

Zoraida's Return

William P. Childers
Brooklyn College and CUNY Graduate Center

For Patricia E. Grieve

On January 2, 2005, a group of writers gathered at the Cervantes Institute in Algiers to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of *Don Quixote*, as thousands of others would do throughout that year, all over the world. But their tribute had a special urgency, as one notes from their eagerness – the gathering was scheduled for the *second day* of 2005. Naturally, the focal point of their particular homage was Cervantes' five-year captivity in Algiers. Waciny Laredj spoke first, insisting that those years be understood as an essential part of the background to the invention of the novel. Zineb Laouedj, for her part, emphasized the creative potential of the open, polyglot space of sixteenth-century Algiers, while Ahmed Berraghda situated Cervantes at the crossroads of two worlds, the Moorish/Arab world facing east and the Spanish/European one facing west.¹ At one level, undeniably, this was simple opportunism: claiming a place for Algeria, and thus for themselves, in the history of modern letters. For these and other Algerian writers and intellectuals, however, a good deal more was at stake than the prestige value of associating themselves and their nation with one of the masterpieces of world literature. They were invoking the memory of an aspect of Algerian national culture that has been marginalized in recent years: the open-ended relationship with European secular culture. Algerian writers' appropriations of *Don Quixote* belong to a larger project of reconstructing an alternative national identity to the Islamist extremism that ravaged their country in the 1990s. They look to Cervantes, then, as an example of dialogue across cultures, particularly evidenced for them in Zoraida, the African-born princess who helps the Captive escape, fleeing with him across the Mediterranean divide to Europe.

I will discuss two of these appropriations in some detail, both published during the height of the Algerian civil war: Waciny Laredj's recreation of Zoraida in *La gardienne des ombres, Don Quichotte à Alger*, written in Arabic but published first in French in 1996, and Assia Djebar's interpretation of Cervantes' character in her 1995 novel, *Vaste est la prison*. Laredj's and Djebar's semi-autobiographical novels share a common strategy of anchoring their broad, inclusive vision for Algerian nationhood in Cervantes' experience of captivity and the fantasy it inspired in him of an exotic, beautiful woman who serves as a cultural go-between. She exemplifies the element of North African society through which Cervantes himself grounds a more open understanding of Spanish identity, less narrowly focused on religious dogmatism. Thus the role sixteenth-century Algiers played for Cervantes is analogous to the role he now plays for Algerian writers today. He lived most of his adult life in a nation that had veered sharply away from the secular humanism of the Renaissance, toward religious extremism and authoritarian persecution of dissent. Despite the fact that he was a captive there, Algiers provided him with the model of another version of Spain, an outsider's perspective on his own nation, which is precisely the kind of leverage he now offers Maghrebian literature, at the distance of four hundred years.

After examining Algerian writers' strategic grounding of their own national past through the memory of Cervantes' captivity and the desires it stirred in him, I will therefore consider the degree to which their approach mirrors the use Cervantes made of his own experience in Algiers. This reciprocity implies a complex rhythm for Mediterranean borrowings; cultural memory allows

¹ "Cervantes en Argel, toujours parmi les Algériens." *Le Soir d'Algérie*, January 6, 2005.

anti-authoritarian values of openness and hospitality left ‘on deposit’ to be recovered in a moment of need, even after centuries have passed. Beyond the historical analogy between Cervantes’ circumstances and their own that permits Laredj and Djébar to ‘cash in’ on this cultural capital, the loan was ‘underwritten’ by an elusive, ambiguous female figure, Zoraida, whose abandonment of one society and admission to another are figured by her veiling and unveiling in the text. While the title “Zoraida’s return” refers to the renewed interest in the literary character on the part of these writers, it is also the *return* on a four-centuries-old investment in the figure Cervantes put into circulation. The second half of this essay uses a close reading of the scene of Zoraida’s arrival at the inn to theorize the Mediterranean as a space for such cultural interchange. Based on a woman of flesh and blood, Zoraida is at the same time Cervantes’ version of the yearned-after mediatrix without whom no representation of the Mediterranean world is possible. This figure has existed in many guises, among them Helen of Troy, Isis/Aphrodite/Venus, Elissa Dido, the Virgin Mary, Scheherazade, and la Cava (for whom Spain was ‘lost’). She bridges rival communities, but in fulfilling this role is pulled in two directions; she must belong fully to her home culture and yet become just as fully a member of her adopted community. Her would-be protectors jealously guard her from desecrators who would profane her, hide her from eyes unworthy of beholding her divine beauty; once revealed she must be humbly welcomed, venerated, served. Given the difficulty of satisfying both of these demands, her image veers between the victim of abduction, and the “harlot” who betrays her own people. Is she an innocent refugee, or a threatening infiltrator? Imbued with irreducible ambiguity, she embodies the ever-changing, limitlessly malleable inland sea. The endlessly repeated trope of her unveiling reproduces, but does not resolve, the problematic of her double belonging. Her very fluidity thereby becomes the medium for representing the elusive, contradictory Mediterranean.

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During the 1990s, Algeria was ravaged by horrific violence that brought the country to the brink of anarchy.² After leading the struggle for independence from France, finally won in 1962, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) became entrenched as a single-party regime backed by the military. Increasing calls for democratization in the face of cronyism, corruption, and abuse of power led to an opening up of elections to other parties in the late 80s, but after the decisive victory of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS), in the first round of elections in December 1991, the army cancelled the second round, plunging the country into the escalating violence of a civil war in which civilians became the targets of Islamic militants, in turn brutally repressed by the police and the military (Stora 194-226). Beginning in 1992, Islamist terrorist groups carried out targeted executions; chief among them was the brutal Groupement Islamique Armé (GIA). Their preferred method of killing was to slit victims’ throats, often in front of their immediate family for added cruelty. Death threats inundated the lives of cultural workers, including journalists, intellectuals, novelists, and musicians. Among the prominent victims were the writer Tahar Djaout (assassinated in 1993), the *rai* singer Cheb Hasni (killed in 1994), and the popular Kabyle singer Matoub Lounès (kidnapped and released in 1994, but murdered in 1997). By 1997, the GIA was capable of carrying out large-scale massacres, such as the one that took place at Rais on August 28, in which nearly 300 people were killed and 200 injured, just a few hundred meters from a military outpost. The terrorists arrived by truck during the night, carried out their carnage for five hours, and left at dawn, without the soldiers quartered nearby making the slightest attempt to intervene, prompting speculation concerning their complicity with the violence. As Frédéric Pons puts it, “Who is

² Of the many published accounts of those years, I have primarily relied on Stora, Martinez, Le Sueur, Pons, and Assia Djébar’s literary testimonial, *Algerian White*.

massacred by whom? The motivation and identity of the perpetrators of atrocities had become indecipherable” (235).³ In some ways, the situation came to resemble the final years of the war for independence, with the FLN ironically cast in the role of the French, savagely repressing terrorists and torturing those they managed to capture in the hope of gaining information about their clandestine networks. As Benjamin Stora explains, the FIS thereby succeeded in positioning themselves as the true heirs of the revolution, “taking the populist logic conveyed by the FLM since its foundation and pushing it to the extreme by coloring it with religiosity” (207). At a deeper level, though, Luis Martinez has argued that both the military regime and their ostensible enemies, the Islamists, occupied mutually-reinforcing positions in a “war-oriented *imaginaire*” with deep roots the history of the Maghreb, stretching back to the corsairs and the Beylicate under the Ottoman Empire (13-14, 220-244).⁴

Even prior to 1992, and rapidly escalating afterwards, a relentless intimidation campaign was directed against women, to frighten them into acceptance of narrow restrictions on their behavior and movements. Women who worked outside the home or who refused to wear a veil were singled out, with schoolteachers and female athletes being particular targets (Le Sueur 169-94). As Karima Bennoune reported at the time, “in March 1994, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) issued a statement classifying all unveiled women who appeared in public as potential military targets,” which they enforced by carrying out several public executions of women in their teens who went out unveiled, including two high school students shot while waiting for a bus by a man on a motorbike (187). Bennoune further explained, “women with whom I spoke [...] expressed the hope that the outside world should know that [...] they represent *another Algeria*, which retains its commitment to progressive values and tolerance” (199, emphasis added). In their daily struggle to continue with their professional activities despite the Islamists’ bullying they display a spark of the same fire that Cervantes must have seen in Hajji Murad’s headstrong daughter, leading him to imagine the powerful female protagonist of “The Captive’s Tale.” Indeed, the novelistic rediscovery of Zoraida would be driven precisely by the desire to give representation to this “other Algeria”.

As the conflict worsened, thousands of Algeria’s liberal-minded creative artists and intellectuals fled, mainly to France. A flourishing literary production ensued, known as “l’écriture de l’urgence” (Fisher 34-77). In effect, as the decade wore on, the polarizing violence of both the police state and the Islamists “boomeranged,” to become “a creative cultural force in Algeria” (Le Sueur 192). Those who had fled across the Mediterranean to seek asylum in France continued to write for what Jean-Robert Henry calls an “organic double public”:

The fact that, just as happened during the first Algerian War, a significant portion of the new generation of Algerian writers [...] chose to express themselves in French, in Parisian publishing houses, addressing themselves to an Algerian and French “organic double public” [*double public naturel*] is a testament, to be sure, to the surprising cultural porosity

³ My translation. Unless a published translation is listed in the Works Cited, all translations are my own. Algerian feminist activist Zouliha explained in a 1998 interview that massacres of this type were primarily the result of infighting involving terrorist groups and their former supporters (364).

⁴ Martinez notes parallels between financing by the Ottoman Sultanate and the IMF, citing a “firmly held” public awareness of the government’s dependence on foreign financial support, “an outlook which sees the political and military leaders as heirs to the Beylik...and thus as inevitably strangers to Algerian society” (180). This in turn can be tied to Boudaoud Hammou’s attribution of the ‘failure of democracy’ to the State’s inability to really convince the people that it represents the nation. This gap between the State apparatus and popular national feeling goes back to decolonization. (*Démocratie algérienne* 250-56).

still existing between the two societies. Literature here contrasts with official discourse, whether political or historical. (369)

Thus this literary response to fundamentalist Islam tended to include a more positive re-evaluation of Algeria's ties to France and to Europe in general. Lucienne Martini agrees, pointing out that memory had always been an essential theme of the Maghrebian novel, but that this came to include, from the 90s, a renewed interest in the French presence: "today, reflection on the present situation is the catalyst for a new point of view on the past and, along with that, on the French presence" (352).

It was in this context that the Parisian journal *Algérie Littérature/Action* was founded in 1996 by novelist Aïssa Khelladi and ethnographer Marie Virolle, "two people persuaded that they were about to witness the explosion of a new Algerian literature" (Interview with Marie Virolle). Jean-Robert Henry singles out this publication for intensifying the visibility and social impact of literary discourse at a time when insightful analysis of the situation in Algeria was sorely lacking in other media (369). The featured text of the magazine's third issue, published in September 1996, was a novelistic recreation in the present of Cervantes' experience in Algiers, *La Gardienne des Ombres* by Waciny Laredj, translated from Arabic by Virolle herself in collaboration with the author's wife, Zineb Laouedj. Following the novel in its entirety was a "Postface" penned by prominent novelist Leïla Sebbar, in which she praised it as "the most successful literary enterprise and most efficacious novel of the decade thus far" ("l'entreprise littéraire la plus réussie, la plus efficace des romans de ces années 90" [164]). After Sebbar's comments came an insightful interview with Waciny Laredj himself (165-171). Rather unexpectedly, then, Cervantes came to play a significant part in Algerians' literary response to their national crisis.

When Waciny Laredj wrote *La gardienne des ombres. Don Quichotte à Algiers*, the Algerian civil war was at its height. The novel presents a country on the verge of anarchy, torn between a corrupt, ideologically closed, single-party state on the one hand, and vicious Islamic terrorists on the other. As Leyla Guenatri has shown, its satirical humor only partially masks the seriousness of the quixotic task it undertakes, the reconquest of collective memory in a time of violence and chaos. In this darkly carnivalesque world, everyone is afraid, and only the dogmatists are willing to publicly defend their views, though several characters privately express concern over the loss of cultural richness as Algeria slides ever deeper into the 'shadows' of the title. Don Quichotte is the nickname of a Spanish journalist, Vasquez de Cervantès de Almería, a descendant of Cervantes' who travels to Algiers as part of a book project in which he retraces the steps of his distant ancestor. He has already toured the relevant locations of the northern shore of the Mediterranean in Spain, Italy, and Greece; now he wants to visit all the places associated with Cervantes' captivity (21). Though forewarned of the danger for foreigners in Algeria – indeed, in 1995 the GIA had issued an ultimatum telling all foreigners to leave the country – he goes anyway, exhibiting the quixotic personality that earned him his nickname. He is befriended by H'sissen, a staff member of the Ministry of Culture, specialist in Hispano-Algerian relations, who initially tries to persuade him to leave, showing him a newspaper article narrating the latest atrocity. Unable to dissuade Don Quichotte, H'sissen decides to accompany him on his adventures, realizing this will allow him to see Algiers through the Spaniard's eyes: "Faire découvrir la ville à Don Quichotte, c'était aussi me la faire redécouvrir, à moi qui l'avais un peu oubliée [...] Cela me donnerait sans doute une nouvelle force intérieure dans cet environnement où tout était devenu non-sens et absurdité" (23; "Helping Don Quichotte discover the city would also help me rediscover it, for I had rather forgotten it [...] That would doubtless renew my inner strength in this environment where everything had been reduced to nonsense and absurdity"). Because all the

hotels are filled with refugees from the outskirts of Algiers fleeing the terrorists, H'sissen invites Don Quichotte to stay with him and his grandmother, Hanna, who claims to be descended from Moors of Granada and tells him romantic tales of her forebears. She is the one who first tells him the "grande mythe de cette ville" (great myth of this city), the pre-Islamic legend of the "gardienne des ombres" (keeper of the shadows), an ageless woman who waits tirelessly through centuries of darkness for the sun god Ammon to return and illuminate the land once more (114).

The next day H'sissen takes Don Quichotte to visit the cave where the illustrious writer is supposed to have hidden during the most famous of his failed escape attempts. He also visits a dump where the bust of Cervantes, missing from its rightful spot at the cave, can be bought from an unscrupulous contrabandist who gives him a tour of an impressive collection of national treasures, all for sale. Cervantes' cave is symbolically constituted in the novel as a privileged site for an alternative narrative of Algerian identity; its neglect represents, in quasi-allegorical fashion, the precarious status of secular literature and the connection to Europe on which Laredj and other novelists would base their version of the national tradition. The cave thus becomes hyper-charged with signification, at once a contested Algerian site of memory (*lieu de mémoire* in Pierre Nora's sense) and something more complex, a transnational memory-knot (*nœud de mémoire* in the terminology introduced by Michael Rothberg and the other collaborators in a 2010 special number of *Yale French Studies*).⁵ The indiscretion of a foreign journalist visiting such a site, combined with the fact that his passport has no stamp of entry, lands him in prison, where he spends about a week before being deported once and for all. In prison, a beautiful young Algerian woman named Maya serves as his interpreter, but he secretly thinks of her as Zoraïd (that is, Zoraida), "la femme maure qui avait séduit mon aïeul captif" (135; "the Moorish woman who had seduced my captive ancestor"). As she points out to him, his harrowing experience has allowed him to relive, though more briefly, his ancestor's captivity, and can thus be of use to him in his work. Indeed, he confesses that he has the impression nothing has changed – his situation transports him four centuries back in time (141).

Maya is a modern woman, even exaggeratedly so. She has studied medicine, but found the conditions for practicing it in her native land so deplorable that she had to find another career. Since she speaks five languages fluently, she decides to become an interpreter. Laredj makes his Zoraida the spokesperson for a multicultural, open Algeria:

Pourtant, Alger était autre chose, une grand ville, belle, grouillante, bigarrée, où se mêlaient Maures, Juifs, renégats, Chrétiens, savants venus de diverses nations d'Europe. Société complexe où l'impossible devenait possible. Soudain, un beau matin, en ouvrant les yeux, nous nous sommes retrouvés face à une ville close, repliée sur elle-même, hostile, rebelle

⁵ I take up the distinction between sites and knots of memory at greater length in the second half of this essay. The constitution of this cave as a place of interest has always been a particular concern of Spaniards and should therefore be understood as having a particular link to *pied noir* identity, since so many of the *pieds noirs* were of Spanish descent. "Le grotte de Cervantès," was the site of an homage by Spanish soldiers stationed in Algiers in 1887 (Abi-Ayad n4), and a bust of the author was ceremoniously placed there in 1894 (Bensaadi 125). These first efforts at commemorating the site began some three hundred years after the events, and presumably relied on oral tradition to authenticate the location. They represent the efforts of *pieds noirs* of Spanish heritage to establish for themselves a link to the Algerian past. After the *Quixote* centenary of 2005, interest in the site revived, with a substantial investment by Spanish petroleum firm Repsol to restore it for visitors, again trying to forge an enduring link between the two countries, this time through shared economic development interests ("Inaugurada la gruta que sirvió de refugio a Miguel de Cervantes en Argelia," *El Mundo* 6 June 2006). It is interesting to note that the heroine of American novelist Irene Osgood's *Servitude* (1908) hides out for almost two weeks in "Cervantes' cave," the location of which is known only to a Spaniard living in Algiers, who insists on keeping it secret.

à son essence, à sa propre histoire [...] Notre histoire nous avait légué un si beau pays!” (142)

[Yet Algiers was once something completely different, a great city, beautiful, teeming, diverse, a meeting place for Moors, Jews, renegades, Christians, and scholars from across Europe. A complex society where the impossible became possible. Suddenly, one fine morning, we opened our eyes and found ourselves faced with a closed city, folded over herself, hostile, rebelling against her own essence, her own history [...] And our history had bequeathed us such a beautiful country!]

Her bitterness moves Don Quichotte to ask her why she doesn't leave, at least temporarily. She rejects exile, insisting on the importance of her role, as a professional woman, in the society she criticizes, which she points out is a difference between herself and Cervantes' Zoraida. Her refusal to leave Algeria is a hopeful note in this bleak, though humorous, novel of disillusionment. This time, Zoraida remains loyal to the land of her forefathers, despite how difficult living there has become. Its pessimistic tone notwithstanding, Laredj's novel refuses to surrender all hope for the plural, open Algeria for which Maya longs. In the narrator's imagination, Hanna, Maya, and Zoraida become interchangeable versions of a singular woman of indomitable spirit, the “keeper of the shadows,” watching over the benighted nation, looking forward to a time when, she and others believe, what appears hopelessly lost will be able to return. “Réinventer cette Zoraïde, devenue, soudain, le plus beau poème” (140) [“reinventing this Zoraida suddenly became the most beautiful of all poems”]. To this end, he struggles to forget everything else that has happened to him in Algiers, “sauf le visage triste de Maya, gardienne des ombres perdue dans le tréfonds d'une ville sans âme” (144) [“except Maya's sad face, the keeper of the shadows, lost in the depths of a city without a soul”].

The interview with Laredj helps clarify his understanding of the historical continuity between Cervantes' Algerian captivity and the characters and scenes of the novel. Asked why he chose to base his book on Cervantes he refers to his “mocking discourse” [*discours de dérision*] and the notion of “the world as ambiguity” [*le monde comme ambigüité*] which offer a powerful alternative to the certainties of Islamic fundamentalism. Like the fictional H'sissen, Laredj claims to be descended from a Moor who left Granada when the Inquisition burned his books. His own grandmother, fictionalized in the character of Hanna, taught him legends of Spain – “Elle m'a légué une partie de cette mémoire fascinante, un mélange terrible entre le réalité et la légende” (166) [“She bequeathed to me a part of that fascinating memory, a terrible mixture of reality and legend”]. When asked about the representation of Algeria, he explains, in very Cervantine fashion: “C'est un roman sur Alger que je voulais écrire. Un roman qui dit le mal par le rire et la dérision. Quand le mal parvient à son paroxysme, il n'y a de choix qu'entre la folie et la dérision. J'ai choisi la deuxième attitude” (166). [I wanted to write a novel of Algiers. A novel that would tell the story of evil through laughter and mockery. When evil reaches the extreme, the only choices left are madness and mockery. I chose the second attitude.] Bringing Don Quichotte and H'sissen together creates a broader, “humanist” perspective (reminiscent of Cervantes' ‘perspectivism’, most evident in the Quixote-Sancho pairing). Though the style involves exaggeration, this too is part of the satirical technique he adopts from Cervantes:

C'est un mise à nu non pas des individus mais de la machine infernale qu'est le “système” qui continue à exister, à engendrer le mal, à broyer toutes les possibilités du renouveau. Dans le monde bureaucratique du fonctionnaire, il n'y a ni initiative, ni action, ni liberté. Il y a seulement l'obéissance la plus absurde. Situer un personnage dans ce monde c'est le tuer, le vider de toute substance créative. (166-67)

[What is laid bare is not the individual but rather the infernal machine of the “system” which persists in engendering evil, crushing all possibilities of renewal. In the bureaucratic world there is neither initiative, nor action, nor freedom. There is only absurd obedience.

To situate a character in this world is to kill him, empty him of all creative substance.]

Emptied of authentic cultural memory by the succession of civil wars, corruption, violence, and propaganda, the citizens of Laredj’s Algiers are like automatons. The ultimate enemy is not Islamic extremism, but loss of the ability to connect cultural memory to any project for the future. In this sense, Laredj sees Islamism as merely the latest stage of the opportunism characteristic of Algerian public life. Deploring the totalitarian consequences to which he believes religion always leads when it becomes too politicized, he aligns himself, not with the monolithic, unified past of nationalist slogans, but rather with cultural crossroads such as the one in which Cervantes took part, of which memory-knot of the “Grotte de Cervantès” retains a trace (168). Just as his novel ends with the ambiguously hopeful indication of Maya/Zoraida’s willingness to wait for the current crisis to subside, so Laredj sounds a somewhat more hopeful note at the end of the interview, explaining that things can only get better; Islam cannot retain the place it has occupied in Algeria, and the system, having collapsed, must now give rise to some more human and democratic form:

L’Islam comme religion, en Algérie, n’aura jamais la même place ni le même sens dans le futur. Le système, en pleine déconfiture, ne pourra pas arrêter le processus de sa désintégration pour donner naissance à d’autres formes plus humaines et plus démocratiques. Là, je ne peux qu’être optimiste et empli d’espoir. (171)

[Islam, as a religion, in Algeria, will never again have the same role or the same meaning. The system, in the midst of a complete breakdown, will not be able to halt the process of its own collapse, giving way to other more humane and democratic structures. In this, I cannot help being optimistic and filled with hope.]⁶

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One of the most encouraging developments of *l’écriture de l’urgence* has been the coming to prominence of women’s voices in Algerian fiction, among them Assia Djébar, Leïla Sebbar, and Nina Bouraoui. As Hafid Gafaïti explains, “Maghrebian literature participates in struggles within the sociocultural field [...] If the revolution was the domain of History with a capital ‘H’, it is now also the domain of literature: women have been empowered through writing” (335-336). One internationally recognized symbol of the political and specifically anti-patriarchal implications of women’s storytelling is, of course, Scheherazade.⁷ Along with Moroccan feminist Fatema Mernissi, Djébar and Sebbar are linked by an interest in Scheherazade, a female figure whose contemporaneity, moreover, bears comparison with Zoraida’s. I will return to this comparison in my conclusion; for now, it is enough to point out that what appears to be the main feature attracting Djébar to Zoraida is also what most obviously distinguishes her from Scheherazade: she *writes*, unlike the purely oral storyteller of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

On a visit to Madrid in 1992, Djébar wrote “Fugitive, et ne le sachant pas” (“Fugitive without knowing it”), a tribute to Zoraida which first appeared in 1993 and was subsequently incorporated into her 1995 autobiographical novel *Vaste est le prison* (*So Vast the Prison*). Djébar identifies with Zoraida as a writer, a woman, and an exile. Her letters to the Captive, written in

⁶ This interview is also available online at: http://www.revues-plurielles.org/_uploads/pdf/4_3_8.pdf. Wacily Laredj has continued write about Spain in general and Cervantes in particular, with a 2008 book on traces of Cervantes in Algiers and a 2011 novel about an Andalusian house there, both written in Arabic.

⁷ The role of Scheherazade in contemporary feminist Islamic writing is the subject of Suzanne Gauch’s *Liberating Shahrazad*.

Arabic only in order to be translated into Spanish, make her “la métaphore des Algériennes qui écrivent aujourd’hui, parmi lesquelles je me compte” (130); [“the metaphor for Algerian women writing today – among them myself” (173)].⁸ This illegible, effaced writing is “écriture de fugitive, écriture par essence éphémère” (130); [“the writing of a fugitive, a writing whose very essence is ephemeral” (172)]. Like Zoraida, Djébar, who writes in French and lives part of the year in Paris and part in New York, turns to Europe to escape the “vast prison” of traditional Muslim womanhood. But also like Zoraida, she finds herself permanently enshrined between two worlds, in the ambiguous space she calls *l’entre-deux-langues* (“the in-between of two languages”).⁹

At the same time as she identifies with her, Djébar also compares Zoraida with her own mother, born in Cherchell, a town on the Algerian coast settled by Moriscos after 1610. She tells how her mother cherished a transcript she had made as an adolescent of *noubas*, Andalusian songs still passed down in the oral tradition of her community, and how that manuscript was destroyed by French soldiers during the Algerian Revolution. They did not know what the text meant, but its Arabic characters rendered it suspect. Djébar’s mother, then, like Laredj’s grandmother, fictionalized in *La gardienne des ombres* as Hanna, represents continuity with Muslim Spain. Thus both novelists lay claim to a familial tie to Cervantes’ homeland, kept alive through oral tradition. Moreover, the Spain of their collective memory is not the monolithic Spain of Counter-Reformation triumphalism, but the heterogeneous, conflictive Spain of the Moors/Moriscos.

Also during the war, Djébar’s brother was arrested without her parents being informed of his whereabouts. Her mother searched for him through the prisons of France, a courageous journey that Djébar describes as an inversion of Zoraida’s, since she is seeking the captive in Europe, in hopes of bringing him back across to Algeria. These crossings and re-crossings by Algerian women, Zoraida, Djébar, and her mother, repeat an endless cycle in which they ultimately find no resting place on either side. Writing serves less as an anchor for the self than as a way of tracing its ceaseless movement. “Fugitive et ne le sachant pas’ [...] désormais je prends conscience de ma condition permanente de fugitive – j’ajouterais même: d’enracinée dans la fuite – justement parce que j’écris et pour que j’écrive” (132-33); [“Fugitive without knowing it’ [...] up to the moment in which I become conscious of my permanent condition as a fugitive – I would even say: as someone rooted in flight – just because I am writing and so that I write” (176)]. Yet it is precisely this unceasing movement that gives Djébar’s writing the agility to construct an all-embracing vision of Algerian nationhood, encompassing ancient struggles of Rome and Carthage, the corsair Republic of the Ottoman regency, European colonialism, and the ongoing fight against both the corrupt postcolonial state and the Islamist extremism that tries to portray itself as the only authentic identity for the Maghreb. The leitmotif of women’s struggles for autonomy runs throughout *Vaste est le prison*, bridging differences between Arabic and Berber, mountain villages and coastal cities, and of course historical periods. Her bold reading views Zoraida less as a convert to Christianity than as a woman seeking liberation for herself and others: “Libérant l’esclave-héros des bagnes d’Alger, elle se libère elle-meme du père qui lui a tout donné, sauf la liberté [...] Elle troque un espace cerné (la maison la plus riche d’Alger où elle était reine) pour un ailleurs illimité mais incertain” (129-30); [“Freeing the slave-hero from the dungeons of Algiers, she sets herself free

⁸ Page numbers for the French refer to the original publication of “Fugitive, et ne le sachant pas” in *L’Esprit Créateur* 33.2 (1993) 129-33. The discussion of Djébar’s appropriation of Zoraida in these pages takes as its point of departure my previous treatment of the topic in *Transnational Cervantes* (191-193).

⁹ As Michèle E. Vialet has shown, the “two languages” whose in-between Djébar occupies, in addition to French and Arabic (or Berber), also include oral vs. written. *So Vast the Prison* displays a fascination with written texts that go unread, that are effaced or destroyed, and with spoken language, especially within women’s communities, that resonates long after the words themselves have ceased to echo.

from the father who has given her everything except freedom. [...] She exchanges her gilded cage for an elsewhere that is boundless but uncertain” (172)].

Djebar’s version of Zoraida must be seen in the larger context of her project of reconfiguring Algeria within a pluralistic understanding of the Western Mediterranean as a complex whole. As Winifred Woodhull has pointed out, Djebar shares Moroccan philosopher Abdelkebir Khatibi’s conception of the Maghreb (which after all means “West” in Arabic) as a “mosaic of cultures,” and the corresponding rejection of a narrowly pan-Arabian, Islamic understanding of Algerian identity.¹⁰ In Woodhull’s view, *Vaste est le prison* “is especially notable for its ‘pluralizing’ effects.”

It beautifully traces the intricate relations between North Africa on the one hand and a host of other Mediterranean cultures on the other, from ancient Greece, Rome and Carthage, through the period of Arab conquest in the ninth century, into early modern times when Andalusian Moors and Spanish Jews crossed and re-crossed the Mediterranean (along with writers like Cervantes) [...] *Vaste est la prison* restores polyphony to Algeria while at the same time relating histories in which women are significant actors. (215)

In postcolonial North Africa, however, this polyphony has been repressed and can only manifest itself as a yearning for the missing, excluded dimension a divided identity. At the PEN club’s four-hundredth anniversary tribute to *Don Quixote*, held in New York City on April 16, 2005, Assia Djebar again spoke of Zoraida, this time as “a figure of passage”, not only between the shores of the Mediterranean, but between languages and cultures. “More than metaphor”, Zoraida epitomizes the female cultural go-between, an inversion of Cervantes himself – female and Muslim, but engaged with him in a common project of constructing a bridge between two worlds. She is thus “the person who was missing for Cervantes,” and, Djebar concluded, “on both shores of the Mediterranean, for European *and* Algerian women, Zoraida is still the one missing. She has been missing for four hundred years.”¹¹ In this evocation of Zoraida as “the one missing”, her elusive, chameleon-like nature, like Scheherazade’s, is capable of adapting itself almost limitlessly to socio-historical circumstances. Though she betrays and abandons her homeland, she will never finally be at home in Christian Spain, but must live out her life, like Djebar herself, in the “in between” of multiple languages and cultures.

For Cervantes, Zoraida is missing because she represents the Moorish element that is in the process of being excluded in the midst of the Morisco crisis. For today’s Spaniards, too, her uncanny vacillation between belonging and not belonging renders her more than just a *foreigner*; she is that which became *estranged* from European civilization and has returned. Ever since Jaime Oliver Asín’s research into the background to “The Captive’s Tale,” it has been known that Cervantes’ Zoraida had her basis in the real-life daughter of the Slavonic renegade Hajji Murad. Also according to Oliver Asín, Hajji Murad married the daughter of a Christian captive, meaning that the historical prototype for Zoraida the daughter of a renegade was not only, but three of her four grandparents were Christians.¹² On the other hand, she married the prince of Morocco, and after his death, Hassan Veneziano, who became king of Algiers (and, incidentally, Cervantes’

¹⁰ This is the precise antithesis of the Algerian nationalist slogan, “Islam is my religion, Arabic is my nation, and Algeria is my country,” made famous in the 1930s by Abelhamid Ben Badis, leader of the Association of Algerian Ulema (AUMA). Ben Badis’ version of Algerian identity excludes Berber or *pied noir* elements from the authentic definition of the nation. Moreover, only an orthodox version of Islam is to be tolerated; the folk Islam of the *marabouts*, indigenous to the Maghreb, must be renounced (Philips and Evans 43-45).

¹¹ In “Cervantes and His Women Readers,” Lisa Vollendorf mentions Djebar’s remarks at the PEN event (323).

¹² Steven Hutchinson has recently questioned Oliver Asín’s assumption that her mother was a Christian captive, uncritically accepted by several generations of Cervantists (2009, 657; 2011).

master). The trajectory of the historical figure on which she is based leads from Christian Europe to the highest echelons of Muslim North Africa, but Cervantes inverts that trajectory, ‘returning’ her to Christianity and the northern shore of the Mediterranean. But the separation this description of her trajectory implies is itself a simplification; since the eighth century, Islam has always been one of the religions of Europe. Modern Europe came into being in a constant dialogue with Islamic thought and cultural expression, and, as Edward Said demonstrated so convincingly in his seminal *Orientalism*, Europeans have never ceased, in spite of the worldly success of their modern world empires, to contemplate themselves in the mirror held up to them by Islam. Today, this largely misunderstood and unexamined aspect of their own past has returned to the forefront of European societies. Zoraida’s return is, from the European point of view, this return of a repressed element within their cultural memory.

For Djébar and Laredj, Zoraida is “the one missing” in the opposite sense. They stress the importance of the Muslim dialogue with European, Christian culture. The idea that the European novel originates with a hybridization of Christian and Islamic elements provides them with a foothold in this ‘foreign’ genre. To some extent they see themselves as the inverse reflections of Cervantes’ trajectory. As they have done, he went beyond the ready-made cultural identity into which he was born, imbuing it with a productive tension through contact with another social world. Thus they share with him the role of cultural go-between, with all the ambiguities that result. It is Zoraida’s ‘return’ to North Africa that interests them, the restoration of her connection to their own past, and through her, that of Cervantes and the whole tradition of modern secular literature of which he is a cornerstone. Like “The Captive’s Tale,” most *écriture de l’urgence* texts are autobiographical fiction. Tellingly, Laredj and Djébar both claim some Andalusian ancestry, which gives them a personal connection to Cervantes that goes beyond the role of *Don Quixote* as a model. They both focus on the Cervantine text that bears the closest resemblance to their own project. Indeed, one can say without exaggeration that these chapters of *Don Quixote* were likewise written out of a sense of urgency, as an intervention in the shaping of public opinion concerning the ongoing low intensity war with the corsairs and the resulting economy of ransoming captives.¹³

In recent years, a number of scholars – myself among them – have argued that Cervantes’ experience in Algiers provided him with a different perspective on Spain than he would ever have been able to acquire on the Iberian Peninsula, and that this perspective was decisive in the development of his literary style and vision.¹⁴ Despite the hardship of captivity and his ultimately remaining loyal to his King and Church, Miguel de Cervantes, still a young man, would certainly have been able to appreciate the significant differences between Spain and North Africa. In several senses, Algerian society was freer. There was class mobility; a man’s opportunities were not limited by his genealogy. Religious tolerance of Christianity and Judaism was paired with a lackadaisical attitude on the part of the authorities concerning Islamic practice by ostensible Muslim converts. Algiers was one of the most cosmopolitan places on earth at that time, with renegades and captives from all over the northern shore of the Mediterranean and beyond, as well as Turks and Muslims from North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africans, and even

¹³ Laredj underlines this autobiographical connection what he has Don Quichotte compare Maya with Zoraida, that Moorish woman who seduced “his ancestor,” i.e. Cervantes (rather than the fictional Captive). I believe this link between Zoraida and Cervantes’ own captivity is the best answer to the question Barbara Fuchs raised when I gave an earlier version of the first part of this essay as a paper at the MLA in Washington DC in 2005: Why do these writers focus only on Zoraida, without taking any interest in Ana Félix, another character from *Don Quixote* who travels between Spain and Algiers?

¹⁴ See Francisco Márquez Villanueva 15-49; María Antonia Garcés 2010, 95-106; William Childers 2006, 40-42; Ahmed Abi-Ayad; Juan Goytisolo 60-61; and Steven Hutchinson 2009, 648.

some indigenous from the Americas (Garcès, “In the Hands of God and the Renegade’s” 104). Though its economy was based on piracy and there was little concern with cultural or literary life, it was a city with many languages, many cultures, and several faiths.¹⁵

What impact might this city have had on Cervantes’ writing? After the Council of Trent, the relatively open Spain of Charles V gave way to an ideological shift toward religious intolerance, cultural control, and limited access to foreign study. Erasmus’ Christian humanism, so influential in the first half of the sixteenth century, was outlawed; the Inquisition gained in power and jurisdictional range. Ethno-religious minorities were marginalized and persecuted, in a process of shaping the Spanish nation by exclusion of everything not in conformity with Counter-Reformation Catholicism. Concern over *limpieza de sangre* – purity of blood – gave rise to a racialized regime of internal differentiation and categorization of rights and privileges based on proliferating genealogical distinctions. This baroque ideology of closure to the outside and internal division was defended and maintained through a politics of fear, according to which Spain had to be tirelessly defended against the many enemies of Church and Crown.¹⁶ Algiers gave the lie to this entire confessionalist agenda, showing that national unity and security did not necessarily depend on the imposition of ever narrower boundaries for the community. Cervantes saw in North Africa a mirror to the southern European societies of his day, which, although it did not persuade him to become a renegade and remain in Algiers for the rest of his life, nonetheless did allow him to see his own country, along with its people and institutions, from a newly critical angle.¹⁷ The value of this viewpoint from outside for his eventual literary output is inestimable. Cervantes’ profoundly humane sensibility, simultaneously critical and comprehending, is notoriously distinct from that of such literary rivals as, to take two diametrically opposed examples, the reformist Mateo Alemán and the conformist Lope de Vega.¹⁸ Without reductively asserting direct causality, it does not seem too much to suggest that his five years as a captive contributed significantly to this recognizably Cervantine difference. Today, though dead for nearly four hundred years, he is able, astonishingly, to repay his debt to Algiers, providing the antecedent of an open, magnanimous, ecumenical attitude, imbued with good humor and sympathy even for the adversary, and which can be grounded in Algeria’s own history and tradition.

Of course, there are significant differences between Cervantes’ Spain and Algeria in the 1990s. Spain was not on the brink of anarchy, with a civil war between a repressive government and religious extremists; rather, the religious extremists *were* the government, facilitating a much more effective illusion of consent to the existing order. Obviously, being captive in Algiers was a difficult, not to say traumatic, experience. Cervantes did not spend five delightful years as the Bey’s honored guest! And while there was religious tolerance in Algiers, as well as acceptance of

¹⁵ For a general view of Cervantes’ Algiers, see Garcès 2002, 15-123; Sola and de la Peña; and Bartolomé y Lucile Bennisar. Also worthy of consideration is Daniel Eisenberg’s speculative essay, “¿Por qué volvió Cervantes de Argel?” Eisenberg acknowledges the attractiveness of certain aspects of Algerian society, but insists that the lack of a literary culture in the corsair republic made remaining there long term an unattractive option for Cervantes.

¹⁶ Over the last few decades, this view of the Spain of Cervantes’ day, “la edad conflictiva” as Américo Castro re-baptized it, has become quite familiar. Among many studies that could be listed, Maravall’s theory of the Baroque as a *cultura dirigida* contributed significantly to the trend, as did Cruz and Perry’s *Culture and Control* and Mariscal’s *Contradictory Subjects*. For most of the points mentioned here, my own treatment of “internal colonialism” in early modern Spain contains still useful examples and references (2006, 3-43).

¹⁷ The notion that Cervantes saw – and presented – Spanish society from a critical angle different than most of his contemporaries is developed at length in David R. Castillo’s *(A)wry Views*.

¹⁸ For the difference with Alemán, in my opinion there is still no better study than Blanco Aguinaga’s. The contrast between Lope and Cervantes has been studied much more frequently, including, among others, Gerli (95-109) and my own essay on *El rufián dichoso*.

a purely external and formal adherence to Islam even by those who did profess it, it would be an exaggeration to compare this with the development of secular culture in bourgeois Europe, of which today's western European societies – including Spain – are the inheritors. However weak the culture of secular literature may have been in Castile, it was certainly stronger than in early modern Algiers.¹⁹ Nonetheless, in the fundamental sense of offering an alternative to a religious-based understanding of the core unity of society, Algiers provided a model to Cervantes in the 1570s, and Cervantes returned the favor, providing an analogous model for Algerian writers in the 1990s.

* * * * *

Our examination of the reception of Zoraida in Algeria has thus far revealed her to be the bearer of an indeterminate identity that disrupts parochial, isolated constructions of both Spanish and Algerian nationhood. In fact, her constant inconstancy, her steady oscillation between oppositional terms, threatens to break national categories down altogether, opening up the possibility of a pan-Mediterranean space. In the light of her productive role for an open, anti-fundamentalist construction of Algerian identity – and one that, moreover, provides equal agency to women – can we begin to see her as part of a larger, characteristically Mediterranean pattern of inter-cultural dialogue? My goal in what follows is neither to isolate a single, overarching set of shared features, nor to identify pairs of rival civilizing projects (e.g. East vs. West, Greek vs. Latin, Islam vs. Christianity), but simply to theorize certain aspects of the dynamics of interaction among disparate communities across a wide and variegated geography. As it turns out, ambiguous female figures of the Dido/Zoraida/Scheherazade type are crucial to this cultural economy. Male-dominated societies often assign women the role of maintaining markers of identity against outside influence; yet such figures emphasize feminine power to bring about transformation and redefinition.

As one often does where the Mediterranean is concerned, let us start with Braudel, who demonstrated in detail that, “in the Mediterranean to live is to exchange – men, ideas, ways of life, beliefs – or habits of courtship” (II, 761); [“tout s'échange en Méditerranée, les hommes, les pensées, les arts de vivre, les croyances, les façons d'aimer” (II, 99)]. His thick descriptions of the close-knit fabric of life around this perimeter cast political, economic, and social structures as the result of overlapping everyday practices of exchange, built up over the *longue durée* from one human grouping to the next, traveling along navigation routes, roads, and coastlines, from fishing villages to major ports and vice versa, island hopping, crisscrossing the inland sea. Magisterially, his analyses follow the contours of land and sea, recognizing the limiting and shaping impact of the underlying physical configuration.

Yet Braudel also felt the need to introduce *another* limiting factor, the abstract category of “civilizations”, to which he devotes a major chapter of *The Mediterranean* (II, 757-835). This term refers to a stable set of practices that are much less malleable or moveable than other forms of human activity. Countering the prevailingly fluidic orientation of the rest of the monograph, civilizations are “anchored to the soil” (II, 773); [“attachées au sol” (II, 109)]. Civilizational units of analysis are inscribed on the land by destiny. Speaking of the area corresponding to present-day Tunisia, he personifies the forces that created its spatial setting: “Nature laid its foundations” (II, 771); [“La nature a préparé le logement” (II, 108)]. Despite expansion of influence from more powerful into weaker geographic areas, ultimately each region remains locked into a deep, virtually unchanging configuration of folkways, religious beliefs, and values, creating an

¹⁹ This is the crucial reason Eisenberg adduces for Cervantes' decision to return to Spain rather than becoming a renegade.

insurmountable backstop to the pliability of customs, which otherwise would appear endlessly negotiable. The repository of cultural memory is indissolubly linked to the sense of place, providing a deep, rooted national sensibility, beyond the reach of the constant flow and flux of goods and people. It turns out to be not quite true that for Braudel “*tout s’échange en Méditerranée.*”

Of course, even in the civilizational realm change takes place, however slowly, leading to difficult conundrums, such as the transformation of Medieval Iberia into Christian Spain, which Braudel likens to the slow and inexorable movement of a glacier that “crushed the trees and houses in its path” (II, 825). He expresses sympathy for the victims of this crushing, recognizing the colonialist nature of Spain’s takeover of Granada, yet his perhaps unconscious bias in favor of nationalist historiography leads him to stigmatize human migration as a “betrayal” of the rightful geography of civilizations.²⁰ Given enough time, the imposition of homogeneity in previously heterogeneous areas is inevitable: “Let us accept rather that all civilizations move towards their destiny, whether willingly or unwillingly” (II, 825). In Spain’s case, destiny apparently chose the exclusive alignment of the northern shore of the Mediterranean with Christianity. Presumably the FLN and the FIS would both agree to this principle, according to which memory of French and *pied noir* elements must be erased for a modern Algerian nation to emerge, just as the Sephardic and Hispano-Arabic elements were slated for oblivion in the construction of the Spanish nation some four centuries before. Though “civilizations of the diaspora type” exist (II, 804), the glacier is bound to crush them eventually. Any feeling of sympathy we may have for its victims is “irrelevant to the basic problem” (II, 823); that is, the construction of the vast cultural unities undergirding the modern nation state. These out-of-place diasporic elements are compared to islands; “if these islands made contact with each other, the whole situation could be very different” (II, 804). But do they *not* make contact? Are diasporic identities really less common in the Mediterranean than the supposedly stable ones that are the stock in trade of nationalist representations?

At this point it is helpful to supplement Braudel’s seminal study by means of Paul Gilroy’s influential theoretical construct of “the black Atlantic,” which reoriented cultural history from land masses (i.e. national territories) toward bodies of water: crossroads, movement, exchanges. For Gilroy, diasporic cultures *typify* modernity. His approach to cultural history involves mapping the “erratic flows” of a widening “diaspora web” (191). This turn away from narratives of nationalism has significant repercussions for understanding the Mediterranean as a space created and maintained in its vitality by constant interchange. In *Mediterranean Crossings*, for example, Iain Chambers draws on Gilroy’s methodology to map trajectories that disrupt the boundary between Christianity and Islam, beginning with examples taken from the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, then jumping forward to the present:

In this more mutable archive, the seemingly intractable *knots of history* begin to unravel, proposing unexpected lines of enquiry and unsuspected overlapping encounters. Here, for example, it becomes possible to think, and read, Jacques Derrida, less as a member of the Parisian intellectual coterie than as a Mediterranean thinker, a philosopher from the Maghreb, a French-speaking Jew from colonial Algeria who, from the margins of the

²⁰ “In the Spanish situation I am therefore naturally on the side of the Jews, the conversos, Protestants, almoravids, and Moriscos. But such feelings, which I cannot avoid, are irrelevant to the basic problem” (II, 823). “Everything that has been said or written about ‘colonialism’ at any time and in any country is strangely true of the reconquered kingdom of Granada” (II, 787). “A civilization cannot simply transplant itself, bag and baggage. By crossing a frontier, the individual becomes a foreigner. He ‘betrays’ his own civilization by leaving it behind” (II, 770).

European logos, radically reconfigures its critical syntax. This suggestive supplement – which could be extended to Frantz Fanon, Hélène Cixous and Assia Djébar [...] – is intended not to propose a new set of “origins” but, rather, to set such thought, writings, and criticism in movement: a crossing of routes that proposes transversal passages through the Western topos, leading to a wider and perhaps unfamiliar constellation. (133, emphasis added)

Gilroy’s “diaspora web” and Chambers’ “knots of history” resonate with the notion of *nœuds de mémoire* (knots of memory) introduced by Michael Rothberg and the other collaborators in a 2010 special number of *Yale French Studies*. Like Gilroy’s black Atlantic diasporas vis-à-vis Braudel’s ‘civilizations’, these knots render a predecessor’s stable, reified categories more flexible. In this case it is Pierre Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, which Nora has employed for decades to orient historians’ attention to the ways collective and institutional memory shape the past through resonant nodes of French national myth, such as Charlemagne, the Eiffel Tower, and the Marseillaise, among literally dozens of others.²¹ Though impressive in its scope and theoretical sophistication – employing metahistorical analysis to illuminate the very processes whereby canonical historical icons are created, thereby enabling a reexamination of the entire French past and its representation – Nora’s project was nonetheless achieved at the cost of reinscribing an unabashedly Eurocentric nationalism at the center of the historian’s task, precisely at a time when such an orientation was being called into question. Rothberg explains in his introduction to the volume that Paul Gilroy is a key predecessor for the “knots of memory” approach, insofar as it tries to “break the national frame” in order to “explore the ‘knotted intersections’ of history and memory that cut across categories of national and ethnic identity” (8). The “erratic flows” that converge in the various parallel and interwoven strands of these knots connect analogous historical/memory processes across space and time. As we have seen, Cervantes is connected to Djébar and Laredj by a similar tension between the constraining impact of religious extremism and the liberating potential of life-writing, even under the extreme duress of civil war or captivity. History does not so much repeat itself as it echoes and reverberates like ripples crossing and re-crossing a pool.

Thinking of Zoraida/Zoraïd/Zoraidé’s trajectories back and forth between northern and southern coasts as a “knot of memory” tying the Spanish/Algerian context of the late sixteenth century to the Algerian/French one of the late twentieth allows us to situate Cervantes’ text alongside broad issues of the circulation of cultural practices and perceptions throughout the Mediterranean. In particular, I wish to frame Zoraida through two of the most widespread and protracted Mediterranean practices in situations of intercultural encounter, hospitality and veiling, which we will attempt to trace in Cervantes’ text as if they were two strands of the knot of memory connecting her simultaneously across the expanses of time and space that are modernity and the Mediterranean. Certainly, the notion of a Mediterranean *ethos* of hospitality is as old, at least, as the *Odyssey*.²² Veiling, on the other hand, was already widespread in pre-Islamic times throughout communities of the eastern and central Mediterranean, as the examples collected by Fadwa El Guindi show (149-51). Indeed, Leila Ahmed has argued that Islam may have brought veiling, as it is now known in any case, to the Arabian Peninsula from the Eastern Mediterranean (11-63).

²¹ Nora’s best known theoretical formulation in English is the article “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*” (1989). For a fuller idea of how the notion operates in practice, see the four volumes of Nora and his collaborators published by the University of Chicago under the title *Rethinking France* and the three volumes published by the University of Columbia, *Realms of Memory*.

²² Steve Reece analyzed and codified the scenes of hospitality in the Homeric poems, especially the *Odyssey*.

Moreover, as we will see at greater length below, hospitality and veiling converge around issues of identity and difference, concealment and trust, acceptance and exclusion, which are crucial to intercultural negotiation. More than as the property of any particular human group or groups, it is helpful to think of them as regulatory meta-practices articulating cultural interfaces around the periphery of the shared inland sea. In a significant sense, veiling and hospitality are two sides of the same coin, as Cervantes' sequencing of these motifs in the scene of Zoraida's arrival at the inn will demonstrate.

In *Of Hospitality*, Jacques Derrida theorized two contrasting "laws" of hospitality in a manner uncannily suited to specific details of the representation of the arrival scene. His wide-ranging discussion examines the treatment of the "foreigner" (*l'étranger*) in, among other texts, the *The Apology of Socrates*, the *Crito*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and the book of *Genesis*, while tying this thematic to such contemporary issues as internet surveillance and immigration policy. Derrida contrasts the singular law of *absolute* hospitality, with the set of rules and obligations, in the plural, which govern "hospitality as right or duty." The former demands that we welcome unnamed, unknown strangers unconditionally and without interrogation, "without asking of them either reciprocity [...] or even their names" (25). The latter inscribes hospitality within a judicial framework, in accordance with which only those foreigners who meet certain conditions are entitled to be treated with hospitality. "Among the serious problems" to be posed in relation to these contradictory demands "is that of the foreigner who, inept at speaking the language, always risks being without defense before the law of the country that welcomes or expels him"; thus the "question of hospitality" begins here: "must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language, in all the senses of this term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country?" (15) Although Derrida insists that the *absolute* law is "above" the "structured multiplicity, determined by a process of division and differentiation" (79), the phenomenon of hospitality takes place concretely in the contradictory tension, the antinomy, between them. A merely utopian abstraction cannot be called, after all, true hospitality; nor can the merely perfunctory fulfillment of a duty. The two need one another:

But even while keeping itself above the laws of hospitality, *the* unconditional law of hospitality needs the laws, it *requires* them. This demand is constitutive. It wouldn't be effectively unconditional, the law, if it didn't *have to become* effective, concrete, determined [...] It would risk being abstract, utopian, illusory, and so turning over into its opposite. In order to be what it is, *the* law thus needs the laws, which, however, deny it, or at any rate threaten it, sometimes corrupt or pervert it [...] And vice versa, conditional laws would cease to be laws of hospitality if they were not guided, given inspiration, given aspiration, required, even, by the law of unconditional hospitality. (79; emphasis in the original)

The scene of the Captive and Zoraida's arrival at the inn in *Don Quijote* I, 37 stages these two laws and their mutual dependence with remarkable precision. Let us recall: the Captive (only later will we learn his name is Ruy Pérez de Viedma) arrives first; "en su traje mostraba ser cristiano recién venido de tierra de moros" (439) ["in his dress revealing himself a Christian recently come from Moorish lands"].²³

²³ This scene has been discussed too often to attempt an exhaustive list here. Among commentaries focused on the arrival in the inn, Garcés' treatment ("Cervantes Veiled Woman") and Gerli's (42-47) are still valuable. Recent discussions by Luis Avilés, Luisa Fernanda Aguirre de Cárcer, and Steven Hutchinson ("Fronteras cervantinas") explicitly link the issues of Zoraida's language, baptism, and veiling to the Morisco question.

Entró luego tras él, encima de un jumento, una mujer a la morisca vestida, cubierto el rostro, con una toca en la cabeza; traía un bonetillo de brocado, y vestida una almalafa, que desde los hombros a los pies la cubría. (439)

[A woman came in behind him, on a donkey, dressed in Moorish fashion, her face covered, with a scarf on her head; she had on a brocade cap, and she wore a shawl that covered her from her shoulders to her feet.]

This description emphasizes a typical visual preconception of the Maghrebian woman: her head, face, and body covered by layers of cloth which hide her from view. As there is no room for this couple at the inn – the echoes of the story of Mary and Joseph are unmistakable, as Gerli has pointed out (42) – Dorotea immediately offers the hospitality of the room she and Luscinda are sharing, but the lady answers only with a humble bow, leading those present to imagine that she must be Moorish, “y que no sabía hablar *cristiano*” (440, emphasis added); [“and that she could not speak *Christian*”]. Using the name of a *religion* to refer to the local language emphasizes that to be received hospitably one should indeed master it “in all the senses of this term, in all its possible extensions.” Speaking the language is tantamount to complete acculturation. At this point the Captive returns – “que entendiendo en otra cosa hasta entonces había estado” (440) [“for he had been attending to some other matter”] to find the woman with whom he entered ‘surrounded’ (*cercada*) and, assuming she is being interrogated, explains that she can only speak the language of her own land, “y por esto no debe de haber respondido ni responde a lo que se le ha *preguntado*” (440, emphasis added); [“and for that reason it must be that she has not answered nor does she answer what she has been *asked*”]. Luscinda immediately denies they were interrogating her; they were *offering* their hospitality, without asking her anything *else* (“no se le preguntaba *otra cosa* ninguna” [440, emphasis added]). The Captive’s assumption is that curiosity had gotten the better of the other guests at the inn; Luscinda’s defensiveness already implies her awareness of the law of *absolute* hospitality – to welcome the stranger with no preconditions – which to interrogate the new arrival at this point would violate.

Now that they know she is Moorish, however, they do in fact begin to question the Captive about her. Dorotea: “¿esta señora es cristiana o mora? Porque el traje y el silencio nos hace pensar que es lo que no querríamos que fuese” (440) [“Is this woman Christian or Muslim? Because her dress and silence make us think she is what we would not have her be”]. Here ‘mora,’ which I have previously translated ‘Moorish,’ clearly refers to the *religion* she professes. “Lo que no querríamos que fuese:” there is an edge of menace in this remark, a veiled threat that the hospitality so quickly offered may be withdrawn. If she is Muslim, she is not welcome here. The *judicial* form of hospitality, “structured multiplicity, determined by a process of division and differentiation,” now takes over. Under this regime, the degree of hospitality due a stranger depends on the category to which s/he is assigned. Religious difference conditions the microeconomics of trust. As Luis Avilés has noted, Dorotea here uses the first person plural, referring implicitly to the entire group, who now stand over and against the foreign woman, judging her, deciding whether or not to accept her (183-84). Luscinda: “Luego, ¿no es bautizada?” (441) [“Then she’s not baptized?”]. The Captive admits she is not, but insists she will be, as soon as it is possible to do it properly, as befits a woman *of her station*. At this, everyone listening burns with curiosity about the newcomers’ identities, but the narrator explains that for the time being they choose not to ask, “por ver que aquella sazón era más para procurarles descanso que para preguntarles sus vidas” (441) [“seeing that the time was better for providing them rest than for asking them about their lives”]. Here *absolute* hospitality *seems* to reassert itself, yet the very next moment Dorotea takes her hand, seats

her by her side, and asks her to uncover her face.²⁴ Is this just a reflection of simple curiosity or a *test* of her willingness to adopt Christian customs? The Captive translates the request and tells her to grant it; she complies, revealing “un rostro tan hermoso, que [...] todos los circunstantes conocieron que si alguno se podría igualar al de las dos [Dorotea y Luscinda] era el de la mora, y aun hubo algunos que le aventajaron en alguna cosa” (441), [“a face so beautiful that [...] all those present knew that if anyone could be as beautiful as the two [Luscinda and Dorotea] it was the Moor, and some even thought he had the advantage over them in something”]. Her strong showing in this impromptu beauty contest exempts Zoraida from the requirements of judicial hospitality: “Y como la hermosura tenga *prerrogativa y gracia* de reconciliar los ánimos y atraer las voluntades, luego se rindieron todos al deseo de servir y acariciar a la hermosa mora” (441, emphasis added), [“And as beauty enjoys the *grace and privilege* of reconciling spirits and drawing the will to itself, so all were vanquished by the desire to serve and cherish the beautiful Moor”].

Both laws of hospitality converge in this moment of unveiling. The scene is staged as a test in which her willingness to remove the veil is a *condition* for her to be welcomed; that is, the *act* of unveiling is a sign of her sincere repudiation of Islamic custom. At the same time, however, once her face is revealed, their response to her beauty operates as a sign of the unconditionality of the *absolute* law of hospitality. Here and elsewhere in his writings, Cervantes participates in a tradition extending from Plato’s *Phaedrus* to Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* and beyond, in which beauty exerts a morally elevating power over the will of those who contemplate it. The effect of Zoraida’s beauty on the Spaniards assembled in the inn can thus be interpreted as a quasi-allegorical indication of the higher impulse to welcome the stranger disinterestedly, without question, though at the same time it is obvious that not every refugee arriving on foreign shores will happen to be in possession of the physical beauty that can exercise the power over those s/he meets of reminding them of the higher duty they have to “serve and cherish” the visitor.²⁵

Yet even her willingness to unveil and her beauty are not yet enough to end the questioning. Here for the first time since their arrival, a man of the assembled company speaks, and it is the highest-ranking man at that; Don Fernando asks the Captive the final question, her name, to which he answers ‘Lela Zoraida’. Thus Fernando’s male authority to demand her name exactly mirrors the Captive’s authority to require her to unveil. She immediately insists, however, “con mucha priesa, llena de congoja y donaire” (441), [“hurriedly, with great vehemence and charm”] that she wants to be called María, *not* Zoraida. “‘¡Sí, sí, María: Zoraida, *macange!*’ –que quiere decir *no*”

²⁴ The word used here is “embozo,” which the Captive translates: “Él en lengua arábica le dijo que le pedía se quitase el embozo, y que lo hiciese” (441) [“In Arabic, he told her that they were asking her to remove her face covering, and to do so”]. *Embozo* is a piece of cloth used to cover the face, possibly just part of a larger cloth, presumably the *tocado*, head scarf, which the narrator told us she was wearing when she entered. As Avilés points out, this word often refers to hiding the face for the purpose of keeping one’s identity secret, and to concealment of intentions generally (183). In this context, we should not forget that in the preceding chapter don Fernando, his three companions, and Luscinda all arrived with their faces covered, the men with *antifaces negros* (black masks I, 36, 424), Luscinda with a piece of *tafetán* (taffeta I, 36, 426), presumably white; and that Fernando is described as *el caballero embozado* (the masked man I, 36, 425).

²⁵ The meaning of Zoraida’s gesture of unveiling here cannot be fully understood without addressing, however briefly, beauty as a signifier in Cervantes. The Neo-Platonic idealization of beauty as the sign of a higher reality is already prominent in *La Galatea* (1585). Especially in the posthumous *Persiles y Sigismunda*, Cervantes often employs the baroque technique of suddenly revealing hidden beauty to dramatically heighten its effect, which in the most extreme instance provokes in the bystanders the belief that they are seeing a goddess (II.10, 342). Elsewhere I have argued that this dramatization of beauty’s sudden revelation brings its effect closer to that of the sublime (2006, 146-148).

(442) [““Yes, yes, María: Zoraida, *macange!*’ – which means *no*”].²⁶ In her fervent desire to leave behind every trace of her former self, she is willing to give up even her name. The intensity of the feeling with which she says these words moves some of those present to tears, and Luscinda embraces her lovingly (“con mucho amor” [441]), agreeing, “Sí, sí, María, María.” Just as the unveiling of her beauty undid the authority of the man who commanded it, so her rejection of the name her father gave her in favor of one that expresses her desire to join the Christian community undermines the male authority that demanded her identity be given. It would appear, at this point, that the interrogation is over, and the principles of absolute and relative hospitality now converge. Her beauty, helped by her spontaneous and unaffected expression of Christian faith, has done the trick.²⁷

‘Zoraida’ (for ironically she will always be known by this name, the very one she so strenuously disavows) refers to a paradoxical subject permanently caught in ambiguous oscillation. The self she performs here, in transition from her former life to her new one, is fixed at the precise moment between the culture she has abandoned and the one she is about to adopt. She has two names, two identities, veiled *and* unveiled, not either/or but both/and. The veil she now removes is an indicator of her loyalty. Wearing it, she perhaps retained a last shred of faithfulness to her Muslim father; removing it, she betrays him utterly and adopts the customs of her ‘infidel’ husband-to-be. Yet we should not fail to recognize that it is the Captive who instructs her to remove the *embozo*, leaving the action shrouded in even greater ambiguity. She obeys her husband, and the unveiling signifies her acceptance of his authority over her; Castilian and Islamic values converge. Could she even have been wearing it at her husband’s request, rather than as a Muslim? Would this be because he is a typical Spaniard, or has he become acculturated to Algerian ways? The undecidability of these questions indeed points to underlying cultural commonalities deriving from what Barbara Fuchs has termed the “Moorish habitus” in early modern Spain (5-13), and possibly even to the shared Mediterranean roots of gender roles in both societies. Here it is worth recalling that in order to eliminate the *hijab* among Moriscos in the Crown of Castile it was also necessary to forbid Christian women from going about in public with their faces covered, as was quite customary in the sixteenth-century (Gallego Burín and Gámir Sandoval 58-59). The indecipherability of Zoraida’s intentions as she first wears then removes the veil is a testament to the contextually embedded nature of even the most seemingly straightforward customs in a setting like the Mediterranean, where constant intercultural contact continuously reinscribes their meaning.

This contextualized reversibility of the veil, like a piece of cloth with a front and a back side, is the primary subject of Frantz Fanon’s 1959 essay “Algeria Unveiled.” Fanon talks about how the meaning of veiling changed in response to circumstances, beginning in the early 1930s when pressure to abandon the practice as a sign of assimilation to French social mores gave wearing it the additional meaning of resistance to the colonizer (37-41).²⁸ As women began to

²⁶ Concerning possible Arabic meanings for *macange* and their consequences for interpreting Zoraida’s positioning herself vis-à-vis her Muslim identity, see Ibtissam Bouachrine, “Zoraida, the Other Author of the *Quijote*.”

²⁷ The Captive will still have to tell his own version of the tale of his captivity and escape in order to prove himself above suspicion of having apostatized in Algiers, but this is beyond the scope of the current study. In two previous publications (Childers 2010a; 2010b) I discuss aspects of his secondary narrative, which serves to dispel the atmosphere of suspicion upon his arrival at the inn.

²⁸ As Leila Ahmed has shown, the association of veiling with resistance to European colonialism began even earlier, in the Victorian period (144-168). Inge Boer has perceptively analyzed this process: “The debate about the relative advancement of European societies and the need for Muslim societies to catch up [from the 1920s forward], took women veiling themselves as a focal point. Because, so the argument ran: how can a society want to modernize itself

participate in the struggle for independence, going about the streets unveiled served tactically to render them above suspicion – as in Zoraida’s gesture at the inn, where removal of the veil indicated repudiation of Islam and adoption of Christian/European values (57). Yet having captured a few of these women and tortured them, the French authorities eventually caught on to the strategy. The meaning of *unveiling* had shifted to include its being a possible sign of *resistance* to the colonial regime (60-61). So a new tactic had to be developed, in which ‘liberated’ women fighting for *national* liberation dressed and *acted like* traditional villagers in order to avoid suspicion. Thus they returned to wearing the veil, now as a *false* sign of their submissiveness to authority, beginning with that of their husbands and fathers, but encompassing that of their rulers. The meaning of the veil repeatedly changes, always in response to the colonizer’s shifting expectations. “Removed and reassumed again and again, the veil has been manipulated, transformed into a technique of camouflage, into a means of struggle” (61). Diana Fuss notes, however, that this *reveiling* of Algerian freedom fighters still retains its original meaning of affirming patriarchal privilege, showing that “*within* a single discourse the veil can thus signify *doubly*” (304, emphasis added). According to Penelope Ingram, Fanon’s essay shows how “the inert material object, the veil, now invested with not only one cultural script but several intersecting and opposing ones, into which the woman finds herself inscribed, becomes a dynamic material text enabling the reinscription of the Algerian woman’s body, *whether she is wearing it or not*” (100-101, emphasis added). The veil mediates the woman’s relationship to the gaze of those in whose presence she wears it, but it also mediates her relationship to her own body, her sense of herself. Even the unveiled face retains the invisible trace of the veil she is not wearing, with the corresponding set of possible motives, including but not limited to a feminist critique of the practice.²⁹

Like hospitality, veiling separates inner and outer, defining degrees of intimacy and belonging. As with hospitality, there are rules differentiating persons, situations: who should veil, what she should cover, when she can/must remove it. This is never simply a question of individual choice, since any decision conveys a contextualized meaning independent of her intention, with consequences for how she is perceived and treated, including the hospitality extended to or withheld from her. So whether she veils her face or uncovers it, meanings multiply, since we never know whether she veils or unveils as an expression of her own preference or due to intimidation, coercion, or other external motives. Her decision is caught in a web of contradictory meanings, as Miriam Cooke describes:

The veil in this late twentieth-century context is riddled with contradictions. It marks the piety of the individual, as of the society, by reinforcing women's traditional role as cultural custodians, at the same time that it facilitates educational and professional participation.

while obvious examples of ‘backwardness’ were visible in the streets and cities in the form of veiled women? [...] The veil thus obtained a significance that went far beyond its usage, but instead became charged with distinctions such as those between ‘progress’ and ‘backwardness’, ‘Western’ versus ‘authentic’ values, and its relation to class, culture, and gender. The call for reforms for women was thus subsumed under the master narrative of modernization, designed along the lines of Western development” (112-113). Ahmed argues that this association of unveiling with the betrayal of native culture under colonial pressure “imparted to feminism [...] the taint of having served as an instrument of colonial domination.” Ironically, then, the effort to pressure women to unveil, supposedly in the name of gender equality, “has undoubtedly hindered the feminist struggle within Muslim societies” (167).

²⁹ Fanon’s analysis of the changing significance of the veil and women’s role in the struggle for Algerian independence has been the subject of ongoing debate among feminist theorists. Writing in 1987, Marie-Aimée Helie-Lucas criticized his overstatement of women’s participation as equals in the Revolution; but T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting has defended the value of his insights for feminism, insisting that we not hold him responsible for the failure of the postcolonial Algerian state, since Fanon died before independence.

The veil imprisons and liberates. It may or may not be a matter of choice, and this clearly depends on whether the veil is worn in a society controlled by an Islamic regime or in one tolerant of multiple religious observances. Whether the veil is imposed or chosen, it is an item of clothing that each woman daily engages, aware of the symbolic baggage it carries. As she looks at herself in the mirror in the morning to hide her hair and adjust the cloth, this Muslim woman daily reaffirms the fact that her body marks her morally and sexually, in other words, as a religious and as a female person. Daily, this veiled woman has a multiple consciousness of herself as she sees herself, as her community sees her, and as outsider men and women see her. (166)

What Fanon terms the “historic dynamism of the veil” (63) did not end, then, when Algerian independence was won in 1962. Quite the contrary. The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a new, Islamic feminism across the Muslim world, in which women writers of the Maghreb were prominent, especially Fatema Mernissi and Assia Djebar (Wehrs). Their critique, directed especially at forms of veiling that hide the woman’s face, led to a backlash from Islamist circles. During the Algerian civil war of the 1990s, as previously mentioned, Islamic terrorists threatened with death any woman who dared to appear on the street unveiled. To do so was a sign of resistance to this threat and to Islamism generally. Yet during the same period, however, many Muslim women living in Europe who had previously been unveiled began to wear at least a headscarf (*hijab*), not as a sign of their religiosity or submissiveness, but as an affirmation of their cultural identity and resistance to assimilation. María Eleonora Sanna explores these contradictions in her essay, “Voiles musulmans: Une réalité polysémique,” included in the exhibition catalogue for *Au bazar du genre: féminin, masculin en Méditerranée*, currently on view at the new Musée des Civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée in Marseille. The meaning of this “polysemic reality” depends on the social or political contexts in which veils are worn. She mentions Algeria as a case of violent constraint, but insists that many women in other parts of the Mediterranean veil by choice, for a range of reasons, including religious commitment, community involvement, and even as part of their struggle to gain autonomy (193-94). In a by now familiar twist, European discourse reducing the variable significations of the veil to that of an ostentatious religious symbol can lead to its taking on even more new meanings as “a sign of political resistance to the growing Islamophobia in Western countries, or the expression of a demand for recognition and equality on the part of the Muslim minorities” (197). She concludes by discussing the emergence of a new veil, prey to fashion; more and more young Muslim women on both shores of the Mediterranean combine traditional veils and modern clothing, or wear thin, translucent taffeta veils with bright colors and modern patterns. The exhibition includes several images from Hassan Hajjaj’s “Kesh Angels,” series, provocative photographs this Moroccan-born, London-based artist has taken of women in Marrakesh astride motorcycles, their faces covered with veils adorned with polka dots or the Nike logo.³⁰ Against the dominant idea of ‘*the veiled woman*,’ this usage combines “on the one hand, traditional religious gender norms, and on the other, affirmation of the individual’s own seductive and coquettish personality, alongside a certain flirtation with the trends of global fashion” (197). Like Zoraida, women who veil in this way challenge the assumptions of *both* traditional and modernizing tendencies in their communities, defying Islamists’ expectations

³⁰ These images can be viewed at <http://www.roseissa.com/past%20exhib/hassan%20Kesh/hassankesh-exh4.html>. This process is not new, either; Ahmed describes such transformations of the veil in early twentieth-century Egypt, part of an autochthonous women’s movement, distinct from the Western colonial attempt to undermine native culture by promoting a foreign ideal of gender equality (172).

because of the *way* they wear the obligatory *hijab*, while frustrating modernists' expectations insofar as they submit to the obligation in the first place.

Hajjaj's images and Sanna's analysis of them demonstrate that Zoraida retains meaning even today for Muslim woman in Europe. Hiding and revealing, separating and joining, the veil which conceals her face displays her difference. It marks her foreignness, her not belonging to the dominant group, and thus paradoxically at one and the same time indicates the she is in need of hospitality (in accordance with the absolute Law) and yet not entitled to it (in terms of the social pact). The veil shows that she is "what we would prefer she not be," yet her willingness to shed it isolates a symbolic moment of convergence in which her dazzling beauty momentarily blinds us to the problematic constellation of irreconcilable significations she embodies.

Women's burden of representation in national imaginaries is notoriously disproportionate. The domestic sphere to which they are traditionally consigned is conceived in many discourses, from social science to popular culture, as a repository of fixed, stable identities. All the more reason, then, for them to figure prominently in depictions of dialogue among disparate groups leading to social change. All the more reason, moreover, for the heroines of such depictions to frequently be maligned as 'traitors' to the *fatherland*. In her Janus-like ambivalence, Zoraida joins a long sequence of women who move between cultures within the Mediterranean, permanently fixed in the fluctuation between two poles, between the two sides of the veil, between hospitality and rejection. Even before the confrontation of Christianity and Islam, Elissa Dido, Queen of Carthage, stood for resistance to Roman expansion *as well as* for hospitality extended to the northern colonizers, in betrayal of Africa.³¹ The Virgin Mary, with roots in the cults of Isis, Aphrodite, Venus, and Demeter, could be venerated by the Morisco fabricators of the *libros plúmbeos* in a fashion which simultaneously betrays *and* remains faithful to *both* Christianity and Islam.³² As Patricia Grieve shows in *The Eve of Spain*, interpretations of La Cava, the daughter of Count Julian, for whom legend has it Spain was lost to the Arab invader, follow a similar pattern, over the centuries, of oscillation between her being viewed as a traitor to Spain and a victim of King Rodrigo. Even Europa herself, the continent's namesake, who was carried off to Crete by Zeus in the form of a bull, can be included here, as she was variously seduced or abducted by the god, and gave her name to the mainland she abandoned. Alluding to the Virgin *and* la Cava in telling Zoraida's story, Cervantes mixes memory and desire, past and future, as he spins yet another diasporic web of betrayal/conversion (Gerli 40-60).

Of late, the female figure who most powerfully conveys this sense of the endlessly malleable yet always self-possessed woman, equally comfortable on either shore of the Mediterranean yet not finally reducible to either, is Scheherazade, the greatest repository of Arab and Persian narrative memory. Fatema Mernissi, noting that the *Thousand and One Nights* in its current form is the product of contributions from Muslim and European editors over several centuries, conceives of Scheherazade as a go-between in her exploration of women's role and masculine constructions of female identity, East and West. Her Scheherazade is first and foremost an intelligent woman who lives by her wits; she makes herself the ideal companion for king Shahrayar, talking to him in the night, penetrating into the world of his desires, and finally taking

³¹ Several Spanish writers, including Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega, take up the defense of Dido's "honor" against Virgil's "defamatory" treatment. Lida de Malkiel's remains the primary monograph on the subject.

³² The Marianism of the *libros plúmbeos* is much in evidence, for example in the *Libro de los enigmas y misterios que vio la virgin santa María por la gracia de Dios*, included in Hagarty's edition. As A. Katie Harris has shown, the emphasis on the Immaculate Conception in the lead books facilitated their acceptance by Granada's Christian community (137-148).

over the political situation by subtly manipulating his thoughts, beliefs, and motivations. Mernissi contrasts this witty and learned Arab woman with the Western male fantasy of a harem filled with sensuous Arabian dancers. In a double challenge similar to the one Zoraida poses at the inn, Scheherazade serves to confront *both* the masculine hierarchy of Muslim societies *and* the stereotypical image of Muslim women in Western society, equally patriarchal though in superficially different ways. Mernissi encapsulates these two forms of control by declaring that if Muslim men want to cover ‘their’ women up, Western men want to disrobe theirs, in order to impose a narrow canon of “beauty” to which women in consumerist societies vainly strive to conform (106-116). Her Scheherazade is turned equally toward Europe and toward North Africa, equally toward the memory of their shared past and the certain knowledge that their future will be shared as well.

Assia Djebar, in *Ombre sultane* (1987, translated into English as *A Sister to Scheherazade*), uses epigraphs and allusions to compare the bourgeois narrator, Isma, to Scheherazade’s sister Dinarzad, tasked with waking her every morning before the break of day. After her divorce, the French-speaking Isma, a stand-in of sorts for the author, arranges her own ex-husband’s marriage to Hajila, a woman of a lower social class. Hajila, who does not speak French, is more like a servant and nanny, than a true companion to her husband. Isma, witnessing Hajila’s confinement and suffering, finally provides her a means of liberation: the copy she still has of her key to the apartment. The analogy with Dinarzad serves to memorialize the archetypal situation of women in mid-twentieth-century Algeria, as their traditional quotidian existence, still frozen in colonial time even after independence, differs little from the patriarchal court ruled by the tyrant Shahrayar.³³ Thus Djebar’s use of Scheherazade, at least in this early novel, is turned toward memory and a critical mirroring of Arab society.

Taking the opposite tack of the bifurcation between past and future, Leila Sebbar brings her version of the character, Shérzad, over to the European side, to France, where, as a young French-born Algerian, she plays flirtatiously, restlessly, provocatively, with the various dimensions of her incomplete, fragmented self. Whereas Djebar’s focus in *A Sister to Scheherazade* was on Algerian women’s relationships to one another, Sebbar’s Shérzade has as her interlocutor a ‘European’ man, the *pied noir* Julien. A four-way back-and-forth involving two characters’ perceptions of themselves and each other runs throughout Sebbar’s trilogy, destabilizing their identities. Anne Donadey has discussed the “nomadic practice constantly negotiating between fixed and objectifying representations” which allows Shérzade “create her own imagined territory, a Mediterranean mosaic” (270-71).³⁴ In this respect, Sebbar is closest to the spirit of Cervantes, who also brought his North African shape-shifting goddess/princess across the Mediterranean to Europe, where despite her exotic appearance, her Christian piety makes her a mirror for the Spaniards gathered at the inn. Now more than ever, these female characters must circulate, challenging fixed boundaries among southern European and northern African communities. Their movement throughout the Mediterranean allegorizes, not so much the creation of a single Mediterranean culture or civilization, as an open-ended continuous process of reconciliation of the various groups that confront one another around the rim. Their trajectories traverse the space of the region, bringing cultures into contact and mirroring identities across the sea which both divides them and unites them into a constellation of varied communities. In the encounters that result, the demand for *absolute* hospitality to be extended always and everywhere is no more realistic than the corresponding demand that veiling – both literal and metaphorical –

³³ Gauch discusses this novel and the role of the comparison with the *Thousand and One Nights* (81-84).

³⁴ Suzanne Gauch devotes her fifth chapter to Sebbar’s Shérzade trilogy (103-28).

be abolished once and for all. But just as in Cervantes representation of the arrival at the inn, the dialectic of hospitality and veiling can at times converge on moments of community across social and religious divides.³⁵

Though she leaves her father stranded on the beach at Cava Rumia, Zoraida does not entirely jettison her past. In fact, as the daughter and granddaughter of renegades, she recovers it, even as she leaps forward into an uncertain future. Based on a woman of flesh and blood but with equal parts fantasy, she bridges fiction and history, Christianity and Islam, past and future, veiling and unveiling, hospitality and hostility, loyalty and betrayal. The various strands of the knot of memory she provided her Algerian readers at perhaps the most terrible time in their history have not been exhausted here. Indeed, to follow their traces in all their implications, especially concerning gender relations and representations, would generate a constellation of memory and futurity embracing the entire Mediterranean.³⁶

³⁵ Writing about the “return” of Maghrebians descendants of the Moors as immigrants to Spain, Daniela Flesler argues, following Stuart Hall, that identity is an ongoing process, always requiring the mirror of the Other, the excluded, to complete it, or rather to continue in its construction. “In their present encounter with the ‘Moor,’ this time in the context of the new Europe, Spaniards are once more engaging in their own constitutive process of identity formation, trying to solve unsolved questions, and attempting to come to terms with their own ghosts” (198).

³⁶ In her recent memoir, Algerian-born Fatima Benamrane, a kind of present-day Zoraida if there ever was one, describes an ever expanding sense of self, which encompasses more as time passes: “J’eus l’opportunité d’apprécier, de visu, les bienfaits de la suppression des frontières nationales entre pays européens, avec la conversion de mon statut de Française en celui, bien plus promoteur, d’Européenne, tout en conservant mon statut d’Algérienne que j’aurais aimé troquer contre celui d’Africaine, dans une intégration plus large d’espace arabo-euro-africain” (289). She ends up with a plea for world citizenship: “pour moi, l’avenir de l’humanité passera impérativement par la création et la consolidation de la citoyenneté mondiale qui remplacera inéluctablement toute autre citoyenneté locale, nationale, continentale ou inter étatique. Je continuerai à défendre avec toute mon énergie cette vision” (293).

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