Jamón and Halal

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As word spread about Órgiva, in the 2010s narratives about the town started to appear via television. This set of narratives, like that of Bailey, crafts an image of Órgiva as tolerant, without considering what is meant by “tolerance”—what kinds of tolerance exist, how forms of coexistence are created, and where and by whom their limits are set. All eight of these televisual narratives present Órgiva as a place that draws people who seek an escape from modern, urban life or conventional living, and most present it as a space of tolerant harmony. These television programs feature the town either as one of a set of locales tied to a particular theme, or as the sole focus of an entire episode. Aimed at a Spanish (and in one case a broader Spanish-speaking) audience, these televisual narratives reflect and amplify the layers of written narratives, journalistic pieces, and informal accounts circulated on the Internet or by word of mouth, that establish Órgiva as a haven for alternative lifestyles. In the ultimate rebuttal of the Black Legend, most of these television portraits emphasize the town’s tolerance and convivencia. In the process, they highlight certain elements that create cohesion in the town, but obscure others that are sources of both friction and more sustainable forms of tolerance.

In keeping with the pattern of travel writing about the Alpujarra, these television shows are forms of 21st-century travel narrative. These small-screen narratives create different visions of the same
town. They differ not only in their characterizations of Órgiva, but in their production values and their forms of distribution. Four of these mass-media representations of Órgiva were broadcast by the free-to-air Canal Sur television network, which is part of Radio y Televisión de Andalucía (RTVA), the public broadcasting company of the Autonomous Region of Andalucía, while two were broadcast by the free-to-air national public television network Radio y Televisión Española (RTVE), and two others by different branches of the international telecommunications giant Movistar (one as Internet television and the other as on-demand Spanish digital television). However, this set of eight shows, broadcast within a 6-year timespan, does demonstrate certain patterns. Aside from one quick visual reference in one of the shows, none of them include any mention of Maghrebi immigration, but almost all mention the Moorish past of the area and most participate in what I call “convivencia-washing”: erasing or de-emphasizing certain elements in order to create an idealized image of happy cohabitation. Although, as indicated earlier, Órgiva is relatively more diverse and peaceful than other towns in Andalucía, painting a rosy picture results in three key losses: 1) the elimination or minimization of tensions experienced or witnessed by others in the town and thus the negation of their lived experience, 2) the inability to gain a deeper understanding of how the townspeople perceive and navigate these tensions, and 3) the impoverishment of the concept of tolerance via oversimplification.

THE MAGHREBIAN CONNECTION AS STRICTLY PART OF THE PAST

The second of the televisural narratives about Órgiva to appear, and the first of the RTVA episodes to appear, is a 1-hour and 15-minute show from the series Este es mi pueblo (“This is my town”), that is dedicated in its entirety to Órgiva.¹ In general, Canal Sur demonstrates lower production values than nationally broadcast shows and this is particularly true of this episode. More importantly, this show stands out from among the eight shows featuring Órgiva in that it is the only
one in which Islam and North Africans—presented as lo morisco—are only mentioned as part of the past. In the long-running Este es mi pueblo series, the show host, Rafael (“Rafa”) Cremades, visits Andalusian towns, getting to know them via interviews with local inhabitants, and, in a thinly veiled fashion, promoting local businesses and/or tourism to the area. In its 11th season, the 9th episode (first aired on October 10, 2015) is dedicated to Órgiva. The episode includes a tour of Órgiva offered by Manuel Hernández Linares, a nationally recognized guitarist whose parents are from the town, an interview with Chris Stewart of Driving over Lemons fame, and visits to a local bakery, a local ceramics workshop, and the collection of editions of Don Quixote in the local library’s Cervantes room, among other points of interest.

At Panadería Galindo, a local bakery, baker Antonio Pérez tells viewers that “within the cuisine of Órgiva, my wife and I will present to you some morisco sweets [. . .] There is a wide variety of morisco sweets [. . .] [dentro de la gastronomía de Órgiva mi mujer y yo os vamos a presentar unos dulces de elaboración morisca [. . .] Hay una gran variedad de dulces moriscos [. . .]]” (2:06–2:17). He then explains that they have chosen to demonstrate how to make two of the most representative of these sweets: “Mozarab [Arabized Christian] curd and Alpujarran delights [la cuajada mozárabe y las delicias de la Alpujarra]” (2:18–2:24). The baker goes on to explain that these recipes are “very ancient [antiguísimas]” and that his family, which has run the bakery for five generations, “found a book, a manuscript [encontramos un libro, un manuscrito]” containing many recipes that they had adapted (2:56–3:08). As the video shows Pérez and his wife, Encarnacion Álvarez, demonstrating how to prepare these sweets, the Chyron graphics at the bottom of the frame state “These recipes have been inherited from the morisco era [Estas recetas se han heredado de la época morisca]” (3:00–3:08). Curiously, the show does not mention that similar sweets, made by a North African immigrant living in the town, could be found at the town’s halal eatery, Café Baraka. Instead, this narrative marks the sweets as traditionally Alpujarran and linked to a long-gone Moorish past, without noting that in
Órgiva these confections are consumed side by side with their contemporary Maghrebi culinary cousins. Additionally, although the two recipes Panadería Galindo highlights do not contain either oil or lard, many of the morisco recipes that are still made in the Alpujarra and Andalucía—such as mantecados, polvorones, almendrados, and perrunas—have undergone a modification: olive oil and vegetable oils have been substituted with lard. Thus, the sweets of the Alpujarra can lie on either side of the dividing line between haram and halal, thereby constituting separate communities.

Immediately following the segment in the bakery, the show moves to the first of various segments that are a creative way to present more spontaneous, yet elliptical, local perspectives on the town. These segments feature a few alternating small groups of unnamed orgiveños (ranging from young adults to some in their 60s) seated on a bench placed next to the town’s main plaza and giving their explanations of local vocabulary and customs, their observations on life in the town, and so forth. Although these orgiveños included as representative local voices are clearly responding to specific prompts or questions, viewers do not hear these. After the first appearance of these anonymous local commentators, the show moves to an orgiveño goatherd and his production of artisanal cheeses, and then, through a local ceramist, returns to the legacy of al-Andalus. When the show host, Rafa, visits the ceramist, Ricardo González, in his workshop, González demonstrates how he makes mosaics and they explain that his work not only recreates the style of the elaborate tilework in Granada’s Alhambra palace, but some of his pieces are used in tactile displays within the Alhambra itself. Rafa and the ceramist refer to his craft as “Nasrid ceramics [cerámica nazari]” (8:58–9:00) and, as the ceramist shows Rafa how to make mosaic tile, Orientalist flute and violin motifs (that is, musical phrases recognizable, partly due to stereotyping, as Middle Eastern or North African) emerge within the background guitar music (8:08–12:58).

Although this narrative of orgiveño foodways and artistry emphasizes the Moorish connection and even includes a Quixotesque use of
the found-manuscript trope, the Órgiva episode of *Este es mi pueblo* is equally intent on excluding any modern-day Muslims or North Africans from its portrait of the town. The baker’s found manuscript serves as a prelude to the show’s highlighting of links between Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* and Órgiva. Later in the episode (immediately after a segment on tourism that is poorly blended in and seems like an infomercial), the groups of anonymous local commentators read aloud *El Quijote*’s famous opening passages and offer their perspectives on the importance of the town’s collection of editions of Cervantes’ masterpiece (57:31–58:13). The orgiveño observers serve as a segue to Rafa’s visit to the Cervantes room in the local public library, which includes more than 300 editions of *Don Quixote* in various languages, the result of the efforts of a former librarian who started building the collection in the 1970s (58:14–1:04:53). Invoking *Don Quixote* brings to mind the uncomfortable relationship between Spanish identity and the Moor. The novel is presented by Cervantes as a found Arabic manuscript that is translated into Spanish by a morisco and it features various morisco characters. The moriscos in the text have been interpreted as either ridiculed or negatively stereotyped figures, or as vehicles for an ironic critique of the nascent modern Spanish nation-state’s ethnocentrism, that serves to defend the oppressed moriscos.⁵ Thus, while the question “What is the place of the Moor in Peninsular culture?” is central to the *Quijote*, there is a great deal of ambivalence regarding how the text responds to the Moorish question and what prevails is an awareness of this identity issue as a source of tension. Through morisco and Mozarab sweets, ceramics from the 13th- to 15th-century Nasrid dynasty of Granada, and Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, the Órgiva episode of *Este es mi pueblo* emphasizes Moorishness as part of the past. However, the episode never mentions, verbally or visually, the Muslims or Maghrebis that are part of the town’s present.

After the initial visit to the ceramist, the show covers the international and interregional character of Órgiva, still excluding its Muslim and North African elements. The town’s international nature is first touched upon via the introduction of Chris Stewart and a visit, in
the company of the guitarist Manuel Hernández Linares, to a German luthier who lives in Órgiva.

On the way to the luthier’s workshop, Hernández Linares and the show host talk about this German who has chosen Órgiva as the place in which to practice his craft, how often Hernández Linares visits Órgiva, and the town as a source of inspiration for his music. During part of this conversation, the background information about the guitarist that explains his link to Órgiva is presented in a two-line on-screen graphic: “Source of inspiration; Manuel was born in Barcelona because his parents had to emigrate [tuvieron que emigrar]” (22:54–23:01). The choice of wording here—“had to emigrate”—sends the message that labor migration is a necessity or a response to larger forces, not an unjustified choice. The sequencing of this message with the segments that follow is significant. Immediately after visiting the luthier, the show moves to a visit with Hernández Linares’ parents, with the on-screen graphics placing them within the realm of migration: “Rafa meets Manuel’s parents, return emigrants [emigrantes retornados]” (33:22). The conversation between Rafa, Manuel Hernández Linares, and his parents explains that the parents went to Barcelona in search of work, worked there for many years as manual laborers, visiting Órgiva three or four times a year during that period, and then returned to retire in their hometown. The segment, by mentioning the material and emotional difficulties of emigration, and the broader phenomenon of Andalusians who left the region to work in Catalonia in the 1950s through the ’70s (33:22–36:20), sets the stage for a more direct treatment of the newcomers in the town.

After another commercially oriented, tourism-related segment, the groups of anonymous orgiveño commentators make another appearance to talk about the high number of different nationalities found in the town. As one trio lists the different nationalities present in the town, one of the participants states that for any country in the world, one will find at least two people from that country in Órgiva (38:19–38:21). In the group of younger commentators, one young woman states “People is [sic] very open [La gente son [sic] muy...
abierta)” and another in the trio agrees (38:23). Then the anonymous local voices talk about how they manage to communicate with the incomers across language barriers. In spite of the local voices listing many nationalities, there is no reference to Sufi converts or to Maghrebi migrants. Instead, this segment is followed by a conversation with Chris Stewart, in which the show host and Stewart refer to the role of his books and that of Gerald Brenan in attracting newcomers and briefly mention the hippie presence in the town, with Stewart presenting a positive take on the hippie philosophy and lifestyle. The sequencing of these segments that interweave labor migration, return migration, and migration in search of artistic inspiration or quality of life, as well as local voices contentedly describing the town’s cultural and linguistic plurality, serves to normalize migration and also paints a harmonious portrait of life in the town. However, this portrait leaves certain groups, namely the large Sufi community, out of the picture. After other segments, including a visit with a local tourist guide to the chapel, the church, and the palace that had a role in the Rebellion of the Alpujarras, and an event of the women’s association (Asociación de Mujeres de Órgiva por la Igualdad), the episode ends without any reference (verbal or visual) to Muslims of any type in present-day Órgiva, or to frictions between the townspeople and hippies in the area. The upshot is a partial vision of the town that, while normalizing human mobility, ironically presents a convivencia-tinged picture of the town without mentioning any of the town’s Muslim residents, present-day versions of the hybrid moriscos and Mozarabs, and without mentioning tensions with the “alternative” community. This occurs, no doubt, in pursuit of an untroubled image that will support tourism to the area. Given the fact that it is a public television program of the Andalusian government, its aims are to promote cultural and economic development in the region. As a network geared toward traditional television audiences who may be more conservative, the program presents a selective image of Órgiva that primarily serves the economic development goal. In all but one of the other visual narratives about Órgiva, this type of whitewashing is present and even becomes full “convivencia-washing.”
ÓRGIVA AS A SITE FOR CONTEMPORARY ISLAM:
THE TITILLATION OF THE RETURN OF ISLAM VS.
A CONTINUATION OF THE CONVIVENCIA

In sharp contrast with the Este es mi pueblo episode, the Órgiva episode of an Internet television program broadcast almost exactly one year later and directed at a very different audience emphasizes an excitement-tinged fear of the return of Islam to Spain. Part of the Spanish-language arm of the digital media giant Vice Media Group, the Diario Vice (Vice Daily News) program is produced by Movistar (a major telecommunications brand, owned by Spain’s Telefónica, that operates in Spain and parts of Latin America) in collaboration with Vice News (stylized as VICE News), Vice Media’s current affairs channel. Vice News produces daily documentary essays and video through its website and YouTube channel, which are geared toward a youth and young adult audience, and—with a focus on hip, edgy topics (alternative religious practices, fringe groups, etc.)—bills itself as presenting “under-reported stories” in an “unvarnished” manner.6 Given this profile, the target audience for Diario Vice is the polar opposite of the regional, more traditional target audience of Este es mi pueblo, and the resulting reportage is also radically different.

The 10-minute Diario Vice episode focused on Órgiva is entitled “Sufís, los místicos del islam en España” (Sufis, the mystics of Islam in Spain) and was first broadcast on October 26, 2016.7 From the start, the show seeks to pique the interest of viewers curious about pushing against the status quo and testing the limits of acceptability: against the background of reverberating music with an Orientalist motif, the show uses a cold open that begins with statements from two Spanish converts to Islam about their families’ negative reactions to their conversion. From a close-up shot of the second convert, this teaser sequence continues by cutting to an exterior view of the Sufi prayer space (dargah) and interior views with details of figures carrying out Muslim prayers, as an off-screen voice (in native Spanish) states: “It might be that we are the answer to the prayers, to that longing for Islam to return to Spain, right [Puede que nosotros seamos la respuesta
a las súplicas, de esa añoranza de que el islam volviese a España, no” (0:10–0:16). During the last second of this provocative statement, the image switches to a close-up of the speaker, a white-presenting young man with a trim beard, tunic top, and taqiyah that mark him as Muslim. The image then immediately shifts to a scene of Sufi prayer through movement (a group *dhikr*), focusing on a twirling figure reminiscent of the whirling dervishes whose related religious practice is proverbially associated with Sufism in the European and North American imaginary. A few seconds later, this visual is covered by on-screen graphics showing the black-and-white Vice News logo that then takes over the whole frame, a shift that is accompanied by dramatic music. As this music blends into an Orientalist motif, the title of the episode appears: “*Sufis, los místicos del islam en España.*” Building on the unexpected presence of Islam in Spain that is proclaimed by the title, the next image is a panoramic shot of Órgiva nestled among mountains, looking like any of Andalucía’s famous white villages, with on-screen text naming the location (0:25). The reverberating music that continues to play, paired with the contrasting image of a bucolic village, creates a sense of unsettling foreboding.

This teaser and opening title sequence create a titillating threat that taps into what Daniela Flesler identifies as a form of trauma: “Inasmuch as the more than eight centuries of Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula are perceived as a breach of the Christian continuum, they constitute a cultural or historical trauma” (57). Thus, the *Diario Vice* episode creates a narrative of a return to Islam in Spain that, for a more nationalist viewer, can trigger Islamophobia, and, for a young thrill-seeker viewer, the rush of brushing up against danger, and, when these viewer categories overlap, a tense mix of the two. Either way, the episode utilizes and intensifies the association between Islam and danger to create a different type of partial portrait, one that situates Órgiva not as the site of *convivencia*, but as the site of a new Islamic invasion.

The rhetoric of Islamic threat is seen throughout the remainder of this *Diario Vice* episode, albeit in more subtle form. After the panoramic view of Órgiva, the show host, Dani Campos, speaks to viewers
from behind the steering wheel of a car explaining, as the subtly ominous and Orient-tinged soundtrack continues, that he is taking viewers to remote Órgiva, home of the largest Sufi community in Spain. After talking about Islamic mysticism and austerity, the host launches a very provocative question, shaking his head at the end to emphasize the shock value of his statement: “So I wonder if it’s possible to live like in the times of the Prophet in 21st-century Spain [Así que me pregunto si es posible vivir como en los tiempos del profeta en la España del siglo XXI]” (0:46–0:52). Here, the specific fear that is tapped into is that of the incompatibility between Islam, with its Sharia law based on the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, and Europe, with its identification as modern and secular. Given the large number of Muslim migrants from the Maghreb, this question echoes a common concern raised in anti-immigrant discourses in Spain and elsewhere.

The reverberating soundtrack with Orientalist touches continues as the show host interviews Shaykh Umar, the Catalanian head of the Spanish Naqshbandis, and we see the interviewer’s subdued skepticism toward one of the Shaykh’s statements via the host’s facial expression and body language. The sonic ambience becomes specifically Sufi as the show host takes viewers with him to a dhikr ceremony and later to a hadra ceremony. The Islamic devotional act called dhikr (lit., remembrance/reminder, or mention) is the rhythmic repetition of religious phrases or prayers, which in Sufism is done communally and often accompanied by music and movement, while hadra (lit., presence) consists of various forms of dhikr, including recitation combined with dance, as well as a sermon and study of a devotional text. Group dhikr, especially performed out loud and accompanied by music and dance, is not typically part of mainstream Muslim forms of worship and is seen as heretical by particularly conservative Muslims. The Diario Vice host notes that in dhikr, Sufis mix prayers with rhythmic chanting through which they say that they can enter a trance state; the host refers to hadra as a typically Sufi form of dance, but otherwise does not enter into varying Muslim dogma regarding dhikr and hadra. He does state that, although he stayed on the sidelines, the rhythmic chanting and drum music were so powerful that he too
started to enter into a trance. Given the discursive context of the episode that I have already established, this statement enhances the sense of Islam as an attractive and powerful forbidden fruit and suggests that this Sufi group is cult-like—a powerful yet potentially overpowering fringe group.

The episode then cuts to views of the twin church towers, visually establishing a religious confrontation. After shots of the show host walking through the town, he meets with a series of converts to Islam residing there. This includes visits with the two converts that appear in the teaser sequence, now introduced by name and occupation before longer versions of the statements made in the teaser. (The second of the converts, Qasim Barrio Raposo, is a restaurant owner from the north of Spain whom we will reencounter in subsequent sections.) Then the viewers accompany the host to the *hadra* and at one point in a close-up shot we see that he raises his eyebrows to subtly convey his incredulity toward this Sufi practice (7:53). In the final minutes of the episode, we return to the young man who spoke at the end of the teaser sequence about the yearning for a return of Islam to Spain. He is introduced as Shamsuddin, the son of Shaykh Umar. As the camera alternates between Shamsuddin, panning shots of the olive and orange groves amid the mountains, and herds of goats, we hear Shamsuddin say a longer version of what is presented in the teaser:

That the Alpujarras was the last place where the Muslims lived is interesting. Eight hundred years here in Spain: they weren’t invaders, no, they were people from here who had converted, right. Who abandoned their houses, right, seeing that Spain had been closed off for them, right. It might be that we are the answer to the prayers of those people, right, to that longing for Islam, right, to return to Spain, right [Que las Alpujarras sea el último sitio en el que los musulmanes estuvieron es muy interesante. 800 años aquí en España: no eran invasores, no, eran gentes de aquí que se habían convertido, no. Que abandonaron sus casas, no, viendo que España se había cerrado para ellos, no. Puede que nosotros seamos la respuesta a las súplicas de esta gente, no, de esa añoranza de que el islam, no, volviese, volviese a España, no] (9:33–10:01).
The *Diario Vice* episode ends here, with the credits rolling over the same panoramic shot of Órgiva that was seen at the start, as the last reverberating tones fade out. The episode’s circular structure, which kicks off with and then closes with Shamsuddin’s statement about expelled Muslims (understood by him as Iberian converts to Islam), creates at once a parallel with the well-known trope of Islam circling back to Spain and also a new twist on this rhetoric of return by presenting the expelled Muslims as originally Iberian. However, the potential for this historical revision to dismantle fixed conceptions of Moorish versus Christian identity and nationalist essentialisms is largely undermined by the sensationalist sonic and visual leitmotif of Islam as a threat and Sufism as cultish.

As if in response to *Diario Vice*’s take on Islam in Órgiva, an Islam-themed series on national television released an episode focused on Órgiva in 2019. *Medina* is a program of 15-minute episodes broadcast on La 2 (Channel Two), a free-to-air television channel that is part of the Spanish public broadcasting company RTVE which is geared toward, or at least more likely to attract, a niche audience: Spanish-speakers already practicing or interested in Islam. Its episode on Órgiva, entitled “Comunidad sufí de Órgiva” (Órgiva’s Sufi community) was first broadcast on March 3, 2019 and is a clear example of *convivencia*-washing. This type of narrative is evident from the start, when the host and director of the show, Bouziane Ahmed Khodja, a journalist of Algerian origin, states from a studio setting:

Órgiva, capital of the Granadan Alpujarra, place of refuge of the last Nasrid king, Boabdil, extends into the present part of the multicultural splendor of the past [. . .] This town, of barely 6,000 inhabitants, harbors in its streets more than 70 different nationalities. Perhaps the best manifestation of this diverse blend is the Sufi community of this town [Órgiva, la capital de la Alpujarra granadina, lugar de retiro del último rey nazarí, Boabdil, prolonga en el presente una parte del esplendor multicultural del pasado [. . .] Esta localidad, de apenas 6.000 habitantes, alberga en su callejero más de 70 nacionalidades distintas. Quizá, la mejor encarnación de este variopinto mestizaje sea la comunidad sufí de esta localidad] (0:14–0:45).
This introduction frames the entire episode as a tracing of the continuity of al-Andalus, understood as an example of multicultural harmony, in present-day Órgiva.

In the next segment of the episode, against the backdrop of soothing music with occasional Orientalist phrases, various views of the town (including images of hippies) are accompanied by a voiceover in which a female narrator describes Órgiva as

a sort of contemporary Babel where more than 60 nationalities coexist in peace and harmony [. . .] Órgiva is, then, a cosmopolitan town. Open to everything and everyone. Where coexisting means exactly that, respect and tolerance towards one another, each other’s religion, and way of life. And it is in this environment of tolerance and convivencia where one of the most important Muslim Sufi communities not only in Spain but in the world has settled [una especie de Babel contemporáneo donde conviven en paz y armonía más de 60 nacionalidades diferentes [. . .] Órgiva es, pues, un pueblo cosmopolita. Abierto a todo y a todos. Donde convivir significa exactamente eso, respeto y tolerancia al otro; a su credo, a su modo de vida. Y es en este entorno de tolerancia y convivencia donde se asienta una de las comunidades musulmanas sufís más importantes, no solo de España, sino del mundo] (0:46–1:45).

After quoting verses from the famous 12th-century Sufi mystic Ibn Ṭarabí, who was born in al-Andalus, the narrator introduces us to Qasim Barrio, the Muslim convert who owns and runs Órgiva’s main halal restaurant, Café Baraka. The narrator opens this segment by emphasizing that people from all walks of life are patrons of Qasim’s restaurant—from locals to hippies. However, after Qasim speaks about life in Órgiva and its general feeling of “hermandad” (brotherhood) (5:22) and the many spiritual traditions present in the town, he refers to the difficulties inherent in opening a halal restaurant in a societal context in which customers demand alcohol and pork.

The episode then moves to Shaykh Umar who describes Órgiva as “muy cosmopolita [very cosmopolitan]” (9:10). After the narrator describes dhikr as a practice common to all Muslims, but distinguishes hadra as a specifically Sufi practice, the episode returns to Shaykh
Umar emphasizing the normalcy and even orthodoxy of Sufism within Islam:

Our practices are the practices of all Muslims. We follow the Sharia [Islamic law]. We follow a school, specifically we follow the Hanafi school. We are within the Naqshbandi tariqa, which has been, among the tariqas, the one that has most defended the Prophet’s Sunna [the part of Muslim law based on Muhammad’s words and deeds]. We are at the very center of the heart of Islam [Nuestras prácticas son las prácticas de todos los musulmanes. Nosotros seguimos la sharia. Nosotros seguimos una escuela, concretamente nosotros seguimos la escuela Hanafi. Estamos en la tariqa Naqshbandi, que ha sido, dentro de las tariqas, la que más ha defendido la sunna del profeta. Estamos en el centro mismo del corazón del islam] (11:33–11:56).⁹

After this defense of Sufism’s conformity to religious law, the narrator then clarifies that the Sufis do not shun society and use modern technology and media. She closes the episode with an explanation of the quest of Sufism as a search for God in one’s heart, while the visuals show Khodja walking and talking with Qasim and sitting and talking with Shaykh Umar, and Sufis gathering together at Shaykh Umar’s mosque. The Órgiva episode of Medina focuses on presenting the town as a continuation of a Muslim Iberia imagined to be pure tolerance and harmony and within this convivencia-washing, the show erases Sufism’s often tense relationship with those who see themselves as representatives of Islamic dogma. Based on the show’s audience, the episode projects an aspirational convivencia that includes intra-Muslim harmony.

**CONVIVENCIA-WASHING FOR REGIONAL AND NATIONAL AUDIENCES**

In August 2015, two months before the broadcast of the Este es mi pueblo episode (making it the first of the eight shows), a show aired featuring a convivencia-washed narrative about Órgiva that was di-
rected at a broader national audience. The series *España a ras de cielo* (Spain at sky level—a play on the expression *a ras de suelo* meaning “at ground level”), which is broadcast on the public network RTVE’s free-to-air television channel La 1 (Channel One), aims to present hidden corners of Spain, or known areas from a new angle. In the series’ second season, the 55-minute episode “*Me voy al pueblo*” (I’m headed to a country town) focuses on the phenomenon of Spaniards moving from urban to rural areas, and one of the four small towns featured is Órgiva. In the teaser sequence that presents snippets about each of the four locations to be visited, the show host, Francis Lorenzo, states “Did you know that the last hippies have transformed a town in the Granadan Alpujarra to the point of turning it into a little Babel? [¿Sabían que los últimos hippies han transformado un pueblo de la Alpujarra granadina hasta convertirlo en una pequeña Babel?]” (0:09–0:15), and we see and hear from Muslim converts in Órgiva and members of a hippie community in the surrounding area. After the title sequence, the host explains that in the last 15 years, the Spanish trend of people moving to major urban centers has reversed; for the first time, there are more people moving from urban centers to small rural towns.

The host’s introduction to the segment on Órgiva, which is the first in the episode, includes various images of diversity in the town accompanied by the host’s voiceover. The host starts by describing the Alpujarra with a reference to the *moriscos* who didn’t want to leave the area:

We’ll set out to the Alpujarra, sheltered by the Sierra Nevada, for our first stop. In this special place, teeming with white villages that dot the landscape, and that the *moriscos* withdrew from only through the imposition of arms, one finds a very peculiar town with the most curious inhabitants of Spain: Órgiva [Ponemos rumbo a la Alpujarra, al amparo de Sierra Nevada, para hacer nuestra primera parada. En esta tierra especial, plagada de pequeños pueblos blancos que motean el paisaje y que los moriscos abandonaron solo bajo la imposición de las armas se encuentra un pueblo muy peculiar con los habitantes más pintorescos de España: Órgiva] (3:15–3:38).
The host’s voiceover explains that in the 1970s, many órgiveños left for urban centers, while the on-screen graphics display that between 1950 and 2010 the Alpujarra lost 50 percent of its population (3:46–3:53). The presenter then states that in the 1980s, people of various ideologies and religious traditions arrived in the area seeking the tranquility and spirituality of closer contact with nature; he notes “And although at first they made an impact, the locals ended up getting used to their presence and today so much diversity has enriched the town [Y aunque al principio causaron impacto, los lugareños terminaron acostumbrándose a su presencia y hoy en día tanta diversidad ha enriquecido al pueblo” (4:14–4:21). After this brief reference to shock waves in the otherwise tranquil Órgiva, the show goes on to emphasize happy diversity.

Among the various inhabitants interviewed, Qasim Barrio, the convert to Islam who owns Café Baraka, explains that his spiritual quest led him to Islam and the show’s presenter asks what led him to Órgiva. Qasim answers:

I found Órgiva and saw that there were, shall we say, people with the same profile as me, meaning, Western Muslims [. . .] Let’s just say that there’s a ton of people the same as me here. There I was a weirdo and here I was a dime a dozen [Encontré Órgiva y vi que había, digamos, gente de mi mismo perfil, o sea, musulmanes occidentales [. . .] Digamos que hay un montón de gente igual que yo. Allí era un bicho raro y aquí era uno más] (5:47–6:04).

I will take up the topic of “weirdness” further on, but it is important to note that indirectly Qasim is stating that being “Western” (that is, from a European-derived cultural sphere) and Muslim is typically a mark of weirdness, but in Órgiva he feels that this is not the case.

After a conversation with Shaykh Umar, the camera pans out over chanting Sufis and the countryside, cuts to the twin church towers, and moves to an interview with the mayor at the time, María Ángeles Blanco, as she and the program’s host stroll through the town. The host introduces this segment by saying “We’re talking with Mari
Ángeles Blanco, the mayor of Órgiva, to get to know this cosmopolitan town where people from around the world coexist [Habla mos con Mari Ángeles Blanco, la alcaldesa orgiveña, para conocer este pueblo cosmopolita donde convive gente de todo el mundo]” (8:36–8:43). The mayor states “Here diversity is the norm [Aquí la diversidad es la normalidad]” (8:50–8:52). When the host asks why people come to Órgiva, Blanco responds that “it’s in our blood [lo llevamos en la sangre],” and indicates that documents from as early as the 1400s mention outsiders arriving and staying for a while, people coming and going, and she ties this to the area’s location between the sea and the mountains (9:45–10:05). The mayor’s turn of phrase is noteworthy in that it uses biological terms to explain mobility; that is, she expresses the idea that orgiveños are already part of centuries of movement in and out of the region, but states this through a figure of speech that indicates that they have movement in their blood, that is, as part of their biological make-up. On one level, the use of the expression “lo llevamos en la sangre” in this context is paradoxical, given that constant movement doesn’t lead to genetic similarity in the crossroads locale, but could lead to an accumulation of people who have felt the urge to pick up and resettle. On another level, the use of this biological expression here serves to counterbalance xenophobic thinking by pointing to the long history of population shifts in the area. Using the first-person plural here with this biology-based figure of speech establishes the more recent arrivals in Órgiva (those from Madrid, London, Berlin, and so forth) as part of the same (biological) group as those whose families had arrived in the area generations back. In this sense, here the biological rhetoric usually used to reject newcomers is used by the mayor to embrace them. When the program host suggests that the mayor must be proud to be leading such a place, she states that she’s honored and happy to have neighbors from around the world because “always being aware that we all belong to the world and [. . .] spending time with each other and getting to know each other is wonderful [pensar siempre que todos somos del mundo y que [. . .] compartir y conocernos es magnifico]” (10:18–10:34).
After this exchange, the _España a ras de cielo_ episode visits the Beneficio hippie commune and the episode closes by emphasizing the common interest in spirituality and nature that unites the residents of Órgiva. Although this episode is focused on people who have chosen rural life, it is important to note that the mayor is the only person among those interviewed who is a born and bred orgiveño. Similarly, the _Diario Vice_ and _Medina_ episodes, given their focus on Islam, albeit from very different angles, do not feature any orgiveños. In contrast, the four Andalusian shows from RTVA include and even emphasize the local perspective. In addition to _Este es mi pueblo_, three more recent Canal Sur programs (two from 2021 and one from 2017) have presented Órgiva to the network’s regional audience and have done so featuring local perspectives. Tellingly, these additional Canal Sur programs don’t dwell on manifestations of difference in the town, but, like all of the other television narratives about Órgiva (except for the _Diario Vice_ episode), they still characterize it, albeit with less emphasis, as a space of harmonic multiculturalism.

The cooking show _Tierra de sabores_ (Land of flavors), which focuses on traditional Andalusian cuisine, dedicated an entire 55-minute episode to Órgiva, that aired on February 14, 2021. In the episode, the show host and chef Bosco Benítez primarily spends time with the orgiveños Carmen Berrio and her husband, Antonio Puerta. Carmen demonstrates how to cook two local dishes and Antonio provides a tour of the town including some of its history. The area’s Moorish past is highlighted in the introduction sequence, when the narrator remarks that the town’s narrow streets evoke its morisco past (1:42–1:46). Later, this past is touched upon briefly when Antonio says that the church was built upon a former mosque and mentions a famous local dish (not one of the two being prepared in the episode) that is of Arab origin. When Bosco asks about what it is like to live in Órgiva, Antonio replies by saying that life in the town in great and the fact that people have come to it from around the world is proof of this. When Bosco says he wants to see this confluence of cultures, Carmen notes that he’ll get to do so in the municipal market, where they will go to buy ingredients for the dishes to be prepared. As they speak,
the image flips between them and shots of diverse inhabitants of the town, including one in Muslim-associated attire (the clothing typical of the local Sufis). At this point, the voiceover narrator explains that Bosco and Carmen will go to “the municipal market of Órgiva, a multicultural space with many stories to get to know [el mercado municipal de Órgiva, un multicultural espacio con muchas historias por conocer]” (12:07–12:15). The images of the indoor market that follow include two of women wearing North African-style hijab. These visual references are the only mention that the episode makes of the Sufi community or the Maghrebi migrants in the town. After visiting the market, Bosco visits bakers (Antonio and Encarna, the same ones from the Galindo bakery featured in *Este es mi pueblo*) and a potter, and then he and Carmen cook two dishes.12

In the closing segment of the show, as Bosco thanks Carmen and says good-bye, he tells her that she has taught him that Órgiva is “una tierra de nacionalidades [a land of nationalities],” as well as a “tierra de sabores [land of flavors]” (53:50–54:00). In sum, this episode of *Tierra de sabores* presents Órgiva as a “multicultural space,” but without entering into any detail about the multiple cultures, some of which are very relevant to the oldest traditions of the local cuisine and the newest trends in the food on offer in the town. Thus, this more subtle form of “convivencia-washing” wipes away the Muslim presence in the town almost completely, in favor of using the catchphrases of diversity in a superficial manner.

Another Canal Sur series, *Los repobladores* (The repopulators—a play on repoblar (to resettle) and pueblo (town)) featured Órgiva in its February 20, 2021 episode.13 The entire series focuses on people who have chosen to move from urban to rural settings and Órgiva is one of three locations featured in this 51-minute episode. The introduction to the episode’s segment on Órgiva consists of various shots of the town and its natural surroundings, accompanied by a Spanish pop song and a graphic stating the name of the town and province. In contrast with all the previously mentioned programs except for *Este es mi pueblo*, this montage of views of Órgiva doesn’t feature the diverse inhabitants and instead only includes one human figure, that of
a man dressed in typical, conservative European clothing seen in the distance crossing an otherwise empty plaza. The show soon focuses on a young man, Antonio Méndez, who had decided to return to his hometown of Órgiva to start an insect-farming business. After Antonio leads the reporter, who always remains off-screen, on a tour of his farm, he takes her to the town church, where they meet an older local woman and the reporter exclaims “Listen to that! Another return rural dweller [¡Cuchen! Otra repobladora]” (37:49). This elderly woman, in response to the reporter’s questions, explains that she left Órgiva to work in Barcelona for the same reason as everyone else: because there was no work in the town and they needed to eat. But she wanted to return and encourages young people to remain in their towns “because I was taught to love my town in Catalonia [porque a mí me enseñaron a querer a mi pueblo en Cataluña]” (38:06–38:12). During the scenes at the farm and inside the church, Antonio and the older return migrant emphasize the virtues of small-town rural life and contributing to the development of one’s town, a message that the Andalusian government, the source of funding for the station, no doubt would like to amplify.

Immediately after the conversation with the return migrant, an on-screen graphic appears stating “Órgiva is a multicultural municipality where inhabitants from more than 70 different nationalities coexist [Órgiva es un municipio multicultural donde conviven vecinos de más de 70 nacionalidades diferentes]” (38:13). Interestingly, once again this occurs against the backdrop of depopulated vistas of the town. After more coverage of the farm, the show returns to the older return migrant in the church, presenting a longer version of the previous conversation, in which she recounts the devotion and legends surrounding the statue of the Cristo de la Expiración and talks about her experiences in Barcelona. At this point, an on-screen graphic explains “Two million Andalusians emigrated to Catalonia in the ’60s and ’70s” (44:34). In Los repobladores, labor migration is normalized and presented in an empathetic light, but put at the service of the series’ agenda to encourage a return to small-town, rural life.
Following the extended version of the conversation with the elderly return migrant, Antonio takes the reporter to meet Qasim at an empty Café Baraka. Antonio introduces Qasim as another “repolblador” (45:28), and Qasim presents the journey that led him to join the Sufi community there. Then he demonstrates how to make an aromatic tea (a South Asian chai referred to by Qasim as “Pakistani tea”), which he connects to the tranquil life that he was seeking in Órgiva. While he speaks, a few different on-screen graphics appear: one noting that Qasim used to be a “cortador de jamón [master ham carver]” named Pedro in Bilbao, before converting to Islam (45:48); a second graphic stating “The largest community of Sufis (members of a branch of Islam) in Spain is located in Órgiva” (46:38), and two more graphics about tea—the first one presenting it as an expression of Muslim culture. Through Qasim’s statements and the on-screen text, the scene focuses on his transformation from a master ham carver to a Muslim and on his search for tranquility in Órgiva. As a musical manifestation of Qasim’s transformation, during the scene the muted background music shifts from a guitar-based Spanish pop song to a South Asian pop song meant to invoke the Muslim world.

While the empty public spaces that are seen throughout the show may be related to the fact that it was filmed during the coronavirus pandemic (at certain points, interviewees are seen wearing masks), given the fact that stock footage could have been used to fill the spaces, it is very likely connected to the impetus of the show to draw people to repopulate rural areas—that is, to beckon them to fill empty spaces. The episode closes with a montage of shots of Antonio at work and nearly empty plazas, while a voiceover presents Antonio making a final plug for the return to rural life. In support of this explicit message regarding the virtues of rural life, the plurality of cultures in the town is mentioned, but only demonstrated visually through images of Qasim. Thus, the multicultural descriptor used for the town remains a superficial label and the diversity within the town is kept at a minimum while the tensions caused by difference are completely erased. In this way, the Órgiva episode of Los repobladores creates another form of convivencia-washing.
An even more food-centered _convivencia_-washing takes place in a short segment of _Andalucía Directo_ (Andalucía Live) that was broadcast in 2017.15 _Andalucía Directo_ is an infotainment show that is broadcast on two RTVA channels (one free-to-air and one subscription satellite). A 4-minute segment of the 72-minute episode focuses on Café Baraka and emphasizes sustainability and multiculturalism, but blithely presents the origins of the food served at Baraka as both Arab and authentically Andalusian. This segment opens with an in-studio host announcing that Café Baraka was voted by readers of the British newspaper _The Guardian_ as one of the 10 best rural restaurants in Spain, and characterizing the restaurant as “a promoter of all that is eco-friendly and local [una apuesta por lo ecológico y lo local]” (0:17–0:19). Against a background of upbeat Middle Eastern music, the show then moves to on-location interviews of Qasim, the restaurant owner, and his employees and clients. These interviews are prefaced by shots of various dishes served at the restaurant and the reporter’s statement that “The aroma of our past and the taste of our history comes together in these dishes [El aroma de nuestro pasado y el sabor de nuestra historia se funden en estos platos]” (0:31–0:34). After this vague reference to Iberia’s Muslim and Arab-Maghrebian past, the cuisine served at Café Baraka is referred to as “Arab” once by the reporter (0:56) and for a few minutes through intermittent on-screen text. The segment also includes repeated references to Órgiva as a place characterized by “interculturality” and “something magical,” and briefly mentions that Qasim is a Basque convert to Islam. It features images of eclectic clients at the restaurant, including Sufis and a lingering shot of two customers clasping each other’s hands—one who looks Northern European and the other sub-Saharan African. The segment also includes shots of the chef at Baraka preparing food, and stating that he has been in Órgiva for 14 years and feels like he is “at home [como en mi casa]” (2:28–2:30). But given his physical appearance and fluent Spanish, and the fact that his Maghrebi origins aren’t mentioned (though some restaurant diners are identified as French), his background remains ambiguous. The reporter praises the restaurant’s commitment to “that which is autochthonous, local, authentic,
and organic [lo autóctono, lo local, lo auténtico, y lo ecológico]” (1:43–1:48) and closes by noting that this food is “seasoned with the best of our culinary inheritance [aderezada con lo mejor de nuestra herencia culinaria]” (3:53). Thus, the segment emphasizes these dishes’ authenticity, without specifying whether they are authentically Arab or Andalusian, and claims them as part of “our” culinary tradition, which, given the title of the show and its target audience can be understood as a reference to the cuisine of Andalucía. The result is an ambiguous melding of Arab and Andalusian, and of past and present, that doesn’t mention that these recipes were not necessarily prepared in al-Andalus and that Spain’s more recent contact with Arab-Maghrebian cuisine results from its colonial entanglement with the Maghreb and from Maghrebi cooks, whether in immigrants’ fast-food kebab shops, or in the tea houses and high-end restaurants in Granada, Córdoba, and elsewhere, that try to create a Moorish experience for tourists.

The unquestioned jump from contemporary Arab cuisine to authentically Andalusian cuisine erases the differences between the cuisine of al-Andalus and that of the contemporary Arab world, and the difference between both of these and contemporary Andalusian cuisine. Although a few interviewees mention that no alcohol is served at Baraka, in this narrative no mention is made of the absence of pork—an essential ingredient in contemporary Andalusian cuisine. By vaguely referencing the maintenance of culinary traditions while emphasizing that Baraka’s dishes are local, organic, and authentic, and that the restaurant is the center of the convergence of many races and cultures in Órgiva, the segment makes no attempt to explain the relationship between the cuisines of different historical periods and regions, let alone the power relations that are part of foodways. Instead, it pairs convivencia-washing with green-washing and uses the rhetoric of authenticity and sustainability to present contemporary Arab food as “organically” Andalusian. This type of erasure becomes stronger in a Moroccan tea-service scene in the Órgiva episode of the show Radio Gaga.

Thus far, the only broad audience television series to dedicate an entire, longer-format episode to Órgiva is the highly popular Spanish
digital television series *Radio Gaga*, available on demand from Movistar’s Movistar+, the largest subscription television provider in Spain. *Radio Gaga* features two witty, yet warm, hipsters, Quique Peinado and Manuel Burque, who visit different communities in Spain with a camper trailer that doubles as a radio station. Upon arrival, they set up localized radio transmission to connect with community members and spend two days drawing them in to share their perspectives on the locale and their life stories, which are heard locally via radio, but are also filmed for the television audience. In addition to what the participants say inside the camper or at the standing microphone in front of it, many are filmed in scenes from their daily lives as they narrate more of their experiences. As seen on screen during the show’s opening: “They’ll create 48 hrs. of radio searching for the soul and soundtrack of the place [Harán 48 Hs de radio buscando el alma y la banda sonora del lugar]” (00:42).

The 4th episode in the 2nd season of *Radio Gaga* offers a 56-minute multi-media narrative about Órgiva. The episode, first aired on May 3, 2018, portrays the town as a place where people can rebuild their shattered lives, find spiritual fulfillment, and/or escape from the modern rat race in a tolerant space that is, as Quique Peinado puts it, “the theme park of religions and good vibes [el parque temático de las religiones y las energías]” (29:08). As they begin transmitting radio from their camper set up in the town’s main pedestrian plaza (Plaza Alpujarra), among their opening remarks Manuel Burque says: “The door of the camper is open. Why? So that you’ll enter [. . .] and tell us what makes Órgiva special. Why don’t people leave here? [La puerta de la caravana está abierta. ¿Para qué? Para que entréis [. . .] y nos contéis qué tiene de especial Órgiva. ¿Por qué la gente no se va de aquí?]” (3:58–4:08). Among those who come forward and are featured in the episode are orgiveños and transplants from other parts of Spain who are rebuilding their lives after trauma or addiction. Fernando, a former drug addict from elsewhere in Andalucía, visits the camper and responds to Burque’s question by saying: “The people who sort of aren’t interested in the system [que pasan del sistema un poco], well, they hide here. And that’s what’s special about it” (4:15–5:21). This
point is emphasized when, as occurs at the end of most of the participants’ visits to *Radio Gaga*’s camper, one of the show hosts asks Fernando for his musical request. Fernando asks them to play “Society” by Eddie Vedder and as this haunting, lyrical anti-establishment anthem plays via the local radio transmission, viewers see the hosts warmly saying good-bye to Fernando and scenes of Órgiva’s eclectic inhabitants.

Later, a trio of women—one from Madrid, one from England, and one from Germany—approach the standing microphone outside the camper; the Spaniard explains that, having come from elsewhere alone to raise children in Órgiva, they had to create a new family:

> It’s also hard to live here. Because we’ve all left our families and we’ve made our own family among ourselves, right? But, for example, those of us who are single moms raising our kids, we’ve had to set things up among our friends. There’s a family bond there, like, we’re like sisters, you know [Es duro también vivir aquí. Porque todos hemos dejado nuestras familias y nos hemos hecho nuestra propia familia entre nosotros, no. Pero, por ejemplo, las que hemos criado hijos solas lo hemos tenido que montar entre amigas. Allí hay un vínculo familiar como, somos como hermanas, sabes] (44:03–44:20).

The theme of family ties continues with a young family that is preparing to move from Malaga to the commune of Beneficio in order to leave their jobs and spend more time with their children. The episode closes with Peinado saying that Órgiva demonstrates that one can always start over again, reinvent oneself: “one can always, always, always, start from zero . . . [siempre, siempre, siempre, se puede empezar de cero . . .]” (56:34–56:40).

The theme of reinvention in Órgiva is also presented via a few of the converts to Islam; one in particular also addresses estrangement. During one of the episode’s testimonies regarding a spiritual journey—the theme of existential estrangement, that which drives the convert to embrace Islam—is connected to being a stranger and is intertwined with a statement that highlights the episode’s failure to
mention Maghrebi migration. Viewers first meet the convert Sonia, who has taken the Muslim name Suniya, through her statement about her feelings of estrangement/strangeness, which is filmed in an olive grove:

Feeling like a weirdo is a sensation that I had until I found my spiritual family and then . . . everyone was a weirdo, I wasn’t the only one anymore. I think those of us that are converts, the Muslims by birth see us as weirdos and those that haven’t converted see us as weirdos. So we’re the weirdos and then you feel very bundled up and accompanied by weirdos [Sentirme bicho raro es una sensación que he tenido hasta que he encontrado mi familia espiritual y allí ya . . . todos eran bichos raros, ya no era la única. Creo que los que somos conversos, los musulmanes de nacimiento nos ven bichos raros y los que no se han convertido nos ven bichos raros. O sea que somos los bichos raros y entonces te sientes muy arropado y acompañado por bichos raros] (13:33–14:00).

This segment of the episode is significant for two reasons. First, Suniya describes a process whereby she felt estranged from society—strange on the inside—and this led her to make a life choice: conversion to Islam, that, while it provided spiritual solace and enrichment, and the comfort of a community of fellow “bichos raros,” also marked her externally as a “weirdo.” By resolving her feelings of estrangement, she became a stranger in the eyes of both Muslims by birth and non-convert Spaniards. Unlike immigrants and others who are marked as different, the convert chooses a path that marks him or her as strange in order to resolve inner estrangement. In this sense, a preexisting sense of difference becomes externalized, but within the spiritual community found in Órgiva, Suniya feels at home. Secondly, the way that the scene presents non-convert Muslims is striking because, although Spain has a high number of North African Muslim migrants and their presence is the polemical subject of media and public discourse, in Suniya’s statement, at least as it is edited for the episode, the word “immigrant” is never used.
As John Lennon’s “Imagine,” the song that Suniya requested and dedicated to all those who had come to live in the valley of Órgiva, is fading out, the episode shows a man arriving at the camper with a tray of Moroccan tea. When this participant with a beard, long nose, and olive-toned skin enters the camper and introduces himself as “Amin,” Peinado finds a cleverly subtle way to establish whether the guest is a convert to Islam or whether he is of Arab/Maghrebi origin, without having to mention the latter possibility. Peinado asks Amin to say his last names as well because he (Peinado) loves last names. The guest’s last names are both clearly Hispanic and this identifies him as, in all likelihood, a convert. The conversation then unfolds with the hosts’ questions about how long the guest has been called “Amin,” what the name means, and what Muslim names Amin can propose for them—without ever acknowledging other “Amins” in Spain with different kinds of last names. Later scenes filmed outside the camper offer Amin’s story of recovery from childhood trauma via conversion to Islam and a new life in Órgiva.

Like other converts featured in the episode, Amin recounts his journey toward spiritual fulfillment, but never addresses the Moroccaness of his tea service (a silver teapot with short Maghrebi-style glasses filled with tea and mint). A perceptive viewer might notice that Amin is wearing an embroidered tunic similar to that worn by the Café Baraka employees seen in earlier scenes of the episode, and (correctly) place him as a waiter from that restaurant. Later scenes do show Amin arriving at work at the café, but at no point is the question of potential appropriation or staging of the “Orient” for customers even touched upon. That is, the episode never mentions either the topic of Spain’s historical links to North Africa, or its current migratory links. In keeping with this, the scene with Amin in the camper closes with Peinado raising his Moroccan tea glass and leading the others in an Arabic toast: “As-sahha!” This scene transitions to footage of the sun rising over Órgiva with another convert to Islam belting out the Arabic call to prayer. The religion, language, and cultural accoutrements of North Africa—a large area of which was under Spanish colonial
control until 1976—are present in the episode, but not named as such. Thus, *Radio Gaga* portrays and participates in cultural appropriation with no reference to the 19th- and 20th-century Spanish colonial relationship with North African cultures, or the migrants from those cultures whose presence in Spain is well known, and hotly debated.

Within this selective portrait, Órgiva’s tolerance is emphasized, alongside the inverted symbolic value of jamón in the town. The last group of visitors to the camper is a trio of teenage girls, one of whom is Suniya’s daughter, Maryam (who is not dressed in typical Sufi attire). Peinado brings up the topic of body piercings because earlier Suniya mentioned Maryam’s desire to get one, and Maryam explains that she had had one before. When he asks what happened to her piercing, her friends jokingly act out her father forcing her to take it off at knifepoint: “you see her dad with the ham knife, ‘take that off!’ [ves al padre con el cuchillo de jamón, ‘quitate eso’],” to which Maryam immediately responds “hey, not a ham knife [de jamón, no, eh].” The show hosts build a few humorous comments from this, including Burque saying that her having a ham knife at home would be “an outrage in Órgiva [un escándalo en Órgiva]” (52:17–52:47). Burque then states: “You all seem very tolerant and very activist [Se les ve como muy tolerantes y muy activistas],” and Peinado follows up with “Dude, you have no other choice in this town, if not, you kind of die of boredom [lit., of disgust] if you’re not tolerant [Hombre, no os queda otra aquí en este pueblo, sino, te mueres un poco del asco si no eres tolerante]” (53:47–53:54). One of the three teenagers echoes this by saying that if you are “intolerant,” you won’t be able to leave your house because you’ll be offended by everything (53:54–53:55). Paradoxically, through the reenacted figure of the Muslim convert father not tolerating his daughter’s piercing, the show presents the town’s tolerance as an established fact that is conditioned by the very diversity in the town. Nonetheless, Spain’s iconic jamón, albeit with an inverted cultural value, still functions as a marker of boundaries.

*Radio Gaga’s* narrative of Órgiva as a space of harmonious tolerance and healing purposely or not omits two significant constituents of this Andalusian “global village.” The episode erases the North African immigrants who have chosen to settle in the town and another
group of economic migrants: the orgiveños who have an intimate awareness of emigration as either return migrants or the relatives or friends of émigrés (a topic I return to later).

On the one hand, considering that contemporary Spanish discourses about North African immigration often use the framework of Muslim conquest, and a seemingly still active Christian Reconquista, to present Maghrebi migrants as dangerous conquerors, the complete omission of North African immigrants, as well as the town’s local return migrants, from this television narrative of Órgiva’s tolerance is striking. Given the national context of rising and politicized anti-immigrant sentiment, it is possible that the show’s producers preferred to leave North African immigration and the period when Spaniards were labor migrants (which recurred to some extent in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis) out of the picture to make the show more palatable to a broader audience. In this sense, these two groups of economic migrants would be left out of Radio Gaga’s portrait of Órgiva because they are the uncomfortable truths that would threaten to make the episode unpalatable on a regional and national level. In this reading, economic migration—Spaniards seen as less than European and Maghrebis seen as making Spain less than European—is ignored in favor of a focus on European converts to Islam. In this televisual narrative, tolerance that makes a community feel good about itself is celebrated, while immigration and fragile European identity are too thorny an issue to include in the portrait of the “global village.”

On the other hand, the Radio Gaga series focuses on listening, and certainly its tone is much closer to the caring cleverness of Stewart that to the imperial attitude of Brenan. Due to the show’s format, it is up to the residents whether or not they participate and what they decide to say. Obviously, the most vulnerable (the ones who feel the most “put up with” or tolerated) are not likely to come forward or agree to take part in the show. Thus, if no Maghrebi migrants participated, this in and of itself would be revealing; it signals that they may not have felt secure enough to do so. Either way, this erasure, alongside a Moroccan tea with a toast in Arabic, makes Maghrebi migration the proverbial elephant in the room.
Whether intentional or not, the Radio Gaga episode simplifies the Órgiva story by effectively erasing economic migration and the intertwined issues of class, ethnicity, race, and conceptions of European modernity and civilization from the picture. Taking into account all eight of the visual narratives about Órgiva, only two programs address labor migration and two others reference it obliquely. These four are all from the Andalusian television network RTVA. Este es mi pueblo and Los repobladores highlight Andalusian economic migration, thereby attending to socioeconomic class differences, while the other shows from RTVA, Tierra de sabores and Andalucía Directo, only hint at Maghrebi labor migration elliptically, through the image of a woman in North African hijab and the chef at Café Baraka, respectively. Of these programs, only Los repobladores and Andalucía Directo include or even acknowledge the present-day Sufi presence in the town. None of the other four shows, all aimed at a national, or even international, audience make any reference to Andalusian or Maghrebi labor migration, although they highlight the Sufi presence. Given that only one out of the eight programs (Los repobladores) addresses contemporary Muslimness—whether in the form of European converts or Maghrebian migrants—together with Andalusian labor migration, one can conclude that acknowledging labor emigration as a Spanish experience alongside the presence of Muslims (largely labor immigrants) in Spain is an uncomfortable proposition. The end result is that none of the eight programs address ethnicity, race, and conceptions of European modernity and civilization, although these are certainly part of the lived experience of the town’s residents. In order to present a happy image of effortless tolerance, all eight shows erase or minimize the small but visible Maghrebi contingent and also erase tensions along linguistic lines (primarily Spanish vs. English), substance abuse issues in the town, and friction between the working-class and bourgeois sensibilities of the orgiveños and the more alternative elements of the community. In the process, these accounts of Órgiva miss key dynamics in the town’s cohabitation dynamic and, thus, any deeper understanding of tolerance is also left out of the story.
The terms “multicultural,” “cosmopolitan,” “convivencia”/“convivir,” references to multiple “nationalities,” and—in the case of Andalucía Directo—“interculturality,” recur in all of the visual narratives about Órgiva, except for that of Diario Vice. Yet these same narratives minimize or erase differences and tensions that exist within the town, thus establishing certain experiences as universal and removing from the picture the negotiations and conversations that occur between groups to maintain the level of coexistence present, and the contexts in which coexistence breaks down and a group (the more radical “alternatives”) is publicly rejected. Additionally, the shows’ recourse to the category of nationality creates dissonance with the purported cosmopolitanism, in which one’s identity as a human being and commonality with other humans come before one’s identity based on nationality or another type of grouping. Although sometimes the reference to “nationalities” in the television shows is initiated by the show host, often it is the interviewed orgiveños that introduce the term, or at least maintain it, building on the phrasing of the reporter’s question. This belies the existence of a true cosmopolitan spirit across the town. At the same time, the references to the experiences of Andalusian migrants in Catalonia signal regional andaluz and alpujarreño identities that trump national identity, let alone a cosmopolitan one. Many of Órgiva’s residents—particularly the orgiveños and the British residents—still identify along national and regional lines, not as cosmopolitan citizens of the world.

The televisual narratives about Órgiva represent the town as cosmopolitan, multicultural, and/or as an example of convivencia, and thus implicitly label it as tolerant, but without any clarification, qualification, or questioning of the terms. The Spanish-language verb convivir and the term convivencia are in general usage, outside of contexts related to the concept of la convivencia or the medieval period, with the sense of amicable coexistence. However, because the concept set forth by Américo Castro has been kept in circulation by various contemporary cultural discourses, within contexts remotely linked to al-Andalus and the moriscos, the use of convivir evokes La convivencia. Thus, harkening back to the discussion of civilizational
hierarchies in Chapter 2, the terms used in these television programs serve to identify the town as part of the European modernity and/or local authenticity—the connection to al-Andalus—that the national and regional television networks seek to project as part of their mission to educate and entertain. But they do so without considering the power relations involved, which have to do precisely with the conceptualizations of European, Muslim, and civilized identities. This is an example of what Venegas designates, in reference to Andalusian television, “mass-media costumbrismo, a spectacle that dictates rather than debates collective identity” (144). Through a late modern version of costumbrismo (the 19th-century subgenre of realism focused on portraying and establishing the customs of a specific country or region), these programs reiterate the liberal discourses of tolerance that, as per Brown, are employed to deflect a deeper analysis of political power dynamics.

Living with difference, even in Órgiva, is not effortless. In all eight television narratives, within this mix of national and regional identities, some form of spiritual identity—Catholic, Sufi Muslim, and/or New Age—has a prominent role. And it is precisely at the intersection of religious and place-based identities that a great deal of the negotiation of difference in the town takes place. For some, this is a matter of reconciling Spanish or orgiveño identity with Catholicism vs. agnosticism, atheism, or another spiritual belief system, while for Muslims it is a matter of reconciling this religious identity with European and/or Spanish vs. Arab-Maghrebian identities. In the following chapters, I will delve further into the struggles—and power differentials—involved and how they are negotiated and attenuated.