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# The History That Is Criss-crossing Back and Forth: The Dialectic of the Same and the Other in Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quijote*

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For a literary historian, it is not surprising that a new genre should be inaugurated in such a socially heterogeneous and politically complex period as the Counter-Reformation in Spain. The societal climate of the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century Spain, however, engendered a particular genre whose intrinsically dialogic nature provided the most adequate formal representation for the material history of the period: the novel. Characteristically for an inchoate generic articulation, Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quijote* brings to the fore the genre's own dynamic, and importantly highlights its status vis-à-vis the "real life." This article interprets the literary articulation of the intense dialectic of the cultural Same and the Other in *Don Quijote* as a refractive way of dealing with history. Through an exploration of the heteroglotic intertwining of the discourses of the Same (Spanish, Christian editor) and the Other (Moorish historian), this essay will present the novel as importantly modulated by the cultural and historical inflections. In turn, it will argue for the formative role of the dynamic of the Same and the Other in the development of the genre of the novel itself.<sup>1</sup>

## MONOLOGICAL HISTORY AND ITS NARRATIVE CORRECTIVES

By the time when the shepherd-boy in a bordering land saw unknown people in Moorish apparel coming towards him and screamed "Moors, the Moors have landed! Moors, Moors! To arms, to arms!" (*DQ* 281; bk. 2), the external "threat" to Spain—its Oriental/Orientalized Other—had long since made its way through the nation's gates; in fact, it had become an intrinsic part of what the Spanish kept

inside.<sup>2</sup> During roughly eight centuries of living together, the population had mixed, and an unprecedented multitude of races and beliefs had inhabited the area. Despite great diversity and much intercourse (even in official form of intermarriages, joint trades and so forth), the anti-Semitic and anti-Arabic sentiments had gradually intensified since the beginning of the thirteenth century. The racial intolerance reached its peak in the sixteenth century, consequential upon the endeavors to construct a Spanish sense of self, a political entity which would be religiously and nationally opposed to anything “exterior” (other national entities, Reformation, Islam, the rise of the mercantile class, etc.). Thus Spain tried to corroborate its own national identity through the solidification of a negative notion of racial, ethnic, and religious “otherness.” The cluster of ambivalent feelings characteristic for the negotiation of the “otherness” in the process of consolidation of the “sameness” got attached in particular to the image of the *morisco*, against which the “purely Spanish” purported to define itself.<sup>3</sup> As the sense of identity is not susceptible to direct representation, it generally has to be derived by an act of literary, artistic, or cultural distancing, and the consolidation of the Spanish identity was no exception. The ambivalent attitude towards *moriscos* was reflected most interestingly in the arts and literature of the period: the *morisco*-Other would be subject to either vilification or idealization in Christian terms.

In the light of this historical and literary overview, it might seem counter-intuitive that an internally dialogized narrative system such as the modern novel could come into being precisely at the time and space marked by forceful monologization. Yet, it is everything but coincidental (or solely a premature stroke of genius) that a generic mixture of heightened narrative and cultural bending—Cervantes’s *Don Quijote*—stands at the beginning of the history of the modern novel. The social conditions of the late XVI century Spain were in fact particularly favorable for the rise of the novel. In his discussion on the novel and heteroglossia, Mikhail Bakhtin claims that the emergence of the modern novel is accompanied by an undermining of the picture of national stability through two linguistic crises. Intralinguistically, the peaceful coexistence of the discourses within the predominant discourse has ended: “territorial dialects, social and professional dialects and jargons, literary language, generic languages within literary languages” dissipate the “official” language itself (Bakhtin 12). In *Don Quijote*, Bakhtin continues, this state is emblemized through the

encounter of the “respectable discourse” of romances and the vulgar language. Externally, on the other hand, “[. . .] the period of national languages, coexisting but closed and deaf to each other, comes to an end,” Bakhtin observes. Now these disparate languages “throw light on each other”; for, “one language can, after all, see itself only in the light of another language” (Bakhtin 12).

This intra- and extraheteroglossia is easily noticeable in the societal dynamics of the Counter-Reformation Spain. In spite of ostensible success in its repressive efforts to corroborate the national identity, the actual failure of the Counter-Reformation politics was manifested in the inflections of the inner lever of national consciousness—the language itself. Neither the Inquisition nor oppressive politics could annihilate the cultural impact of the centuries-long entwining of races, languages, and beliefs in the area. The amalgam of the existent languages, dialects, and the “new” discourses of emerging trades, permanently questioned the assumption of a linguistic unity onto which the Spanish might lay a cultural foundation. *Don Quijote* provides us with an apt artistic elaboration of both, heteroglossia in language and overall polyglossia of the period. The first modern novel presents itself as a crucible of discourses, skillfully orchestrated to give the picture of a vibrant time-and-space. In the interpenetration of discourses, Cervantes goes far: he conjoins languages in a new linguistic admixture, the process in which the translation becomes the novel itself. On the level of “voicing,” Cervantes inaugurates a specifically polyphonic politics of writing. This tactic, I would argue, discloses the imminent politico-historical intentions of the novel: it furnishes the reader with the picture of Spain imbued with “otherness.” The proliferation of difference on the pages of *Don Quijote* (the Moor, the Gypsy, the Jew, the woman, Don Quijote himself, and so forth) powerfully puts into question Spain’s horrifying, absurd and, eventually, unsuccessful attempt to dispel the Other. This culturally installed polyphony may be viewed as a profound problematization of our historical and epistemological insolence. Two concrete historical “voices” permeate *Don Quijote*; unsurprisingly, those are the “voices” that capture the politico-historical dynamics of the Counter-Reformation in Spain best—the discourse of the Moorish “Other” and that of the Christian “Same.” The two discourses to merge are not chosen by chance. The “deorientalizing” edict which Philip II issued in 1567 prohibited Islamic apparel, the public exercise of Islamic religious practices and

customs, and—most relevant to Cervantes’s narrative strategy in *Don Quijote*—the utilization of spoken or written Arabic. The novel’s heightened linguistic consciousness is thus revealed as bound to the particular historical vicissitudes.

Heteroglossia and polyphony alone seem not to be enough to account for the radical nature of the new genre. The heteroglotic discourse rendering the comparable world has to be accompanied with a subjective reflexivity which both Georg Lukács and Mikhail Bakhtin find intrinsic to the novel as a genre.<sup>4</sup> This internal reflexivity, which, I would argue, need not necessarily be equalized with intentionality (as self-reflexive employment of a device), always presupposes at least two planes, or two constituents, two “voices” (stances), which then engage in a dialectic movement back and forth. Thus the historical need to accommodate different voices gets transposed onto a dialogic narrative structure in *Don Quijote*. This “dialogicity” gets reflected/refracted on several levels of the novel. One may easily find it transcribed as the dialogue between a well-established (and soon-to-be-obsolete) form, and a nascent form (romance and the novel). The “new poetry,” which Cervantes practices further, may be seen as a dialogical oscillation between the realistic novel and the novel of fantasy, as José Ortega y Gasset acknowledges (282). The self-reflective moments such as Don Quijote and Sancho Panza’s famous discussion about the rendition of their own adventures certainly instantiates the same dynamic between the first and the second part of the novel (and also that between the two different “renditions” of the story). Yet, the novel itself is dialogically structured around the intertwining of the aforementioned “cultural” voices—that of the Moor and the Christian—now inflected polyglotically and polyphonically. The dialectical movement between the two positions situates Cervantes’s novel in the text and the world of Renaissance Spain. In addition, this reflection/refraction points to a more general dynamic of the rise of the novel: it may be argued that the societal dynamic that accentuates the interrelation of the cultural Same and the Other is naturally productive of the novel as a dialogic genre.

#### THE INTERRELATION AS INTERNARRATION

The empirical reflection of material history, the novel’s “external” reflexivity, gets formalized (indeed heteroglossized) in the two entities narrating the story. The interplay between the Moorish author and

the Christian editor may be viewed, in a Bakhtinian sense, as aimed to dissipate the nation's coherent, hermetic language, and consequently, to disintegrate the predominant discourse. Simultaneously, it is an instance in which the novel's self-reflexivity finds a more oblique formal expression than that of the heroes' self-reflexive and metatextual remarks. Via the highlighted role of the translator, the Arabic (Moorish) pseudo-author and Spanish (presumably) Christian editor establish an interrelation that is marked by both rivalry and harmony.<sup>5</sup> The formal effect of this dialectical interplay is a constant re-fracturing of the narrative frames, their inflection, or a certain "criss-crossing" movement of the story, as the Spanish editor-narrator describes it at one point. The play of the narrators thus installs a *metalepsis*, an infraction of the narrative levels, as a main structuring principle of the novel, but also of the world reflected in it.<sup>6</sup> For this formal self-exploration presents a microscopic image of the broader realm: it reveals the complex and disquieting set of relations between the predominant culture/discourse and its Other in the Counter-Reformation Spain. Structurally, this interaction is a major formative principle of the novel itself; culturally, it is the formal articulation of the complex historical negotiation of the otherness.

Characteristically for the genre, the beginning of the novel sets up the dialogical mode while presenting all the motifs and relations in a compressed form. There, the reader learns that the text is rather a "stepchild" than a "real child" of the person narrating the prologue. The otherness of the "original" author is clearly indicated—the reader is "neither his relative nor his friend;" the evaluative distance between the reader (addressed intimately) and the "original" author (referred to abstractly) is also invoked: "your soul sits in its own body, you can make up your mind for yourself, with the best of them" (*DQ* 3; bk. 1). This pseudo-author-contrivance reveals its cautionary function in the next sentence addressed to the (leisurely) reader: "you're under no obligation at all, so you can say anything you like about this history, you don't have to worry about being insulted if you don't like it or rewarded if you do" (*DQ* 3; bk.1). But the *desocupado lector* is already put on alert by the editor's distancing from the narrative whose subversiveness he rightly assumes. At the same time, the internal reflexivity is installed and the reader's attention is directed to the form and its adequacy in the rendition of reality. The "author" will be revealed only at the end of chapter 8: he is a Moorish historian named Sidi Hamid Benengeli.

This “postponement” propels the anxiety of the absence of author(ity) from the first pages: the confusion about the author feeds into a sense of loss of the narrative voice which would authorize a vision of the world and therefore, one may add, institutionalize the text itself.<sup>7</sup> “Prepared” with this narrative expectation, the entrance of Sidi Hamid is writerly “accentuated,” thereby drawing attention to its historical context: the prohibition of the utilization of spoken or written Arabic. This chronotope figures the pseudo-author “as a ghost that has returned to our stage,” the ghost whose power to reaffirm, obliterate or change our narrative is sensed throughout the novel.

Even though the references to the Moorish author appear regularly after Chapter 9, and his role is prominent in chapter 27, Sidi Hamid’s presence is tacit until the end of the first book, and does not resurface under his own name until the first sentence of the 1615 continuation.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, the Moors were formally expelled from Spain (the edict of 1609), and “after 1614, ceased to exist in the official language” (Burshatin 132). The unofficial/anti-official language of Cervantes’s novel refused to muffle the “Morisco problem”: the Moors appear with increasing frequency in the second part of the novel, now with an ostensibly negative designation which is put into question by its very aggressiveness and its comic-ironic undertones. A special role in this process is assigned to the Moorish pseudo-author whose self-assertive and comic interventions finally affirm him as one of the characters. Ruth El Saffar estimates that the Moorish historian “appears at least a hundred times” in Part 2 (83). Not only does the Moorish historian appear more frequently in the text, but his presence is also *felt* more powerfully. An important way in which a sense of increased presence may be obtained is a characteristic device of naming and calling by name. In the index to Martín de Riquer’s edition, Sidi Hamid Benengeli’s name is listed as appearing only five times in Part I and as many as thirty-three times in Part II. The second part abounds with the historian’s interruptions, comments, and metatextual remarks, from his praise to Allah as Don Quijote’s third sally begins (*DQ* 8; bk. 2) to a digression on the subject of poverty (*DQ* 44; bk. 2). Given the fact that the “prime” author is a Moor, it might appear that the image of the Moor in the text was shaped only by another Moor. However, his “history” is edited (rewritten?) by a (presumably Christian) person narrating the prologue, hereafter termed the editor. Thus, the main narrator *is* a Moor, but his narrative is edited by a Christian.

Although the editor resolutely denies his merits in the figuration of the story, his authoritative attitude is salient: he revises, corrects, and orchestrates different sections of the text, and his self-reflexive intrusions in the narrative seem as significant as Benengeli's own remarks. The "editorial action" often takes the form of a conspicuous intervention, typically without warning, as seen in the prologue, or at the end of chapter 8 in the first part, as well as in numerous instances of questioning the historian's narrative in the second part of the novel. The Spanish editor responds to the Moorish historian's self-assertiveness in Part II with overt mistrust, indeed ridicule of the historian's ability to relate the story coherently. The Moorish historian's account now appears erratic and untenable. The editor explicitly suggests that there might be some sources which are more accurate or that the existing materials might have been presented in a better way; furthermore, he frequently points out what the historian, despite his remarkable attentiveness to detail, simply fails to render. In this way, Sidi Hamid's narrative efforts are presented as at the same time absurdly detailed and deficient, and therefore ludicrous.<sup>9</sup> Given the digressiveness to which he is inclined, the historian's lamentations over the limited subject of his history (*DQ* 44; bk. 2) produce additional comic effects. Through the editorial intervention, the "*flósofo mahomético*" rivals his own heroes as an object of laughter. The editor, in turn, reveals himself as a clear embodiment of the domineering culture: he orders, organizes, and comments upon the narrative, having the power to praise or condemn the Moorish historian.

The implications of this "Christian translation," are, of course, serious. The Moorish historian's seemingly unproblematic attitude toward Christian persecution of the Muslims, and his occasional derision aimed at the members of his own ethnic minority have to be investigated under a different light. The Moors appearing in the text are, then, literally redescribed in the language and rhetorical system of the imposing culture. In this light, the "edited story," even though not being an account of an actual travel to foreign lands, may be viewed as an "ethnographic narrative" in the way Michel de Certeau uses this term.

According to Certeau, an ethnographic narrative is the "travel account" of a circular journey which develops in three stages: description of "the outbound journey: the search for the strange which is presumed to be different from the place assigned it in the beginning



by the discourse of culture,” a central “depiction of savage society, as seen by a ‘true’ witness” and “the return voyage, the homecoming of the traveler-narrator” frame (*Heterologies* 69–70). After the distancing process of the outbound voyage, the narrator performs his “activity of translation” (*Writing* 222), explaining the world of the alien in terms of a framing meta-discourse. The account of the homeward voyage reverses the distancing process and returns both the narrator and his exotic subject to the world of the familiar. As the traveler orders and recounts the observations made on his journey to create a credible narrative, he “invents” the Other, i. e. “brings back a literary object” (*Writing* 213), rendered essentially in the terms of his own culture. It is the Other “himself, originally absent from common representations, who returns in the text [. . .] enters our language and our lands” (*Heterologies* 70). The attempt to integrate the Other into the Sameness of the predominant discourse is thus the final aim of an ethnographic narrative. One may now recognize the editor’s story as a symbolic-narrative voyage to the land of the Other: through traveling and distancing from the initial perspective, the narrative of *Don Quijote* moves away from its “home” toward the uncanny, if comically toned, world of the Other (the chivalric, imagined world of Don Quijote’s speeches, North Africa of the Captive’s Tale, the lunatic asylum of the barber’s tale, and so forth) by the acts ranging from ridicule to misappropriation.

Yet, the ambivalence in the negotiation of the “otherness” is disclosed precisely through the dominant culture’s reinforced need to “evaluate” the other. This process typically generates ambiguities. Hence the editor’s stance towards the Moorish historian’s account is characteristically full of contradictions. On the one hand, the editor admires the Moor’s text for its veracity, attention to detail, and historicity, and describes Sidi Hamid Benengeli as “wise and knowing,” (*DQ*, 170; bk. 2). At the same time, he laments the fact that the author is an Arab, since the Arabs are prone to be liars and hostile to Christians. He further concludes that the story itself is likely to be toned down rather than embellished and that the Arabic author “deliberately passed over things in silence” (*DQ*, 48; bk. 2). Later, when he praises the Moor for being “a very searching and careful historian,” the editor asserts that Sidi Hamid—never “passes over it [thing, reference] in silence” (*DQ* 81; bk.2). His ambivalent attitude is perhaps best captured in the general designation of Benengeli’s

account as “lofty, impressive, scrupulously detailed, pleasant and highly imaginative history” (DQ 120; bk.2).

The historian’s and the editor’s respective narrative frames, however, seem not to be alone in the novel. The presumed dialogue between the Moorish historian-author and the Christian editor-author is dependent upon a translator and the importance of this mediatory activity is clearly emphasized in *Don Quijote*. An optimistic view of this dynamic would hold that the role of the translator reflects the nature of *Don Quijote* and the genre of the novel in general as a constructive cultural translation. However, when pursuing this interpretative path, the reader must not forget that the “translator” in *Don Quijote* is everything but non-aligned. His intrusions and comments do not really signify a presence of a third party in the dialogue. The very way in which the editor “obtained” a translator is illuminating in this respect. The translator is introduced on page 9: the editor is happy to have found an unnamed *morisco* who would translate the manuscript accurately and “succinctly” and would be satisfied with only “fifty pounds of raisins and three bushels of wheat” as a salary’ (DQ 46; bk. 1). The Moor is literally snatched and brought to the editor’s home where he spent “a little more than a month and a half” translating the manuscript (DQ 46; bk. 1). The setting for the editor’s proposal and *morisco*’s acceptance is everything but incidental: “And then I quickly drew the Moor aside, into the church cloister, and implored him to translate [. . .]” (DQ 46; bk. 1, emphasis mine). The spatial designation serves to subtly indicate the predominant discourse into which the Moor is “drawn.” As a result of this symbolic movement and the economic stimulus, the translator will be inclined more to the Christian discourse of the editor than to that of the pseudo-author. The translator will overtly display his “alliance” with the editor in Part II. He will show more understanding for the Catholic structure than for the pseudo-author’s “oriental” digressiveness and penchant for details. In *Don Quijote*, part 2, page 18, the translator and editor finally concur in criticizing the historian’s methodology: the *morisco* translator omits Sidi Hamid’s lengthy description of Don Diego de Miranda’s home because it does not “comfort well with the main themes of this history” (DQ 440; bk. 2). The translator and the editor thus unite in the “activity of translation,” i.e. the rendition/explanation of the world of the Other.<sup>10</sup>

One, however, should not be misled by the apparent hegemony of the Christian discourse in the novel, for the discourses of the Same and

the Other have already intertwined. Benengeli's presence is also a narrative. Moreover, he is the one who is granted to utter the most subversive metatextual remark in the novel: the readers, the historian informs us, should be grateful not only for what he has decided to put in the text, but also for what he has *refrained* from writing (*DQ* 575; bk. 2). The withheld empowers him as much as the rendered. And the "rendered," especially in the second part of *Don Quijote*, is replete with the explicit accounts of the status of the Moors in the Counter-Reformation Spain, the most conspicuous example being the story of Ricote (54; 63; 65; bk. 2) and his daughter, Ana Félix (63; bk. 2).

The metatextual remark referenced above presents language (and/or its lack) as an important lever of power and, hence, allies the diplomatic and linguistic trade. This insight leads one to a closer perusal of the language deployed in the novel in search of the same dynamic. If Bakhtin is right, the dialogic interaction between these two narrative and politico-cultural entities should be also discernible on an elementary (and more tangible) level, that of language itself.

#### LANGUAGE OF THE CULTURAL INTERRELATING

Cervantes was not content to *only* dialogically pair the narrators and produce an elaborate agonistic interaction between these characters. Rather, he attempted to present the subtle interlacing of the two discourses *within* the language itself. In *Don Quijote* the interanimation of languages, often performed on the extralinguistic level, i. e. when the "languages" involved are distinct and concrete linguistic/historical entities, affirms itself as the impetus for the genre of novel. How does it function in Cervantes's novel?

Sometimes, the editor surfaces unexpectedly from what purports to be Sidi Hamid's manuscript. The editor's intrusions are almost imperceptible, rendered within the language itself. There are several instances in which Benengeli takes the Christian side in the disputes between the two cultures. The reader should realize that such overt admissions of the superiority of Christianity over the historian's Muslim beliefs are incongruous—the Moor must be facetious in employing such terms. The heteroglossia as a rule accompanies these "linguistic conversions," and the transformation of vocabulary renders the sense of a change in attitude. For instance, Benengeli's solidarity with the Christian forces in the description of the naval battle off the coast of Barcelona (63; bk. 2) is signified by the reiteration of the adjective "nuestro/a" ("our boat,"

“our galleys,” and alike). The occasional use of the “Válame Dios” expletive is another excellent example of this linguistic intrusion. In this light, Sidi Hamid’s discourse may be seen as constantly undermined from within by a surreptitious Christian presence.

Yet, in a comparable manner, Benengeli’s discourse exerts its own power: the historian’s ideological stance lurks behind the language of his allegedly accurate history and combats the editorial version more than successfully. Thus the Moorish narrator powerfully asserts his “ultimate” orchestration of the narrative exactly in the story whose subject-matter purports to be emphatically “Christian.” Here I have in mind the *Captive’s Tale*, an interpolated story which in many respects presents a microcosmic picture of the entire novel.<sup>11</sup> The dynamic interweaving of the two discourses peaks in this semi-ethnographical-semi-adventurous account. The story may be considered a compressed picture of how polyglossia operates in the novel: it renders the full complexity of cultural interrelating. Thus it may be beneficial to engage in a close reading of this episode next.

#### THE CAPTIVE’S TALE, OR WHO IS CAPTURED?

The central part of “The *Captive’s Tale*” (*DQ* bk. 1, ch. 39-41) follows (sometimes with a proliferation of details, sometimes with the omission of important information) the “ethnographic narrative” of a Christian captive in Algiers and his escape with the help of a beautiful Moorish girl, Zoraida, who has an “immense wish” to become a Christian. This desire seemingly relegates the Moorish girl from the realm of the Other to the realm of the Same, even before the actual story begins. However, the authenticity of this cultural and religious conversion is subtly put into question, as my further discussion will prove.

If one overlooks the dynamic of the dialogical interaction between the two narrators, the tale might appear as an innocent, hopeful story of a “purehearted” Muslim’s conversion to Christianity and therefore unproblematic to the predominant discourse. Yet, the underlying presence of the rigorous Arabian historian subverts the narrative and silences the editor. One particular instance of silence is noteworthy here: the Moorish historian—in an illicit protest, as it were—entirely omits a description of Zoraida’s mental conversion to Christianity and the miraculous apparitions of Zoraida’s teacher, which supposedly have incited her faith. It is on this point that the account of conversion significantly diverges from the typical “*converso*” stories

in Cervantes's time. The power of the unwritten to which the historian alludes in his metatextual remarks referenced above (*DQ* 525; bk. 2) is intensively at work here. The conversion is, however, further relativized by the words of Zoraida's father: "And don't think she's changing religions because she believes yours is any better—no, it's just that she knows how much easier it is to practice indecency, in your lands, than it is in ours" (*DQ* 279; bk. 2). The reader is finally led to comprehend the conversion skeptically. Hence the story presents itself as the compressed embodiment of a broader narrative (re)fracturing.

Yet, by far the most important device employed to render the dialogical interrelating of the Same and the Other in this tale is the powerful linguistic "intervoicing." The newly discovered means of polyglotic language thus makes the cultural clash and dialogue more conspicuous than anywhere else in the novel. The surreptitious narrative power of the Moorish historian is noticeable, first, in a complicated description of how the hero came to Algiers where he met his future bride. To embark on a close reading, as proposed above, means to attentively *travel* with the hero. On such a voyage the reader may discover that s/he is led from Spain to Italy to Flanders, and then again to Italy, to Venice, wherefrom to Constantinople, and eventually to Algiers. This circumlocution serves to distort the spatiality and introduce a conglomerate of different "others" within that extended minimal space: Moorish commanders, the Italians who had converted to Islam, pirates, the Spanish disguised as Albanians, the pirating Turks, Greek double agents. This voyage will finally bring us to the "Otherland" where the actual cultural interaction may begin. For my present purposes, it seems even more important that, from the beginning of the account of his voyage towards (and back from) the Other, the captive shows an excessive—and seemingly unmotivated—need for familiarizing the reader with Arabic or Turkish words and customs (hence the activity of translation resumes the central position in the narrative once again). Trying to explain the world of the alien, the captive-narrator (our third-, if not fourth- or even fifth-plane narrator) gives a picturesque account on the Islamic rituals, beliefs, and some aspects of current politics, peppered with Arabic words through and through. We also witness an act of (narratively never innocent) naming and an apparently unnecessary classification: "The Barbary Moors call the ones from Aragón *tagarinos*, as they label those from Granada *mudéjares*, though in Fez what they call the *mudéjares* is

*elches* [. . .]” (DQ 270; bk. 1). The return voyage to Spain is no less complicated than the first trip. To come back from a foreign place, impressed, repelled, and reinscribed by the Other, appears to be as problematic as to encounter the alterity for the first time. When the travelers return, they themselves will be partly redefined, transformed. Their first encounter in the homeland certainly confirms this change. A shepherd boy they meet is terrified by the sight of the renegade, and Zoraida dressed in Moorish apparel and concludes that “all of Barbary was after him.” So, he starts “running through the nearby wood, leaping like a rabbit and screaming, with the wildest yells ever heard, ‘Moors, the Moors have landed! Moors, Moors! To arms, to arms!’” (DQ 281; bk. 1).

The story elicits the dialogue and clash of discourses shaping the novel through the heteroglossic refraction of the surface linguistic level: the interanimation of languages produces a vertiginous flux between Arabic and Spanish. The merging of the Arabic and Spanish vocabularies in part reflects the actual linguistic state of the Spanish language in that period, and in part presents Cervantes’s narrative tactic aimed at rendering the collision and merging of a dominant and minority culture. The Moorish historian’s and the Christian editor’s discourses are strained to the point of breaking. As the captive narrates, his own language changes, metamorphizes into the very lingua franca that he hears “all across Barbary,” the language which “neither is or isn’t Moorish or Spanish, or any other language for that matter, but a jumble of languages [. . .] allowing us to communicate” (DQ 271; bk. 2).

To exemplify this merging of discourses one may turn to the first discursive bond between the two cultures: the letters that Zoraida and her future lover exchange. In these letters the language-merger is self-reflexively emphasized and attached to particularities of each culture; this strategy produces numerous comic effects. The strange mixture of Christian and Muslim imagery permeates Zoraida’s letter, culminating in the fusion of Allah and Virgin Mary. Her Christian-Muslim narrative indeed evokes (and perhaps parodizes) the lead books of Granada, a daring attempt at reconciliation of the two discourses undertaken by Miguel de Luna and Alfonso de Castillo, the two New Christians of Muslim descent serving as official translators of Arabic for Philip II.<sup>12</sup> In turn, the captive significantly adopts her discourse in his response, renaming the Christian God in order to come nearer to his “chosen” Other: “May the true Allah protect you, my lady [. . .]” (DQ 267;

bk. 1) He finishes his letter with an exclamation as displaced (and therefore comic) as disturbing: “May Allah and Marién, His Mother, watch over you, my lady” (*DQ* 267; bk. 1).

There are, however, many other instances in which the two discourses are infracted, interpolated one into the other in a subtle manner that is often lost in translation or in the linguistic oblivion that has covered many a Cervantes’s phrase. In this respect, the polyglotic interaction seems to have found its most expedient form in the strategic use of the Spanish words of Arabic origin. These (historically and politically) dialogized words either accentuate or undermine the unfolding course of events. For example, if one does not identify the word *la zalá* as a Spanish-Arabic word (derived from *saalam*) referring specifically to the Islamic bow to Allah, the delicate juxtaposing that this word offers will not be recognized. The word appears in two small, but rather important instances within *Don Quijote*, both in the Captive’s Tale. In Zoraida’s first letter, she says that a woman slave taught her how to make “la zalá cristianesca,” that is to say, how to perform the Islamic bow in a Christian way.<sup>13</sup> A few pages later, a similar construction appears: the narrator describes how the Moorish renegade who watches the Hadji Murad’s garden “hacer la zalá”—performs the bow to Allah. In both cases, the “zalá” phrase displays the amalgamation of the languages and it casts a more ambiguous light on Zoraida’s and the renegade’s conversions.

#### THE TROUBLES OF EPISTEMOLOGY OF A HISTORICAL RECORD

The clash of a dominant and minority culture often brings about an interesting fluctuation of signs, revelatory of the psychological and historical projections of the dominant culture. The dominant culture frequently (and for the most part unconsciously) relegates the phrases of the dominated into its own discourse; it happens, however, that the predominant discourse “bounces back” the phrase, thereby attaching it to its very source. In this respect, one may find it of interest to follow the numerous phrases concerning lying in the novel. The “lying dog” phrase belongs to the set of common attributes of Christians in the Muslim imagery. The designation is taken up by Christians and then used to point back to the Arabs. The editor designates the author as a lying dog of a Moor by typical dispersion of the phrase: “the author was an Arab [. . .] it’s very natural for people of that race to be liars [. . .]. I’d blame it on its dog of an author [. . .]” (*DQ*

46; bk. 1). The characters take up the same refrain: Don Quijote is disconsolate over the idea that his historian is Moorish and therefore a congenital liar (DQ 364; bk. 1). In the Captive's tale, Zoraida, a Moorish girl with Christian longings, warns the captive against her own national group: "don't trust a Moor, because they're all liars" (DQ 266; bk. 1). Later, Zoraida's father will describe Christians as liars: "you Christians always lie to us about how much you're worth and, to cheat the Moors, pretend you're all poor" (DQ 272; bk. 1). Along the lines of this stereotypical attribution, Muslims of the time generally gave little credence to Christian words of honor. To swear like a Christian was to invalidate an oath. Even this part of a stereotypical designation will be inverted by the predominant discourse. The captive writes to Zoraida: "as you know, Christians keep their promises far better than the Moors do" (DQ 267; bk. 1). The same phrase entails a more general epistemological questioning in the second part of the novel. Sidi Hamid Benengeli opens the chapter 27 with the words "I swear, as a Catholic Christian [. . .]" (DQ 493; bk. 1). In a confusing and comical manner, the translator speculates: "when Sidi Hamid swore as a Catholic Christian, being as he surely was a Moor, all he meant was that he was swearing in precisely the way that a Catholic Christian would swear, or is supposed to swear, that he is being truthful in saying whatever he says, just as Sidi Hamid, swearing as a Catholic Christian, was verifying his own truthfulness in what he recorded about *Don Quijote* [. . .]" (DQ 493; bk. 1). Even without the rhetorical whirls in which the translator entangles himself in order to justify the Moor, the sensitive reader would not miss the underlying irony of Hamid's words. For the reader *knows* that the story is fictionalized. Epistemological questions, emphasized by both Hamid and the translator, are suddenly given prominence. The series of praises or condemnations of the historian's veracity now appear in a novel light, as the mobility of the lying-sign renders everyone—a liar. It is this epistemological instability of *Don Quijote* (indeed the question at the center of the later development of the novelistic genre) that, in my view, reflects back onto the "prefigured" world of the historical reality. At the time of dissemination of signs/signatures of the dominant discourse (cf. my discussion of the turbulent history of the period), such powerful problematization of truth should not be deemed incidental. This epistemological questioning is significantly rendered through the interpenetration of the two specific, historically



embedded discourses. In this way, a distinctive feature of a novel genre serves to capture and critique the politico-historical reality.

#### THE CULTURAL POLITIC OF METALEPSIS

The dialogical interrelating of the two “voices” and the corollary infraction of the narrative planes in *Don Quijote* artistically portray an “infracted” historical moment. In the light of my preceding analysis, the interilluminating play between the Moorish author and the Christian editor, the very *metalepsis* structuring the novel, may be viewed as a narrative strategy aimed to disband the nation’s coherent language, and consequently, disintegrate the predominant discourse itself. This linguistic intertwining has a twofold effect on the cultural questions raised by the novel. On the one hand, it displays the painful and absurd nature of religious and racial intolerance in full light. On the other, it reveals the romantic myth of a peaceful coexistence as false and always tainted by appropriations. The “cultural politics” of the novel based upon the interpenetration of the discourses of the Same and the Other, then, may be seen in the light of an endeavor to propose a novel mode of co-existence. This mode would eschew both, the open aggressiveness toward the Other and the dominant culture’s feigned benevolence aimed at annihilating cultural divergences. Thus *Don Quijote* performatively and playfully acknowledges the co-existence in realistic terms—as both, recognition and conflict.

How conscious of the implications of this complex *cultural* structuring Cervantes was is another question. The “prefigured” reality—to utilize Paul Ricoeur’s conceptualizations here—frequently “necessitates” a certain type of figuration without the writer’s overt intention. It is for this reason that the modern novel in the full sense of that word could have appeared *only* in Counter-Reformation Spain. Thus this device also vocalizes the novel’s reflecting upon its own dialogic nature and a heteroglotic provenance of the genre itself. In turn, the entwining of the discourses of the Same and the Other may be seen as the distinctive societal dynamic which nourishes the novelistic form. *Don Quijote* presents an excellent example of how heteroglossia and dialogicity function in the modern novel to the aim of reflecting/refracting the contemporary reality. It is to this requirement of the genre that *Don Quijote* may thank its precarious suspension of “easy solutions” in the realm of (hi)story.

## Notes:

1. Herein the dialectic interlacing of the narrative frames is understood as the manifestation of several governing principles of the novel as a genre: namely, its dialogicity, reflexivity (as both, generic-subjective reflexivity and the reflecting of empirical objectivity), and a refractive way in which the narrative engages with the material history.

2. The Spaniards used the cumulative designation “morisco” (the Moor) to refer to the peoples of Arab and Berber descent. In the beginning, the image of the Moors in Spain did not rely upon specific religious and/or racial attributes, but rather upon the geographical origin and cultural difference. The question of race was never fully endorsed—there were as many white Moors as there were black ones, but their status as *infidels* was much emphasized in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. In the course of time, the term “morisco,” however, came to be attached specifically to the converted Muslims suspected of secretly retaining their original faith.

3. The history of the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula started with the invasion of Spain by a mixed force of the Arabs and the Berbers in the early eighth century. The Christian reconquest was resumed in 1086 and it ended only four centuries later with the fall of Granada (1492). This was hurriedly followed by a spiritual reconquest, the work of the Inquisition, which made the status of all non-Christian, or “suspiciously” Christian groups in Spain (the Moors, the Jews, the Gypsies, the “*conversos*”) highly problematic. Philip II’s policy focused on establishing a strong autocratic royal power and securing the authority of the Catholic Church. To that end Philip II concocted an infamous status symbol—the certificate of *limpieza de sangre* (the purity of blood), satirized at length in *Don Quijote*. In 1567 Philip II issued a “deorientalizing” edict; the latter provoked a Moorish uprising that was put down with great severity. The Moors were officially expelled from Spain in 1609 by the decree of Philip III. Six years after, Cervantes published the second part of *Don Quijote*.

4. Cf. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, and Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*.

5. Although the narrative structure of *Don Quijote* is not always consistent or clear, the three-level author-translator-editor relationship remains the basis for a discussion of Cervantes’s narrative technique. The historian-translator/editor structuring and the found manuscript device were common to the romances of chivalry. Cervantes utilized them in a twofold manner:

internally, they are the structural basis for his parody; externally, they are a formal refraction of the current historical moment.

6. Gérard Genette's concept *metalepsis*, meaning the infraction of narrative level, is arguably the most adequate term to describe this phenomenon in Cervantes's narrative technique; also noticed by James A. Parr.

7. Cervantes's subversive manner in which the authorial presence is made manifest actually keeps generating the implied authors. In addition to the historian and the editor, there is yet another "author" inferable from the text—the one writing the story of an editor-writer faced with an interesting manuscript by an exotic author. He may be that never identified "segundo autor" mentioned in part 1, ch. 8 or perhaps an even more obscure "ultimate author" mentioned occasionally throughout the novel. The authorial vertigo-effect simultaneously masks the real author and his intentions and indirectly points to an "authorial" crisis in contemporary Spain. In addition, this "authorial crisis" speaks well to the "transcendental homelessness," the historico-philosophical dynamic of constitutive of the novel, as elaborated by Lukács. The issue of authorial voice in Cervantes has been widely discussed. Among numerous, often-conflicting interpretations, I recommend: Ruth El Saffar, *Distance and Control in "Don Quixote"*.

8. The only direct commentary on the story that can be attributed to Benengeli in Part 1 is the annotation on Dulcinea which causes the translator's laughter, thereby revealing to the editor that he has discovered the manuscript for which he has been searching (*DQ*; bk. 1, ch. 9).

9. Cf. the editor's intrusions such as: "he was leaving the road and riding into a dense grove of oak trees—or perhaps they were cork trees, for Sidi Hamid is not quite so careful, on this point, as he usually is about such matters" (*DQ* 664); "leaning up against the trunk of beech, or perhaps it was an oak tree – again, Sidi Hamid Benengeli doesn't tell us what kind of tree it really was [. . .]" (*DQ* 706).

10. As many other issues fundamental to the novel, the translator's problematic status is compressively (and comically) mirrored in the Captive's Tale. There, the translator is a renegade who "well and truly believed [in God], though he was a sinner and a wicked man" (*DQ* 267). For the "activity of translation," see: Michel de Certeau's "Ethno-Graphy: Speech, or the Space of the Other: Jean de Léry" in *The Writing of History* 222.

11. By "The Captive's Tale" critics usually denote bk. 1, ch. 37-47 of Cervantes's *Don Quijote*.

12. For the information on this idiosyncratic heteroglossic endeavor, cf. Israel Burshatin, "The Moor in the Text: Metaphor, Emblem, and Silence,"

in "Race Writing and Difference," *Critical Inquiry* (1985) 12:1.

13. Burton Raffel's otherwise excellent translation unfortunately renders this phrase with "how to say Christian prayers" (*DQ* 266; bk. 1).

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