that the defence of democracy and «the American way of life» was at the forefront of public consciousness. The All-American Boy who embodied those values was about to be sent to war. The United States government had actually asked Hollywood producers to help the war effort by proposing six basic themes to be incorporated into films, including «The nature of the enemy —his ideology, objectives and methods» and «The Home Front— the duties of civilians» (Izod: 111). In this environment, it is not surprising that the high Hollywood production of Blasco Ibáñez's novel, with expensive production values and a glamorous cast of stars, should be transformed into a classic Horatio Alger tale of the poor boy who makes good with the support of a faithful wife. While a story about a Spanish bullfighter could hardly be expected to explain the ideology of the enemy or the duties of civilians, it could present the ideology of the American soldier and the virtues of those he leaves behind on the home front. In this reading of the novel, Carmen is not

betrayed by her husband, who is fundamentally good, but by the wicked seductress, Doña Sol, who tricks Gallardo into uncharacteristically bad behaviour. In this optimistic mid-century reading, Gallardo's unfaithfulness only offers the opportunity for Carmen to demonstrate her wifely devotion to Gallardo, who she perceives to be an overgrown boy not responsible for his faults. Her devotion suggests the devotion of wives on the home front who remained faithful to their soldier husbands while away at war.

In order to emphasise Gallardo's innocence, the 1941 film adds his boyhood to Blasco Ibáñez's plot, so that by the time the film's characters arrive at adulthood —Tyrone Power playing Gallardo and Linda Darnell playing Carmen— the film has emphasised Gallardo's endearing combination of bravery and simplicity. For the 1941 Gallardo, bullfighting becomes a type of highjinks, enabling him to wear handsome outfits which he displays with boyish arrogance to his admirers. In the bullfighting scenes, Gallardo is shown using dramatic flourishes, twirling around like a tango dancer as if there were no danger at all. What is completely missing in this film is the psychological tension Blasco Ibáñez built up in the novel through descriptions of the constant dread Gallardo feels prior to entering the bullring. The post-Depression audiences of 1941, facing the tension of impending war, sought relief from anxiety and a reassuring vision of ease and abundance after a decade of scarcity, and did not want to be reminded of the threatened dangers of the war by seeing the fear and bravery of a young man facing danger.

In the parallel scene to the 1922 film version, Gallardo has been invited to join Doña Sol (Rita Hayworth) at a dinner party. He makes a fool of himself at dinner, boasting naively about his skills and possessions in front of Doña Sol's high class friends, though his lack of social status is not the source of humiliation for him in this version that it is in both the novel and the 1922 film. The Spanish stereotype has shifted from authentic exoticism, in which the «natural» wild man is read against the forces of civilisation, to a comfortable exoticism, in which the «natural» boy, Gallardo, identifiably American in all his naïveté, is superior to the decadent powers of Europe, soon to become enemies in war.

The scene continues as Doña Sol begs off the evening's entertainment and manoeuvres Gallardo into staying alone with her in the Alhambra-style patio so that she can seduce him with music. The results are quite different for Rita Hayworth's Doña Sol than from those achieved by Nita Naldi in the 1922 version. Far from inciting a moral struggle in Gallardo's soul, this Doña Sol cannot hold Gallardo's attention. As she sings a suggestive love song to him, he falls asleep in his chair, lulled by the murmuring fountain in the courtyard and Doña Sol's soft voice. Thus the boyish Gallardo of 1941 transforms a love song into a lullaby, and a seductress into what the Production Code suggested was the only appropriate role for women: that of the nurturing mother. In spite of Gallardo's stupor, Rita Hayworth's Doña Sol is smiling as she leaves him in the patio, because she has decided to lock all the doors except the one to her bedroom, removing from Gallardo any range of

choice, and, by extension, any personal responsibility for what transpires. The transformation of Doña Sol into a caregiver rather than a seductress greatly diminishes the theme of danger in *Blood and Sand*. Neither the toro nor the woman pose a threat to Gallardo.

Although the causal relationship of unfaithfulness with death is not present in Blasco Ibáñez's novel, the Production Code required that «the sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home be upheld», and so Gallardo had to be punished for his unfaithfulness by being gored in the ring. But the Gallardo of 1941 dies with a smile on his face in the arms of his faithful Carmen, who has forgiven him for his infidelity as if it were a prank of childhood rather than a breach of faith. Unlike Valentino's more mature Gallardo, Tyrone Power's torero completely denies his own impending death, protesting that «the bull has not been born who can kill me». This denial is possible because the childlike Gallardo has no need for confession and redemption. As a naive figure, Gallardo is as innocent of intentionality for both his sexual behaviour and his violence as the bull who gored him. Carmen has the last word on this reading of his character, when she assures the priest that for her Gallardo is not dead: «To me... he'll always be just as I first saw him —just a little boy, with fire and valour!» Her comment perfectly integrates both the Spanish stereotype of passion, honour, and spontaneity, with the North American fantasy of perpetual boyhood— a Huckleberry Finn in the bull ring.

6. Woman as toro: *Blood and Sand* (1989)

In the forty-eight years that elapsed between Hollywood's 1941 American Dream version of *Blood and Sand* and the Spanish-produced 1989 version, tolerance for the enactment of sex and violence on screen underwent a revolution in both Spain and the United States. The Production Code was withdrawn in 1966 under economic pressures brought on by television, the restructuring of the studio system by international conglomerates, and the reluctance of large audiences to buy expensive movie tickets for anything less than a guaranteed hit. Studios had assumed the basic structure they have today, whereby many millions of dollars are gambled on the «blockbuster» hit, leaving low and mid-level budget films to independent producers (those who rely on others for distribution rather than having built-in exhibition networks). While Hollywood studios are unwilling to gamble their enormous budgets on anything truly innovative, or on untested stars, the simultaneous withdrawal of the Production Code with the opening of the market to foreign and independent films has created a much livelier and varied scene. For the first time in North American film history there is a market for scripts that reflect the multiracial and multicultural diversity of audiences. A lower budget film with a particular ethnic bent, such as *The Joy Luck Club*, does not have to make many millions to be profitable, and can therefore be supported by the segment of the popu-

lation to whom it appeals. Consequently, the most recent transformation of *Blood and Sand* was produced, directed and filmed in Spain, albeit in English for an English-language audience, since its producers knew it would not be shut out of the enormous North American market. Because of this, North Americans have been treated to a version of *Blood and Sand* with a distinctly Spanish subtext as opposed to the transference of North American forms of desire found in the previous two films.

The difference, both in time and cultural sensibility, is announced immediately in the 1989 version by the opening credits, which show documentary footage of bulls leaping the barriers of the bullring and charging into the crowds, followed by footage of picadors and their horses being overrun by bulls, and, finally, by repeated footage of toreros being tossed on the bulls' horns and gored. Thus one of Blasco Ibáñez's major themes from the novel is restored: the deadly nature of the bullfight for everyone involved, including the blood thirsty audience who is, as Blasco Ibáñez says, the «true beast». This theme is further developed in both the novel and the film texts as the destructive power of the bull is relocated onto and equated with the destructive power of women. Both Blasco and the Spanish filmmakers in 1989 viewed Doña Sol as, in effect, a toro in the form of a woman.

Blasco Ibáñez manifests the latter theme in his novel when he has Doña Sol announce to a shocked Gallardo «I should like to run on all fours. I should like to be a bull, and that you should stand before me, rapier in hand. Fine gorings I would give you!» (1908: 165). The 1989 film takes this idea much further: Doña Sol, played by the North American performer Sharon Stone, becomes a single-minded sexual predator, with few pretensions to aristocratic values. There is some small effort to explain that her bull-breeder father was married to a North American, which is why he has a North American daughter, but the «blond-bombshell» image, reminiscent of such classic Hollywood stars as Mae West, Veronica Lake, and Marilyn Monroe, is presented by Sharon Stone as an archetype for the uncontrollable woman whose promiscuity is the ruin of honourable men.

The anthropologist Carrie B. Douglass analyses the relationship between bullfighting and the Spanish concept of honour in her article entitled «*Toro muerto, vaca es: An interpretation of the Spanish bullfight*». By comparing an array of ethnographies about Spanish culture, Douglass demonstrates that the relationship between the torero and the bull in the bullring forms an homology with the relationship of men and women in the Spanish code of honour (defined as occurring in Castilian-speaking areas, primarily southern, in the period from 1054-1900 —though clearly vestiges of this code remain). In Douglass' analysis, the bull, despite its gender, is either rendered female by its death or renders the torero female by killing him. In either case it is a fight to maintain virility, and the loss of that battle in the ring is the equivalent to loss of honour a man suffers when a woman figuratively places the horns on him through promiscuity and infidelity. Thus the sexually ungovernable female is as dangerous to male honour as a wild bull.

In the seduction scene from the 1989 version, which is the same moment in the story as in the previous two films, Gallardo enters Doña Sol's house through the requisite Alhambra-style patio, but he needs neither persuasion nor manoeuvring to engage in direct and immediate sexual combat with his antagonist. As Gallardo enters Doña Sol's house, after having been left alone by his manager who, as in both earlier films, recognises that the party is for two only, Doña Sol stalks up to him and immediately plants a passionate kiss on his mouth, which he receives as his due. They then sit on the sofa and she asks him what type of bull she would be if she were a bull. He says «the most dangerous and difficult kind there is». She asks what he would do with her if she were a bull, and he describes the stages of the bullfight in terms of «you» ending with the declaration: «then I would kill you». Doña Sol is not impressed with his boasting, and explains that men are the easiest creatures of all to tame. Thus the lines of battle are established, and the two proceed to use sex as the means of contention. They engage in passionate kissing and she begins to strike him, challenging him to give her rough sex. Gallardo then accommodates her on the dining room table, clothing and cutlery flying.

Though Gallardo, in effect, «wins» this particular encounter by controlling and containing the sexual appetite of his lover, Doña Sol triumphs later by cheering for a new torero as Gallardo lay dying in the plaza infirmary after receiving a mortal wound in the ring. In this transformation of the text, Carmen recognises that her husband's desire for a last-minute reconciliation with her is by default —that Gallardo was so conquered by his desire for Doña Sol that if the seductress had been willing he would have divorced Carmen without regret. Yet Carmen returns as an isolated and sympathetic figure to witness Gallardo's humiliation and symbolic emasculation at the end. She is forced to stand behind the glass window of the infirmary and watch the physicians work over Gallardo's lifeless body; there is no tender scene of reconciliation or redemption which occur in both the previous films and which typify North American cultural optimism. In the 1989 Spanish version of *Blood and Sand*, both Gallardo and his innocent wife must suffer, though the causation between infidelity and death is not as clear. It is as if Gallardo's humiliation at the hands of both the toro in the ring and Doña Sol, the torowoman, represent nothing more than the torero's loss of control over the forces that govern his life.

What is interesting about this interpretation of Blasco Ibáñez's text is that a North American figure has become the exotic Other in a Spanish landscape. This moves the source of Gallardo's destruction from a strictly gendered field, in which Doña Sol is dangerous because of class and sex, to one of alienation and alterity, in which Doña Sol is dangerous because she is an outsider. The faithful wife is played by Spanish performer Ana Torrent —the representative Spanish presence set up in opposition to the North American Doña Sol. In the final scene, in which the good wife leaves the plaza, weeping and comfortless, the final shot dwells on Doña Sol —the embodiment of the North American blonde bombshell cliché— sitting in the stands wearing a

high comb and mantilla, signifying the invasion and triumph of this quintessential North American image into the Spanish system of cultural signifiers.

This invasion can be read in a number of cultural and symbolic ways, but within this context it signals the inversion of the North American desire for a Spanish Other to a Spanish desire, with all its ambiguities and dread, for an North American Other. This desire, of course, is mutual but mutually misread —Sharon Stone's Doña Sol is charmed by what amounts to a sexual *españolada*, trading one exotic and violent bullfighter in for another, while Gallardo is seduced by an updated version of Marilyn Monroe with all her artificiality and abundance. She is the Caucasian Other, the colonising «Yan-queen», «Ugly American», or «blue eyed devil» who has returned, in a sense, to her origins, and is prepared to wreak as much damage on the ancient homeland as the Caucasian Other did in the New World. When one considers the intense world-wide debate over American cultural imperialism, the «McDonaldising» of the European landscape, and the «Disneyfying» of European narrative (*Hercules*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) the threat is palpable.

7. North American desire for a Spanish Other

In conclusion, the three film versions of *Blood and Sand* have effected the exchange of cultural icons between Hollywood and Spain for similar purposes —to return to the social psychologists' definition— of offering culturally accepted explanations for events, justifying group actions, and providing a means to differentiate groups positively from other groups. These stereotypes have provided the literary and visual arts with an array of genres that function in identical ways to permit groups, however diverse, to identify with the dominant culture over and against the exoticised Other. The American western, the detective story, the historical romance set in a variety of exotic locations, such as Spain and the corrida, have all provided North American film audiences with the stereotypes they need to see themselves as part of North American culture.

Blasco Ibáñez's original theme of social exploitation against the impoverished and uneducated Gallardo is largely lost in the film versions, replaced by a theme of sexual desire leading to destruction. In the two Hollywood versions of *Blood and Sand* this destruction is caused at its root by infidelity, while in the Spanish version a more complex reading is achieved, in which destruction is due to the loss of male control over the powers that would emasculate him: the toro and the woman, who are symbolically conflated into the same force. In all three versions, however, this destructive force is safely displaced onto figures of exotic otherness which permit North American audiences to use Spanish stereotypes as safely removed fields of erotic desire as well as identity-forming alterities. The subtext of those stereotypes shifts with the needs of the age: Rudolph Valentino's unfaithful husband in the «roaring twenties», Tyrone Power's innocent boy on the brink of World

War II, and Sharon Stone's blonde bombshell superimposed on a Spanish landscape in the fin de siècle. But all construct an exotic Spanish Other which appeals to North American desire, both as an erotic longing projected into a safe, fantasy world, and a need for an exotic stereotype against which to read one's own identity.

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