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# Unsettling Details: the Canonized Mooress in the Quixote

**Keywords / Palabras clave**

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## *Unsettling Details: the Canonized Mooress in the Quixote*

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### **First Salvo, Random Thoughts**

In the preface to The Adventures of Roderick Random, Tobias Smollett asserted that “Cervantes, by an inimitable piece of ridicule, reformed the taste of mankind, representing chivalry in the right point of view, and converting romance to purposes far more useful and entertaining, ... making it assume the sock and point out the follies of ordinary life” (4). Smollett saw himself as a follower of Cervantes (translating the Quixote in 1748), particularly in the way he hoped to stir “that generous indignation

which ought to animate the reader against the sordid and vicious disposition of the world” (4-5). As a Scottish physician who served in the British royal navy, he took the essence of the Quixote and applied it to his own world, resulting in the first full-blown picaresque novel in English.

More compellingly for present purposes, Smollett portrayed in his novel a young woman who believes her father will react violently to her fall from grace, causing her to flee from home. This basic trajectory of “The History of Miss Williams,” the main interpolation in Roderick Random, is, I would argue, a recasting of Cervantes’ interpolated “Captive’s Tale,” which in turn is a crucial point of reference for both novels. Applying Smollett’s “generous indignation” to the Captive’s Tale, then, this essay will focus on the plight of the beautiful Moorish convert Zoraida. If Smollett’s take on Cervantes’ fundamental strategy is correct, readers – “as wide a public as possible,” according to E.C. Riley (115) - should be brought to empathize with and rail against the impossible situation of Zoraida, who cannot openly practice Christianity in Algiers any more than Islam in Spain. As an Algerian devotee of an apparently alien creed, Zoraida is disowned by her father, who immediately has second thoughts. As a Moorish convert in Spain, a morisca, she will, after initial enthusiasm for her conversion has passed, be viewed with suspicion or simply disappear into the landscape. Her personal dilemma shadows the doomed socio-political status of Moors in the Spain of Cervantes.

Reader empathy for Zoraida is more creditable than the black-and-white claim in her letters to the captive – a claim echoed, with no little historical irony, on the streets of England, and aimed wholesale at swarthy Spaniards - that all Moors are untrustworthy and that true Christians keep their promises. When renegades shed rival faiths like so many clothes, the ethics of an age are complicated. Thus, while those who meet Zoraida in the Quixote are quick to praise her person and laud her conversion, a less credulous reader is not quite so eager, despite a natural reticence to doubt the motives of a young woman moved by Christian lessons imbibed in infancy, lessons that once promised the survival of her kind in Spain.

Thus, in an era rife with both Christian and Muslim renegades, the Captive’s Tale problematizes the historical circumstances that lead to the marriages and conversions of convenience depicted in novelas moriscas, leaving the impression (as in many of Spain’s popular morisco narratives) of a spiritual victory won at an incalculable human cost. Zoraida elopes with the Spanish captive Captain Viedma,

leaving her father Agi Morato behind, with his faith intact but much of his wealth in her possession, at least until a Spanish renegade consigns it to the Mediterranean that separates Christendom from heathenish lands. Materially, both sides lose in the end.

At the time Cervantes was composing the Quixote, his nation was grappling with “the disposition” of Christianized Moors – moriscos - still present in Spain after the Reconquista. However, “guarantees of cultural and religious freedom that Ferdinand and Isabella had offered the Moors when they surrendered in 1492 were deliberately ignored. By the turn of the century, the Church had instituted baptisms en masse, bringing the Moriscos under the aegis of the Inquisition and provoking a spate of rebellions” (Fuchs Mimesis 49). The Alpujarras uprisings of the late sixteenth century would result in the definitive expulsion of 1609, by which time Cervantes was working on Part II of his novel. However, it should not surprise us that in Part I Cervantes broaches the Moorish question and does so, as we will argue, on a level that is not so much episodic as essential, woven into the very fabric of the text.

This discussion will hold that Cervantes – like Lope de Vega, Pérez de Hita and Mateo Alemán, other towering turn-of-the-century literary figures – adapts romance morisco to his own ends. Lope injects Moorish verses and trysts glossed in his poetry into his dramas (Case 35-67); Pérez de Hita interrogates the historiography of Moorish guerras civiles through romance (Fuchs Mimesis 49-63); and Alemán evokes sympathy for his stranded converts and ideal lovers Ozmín and Daraja (Stone 47-74) [1]. Yet here we will follow Smollett’s lead and argue that Cervantes acknowledges an immanent, intricate cultural heritage as he invents the modern novel by creating uncertainty and vulnerability – humanity – in his characters as well as his readers [2]. The Quixote itself, as part of the modern canon, is often read as a reflection of essentially Spanish values, yet what we will pursue here, by attention to the Captive’s Tale, is Cervantes’ awareness that some of those values originate in a defeated culture that is as central to the novel as it was to Spain, i.e., both central and marginal at the same time. We will first make our case by describing Cervantes’ deployment of satire as a tool for cultural critique, framing his novel in moments of Moorish chivalry. These will lead us to the romantic tales of Part I into which the Captive’s Tale insinuates itself, destabilizing reader hopes for a conventional happy outcome, or “canonization.” After that, as the Captive’s Tale revisits a legendary site of Spanish/Moorish history,

we will examine the way in which renegades muddy the waters that separate Christianity from Islam, before finally considering the paradox of essence and alterity co-existing in the text and the nation.

### **Firing the Canon: from Courtly to Cultural Values**

Cervantes explicitly states that the Quixote is a satire of the novelas de caballería that turn the brains of its hero inside out, so it is only natural that the novel should trot out the tropes of that genre built around idealistic quests and courtly love. Consequently, a just-knighted Don Quixote cites chivalric narratives at the end of his first sally, uttering the gnomic “Yo sé quien soy” while asserting his identity against the backdrop of those popular fictions dismissed by the narrator as “no más verdadera que los milagros de Mahoma” (I, v). What at first may seem a formulaic swipe at chivalric novels by way of Islam, however, is itself a conventional falsehood. Mohammed, as those conversant with Islam (such as Cervantes, five years a captive in Algiers) would know, performed no miracles - his exalted status was based upon the series of annunciations from Gabriel later codified as the Qu’ran. In this light, the Prophet was not so much a pagan impostor as a human precursor to the reification of Mary, who is called a saint by Islam’s holy book (just as Abraham, Moses, the Buddha and Jesus are called prophets). Only later did an oral tradition about Mohammed emerge (hadith), and some of these do indeed describe miracles. In parallel fashion, there are truths to be found in those fantastical chivalric narratives that are the key to Don Quixote’s identity, but only if they are traced to their real-world origins and contexts [3].

In case this subtle inversion is beyond the ken of many readers (including the pre-Cide Hamete narrator of the novel), the ironic critique of chivalry as apocryphal along the lines of Islamic heresy is immediately taken up again. After a brief flight of fancy into the Christian milieu of the knight Valdovinos and the Marqués de Mantua, Don Quixote finds that words used by the captive Moor Abindarráez to Rodrigo de Narváez in the Abencerraje are more better suited to his situation, although the unnamed narrator clearly feels that such tales are useless - “no parece sino que el Diablo le traía a la memoria los cuentos acomodados a los sucesos” (I, v). Nevertheless, our hero tells the bewildered labrador who is simply trying to take him back home, “Sepa vuestra merced, señor don Rodrigo de Narváez, que esta hermosa Jarifa es ahora la linda Dulcinea del Toboso” (I, v), in a stroke elevating the

labrador to the ranks of nobility, aligning himself with a legendary Moorish knight, and making Dulcinea a latter-day counterpart of the beloved Mooress Jarifa. Although many have claimed that Don Quixote espouses a brand of secularized Christianity through the novel, here are broad hints that his code derives from other sources as well; the high-low satire slipped in at this very early stage thus moves us to pay close attention to other Moorish incursions into the text.

In light of the known continuities between Moorish culture and courtly love in Europe, such small jokes may at first seem harmless. The novel's fundamental dynamic with readers, however, is consciously complex. Leo Spitzer outlines the traditional scholarly wisdom about how the novel relates to readers:

The novel-of-chivalry-to-end-all-novels-of-chivalry must adopt a particular technique: it must allow the story to unfold as if for the enjoyment of the credulous reader, at the same time suggesting slyly the reading of the critic-author, which will often consist only of an ironical underscoring, whereby he achieves an original creation composed of ingredients borrowed from the works criticized: a re-creation of the old subject matter. ("Significance" 119)

However, when these re-creations are left unresolved, as we shall see, the credulous reader is pushed (insistently, as Don Quixote treats the uncomprehending labrador) to become a critic-author of another sort. To put it in Baroque musical terms, the reading Spitzer describes is like a canon – a single theme played against itself at either a higher or a lower register. But what interests us is more fugue-like: elusive and multi-voiced, yet able to stretch the limits of attentive eyes and ears (Hofstadter 8-10). In the visual arts, José Antonio Maravall calls it anamorphosis, "a procedure wherein the incomplete serves as the means for leading to a state of suspension, to the public's active intervention, and to contact with and psychological action upon this public, thus inclining it toward certain desired objectives" (218). Cervantes' novelistic technique has, more to the point, been compared to the arabesques of Islamic art (McGaha "Don" 163-4), and we wish to indicate some of the substance behind that narrative strategy.

A reader's expectation is either fulfilled or frustrated by texts, and when the latter is the case, an array of contradictions not bound exclusively within the text, but present in the world outside of it, may be exposed. Riley has noted the inherent relativism of Cervantes' aporia: "Detaching himself from what he writes, Cervantes puts mutually contradictory ideas together; neither affirming nor denying, he chooses both and chooses neither. This makes sympathy and criticism possible simultaneously" (31). Thus, early on, the novel again makes a move from literary to more popular culture, binding them still closer together. The springboard for Don Quixote's delusions unexpectedly leads us away from the chivalric canon found in his library (Orlando Furioso, Tirante el Blanco, Amadís de Gaula) and gestures towards a derivative, popular sub-genre found among prose passages of Montemayor's La Diana. These are spared from burning by the barber and the priest, who says of the work: "quédesele en hora buena la prosa, y la honra de ser primero en semejantes libros" (I, vi). Although the primacy of La Diana among novelas pastoriles is undeniable, the most remarkable "first" of this work is its interpolation, in editions after 1561, of the foundational novela morisca known as El Abencerraje. That novella retells the story of the aforementioned Abindarráez and Jarifa (already well-known from poetic treatments), evincing "una actitud de manifiesta simpatía hacia lo musulmán en cuanto exponente de una cultura no cristiana, pero adornada de los más altos valores humanos" (Márquez Villanueva 244). This text set off a wave of maurofilia in the late sixteenth century (Menéndez Pidal 26-31), exploited, as mentioned, by Pérez de Hita in his Guerras civiles de Granada and Mateo Alemán in Guzmán de Alfarache. Yet these Moorish models of empathy, appearing amid "refinadas aristocracias intelectuales" over three generations after the Reconquest (Márquez Villanueva 244) themselves emerged from a largely oral ballad tradition – the romance morisco – revived in written form by Lope in the late 1500s [4].

One of the most famous poems in the oral tradition prior to Lope, the "Romance de Abenámar," turns on the reply given the king of Spain by the personified city of Granada when he proposes to marry her: "Casada soy, rey don Juan,/ casada soy, que no viuda;/ el moro que a mí me tiene/ muy grande bien me quería." She is already taken, already loved dearly, but the reader may easily foresee that she will fall [5]. Although unwed in the Quixote, Zoraida is indubitably loved by her father in Moorish lands, and in this sense the lines from the romance above foreordain an outcome from the safe distance of historical inevitability – the Moors will lose, Christian Spain will rise.



Anyone conversant with history knows that Granada will fall, but only a naïve reader will assume the certainty of the baptism and marriage of Zoraida in the early seventeenth century. Her historia will therefore remain tantalizingly incomplete (as will, ultimately, Sancho Panza's, since we do not know what life he will lead after the death of Don Quixote). Thus, the figure of Zoraida appears in Cervantes' novel against the backdrop of a poetic form being adapted into prose in the late sixteenth century. The image projected in these treatments, however, is patently false, as *moros y cristianos* were presented in a hyperbolic, pseudo-epic manner (comparable to the depiction of indios in Ercilla's La Araucana): "Through Western Christian eyes Moslems were assumed to share the culture of knighthood, honor and dueling. In fact in real life this was not the case" (Hahn "Moors" 27). A public in Cervantes' Spain is increasingly literate and aware of the grim realities of morisco life in Spain, and for this reason, perhaps, turns to prose treatments for alternative accounts of common histories, rather than to romanticized high-culture versions of the past. As Fuchs notes, "Hardly any popular ballads were written about the Rebellion in Alpujarras – the events, like the unfulfilled conquest in Chile – were too close, too raw, too unresolved to be written comfortably" (Mimesis 62).

The flagging fame of pseudo-historical verse of this type at the time of the Quixote's composition is evidenced by the fact that the Romancero General of 1600 included dozens of romances moriscos, while the one of 1605 had only four (Menéndez Pidal 160). Still, Cervantes folds the open-ended nature of the ballad form into his prose, pointing to a historical lack in lieu of the sort of manifest destiny that typically depicts chivalrous Moors becoming Christians "sin apremio ni catequesis de nadie" (Márquez Villanueva 245). Menéndez Pidal saw the decline of maurofilia as a reaction against the unreality of a genre that left "real" Spain out of the picture, but in fact the opposite was true: no one, especially the guardians of courtly culture, wanted to be reminded of noble Moors when those still struggling to survive were about to be bundled out of the country.

In this way, "canonization" becomes a requirement if Moors are to be part of official culture. The romances fronterizos of the Reconquista idealize secular love and fraternity among Moors, making them acceptable Others, but after 1492 Spain will not have them unless converted, and after 1609 will not have them at all [6]. But Cervantes, precisely at the time that Moors disappear from the romancero, revives them in prose in an eleventh-hour appeal to all readers on their behalf [7]. Zoraida is,

historically speaking, suspended between these two great crises of Moors under Catholic rule. Her story is also stretched between official and popular culture, and clashes with the strict canon of Catholicity: what do we do with a sincere Muslim convert?

To return for a moment to the literary inquisition undertaken in Don Quixote's library, we may perceive there a turning away from canonical (i.e., orthodox), bucolic high culture (Montemayor's Diana in its entirety) towards a prosaic outside world (those fragments of the text that are saved from the fire) that is still determined by other facets of Spain's history. Within the Quixote, self-appointed censors famously purge books deemed offensive from Don Quixote's library, an event commonly taken to be a tragicomic auto-da-fe, a crime against heretical books-as-people (Riley 112) [8]. However, horrific as this is, a closer historical correlative to the book-burning was systematically undertaken during the Reconquista:

To eliminate all copies of the Koran from the formerly Muslim areas of the peninsula once the Moors were driven out, the Catholic church and state ordered the wholesale destruction of all Arabic manuscripts. The book burners' success was virtually complete, and the only manuscripts that survive are those carried to safer havens. (Bloom 89)

Such a holocaust suggests how remarkable it is that the "original" Arabic manuscript of the Quixote survived, especially in light of the fact that "scarcely a novel of chivalry was in fact banned by the Inquisition" (Riley 98). This, then, is a relic unearthed and translated for Spaniards, a dangerous book that consciously threatens the status quo, but must do so in a way that permits survival amid official disapproval. The Captive's Tale alerts a reader to this possibility through Zoraida's own precarious, questionable status [9].

Another historical facet of which Cervantes seems to have been aware is a distinct popular culture. A Martín de Riquer footnote to the early chapter in which Don Quixote alludes to the Abencerraje notes that the events in it seem to have been inspired by an anonymous play entitled the "Entremés de los romances," underscoring the degree to which chivalric narrative, having shed its epic trappings, permeated popular culture of the day. In this sense, an entire public was Quixote-like in its ability to recall chivalric episodes to fit most any occasion – it had its *own* chivalric canon, beyond that of

officialdom. Even Sancho - though initially presented as a voluble bumpkin on the order of the labrador – will (by the end of Part II) demonstrate his knowledge in advice on how *not* to rescue Don Gregorio from captivity among the Moors:

Dijo Don Quixote a don Antonio que el parecer que habían tomado en la libertad de don Gregorio no era bueno, porque tenía más de peligroso que de conveniente, y que sería mejor que le pusiesen a él en Berbería con sus armas y caballo; que él le sacaría a pesar de toda la morisma, como había hecho don Gaiferos a su esposa Melisendra.

- Advierta vuesa merced – dijo Sancho, oyendo esto – que el señor don Gaiferos sacó a su esposa de tierra firme y la llevó a Francia por tierra firme; pero aquí, si acaso sacamos a don Gregorio, no tenemos por dónde traerle a España, pues está el mar en medio. (II, lxiv)

Sancho eventually becomes a common-sense reader, a counterpart to an unlettered listener or upwardly mobile literate outside of the novel, whose grasp of the real world potentially overtakes his master's admirable fantasies, and who recognizes that Moorish tales still apply to his contemporary Spanish reality. Of course, Sancho does not come by this knowledge from reading, or even by paying attention to his well-read master. He watches - carefully we may surmise - Maese Pedro's puppet show about the rescue of Melisendra from the Moors, a very popular tale, as we learn from its introduction: "Esta verdadera historia que aquí se representa es sacada al pie de la letra de las corónicas francesas y de los romances españoles que andan en boca de las gentes, y de los muchachos, por esas calles" (II, xxvi). The intrinsic tension between a puppet-show version of a story that promises to be faithful to competing written and oral versions of distinct cultural origins cannot be resolved. Indeed, the show ends only when Don Quixote destroys the puppets, wildly attacking the Moors but disfiguring instead Christian monarchs, including an emperor, and cutting the nose off of Melisendra – a classical sign of dishonor. Here is a parable for Spain, lashing out at others but hurting itself. Furthermore, the knight thinks he understands Moorish culture from his own high-culture readings, correcting the narrator of the puppet show on more than one score. But Don Quixote also reveals an incomplete knowledge when he points out, rightly, that bells are not to be found in Moorish "campaniles." He fails to realize, apparently, that their primary function, the call to prayer, is

performed by a human voice, not the drums and tambourines he cites. It is an understandable omission, for such voices have long been silenced in Spain.

To summarize, then, two chivalric moments – Don Quixote’s invocation of Abindarráez and Sancho’s recollection of Don Gaiferos – are Moorish bookends to a work that is often said to espouse secularized Christianity. What are they doing here, and how can the gap between them, as well as between genres and cultures separated by time and distance – “el mar en medio,” in Sancho’s words (quoting a Lope romance) – be bridged?

### **The Inn Crowd: a Captive’s Audience**

As Dominick Finello observes, “Broadly speaking, much of the Quijote, part I, integrates a complex mosaic of people and events through so-called romantic stories” of various genres (120): pastoral (Marcela, who chooses the freedom of the fields over the bonds of loveless marriage to Grisóstomo), sentimental (Cardenio and Luscinda), cortesana (Don Fernando and Dorotea) and exemplary (Anselmo and Camila in “El curioso impertinente”). Stories of couples separated and reunited dot the text and, as Part I draws to a close, Cervantes seems to pave the way for the resolution of these romances at the inn transformed into a castle by the wizardly Ur-author Cide Hamete Benengeli.

In this regard, it is perhaps not untoward to note the linguistic link between the verb casar - to wed - and the noun casa, as implied by the conflated image of bride and city in the “Romance de Abenámar” cited above: “Casada soy, rey don Juan....” To be married is to be housed, to be settled in a stable condition, and this is the situation to which Zoraida aspires, yet it is also the one she chooses to abandon - like Don Quixote, she cannot simply remain at home and be the person society expects her to be. Moreover, resonant with the designation mora, or Mooress, is the less common (although Portuguese-dominant) verb morar, meaning to live or reside, derived from muro or wall, again the obvious synecdoche for a house, a city, a secure place [10].

Here the text comes full circle to implicate its heroes and heroines. Comically, the enchanted inn is defined in a reader’s imagination by those walls above which Sancho is tossed, and from which Don Quixote is dangled, but it is also an enclosure for more radical transgression, starting with the

knighting of Quixote by prostitutes, and carrying on through a series of trysts and elopements, realistic, artificial and absurd. Located in the midst of a wilderness, “la venta de la Sierra Morena,” with its linguistic hint of Moorishness, offers to all comers a temporary haven from the eyes of gossips and snitches [11]. Symbolically, it is the wall to which threatened, unsheltered women such as Luscinda must cling like ivy, as she asserts when confronting the nobleman who has abandoned her.

Dejadme, señor Don Fernando, por lo que debéis a ser quien sois, ya que por otro respeto no lo hagáis, dejadme llegar al muro de quien yo soy yedra, al arrimo de quien no me han podido apartar vuestras importunaciones, vuestras amenazas, vuestras promesas ni vuestras dádivas. Notad como el cielo, por desusados y a nosotros encubiertos caminos me ha puesto a mi verdadero esposo delante. (I, xxxvi)

She expresses a frustrated desire for independence and demands to be restored to respectability. In accordance with his titled position of honor, Don Fernando must act to rescue this exposed woman, to marry her as Viedma promises to marry Zoraida, to save her as Don Quixote strives to save Dulcinea.

This inn, a walled, non-specific sanctuary, is part of Cervantes’ core vision in Part I, explicitly referred to as a kind of heaven-on-Earth, a place where couplings can be finalized: “habían llegado a aquella venta, que para él [Cardenio] era haber llegado al cielo, donde se rematan y tienen fin todas las desventuras de la tierra” (I, xxxvi). Yet despite such promises, a woman like Zoraida will remain an outsider in this Spain, because of a tainted pedigree [12]. Her end, unlike that of the bride of the “Romance de Abenámbar,” is unclear. She lingers tantalizingly on the verge of marriage, a sacrament that seems certain to be denied the more purely loved and ironically named Ana Félix in Part II. The ending of the Captive’s Tale is thus particularly bittersweet, promising but not realizing the baptism and marriage of its heroine: [13] Zoraida’s uncertain status is akin to that of a modern immigrant seeking political asylum or citizenship through marriage [14]. Precisely that kind of marriage is intended between Christian and Moorish Spain – ongoing, but, sadly, destined for no good.

A contemporaneous reader of the Quixote Part I will observe that the novel concerns itself as much with the fate of wandering lovers as with the peregrinations of Sancho Panza and his master – with a broader vision of Spanish society (a la picaresca) than just that of knight and squire. In many ways,

their Part I adventures can be considered a mere scaffold upon which Cervantes hangs other genres. The courtly narrative, then, leads not only out onto Spain's landscape, but also to its other literary landscapes, especially those subgenres intended for broad public consumption.

Through the whirligig of fictions about lovers lost and reunited in Part I, we wish to trace the axis that makes its appearance even before Sancho does, namely the question of Moorishness that shadows these stories. Just after Don Fernando is reunited with Luscinda and Cardenio with Dorotea, three more troubled couples appear at the inn: Captain Viedma and Zoraida, the mozo de mulas and hija del oidor, and the mozo de cabreros and Leandra. The outcome of each relationship turns on a motherless daughter who risks losing her father's approval. While the triangulated couples deserve scrutiny as structural underpinnings of the closing chapters of Part I [15], we will focus on only the first one, i.e., on the story of Viedma and Zoraida.

As many before us have been, we are struck by the prominence of the interpolation that begins what may be termed the final movement of Part I, and so will make it the key to our reading of popular genres within the Spanish-Moorish context. Just at the moment when the aforementioned reunions are securely and satisfyingly in the reader's grasp, Cervantes presents the "Historia del cautivo" or Captive's Tale, thus imposing reality - underscored by reference to his own five years captivity in Algiers - onto the romances, following Don Quixote's lead and taking literature out to meet the world. Cervantes seems aware of what he does, and even slightly apologetic, when the captive warns his audience that his tale "no había de ser tal, que les diese gusto que él deseaba," but goes on to promise "un discurso verdadero a quien podría ser que no llegasen los mentirosos que con curioso y pensado artificio suelen componerse" (I, xxxviii). The diction of this passage is remarkable not only because it sets up a contrast with the patently fictional romantic episodes that precede it in the text, but also with Don Quixote's most renowned long speech, his high-flown "Discurso sobre armas y letras" that occurs just prior to the tale. Here again, the Moorish theme is set up as the possible real substance of the novel, in opposition to rhetorical flourishes, or cliché-bound narratives.

To some degree, this correlation has been observed by critics. The tale is presented as a kernel of social truth and a dose of reality, a riposte to idealism that is "highly historicized...to counter...outrageous chivalric fictions" (Hahn "Capitán" 269). Then, in what Márquez Villanueva

dubs the “economía irónica del Quijote,” for example, the captive briefly relates his reasons for becoming a soldier (the economic straits of a profligate parent of the low nobility) and his ups and downs in battles in Europe and North Africa prior to his capture. In Algiers, Captain Viedma is reduced to circumstances in which freedom is no longer dependent on trusty arms, but on less reliable letters that prove nobility, promise rescue or - in the case of returning renegades - attest to hidden Christianity. Texts with real-world consequences trump swords, and, miraculously for Viedma, letters with money do arrive, but not from any expected source. The poor captain is to be rescued by a daughter of the local Moorish elite who has converted to Catholicism. David Quint states, “In Zoraida’s eyes, the captive is a knight in shining armor who will carry her away... from her own captivity in Islamic error and bring her to Christianity” (62), but this, as Quint himself admits, is an oversimplification of a compact between fellow inmates. Viedma is at least as indebted to her for his ransom, and their apparent freedom and devotion to each other are fraught with doubt and deception. Since the plan is for them to escape to Spain with her father’s riches, they are in effect co-conspirators.

The money, which Zoraida is stealing from her father, is to be used to ransom Captain Viedma and to purchase a boat for their flight from Algiers.... Buying one’s way out of captivity is hardly heroic. Captain Viedma’s subsequent stealing Zoraida and her father’s money may be hardly more so: “Christians, Christians, thieves, thieves!” the old man cries before he too is carried off - ... - a potential hostage, as he supposes, for ransom.... Implicit here is a retrospective critique of the impure motives of Spain’s crusading mission in her great century, a mission that could too easily lose sight of its spiritual goals in favor of material ones - transforming Christians into thieves - and that could end up exchanging money for human lives and liberty, as Cervantes, five years a captive in Algiers, knew all too well. (Quint 66-67)

Therefore, perhaps the most remarkable couple of Part I is found in Cervantes’ semi-autobiographical Captive’s Tale, narrated by Captain Viedma, although the name dominating his story is that of Zoraida [16]. This tale - like the novel and several of its components - springs from a literary and originally oral tradition of the Moorish romance. Through it, Cervantes juxtaposes the Christian and Moorish sides of Spanish history [17].

## Questions of Canonization

Another popular body of literature, hagiography, often holds up the devout convert as exemplary, and sainthood is a typical outcome for a former heathen willing to sacrifice wealth and give her life to the faith. Yet Zoraida's case also complicates this canon, which in any case was never that simple. Intriguingly, the ground rules for sainthood were laid out by the early Church in the same part of the world that produces the *Captive's Tale*: "The fact of true martyrdom, as distinct from either suicide by enthusiasts or the pertinacity of heretics who were not motivated by charity, needed to be established. The area in which controversy about the discernment of true from false martyrdom developed was North Africa" (Farmer xi). This points to the fact that just as North Africa was formerly a Christian stronghold, so (the obvious but unspoken secret goes) Spain was dominated by Islam for centuries.

Hagiography itself was not immune from literary trends in popular culture, including the genre that drove Cervantes' hero to undertake a mad campaign for justice: "The rise of romance in the age of chivalry deeply influenced" the writing of saints' lives (Farmer 2004, xvi). Nevertheless, in the formal process of beatification that might lead to canonization, the foremost criterion for sainthood were personal testimonials to acts of faith, hope and charity - reliable oral accounts comparable to the aforementioned hadith. In this system, public perceptions might insert themselves into official accounts of exemplary lives, or even supersede them and, indeed, throughout Catholic Europe localities were brimming over with saints who had not received the formal stamp of approval. The reader of the *Captive's Tale* might judge Zoraida along these lines and find her wanting [18].

In response to Reformation denunciations of abuses "including deception and fraud" (Farmer xvii), the Catholic Church moved to take formal papal control of the process of canonization in 1602 (Kemp 145) [19], even as Cervantes composed Part I of the *Quixote*. Undoubtedly, then, a looming question in his Spain was that of authenticity and its performance to the satisfaction of Church authorities, from local inquisitors to Roman pontiffs. Spanish Catholic identity, it could be said, was largely founded on the suppression of history by myth, as in the debatable journey of "Santiago el Matamoros" to Iberia (never fully endorsed by Rome) or, as discussed below, the legend of the fall of the last Gothic king Rodrigo. Furthermore, in Cervantes' day a movement was afoot to gain papal acceptance of the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception, a movement rooted in the cities of what had been Al-Andalus: Sevilla, Córdoba, Granada. This is the fray into which the Moors Zoraida, innocent of all but the most personal religious practice, launches herself.



It would appear that in the Counter Reformation, with Christians fighting each other in Europe and the New World, conversion can only be heroic or mythic by rejecting Islam. The Moorish Zoraida embraces Christianity with fervor, yet the reader's enthusiasm for her conversion is dampened by the way in which she abandons her devoted father. (In modern psychological terms, it seems an act of youthful rebellion, especially considering the fact that she chooses to leave Agi Morato for a man said to be in his forties who will later refer to himself as one who has served her "de padre y escudero y no de esposo" (I, xli) [20].) The exemplum of her conversion fails to override the very unchristian treatment she metes out to her only parent and his more ecumenical consciousness. She says the father she abandons would throw her down a well if he were to learn of her conversion, yet this same man chose a Christian to care for his little girl, and that nanny initiates Zoraida into the cult of the Virgin, whom she calls Lela Marién. If Zoraida's nursemaid is seen as a prophetess in the line of Mary, she must reclaim North Africa from the later heretical transmission of the Qu'ran, and as competing master narratives, Gabriel's revelation to Mohammed may be set against the same angel's biblical visit to Mary [21]. Yet the story of the Nativity (in which travelers seek shelter at an inn, explicitly mentioned by Cervantes) contends with Zoraida's imperfections, as does Mary's immaculate life. These familiar stories do not let themselves be reconciled easily – as exempla might – and so they tend to diminish the value of the Christian inheritance, or at least open it to a partially positive vision of the Moors who have been consigned to Spain's past.

As an exemplum of saintly action, Zoraida's conversion seems equally unstable. The Captive's Tale presents her as a type of foreign-born beata whose vision of faith poses a challenge to the teachings of Church fathers. She is a mystic who escapes into the world that other saintly women of the age (as hermits or nuns) attempt to shun. Nonetheless, her fixation on Mary enables her to explain away deceitful acts towards her father that are otherwise intolerable. We hardly need point out that Tridentine morality emphasized good works over all other shows of piety – "...a los hombres hay que juzgarlos por sus actos y no por convicciones. Y aquí son las obras de Zoraida las que suscitan serias reservas y no las de su padre" (Márquez Villanueva 129) [22].

The Captive's Tale leaves the balance and fates of these competing moralities in doubt because we may only speculate what will ultimately become of Viedma and Zoraida. While the tale may conclude with

a promise of marriage, this has to be put off because the captive's brother, a judge who might preside over the ceremony, must rush off for the New World, where a third brother has carved out a successful life for himself. Thus the marriage remains up in the air, as does Zoraida's baptism, providing only a ghost of closure, as Paul Julian Smith has observed in Derridian terms:

As the narrative ends, the phallic order seems complete once more: the captive will return to his father before the latter dies. And with the imminent conversion of Zoraida/María, religious hermetism is also complete. The women are secluded ("recogidas") in their room, guarded by Don Quixote. But they are awakened by a muleteer who compares himself in a song to Paliurnus, the Virgilian helmsman who will never reach his destination, never achieve a decent burial. In spite of the closure of "The Captive's Tale," the narrative thus at once opens out again, becomes subject to deviation and deferral. (Smith 234-5)

Such a strong, high-culture reading, while compelling, is not essential to an appreciation of the tale's asymmetry. Even if the marriage between Zoraida and Viedma were to come to fruition, that - as any groundling knows - is where the quotidian tragedy of historical circumstance begins. Indeed, the final couple of the *Quixote*'s second part will enact just such a tragedy, reminiscent of a popular ballad, a true-life rebuttal to the comedy of the "Bodas de Camacho." Claudia Jerónima, a daughter of popular culture (her father is the notorious Catalan bandit and sometime puppeteer Roque Guinart), murders her betrothed when she hears, mistakenly, that he is to marry another: "Enamoréme, a hurto de mi padre; porque no hay mujer, por retirada que esté y recatada que sea, a quien no le sobre tiempo para poner en ejecución y efecto sus atropellados deseos" (II, lx). This, too, reflects back on Zoraida, whose "malos deseos" cause her to leave behind father and country to face an uncertain future married to a man she knows only by sight. Although it is a tendency commonly voiced in the novel by both characters and narrators, her susceptibility to surface impressions can only be described as masculine in its tendency to confuse physical beauty and goodness, as opposed to the fickleness conventionally attributed to female characters.

The convergence of the Captive's Tale with religious and secular exempla is decidedly incomplete and unsettling to conventional and official versions of morality [23]. A reader falling into this space is led to re-examine assumptions about canonical tales of captivity and conversion. However, the

juxtaposition of official and popular culture on these questions is not confined to Zoraida's story, just as Moorish culture was not necessarily relegated to the losing side by Europeans.

### **Ransomed Renegades, Opportunistic Converts**

Zoraida is of course not the only convert in the tale, nor are religious exempla the only link with Spain's history and campaign against various infidels. The first convert to be introduced is Viedma's captor, the historical Uchalí, an Italian renegade who became a Muslim, all must agree, for the wrong reason - to wreak vengeance on a Turk who had slapped him when he was a galley slave. Cervantes plays with this scenario, as noted by Riquer: the name Uchalí comes from the Arabic word *uluji*, meaning "renegado europeo al servicio de príncipes musulmanes" (405). Uchalí's motive for abandoning Christianity is so questionable as to recall the well-known hidalgo in *Lazarillo de Tormes* who quit his hometown because, in his eyes, someone failed to treat him with due respect [24]. The petty noble in *Lazarillo* is a social renegade from Castilla la Vieja: "había dejado su tierra no más por no quitar el bonete a un caballero su vecino" (40). Other popular literature of the day gives us the father of Guzmán de Alfarache, an opportunistic renegade if there ever was, exploiting conversion for cash (Stone 65). In this way, conversion and migration are satirized as self-serving social gestures in the era, not simply acts of piety or self-preservation. Yet Cervantes is cautious about coming down in favor of the ethics of one group over the other. Despite the negative literary antecedents, Viedma admits that Uchalí "moralmente fue hombre de bien, y trataba con mucha humanidad a sus cautivos" (I, xl).

Thus the motive for conversion is never as simple as it may appear and the question of renegades is one bound up in desire and deceit: "renegades and captives on both sides of the Christian-Muslim frontier navigate the complex waters of Mediterranean identity, [suggesting] how radically that identity may shift in response to particular locations or repressive contexts" (Fuchs *Passing* 15). Thus Zoraida, conveniently forgetting that she is a Moor herself (and so adopting the false consciousness of Spain), writes that all of them are liars, not to be trusted. Viedma replies that "los cristianos cumplen lo que prometen mejor que los moros" (I, xl), yet the tale muddies the waters, showing renegades who are viewed with suspicion by both sides. In this regard Zoraida contradicts her earlier assertion, pointing out to the captive (as her father listens on) that "... vosotros, cristianos, siempre mentís en cuanto decís, y os hacéis pobres por engañar a los moros" in order to be ransomed for a reasonable price [25].

The question of human worth, of course, cuts to the quick of these romances. Is it to be measured on the basis of pedigree (e.g., the letters of nobility that erroneously condemned Cervantes to five years in the bagnio, but perhaps also gained him preferential treatment), appearance (the physical beauty attributed to all of the novel's interpolated romantic couples), speech ("El discurso sobre armas y letras," e.g.), wealth, faith, or actions? Time and again, the Quixote steers us towards the final option, in accord, here at least, with Tridentine dogma.

Yet in the *Captive's Tale*, some renegades, like the one who wears a crucifix under his shirt, or Agi Morato, who allows his daughter to be nurtured by a Christian, appear to be both Catholic and Muslim at the same time. This is a historical reference: the Barbary Coast of the era is full of Christians who profited from conversion to Islam as pirates or officials in the Ottoman Empire, which did not hesitate to co-opt foreigners into positions of authority. Some of them, Agi Morato, for example, "rose to heights of power undreamed of in so-called civilized nations" (McCrorry 66-7). Despite being deputized in the service of the Ottomans, Agi Morato will allow his daughter to converse with Christians, but as soon as Turkish "canes" appear, he sends Zoraida inside behind locked doors, presumably fearing that her beauty will land her in the harem of the Sultan. Faced with this imperial rival, then, Cervantes suggests that in the Moors Spain has rejected a potential ally in the struggle for regional control. History confirms the cultural divide between Moors and Turks when the latter send only token support for the Alpujarras rebels, not the hordes feared by Spain (Fuchs Mimesis 57).

A reunion of exiled Moors with Spain is further hinted at when a Spanish renegade explains to Agi Morato that Zoraida (afraid to tell her father herself) is "aquí de su voluntad, tan contenta, a lo que yo imagino, de verse en este estado, como el que sale de las tinieblas a la luz, de la muerte a la vida y de la pena a la Gloria" (I, xli). The renegade hopes that by helping Zoraida and the captive to escape, he, too, will be returned "al gremio de la santa Iglesia, su madre, de quien como miembro podrido estaba dividido y apartado, por su ignorancia y pecado" (I, xl). This amputation imagery in the context of the semi-autobiographical tale recalls Cervantes as "el manco de Lepanto," and gives a reader pause. We may compare this renegade's position to that of Zoraida, who is literally motherless. Lack – of closure, of a parent, of a home – points to a theme that readers must pursue in order to resolve, finally, that it is not the conventional faith that matters, but the individual practice of it, whether we call it chivalry, Islam or Christianity – "the juxtaposition of different cultures ensures that certain practices held to be

natural or universal are relativized, denaturalized” (Smith 231). In this case, too, the juxtaposition consciously calls hegemonic views into question among a public who have probably shared an experience quite different from the easy preeminence assumed by Catholic Spain.

Smith has further commented on the slipperiness of the Spanish renegade in the tale, “a marginal creature” to whom Zoraida and Viedma entrust themselves:

Most disturbing is the Murcian renegade, who serves as intermediary between the two cultures, translating Zoraida’s notes to the captive and, later, her conversations with her father. The renegade collects signatures which will guarantee his good faith on his return to Spain; and we are told at the end of the tale that he returns to the Christian group or “gremio” through the offices of the Inquisition. But his very existence suggests duplicity or deviance, the possibility of treacherous translation. Far from guaranteeing good faith, the signatures collected by renegades may be counterfeit: as Derrida suggests, the very fact that a signature can be repeated means that it is subject to unauthorized reproduction. (230)

As a reverse renegade, Zoraida is somewhat taken aback when she finally enters a church and is confronted with various images of the Virgin that, as she is told by the Spanish renegade, may be worshiped equally. “Le dio el renegado a entender lo que significaban, para que ella las adorase como si verdaderamente fueran cada una de ellas la misma Lela Marién que la había hablado” (I, xli). These paintings and statues must seem to be idols in her ken, but the none-too disinterested captive makes an assumption about the character of his beloved: “Ella, que tiene buen entendimiento y una natural fácil y claro, entendió luego cuanto acerca de las imágenes se le dijo” (I, xli). We, however, may entertain doubts about the clarity of mind of a young woman violently, if voluntarily, taken from her home. What is on display here is not only her adaptability, but her vulnerability – as “María” she will soon become just another morisca in a hostile environment [26]. The pursuit of some chimerical Marian ideal is for Zoraida what the island is for Sancho, or Dulcinea is for Don Quixote (Márquez Villanueva 237), with desengaño, the melancholy that comes with mature wisdom, closely attendant upon the near-realization of a long-anticipated goal [27].

Cervantes clearly builds such reservations into the text, as a multiple act of cultural criticism. The Captive’s Tale contrasts Zoraida’s outsider position, the extremity of her exposure and isolation, with

that of Captain Viedma, who after telling his tale to guests at the inn is immediately reunited with one of his brothers, the oidor. Soon thereafter, Zoraida looks on as a compromise is worked out between another wayward couple who have landed at the inn, the singing muledriver and Doña Clara. At this moment, her vulnerability is again evident in the description of her swinging emotions - “Zoraida, aunque no entendía bien todos los sucesos que había visto, se entristecía y alegraba a bulto, conforme veía y notaba los semblantes a cada uno, especialmente de su español, en quien tenía siempre puestos los ojos y traía colgada el alma” (I, xlvi). The narrator’s description calls a reader’s attention to Zoraida’s face, unmediated now by the interpretation of an interested party, and it belies the bipolarity of her situation, created on the basis of what she *thinks* is happening – she is an imperfect reader of her own status, at the mercy of her putative protector in Spain, the captain upon whom she has “hung her soul.” With this, excepting a passing mention of her anticipated baptism, Zoraida disappears from the novel: “As soon as the presumably happy ending is reached and she is incorporated into the ‘normal,’ ‘official’ order, she is silenced and stripped of her power” (Johnson 92). As a morisca, she becomes an invisible part of the Spanish landscape. Note that the words that announced the power of Mary to Zoraida, that she wrote to Viedma, that inscribe her self-made social contract - all are in Arabic, the written traces of which have been eradicated from Spain.

Zoraida’s situation is portrayed as part of both sides of the equation, however – she is not the only character who has to imagine what must be going on. Mixed emotions envelop the returning captive as well, because (recalling that his spendthrift father may have tried to make amends too late in life) he may have no home to offer Zoraida: “el gusto que tengo de verme suyo y de que ella sea mía me le turba y deshace no saber si hallaré en mi tierra algún rincón donde recogella, y si habrán hecho el tiempo y la muerte tal mudanza en la hacienda y vida de mi padre y hermanos, que apenas halle quien me conozca, si ellos faltan” (I, xli). Spain has changed since Viedma left it, especially if one sees a double meaning the words tierra and hacienda, the homeland and patrimony that ought to provide security to his bride, even as her fellow Moors in Spain are about to be deprived of theirs [28].

In the character of Zoraida’s father Agi Morato we encounter yet another character caught between cultures. He is a “personaje rigurosamente histórico; hijo de padres esclavos, había renegado y era una destacada personalidad in Argel” (Riquer 408). His name, “Haji,” indicates a man devout enough to have undertaken the pilgrimage to Mecca, to have fulfilled one of the pillars of his faith, yet his

luxurious estates and pampered daughter do not suggest the lifestyle of a fanatic. Moreover, when he realizes that his daughter has initiated her own elopement to Spain, his first reaction is not to try to kill her, as she had predicted, but to throw himself into the sea to drown – it is his failure that has led to her flight; he has misread his own child of mixed heritage, and the reader should try to avoid falling into the same error.

Comparable irony is felt when Viedma comes in disguise to abduct Zoraida. Agi Morato thinks that his house is being robbed, and it *is* in fact, but it's an inside job, the chief instigator and jewel thief being Zoraida herself. Even when Agi Morato does eventually curse Zoraida's renunciation of him and Islam as motivated by "malos deseos," in the next instant he is begging for her return. His last words, shouted from the shore where the escaping ship has put him off, are all forgiveness, and are the dramatic climax of the tale: "Todo te lo perdono; entrega a esos hombres ese dinero, que ya es suyo y vuelve a consolar a este triste padre tuyo" (I, xli). The alliteration recalls another well-known refrain from Lope's romances - "¿Qué tiene este triste moro?" This one is left with nothing.

Significantly, paternal love is the only love beyond question in the tale, for Zoraida is very fortunate that her captive is a man of honor – not like the Christian who tricks a beautiful young Moorish girl into opening her door for him in the popular romance "La morilla burlada," or, closer to home, the cocky soldier who seduces and abandons Leandra in chapters following the Captive's Tale. Unlike Zoraida, Leandra misjudges a soldier's good looks, is seduced then abandoned, leaving a more sincere suitor (the goatherd Eugenio) to curse his fate and her supposed fickleness. Viedma, an older and more considerate captain, returns Zoraida's love even after he has entered her house and she has lost her treasure to the sea. However, in poetic-symbolic terms, as well as in the social and dramatic terms of the era, she is damaged goods, although Spaniards in the novel seem very willing to overlook this in light of her conversion and her striking beauty. R. M. Flores cites nine instances in which the beauty of Zoraida is noted (91), practically to the point of becoming her epithet. This insistent superficiality pushes a reader to look elsewhere for signs of worth.

Thus, sympathies are gently guided towards Agi Morato, a captive on the escapees' boat: "El, como vio allí a su hija, comenzó a suspirar ternísimamente, y más cuando vio que yo estrechamente la tenía abrazada, y que ella sin defender, quejarse ni esquivarse, se estaba queda" (I, xli). We must differ with

Michael Gerli's description of the lovers' relationship as "characterized by an absence of passion and erotic craving" (53), or what Márquez Villanueva terms its fundamental "frialdad" (120). While their intimacy is not carnal, it is erotically charged from the moment Zoraida's beautiful hand appears from her window to bestow a letter on Viedma (Smith 233), and her adornment in finery and jewels evokes odalisques of Orientalism, as well as those classical poetic images of desire spoofed by Cervantes in "El Licenciado Vidriera" [29].

Simply put, this is bad behavior on the part of the lovers on the boat, and in it Agi Morato sees the confirmation of his paternal fears: "... ni penséis que la ha movido a mudar religión entender ella que la vuestra a la nuestra se aventaja, sino el saber que en vuestra tierra se usa la deshonestidad más libremente que en la nuestra" (I, xli). Márquez Villanueva goes far as to call Agi Morato's the tale's true hero, and in so doing, implies that which we are attempting to make explicit: the novel's basis in Moorishness as possible response to hackneyed Spanish conventions, giving the lie to social fictions such as limpieza de sangre and Old Christianity – we might call the response "moralidad."

Su verdadero héroe sigue siendo (como siempre) el noble moro cautivo, es decir, el desdichado padre de la fugitiva, cuyo dolor carece de remedio humano, pues no está dispuesto a comprarlo al precio de su conversión (todos los caminos llevan a esta Roma). La novela del Cautivo constituye así una invitación al examen de los prejuicios, a descartar salidas fáciles o violentas al problema de la diversidad religiosa, y nada de esto pudo advertirse como es lógico, mientras se pensó que la actitud de Cervantes hacia lo musulmán era cerradamente negativa y cargada de odio, como la de muchos contemporáneos. (Márquez Villanueva 246)

Curiously, just after Agi Morato's attempted suicide, the fleeing ship comes to an inlet called La Cava Rumía, a legendary remnant of Spain's fall to Muslim invaders in 711, which, according to folklore, resulted from a North African woman's seduction by a Gothic, i.e., Old Christian, king. His lament, cited as follows in the Maese Pedro episode of Part II, here remains only an indirectly ironic critique of Spanish history - that is, the history of the Moorish presence - from the realm of popular romance: "Ayer fui Señor de España/ y hoy no tengo una almena/ que pueda decir es mía." It is also another echo (from the other side) of the emotional state of the abandoned renegade Agi Morato.

## **Conclusion: Navigating Multicultural Spain**



As we come to the end of this discussion of the Captive's Tale, let us not forget that the captive is a man anxious to regain a position of honor upon returning home, and must therefore emphasize the chastity of his relationship with the Mooress. Accordingly, textual intersections of a questionable nature, like the one at La Cava Rumía, must be authorially intentional. The tale visits yet another site of rival narratives, as if to call attention to its own contradictions by looking at history from yet another side. Describing the boat journey back to Spain, the captive says, “[L]legamos a una cala que se hace al lado de un pequeño promontorio, o cabo que de los moros es llamado el de la Cava Rumía, que en nuestra lengua quiere decir la mala mujer cristiana; y es tradición entre los moros que en aquel lugar está enterrada la Cava, por quién se perdió España” (I, li). The pejorative “la Cava,” which some have translated less euphemistically as “high-class prostitute,” reminds us that Muslim culture is more likely to blame a woman for exposing herself to dishonor than to blame a man for acting impulsively – for being fickle, in other words. And here again, a specifically literary intervention has been staged. In the Spanish version of the legend, well known from poetic and dramatic treatments, the last Gothic king Rodrigo spies Florinda, the daughter of the Spanish governor of a North African outpost, from his palace window in Toledo as she emerges from her bath, soon becoming so obsessed that he offers to make her his queen. When she declines, he forces the issue, and her father later avenges the violation by allowing Umayyad armies to cross the Mediterranean from his territory – the invasion of 711 ensues.

By Cervantes' time, the bathing that propels this story set in Old Christian Toledo is a tell-tale sign of clandestine Islam that could draw unwanted attention from the Inquisition. While this narrative inverts the way in which Zoraida falls for Viedma (spying him from the window of her luxurious abode), passionate obsession and a father's call for vengeance are at the heart of each story. Gerli, who, despite a nod to Cervantes' “remarkable blurring of the boundaries between the sacred and the secular” (41) and a “reigning confusion of national and cultural identities with forms of spirituality” (43), views this portion of the narrative in absolute terms, and describes the reversal provocatively:

[T]he basic territorial pattern of the legend of La Cava is inverted in the Captive's tale when the Christian spirit in the person of Zoraida and the captain is restored from the direction of Africa. Just as the cataclysmic

Moorish invasion signaling the damnation of the Gothic people originates with a cry for blood on the dark shores of that continent, so too the promise of their final redemption in the person of an Arab woman. (55)

In this light, Gerli maintains that “Zoraida’s abandonment of her father in sight of La Cava’s tomb, more than a cruel act or a personal tragedy, constitutes a remembrance and exaction of a patrimonial debt – an act in the name of faith symbolizing the rejection of a patrimony of carnality, infidelity, vengeance and enslavement” as embodied by Agi Morato (55). Gerli accepts Zoraida’s conversion as complete, and grants her potentially redemptive status within Spain – she has saved the good Christian Viedma and their union will signify a better nation in the making.

Yet variant versions of the legend of La Cava vie for authenticity in both popular and esoteric culture. Our reading would place less emphasis on a sort of clash of civilizations, and more upon competing readings of master narratives that inform individual lives. What critics seem to have overlooked is that the legend of Florinda is a balance to, and reversal of, the fall of Granada in 1492, set in the Gothic court at Toledo. That is where the king glimpses the maiden from his palace. Cervantes’ pointed allusion to the legend sidesteps accounts that give lip service to a moral equivalency of Moors and Christians. He superimposes disparate, patently fictionalized histories, and hints at a new age of convivencia as an alternative to a conversion of convenience with only a vague promise of redemption.

This reading does not seem willful, especially as it is rooted in the novel’s first interpolation in Part I, chapter nine, which refocuses a reader’s attention (just as the story of Ozmín and Daraja does in Guzmán de Alfarache). For all its touted geographical vagueness in questions of origin (“En un lugar de La Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme...”), the interjected story of the discovery of the Quixote manuscript in the novel’s ninth chapter is given a precise locus in Alcaná de Toledo, a marketplace where a translator is easily found because it is frequented by conversos and moriscos, and where the traveler Cervantes finds a Spain living under a delusion of Catholicity. Toledo may be the locus of Old Christian/Gothic power, but it is also the hub from which much “Western” civilization was transmitted to Europe by the Arabs who ruled there for centuries.

Here, then, is an alternative foundational myth to debunk the officially promoted popular chivalric pageantry, a warped record of the Reconquista. A contemporary Islamic source tells this story from a perspective that Cervantes would have recognized:

Even after its fall in 478 A.H./1085 A.D., Toledo maintained its Arabic stamp for several centuries; Muslim scientists, Arabized Christians and Jews continued their meeting in the courts of its Christian monarchs and translated Arabic books into Latin. These books were either Arabic translations from Greek, Persian and Indian books or they were written by Muslim scientists themselves as new works.... The translators' school in Toledo became a major cultural centre attracting scientists and scholars from various parts of Europe. One of the senior scientists who supervised this scientific movement was Jorge de Rada, the archbishop of Toledo (1170-1247 A.D.). He knew several languages including Arabic, which helped him greatly to make use of Arabic sources and in writing his sizeable *Crónica del Toledano* on the history of the Romans, Goths and Arabs. When Alfonso the Wise became King of Spain in the middle of the thirteenth century, he supported the Toledo school, and patronized its scientists, encouraging them to continue their translation work.... This renaissance was characterized by the use of the Castilian (Spanish) language instead of Latin in writing literary, historical and philosophical works. Through this approach, this school cast all these Arab, Latin and Greek works into a Castilian mould.... ([www.islamset.com/islam/civil/manscr.html](http://www.islamset.com/islam/civil/manscr.html))

This is not the optic of a monolithic Spain, but that of a multi-ethnic Castilla, a historical memory that nationalism has all but erased. Unfortunately, however, this idealized vision of Toledo also glosses over troubling historical and literary evidence, of which Cervantes undoubtedly was aware. In addition to being a patron, Alfonso was a poet who, in his popular *Cantigas de Santa María*, damns the Moors with faint praise. On the one hand he

...claims that Muhammad professed the Virgin birth (song 329), and, to show her gratitude, Mary goes so far as to help Muslim emigrants fend off an attack by Catalonian corsairs (song 379). Despite this exceptional acknowledgment of Muslim belief in the Virgin, Christians were nonetheless committed to converting their infidel enemy. (Carpenter 73)

In the context of the Captive's Tale, with its Mariolatry, piracy and Moorish immigration, these are remarkable points of contact, but they tell only part of the story:

Alfonso frequently depicts [Muslims] as dark-skinned unbelievers, ever ready to annihilate Christians and profane the symbols of their religion. In song 99 of his *Cantigas*, for instance, a Muslim horde seeks to wreak havoc on a Christian village and desecrate an image of the Virgin. Mary swiftly intervenes to prevent this sacrilege and the Muslims pay with their lives for their audacity. (Carpenter 73)

Zoraida reveals a similar belief in a retaliatory Mary: she warns Viedma that if he will not marry her, “yo pediré a Marién que te castigue” (I, 40). Confoundingly, the figure of the Virgin looms as both a merciful and a vengeful goddess, and Cervantes knows well how canonical texts can justify or determine action, for better or worse. By alluding to the legend of Florinda at this juncture in the *Captive’s Tale*, with its resolution literally at sea, Cervantes suggests that Hapsburg turpitude, comparable to that of the decadent Visigoths, threatens the well-being of imperial Spain, whose victory over Islam was frequently presided over, in legend and in art, by the figure of Mary. At the same time he plants the possibility that Zoraida, by exposing herself to danger like a latter-day La Cava, is less innocent or saintly than she might appear. Her actions are both attractive and repugnant.

Zoraida’s motives, while well-meaning, remain questionable to us, as they must have to a contemporaneous reader. How else are we to take her claim to her father that “nunca mi deseo se estendió a dejarte ni a hacerte mal, sino a hacerme a mí bien” (I, xli, 425) - it was never her desire to leave or hurt him - when that is the immediate result of her elopement? Agi Morato is left on the shore of La Cava Rumía, emotionally shattered if physically unharmed. Because all of these stories, textual and subtextual, are traced according to the traditions of the romances, Cervantes’ reader is straightforwardly directed to bear confounding and quasi-mythical similarities in mind and not be so quick to canonize Zoraida alongside her chosen namesake, the long-suffering Mary.

Recall that grief over love lost is a romantic motif and in this sense the Quixote is no exception, as when Don Luis runs away from his pampered upbringing, “killing” his father. This can be more than a figure of speech, as the reader of “El curioso impertinente” or any number of chivalric tales will recall, and it is grief, as much as fever or age, that eventually kills Don Quixote. Is it mere poetic justice that Cervantes has his refugees visit La Cava Rumía, closing the circle of Spanish Reconquista with a comforting reminder of the Moorish Conquista? Or, rather, does it indicate that an injustice of historical proportions is about to repeat itself, and that the perceived morisco threat is merely that – a

perception, a distraction from European turmoil. The tale ultimately suggests as much when French pirates put the captive and Zoraida ashore in Spain, and they (not the pirates) are immediately taken for marauders: “¡Moros, moros hay en la tierra! ¡Moros, moros! ¡Arma, arma!” (I, xli) [30]. Outsiders are always remembered as such.

In repeated references to the Moors that ruled much of Spain for centuries, then, Cervantes' vision of a multicultural nation begins to come through in Part I, and is finally dealt with head-on in the Captive's Tale, which, as we have suggested, Smollett read with great care. Chapters 22-24 of the Scotsman's first novel relate “The History of Miss Williams,” whose conversion to Presbyterianism and descent into prostitution is described with directness unthinkable in Cervantes' day. Nonetheless, this story appears as a kind of palimpsest of the Captive's Tale. The manner in which the fate of Miss Williams hangs in the balance until the very end of Smollett's novel only serves to underscore the connection between the two tales. Miss Williams commits the same error as Zoraida, confusing attractiveness with goodness, but with a more immediate unfortunate consequence, namely, pregnancy out of wedlock. Fearing that her father will never forgive her, she flees his country estate and begins her downward slide. Only after her father's death does she come across a newspaper ad he had purchased that recalls Agi Morato's retraction of the curses he had hurled at his only child:

...whoever will give me any information about her... shall be handsomely rewarded; or if she will return to the arms of her disconsolate parent, she will be received with the utmost tenderness, whatever reason she may have to think otherwise, and may be the means of prolonging the life of a father, already weighed down almost to the grave with age and sorrow. (130)

The only way to reconciliation, although it is in fact too late, is through a reconsideration of the circumstances that brought about the dissolution of families closely bound by blood or common history, whether divided by Christianity and Islam or, in Miss Williams's case, by Presbyterianism and Anglicanism.

At least Miss Williams narrates her own tale, unmediated by a self-serving narrator or translator. Her honor is ultimately restored when she marries Strap, the generous barber who is this novel's version of Sancho Panza. Smollett finally gives his reader the satisfaction that Cervantes could not, not so much

for fear of censorship of a tale told by a lady of questionable virtue as because of the canonical literature of the Spanish Golden Age in which a schizophrenic treatment of Moors artificially inverts alterity, praising the near-saintliness of the few - the Abencerrajes, the Jarifas, Darajas and Zoraidas - while Spain damns the majority wholesale. Indeed, this double standard is echoed in the *Quixote*'s presentation of its overarching creator, the Moorish author Cide Hamete Benengeli, who is "at once peripheral to the story and central to the book" (Riley 207). I would say, rather, that the heart of Don Quixote's Spain, as Cervantes outlines it, is hidden in plain sight.

Never one to put himself above his public, Cervantes conveniently blames Cide Hamete for the text's shortcomings, but not without also telling the reader how to read his book framed, as we have seen, in supposedly mendacious Moorishness. Here is the comment when Cervantes comes upon the Arabic manuscript in Toledo, without which the story of Don Quixote would forever remain untold:

Si a ésta se le puede poner alguna objeción cerca de su verdad, no podrá ser otra sino haber sido su autor arábigo, siendo muy propio de los de aquella nación ser mentirosos; aunque, por ser tan nuestros enemigos, antes se puede entender haber quedado falto en ella que demasiado. Y así me parece a mí, pues cuando pudiera y debiera extender la pluma en las alabanzas de tal caballero, parece que de industria las pasa en silencio; cosa mal hecha y peor pensada, habiendo y debiendo ser los historiadores puntuales, verdaderos y no nada apasionados y que ni el interés ni el miedo, el rencor ni la afición no les hagan torcer del camino de la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir. En ésta sé que se hallará todo lo que se acertare a desear en la más apacible; y si algo bueno en ella faltare, para mí tengo que fue por culpa del galgo de su autor, antes que por falta del sujeto. (I, ix)

It is all there, the novel's narrative strategy in miniature, as it were: conventional stereotyping and the question of authenticity couched in self-censorship - signs of the times to accompany the discovery of this manuscript that has somehow survived to tell its version of events. But at the center, an authorial injunction to follow, without selfishness, fear or bitterness the "camino de la verdad," to see the text as a testament and harbinger of history, which, according to our analysis, would include the "Historia del cautivo." Riley puts it nicely, pointing the way to interpretations such as our own that bring meta-fictional games down to earth: "The inventor of the world's most gullible reader of novels was

not likely to risk misleading other readers with his own. Notably by means of his handling of Cide Hamete..., the Quixote as history is contained in an envelope of unmistakable fiction” (174). Unfortunately, this practical lesson will not arrive in time to save the Moors whose ancestors have created much of that history in Spain. As we have seen, on this subject a reader cannot entirely trust the canon, nor the multiple narrators of the novel, nor the readers within it. Cervantes’ text is a hybrid of official and popular culture that both desires and resists full assimilation into either sphere - what we have termed canonization. Thus the reader must be awakened, as Sancho Panza will be, to the fact that his or her own experience of shared culture, what Riley calls “a nascent empiricism” (165), is perhaps the fairest guide to an assessment of the historical and literary problems posed by the text. In this sense, the work is not only the first modern novel, but also the first Bildungsroman (Stone 95-131).

## Notes

[1] This, of course, is in the first interpolated novella of Guzmán de Alfarache. Case counts fifteen extant plays by Lope that derive from the Roland-Carolingian cycle and the Abencerraje saga, but many others allude to romances previously known to the public, either from the ballad tradition itself or from Lope’s revival of the form in the late sixteenth century.

[2] In the words of a contemporary scholar, “Cervantes gives us hugely sympathetic characters whose uncertain status within Spain simply cannot be resolved” (Fuchs Passing 11).

[3] Daniel Eisenberg long ago called for a reconsideration of the Quixote in light of those chivalric romances mentioned by the novel, but not always readily available to readers, even avid ones such as Cervantes. Here, however, we will paint with broad strokes to include both popular tales of love and the equally popular Spanish ballad form called romance.

[4] For Lope, Moors were exotic stand-ins for his own serial love affairs, penetrable lyric masks. With their declamatory nature and scene shifts from hero to heroine, Lope’s romances lent themselves to later adaptation for the stage (Carreño 87), especially since the essential plots were already familiar to

the public from verse and song.

[5] Spitzer calls this irony “la fatalidad y la dramaticidad de la vida... que informa los romances” (“Romances” 78).

[6] A late sixteenth-century verse sends up romances and exposes the true circumstances to which Moors have been reduced “¿A qué tanta gala, tanta danza, tanta fiesta en la Alhambra, tanta gallardía a la gineta, tanto desafío, tanto romper lanzas, si Fátima y Jarifa no hacen otra cosa que vender higos y pasas en la plaza, si Aliatar teje serones y esteras, si Muza hace buñuelos, Arbolán cava las viñas y el Cegrí es aguador o arriero?” (Menéndez Pidal 133). The pairing of Dulcinea and Jarifa is confirmed by this wry slice of popular culture.

[7] Cervantes was not the only novelist to attempt this. At nearly the same historical moment, Mateo Alemán included the tale of Ozmín and Daraja in his picaresque novel Guzmán de Alfarache (1599) and, also via empathy, raised many of the same questions as Cervantes. His critique, however, was not given a contemporaneous setting, but revisited the site of Granada at the time of its fall, the usual site for the melodramas of novelas and romances moriscos. Still, it is there established that Daraja’s goodness and superior morality are instilled in her well before conversion is forced upon her by the Reyes Católicos. The entire court holds that her suitability for conversion is evident from her speech, bearing and modesty, yet it is does not acknowledge these as products of her upbringing in Muslim Granada, whose dying culture she does not willingly forsake. In that novella we are asked to imagine how the new converts Ozmín and Daraja, now baptized as Fernando and Isabel, must feel as they meet the Reyes Católicos at the recently reconquered court of Granada (Stone 47-74).

[8] In the twentieth century, such a reading spawned Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451 (1951).

[9] Michael McGaha confirms the plausibility of such a narrative strategy when he asserts that, while in captivity in Algiers, Cervantes must have become familiar with a prevalent form of Sufism whose “idea básica es que el verdadero orden de las cosas está oculto de los hombres, y es, en efecto, el reverse de lo que parece en la superficie de la vida cotidiana” (“Hacia” 540-41).



[10] This points up a theme of Mary Elizabeth Perry's fascinating monograph Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville, which examines the "enclosure of women in convent, home, or brothel" (13). Indeed, it is a trope that runs through much of western literature through the twentieth century – women unhoused (or housed against their will) are renegades of sorts, candidates for reconciliation to a socially acceptable condition.

[11] Writing of Cardenio and Dorotea, although the observation applies to the captive and Zoraida as well, Márquez Villanueva asserts that "El hecho físico de la vida en Sierra Morena, lejos de constituir ningún determinismo en sí, actúa como una relatividad modular respecto a la naturaleza profunda de ambos personajes y de su obvia contraposición" (53).

[12] The historical figure upon whom Zoraida is based exhibits a complex bloodline that spans both sides of the Mediterranean: "era nieta de una mallorquina que había sido cautivada en 1529, y casó en 1574 con Abd al-Malik (que Cervantes en la comedia [Los baños de Argel], llama Muley Maluco, y vivió de 1541 a 1578), que fue proclamado Sultán de Marruecos" (Riquer 412).

[13] To the contrary, a positivistic reading such as Gerli's finds that the marriage, "civilly sanctioned by a justice of the peace in the person of [Viedma's] serendipitously encountered brother, the oidor, and to be consecrated later by the church under the patronage of the Virgin Mary, provides a powerful image of union in the text" (Gerli, 1995: 57). In the final analysis, he too admits that the story "remains, however, only a tale of hope and promise lacking in the lasting assurance of a resolution. Whereas Cardenio, Luscinda, Dorotea, and Don Fernando have consummated their unions through the conquest of their passions and themselves, Zoraida and the Captive must still think of the road left to travel, leaving in doubt beyond the marginal precinct of the inn the nature of Spain's final solution to the Reconquest" (60).

[14] Before the publication of the novel's sequel, however, history will further challenge the wisdom of offering of such blessings to a Moor. See my second article on Part II, entitled "Return of the Natives: Last Sighs in the Quixote."

[15] McGaha's observation on chapters 11-19 of Part II, leading up to the Cave of Montesinos episode, *Dissidences. Hispanic Journal of Theory and Criticism* 2.1 (2006)31

also applies to these romantic tales: “Each new episode in the series arises with apparent spontaneity, yet each one somehow sheds new light on the one that preceded it and foreshadows what will come next (“Don” 165).

[16] Recently, close attention has been given to this interpolation in María Antonia Garcés’s prize-winning book Cervantes in Algiers. Rather than focus on the psycho-biographical tensions explored there, however, I will try to indicate broader social and structural issues raised by the tale.

[17] Moisés Castillo explores this very idea with regard to three comedias by Cervantes, arguing that dramatizations of interaction between Christians and Muslims of the day reveal contradictions inherent in Spanish society, “produciéndose así una especie de ‘vértigo’ que viene a desestabilizar cualquier noción de centralidad cultural” (178).

[18] Other prerequisites for beatification and canonization, such as cures and miracles, came into play only after the immediate sphere of one’s life had undergone intense scrutiny.

[19] “In December 1602 and January 1603 Clement VIII had a number of discussions with the cardinals, heads of religious orders, and theologians about...abuses, but nothing was decided” definitely until the papal reforms of 1623 (Kemp 145). This is obviously a contentious social issue of the day.

[20] For a Freudian reading of the tale, see Paul Julian Smith’s contribution to Quixotic Desire, where he too notes an inherent contradiction: “Zoraida is at once true and false, faithful to her new religion and its cult of the Virgin, and faithless to the father whom she so cleverly deceives” (Smith 230).

[21] In psychoanalytic terms, matriarchy deposes patriarchy (Johnson 72-92, Smith 228).

[22] While it may also be true that “Zoraida’s behavior is explicable in terms of a confluence of master narratives from capitalism and psychoanalysis,” and “that the Marian rhetoric provides her a doctrinally acceptable outlet for a preexisting hostility toward Hajji Murad” (Johnson 89), we are more interested in pursuing the action of the text upon readers contemporary with it.

[23] In Smith's words, "If the characters themselves remain captives of 'race' and gender, they also point the way to a re-examination of those terms as they emerge into language and take on historical specificity" (235).

[24] Fuchs notes the pervasiveness of such phenomena: "Beyond widespread anxiety about blood purity, moreover, the lower echelons of the aristocracy were often involved in complex economic charades. Like the hapless squire in Lazarillo de Tormes – and, arguably, Alonso Quijano himself, - they frequently led a life of acute economic deprivation in order to maintain a social status that offered concrete financial advantages, such as avoiding taxation, but that threatened to collapse at any moment under the weight of financial reality" (Passing 17).

[25] With regard to her fooling of her father, as well as her reeling in of the captive, Márquez Villanueva dubs Zoraida "maestra en el arte de aparentar lo que no es" (120)

[26] Márquez Villanueva contends that in this scene Zoraida faces a reflection of her own fragmented self, which has constantly been refracted through the eyes, ears and mouths of others (131). Cervantes employs a similar device to in his tale of the Licenciado Vidriera, another impressionable, intelligent and conspicuously fragmented character who visits the shrine of the Virgin of Loretto and seems overwhelmed by the abundance of tokens and milagros found there, just as Zoraida is before myriad images of the Mother of God (Stone 82-3). Because she speaks no Spanish, Zoraida's voice is constantly mediated, her desires subject to male translation or interpretation of her facial expressions. Smith points out famously that she is "triple marginalized, through 'race,' religion and gender" (228). Still, the reader can only admire her possibly doomed attempt to take fate into her own hands, and in this sense she is unmistakably Quixote-like, "uno de esos personajes quintaesencialmente cervantinos que nacen del acto de tomar sus vidas en las manos, moldeándose a sí mismos en el torno centrifugo del 'yo sé quién soy' para darse su propio carácter, su lógica y su moral" (Márquez Villanueva 132). This realization underscores our general point that the Quixote portrays the complex action of texts on audiences, directing and defining them, both inside and outside the novel: "Ni deja tampoco la literatura de hallarse presente de un modo sutil, pues el caso de Zoraida no hace sino ilustrar a las claras lo que ocurre cuando un ser de carne y hueso se lanza a vivir no un libro de caballerías, pero sí una

material hagiográfica (leyenda argelina) harto fácil de reconocer” (Márquez Villanueva 132).

[27] Only in Part II does the Moor Ricote pursue something concrete that has been taken away from him by the pitiless state – he knows where to find the treasure: on home turf to which he may only return incognito. I will discuss this in another article, entitled “Return of the Natives: Last Sighs in the Quixote.”

[28] Despite a stated skepticism of idealistic readings, Johnson allows that “it is difficult to decide whom to feel sorrier for: Ruy Pérez (Viedma)...or the silent Zoraida, for whom the reality of life in Spain, as a morisca or second-class Christian, will bear no resemblance to her Algerian fantasies” (92).

[29] Indeed, Alison Weber sees the tale as fundamentally an erotic triangle, a psychological bid for independence on the part of Zoraida (425). In a similar vein, Michael McGaha argues that the Captive’s Tale sublimates a real love affair that Cervantes had during his years in Algiers (“Hacia” 542), which, from a Freudian perspective, would support the notion of a return of suppressed history that is being argued here.

[30] As in Alemán’s tale of Ozmín and Daraja, or in the tale of Ana Félix and Don Gregorio of Part II, a couple full of admirable qualities appears doomed to live out its days anonymously in hostile territory.

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