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TOWARDS MODES OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION: REVISITING THE IBERIAN DIASPORAS' THROUGH LITERARY TEXTS

*Wherever we are we weep for Spain; for after all
we were born there and it is our natural fatherland.*

Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* II, 54.

Introduction

In his work on the modern system of meaning and its displacement of alterity, Michel de Certeau (1988) discusses how Freud elaborated upon a new approach towards history as a “return of repressed alterity”. This is a starting point for De Certeau’s reflection on the therapeutic role of history and memory.

Taking off from this theoretical standpoint of the restorative function of remembering and reinterpreting the past, the following pages will address the conversion and diaspora's histories of the *conversos* and *moriscos*¹ as a way of reconsidering and reenacting in the present a dynamics of emotion and forgiveness. In other words, I ask to consider the possibility of a present-day working-through of the memory of a past trauma—in this case that of the forced conversions and exiles of the *conversos* and *moriscos*— through the reading of literary texts. In my view, this could constitute a path towards the realization of a shared emotion, leading to a feeling of reconciliation and forgiveness within the complexity of current Israeli/Arab or Jewish/Muslim tensions.

¹ I use the concepts of *conversos* and *moriscos* in a generic and inclusive way for Iberian Jews and Muslims and their descendants that were forced to convert to Christianity during the XIV-XVI centuries. Many of them left Spain in the successive expulsions and kept Catholicism as their religion while others reconverted to Judaism or Islam.

I ask to reconsider the notion of diaspora, not only as one of geographical displacement, but also as a religious and cultural “border-crossing” through conversion, taking place inside those diasporic groups in early modern Europe. Indeed, as persons who had been exposed, often in their childhood or through the remnants of memory, to both religions and cultures, the *conversos* and *moriscos* were border-crossers and go-betweens. My perspective tends to redefine the *converso/morisco* experience as a diasporic one, searching for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon while attempting to project it onto contemporary contexts. I believe that the diasporic experiences of *conversos*, though differing from those of the *moriscos* with respect to historical circumstances, scope, and repercussions, presents a similar traumatic collective memory.

In this respect, I want to suggest that the analysis of the literary texts of that period —the corpus of the literature of the Iberian *conversos*— serves not only to enrich our understanding of their function as cultural border-crossers, mediators, and facilitators of cultural interchange, but also to identify voices of loss and melancholy that historical documentation cannot register. This can result in a recuperation and/or reconfiguration of emotion leading to forgiveness, concepts that I will address in the following pages. This will be pursued through the reading of the Captive’s episode in *Don Quixote*. This episode enables us to revisit past experiences of conversion/diaspora in order to attempt to understand their potential impact on collective and individual memory and identity.

One of the central aims of the article will thus be to address the question of how the memory of the Iberian Diaspora experience can affect the contemporary processes of conflictive diasporization, as a therapeutic process of ‘self-discovery.’ This process is facilitated by an

understanding of the Other in a manner that enacts the concepts of emotion, belonging and forgiveness. My claim is that this contemporary reading can allow the human groups in question to remember and reconsider the impact that it had for both their collective memories and present-day identities. Therefore, I ask to approach the *converso* and *morisco* experience in the Iberian Peninsula and in the Diaspora through a possible shared re-reading and present-day interpretation of literary works.

1.1 The *converso* and *morisco* experience

The *converso* and *morisco* diasporas offer us two of the most complex and interesting examples of the diaspora experience in Early Modern history. Both cases combine compulsory geographic exiles with the phenomena of conversion and re-conversion, diasporization and re-diasporization, as well as what can be regarded as internalized diasporic processes.

The advent of the *converso* phenomenon in Spain came in 1391, with the uprisings that took place throughout the Iberian Peninsula against the Jewish *aljamas*. Between this series of events and the Disputation of Tortosa, in 1413, it is likely that some one hundred thousand Jews (at least a third of the Jewish community) were baptized under force. In these circumstances, the term *converso* is misleading, as the majority of baptized Jews did not sincerely embrace the new religion. Moreover, it is apparent that their Old-Christian coercers never really considered the neophytes to be equal co-religionists. The converts were still regarded as aliens and would continue to carry ineradicable ethno-cultural stigmas. Old-Christian triumph was not based on the assimilation of a group of Jews but on their subjection to its power.

It can be claimed that the *conversos* were never meant to be equal Christians. First of all, in the period after the mass conversions, no attempt was made to instruct them in the precepts of Christian belief. Secondly, their children and grandchildren were also regarded as *conversos*, signifying the evolution of the word from being synonymous with the non-transmittable personal condition of neophyte or apprentice, to being a pejorative hereditary epithet meaning outsider, subversive, or Other. Thirdly, to reinforce the *conversos*' alien status, Spanish society introduced the blood purity statutes, prohibiting the *conversos*' access to universities, church and town councils, guilds, and military orders, on the grounds that they were of Jewish provenance. Evidently these laws were passed to remind the *conversos* of their permanent Jewish taint. Many questions still remain unresolved or under scholarly dispute: How did they adjust to their unique situation? What was the nature of their religiosity? And how were all of these issues re-signified in their various diasporas? Was their diasporic collective identity generated after they left the peninsula (Ray 2008)?

With the establishment of a relatively tolerant Dutch Republic in 1581, many *converso* merchants, who had until then made their homes in the southern Netherlands (Antwerp in particular) converged on the city of Amsterdam. A number of these men and their families took the opportunity to reconvert to Judaism. However, this conversion process could be a traumatic affair, as *conversos*, accustomed to a private religious existence, were now required to adjust to the demands of normative orthodox Judaism. How did this array of religious beliefs enable the Iberian *conversos* to make multiple religious border crossings? What effects did it have on religious thought? And finally and very important, why did they kept the Spanish, the language of the homeland from which they were expelled as their beloved and literary language?

Moreover, why the Spanish Jewry expelled from Spain kept the language (ladino) and even “the key” to their houses hoping for a return?

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

I believe that a re-examination of the notion of Diaspora will yield important information on the similarities of the collective trauma of the conversion within and as a diasporic process for both groups.

1.2 Reconsidering the concept of diaspora

As already mentioned, the conceptual standpoint of this paper considers the *converso* and *morisco* experience and condition as an essentially diasporic one. An observation of the diasporic phenomena of the two

groups of Iberian converts during the late fifteenth up to the beginning of the eighteenth century facilitates a revisitation of the notion of diaspora.²

Following reflections on previous analyses of diasporic studies, such as Safran (1991), Clifford (1994: 304), Cohen (1997: 22-27), Reis (2004) summarizes the basic characteristics that became the pillar tenets used to assess whether an ethnic group is in fact diasporic. The basic characteristics collected by Reis are:

1. Dispersal from an original “center” to two or more foreign regions;
2. Retention of a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland including its location, history, and achievements;
3. The belief that they are not – and perhaps never can be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;
4. The idealization of the putative ancestral home and the thought of returning when conditions are more favorable;
5. The belief that all members should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, and the belief in a common fate (Reis 2004: 43).

Needless to say, all the above mentioned authors claim that very few diasporas ascribe to all of the abovementioned characteristics, which did not intend to offer as a definite taxonomy, but only as a comprehensive paradigm, knowing that not all of its features could be applied to all groups and to all times. I would claim that the *morisco* and *converso* experience responds at least in certain times and for significant portions of those groups, to most of the above characteristics.

²As known, the term “diaspora” has its origins in Greek history and civilization. Cohen (1997: 2) defines the word diaspora in relation to the Greeks in the following manner: “for the Greeks, the expression was used to describe the colonization of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the Archaic period (800-600 BC)”. The word diaspora derives from the Greek verb *diasperein*, meaning “scatter about”, and the Greek preposition *dia*, meaning “through” or “over”.

My own reading is that even for Jewish history all along its succession of diasporic communities, the ancient Jewish Diaspora as a reference for the archetypal diaspora has ceased to be univocal in its relevance, and the case of the Iberian expulsion, conversions and reconversions of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries constitutes an important example of a new understanding of diasporization processes. The entrance to Modernity offers a much wider variety of diasporic communities, with far more complex causes than the ones of the Jewish Ancient Diaspora, particularly in relation to conversion.

Indeed, we should be able to recognize the foundation role of Ancient Jewish history on the conceptualization of diaspora without narrowing our perception towards it as a definitive model, even for Jewish history itself. In this respect, I would prefer to complement and broaden the concept, especially for our case study to the more inclusive notion of “communities of memory” which can relate to a diversification of processes such as religious conversion and reconversion, while also incorporating and developing the dynamics of emotionality.

1.3 On ethics, emotion and forgiveness

Levinas suggested that ethics constitute a first philosophy, meaning that idealist metaphysics, phenomenology, and ontology reduce the Other to the category of the self, to the appropriation of the Other, depriving him of his alterity. Levinas will claim that the ethics should not be a theoretical and abstract reflection, but a response and responsibility towards the Other (Levinas 1991).

One of the central concepts in Levinas’s ethics is that of the face (and the skin), which expresses the unmediated encounter with the Other. The face and the skin are emblematic figures representing difference, plurality, otherness. Levinas (1994, 1999) claims that the face of the

Other is the mark, the trace of the supreme Other, God, whose commandment is “thou shalt not kill”: this invocation is inscribed in the face of the Other, and it is not a metaphor, but a concreteness. It is through this encounter that a revelation (epiphany) can occur leading to forgiveness.

Distancing himself from Buber’s concept of reciprocity, Levinas maintains that we are dealing neither with a symmetric relationship nor with “generosity,” but with a recognition of the Other, who has primacy and precedence, meaning that I am responsible for him, and this responsibility is infinite and unconditional. This is the primordial human “command.” It is the response and not the question that has priority in this relationship. I ask to frame the concepts of emotion and hospitality within the principles of Levinas’s ethics. Alfonso de Toro claims regarding these concepts:

In the construction of identity, “emotion” is a central aspect and concept to which I assign not only a psychological and affective status, but also a *cognitive status as a knowledge structure*. In this context, we implement, supplement, and expand the term “integration” in the sense of a “reciprocal, dynamic integration” based on the fundamental notions of “recognition,” “hospitality,” and “belonging” in a space of “shared responsibility.” (2014: 13).

The concepts of “emotion” and “forgiveness” are hence understood as the experience of “hospitality” and “belonging,” which build themselves through the Levinasian gaze at the face of the Other. Emotion is constitutive for the willingness to accept and recognize, based on positive or negative experiences, a shared traumatic past that can be resignified in the present.

The feeling of belonging within a new society is indeed closely connected to that of emotion. Relating to the diasporic cases of the early modern Iberian context, I believe that the reconsideration in the present of

a shared diasporic past can be fundamental not only for the understanding of this common past and for envisioning new ideas and conceptions of integration and citizenship, but also for evoking affective and subjective aspects of hospitality and belonging in the present. “Emotion” thus delineates a fundamental moment in culture and society for the recognition of the Other. Similar lives and emotional situations (as the Iberian expulsion and conversions for both *conversos* and *moriscos*) determined a collective common trauma. This process should be understood as a collective experience with a fragmented belonging and identity that is collected through the *emotionality* of the recovered past. The recovery of past emotion can create a renewed or new emotionality, as well as a community of memory and of emotion, which can derive in a new sense of reciprocal forgiveness.

In Judaism, forgiveness it is a *mitzvah*, a divine command. The Torah explicitly forbids us to take revenge or to bear grudges (Leviticus 19:18). It also commands us, “Do not hate your brother in your heart” (ibid. 19:17). True strength is expressed by overcoming the instinct of revenge and being able to forgive. But, how does one acquire the ability to forgive? Once we are aware that everything that happens in the world in general is by divine providence and hence for my benefit, I have no reason to get angry with anybody. I should ask myself: Is it in order to test me? Is it in order to refine me?? Is it an opportunity to accomplish something unexpected? One does not decide what happens to him; one decides what he wants to do with what happens to him. Man is responsible for his actions. God does not forgive a wrongdoing that was done against another until that person forgives him first. Only after one has corrected the damage and has been forgiven by the one who suffered, does God forgive the violation of His command.

I would like to put forward the possibility of enacting the recovery of shared emotion of the past as a way of bolstering responsibility and forgiveness towards the Other, through the consideration of the notion of communities of memory as a framework for the reading of Cervantes' text.

1.4 Communities of memory

The correlation between memory, identity, and survival is a focus of reflection and discussion among scholars who debate the possibility of a collective memory that can constitute a central element in the formation of identity (Connerton 2008, Yerushalmi 1989, Halbwachs 1980, Olick 1991, Irwin-Zarecka 1994). For Irwin-Zarecka and Kohut (2003), for instance, the existence of the memory of a trauma is vital for the survival of collective identity as it creates the continuity between the pre-traumatic and post-traumatic identity. This explains, in their view, why the endurance of the memory is often so strong.

Relying on Freud's theory, Irwin-Zarecka (1994) analyzes the notion of collective memory, connecting it to the concept of trauma. For this author, trauma defines the boundaries of certain communities and can even shape collective identity, a trauma which over time remains only as a memory but still defines the lives and actions of the people who survived it. According to Irwin-Zarecka, this process creates communities of memory, or, communities bonded by traumatic experiences, wherein these shared memories become shared points of reference. The critic stresses that one of the surprising features in these communities is the endurance of the memory of the trauma, outliving the trauma itself for many generations, as if it was an entity in its own right, creating and shaping identities.

Irwin-Zarecka studies the relationship between collective memory

and collective identity, advancing the notion of “communities of memory” for which the traumatic experience is foundational: the past is mediated by its re-signification in the present (1994: 69). The case of the *conversos* and *moriscos* could be paradigmatic: on the one hand being denied the right to memory, while on the other hand experiencing an anxiety for this memory, due to the impossibility of return. From Irwin-Zarecka’s point of view, this is a social and not an individual experience. In this respect, we can claim that this community of memory is neither natural nor historical, but a construction that unites the individuals through their reinterpretation of historical grievances (1994: 71) and I would add, the forgiveness of those grievances.

Why is the past so important for them? Frequently, this is due to what is perceived as a lack of justice or compensation. For the construction of a new “home”, the necessity of a voice and of places of memory becomes acute, and can be provided by systems of representation, especially by literary texts, which render the re-building and re-signification of memory possible. In this respect, the *converso* and *morisco* can be understood as recovery / construction / erasure of collective memory.

How does the literal reading and interpretation of the past in our present space become historically relevant? I believe that the study of the literature of converts must address these questions in its analysis and interpretation of a corpus that, due to its specificity, finds ways of re-signification of trauma and historical memory in our present.

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (1989) begins his influential book *Zachor*, devoted to the enactment and value of memory in Judaism, with the following statement:

Yet the Hebrew Bible seems to have no hesitations in commanding memory. Its injunctions to remember are unconditional, and even when not commanded, remembrance is always pivotal. Altogether the verb *zakhar* appears in its various declensions in the Bible no less than one hundred and sixty-nine times, usually with either Israel or God as the subject, for memory is incumbent upon both. The verb is complemented by its obverse—forgetting. As Israel is enjoined to remember, so it is adjured not to forget. Both imperatives have resounded with enduring effect among the Jews since biblical times. Indeed, in trying to understand the survival of a people that has spent most of its life in global dispersion, I would submit that the history of its memory, largely neglected and yet to be written, may prove of some consequence (1989: 2).

Indeed, the centrality of the term “remembering” is unquestionable in Jewish culture and historical self-perception. For centuries until early modernity, the injunction was necessary in order to develop a special kind of Jewish historiography: the exercise of historical memory through reading the Bible, commentary, and liturgical ritual, were sufficient to fulfill the obligation to remember within Judaism.

In his study, Yerushalmi differentiates between historiography and collective memory. The latter is a-historical and selective, a socially constructed reality: a winding metaphor but a functional necessity that is forged from myths, memorial sites, and especially, literature (Fine 2012). In his essay, Yerushalmi describes the gradual passage in Judaism from the dominant collective memory to historiography, at the dawn of modernity. Significantly, the latter emerges in the sixteenth century due to authors of primarily Iberian origin, who, or whose ancestors, had gone through the process of expulsion and/or conversion: Solomon Ibn Verga, Yosef Ha-Kohen, Samuel Usque, Menasseh ben Israel, Isaac Cardoso, among others, all authors that focus and redefine Spanish-Hebrew history

from an historiographical morphology unknown until then to Judaism. Yerushalmi notes:

The resurgence of Jewish historical writing in the sixteenth century was without parallel earlier in the Middle Ages.

Within the span of a hundred years no less than ten major historical works were produced by Jews [...] Only in the sixteenth century do we encounter within Jewry a cultural phenomenon that can be recognized with little hesitation as genuinely historiographical. Though each of the ten I have mentioned is quite distinct from the other, they also form a cultural and historical continuum. Of their eight authors, five were either exiles from Spain and Portugal or descendants of exiles. (1989: 57-58)

These works were written during the sixteenth and seventeenth and until the early eighteenth century—in Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, and Portuguese. Some of the authors were incorporated into Judaism after living as Christians for generations. Yerushalmi argues that the Sephardic origin had a crucial influence on the writings of these authors. In his view, the crisis caused by the expulsion and mass conversions in the Iberian Peninsula—which he characterizes as a “great catastrophe” (71)—was the primary trigger for the flourishing of Jewish historiography, an argument that in certain cases those same historians posed. He points out:

Nothing [...] had engendered a comparable literature. In addition to the actual historical works, almost all branches of sixteenth-century Jewish literature contain direct or indirect references to the Spanish Expulsion of 1492, to the forced mass conversion of Portuguese Jewry [...] and to the sufferings of the refugees on the land and sea. (1989: 59)

This nascent historiography, as well as the texts dealing with the events of the “Iberian saga,” would then be one of the modes of response to the trauma of displacement and conversion.³

Indeed, both the Jewish *converso* communities (as also the *morisco* communities) outside of the Peninsula are communities of memory—adopting the category proposed by Irwin-Zarecka, whose common ground was a deeply traumatic experience, marked by the inherent ambivalence of the trauma. These “new Jews”⁴ interpreted and eventually rewrote the convert Iberian journey in a particular way, and their texts permeated what was one of the deepest crises in the collective memory of Jewish history. I believe that this corpus can be considered a post-traumatic literature, one that records a particular behavior in relation to the memory impulse and its reprocessing in historiographical and fiction writing.

I will focus here on some significant and specific moments of the episode of the Captive in *Don Quixote* in order to observe the treatment afforded to two central semantic fields: forced conversion and the consequent silenced trauma, isotopies between which, as we shall see, a dialogue is established.

2. Revisiting the “Captive’s tale”

“Los hijos, señor, son pedazos de las entrañas de sus padres...”
“Children, sir, are part and parcel of the very bowels of their parents, and so we must love them, whether they are good or bad, as we love the souls that give us life. It is the parent’s duty to guide them from childhood

³I develop the notion of literature of converts as a post- traumatic literature in several works devoted to the posterior corpus to 1492, inside and outside the Peninsula . See Fine 2012, 2013 and 2014.

⁴ An expression introduced by Yosef Kaplan (1996) to designate the Iberian Jews that returned to Judaism in the XVII century in North Europe.

along the path of virtue, of good upbringing, and of good and Christian manners, so that when they grow up, they can be a comfort to the old age of their parents and a glory to their descendants.” (Cervantes II, 16: 568) These are the words that Don Quixote addresses to the Gentleman in Green (el Caballero del Verde Gabán), in chapter 16 of the second part of the book, after the Caballero harshly expresses his disappointment regarding his own son. It is ironic, indeed, that it is precisely the crazy knight, the one who has no family and no children of his own, who shows such wisdom and sensitivity regarding parenthood.

However, upon closer examination of Cervantes’ masterpiece, we easily recognize that parenthood is a central and recurrent issue in the book, as well as in the consciousness of its various narrators, including that of the main protagonists, Don Quixote and Sancho.

Indeed, from its very opening—its famously unconventional prologue—the book declares that it is the product of a parent-child relationship, albeit a conflictive one: “Idle reader, you can believe without any oath of mine that I would wish this book, *as the child of my brain*, to be the most beautiful, the liveliest and the cleverest imaginable. But I have been unable to transgress the order of nature, by which like *gives birth* to like [...] It may happen that a father has an ugly and ill-favored child, and that his love for it so blinds his eyes that he cannot see its faults.” (Cervantes I: 25; emphasis my own). The metaphors of birth and parenthood accumulate one after the other in this prologue, and they will reproduce themselves in different contexts throughout the novel, intermingling with the critical question of authorship and origin. Significantly enough, the closure of the book will return to the semantic field of parenthood, sealing the novel with the voice of its one and only parent/child, the pen, hence revealing the unique “parent/daughter” bond in its self-reflective and crucial statement of parenthood: “For me alone

Don Quixote was born and I for him.” (Cervantes II, 74: 94). Let us not forget that the Spanish word used by Cervantes for pen or feather is significantly a feminine one, *péñola*, and hence the daughter association.

The semantic field of parenthood manifests itself not only through metaphoric paths or to signify and question authorship, but also in the diegetic level, in the numerous stories populating the novel that deal specifically with daughters abandoning their homes and parents—Dorotea, Lucinda, the daughter of Don Diego de la Llama, and many others—seeking their destiny, in order to fulfill their will and love, only to eventually return to the social order. Notably enough, though, the daughters who desert their fathers forever, with no way back, mostly belong to the social group of the despised and expelled, the ultimate Other—the Muslims or Christianized moors, the *moriscos*. To their perpetually abandoned fathers, Ricote and Hajji Murad (Agi Morato), Cervantes bestows a unique voice in the context of the Spanish Golden Age and its literature, permeating through their voices a collective trauma that has an individual, personalized textual expression—that of broken parenthood—as an individual trauma, and that through textual repetition, calls for a reading that can arouse a consciousness and understanding of the collective trauma in the social context of the period.

In the framework of the second of these *morisco* fathers’ stories—the so-called “Captive’s tale” from the first book of *Don Quixote*—I would like to focus on the episode of the Moress Zoraida and her father, in order to reconsider the notion of collective trauma as manifested in this lengthy and indeed autobiographical episode of the novel. I believe that this will allow us not only to reevaluate the Freudian notion of trauma in the literary space as a formative experience, as much for the reader as for the characters themselves, but also reconsider the Iberian collective trauma of *moriscos* and *conversos*.

If the traumatic experience, as Freud indicated, is not fully experienced as it occurs, the literary texts are able to transform us into witnesses of the traumatic event, explicitly conceived as an ethically charged “new mode of reading.” Indeed, when Caruth refers to this language of trauma, she points out the power of the literary text to transmit trauma beyond mere repetition compulsion and performatively transforming it “into the imperative of a speaking that awakens others.” (1996: 108).

In my view, it is the representation of the traumatic event itself, the textually inscribed broken familial bond, which can constitute the formative experience from which radiates the repetition of the collective mnemonic footprint—manifested textually through a variety of symbolic processes that can be detected in subtexts, traces, euphemisms, and intermittent occurrences, all of which are evident in a close reading of the Captive’s tale. Let us approach the text briefly⁵:

Two fathers frame the story of the captive in *Don Quixote*. The first is Christian, noble, and prodigal; he is the symbol of Spanish Christendom and State power: the father of Ruy Pérez de Viedma, the Christian captive, the ostensible hero of the story, and also the father of his two brothers. The second is very different: Zoraida’s father. He is the prototype of a rich Moor merchant living in sixteenth-century Algiers, where Captain Ruiz Pérez de Viedma and his fellow Spanish comrades have been taken into captivity. He is the Other, etched with the mark of the archetypal feminine, not only because he gave birth to a single progeny—a girl—but because he has the attributes of the weak, the silenced, the feminine.

⁵ For a comprehensive analysis of this episode see Fine (2013).

At the beginning of the episode we are told that Hajji Murad possesses a garden and a well-guarded fruit: his daughter Zoraida. Hajji Murad is generous with the fruits of his garden. When Zoraida makes her majestic appearance in her father's garden, the captive captain's description of her beauty focuses overtly on her jewelry and their value. Zoraida herself even says—in a recurrent ironic twist—that all Christians are liars and cheaters. The scene that unfolds later, in which the father of Zoraida serves as the couple's hoodwinked translator, unaware of the codified messages they transmit back and forth, situates the view from the perspective of the father, who adores his daughter and praises her incomparable beauty.

Hajji Murad is always in his garden. This is also the case on the night of the escape, planned by the captive and facilitated by Zoraida, the traitor-daughter who wants to embrace Catholicism and escape with the Christians.

By now captive and aboard the ship of his disgrace, the father bears stunned witness to the scene that unfolds before his eyes, “not knowing how very willingly she had put herself in our hands.” (I, 41: 371). Zoraida asks to liberate her father, under the threat of throwing herself to the sea before seeing her father, who loved her so much, taken in captivity because of her. But she is easily (perhaps too easily) convinced of the risk that this action could mean for the fugitive Christians.

On the other hand, the daughter, who cheated and stole from her father, abandoning him once and for all, is not only not held responsible but, in an inversion of the legendary Cava, becomes, metonymically, the very symbol of Christian salvation. However, the real hero of this story is Hajji Murad—Zoraida's abandoned father. This character, whose historical referent, perhaps not coincidentally, is that of the apostate—and

of Christianity—is undoubtedly, intentionally or not, the central figure of the story of the flight from Algiers, as told by Ruy Pérez de Viedma.

Indeed, Hajji Murad—not his daughter, and certainly not Ruy Pérez de Viedma—is the hero of this episode. His is the word and his is the act; his is also forgiveness, which is sorely lacking in his surroundings. His first action is a choice: that of death—reminiscent, perhaps, of the choice of many of those who preferred to put an end to their lives rather than abandon the religion of their ancestors: “No sooner did the Moor hear this than he threw himself with incredible agility head foremost into the sea, and no doubt would have drowned if the long and cumbrous clothes he wore had not kept him just above water [...] we pulled him out by his cape, half-drowned and unconscious. And so distressed was Zoraida that she burst into a tender and sorrowful lament over him, as if he were really dead.” (I, 41: 374).

The renegade explains the sad truth to Hajji Murad:

“Let me tell you that she is a Christian; it is she who has been the file for our chains and the key to our captivity. She is with us of her own free will” [...].

“That, in fact, you are a Christian,” asked the old man, “and it is you who has put your father into his enemies’ power?” To which Zoraida replied: “I am a Christian, but it is not I that brought you to this pass, for it was never my wish to leave you or do you any harm. I only wished to do myself a benefit.”

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

Again, defying the stereotype, Zoraida’s father is not motivated by money; moreover, in his final, painful speech, the text emphatically emphasizes this divergence from the model of congenital greed attributed to those socio-religious groups: “If you would name the sum, I offer you here and now as much as you want for myself and for this unhappy

daughter; or failing that, who is the greater and better part of my soul” (I, 41: 372-373); “Give those men the money, for it is theirs.” (I, 41: 375). He is ready to forgive at any price.

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

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

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

“Maldita sea la hora en la que yo te engendré.” “Accursed be the hour in which I engendered you” (I, 41: 485) This is the anguished cry of Hajji Murad upon discovering that his beloved daughter has betrayed not only him but the faith in which he raised her. The pathos of this scene has not gone unnoticed by scholars. To be sure, this episode conveys a pathos that, if not daring, is at least out of the ordinary. Significantly, we must note that throughout the sequence, after being captured and silenced with a handkerchief in his mouth, the character is never identified by his name, but always as the father of Zoraida. As if the text is emphasizing the weight of familial affiliation, of duty, but also of affection and forgiveness. Paternal love, recurrent throughout the novel, is the only unquestionable one in this episode. Hajji Murad does not try to kill Zoraida but rather attempts to take his own life; and, in his curse, he blames himself and not her.

The narration grants the voice and, at times, the focalization of the scene to the tormented father. This is indeed unusual for a Golden-Age text that valorizes the martyrdom and heroism of captivity. We are aware that the granting of a voice and point-of-view to a character is an explicit acknowledgment of the legitimacy of his word and his gaze. Likewise, the voice and focus in the narrative text is an unequivocal invitation for the receiver to penetrate the character's interiority and to identify, sympathize, and even empathize with him, the quintessential Other, the enemy. This is the voice of Hajji Murad, possessed by tears, humiliation, weakness that will lead him to a suicide attempt, and, finally and despite it all, forgiveness. Finally, the story denies him, the enemy, the possibility of ever seeing his daughter again, while perpetuating a symbolic trauma in the novel that will be repeated in the recurrent echoing and traces of parenthood.

Moreover, the episode of Hajji Murad leads us to rethink the *converso* and *morisco* phenomena and literature from a different place: it proposes the decodification of symbolic and cultural memory, of the world of confusion in which complex and conflicting identity paradigms are presented. A literature that can be an ethic, because it readmits the Other in the process of the consciousness of the trauma's impact.

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

This Other is the abandoned Father. Hajji Murad's voice conveys the echo of the voices silenced during the course of those centuries of homogenizing and monolithic ambitions in Spain. These are the silenced voices of families divided by the conversion of one or more of their

members, by the abandonment of the ancestral tradition, of the faith, of home, of history. They are the voices of an abandoned memory, stripped of the right to be a memory. They are the voices of familial, social, and human fracture. These are disenfranchised voices in Trentian Catholic Spain. Voices without testimony and without memory, rescued by Cervantes in Hajji Murad's cry: "Come back, beloved daughter—come back to land! **I forgive you of everything!** Give those men the money, for it is theirs; and come and comfort this wretched father of yours, who will lose his life in the sands of this desert if you forsake him." (I, 41: 375)

Reading the episode through the prism of the *converso* and *morisco* phenomena obliges us to acknowledge the diverse human strategies for confronting individual and collective trauma. Cervantes places us in the center of the *intrinsic* perspective of the convert, one rarely assumed in Spanish historiography: the guilt, the resignation, and the fear. To conceive of conversion is to reflect upon its problematic nature but even more upon the pain of the trauma of a collective.

Mass conversions, conversions of convenience, conversion as an alternative to expulsion, and expulsion itself, are clear phenomena of collective trauma, though seldom treated as such by the literature on the subject. It is a singular process of collective transformation, in which the group is confronted with a complex series of dilemmas at all levels.

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

within the Other: Hajji Murad, the abandoned father/mother—abandoned and, in turn, immortalized. And Cervantes, as we know, likes to give voice and forgiveness to the silenced, while reconstructing forgotten gardens and lost paradises on other banks.

3. Conclusions

Hirschfeld (2012) elaborates on the closing chapter of the work, *The Fiction of History: Moses and Monotheism*, in which Michel de Certeau brings to light what can be regarded as a theory of history. De Certeau explains that by killing and displacing the first Moses, Freud creates a lacuna; the memories are not eliminated, and they will remain forever present as a truth whose meaning has been silenced and which therefore remains forever to be expressed (1988: 326-327). The question is posed in terms of an historical foundation, a repressed past. Identity comprises the One (the actual) and the other (the repressed). Such is the principle of history. Nevertheless, it is always open to a present working-through in which it can be re-read and re-signified. (1988: 314).

Geoffrey Hartman (1995), in his study of trauma and literature, notes that literary texts enable us to recover memory and read the traumatic wound, not as a mode of recuperating the experience, but of understanding it, hence generating symbolic processes of reinterpretation of the past. Therein lays their ethical action: the literary text helps us to hear voices that speak from their imposed silence, allowing us to recognize and interpret the marks of their wound.

I would claim that the present of Jews and Muslims can be read from the shared collective memory as represented in many literary texts of the period, enabling to recover that diasporic past of loss, guilt, and permanent liminality. In that respect, Graizbord has rightly affirmed that “The central predicament of early modern Judeoconvertos, both inside

and outside the Iberian Peninsula, lay in the fact that they inhabited a cultural threshold. This threshold was at once a boundary and a crossroads between the Christian and Jewish worlds” (2004: 2). This undoubtedly inherent liminality was shared both by *conversos* and *moriscos* and constituted, in my view, one of the primary representations emerging from the texts dealing directly or indirectly with their history and trauma. Yerushalmi (1971) emphasizes that this liminality, and even ambivalence, were not necessarily negative, but rather that it posits the possibility and redefinition of a new collective identity, albeit one that forever carries a significant measure of melancholy, as represented in the Captive’s tale.

Regarding the melancholy inherent in the conversion, Derrida, commenting on the photograph entitled “The last Marranos” (in Brenner, 2003), will confront us with this question: “The melancholy of man is visible. Is it readable?”⁶ My reflections have tried to respond affirmatively: melancholy is indeed readable. Furthermore, that reading is capable of offering understanding (emotion), historical repair, and perhaps even present reconciliation.

Hajji Murad shouts and cries. And Zoraida keeps silent. This silence is not one of joy, but of melancholy. Cervantes invites us to read this melancholy as a silent/silenced traumatized memory that belongs equally to two people, who perhaps might be able to recover and rebuilt its emotion from a shared painful actuality.

⁶ My translation.



“The last marranos” (Brenner, 2003)

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