

On conversion in *Don Quixote*, or, the cry of Hajji Murad¹

Ruth Fine
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*The Other faces me and puts me in question
and obliges me.*

*Nothing responds to us, but this silence; the
voice of this silence is understood and
frightens.*

(Emmanuel Levinas)

In *Don Quixote* I, 37 we find the characters of the plot reunited at Palomeque's inn: Don Quixote, Sancho, Dorotea/Micomicona, Cardenio and Luscinda. The romantic conflicts that divided the couples reach their happy resolution and the social order is gradually restored. It is at this moment of social and class harmony that a strange couple bursts onto the scene. The man shows all the signs of being a Christian ("ser cristiano"), despite the fact that he has come from the Moorish lands. Not only does his attire betray the disturbing journey he has made, so does his companion: "una mujer a la morisca vestida" (I, 37, 439).² The veiled woman does not respond to the discreet questions of the noble Christian women; her companion and interpreter—the returning captive captain, Ruy Pérez de Viedma—explains her silence by saying: "esta doncella apenas entiende mi lengua, ni sabe hablar otra ninguna sino conforme a su tierra, y por esto no debe de haber respondido ni responde a lo que se le ha preguntado" (I, 37, 440).³ Finally, the "courteous and sensible" Dorotea, unable to contain her anxieties, inquires without the least bit of tact: "¿esta señora es cristiana o mora? Porque el traje y el silencio nos hace pensar que es lo que no queríamos que fuese."⁴ It turns out that the "Moorish" dress—a mark shared by both travelers— bears significance only for the woman, since hers is accompanied by silence. It is the silence, therefore, that betrays "what we hope she is not."

Is Zoraida Christian or Moor? The answer to Dorotea's question defies dichotomy. Neither Christian nor Moor, Zoraida corresponds perfectly to neither of these diametrically estranged and opposed socio-religious categories. Zoraida's story, as recounted later from the captive's perspective (chapters 39-41), a Christian noble, will only confirm the judgment:

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² "a woman dressed in Moorish fashion" (I, 37, 337). All Spanish citations from *Don Quixote* are taken from the Crítica edition directed by Francisco Rico, and the English citations are taken from J. M. Cohen's translation.

³ "This young woman can hardly understand your language and can only speak the tongue of her own country, she has not replied to your questions because she cannot" (I, 37, 338). Vila cogently points out that the voice of Zoraida—contrary to what critics often argue— virtually never reaches us in a direct fashion (2006, 171). Hence, power—so Vila suggests—is not located in language. Rather, it is in the inner voice that is most significant, despite the silence imposed by society (193-94).

⁴ "is this lady Christian or Moor? For her dress and her silence makes us think that she is what we hope she's not."

Zoraida is not, nor, more precisely, can she be, either Christian or Moor; she is a convert. She will remain situated in this liminal, un-categorizable space—the most threatening space, precisely, because of its indescribable, ambiguous, silenced nature.

What kind of identity is that which cannot be named or described precisely within the parameters of the discourse of power? What kind of identity is this absence of identity?⁵

The reflections that follow focus on the episode of the captive, or more precisely, on the Hajji Murad sequence within that episode. Here, I would like to consider Zoraida in terms of the overall paradigm of conversion in Cervantes' Spain, encompassing both Muslim *moriscos* and Jewish *conversos*. Such a suggestion is made by Juan Diego Vila, among others, who writes that the *morisco* question in *Don Quixote* can be read as the absent and irrepresentable dramatic playing-out of what formerly occurred with the Jews. In this regard, he writes: “el *Quijote* es un texto que vocifera mudamente el escándalo de la conversión [...] el *Quijote* [tal vez] nos cuenta la afiebrada y problemática constitución de un colectivo sin derecho a existir y sin permiso para nombrarse a sí” (Vila 2008, 526-527).⁶ It is a paradigm marked by shame and silence. In this context we must ask ourselves: What kind of convert is Zoraida?

The converso and morisco phenomenon in historical context

The advent of the *converso* phenomenon in Spain came in 1391, with the uprisings that took place throughout the Iberian Peninsula against the Jewish *aljamas*. Between this series of events and the Disputation of Tortosa, in 1413, it is likely that some one hundred thousand Jews (at least a third of the Jewish community) were baptized by force. In these circumstances, the term *converso* is misleading, as the majority of baptized Jews did not sincerely embrace the new religion. Moreover, it is apparent that their Old-Christian coercers never really considered the neophytes to be equal co-religionists. The mass conversions were, above all, acts of oppression carried out by the dominant cultural group against a despised minority. The converts were still regarded as aliens and would continue to carry ineradicable ethno-cultural stigmas. Old-Christian triumph was not based on the assimilation of a group of Jews but on their subjection to its power. It can be claimed that the *conversos* were never meant to be equal Christians. First of all, in the period after the mass conversions, no attempt was made to instruct them in the precepts of Christian belief. Secondly, their children and grandchildren were also regarded as *conversos*, signifying the evolution of the word from being synonymous with the non-transmittable personal condition of neophyte or apprentice, to being a pejorative hereditary epithet meaning outsider, subversive, or Other. Thirdly, to reinforce the *conversos*' alien status, Spanish society introduced the blood purity statutes. Evidently these laws were passed in order to remind the *conversos* of their permanent Jewish taint.

⁵ From a different perspective than the one espoused in this study, but nonetheless relevant to it, Burshatin analyses the dichotomous representation (idealization/denunciation) to which the moors/*moriscos* are subjected in Golden-Age Spanish literature, through a process of metaphorization. This dichotomy is implied in Dorotea's question: “is this lady Christian or Moor?” (Burshatin 1985)

⁶ “*Don Quixote* is a text that shouts silently the scandal of conversion [...] [Perhaps] *Don Quixote* recounts the feverish and problematic constitution of a collective that has no right to exist or name itself.”

There are obvious similarities between the *morisco* and *converso* cases, but there are also important differences. More isolated socially than the *conversos*, the *moriscos* have until recently been perceived as a crypto-Muslim group. Nevertheless, recent studies have led to a reevaluation of this theory. Indeed, a close examination of *aljamiado* literature (Castilian and Aragonese works written in Arab script) reveal a community whose religiosity was a mixture of a traditional Islamic belief and original spiritual elements, some of which were taken from humanist and even evangelical writings. As is well-known, the forced mass conversion from Islam to Christianity did not come in 1492, at the time the Jews were given this ultimatum, but ten years later, in the wake of a failed Muslim rebellion. This situation led to a radical acculturation program, which required the *moriscos* to abandon their traditional way of life, and which led in turn to the 1568 Granada rebellion. At the end of this conflict, the Granadan *morisco* population was either enslaved or relocated to other areas of Castile. From this moment onwards, Spain's *moriscos* were regarded increasingly as a problem that would only be resolved by expulsion. This finally occurred between 1609 and 1614, when about 300,000 *moriscos* were forced to abandon Spain.

The convert: an ineffable identity

Iberia at the advent of the modern era was a hierarchical, stratified society on a feverish course towards homogenization. Américo Castro aptly describes the Spanish state at the time as *sub specie religionis*, in that secular life therein was not valid in and of itself (Castro 1948). Religious and ethnic categories were presumed to be static and absolute. The Other was one to be restricted or, even better, obliterated. Nevertheless, there exists in the midst of this mental horizon a hybrid, conflicted, ineffable identity that poses a challenge to the rigidity of those categories: the convert.

In effect, in *Don Quixote's* Spain, *converso* identity is a mark of paradox: the convert is not allowed to be Jewish or Muslim, but neither is he accepted as Christian; he is, predeterminedly and eternally, a traitor and a bad Christian. Moreover, his identity is perturbing and menacing, because it is not always identifiable through visible, external signs. In such a rigidly compartmentalized society, the convert, having such a complex identity paradigm, gives rise to a relentlessly disturbing transgression of boundaries.

Likewise, the category of convert in Golden-Age Spain is fundamentally a representational phenomenon, one in which the construction of the collective image superimposes itself upon the individual. Here, collective identity, as an extrinsic phenomenon of representation or a cultural construction whose conflict is neither purely nor primarily religious, but rather social and even ethical, crystallizes like an imaginary projection of the majority group on the individual (cf. Bodian).

Despite the tacit politics of homogenization in the *converso* phenomenon—from both the contemporaneous and the historiographical perspective—the researcher of the period will find its complexity and heterogeneity self-evident. Conversion in Golden-Age Spain was, indeed, a fundamentally forced social transition, not one voluntarily chosen.

Whether its imposition was direct (as in 1391, the *annus horribilis* for the Jews of Spain), or whether it was simply the only means of economic and social integration in the light of mounting institutional pressure, or, a fortiori, the sole alternative to expulsion—conversion in

Spain from the fifteenth century onwards was rarely manifested as the product of free choice. Therefore, the notion of voluntary conversion is a virtual oxymoron from the end of the Middle Ages and up to the Iberian Peninsula's entrance into modernity. On this, Vila writes:

un converso no nombra, unívocamente, a quien libre descubre una nueva religiosidad sino también, y muy especialmente al opreso, aquél que, por temor u oportunismo, resultó conminado a decirse y construirse igual a la mayoría aunque, paradójicamente, esa mayoría se reserve, ulteriormente, el derecho de operar en su contra la infamia de la vejación previa a la que se lo sometió. (2008, 523).⁷

Notwithstanding the fact that in the period at hand—more than three or four generations after the original conversion and the advent of the “new Christians”—the term *converso* had, most pointedly, not disappeared; on the contrary, it exhibited a surprising resilience. General opinion had it that the characteristics of the social group—arrogance, hypocrisy, love of wealth and power, and the inevitable craving for heresy (the return to the ancestral religion)—are transmitted through the blood. The *converso* is, above all, a dubious hybrid: a sort of “al-Burak” (Muhammad's steed, neither horse nor mule), meaning, neither good Christians nor good Jews or Muslims.

In effect, the baptismal act, according to the pseudo-scientific view that defends the statutes of blood purity, could not preclude the transmission of Judaism/Islam through blood.⁸ On this, Vila states:

Los conversos en la España áurea no podían, en su sano juicio, preciarse de tales, puesto que la igualdad en la fe producida se vio complementada en la primera modernidad con prácticas jurídico-sociales que preconizaron por sobre la semejanza obtenida el principio de discriminación. [...] la aplicación de los estatutos de limpieza de sangre implicarán, precisamente, el reconocimiento de un oxímoron jurídico teológico que equivaldría a sostener no sólo que la igualdad no se conseguía con el bautismo religioso sino también que, por sobre la sujeción espiritual, se constataba la prevalencia y la supremacía de un cuerpo y una sangre supuestamente infecta que forjaba un otro monstruoso [...]. Y ello explica, acabadamente, por qué “ser converso” sea algo que en la España del *Quijote* sólo se pueda predicar del otro porque la conversión cifró el agravio y testimonia su poder. (2008, 523).⁹

⁷ “a convert does not refer, uniquely, to one who discovers a new piety, but also, and in particular, to the oppressed, who, out of fear or opportunism, finds himself condemned to define and construct himself like the majority, although, paradoxically, this majority subsequently reserves the right to subject him to the same infamy of humiliation to which he was formerly subjected.”

⁸ Pseudo-scientific theories of this kind spoke, for example, of the influence of breast milk or the more active role of women in conception, as determining factors in the formation of the future child's character and spirit (cf. Edwards)

⁹ “Converts in Golden-age Spain could not, in their right mind, boast of being such, since religious equality was supplemented in the early modern period by socio-juridical practices that advocated, above the parity obtained, a principle of discrimination [...] the application of the blood-purity statutes, implying precisely the recognition of a theological-juridical oxymoron tantamount to the claim that not only could religious baptism not achieve equality, but also a confirmation, notwithstanding the spiritual submission, of the predominance and supremacy of an ostensibly infected body and blood that created a monstrous Other [...]. And this explains perfectly why being a convert is something that, in *Don Quixote's* Spain, could only be preached by the Other because the conversion itself confirmed the insult and testified to its power.” Vila points out that the violent disruption of liberty is

On the other hand, an analysis of the *converso* phenomenon obliges us to acknowledge the diverse human strategies for confronting the conflict and the social stigma, in other words, for confronting the individual and collective trauma. In her study on the identity of *conversos*, Renée Levine Melammed places us in the center of the *intrinsic* perspective of the convert, one rarely assumed in Spanish historiography. This critique analyzes the shock of forced conversions, for Jews and Catholics alike. For the latter—the bewilderment vis-à-vis a situation that they did not prevent; for the former—guilt, resignation, and fear. One should, however, take into account the variety of behaviors and reactions vis-à-vis the conversion, even within a single family: How can one forget one's religion and identity overnight? How can one assume an identity that until yesterday was that of the enemy, and which remains as such for certain members of your family and community? To conceive of conversion is to reflect upon its problematic nature but even more upon the pain of the trauma of a collective.

Mass conversions, conversions of convenience, conversion as an alternative to expulsion, and expulsion itself, are clear phenomena of collective trauma, though seldom treated as such by the literature on the subject. It is a singular process of collective transformation, in which the group is confronted with a complex series of dilemmas at all levels. In the years following the expulsion, the departure of the Jews from Spain—as would be the case with the subsequent departure of the *moriscos*—radically changed the world of the New Christians; these remained on their own, in whichever of the alternatives they opted for (cf. Gitlitz 35-46). Moreover—and this is worth insisting upon—the group we have been discussing is not a homogenous one, notwithstanding the fact that the surroundings perceived it as such and imposed its monolithic fixation on the collective imagination.

It is thus the trauma itself that is the formative experience. It involves a repetition of the mnemonic footprint—manifested through a variety of symbolic processes—which can be detected textually in subtexts, traces, euphemisms, and intermittent occurrences.

What power does this cultural memory hold and how is it manifested in the episode of Zoraida and her father?

This convert woman is named Zoraida

From within the theoretical framework described above, Zoraida's case manifests itself unequivocally as the other face of conversion, since Zoraida *chose* the transition. “En el alma es muy grande cristiana, porque tiene grandísimos deseos de serlo” (I, 37, 440),¹⁰ proclaims the captive captain. Countering Luscinda's insistence on the subject of her baptism, he retorts: “No ha habido lugar para ello [...] pero Dios será servido que presto se bautice, con la decencia que la calidad de su persona merece” (I, 37, 441).¹¹

complemented by the transformation of the word into shameful silence. The convert cannot name his origin; the most he can hope for is a hyper-orthodox discursive compensation for the alleged new faith that will close off the past.

¹⁰ “[I]n her soul she is a very good Christian, for she has the great desire to be become one” (I, 37, 338).

¹¹ “There was no opportunity, replied he, [...] But, please God, she will be soon baptised with the formalities due to her rank” (I, 37, 338).

Zoraida's is a strange case in the mental universe of Golden-Age Spain. Don Fernando does not hide his astonishment at the captive's tale, perhaps, among other reasons, because of its historical improbability: "todo es peregrino y raro" (I, 42, 493),¹² he insists. Is baptism a magical act capable of erasing ethno-religious differences and endowing an authentic social identity? Is baptism conferred according to the "decency" required of the person's rank? It transpires that this idealizing, almost mythologizing, vision of the conversion to Christianity is the thickest veil covering the face of the Moor-Christian woman. And what the text intentionally silences is that which will happen after the baptism.¹³

As has been previously noted, the conversion is a transformative event that consists of the renunciation and forgetting of one religion. This absence of memory is often translated into a change of name: no longer Zoraida, she is now María. It is a change of identity, language, past, beliefs, and traditions, an obliteration of the existential traces of what she was. In its place, she is offered a pact of silence.¹⁴ Zoraida is silent, and it is her silence that betrays her in the presence of the guests at the inn.

Through his tale—full of contradictions and holes¹⁵—the Christian narrator recounts that Zoraida was educated by a Christian captive, who illuminated the path of the true religion for her. Not only is her transition to the other side voluntary, but it is widely praised by the Christians present: she is the paradigmatic Christian, a female Paul, a woman who symbolizes the most pure and authentic longing for baptism. After the captive's tale, the spontaneous and enthusiastic reception of the neophyte by those at the inn is doubtless surprising. Surprising, if not outright suspicious. Could this be an idealizing impulse in Cervantes' text that removes it from the conflicted reality experienced by the author? Or, more likely, an ironic point of view filtering through the interstices of the text in order to symbolically invert that same reality?

The curse of the father, or conversion as seen from the other side

"Maldita sea la hora en la que yo te engendré" (I, 41, 485).¹⁶ This is the anguished cry of Hajji Murad upon discovering that his beloved daughter has betrayed not only him but the faith in which he raised her. Among other references, Hajji Murad's curse recalls the Old Testament: "Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb" (Deut. 28:18), in which the consequences of

¹² "It is a curious tale and full of astonishing incidents" (I, 42, 381).

¹³ Robert Stone suggests that the marriage of the Captive with Zoraida (of Christian Spain with the Moor woman) functions as a sort of immigration visa, but is nonetheless doomed to failure (11). This marriage remains suspended at the close of the episode, just like Zoraida's baptism, and anticipates an outcome of disappointment and melancholy, similar to that caused by Sancho's loss of the island and Don Quixote's loss of Dulcinea (19). Juan Diego Vila writes that "casarse con el extranjero implica una muerte y resurrección simbólica [...] y puede leerse en este acto [...] un tipo de transacción comercial" ("marrying the stranger involves a symbolic death and resurrection [...] and this act can be read [...] as a type of commercial transaction") (2006, 175).

¹⁴ For the significance of name changes for character-identity in *Don Quixote*, see Edward Riley's seminal study, "Who's Who in *Don Quixote*. Or an Approach to the Problem of Identity" (Riley 1966).

¹⁵ On the contradictions, lacunae, and silences in the captive's story, see Juan Diego Vila's fine analysis (2004).

¹⁶ "Accursed be the hour in which I engendered you" (I, 41, 375).

disobedience (of parents, of divine law) entail a series of irrevocable curses.¹⁷ The biblical text condemns and curses conversion and the adoption of another religion. At base, the curse is the threat of punishment for the violation of a pact. And so, as María Caterina Ruta notes in regard to the episode of the captive, the difficulties encountered by the fugitives upon their return home can be interpreted as the punishment brought upon them by the father's curse.

Hajji Murad's curse, which is, notably, more an expression of guilt and self-reproach than an act of aggression towards the daughter, demonstrates the reverse of the official Christian perspective: in this case, the abandonment of the faith in favor of Catholicism is tantamount to perdition and eternal damnation.¹⁸

The dichotomous vision of conversion is a mark that invariably accompanies the three monotheistic religions: on the one hand, the condemnation of those who abandon the ancestral religion, and on the other hand, the praise and acceptance of the neophyte. Thus, in the Bible, alongside the aforementioned curse in Deuteronomy, we encounter the praise for the figure of Ruth, the Moabite, who leaves her land and her beliefs in order to follow her mother-in-law Naomi and join her fate with that of the Jewish people. Her conversion was highly rewarded, and her offspring—the house of David—were granted the privilege of being the race from which the Messiah would be born.

The conversion thus functions as a pivot or “shifter”: it is loaded with positive or negative connotations depending on the point of view.¹⁹ However, in the ideological context of counter-reformation Catholic Spain, this semantic space acquires a much greater complexity than in the other two monotheistic religions. With respect to Judaism, the phenomenon of massive forced conversion—in many cases, let us recall, under the explicit threat of death—forced the Jewish religious and lay leadership to be rather lenient toward those who abandoned the Mosaic religion in favor of Catholicism. Judaism itself not being a proselytizing religion—on top of the negative status of this religion in Europe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the incorporation of neophytes into its own ranks would have been a virtually nonexistent phenomenon in the centuries at hand.²⁰

The case of Islam is different. This religion is very harsh in relation to the sin of apostasy, as one of the offenses punishable by death. However, it does provide three chances for

¹⁷ The curse of birth also appears in Jeremiah 20:14 (“Cursed by the day I was born”) and in Job 3:1 (“May the day of my birth perish”). In both cases, this is a curse of the person upon himself, in protest or even defiance of God, for the state to which he has been reduced.

¹⁸ A similar attitude can be found in the Qur'an, where the curse is usually executed by God, who curses Satan and the enemies of the faith—non-believers, apostates, hypocrites, and those who hide the divine signs (Qur'an 2: 88, 159, 3:8, 9:6, 33: 64).

¹⁹ Another significant “shifter” is the epithet “dog,” directed at the enemy: Christian, Moor, or Jew. This is a symbol of the intersection and overlap of hostility and hatred that employ the same signifier for disparate referents (“retire into the house and shut thyself in while I go and speak to these dogs”; Hajji Murad, referring to the Turks who broke into his garden to steal fruit, I, 41, 366.); (“whither in thy blindness and madness art thou going in the hands of these dogs, our natural enemies?”; Hajji Murad, cursing his daughter, after being abandoned by her at Cava Rumía, I, 41, 375).

²⁰ In the theory and practice of Judaism, proselytizing necessitates the absolute and voluntary acceptance by the neophyte of the fate and history of the Jewish people, as well as the belief in their faith and observation of their practices.

repentance and return to the Muslim faith (*istitāba*) before condemnation. If, following the third attempt, the apostate does not repent, capital punishment and eternal damnation await him. On the other hand, Islam was and is characterized by a relatively speedy conversion process and a policy of integration of neophytes, especially during the years of the wars against the Christian kings of Europe, in which the phenomenon of captivity became widespread. The constant reference to the presence of renegades is striking testimony of this. By contrast, the tale of the captive distinguishes between good and bad renegades: those who return to Christian territory with the intention of staying there are praised by the Christian establishment; the others, who choose the Barbary Coast—meaning, the authentic converts to Islam, those who have embraced the new religion with no intention of leaving it—are denigrated (I, 40, 466).²¹ Such are the paradoxes of perspectivism.

The case of Catholicism, especially in the Iberian Peninsula of the Golden Age, was quite different. On the one hand, the categorical rejection and condemnation of those who renounce the Christian faith, and on the other hand, from the fifteenth century onwards, an official state policy of forced conversion of infidels. In a paradoxical addition, the false adoption of the Catholic faith—or, secret heresy—invited prosecution and was even punishable by death. The space of this perverse ambiguity is consolidated in the stage following the conversion: once baptized, the New Christians will be recognized as neither good nor true Christians. Their marginalization, whether social, institutional, or on the level of collective consciousness, is a widely known and recorded fact in the literature of the period (cf. Fine 2008; 2009). Baptism is not an equalizing or welcoming act for the neophyte. On the contrary, it is an indelible mark of difference, of permanent otherness.

And so, what kind of Christian convert is our Zoraida? And what does the anticipated baptism have in store for this woman who was born and raised as a Muslim?

The captive's tale is not very helpful in regard to the foundations of Zoraida's conversion and catechism. In her first letter to the Spanish captain, she reveals a heretical syncretism when she says that "*Lela Marién hará que te entienda. Ella y Alá te guarden*" (I, 40, 467).²² This is also evident in her final farewell to her father:

–*Plega a Alá, padre mío, que Lela Marién, que ha sido la causa de que yo sea cristiana, ella te consuele en tu tristeza. Alá sabe bien que no pude hacer otra cosa de la que he hecho, y que estos cristianos no deben nada a mi voluntad, pues aunque quisiera no venir con ellos y quedarme en mi casa, me fuera imposible, según la priesa que me daba mi alma a poner por obra esta que a mí me parece tan buena como tú, padre amado, la juzgas por mala.* (I, 41, 459; emphasis my own)²³

²¹ I, 40, 358 in the English.

²² "Lela Marien will help me to understand you. May she and Allah protect you—and this cross, which I often kiss as my slave told me to" (I, 40, 359).

²³ "May it please Allah, dear father, that Lela Marien, who has been the cause my becoming a Christian, may console you in your grief. Allah well knows that I could have done nothing but what I did, and that these Christians owe me nothing for my goodwill. For even if I had not wanted to come with them, it would have been impossible. So fast did my soul hurry me towards a deed which I know to be good, beloved father, though it appears wicked to you" (I, 41, 375; emphasis my own).

Upon her arrival in Christendom, when she goes to pray at a church, Zoraida's ambiguous reaction permeates the captive's stigmatizing description:

Fuimos derechos a la iglesia a dar gracias a Dios por la merced recibida, ya sí como en ella entró Zoraida, dijo que allí había rostros que se parecían a los de Lela Marién. Dijámosle que eran imágenes suyas, y como mejor se pudo le dio el renegado a entender lo que significaban, para que ella las adorase como si verdaderamente fueran cada una dellas la misma Lela Marién que le había hablado. Ella, que tiene buen entendimiento y un natural fácil y claro, entendió luego cuanto acerca de las imágenes se le dijo (I, 41, 491)²⁴

Can indeed an abstract vision of the divinity—that of Islam—transform with such ease and speed, thanks to the “easy and clear intuition” of the neophyte, into a comprehension/integration of the images of the new religion? Is this not yet another mode of abrogation and silencing? What are the theological foundations or, more simply, the most basic tenets of the Christian faith that uphold the precarious conversion of this Moorish woman? What can be the cause of the admiration and praise showered by the guests at the inn upon hearing such seemingly benign (though clearly heretical) pronouncements granting authority to the God of Islam and reducing the Virgin Mary to an overprotective mother (an image that compensates, perhaps, for the absence of a mother in Zoraida's life)? One hopes that the anticipated baptism of the daughter of Hajji Murad will be accompanied by a rudimentary Catholic education that will remove the final vestiges of this heretical syncretism harbored in Zoraida's innocent piety. Perhaps. However, one fact is certain: no catechism or baptism will be able to erase the mark of conversion in a Spain so vigilant about its ethnic purity.

Two fathers, one garden

Two fathers frame the story of the captive. The first is Christian, noble, and prodigal—a product of the official discourse that glorifies lineage as the guarantor of the right to exist. A father who bids farewell to his sons with the material blessing of heredity and the pragmatic advice of the masculine profession; he is the symbol of Spanish Christendom and state power. The body is not dismembered but imperially disseminated. The second is very different. He is the Other, etched with the mark of the archetypical feminine,²⁵ not only because he gave birth to a single progeny—a girl—but because he has the attributes of the weak, the silenced, the feminine: tears, humiliation, weakness that leads him to a suicide attempt, and, finally and despite it all, forgiveness. A sign of Judeo-Islam, of effeminization and impotence, this is the father/mother who must be left on the other side. It is the father who curses and forgives, but

²⁴ “We went straight to the church to thank God for the mercies received, and the moment Zoraida went in, she exclaimed that there were faces there which looked like Lela Marien's. We told her that those were her images, and the renegade made her understood, as best as he could, what they signified, and that she could worship them as she would the true Lela Marien who had spoken to her. She has a good intelligence and an easy and clear intuition, and so she understood what he said about the images at once” (I, 41, 380).

²⁵ Regarding the feminine and its keys in the story of the Captive, see Smith.

whose voice is no longer heard in the collective memory. This is the voice of Hajji Murad. The story denies him, the enemy, the possibility of ever seeing his daughter again. Instead, the text grants the first father, the quintessential Spaniard, the privilege of recovering the prodigal son (I, 43) who himself will bring the good news of his recovery. The brother of the captain expresses a justifiable paternal pain and a reprehensible filial ingratitude:

Vive aún mi padre muriendo con el deseo de saber de su hijo mayor, y pide a Dios con continuas oraciones no cierre la muerte sus ojos hasta que él vea con vida a los de su hijo. Del cual me maravillo, siendo tan discreto, cómo haya descuidado de dar noticia de sí a su padre (I, 42, 498).²⁶

On the other hand, the daughter who cheated and stole from her father, abandoning him once and for all, is not only not held responsible but, in an inversion of the legendary Cava, becomes, metonymically, the very symbol of Christian salvation:

Mas quiso nuestra buena suerte que llegamos a una cala que se hace al lado de un pequeño promontorio o cabo que de los moros es llamado el de la “Cava Rumía”, que en nuestra lengua quiere decir ‘la mala mujer cristiana’ [...] para nosotros no fue abrigo de mala mujer, sino puerto seguro de nuestro remedio (I, 41, 483-484).²⁷

However, the real hero of this story, according to the lucid observation of Márquez Villanueva (1975, 246) is Hajji Murad—the second, abandoned father, the father of Zoraida. This character, whose historical referent, perhaps not coincidentally, is that of the apostate²⁸—and of Christianity—is undoubtedly, intentionally or not, the central figure of the story of the flight from Algiers, as told by Ruy Pérez de Viedma.

As an edenic hero, Hajji Murad possesses a garden and a well-guarded fruit: his daughter Zoraida. It is the garden “where Zoraida was waiting” and so the captive went to the garden “y le pedía fruta y su padre se la daba sin conocelle” (I, 41, 473).²⁹ Symbolically, the captive captain is coming to collect herbs/fruit from this well-kept garden: “Y, así, determiné de ir al jardín y ver si podría hablarla; y, con ocasión de coger algunas yerbas, un día antes de mi partida fui allá, y *la primera persona con que me topé fue su padre*” (I, 41, 474, emphasis my own).³⁰ In a scene replete with dramatic irony, the text hints that Hajji Murad sensed the secret will of the

²⁶ “My father is still alive, though dying with desire for news of his eldest son, and praying God night and day not to let death close his eyes before he has seen him alive. I am astonished that such a sensible fellow could have failed to send my father news in his great troubles and afflictions [...]” (I, 42, 384-385).

²⁷ “But it was by good luck we made a little cove beside a small promontory or cape, which is called by the Moors the Cape of the ‘Cava Rumia’, which means in our language the wicked Christian woman. [...] But for us it was no wicked woman’s shelter, but a secure haven of refuge” (I, 41, 374).

²⁸ For a detailed description of the historical context of Hajji Murad, see Asín (1947/48), who studies the historical legend of the “daughter of Hajji Murad” as the main source for the episode; Márquez Villanueva, who reconstructs a combination of legends that serve as a reference for the episode of Zoraida; Luis Andrés Murillo; and Jean Canavaggio (2000, 39-44), who in his chapter entitled “Agi Morato entre historia y ficción” discusses the reworking of the fictional story vis-à-vis its historical referent.

²⁹ “and beg for fruit, which her father would give him without recognizing him” (I, 41, 364).

³⁰ “So I decided to go to the garden and see if I could speak to her; and I went there one day before our departure on the pretence of gathering herbs. *The first person I met was her father*” (I, 41, 365, emphasis my own).

unexpected guest in his garden: “en esta manera de lenguaje me preguntó que qué buscaba en aquel su jardín”.³¹

Hajji Murad is generous with the fruits of his garden. Greed, on the other hand, seems to be a Christian trait. When Zoraida makes her majestic appearance in her father’s garden, the captive captain’s description of her beauty focuses overtly on her jewelry and their value:

Demasiada cosa sería decir yo agora la mucha hermosura, la gentileza, el gallardo y rico adorno con que mi querida Zoraida se mostró a mis ojos: solo diré que más perlas pendían de su hermosísimo cuello, orejas y cabellos que cabellos tenía en la cabeza. En las gargantas de sus pies [...] traía dos *carcajes* [...] de purísimo oro, con tantos diamantes engastados que ella me dijo después que su padre los estimaba en diez mil doblas, y las que traía en las muñecas de las manos valían otro tanto. (I, 41, 474-475)³²

Zoraida herself even says—in a recurrent ironic twist—that all Christians are liars and cheaters (I, 41, 475). The scene that unfolds later, in which the father of Zoraida serves as the couple’s hoodwinked translator, unaware of the codified messages they transmit back and forth, situates the view from the perspective of the father, who adores his daughter and praises her incomparable beauty (“mi hija, que es la más hermosa de todo este reino” [I, 41, 476]).³³

Hajji Murad is always in his garden. This is also the case on the night of the escape. The renegade says that they must awaken him, take him and “todo aquello que tiene de valor este hermoso jardín” (I, 41, 480)³⁴ with them. To this, Zoraida responds: “No [...] a mi padre no se ha de tocar en ningún modo, y en esta casa no hay otra cosa que lo que yo llevo, que es tanto, que bien habrá para que todos quedéis ricos y contentos.”³⁵ By now captive and aboard the ship of his disgrace, the father is the stunned witness to the scene that unfolds before his eyes, “ignorando cuán de su voluntad se había puesto [Zoraida] en nuestras manos” (I, 41, 481).³⁶ Zoraida, who also threatens to throw herself into the sea, as her father would do later on, gives an order “al renegado que me dijese le hiciese merced de soltar a aquellos moros y de dar libertad a su padre, porque antes se arrojaría en la mar que ver delante de sus ojos y por causa suya llevar cautivo a un padre que tanto la había querido”,³⁷ but she is easily (perhaps too easily) convinced of the risk that this action could mean for the fugitive Christians.

Indeed, Hajji Murad is the hero of this episode—not his daughter, and certainly not Ruy Pérez de Viedma. His is the word and his is the act; his is also forgiveness, which is sorely

³¹ “he asked me what I was looking for in his garden” (I, 41, 365).

³² “It would be too much to describe to you now Zoraida’s great beauty and grace, or the rich and gay dress in which she then appeared. I will only say that more pearls hung from her lovely neck, her ears, and her hair than she had hairs on her head. On her ankles [...] which] were bare, she had two *carcajes* [...] of purest gold, set with so many diamonds that she told me afterwards her father valued them at ten thousand dollars; and those she wore on her wrists were worth as much” (I, 41, 365).

³³ “my daughter, who is the most beautiful woman in the whole kingdom” (I, 41, 367).

³⁴ “everything of value in this lovely place” (I, 41, 370).

³⁵ “No [...] my father must on no account be touched. There is nothing in the house except what I am bringing with me. That will be quite enough to make you all rich and happy” (I, 41, 370).

³⁶ “not knowing how very willingly she had put herself in our hands” (I, 41, 371).

³⁷ “looking at her father there, and the other Moors, all tied up, she bade the renegade ask me to do her the favour of releasing the Moors and granting her father the liberty. She pleaded that she would rather fling herself into the sea than see her father, who loved her so well, carried off before her eyes, a prisoner on her account” (ibid.).

lacking in his surroundings. His first action is a choice: that of death, reminiscent, perhaps, of the choice of many of those who preferred to put an end to their lives rather than abandon the religion of their ancestors:³⁸

Apenas hubo oído esto el moro, cuando con una increíble presteza se arrojó de cabeza en la mar, donde sin ninguna duda se ahogara, si el vestido largo y embarazoso que traía no le entretuviera un poco sobre el agua.

[...] le sacamos medio ahogado y sin sentido; de que recibió tanta pena Zoraida, que, como si fuera ya muerto, hacía sobre él un tierno y doloroso llanto (I, 41, 483-484).³⁹

The renegade explains the sad truth to Hajji Murad:

y así quiero que sepas que ella es cristiana y es la que ha sido la lima de nuestras cadenas y la libertad de nuestro cautiverio; ella va aquí de su voluntad, tan contenta, a lo que yo imagino, de verse en este estado como el que sale de las tinieblas a la luz,⁴⁰ de la muerte a la vida y de la pena a la gloria.

[...]

–¿Qué en efeto –replicó el viejo– tú eres cristiana y la que ha puesto a su padre en poder de sus enemigos?

A lo cual respondió Zoraida:

–La que es cristiana yo soy, pero no la que te ha puesto en este punto, porque nunca mi deseo se extendió a dejarte ni a hacerte mal, sino a hacerme a mí bien.

–¿Y qué bien es el que te has hecho, hija? (I, 41, 483-484).⁴¹

Defying the Judeo-Islamophobic stereotype, Zoraida's father is not motivated by money; moreover, in his final, painful speech, the text emphatically emphasizes this divergence from the model of congenital greed attributed to those socio-religious groups: “el cual interese, si le queréis poner nombre, desde aquí os ofrezco todo aquello que quisiéredes por mí y por esa desdichada hija mía, o, si no, por ella sola, que es la mayor y la mejor parte de mi alma” (I, 41, 483); “entrega a esos hombres ese dinero, que ya es suyo” (I, 41, 486).⁴²

³⁸ In Jewish culture and history, death in the name of religion is known as *kidush ha-Shem* (death sanctified in the name of God).

³⁹ “No sooner did the Moor hear this than he threw himself with incredible agility head foremost into the sea, and no doubt would have drowned if the long and cumbrous clothes he wore had not kept him just above water.

[...] we pulled him out by his cape, half-drowned and unconscious. And so distressed was Zoraida that she burst into a tender and sorrowful lament over him, as if he were really dead” (I, 41, 374).

⁴⁰ Job 17:12; Isaiah 9:2.

⁴¹ “Let me tell you that she is a Christian; it is she who has been the file for our chains and the key to our captivity. She is with us of her own free will; as glad, I imagine, to be where she is, as a man coming out of darkness into light, out of death into life, and out of pain into glory” [...]

“That, in fact, you are a Christian”, asked the old man, “and it is you who has put your father into his enemies’ power?”

To which Zoraida replied: “I am a Christian, but it is not I that brought you to this pass, for it was never my wish to leave you or do you any harm. I only wished to do myself a benefit.”

“And what benefit have you done yourself, daughter?” (I, 41, 373)

⁴² “If you would name the sum, I offer you here and now as much as you want for myself and for this unhappy daughter; or failing that, who is the greater and better part of my soul” (I, 41, 372-373); “Give those men the money, for it is theirs” (I, 41, 375).

And Hajji Murad stays on the other side, helpless, to fulfill the ritual of mourning and of death:

Pero viendo yo que llevaba término de no acabar tan presto, di priesa a ponelle en tierra, y desde allí a voces prosiguió en sus maldiciones y lamentos, rogando a Mahoma rogase a Alá que nos destruyese, confundiese y acabase; y cuando por habernos hecho a la vela no podimos oír sus palabras, vimos sus obras, que eran arrancarse las barbas, mesarse los cabellos y arrastrarse por el suelo (I, 41, 485).⁴³

The reaction of Hajji Murad, Zoraida's father—plucking out his beard, tearing out his hair, and writhing on the ground—refers to the Old Testament Book of Ezra, wherein the hero responds with the same actions to the marriage of young Jews with gentiles: these are the external marks of an unfathomable grief over an irreparable loss:

They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness. When I heard this, *I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled*. (Ezra 9:2–3; emphasis my own)

The pathos of this scene has not gone unnoticed by scholars.⁴⁴ To be sure, this episode conveys a pathos that, if not daring, is at least out of the ordinary. Significantly, we must note that throughout the sequence, after being captured and silenced with a handkerchief in his mouth, the character is never identified by his name, but always as the father of Zoraida. As if the text is emphasizing the weight of familial affiliation, of duty, but also of affection. Stone (21) aptly asserts that paternal love is the only unquestionable one in this episode. Hajji Murad does not try to kill Zoraida but rather attempts to take his own life; and, in his curse, he blames himself and not her (“Maldita sea la hora en la que te engendré”).⁴⁵

The narration grants the voice and, at times, the focalization of the scene to the tormented father. This is indeed unusual for a Golden-Age text that valorizes the martyrdom and heroism of captivity. We are aware that the granting of a voice and point of view to a character is an explicit acknowledgment of the legitimacy of his word and his gaze. Likewise, the voice and focus in the narrative text is an unequivocal invitation for the receiver to penetrate the character's interiority and to identify, sympathize, and even empathize with him, the quintessential Other, the enemy. This Other is the abandoned Father. Hajji Murad's voice conveys the echo of the voices silenced during the course of those centuries of homogenizing and monolithic ambitions in Spain. These are the silenced voices of families divided by the conversion of one or more of their members, by the abandonment of the ancestral tradition, of the faith, of home, of history. They are the voices of an abandoned memory, stripped of the right to be a memory. They are the voices of familial, social, and human fracture. Disenfranchised voices in Trentian Catholic Spain. Voices without testimony and without memory, rescued by Cervantes in Hajji Murad's cry: “Vuelve, amada hija,

⁴³ “But when I saw that he was not likely to end quickly, I hurriedly put him ashore; and from there he went on calling out his curses and lamentations, praying to Mahomet to beseech Allah to destroy us, confound us, and annihilate us. And when we had hoisted sail and could no longer hear his words, we saw his actions, and watched him plucking his beard, tearing his hair, and rolling on the ground” (I, 41, 375).

⁴⁴ Ruta, Moner, and Smith all highlight the irreducible and enigmatic character of Zoraida, as well as the ambivalence of the signs that characterize her.

⁴⁵ “Accursed be the hour in which I engendered you” (I, 41, 375).

vuelve a tierra, que todo te lo perdono; entrega a esos hombres ese dinero, que ya es suyo, y vuelve a consolar a este triste padre tuyo, que en esta desierta arena dejará la vida si tú le dejas” (I, 41, 480).⁴⁶

The face restored

Every word in the space of the novel leads to a foretold response: those voices that interact and respond to one another can be recognized in the textual space. Thus, in the captive’s tale, conflicting centralizing and de-centralizing forces are at play; spaces populated by foreign, ancient words appropriated from the speech and meanings of others: the speech of the noble, bastion of Trentian values, is interspersed with past and present voices of those displaced and stripped of worth and identity.

Bakhtin wrote that polyphony is a principle of radical otherness: a multiplicity of voices and discourses coexist and are interlaced in literary space. To be sure, the fundamental dialogical character of the world evoked in the story of Ruy Pérez de Viedma is explicit: “lengua que en toda la Berbería y aun en Constantinopla se halla entre cautivos y moros, que ni es morisca ni castellana ni de otra nación alguna, sino una mezcla de todas las lenguas, con la cual todos nos entendemos” (I, 41, 474).⁴⁷ Yet it is the latent polyphony—opening cracks through which seep those silenced voices (those of the parents, of the converts, of the stranger, of otherness)—that emerges most irreverently in this episode, thus defining a dialogical scandal that insinuates itself, in turn, like an ethical path—as per Levinas.

Both Bakhtin and Levinas viewed the subject as a crucial agent, rejecting the pseudo-subjectivity with which the Other is reduced to the category of the self. Furthermore, the decentralization of the subject undoubtedly constitutes an ethical action. The dialogical worldview constitutes a fundamental ethical metaphor, and yet the search is not for an abstract ethic (Cf. Levinas 1999; 1994), but rather a response to and assumption of responsibility for the Other: the acknowledgment of the other as a neighbor and not as a stranger. Therefore, the dialogical space of captivity is a space of multiplicity, but not necessarily one of an ethic. In this context, the episode of Hajji Murad can be viewed, more precisely, as a space of acknowledgment, of the bestowment of the face and of ethical projection.

Ruy Pérez de Viedma symbolizes the official history of *Don Quixote*’s Spain, in which the masculine, aristocratic body, representing the paradigm of perfection, is constructed via a system of exclusions: exclusion of the feminine, the Jew, the Arab, the foreigner (cf. Mariscal). This Spain displays a hierarchical system based on ethnic homogeneity and the ideology of blood. The expelled Muslim/Jew/feminine from the political body, represents, in the opinion of Ellen Anderson, the shadow of the masculine Catholic,⁴⁸ whereas Vila (2004) maintains that the

⁴⁶ “Come back, beloved daughter—come back to land! I forgive you of everything! Give those men the money, for it is theirs; and come and comfort this wretched father of yours, who will lose his life in the sands of this desert if you forsake him” (I, 41, 375).

⁴⁷ “the language that is spoken between slaves and Moors all over Barbary, and even in Constantinople: it is neither Moorish nor Castilian, nor the tongue of any other country, but a mixture of every language, in which we can understand one another” (I, 41, 465).

⁴⁸ According to Anderson, in his various captives’ dramas, Cervantes favors ambiguous identities, both religious and sexual, thus opening the possibility of playing with rigid social roles (42).

life of Ruy Pérez de Viedma serves as a vindication of the history of the State. Although the essence of this character is the transgression of borders, he inevitably undergoes a return to the self, to the I, to the individual. The Other is left outside.

And yet a fissure is opened up in this tale; the space in which the episode of Zoraida's father unfolds is one in which conformism can dissolve and touch the Other, allowing the materialization of the resignification of the past. This is, on the symbolic level, a sort of inverted replica of Spanish history, in which binary oppositions can be overcome (Sieber). Hence Hajji Murad, in the eyes of Ruy Pérez de Viedma—who regains/rehabilitates his Spanish and masculine “authority” on the ship making its way back to Christian territory—can no longer be clearly categorized as enemy or as friend, neither as foreigner nor as stranger. I believe that this is the same ambiguity, even more pronounced, experienced by Zoraida when confronted with the call of her father's face.

The face, for Levinas, is the expression of the unmediated encounter with the Other. When the Other looks at us, we become responsible for him. Zoraida cannot and does not want to look at her father: “Cuando su hija le vio, [Agi Morato cautivo y atado] se cubrió los ojos por no verlo” (I, 41, 481); “Iba Zoraida, en tanto que se navegaba, puesta la cabeza entre mis manos por no ver a su padre” (I, 41, 482).⁴⁹

Hajji Murad, on the other hand, seeks out the face of his daughter, trying to decipher this mystery that makes her incomprehensible. Let us recall that Zoraida appears, further on at the inn, covered with a veil that mediates between the gaze of the other and her inner self. Symbolically, this veil will never be drawn back. Regarding Zoraida there is no recognition but only an acknowledgment, a reduction of her difference to the homogeneity of the established Spanish subject. However, a brief but significant opportunity to observe unsubjected difference is offered in the sequence of Hajji Murad, a character who metaphorically embodies Levinas's three “abandoned ones”: the foreigner, the widow, the orphan (in this case, Hajji Murad, orphaned of his daughter):

En diciendo esto, comenzó a llorar tan amargamente, que a todos nos movió a compasión y forzó a Zoraida que le mirase; la cual, viéndole llorar, así se enterneció, que se levantó de mis pies y fue a abrazar a su padre, y, juntando su rostro con el suyo, comenzaron los dos tan tierno llanto, que muchos de los que allí íbamos le acompañamos con él (I, 41, 483; emphasis my own)⁵⁰

Perhaps Zoraida can see herself finally only when she can look at his face, as postulated by Levinas's ethics? Could it be that she feels the call of responsibility only when face to face with her father?⁵¹

⁴⁹ “When she saw him, she covered her eyes to avoid the sigh” (I, 41, 371); “Zoraida lay with her head in my arms to avoid seeing her father” (I, 41, 372).

⁵⁰ “At these words he began to weep so bitterly that we were all moved to pity, and Zoraida was compelled to look in his direction, and she was so melted at the sight of the old man weeping that she got up from my feet and went to embrace him. Then as she put her face to his, they both burst into tears of such affection that many of us did the same” (I, 41, 373; emphasis my own).

⁵¹ Weber does a psychological reading of the Hajji Murad-Zoraida-captive Captain triangle, maintaining that the dilemma passes through the psychic order: “la dolorosa disolución de un lazo endógamo [“the painful dissolution of an endogamous bond”]” (429). This is the moment when a young woman must discard family bonds

Whereas Zoraida hardly looks at her father's face, she can only see it through physical contact ("pressing her face to his"), it is Cervantes' text that forces us—readers of those Trentian centuries or modern receivers of the text—to see the face and to remember it, to listen to its call from the other side, where his daughter abandons him. The episode of Hajji Murad is a call for intimacy and for estrangement, emphasizing diachronism: it is the ancestral cry that calls to us from this mnemonic wound/footprint, a voice disenfranchised in its own time; it is memory without recollection. Language, Levinas tells us, is regenerative in the ethical and not only in the semiotic sense. It is an attempt to translate the immeasurable: that added value which is otherness, which defies comprehension but forces us to assume responsibility for the Other.

Concluding remarks

Fuchs notes that in the attempt to decipher *Don Quixote* within the social context of Golden-Age Spain we see how a principle of ambiguity is introduced into the rigid binarism of Spanish orthodoxy. The cases that occur at the boundaries are precisely the most ambiguous and, therefore, the most interesting, because they entail transitions, disruptions, and transformations. The story of Zoraida's father is a decisive example of this principle of ambiguity.

The episode of Hajji Murad exhibits the surfacing of residual elements in the dominant discourse and may, in this sense, be seen as subversive. The sequence featuring Zoraida's father makes room for that which does not have his own space, thus breaking the discursive homogeneity of the socio-historical context: the text is a space through which the voices of others filter centrifugally. It is also an attempt to erase the borders between self and Other, in which the regard is situated within the Other: Hajji Murad, the abandoned father/mother—abandoned and, in turn, immortalized.

The episode of Hajji Murad thus leads us to rethink so-called "*converso* literature" from a different place than that proposed by Américo Castro and his school. It proposes the decodification of symbolic and cultural memory, of the world of confusion—of the subject and not of the individual—in which complex and conflicting identity paradigms are presented. A literature that can be an ethics, because it readmits the Other in the process of the formation of the self.

Finally, Cervantes' text, in this sequence, gives power to the word, but also to silence. Thus, the episode of Zoraida's father is a meditation on the confrontation between the ideal of social acceptance of conversion and the real and intransigent conflict that unfolded in the Iberian Peninsula regarding this semantic space.

(paternal/maternal), for which the longing never entirely disappears. This could be a deviation from the Freudian "family romance," according to which the child displaces his fantasy onto an imaginary father, of higher social status, as compensation for the deterioration of the primary image of admiration for the real father. José Carlos Rios Camacho states that Zoraida is a character who struggles with her past and previous education, her own moral, ego, which she will not hesitate to apply with all its harshness and coldness to her father Hajji Murad (7). This critique attributes Zoraida's behavior to some Islamic consciousness that calls for self-reliance, which is accounted only to Allah [de la cual se rinde cuenta sólo ante Allah], thus suggesting a subtext in which one can read a certain moral supremacy of Islamic culture (8) and a certain subconscious Islam (11) in Cervantes, the fruit of his contact with the Muslim world.

Hajji Murad shouts and cries. And Zoraida is silent. Her happiness as a result of the successful escape and her arrival in Spain are only an (over-)interpretive framing by the Captain. Her silence can be read as joy, but also as melancholy. A melancholy that is not oblivion but rather a silent/silenced memory. And Cervantes, as we know, likes to give voice to the silenced, while reconstructing forgotten gardens and lost paradises on other banks.

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