

The Morisco's Last Sigh: Mirroring Cultural Encounters and Transfers between Al-Ḥajari's *Nāṣir Al-Dīn* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*

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Early modern times were times of huge changes: mass expulsion, population transfer, forced conversion, massacres, transatlantic slavery, book burning and book confiscation. That violence resulted in dislocated, disrupted, and suppressed identities, cultural transfer, and cultural resistance. It produced exiled figures who traversed two worlds of meaning and culture and offered opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and cultural brokerage. Nicholas Terpstra (2015, 3) claims that

Not all exiles were driven out by formal proclamations, and not all migrants fled for their lives. The early modern period also saw 'voluntary' migrations of religious groups with effects that would resonate through later centuries. Some were engineered by governments to secure political control of contested areas, as when English governments moved Protestants into Northern Ireland in what were known as the 'Ulster plantations'. In other cases, whole communities relocated overseas, either to have a chance to exercise their own restrictive notions of religious purity or at least to escape interference and persecution from neighbours and officials.

Travel literature mirrored some of those dislocations, especially when written by exiles or colonizers, in which case authors often wrote back to the West through biased or critical travel and autobiographical works. Later, writers and critics, began to reevaluate the field in relation to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003) as they sought to balance Said's statements. As a result, Counter-narratives started to become essential for understanding the plight of the downtrodden and excluded.

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Edward Said took heed of the critiques elicited by *Orientalism* in his subsequent sequel *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), specifically responding to his use of the word Eurocentrism. He eventually approached the discourse of power through what he called a contrapuntal reading of overlapping histories that revealed the overlap of the colonizer and the colonized. That approach is extremely relevant to understanding the interconnectedness of autobiographies and travelogues in the early modern works of Ahmad Ibn Qāsim Al-Ḥajārī's *Nāṣir Al-Dīn* (2015) and Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (2008). Said argued that "As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (1994, 51). The colonized and diasporic Moriscos creatively produced their discourse against all the odds. Even though they were being forced into diaspora, they stood as bridge-builders of cultural transfer in times of mass fanaticism in Iberia. The Spanish empire was strong when it fought against all religious and political 'others,' effectively put an end to Morisco cultural expression in the Iberian Peninsula. The centrifugal power of colonial discourse was paramount because it was endowed with an authority that relegated the other to abeyance and actual physical banishment. New Historicism comes in handy when reading literary works as opposed to non-fiction and other extra-fictional genres: "by demonstrating that social and cultural events commingle messily, by rigorously exposing the innumerable trade-offs, the competing bids and exchanges of culture" (Veeseer 2013, xiii).

There is a link between New Historicism and postcolonial in its concern with power politics, discourses and analysis because as Veeseer explicates: "It scrutinizes the barbaric acts that sometimes underwrite high cultural purposes and asks that we not blink away our complicity. At the same time, it encourages us to admire the sheer intricacy and unavoidability of exchanges between culture and power" (2013, xi). This paper will read *Don Quixote* together with Al-Ḥajārī's autobiographical narrative and their connections to power. The discourse of power is never complete and resistance seeps through its crevices. Said explained that "it bears repeating that no matter how complete the dominance of an ideology or social system, there are always going to be pans of the social experience that it does not cover and control. From these parts very frequently comes opposition, both self-conscious and dialectical" (1994, 240).

Although Edward Said applied his approach to a group of Western texts, he curiously avoided any extensive treatment of *Don Quixote* and its involvements with the Spanish imperial venture. E. C. Graf (1999) registers his criticism of

“Said’s discourse on the European encounter with the Oriental Other” which, “is largely silent with respect to the case of Spain. Particularly disappointing is Said's stereotypical reference to Cervantes's *Don Quixote* as a book about the dangers of literal reading” (71). Said (1994) argued that “Within the codes of European fiction, these interruptions of an imperial project are realistic reminders that no one can in fact withdraw from the world into a private version of reality. The link back to *Don Quixote* is obvious, as is the continuity with institutional aspects of the novel form itself, where the aberrant individual is usually disciplined and punished in the interests of a corporate identity” (163). *Don Quixote* qualifies for an imperial narrative in the same terms used by Said to analyse the imperial phenomenon of Britain and France. *Don Quixote*, like other European texts, was mired in the colonial discourse of imperial Spain. Said declared that:

When it came to what lay beyond metropolitan Europe, the arts and the disciplines of representation- on the one hand, fiction, history and travel writing, painting; on the other, sociology, administrative or bureaucratic writing, philology, racial theory depended on the powers of Europe to bring the non-European world into representations, the better to be able to see it, to master it, and, above all, to hold it.” (1994, 99)

This paper will pursue a main line of inquiry: that of the Morisco as an agent of cultural exchange and transfer and being a site for warring representations in early modern times. Even under inauspicious and dangerous circumstances as in the autobiography of Al-Ḥajarī and Cervantes’s fictional biography of an imaginary *Don Quixote*, the Morisco was an intermediary between East and West. Cervantes and Al-Ḥajarī are examples of the discursive constructions of their times. Their work registered two competing narratives: one that sought to legitimize the metaphorical presence and acceptance of the Morisco as a cultural capital but did not come near acknowledging his right to return or exist, and a culturally combative narrative that sought to re-centre the Morisco as a cultural speaker for the oppressed, along with the valid but impractical possibility of the dispossessed gaining back their lands through Ottoman support. Those two narratives contended during a process of cultural transfer between two cultures. Both raised narrative to a level of cultural critique that was a unique achievement at a time where cultural purity and ethnic uniformity were aggressively pursued by the Spanish. To what extent were both Al-Ḥajarī and Cervantes able to resist

the centrifugal pull towards the centre and bestraddle the walls of forbidden cities and representations is a difficult yet valid question to pose.

Cervantes and Al-Ḥajarī were assisted by the fluidity of early modern borders in a Mediterranean where people were traversing in and out of religions and allegiances. Cervantes's life and work reflected his engagement with otherness as a site where he staged his fiction while enjoying an ambiguous relationship with power discourses. His fiction represented the Moriscos as facilitators but not beneficiaries of hybridity, and like the Spanish authorities, he invested in the Morisco as "cultural capital", as the fictional originator of the world of *Don Quixote*. In the real world of the inquisition and the politics of Philip II and III, the Moriscos as "cultural capital" were both appropriated and silenced as a minority. Yet the travel account by the refugee Morisco Qāsim Al-Ḥajarī gives a voice to that silenced minority. His book, however, was written after the fact, "at the advice of the Malikite scholar al-Ujhuri (967/1559-1066/1656) and compiled in Cairo in the year 1046/1637 as an extract from his more extensive travelogue (also compiled at the request of the shaykh), *Rihlat al-Shihab ila liqa' al-ahbab*, of which no manuscript copy is known" (Al-Ḥajarī 2015, 9-10).

The Spanish archives silenced the 'other' and racialized the Moriscos to erase all historical memory of their eight hundred years of presence in Spain. In her book, *The Lead Book of Granada*, Elizabeth Drayson contends that:

In the sixteenth century, the Christian Spaniards still aspired to return to the Gothic roots they had relinquished when King Roderick was defeated in the Muslim conquest, leading many Spaniards to fake their genealogies to enable them to claim *limpieza de sangre* or purity of blood going back to the Gothic line. The issue of racial origins was very closely linked in the minds of Christians to religious difference, and there is little doubt that the extreme reaction of the Catholic authorities to the Moriscos had much to do with their centuries-old fear of them as the descendants of those early invaders of the Peninsula. (2016, 47)

However, clearly there is an 'other' and there is the story of their tyrannical expulsion of a persecuted minority. Most of the historical details about what happened to the Moriscos is narrated through the archives of the Inquisition which makes the testimony of Al-Ḥajarī precious. Al-Ḥajarī is a Morisco who left Spain before the Edict of Expulsion by King Philip III in 1609; his travel account is a short statement of the depredations of the Morisco community as

well as the multicultural voyages that he experienced as an emissary of the Sultan of Morocco and his sons. Al-Ḥajarī juggled two identities as a new Christian and a deep-seated one as a religious Muslim. He went by a Christian name like all Moriscos. His Christian name was Diego Bejarano. Before leaving Spain in 1598, he navigated a world controlled by the Holy Office where his identity as a Muslim would send straight to burning at the stake. He developed a strategic hybridity fit for the times of the inquisition. He must have perfected the art of camouflage as he lived in unruly and dangerous times. Al-Ḥajarī (2015) practised *taqiyya* [“precautionary dissimulation of one’s beliefs”] in many instances to hide his identity in the dangerous settings Moriscos had to occupy: “two religions: the religion of the Christians openly and that of the Muslims in secret. The infidels imposed a harsh penalty on whoever manifested any Islamic practice: they [even] burned some of them. This was their situation, as I witnessed it during more than twenty years before my departure from it” (78).

After the forced expulsion mandated by Philip III, return to Spain was very dangerous for Moriscos. Many of them left houses, money, and children in Spain and some attempted to return and get in touch with their previous lives. They used all possible means not least disguise. This is the case of the Morisco Ricote, a neighbour of Sancho:

How! is it possible, brother Sancho Panza, you do not know your neighbour Ricote, the Morisco shopkeeper of your town? Then Sancho observed him more attentively, and began to recollect him, and at last remembered him perfectly; and, without alighting from his beast, he threw his arms about his neck, and said: 'Who the devil, Ricote, should know you in this disguise?' 'Tell me, how came you thus Frenchified? and how dare you venture to return to Spain, where, if you are known and caught, it will fare but ill with you'.
(Cervantes 2008, 817-818)

Al-Ḥajarī on the other hand provides an instance of camouflage that resonates with *Don Quixote*. When he decided to leave for North Africa, he dressed as an old priest to hide his identity. On his journey through Europe as an ambassador for the king of Morocco, Al-Ḥajarī dresses in European clothes to avoid any frictions with his travel companions. As a Spaniard Muslim, Al-Ḥajarī was aware of his environment and was able to dress in a way that hid him from prying eyes. His ability to manoeuvre has enabled him to engage others.

However, those circumstances of fear did not translate into hate against the Spanish. Nabil Matar (2013) makes an important note regarding the nature of Arab-Muslim travel narratives, “But the hostility to the Euro-Christians remained doctrinal and historical ... not racial or cultural” (xxxiii). Al-Ḥajārī offers a constant refutation to the often-inaccurate western perceptions of Islam rife in his times. He does that not as a Muslim who is removed from Europe but as a European Muslim who is an expert of the culture and people of Europe having just escaped the Spanish inquisition and taken refuge in Morocco and worked as a translator for its ruler.

The argument by Nabil Matter finds strong support in the spirit of tolerant dialogue held by Al-Ḥajārī with the Christians he had met who were courteous because of his status as an envoy of Mulay Zaidan of Morocco. He did not seek to alterize the West even with his former status as a refugee left to flee his hometown in terror of being found out and burned at the stake. At the hands of Al-Ḥajārī, travel literature serves as a means of cultural comparison and dialogue. It also offers a corrective of cultural misconception and allows direct cultural transfer between Muslim and European cultures which confirms the porousness of the Mediterranean's culture in the early modern times.

The Madness of the Moor

Don Quixote represented an ambiguous attitude towards the marginalized fictional Morisco who translated *Don Quixote* into Catalan as well as all images of silence imposed by the Spanish discourse of power. Those silences are carried over to the fictional world of *Dom Quixote* where the Morisco is under erasure. In *Don Quixote*, the Morisco is written off as unreal, unreasonable, and always in need of camouflage to survive. The Moor is also a powerful token of past Muslim glory. The Morisco is evoked as an immaterial yet malevolent source of confusion and harm. For Sancho, the Moor is synonymous with the devil: 'Well, let it be as your worship says,' answered Sancho; 'but let us be gone hence, and endeavour to get a lodging to-night; and pray God it be where there are neither blankets nor blanket-heavers, nor hobgoblins, nor *enchanted Moors*; for, if there be, the devil take both the flock and the fold” (*Cervantes* 2008, 133, emphasis mine). Al-Ḥajārī used enchantment as a subterfuge to escape to the North African shores. When he was nearly found trying to escape along with his travel companion, he asked his companion to fake madness having agreed on that beforehand in case they were found out:

“I said to my companion: “that horn is aimed at us! He answered: “You should employ the subterfuge of (feigned) madness because the people are coming towards us!” But I was so angry at him, that I told him: “I will not do that!” He said: “(In this case) I will do it!” I answered: “Go ahead! I will talk to them about you”. So he made some blood leave (his mouth) and threw himself to the earth.” (111)

People gathered around Al-Ḥajarī’s friend and seeing that he was about to die, brought a priest. Al-Ḥajarī (2015) told the priest that his friend is possessed by a Jinn and asked him to read “the first words mentioned by John in the Gospel, so that the Jinn may go away from him!” (112). His friend, of course, was cured of his ‘madness’ and the ploy worked and after that, they made their escape. In that situation, Al-Ḥajarī used his knowledge of the Bible and Christian tradition to manipulate the priest and the gathering to escape. Madness here is significant and is deemed a weapon against the Inquisition which has suppressed any acceptance of difference. The madness of Islam in Foucauldian terms seems to be the only channel through which Al-Ḥajarī and his companion can survive the inquisition by appealing to madness which is one more marker of marginality. Madness is a state of muteness that is foreign to reason and thus becomes a hiding strategy. The same applies to Don Quixote whose, “insane life pursues and immortalizes him only by his insanity; madness is still the imperishable life of death: "Here lies the famous hidalgo who carried valour to such lengths that it was said death, could not triumph over life by his demise" (Foucault 2013, 32). Attempting to spell out otherness when the powerful discourses of the state are against it, leads to another form of feigned madness. Cervantes creates a novel that renders otherness as madness through madness:

The novel’s multiple layers reflected the complex levels of Spain’s religious life. First there was the anonymous translator of the Arabic book, a Muslim record, hidden now in a blatantly Christian setting. Then there was Don Quixote, mad at times, clairvoyant at others, seeking to give meaning and hope to the madness around him, which included the destruction of the country’s Muslim past. (M. Quinn 2013, 84)

Madness is always-already a negation of reason and is associated with the Moriscos whose refusal to assimilate is equated with lack of reason:

'Methinks, O Anselmo, you are at this time in the same disposition that the Moors are always in, whom you cannot convince of the error of their sect, by citations from Holy Scripture, nor by arguments drawn from reason, or founded upon articles of faith; but you must produce examples that are plain, easy, intelligible, demonstrative, and undeniable, with such mathematical demonstrations as cannot be denied; as when it is said: "If from equal parts we take equal parts, those that remain are also equal." (Cervantes 2008, 284)

In the extrapolated story in the quoted passage, the Morisco is altered twice: He is described as devoid of reason which denies his humanity as well as marginalization on all other levels of authentic expression of difference. For to express difference is equal to madness. But there is another use to madness. It is a strategy used by Al-Hajari and his companion to camouflage themselves. So, madness becomes for both of them, a reasonable choice. In a context where embracing your enemy's faith is the only reasonable thing to do, madness is the other rational alternative to escape inquisition-backed arguments.

Auerbach comments on *Don Quixote's* relation to reality maintaining that "Above all, Don Quixote's adventures never reveal any of the basic problems of the society of the time. His activity reveals nothing at all. It affords an opportunity to present Spanish life in its colour and fulness. In the resulting clashes between Don Quixote and reality no situation ever results which puts in question that reality's right to be what it is" (2013, 345). Don Quixote is consequently a marginal figure: his madness does not impinge on reality very much like his Morisco contemporaries. Don Quixote has a common connection with the Moriscos: both are marginal and exiled in a way or another. The marginality of Don Quixote is in a way like the marginality of the internally exiled Morisco. According to Harold Bloom (2014), "The Don, like the Jews and the Moors, is an exile, but in the mode of the conversos and Moriscos, an internal exile. Don Quixote leaves his village to seek his spirit's home in exile, because only exiled can he be free" (133).

The Morisco as a suppressed entity is reminiscent of the Africans in Conrad's *Heart of darkness* (1996) but differs in one aspect: unlike the Africans, the Moriscos were native to the very imperium that oppressed them and could not have been easily distinguished from Spanish Christians. Add to this the fact that their being agents of cultural transfer bought some of them time-out from the prying eyes of the inquisition. The discovery of the Lead Books was a

momentous event that took place at a time when the fate of the Moriscos was hanging in the balance:

It was in this atmosphere of tension and uncertainty that a number of “ancient” Lead Books were discovered in the city of Granada, whose contents revealed that among Spain’s first century Christian evangelists were two converted Arabs. The Lead Books were in fact recent forgeries by local Moriscos, who hoped to enhance their community’s prestige by presenting Arabs, a people associated with Islamic iniquity, as founding members of the Spanish church. The implication was that Moriscos also had the capacity to be good Christians and worthy Spaniards. (Ingram 2009, 13)

Although the Lead Books were found later to be forgeries, for a long time they were still considered important to the city of Granada. The function of cross-cultural transfer and brokerage is, thus, tied to context and circumstances. According to König:

personal motivation to make use of bi- or multicultural skills seems to have concurred with the demands of society. It appears that this was not only due to the fact that the personalities in question had qualifications deemed useful or necessary by the society in question. It also seems to be of relevance that such people seem to have been deft enough to adapt to the workings of their environment. Making conscious efforts to explain the necessity of their qualification to their contemporaries, they enforced or even created the respective society’s demand for their qualification, accordingly drawing benefit from their multicultural heritage. (2012, 68)

In the case of Al-Hajari, his knowledge of Arabic has been propitious. It was a time when a new interest in Arabic was on the rise which was an opportunity for Al-Hajari to be of use. He made the best of his knowledge of Arabic accumulating both money and prestige.

Literacy in Arabic was a source of extreme danger under the Spanish Inquisition as much as a source of opportunity and it all came with the need for specialized knowledge of Arabic to translate the Lead Books and that is when ecclesiastical powers enlisted the services of Al-Ḥajarī. Al-Ḥajarī’s skills as a bicultural transmitter gave him a new lease on life and a job during dangerous

times. Al-Ḥajarī was living dangerously given the fact that knowledge of Arabic and even possession of Arabic books were serious offences under the jurisdiction of the ruthlessly active inquisition. Al-Ḥajarī's knowledge of Arabic and where and how he learned it were dropped in favour of the benefits coming from the urgent need to translate the lead books which were of pressing importance to the ecclesiastical authorities of the time. Harvey (2005) rightly observes the opportunities provided by "the switch in Christian attitudes toward the Moriscos themselves and toward their Arabic language after the discoveries had been made. One moment literacy in Arabic was knowledge to be hidden from the Christian authorities at all costs, the next to read Arabic well became a valued and sought-after accomplishment" (277). This is further confirmed in *Don Quixote* where some authoritativeness is given to the metafictional Arab Historian who wrote Don Quixote. The Arab is not just needed as a translator and a cultural interpreter but also as an originator of founding myths important to imperial Spain. So, he is confirmed at times of need and disavowed at other times. Ambiguity is the mark of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. Cervantes creates an image of the Morisco as a source of his knowledge about chivalry through the translation of a history written by an Arab. Al-Ḥajarī rightly bragged that he has become a licensed translator in no other place but the very Inquisition authorities eager to decipher the content of the Lead books which were written in Arabic and Latin. It was in fear that the transfer took place. Al-Ḥajarī (2015) narrates how he came to be a translator with the inquisition authorities in Granada:

One of the priests who belonged to the close circle of the archbishop was learning to read Arabic. For this reason he used to accompany the hakim Muhammad ibn Abi 'I-Asi (the grandson of the pious shaykh al-Jabbas, of whom it was already said that he used to translate letters) – because of his grandfather he used to read Arabic in the presence of the Christians. [On a certain occasion] he was reading the book *Nuzhat al-mushtaq fi 'khtiraq al-afaq* to the priest. I was in their company, but had not shown the Christian that I could read Arabic, because of the sentence of punishment they usually passed upon those who appeared to do so. While he was reading the book, they hesitated at the correct reading of some words. (87-88)

Once arrived safely in Morocco, Al-Ḥajarī had the confidence and approval of the Saadian Moroccan dynasty which had relations with Spain. He was sent to France as a negotiator to get back the property taken by French captains from

expelled Moriscos. During that time, Al-Ḥajarī used his new status as an emissary of the Sultans of early modern Morocco to navigate Europe and look the European centre in the eye. A former internally colonized and marginalized makes what Said (1994) termed “the voyage in”. Al-Ḥajarī engages in a Saadian voyage-in where he confronts the Orientalist discourse of power about Islam whether he is in Granada, Holland, France, or Morocco. During his journey to France and the Netherlands Al-Ḥajarī engaged in religious and cultural conversations with Europeans from different cultures including women. He fell in love with a Frenchwoman who according to him tried to seduce him. Yet the main points of engagement were related to defending Islam against misconceptions and showing the superiority of Islam over other religions. What he did, coincided with religious polemics widespread in Europe. Islam was used as a negative metaphor by both Catholics and Protestants who used it to tarnish the other side by associating it with Islam.¹ Cultural dialogue in early modern times was impeded in religious dialogue and polemic. There was a proliferation of religious polemic during those times of religious upheaval. Catholicism had to fend off not only Reformation attacks on its tenets but also Islam which was a religion that Moriscos still held on to.

Although Cervantes and Al-Ḥajarī belonged to different world views, they crossed borders and can only be understood contrapuntally. A contrapuntal reading of *Don Quixote* against the grain of Al-Ḥajarī’s autobiographical/ travel narrative allows us to juxtapose seemingly warring visions of the times. Both reflected times of huge changes and interactions between two warring civilizations. Ahmad Ibn Qāsim Al- Ḥajarī’s life is a result of a dislocation caused by the political upheavals that left Andalusian Muslim subjects in a political system that no longer allowed them to keep their Islamic identity or practice their cultural traditions. After his escape, he was employed as a translator and ambassador at the Moroccan Saadian court. He was then sent on a mission to reclaim possessions of Morisco refugees taken by French vessels which were hired to take them to the North African shore. The journey takes him to France and Holland where he encounters ordinary people, Arabists, priests, and rulers. That positioned him well to use his travel as a podium for cultural critique and a counter-narrative to the dominant Islamophobia of the Spanish colonial discourse of power. His engagements were a form of transfer of insider knowledge of Islam to a West that viewed Muslims through dark glasses.

Cross-cultural Transfer

Similar to Cervantes's Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quixote*, Al-Ḥajarī is important for the birth of new nationalism that defined Granada where the Lead books were found. Cide Hamete is the metafictional progenitor of the 'historical' *Don Quixote*. While the Morisco is banished to the margins, his significance is never downgraded. Yet he is ever silent as he does the services for the Spanish. He can only exist as a shadow of his former self. The Morisco's act of translation helps the invention of tradition in Spain yet once the act of translation takes place, the Moor is driven to the margins. The coloniality of power exercised by the new rulers squeezed the Moriscos' bodies for conformity, money and cultural capital. At the same time, another process was pursued by the Spanish authorities that actively confiscated books and left the Morisco with very little to stand on. The intellectual capital of the Moriscos was being drained in all forms only to banish them later. By the time *Don Quixote* was finalized and published in its entirety in 1615, the majority of the Moriscos were forced to cross to the other shore of North Africa. It was an act of population transfer that banished the Moriscos physically.

Cultural mediation in the case of Al-Ḥajarī and his fictional counterparts in *Don Quixote* was a dangerous business because they mediated the identity-making of early modern Spanish culture supervised by the never-tiring Inquisition. The metafictional Morisco, in *Don Quixote*, is credited with being the author of the Arabic text of *Don Quixote* but is driven to the margins and appears occasionally as a prop in a drama that negates and marginalizes Moriscos. His role as a cultural mediator is occasionally acknowledged though. However, *Don Quixote* appropriates the archive of the Morisco but denies him any space beyond a passing gesture of origins:

With this thought I pressed him to read the beginning; which he did, and rendering extempore the Arabic into Castilian, said that it began thus: 'The history of Don Quixote de la Mancha, written by Cide Hamete Ben Engeli, Arabian historiographer'. Much discretion was necessary to dissemble the joy I felt at hearing the title of the book, and snatching it out of the mercer's hands, I bought the whole bundle of papers from the boy for half a real; who, if he had been cunning, and had perceived how eager I was to have them, might very well have promised himself, and have really had, more than six for the bargain. (Cervantes 2008, 68)

Toledo where the discovery of the fictional biography of Don Quixote occurs is a metaphor for cultural and religious transfer and interaction. It is a place that is credited with historically being the abode of translation of Arabic and Greek works into Latin in the early Spanish Renaissance. De Armas brings the significance of this setting to the fore in what follows: “Toledo points to a time when the city prospered under Muslim rule, when it prospered as a centre of learning and *convivencia* as Jews, Muslims, and Christians undertook to translate key works from the past” (2011, 60). However, in modern times it appears in inquisitorial records as a liability not the place of cultural confluence it used to be. The records feature

a Morisco shopkeeper and merchant from Toledo called Jerónimo de Rojas, who was tried by the Holy Office Tribunal in Toledo between 1601 and 1603 and condemned to be burned. One of the accusations against Rojas was that he wanted to learn Arabic, and sought the company of the most educated Moriscos in Toledo, who met at the house of a silk merchant. (Drayson 2016, 91)

Fortunate scholars and translators like Al-Ḥajarī were fortunate to escape the inquisition. The work of Al-Ḥajarī is oppositional; it is anti-Quixotic. His polemics against Christians and Jews during his visit to France, Spain and Holland were geared towards vindicating the Morisco’s Muslim identity and all Muslims. He shows a strong desire to paint Muslims in the best possible way in such circumstances: “The Christians say that Muslims are very greedy to have the properties of [other] people. This [Prince] has seen only a few Muslims, of whom I am on. In order to let him know and convince him that what they say about them is incorrect, and that there are among them those who do not covet his money, I will not ask any money from him. I said to him: “I ask from you a favour or something [else]” (Al-Ḥajarī 2015, 227). Although the title of Al-Ḥajarī’s book *Kitāb Nāṣir al-Dīn* has a polemical aim, the reality of his encounters was far from polemical. His engagements were intellectual and cordial where he sought to convince others and dispel their stereotypes of Muslims and Islam going as far as not asking any material gifts from the King of Flanders who offered to give him whatever he asked. He abstained and only asked a recommendation to the ship captain to take care of him which was readily granted. Just to make a point to him not to think of Muslims as voraciously seeking money.

Al-Ḥajarī's journey shares a similarity with Cervantes's *Don Quixote*: Both desire to fulfil an ideal and defend it. The ideal of chivalry in *Don Quixote* and Islam in *Nasiruddin* are suppressed ideals. For the Spanish empire of the conquistador, both were things of the past. Peninsular Islam has been defeated militarily and the age of chivalry has long passed. The chivalry of defending the weak gave way to the imperial ideals of the conquistador and Islam gave way to a rapacious colonial and religious ideal of Christian world domination. Don Quixote's ideal may have included oppressed Moriscos as well.

In his *Kitāb Nāṣir al-Dīn 'alā 'l-Qawm al-Kāfirīn*, Diego or Al-Ḥajarī (2015) relates the urge behind opting into exile:

One of the blessings of the Exalted God bestowed upon me was that he made me a Muslim in the land of the infidels, ever since I was aware of myself, through my blessed parents – may the Exalted God have mercy upon them – and their guidance. God created in my heart a desire a longing to leave the lands of al-Andalus in order to emigrate to the Exalted God and his messenger and enter the lands of the Muslims. (76)

Al-Ḥajarī staged his escape as a *Hijra* to *Dar Al-Islam*. He escaped a place that no longer considered him a citizen unless he abjured his religion and values. The other shore was a Morocco that treated him as a Muslim and as a citizen and “represented a frontier territory between Europe and the Islamic World. It was a borderland that absorbed peoples expelled from the Iberian Peninsula, such as the Jews and Muslims of Granada, and integrated them as technicians, merchants and consultants to the administration” (Garcia-Arenal 2012, 3). Cervantes's *Don Quixote* reflects the role played by the Morisco as a cultural mediator. However, his role had to be downplayed and his character sometimes vilified to go with the spirit of the times. Al-Ḥajarī was such a Morisco in reality. Al-Ḥajarī mediated one of the most important events of his time through his literacy in Arabic. His services both to the Holy Office and to the ruling Moroccan Kings and his assistant role in teaching Arabic to various orientalist he met during his visit to Holland and France show him as the role model cultural mediator of his times. Al-Ḥajarī's exile was productive in terms of cultural transfer and engagement with the other away from the Inquisition that dominated Spain. The Spanish discourse of religious purity has created an ugly situation of fear among the Moriscos.

Al-Ḥajarī 's translation skills were not limited to translation for the court or translation of technical books evidenced by his translation of the artillery book by Ibrāhīm ibn Ghānim, but also included religious tracts into Spanish for the benefit of Moriscos who were more than proficient in Spanish than Arabic which suffered decades of suppression. His translation for pure religious reasons was born out of a personal commitment to maintain community identity. Many Moriscos were cut off from Arabic language which limited their access to many religious writings and texts. Al-Ḥajarī was commissioned by a Morisco to translate Islamic books into Spanish. During his journey, Al-Ḥajarī had a significant encounter with an important early modern Arabist named Erpenius:

In the summer of 1612 Erpenius returned to Leiden and a year later, in May 1613, he accepted his nomination as the first professor of Arabic in Leiden with his oration on the Excellence and Dignity of the Arabic Language. In June 1613, when he was preparing his Arabic grammar for the press, he suddenly received a letter from the same Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-Ḥajarī, who was in Amsterdam, waiting for a ship to take him home to Morocco. The Muslim scholar spent the whole summer in Leiden as a guest of Erpenius, and probably helped him again with his grammar. Their exchange of ideas must therefore have led to a certain degree of friendship, or at least mutual respect for their opinions. (Vrolijk 2017, 27)

Regardless of his circumstances that dislodged Al-Ḥajarī from his home in Spain, it never clashed with his intellectual engagement with the West and his desire to correct and instruct others when it came to Arabic and Islam.

Incorporating the Other

Al-Ḥajarī has been through a trauma about which he commented later when he landed safely in North Africa: he compared it to going through the tortures of doom's day. A general atmosphere of fear dominated the Mediterranean. Because Al-Ḥajarī was involved in the translation of the Lead Books, he was given a geography book by the priest to locate a certain place. He was rewarded: "The archbishop was extremely pleased with my translation, as he knew that it was truthful. He gave me 300 riyals, as well as a letter granting me a license to translate from Arabic" (Al-Ḥajarī 2008, 92). The fact that he was free to carry

Arabic books in public seemed to Moriscos who knew him as courting disaster. It terrified them so they left his company:

While I was reading the book, some travelers from my country came to the city of Granada and I found out in which funduq they were staying. I went to them, taking the book with me. After having greeted them in the customary way, I opened the book. But when they saw that it was written in Arabic they became extremely afraid of the Christians. I told them: "Do not be afraid. The Christians honour me and respect me for my ability to read Arabic. But all the people of my town thought that the Christian inquisitors – who used to sentence and burn to death everyone who manifested his adherence to Islam in any way or was reading the books of the Muslims- would condemn me [as well]. (2015, 96)

Al-Ḥajarī's journey through Europe was not without its fears. He, for example, finds the French a real threat to his safety:

You should know that I set out for that country deliberately although it lies farther from our own country than France. But a man should seek protection from others or from himself, and after I had experienced the way the French sailors were treating Muslims, I said: I will not return to my country in one of their ships, but I will go to the country of the Netherlanders, because they do not harm Muslims but treat them well. (2015, 219)

Catholicism as a state ideology that forced everybody to sign up to its tenets eroded other identities and religions. Cervantes incorporated the Morisco into his narrative as a historian and a translator. The Morisco can only play an intermediary role and retreat to the background:

I went off immediately with the Morisco, through the cloister of the great church, and desired him to translate for me those papers (all those that treated of Don Quixote) into the Castilian tongue, without taking away or adding anything to them, offering to pay him whatever he should demand. He was satisfied with fifty pounds of raisins, and two bushels of wheat; and promised to translate them faithfully and expeditiously. But I, to make the business more sure,

and not let so valuable a prize slip through my fingers, took him home to my own house, where in a little more than six weeks he translated the whole in the manner you have it here related. (Cervantes 2008, 68)

As Georgiana Dopico-Black (2005, 106) argued about Philip II's acquisition of Arabic books that go back to the Moroccan Mulay Zaidan: "The apparent paradox (morisco bodies out of Spain, Arab manuscripts in) is resolved if we imagine the Escorial library as a machine of incorporation that swallows whole the cultural output of a group expelled as waste from the national body." The dispute over the books lasted for generations as a number of Moroccan rulers dispatched envoys to the Spanish Crown in attempt to retrieve the books. Matar (2011) clarified that:

The reason why Zaidan cherished the books so much is because they included collections of Hadith commentary and grammar; treatises on medicine, and the treatment of diseases; translations of and commentaries on Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Galen, Avicenna's Canons, and Maimonides; translations by Ishaq ibn Hunayn; the poetry of Hafez, Abu Tammam, and selections from Persian and Turkish literature. Some books had been written in al-Andalus, while otherst had been brought from regions as near as Majorca, and as far as Egypt. (118)

A wide range of books cherished by the rulers of early modern Morocco were taken by the Spanish while being transferred to safety through the mediation of a French Sailor when his ship was spotted by the Spanish and taken to Spain. The precious cargo was confiscated and impounded in the Escorial. The Spanish produced the first Castilian dictionary in 1505, a few years after banning Arabic and Islam. The Spanish colonial project mined a people's culture after banning the very people who carried that culture. The battle over books went hand in hand with the battle over expelling Moriscos. Harvey cites an enlightening case from the inquisition: a Morisco called Rom'an was able to improvise stories to entertain his Christian audiences. For that reason, he was suspected of having a communion with the devil. In short, a Morisco's corporeal presence was anathema to the Spanish imperium that dominated both the mundane and the spiritual. He was no different from a creative Cervantes but having a hybrid or a

borderland identity was anathema to discourses of power that worked only with sameness and conformity:

Román was a Morisco working in a fantasy genre, that of the novels of chivalry, and he was not, as far as we can judge, reflecting the reality of life as it was experienced by his community, but it is in this context of interaction between Morisco entertainers and the literature of entertainment for the Spanish general public that we must look at other prose romances in which Muslims (“Moors,” etc.) do figure. The intellectual world of the Moriscos and that of their Christian neighbors were not separated from each other by any impermeable seal. (Harvey 2005, 198)

“The impermeable seal” is the negation of the Moor. He is a stock character for entertainment and exoticism as well but not flesh and blood which is very much like the strategies employed by orientalism. Al-Ḥajarī’s *Kitab*, however, offers a unique opportunity to understand the dynamics of cross-cultural dialogue in early modern Europe between Muslims and Europeans enhanced by the presence of hybrid and liminal identities. Qāsim was writing at a time of extreme polemics written against Muslims and Islam. He was writing not just to assert his identity but to fight back against a discourse that denied him any space for religious or cultural expression. Al-Ḥajarī was a strong cultural transmitter inside and outside; his work as a translator earned him a brokerage status between the hostile and emergent Spanish empire and the rulers of Morocco. He was in a secure position to transfer the material culture into Arabic when he became Mulay Zaidan’s translator. Al-Ḥajarī’s bicultural competence was put to work. According to Harvey (1995), “Here then, we see how a member of the persecuted Morisco minority of Spain was able, when in a Muslim society, to develop his talents and successfully hold high appointments” (73). That mediation is underrated by the narrator of *Don Quixote* who sees representations of the self by others as questionable. The acts of translation and transfer are bracketed. Arabic histories are not objective relays of history:

But if any objection lies against the truth of this history, it can only be, that the author was an Arab, those of that nation being not a little addicted to lying; though they being so much our enemies, one should rather think he fell short of, than exceeded, the bounds of truth. And so in fact, he seems to have done: for when he might, and

ought to have launched out, in celebrating the praises of so excellent a knight, it looks as if he industriously passed them over in silence: a thing ill done and worse designed; for historians ought to be precise, faithful, and unprejudiced; and neither interest nor fear, hatred nor affection, should make them swerve from the way of truth, whose mother is history, the rival of time, the depository of great actions, the witness of what is past, the example and instruction to the present, and monitor to the future. In this you will certainly find whatever you can desire in the most agreeable; and if any perfection is wanting to it, it must, without all question, be the fault of the infidel its author, and not owing to any defect in the subject. In short, its second part, according to the translation, began in this manner (Cervantes 2008, 69).

The Arab cannot be trusted completely with history writing which must be carried out exclusively by European chroniclers. Only a Eurocentric view of history is worthy of trust:

'This true history, here represented to you, gentlemen, is taken word for word from the French chronicles and Spanish ballads, which are in everybody's mouth, and sung by the boys up and down the streets. It treats how Don Gayferos freed his wife Melisendra, who was a prisoner in Spain, in the hands of the Moors, in the city of Sansuena, now called Saragossa; and there you may see how Don Gayferos is playing at tables, according to the ballad. (Cervantes 2008, 638)

The French chronicles and Spanish ballads stand for the 'true history' that is cleared of any presence of the other. Doubt is cast on the Morisco's version of history. Discourses of power do not accept versions of history that put their narratives in question and as such, the history of the subaltern is destroyed, only vestiges remain as token of what was once a great civilization. *Don Quixote* uses hybridity in a way that endorses the dominant discourse of power yet allows a vestige of the other to remain in its compendious narrative.

Don Quixote can be described in the words of Georgiana Dopicco-Black (2005) as "a machine of incorporation" (106) where the Moor as a historian and a translator is included in fiction but marks an absence and is emotied of its richness by the time the second part of *Don Quixote* comes out. The discourse of power related to the Moriscos was motivated by an increasing desire to

alterize and persecute: “The central issue raised by the Morisco question was, ultimately, whether or not they belonged to the Spanish nation. From the perspective of those trying to define Spain in terms of militant Counter-Reformation Catholicism, the Moriscos were the perfect scapegoat” (Ingram 2009, 299). Moriscos were praised for their courage and their organization but they were still portrayed as the arch enemy of Christianity.

A certain obstinacy marks the work of Al-Ḥajarī as it reflects the desire to engage the other and come to terms with his own exile. Cervantes, on the other hand, fictionally reflected the concern with otherness and its potential for cultural transfer as appears from his engagement with the Moor as enemy and intimate other. That is why his discourse on the Moor is fraught. Yet, in both cases cultural transfer and brokerage did not occur in multi-cultural and tolerant circumstances. It occurred in very dangerous circumstances for both Cervantes and Al-Ḥajarī. Cervantes was a soldier who was physically joined with Philip II in war against the Ottomans in Lepanto. The experience of captivity may have changed his perspective on those he was out to fight against:

Yet Algerian captivity was also an extraordinary opportunity to get to know another culture, language and religion, and Cervantes took full advantage. A hallmark of his writing is his humanity, his ability to sympathise with and understand many points of view. This ability must be due partly to temperament, but the Algerian captivity also helped Cervantes enormously to learn to see the world through the eyes of others.” (David and Chesworth 2017, 164)

In Toledo, the Arabic Manuscript of *Don Quixote*'s fictional biography was translated and intellectual ownership transferred as well. Very much like the transfer of Muslim lands; in short, an intellectual Reconquista that went hand in hand with war engagement. The war over land was fought also in the terrain of culture. The modernity of *Don Quixote*, in part, comes out as a new attempt to write a counter- history of the Muslim and the Morisco experience and depends quite specifically not on their presence but on their absence or as Said (1994) showed in his discussion of the orientalist representation of Orientals quoting Marx “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.” Cervantes represents the dominant narrative of power because as a European writer his “narrative has a "structure of attitude and reference" that entitles the European authorial subject to hold on to an overseas territory, derive benefits from it, depend on it, but ultimately refuse it autonomy or independence” (193). The

Moor is dislodged into nothingness in a discourse that marked him as an absence. Mary Quinn (2013) argues that “Indeed, it is the purposeful exclusion of Muslims and Moriscos from Spain’s national project, and Cervantes’s attempt to criticize and realistically personify their plight, that contributes to a new kind of narrative writing” (27). Although M. Quinn (2013) is right about the absence of Muslim presence and self-representation, Cervantes was no modern-day human rights advocate. His representations of the Morisco reflect, “this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand” (Said 2003, 7). The frequent appearance of the Morisco in *Don Quixote* is telling. Al-Ḥajarī on the other hand, sought dialogue with Europeans: the very people who othered and banished him. It is curious to find the reflection of Al-Ḥajarī as a Morisco in the *Don Quixote* whose fictional translator is a Morisco. So, in a way the Morisco is the ultimate metaphor of cultural transfer as a median figure.

Cervantes’s five years of confinement in Algeria after his capture provide an autobiographical reflection on *Don Quixote*. María Antonia Garcés (2005) argued that “returning to Spain after fighting in the Battle of Lepanto and other Mediterranean campaigns against the Turks, soldier Miguel de Cervantes was captured by Barbary pirates and taken as a captive to Algiers. The five years he spent in the *baños* [prison houses] of Algiers (1575–80) left an indelible impression on his work” (1). The time Cervantes spent as a fighter and his career as a soldier in a major Hapsburg battle against the Ottomans in Lepanto brought him face to face with the other. That this soldier became a novelist is a perfect match between raw physical imperial violence and fiction writing. Violence seeps into the novel in copious references to mythic gory violence against the Moor: In *Don Quixote* violence is real and visceral and is expressed not as obnoxious but as matter of fact: “I remember to have read that a certain Spanish knight, called Diego Perez de Vargas, having broken his sword in fight, tore off a huge branch or limb from an oak, and performed such wonders with it that day, and dashed out the brains of so many Moors” (Cervantes 2008, 60). The violence against the Moor is part of Spanish history. The Moor is the arch-enemy:

'You are a very child, Sancho,' answered Don Quixote; 'for, take notice, God gave this great knight of the red cross to Spain for its patron and protector, especially in those rigorous conflicts the Spaniards have had with the Moors; and therefore they pray to, and invoke him as their defender in all the battles they fight; and they have frequently seen him, visibly overthrowing, trampling down,

destroying, and slaughtering, the Hagarene squadrons; and of this I could produce many examples recorded in the true Spanish histories'. (2008, 842)

This narrative of violence can be read against another narrative by Al-Ḥajarī who was a witness to the expulsion of the Moriscos and a bilingual native Andalusian/ Spaniard. The cultural complexity of his background is steeped in hybridity which would allow him later to engage the European other without judgement even though his framework is Islamic. This hybridity allows him to be an agent of cultural transfer, yet he can only exist as a shadow of his former self. He disguises himself for protection:

'You well know, O Sancho, my neighbour and friend, how the proclamation and edict, which his majesty commanded to be published against those of my nation, struck a dread and terror into us. all: at least into me it did, in such sort, that methought the rigour of the penalty was already executed upon me and my children, before the time limited for our departure from Spain. (Al-Ḥajarī 2015, 819)

The final banishment of the Morisco marks the end of both cultural transfer and hybridity as violence carries the day. The cross-cultural interaction was doomed from the beginning as the colonial discourse of Spain was unlike other colonialisms. It was based on the removal of the other as a national component and the new rules which were introduced to make it difficult for Muslims to be part of it. It was difficult to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims on a racial basis and therefore culture and religion became the marks of race and otherness of Muslims.

To conclude, the discursive hybridity of *Don Quixote* did mirror part of the real world and did acknowledge the Moor's eerie presence even as he was being expelled to make way for a non-hybrid real world of national identity that is Castilian where Islam and the Moor were to remain the constant other of 'Spanish' culture. However, the marginalization of the Morisco existed in a Mediterranean that was yet teeming with dissent and cultural hybridity. Al-Ḥajarī's book is an account that struggled with the facts of Spain's expulsion and torture of Andalusians and his polemic is full of a desire to win a symbolic victory for Islam that has already been banished from the Iberian Peninsula. The precariousness of Al-Ḥajarī's position vis a vis the Inquisition and his constant fear of its power contrasts with Cervantes voluminous production that did not

need to go underground. Hybridity does not necessarily mean that the power of the mainstream discourse vis a vis the other is undermined; it means that the centralized discourse of power has assimilated and domesticated the other and has taken the sting out of it. *Don Quixote* fictionalizes the Morisco as it erases him. Yet Al-Ḥajārī's narrative rescues the Morisco by giving voice to the suppressed Muslim culture through his cultural interaction and cross-cultural dialogue. Reading *Don Quixote* against the grain of Al-Ḥajārī's book shows the many trade-offs and hybridization that limited and at times enabled cross-cultural dialogue.

Endnote

¹ Blanks, David R., and Michael Frassetto (1994), as editors, provide a good analysis of Islam as a 'scourge of Christianity' and its use in intra Christian polemics, arguing that: "The Turks were often seen by the Protestants as God's scourge for papal pride, and some expressed a hope that the rival powers of Pope and Sultan would annihilate each other, leaving a power vacuum that might be filled by an expansion of the Protestant Reformation" (211).

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