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Europe and the Muslim World
Before 1700

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CHAPTER THREE

CERVANTES AND ISLAM: ATTITUDES TOWARDS ISLAM IN *DON QUIXOTE*

JOHN RODENBECK

This paper, a kind of footnote to Braudel, is a speculative narrative sketch about a subject on the periphery of my own interests. My aim is to try to understand and contemplate the context and meaning of a few pages of well-known Spanish literary material. Two points must be understood: 1) that although the 800-year-old Muslim community in Spain—referred to as Moriscos—was powerless, declining, and subject to cruel and unrelenting persecution, 2) Muslim power in the Mediterranean world as a whole was not only in a stage of energetic expansion, but was approaching a magnitude of supremacy unmatched in the history of Islam. One result of this situation in a Mediterranean country like Spain was likely to be attitudes that combined, admiration, envy and fear, quite justly. Other kinds of attitudes, it should go without saying, were undoubtedly held quite unjustly.

Probably no other major European writer has had as close or as thorough an acquaintance with Islam as Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1647-1616), best known as the author of *Don Quixote*, a book that is not only one of the first modern novels, but certainly the most influential yet written and probably still the greatest. As the whole literate world knows, and as I shall remind readers here, *Don Quixote* has to do with the adventures of an old gentleman who has gone mad from reading romances of chivalry. Assuming the name and style of an invented knight errant, "Don Quixote de la Mancha," he polishes up some antique armor and sets off on a series of adventures.

Since a knight must have an ideal lady-love, he casts a local farm-girl he has heard of in the rôle and gives her a resonant name: "Dulcinea del Toboso." A knight must also have a squire; and to fill this rôle he prevails upon a local peasant called Sancho Panza, none too bright, but sometimes gifted with simple cunning, and essentially good-hearted. Of the ensuing adventures some are fanciful, some are hallucinatory, and all of them are in some sense real, since they involve truths about human behavior. The book

appeared in two parts: Part I was published in 1605, Part II not until 1615, the year before Cervantes' death. It was popular at its first reception, was instantly imitated, and has never been out of print in several languages throughout the world since.

In Chapter 37 of Part I, Don Quixote, Sancho and several other characters have been happily assembled at an inn when two strangers appear: a man dressed in Moorish clothes, who is thus instantly identifiable as a Christian lately released from captivity in North Africa, and a young woman wearing a veil and mantle, who thus appears to be Moorish. In Chapters 39-41 of *Don Quixote* the freed captive tells his story and explains how he and the young woman came to be together.

Cervantes spent five years himself as a Christian captive in the Muslim city of Algiers and his experiences are explicitly reflected in these chapters.¹ Of the 126 chapters in the complete *Don Quixote*, they are certainly the

¹ Recent studies of these chapters are Mariangela Lanfranchi, "Beyond Borderlines: Civilizational Confrontation in *Don Quixote* and *Hajji Murad*," *History and Literature*, Proceedings of the Third International Symposium in Comparative Literature, 20-22 December 1994 (Cairo, 1995), pp. 127-143; and *The Captive's Tale (La historia del cautivo): Don Quixote, Part One, chapters 39-41*, translated with introduction and notes by Donald P. McCrory (Warminster, 1994). The multitude of earlier specialized studies includes: Jaime Oliver Asín, "La hija de Agi Morato en la obra de Cervantes," *Boletín de la real academia española*, 27(1947-48):245-339; Américo Castro, *El pensamiento de Cervantes*, ed. J. Rodríguez Puértola (Madrid, 1972), pp. 280-289, 320-324; A. Oliver, "El morisco Ricote," *Anales Cervantinos* 5(1955-59):249-255; A. Llorens, "Historia y ficción en el Quijote," *Papeles de San Armadana*, no. 84 (March 1963), pp. 235-258; Gustaf Freden, *Tres ensayos cervantinos* (Madrid, 1964), pp. 7-31; Márquez Villanueva, *Personajes y temas del Quijote* (Madrid, 1975), pp. 229-335; Juergen Hahn, "El Capitán cautivo: The Soldier's truth and literary precepts in *Don Quixote*, Part One," *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, 3(1979):279-303; Jean Canavaggio, "Le vrai visage d'Agui Morato," *Les Langues Néo-latines*, 239(1981):23-38, and *Los baños de Argel* (Madrid, 1981); J.B. Avallé-Arce, *Deslindes cervantinos* (Madrid, 1961), "La Captura de Cervantes," *Boletín de la real academia española*, 48(1968):237-280, and *Nuevos deslindes cervantinos* (Barcelona, 1975); Ruth El Saffar, *Beyond Fiction* (Berkeley, 1984), pp. 75-80; Helena Percas de Ponseti, *Cervantes y su concepto del arte: Estudio crítico de algunas aspectos del "Quijote"* (Madrid, 1975). Professor George Harvey's inaugural lecture in the chair of Spanish at King's College, University of London, 1974, was *The Moriscos and Don Quixote*.

ones tied most directly both to Cervantes' own life and early career and to the realm of public affairs; and for that reason, as well as for their specifically literary interest, they have attracted a mass of commentary. Commentators have likewise observed that Cervantes fictionally ascribes the entirety of *Don Quixote* to a Muslim author writing in Arabic, of whose original work the narrator who represents Cervantes himself pretends to be not the translator--that rôle is fictionally filled by another Muslim--but a sort of Spanish-language editor-amanuensis, dignified by the titles of "second author," "compiler," "step-father to Don Quixote." Both the fictional Muslim author and the fictional Muslim translator become occasional characters in the narrative; and it is the fictional Muslim author's noble address to his pen that concludes Part II, the final section of the book, published in 1615.

Unlike his fictional Captive in *Don Quixote*, Cervantes himself was not taken prisoner at Lepanto, where he played a notable part in the great battle of 7 October 1571. A year or so earlier, in Italy, he had enlisted in the Figueroa regiment, which had already seen action in Flanders, under Diego de Urbina of Guadalajara. On 3 August 1571 Cyprus had fallen definitively to the Ottomans, who were to rule it thenceforward unhindered for more than three hundred years.² The Venetian State had formally held the island only since 1489, when the Signory deposed the last Lusignan queen, Caterina Cornaro, widow of James II and mother by him of the dead infant king James III, whose forebears had ruled since 1191. The Lusignans had dispossessed the Greek Orthodox Church and attempted to convert the native populace to Latin Catholicism. The Ottomans, by contrast, expelled all Latin Catholics and reinstated the Orthodox Church, to which the islanders had remained faithful despite nearly five centuries of pillage and persecution.

Since I shall make reference in the future to a similar quality in Habsburg Spain, I would like to note something here about "Venice," the illogically compressed five-century-long abstraction of that maritime city and its empire that has been created by ten generations of pop historians. This abstract "Venice" deployed contradictory policies towards Hellenic culture, ancient and modern. The city was the birthplace of Pope Eugenius IV, Gabriele Condumer, who attempted to promote a union of Western and

² In 1878 the Porte leased Cyprus to Britain, which paid the rent until 1914, then occupied the island in force and finally turned it into a Crown Colony.

Eastern Churches, it gave hospitality to Hellenists like Bessarion and Erasmus, and it provided a home for the greatest publisher of all time, Aldo Manuzio, founder of the Aldine Press, which produced monumental *editiones principes* of Hellenic classics: Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Demosthenes, Plato, Aristotle, and Homer. It was a Venetian Doge, however, Enrico Dandolo, who was the main instigator of the sack of Constantinople in March of 1204, a cultural disaster of literally incalculable magnitude, and it was a Venetian military commander from an equally distinguished family, Francesco Morosini, who would follow up that masterpiece of barbarism 482 years later, on 26 September 1687, with the destruction of the Parthenon in Athens. Jan Morris has described this deed as "the one Venetian accomplishment in Greece that the world would always remember."³

Pope Pius V had already attempted to form a Holy League against the Ottomans, but had managed to win support only from the Habsburgs and Genoa. After the fall of Cyprus in August 1571, he called upon this League to carry out a combined assault on the Ottoman fleet, which was retiring to winter quarters after a singularly busy summer. Squadrons assembled at Messina representing the Papacy, the Habsburg dominions, and Genoa were joined by fleets from nearby Naples, which was then under the control of the Colonna family, and from Venice, whose maritime empire was being rapidly ingested by the Ottomans. More than half the ships of the combined fleet--well over a hundred--were in fact Venetian, assembled mostly from the city itself, but also from its colonies in the Adriatic and the Aegean.

As commander-in-chief the Pope appointed Don Juan of Austria (1545-1578), son of Charles V by the beautiful singer Barbara Blomberg and an acknowledged half-brother of Philip II. Still only 26 years old and looking like an Apollo, Don Juan had just come fresh from crushing a desperate insurrection of the Moriscos in Granada and the Alpujarras, the latest and most savage stage in the long *via dolorosa* that was taking Spanish Muslims out of Spain: as one historian describes it, "men, women, and children were butchered by his order and under his own eye; the villages of the Alpujarras were turned into human shambles."⁴ The same creative

³ Jan Morris, *The Venetian Empire: A Sea Voyage* (Harmondsworth, 1980), p. 134.

⁴ Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Moors in Spain* (Beirut, 1967), p. 278.

energies would later be let loose on Protestants and nationalists in Flanders. A good man, obviously, for dirty jobs, but hardly worthy, as a historian who certainly knew better once wrote, "to have sat at Arthur's Round Table with Sir Galahad himself."⁵

The ensuing battle led to the first major defeat of any Ottoman land or naval force since the fifteenth century: the Turks lost perhaps 30,000 men, the Spaniards and Italians perhaps 9000; many Turkish ships were sunk and 117 were taken as prizes. Such a victory undoubtedly had enormous positive impact on the morale of the victors, in demonstrating to them that the Ottomans were not invincible. It was not decisive or even significant in any durable or substantial military or political sense, however, a fact recognized at the time, implicit in the text of *Don Quixote*,⁶ and definitively demonstrated by Andrew Hess twenty-five years ago in a classic article, "The Battle of Lepanto and Its Place in Mediterranean History."⁷

⁵ A curious lapse on the part of a great historian: Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Barbary Corsairs* (London and New York, 1896), p. 178.

⁶ The full extent of what Cervantes saw as having actually been achieved at Lepanto is defined in the rueful words of the Prisoner in Part I, chapter 39: "I may say, in short that I took part in that glorious expedition. . . . And that day, so fortunate for Christendom, because there all the nations of the earth were disabused of their error in imagining the Turks to be invincible on sea—on that day, I say, on which the Ottoman pride and arrogance were broken, among all who there were made happy (for the Christians who died that day were happier than those who remained alive and victorious), I alone was miserable." *Don Quixote: The Ormsby Translation, Revised, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism*, Joseph R. Jones and Kenneth Douglas, eds. (New York and London, 1981), pp. 306-307. All English versions of *Don Quixote* throughout the remainder of this paper are quoted from this edition of the Ormsby translation, cited hereinafter as "Ormsby translation, Norton edition."

⁷ "The Battle of Lepanto and Its Place in Mediterranean History," *Past and Present*, 52(1972):543-573. Cited by Shaw, below. Dr. Hess lectured in history at AUC, 1965-67. The false legend of a great Catholic victory survives in pop history, however, as witness Jan Morris' remarks in *The Venetian Empire: A Sea Voyage*, published eight years after Hess' thoroughly accessible article (p. 127): "It was a fearful battle. Some 8,000 Christians lost their lives, and at least 20,000 Muslims. Thousands more Turks were taken prisoner, thousands of Christian captives were freed from their oars, and Ottoman sea-power was held forever within the eastern Mediterranean." Morris may have been somewhat influenced by anti-Turkish propaganda, which is quite obviously at work in the

Far from disappearing, for example, the Ottoman fleet was entirely recreated during the following winter. After an encounter at Navarino⁸ in 1572, in which Cervantes took part, the Holy League was forced to withdraw from the eastern Mediterranean, leaving it an Ottoman lake. On 7 March 1573 the Venetians recognized Ottoman possession of Cyprus by treaty and that summer the Ottoman navy ravaged the coasts of Sicily and southern Italy. The same year Don Juan led a successful raid against Tunis, in which Cervantes also took part, momentarily capturing the city and thus relieving the Spanish garrison that had been installed since 1535 in a redoubt at La Goletta (La Goulette), the narrow mouth of the inner harbor. In 1574, however, the Ottomans retook the city, including La Goletta, thereby winning domination of the western Mediterranean as well.⁹ In 1579 the capture of Fez completed the conquest of Morocco, begun under Süleyman the Magnificent, making the entire coast of the Mediterranean from the Straits of Gibraltar to Croatia and Slovenia—two thirds of its total shoreline—a nearly unbroken stretch of Ottoman territory more than ten thousand miles long.

It should also be emphasized here that throughout the sixteenth century the Ottomans were closely allied against the Habsburgs with France, not least so during precisely these same years. In 1573 the Ottomans supported the election of Henri de Valois, the future Henri III of France, as king of Poland; and in 1574, when the Polish throne became vacant again, the French and the Ottomans collaborated in working for the election of Stephen Báthory, who was prince of Transylvania, an Ottoman fiefdom, and was

definition of the Battle of Lepanto offered by the *Random House Encyclopedia*: "Lepanto, Battle of (1571), naval clash between forces of the Ottoman Empire and various Christian powers. When the Ottoman Turks attempted to take Cyprus from Venice in 1571, Greece, Austria, Spain, and Venice stopped them in this battle." This preposterous fiction, which offers us among major combatants a sovereign state that did not come into existence until 1827, is readily available in computer software.

⁸ A fateful name, of course, for Egypt, whose Mediterranean fleet was annihilated there in 1827.

⁹ Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, I, Empire of the Gaziz: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 178-179.

hence an Ottoman vassal. This intermittent Franco-Turanian alliance is important for understanding another episode in the Captive's tale.

Cervantes' fictional Captive is eventually identified (in Chapter 42) as a Captain Ruy Pérez de Viedma of León. He tells us that he was taken prisoner by one "Uchiali, the king of Algiers." The reference is to a famous Italian renegade known as ^oUlûj ^oAli--translatable as "cAli the Renegade," but perhaps a corruption of some such odd title *al-culûj al-câli*, "Supreme Renegade"--and he was *beglerbeg* of Algiers from 1568 to 1572. Born at Castelli (Licasteli) in Calabria in about 1508, ^oUlûj ^oAli had originally been intended for the priesthood, but obviously found a secular vocation more congenial. Among all the Ottoman commanders it was he who fought with the most credit at Lepanto; and it is perfectly true, as Cervantes says, that he carried off the standard of the Order of the Knights of St. John of Malta. After Lepanto ^oUlûj ^oAli was summoned to Constantinople and made *kapudan pasha*, Grand Admiral. It was he who commanded at Navarino and who led the successful Ottoman mission to recapture Tunis in 1574, which Cervantes must have good inside information about, apart from his own first-hand experiences. ^oUluj ^oAli was succeeded as *beglerbeg* in Algiers by a series of other renegades: Ramadan the Sardinian (1574-1577), Hasan the Venetian (1577-1580)--who also becomes a character in *Don Quixote*--Ja^cafar the Hungarian (1580-82), and Deli Memi the Albanian (1583-86), who was known to Cervantes personally and to whom I shall return shortly.

The real Uchiali, ^oUlûj ^oAli, lived on until 1580, the year that both Cervantes himself and his fictional Captive, Ruy Pérez de Viedma, were finally freed. In *Don Quixote*, however, Cervantes disposes of his Uchiali by having him die in 1574 or 1575, bequeathing the Captive to an heir, another renegade, called Hasan the Venetian, who takes him to Algiers, where he has become "king." And at this point the Captive's fictional life begins to coincide with Cervantes' real one.

Returning home to Spain after six years of military life, which included heavy fighting and permanent injury at Lepanto, as well as service at Navarino and in Don Juan's Tunisian campaign, Cervantes embarked with his brother Rodrigo on the good ship *El Sol* at Naples in early September 1575. Intending to seek a new career, the thirty-year-old veteran was armed with letters of recommendation from several influential people, including Don Juan himself. During its passage across the Gulf of Lyon, *El Sol* was

intercepted by several Corsair galleys under the command of one Deli Memi, known as Memi the Albanian [Arnavut], who carried the two brothers off as prizes to Algiers. Unfortunately the letters they carried suggested that they were rich prizes indeed, worth extravagant ransoms.

Algiers during the sixteenth century has been neatly described by my cousin Christopher Lloyd, the naval historian:¹⁰

Algiers was fundamentally a corsair city, flourishing as prisoners were taken and the booty sold. It was clean, well disciplined, everyone remarking on the law and order which prevailed in a city inhabited by persons of every nationality and religion. A high proportion of them were what we should call slaves and they called captives--15,000 is one estimate for 1631, whereas there were only 7000 at Tunis and 1500 at Sallee. The word 'slave' aroused emotional feelings on the part of Europeans which do not seem to be altogether justified by the conditions of their servitude. It was exploited in innumerable pathetic appeals to every Christian country for the redemption of such unfortunate mariners. 'Prisoners of war,' though of undeclared war, would be more accurate, because they, like the prize goods, formed the real business of Algiers: the ransoming of prisoners captured by corsairs sailing 'on the account' and the sale of commodities of every kind seized on the high seas. Negotiations could be long and tortuous in the case of distinguished captives. . . . Many were ransomed with a few months, but others who had no money or influence languished for years, and their future was grim.

Others 'took the turban,' turned Muslim and took to the corsair's life. Such people . . . could flourish to an extraordinary degree. Those who kept the faith could only look forward to all the uncertainties of a slave's existence, varying from mild, domestic slavery to relentless work on the mole under a tyrannical overseer. But compared with the hard life of a seaman on board a merchant vessel, not to say the navy, which was worse, a common seaman cannot have found life much harder, except for the humiliation of capture at the hands of Moors and infidels. Certainly, as many have left on record, it was preferable to life in a European gaol. . . .

Living conditions in Algiers seem to have compared favorably with those in northern capitals. The domestic architecture, the flowered patios, and gardens of the race which built the Alhambra were among the most attractive in the world. Every respectable house had a galleried courtyard and a flat roof embellished with potted plants. An efficient water supply provided numerous fountains and cleaned the streets to a degree unknown in England at that time, and certainly in Scotland, where [two] hundred years later, Johnson could still smell Boswell in the dark.

¹⁰ Christopher Lloyd, *English Corsairs on the Barbary Coast* (London, 1981), pp. 25-26.

When Cervantes and his brother were taken to Algiers by Memi the Arnaout, the *beglerbeg* was Ramadan the Sardinian. Two years later Ramadan was replaced by another renegade, Hasan the Venetian, who is also the second and last fictional owner of Cervantes' Captive, Captain Ruy Pérez de Viedma. He is thus described in *Don Quixote*:

Though at times, or rather almost always, we suffered from hunger and scanty clothing, nothing distressed us so much as hearing and seeing at every turn the unexampled and unheard of cruelties my master inflicted upon the Christians. Every day he hanged a man, impaled one, cut off the ears of another, and all with so little provocation, or so entirely without any, that the Turks acknowledged he did it for its own sake, and because he was by nature murderously disposed toward the whole human race.¹¹

With what seems to be his usual luck, Cervantes' chivalrous--one might almost say *quixotic*--behavior in assuming all the blame for an elaborate escape attempt took the fancy of this sadistic monster, who purchased him from Memi, his original captor, for 500 gold crowns. Cervantes thus became the slave of the owner of his fictional Captive. "The only one that fared at all well with him," the fictional Captive thus goes on to say,

was a Spanish soldier, a certain Saavedra by name [Cervantes himself, of course] To him he never gave a blow himself or ordered a blow to be given or addressed a hard word, although that Saavedra had done things that will dwell in the memory of the people there for many a year, and all to recover his liberty. For the least of the many things he did we all dreaded that he would be impaled, and he himself was in fear of it more than once. Time does not allow it, but I could tell you now something of what that soldier did that would interest and astonish you much more than the narration of my own tale.¹²

Meanwhile the money sent from Spain to ransom Cervantes and his brother proved sufficient only to buy the freedom of Rodrigo. Cervantes therefore spent five years in captivity. These years coincide with the last five years of the fictional captivity of Captain Ruy Pérez de Viedma and for the

¹¹ Ormsby translation, Norton edition, p. 313.

¹² Ormsby translation, Norton edition, p. 313.

last three of the five Cervantes and his fictional Captive shared the same renegade master, Hasan Pasha, the homicidal *beglerbeg* of Algiers.

Cervantes' courage, patience, and good-humor in captivity were recorded from reminiscences and eye-witness accounts by Diego de Haedo, a Benedictine monk who lived in Algiers for several years near the end of the sixteenth century. His *Topographia e Historia General de Argol* appeared in Valladolid in 1612, three years before Cervantes published the second part of *Don Quixote*. Cervantes' release was secured by a Trinitarian,¹³ Juan Gil, in 1580, when Hasan Pasha was being replaced as *beglerbeg* and Cervantes had already been loaded with chains for the voyage to Constantinople. He returned to Spain after an absence of some dozen years without incident.

The fictional Captive, however, Captain Ruy Pérez de Viedma, has a somewhat more exciting time. First of all, he is ransomed not by a monk, but with money supplied by a beautiful young Moorish lady, Zoraida, who has conceived not only a deep love for him, apparently on the basis of his looks alone, but also an attachment to the Virgin Mary so passionate that she wishes to become a Christian. Zoraida's father, Agi Morato (*i.e.*, Hajji Murad), is rich and kindly. He owns both a house in town, which is conveniently situated next to and overlooking the *bagnio*,¹⁴ where the prisoners are locked in at night, and a house just outside the city walls, which has a large and beautiful garden and is conveniently situated near the sea. With more of Zoraida's money the Captive arranges the purchase of a boat that will permit the escape of several other captives and his own elopement with Zoraida. Unfortunately Zoraida's father, Hajji Murad, awakens from his siesta during their escape and has to be taken with them by force. There is a touching scene when the fugitives land momentarily to

¹³ *I.e.*, a member of the Order of the Holy Trinity and the Redemption of Captives, founded at the end of the twelfth century by Jean de Matha.

¹⁴ *Bagnio*--not *baño*--is the word as Cervantes uses it. McCrory obfuscates matters by informing us that *bagnio* is believed by experts to be either a Spanish word signifying a prison stockade or a Turkish word, derived from Arabic, signifying merely a building. See McCrory, p. 167. What seems obvious, however, is that the word is in fact our old Turco-Italian friend *bagnio*, which was introduced into English by Hakluyt in 1599, six years before the appearance of *Don Quixote*, and means precisely "an Oriental prison, a place of detention, for slaves." See *OED*, I. 623. The proper English rendition of *bagnio* is therefore "bagnio," as in the Ormsby translation.

release Hajji Murad, which I shall look at in a moment. The fugitives set sail again for Mallorca, the nearest Christian land, but are intercepted by French privateers--remember my earlier remarks about Franco-Turanian alliances--who strip them of nearly everything, leaving them dressed in the rags of Moorish clothes that identify them to the other guests at the Spanish inn where the Captive's story is finally told. Here the fugitives are offered charity and Captain Ruy Pérez de Viedma is reunited with his family, who bestow their blessings on Zoraida as a convert and as his fiancée.

We can now consider the attitudes towards Islam suggested by the Captive's Tale in *Don Quixote*. We might look first at the passage I just referred to:

We unbound the Moors and one by one put them on shore, at which they were filled with amazement. Then we came to Zoraida's father, who had now completely recovered his senses:

"Why do you think, Christian," he said, "that this wicked woman rejoices at your giving me my liberty? Do you think it is because of her affection for me? Not so. It is only because my presence hinders the execution of her base designs. And do not imagine that she has changed her religion because she believes that yours is better than ours. It is only because she knows that immorality is more freely practiced in your country than in ours." Then he turned to Zoraida, while I and another Christian held him fast by both arms, to prevent his doing some mad act.

"Infamous, misguided girl," he said to her, "where in your blindness and madness are you going in the hands of these dogs, our natural enemies? Cursed be the hour when I begot you! Cursed the luxury and indulgence in which I reared you!"

Seeing that he was likely to go on for some time, we made haste to put him on shore, where he continued his maledictions and loud lamentations. He called on Muhammad to pray to Allah [*rogando a Mahoma rogase a Alá*] to destroy us, to confound us, to make an end of us.¹⁵

One thing this passage tells us is that Cervantes had more than an ordinary sixteenth-century European's knowledge of Islam, though it remains unclear in the Spanish text whether or not he actually understood that Muslim prayers can never be directed to the Prophet Muhammad or to any object except God. Other passages in these three chapters, however--the letters of Zoraida to the Captive, for example--show that Cervantes

¹⁵ Ormsby translation, Norton edition, pp. 329-330.

understood that Allah and God are one and the same. The suggestion that Hajji Murad could have called upon the Prophet to act as an intercessor with God--as Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints are said to do in Catholic doctrine--is quite un-Muslim. In granting the Prophet a more elevated rôle than could possibly be claimed for him in orthodox Islam, Cervantes thus obtrudes Catholic doctrine. This treatment of the Prophet, however, is one that a Catholic readership would not only find intelligible, but would also recognize as respectful.

Respect is likewise extended to Zoraida's father, Hajji Murad, who is treated as a tragic character. This fact is quite clear when one compares him with other literary fathers of the same period who are losing their daughters in similar circumstances. Shylock, for instance, is treated comically, howling alternately for his daughter and his ducats, whereas Hajji Murad not only maintains his dignity, but actually keeps a moral ascendancy. His declaration to the effect that the Christian West is more immoral than the Muslim East anticipates sentiments that are now commonplace in every Muslim community throughout the world, from Ouagadougou and Wadi Zamzam to Wolverhampton and Walla Walla. In sixteenth-century Algeria, however, they had some obvious basis in real experience near at hand. Most of the sixteenth-century corsairs, for example, including the three corsairs who figure by name in *Don Quixote*, were actually European renegades.

Hajji Murad has been not only loving and indulgent to his daughter, but kind to the Christian stranger in his garden. In one instance, in fact, his cordial and gentlemanly reception of Captain Pérez de Viedma is directly contrasted with his brusque expulsion of a quartet of intruding Turks. When Hajji Murad loses his daughter to Captain Viedma and the Christian faith, we are expected to pity him, as we do Shakespeare's Brabantio, who loses his daughter Desdemona to a Moor, or even King Lear, a father who effectively loses three daughters. Let us note quite clearly, moreover, that he is not being pitied because he is pathetic, wretched or abject, an object of charity, as Zoraida and Captain Ruy Pérez de Viedma are when they arrive in rags at the inn, but because he is tragic: showing noble qualities, he has fallen from potency to helplessness, and has suffered by reason of his own virtues.

The figure of the noble Moor had in fact long since become a literary convention in Spain.¹⁶ From the beginning of the fourteenth century onward Moorish culture had been identified in Spanish literature--e.g., in Don Juan Manuel's collection of tales, *El Conde Lucanor*, in Juan Ruiz' great poem, *El libro de buen amor*, and in a large body of epic-inspired ballads and romances--with chivalry, luxury, and refinement. In about 1560 this topical tradition was given new impetus by the appearance of a novel called *La Historia de Abindarréz y Xarifa*, better known as *El Abencerraje*, which was published in three different versions. The fact that one of these versions was interpolated into the text of the posthumous Valladolid 1561 edition of Montemayor's pastoral novel *Diana* gave it international currency and an ultimate influence among Spanish masterworks that may be second only to that of *Don Quixote* itself.¹⁷ A host of new ballads with Moorish subjects appeared in the 1580s, lyrical rather than epic in inspiration, including a whole series of them by Lope de Vega.¹⁸ The idealization of Moorish culture is central, finally, to Ginés Pérez de Hita's famous and widely read *Historia de los vandas de los Zegries y Abencerrajes* ("The Civil Wars of Granada"), the first part of which was published in at least five Iberian cities (Saragosa, Valencia, Lisbon, Alcalá de Henares, and Barcelona) and in at least eight editions between 1595 and 1605, the year the first part of *Don Quixote* appeared.

The respect extended throughout *Don Quixote* to Muslim culture in general is thus by no means unprecedented. Nor is Cervantes' device of

¹⁶ For a detailed treatment of the image of the noble Moor, see Maria Soledad Carrasco-Urgoiti, *The Moorish Novel: "El Abencerraje" and Pérez de Hita* (Boston, 1978). See also Rhona Zaid, "Las Guerras civiles de Granada: The Idealization of the Assimilation," *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*. ed. John Tolan (New York and London, 1995), pp. 313-330.

¹⁷ This influence extends into the Romantic era, most obviously in such French works as Florian's novel *Gonsalve de Cordoue* (1791), which provided the basis of Cherubini's opera *Les Abencérages* (premiered 1813, in the presence of the Emperor) or Chateaubriand's *Les Aventures du dernier Abencérage* (1828), but also in the novels of Scott and the romances of Byron, whence it becomes part of the infrastructure of Western culture.

¹⁸ It was apparently sometime between 1581 and 1587 that Cervantes wrote *El Trato de Argel*, a play that uses the same materials that enter into the Captive's Tale and was revised for publication in 1615 as *Los Bagnios de Argel*.

ascribing the invention of the character and history of the mad knight himself to a fictional Muslim author, Cide Hamete Benengeli (*i.e.*, Sidi Hamad), whose text has purportedly been translated by another fictional Muslim for the fictional narrator of the novel. The real and non-fictional Cervantes thus presents himself as a mere fourth-hand narrator.

The revelation of Cide Hamete's authorship is not made until the ninth chapter of Part I:

One day as I was in the Alcalá of Toledo, a boy came up sell some notebooks and old papers to a silk dealer. As I am fond of reading even scraps of paper in the streets, my natural bent led me to take up one of the notebooks the boy had for sale. I saw it was in characters which I recognized as Arabic, but despite that was unable to read. I looked about to see if there was any Spanish-speaking Morisco at hand to read them for me, and I had no difficulty in finding such an individual. Indeed, even had I sought one for an older and better language I could have found him. In short, chance provided me with one.

When I told him what I wanted and put the book into his hands, he opened it in the middle and read a little. Then he began to laugh. I asked him what he was laughing at and he replied that it was at something in a note written in the margin of the book. I asked him to tell me what it was.

"In the margin, as I told you," he replied, still laughing, "is written: 'This Dulcinea del Toboso so often mentioned in this history had, they say, the best hand of any woman in all La Mancha for salting pigs.'"

When I heard Dulcinea del Toboso named, I was struck with surprise and amazement, for it seemed to me at once that these notebooks contained the history of Don Quixote. With this idea I urged him to read the beginning, and he did so, turning the Arabic into Castilian at sight. He told me it meant "*History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, written by Cide Hamete Benengeli, an Arab historian.*"

It required great caution to hide the joy I felt when the title of the book reached my ears. Snatching it from the silk dealer, I bought all the papers and notebooks from the boy for half a *real*. If he had had his wits about him and had known how eager I was, he might have calculated on making more than six *reales* by the bargain. I withdrew at once with the Morisco into the cathedral cloister and begged him to translate all the notebooks relating to Don Quixote into the Castilian tongue, without omitting to or adding anything. . . .

If any objection be raised as to its truth, it can only be because the author was an Arab, since lying is very common among those of that nation. Yet as they are such enemies of ours, he is more likely to have erred in diminishing rather than in overstating the case. And this is my own opinion.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ormsby translation, Norton edition, pp. 66-67.

Cide Hamete's authorship is underlined throughout *Don Quixote*. Chapter 8 of Part II begins, for example, with the following words: "'Blessed be Allah, the all-powerful!' says Hamete Benengeli on beginning this eighth chapter. 'Blessed be Allah!' he repeats three times and he says he utters these thanksgiving at seeing that he has now got Don Quixote and Sancho afield."²⁰ He is cited again at the beginning of Chapter 27; and Chapter 40 opens with an encomium that concludes: "O renowned author! O happy Don Quixote! O famous Dulcinea! O witty Sancho Panza! All and each, may you live countless ages for the delight and amusement of the dwellers on earth!"²¹ The last page of *Don Quixote* pretends to be a verbatim translation of the last page of the Arabic manuscript and renders thus the famous declaration in Cide Hamete's own words: "For me and me alone was Don Quixote born and I for him. It was his to act, mine to write: we two together make but one."²²

There is plentiful precedent for the narrative device of an author's pretending to merely a kind of editorial function in European literature from Homer onward; and it has enjoyed undiminished popularity in Western literature of the twentieth century. Precedents for assigning the fictional rôle of primary narrator to a Muslim are specifically Spanish and were well known to Cervantes:²³ they include Alfonso de Salazar's *Lepolemo*, published in 1563, Miguel de Luna's *Historia verdadera del rey don Rodrigo*, published between 1592 and 1600, and Ginés Pérez de Hita's *Historia de los vandas de los Zegries y Abencerrajes* ("The Civil Wars of Granada"), which I have already mentioned as exemplifying a traditional literary idealization of Moorish culture.

Miguel de Luna was himself a Morisco and held a position as Arabic interpreter to Philip II; Maria Soledad Carrasco-Urgoiti and James Monroe

²⁰ Ormsby translation, Norton edition, p. 462.

²¹ Ormsby translation, Norton edition, p. 641.

²² Ormsby translation, Norton edition, p. 830.

²³ See G. Stagg, "El sabio cide Hamete Venengeli," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 33(1956):218-225; B. Wardopper, "Don Quixote: Story or History?" *Modern Philology*, 63(1965):1-11; Américo Castro, "El cómo y el por qué de Cide Hamete" in *Hacia Cervantes*, third edition (Madrid, 1967), pp. 409-419; F. Márquez Villanueva, "Fray Antonio de Guevara y Cide Hamete," *Fuentes literarias cervantinas* (Madrid: Gredos, 1973), pp. 183-257.

observe that the largely fictional picture he paints in his *Historia verdadera* of humane Muslim conquerors carried with it an implicit censure of the cruel conditions imposed by the Spanish crown upon their descendants.²⁴ Pérez de Hita, however, had actually fought against the Moriscos during Don Juan's campaign of suppression in the Alpujarras and appears to have written out of motives that contain no element of self-interest. It is significant that publication of the second part of his *Civil Wars of Granada* was delayed for twenty two years, until after the last expulsion of Moriscos had taken place and the Duke of Lerma, the minister chiefly responsible for their persecution, had finally fallen from power, and that it was prefaced with a dedication by one of its sponsors to an aristocrat who had defended the Morisco communities of Murcia.²⁵

That the kind of Muslim intellectual who could conceivably have written such a work as Pérez de Hita's *Civil Wars of Granada* or Cervantes' *Don Quixote* might actually have existed in reality is hardly indicated by the largest surviving body of sixteenth-century Morisco literary work, the writing referred to as "ajamiado literature," *al-adab al-ʿajamiyya*, which contains almost nothing secular. More suggestive is an extraordinary document discovered in the Vatican by Professor Jaime Oliver Asín.²⁶

The author of this document, Ibrahim al-Taybili, was born in Toledo, where he lived as a Christian under the name Juan Pérez. In 1609, like hundreds of thousands of other Moriscos, he was expelled from Spain. Taking refuge in Tunisia, he became a teacher of Islam to fellow refugees, employing for the purpose their native language, which was not Arabic, but Spanish. In a prologue to one of his works he describes attending the fair at Alcalá de Henares, the university town where Cervantes was born, and going to a bookshop accompanied by a young Christian "without culture, a Christian of those who 'do not know either how to read or how to understand the writings that have been left to us by the Ancients and by our

²⁴ Carrasco-Urgoiti, p.39.

²⁵ Carrasco-Urgoiti, pp. 135-136.

²⁶ Jaime Oliver Asín, *El "Quijote de 1604"* (Madrid, 1948). Extract translated by S. Canon, reprinted in M. de Epalza and R. Petit, eds., *Études sur les moriscos andalous en Tunisie* (Madrid and Tunis, 1973), pp. 240-247. I am grateful to Professor Nick Hopkins for drawing this particular work by Asín to my attention.

forebears, and in which, though they be the work of infidels, there is much to be seen and much to be learned.” Ibrahim himself buys six books; and his semi-literate young companion is surprised that not one of them is a romance of chivalry.

As in the cases of Miguel de Luna and Pérez de Hita, Cervantes' gesture of ascribing the authorship of *Don Quixote* to such a Muslim intellectual suggests a complex sympathy with Islam that is worth pondering. It is especially worth considering in light of Cervantes' personal vulnerability and of the harsh legislation promulgated by the crown in 1609 and 1613, the *Endlösung* designed to eliminate Islam as a living cultural presence in Spain forever. At the beginning of this paper I suggested that we should not be surprised if we found attitudes in sixteenth-century Spain that combined admiration, envy and fear; and certainly such cruel repression arose from such attitudes. I also observed, a little later, that a state like Venice could simultaneously pursue a policy towards Hellenic culture that was utterly destructive while providing hospitality to the remnants of that culture; and I suggested that in the contradiction between these two positions, there were parallels in Spain. The expulsion of the Moriscos and Jews from Spain marked the end of the Golden Age and the beginning of what Spaniards themselves have felt be a long decline. But how many Spaniards at the time recognized it as essentially an act of self-destruction?

The first part of *Don Quixote* was published in 1605, before these measures were taken. The second and concluding part, with its manifold references to a Muslim author, was not published until 1615, by which time all Spanish Moriscos had theoretically been expelled from Spain. Two years earlier Cervantes published his second greatest work, the *Novelas Ejemplares*, a collection of stories containing his other acknowledged masterpiece, “The Dogs' Colloquy,” with its prefatory tale, “The Deceitful Marriage.”²⁷ “The Dogs' Colloquy” records a conversation between two watch-dogs at a hospital currently specializing in the treatment of venereal diseases. After polite exchanges and pious denunciations of such canine vices as backbiting, one of them, named Berganza, tells his life story to the other, named Scipio. One of Berganza's most recent masters, it appears, was a Moor in Granada, who owned a big garden, where Berganza stayed for

²⁷ For a review of scholarship, see Ruth El Saffar, *El casamiento engañoso y el Coloquio de los perros*, Critical Guides to Spanish Texts, 17 (London, 1976).

more than a month in order to learn what he could about how Moors live. Their chief quality, he says, is miserliness, and they have amassed most of the money in Spain. "Bear in mind," he says

that there are a lot of them and that every day they earn and hide a certain amount of money, and that slow fever finishes off a person just as effectively as a quick one. And they are increasing in numbers, so the number of those who hide away money grows, and will go on growing without stopping, as experience shows. Among them there is no such thing as celibacy, nor do any of them men or women, take religious orders. They all marry and multiply because frugal living makes them all the more fit for procreation. They do not get exhausted by wars, nor do they take any employment which wearies them unduly. They rob us, without going out of their way at all, and on the fruit of our properties, which they sell back to us, they grow rich. They have no servants, because they all act as their own. They don't spend money on schooling for their children, because all the learning they want is to know how to rob us.

Scipio, the other watchdog, listens to this diatribe approvingly and adds:

People have looked for remedies for all the injuries you have pointed out and hinted at. . . Up to now the right remedy hasn't come to light. But our state has wise watchmen, who bearing in mind that Spain is rearing and harboring in its bosom all these Moorish vipers, with God's help will find a quick, sure and certain way out of this harmful situation.²⁸

This sort of talk is a long way indeed from the old Spanish literary tradition that identified Moorish culture with luxury and refinement. Cervantes must have been hearing such talk for years, though, and indeed, everyone has, somewhere or other at some time--in France in 1685, for example, in Canada in 1755, in the American Southeast in 1829, throughout the former Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires in 1919, in Russia in 1929, in Germany in 1933, in India in 1947, in Egypt in 1956 or 1961, in Palestine, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Yugoslavia, Rwanda. What we should remember the next time we hear it--Cervantes' story is a good reminder--is that the speaker is a back-biting dog, no doubt inspired by admiration, envy and fear.

²⁸ *Exemplary Stories*, C.A.Jones, trans. (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 242-243.