

Modes of Islamic and Spanish Intertextuality in the Literature of Sixteenth Century Spain

by Carolina M. Mendoza

B.A. in International Relations, August 2013, Florida International University

A Thesis Submitted to

The Faculty of

The Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts.

August 31, 2015

Thesis Directed by

Mohammad Faghfoory
Professorial Lecturer

Table of Contents

I. Introduction: The Religious Landscape of Sixteenth Century Spain.....	1
II. The Qu’ran in Spanish Literature: The Andalusī Nūnniya and Don Quijote de la Mancha.....	3
A. The Qur’an and Courtly Love in Ibn Zaydun’s Nūniyya.....	6
B. In context: El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha.....	12
C. The Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli and the al-Qalam Al-A’lā of the Qur’an.....	14
D. Concluding Remarks: Sealing the Connections.....	23
III. Contextualizing the Vestiges of an Old World: Américo Castro and Aljamiado Literature.....	25
A. The Historical Context of Castro’s Historiography.....	27
B. Origins of Aljamiado Literature.....	30
C. Aljamiado Literature and Castro’s Historiography.....	35
D. In context: La literatura aljamiada.....	38
E. Los aljofres: The Prophet’s Oracle and the Prophetic Writings of St. Isidore.....	42
F. Concluding Remarks.....	46
IV. The Solitary Bird of St. John of the Cross and Islamic Mysticism.....	47
A. Parallels between the Sīmurg and the Five Properties of St. John’s Solitary Bird....	48
B. Concluding Remarks: Criticism of the Field.....	55
V. Conclusion: Thoughts on Future Scholarship.....	58

I. Introduction

The sixteenth century of the Iberian Peninsula was marked by the persecution, torment, and execution of the newly converted Christians by the “old” ones. In effect, it was a time in which the mere suspicion –let alone presence– of Semitic blood or comportment was enough to cost a person their life on the grounds that they were false converts. This century marked the zenith of the Spanish Inquisition –the sanguinary process by which the Arab and Jewish cultures of Iberia were razed and forcibly subjected to the Christian establishment’s quest for religious, political, economic, and social superiority. It stands to reason that such a vastly destructive and harrowing social process would affect and indeed characterize the literary output of this land.

From its birth at the onset of the Middle Ages, Spanish literature grew and came to maturity within this historical context. From the Renaissance, or *Siglo de Oro*, onwards, this literature was to a great extent in the hands of persecuted converts who, to further abstract the reading of these texts, were caught in the midst of constantly fluctuating and conflicting identities and intellectual traditions. Given the complexity of these works, and the fact that the Semitic backgrounds of their authors have rarely been taken into account in scholarship, it is the purpose of this project to focus on the influence of Islamic texts and narratives on some of the literary works of sixteenth century Spain in order to provide a clearer understanding of the magnitude to which this intertextuality characterized the literary landscape of the time.

The first part of this work focuses on the concept of courtly love. It provides a background on the theme of courtly love in Andalusian poetry in order to qualify the Islamic idiom in Spanish literature. In other words, it is meant as a sample of the literary

expression of Muslim Spain, so that its character can be readily identified in Miguel de Cervantes' sixteenth century *magnum opus*, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. The presence of *converso* narratives and Islamic influence is rampant throughout the work, so much so that it is not a stretch to say that a knowledge of Islam and of the way in which it existed in Spain is necessary for any reading of *Don Quijote*.

The second section further contextualizes a different genre of sixteenth century literature –known as the *aljamiado*– in the intellectual and historical debates prevalent in modern Spanish history. To this end, it identifies how the Islamic character of Spain has always been a point of the high intellectual and political polemics. Special attention will be paid to the ways in which this kind of literature has been used to buttress the historiography and historical claims of one of Spain's foremost historians, Américo Castro.

The final part of this work is dedicated to exploring the influence of Islamic mysticism on the *Cántico Espiritual* of St. John of the Cross, particularly in regards to the symbol of the solitary bird. While tracing the influence of Islamic mystical texts on his later work, this last section is also framed as a critique of the field by way of identifying the ways in which greater historical and personal contextualization can increase the depth of this study, as opposed to the un-buttressed tracking of vaguely identified Islamic influence.

II. *The Qu'ran in Spanish Literature: The Andalusi Nūnniya and Don Quijote de la Mancha*

“Leave to us, in Heaven’s name, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, and keep your Omar, your Alchabitius, your Aben Zoar, your Aberangel.”¹

- Pico della Mirandola

Tracing the Islamic influence on Spanish literature can be deeply problematic for a plethora of reasons, particularly because the dominant historical narrative of Spanish history emphasizes the “European” character of these works at the expense of the rooted Muslim influence in Spain. The predominance of distinguishing the “European” character, whose roots lie in Classical Greece, from the Muslim personae was a hallmark of the re-invention of the Western European historical narrative during the Renaissance. Indeed, it is telling that the words above were penned by the man who authored the famous *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, which has been hailed as the “manifesto” of the Renaissance.² The revolutionary ideas that were re-writing the foundational European historical mythology during the 15th century were by no means limited to the Italian peninsula. Iberia was also struggling to reconstruct its cultural identity within the framework postulated by Renaissance philosophy. To this end, the *Reconquista* had sought to purge Spain of Muslim influence, and to place it (or replace, depending on historical perception) within the invigorated Christian, humanistic tradition. It essentially sought to erase the nine-hundred years of Muslim control of the Iberian landmass, and to dispel from both Spanish blood and memory, the civilization that had flourished within it.

From 711 AD, the year when the first Muslim invaders led by Abd al-Rahman came into Iberia and conquered the disparate Christian Visigoth kingdoms, to the year

¹ Emran Qureshi, Michael Sells, *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 249.

² Ibid.

1492 AD, when the Muslim kingdom of Granada fell to King Ferdinand of Aragón and Queen Isabella of Castile's Christian forces, the Iberian Peninsula was a Muslim realm.³ Under Muslim control, its political collective was referred to as *al-Andalus*. It was a de facto offshoot of the Umayyad dynasty, and became a rival in cultural and artistic achievement to the Abbasid capital in Baghdad.⁴ There are a number of shards of the Andalusian world that can be glimpsed in our own, and some of these have palpable connections to the unique cultural achievements that once adorned their world, and which continue to influence many societies and cultures that have endured thereafter.⁵ This influence extends to the world of the Spanish Golden Age or *Siglo de Oro*, which immediately followed the fall of *al-Andalus*, as it began in 1492 AD- the year that marked the end of the Spanish *Reconquista*, the first sea voyages of Christopher Columbus, and the publication of Antonio de Nebrija's *Gramática de la lengua castellana* (Grammar of the Castilian language).⁶

The publication of Nebrija's *Gramática* is especially significant to the characterization of the depth and importance of *al-Andalus* because it decisively established Castilian as Spanish, the successor-language to those of the empires that, in the peninsula, had been united and defined by Latin, and then Arabic.⁷ There is perhaps

³ Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus*, (London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996), 10.

⁴ María Rosa Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, (New York and Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002), 8. Abd al-Rahman was the sole survivor of the Umayyad dynasty, after its members were massacred by the rival Abbasids in 750. The son of a Berber mother, Abd al-Rahman appeared in the West five years later, and led the Berbers in their invasion of Iberia.

⁵ María Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 153.

⁶ Ignacio Arellano, *Autoridad y poder en el Siglo de Oro*, (Madrid: Universidad de Navarra, 2009), 23.

⁷ Jerrilynn D. Dodds, María Rosa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale, *The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 266. Castilian, the language of the Castilian Empire, was created by King Alfonso X (known as Alfonso the Wise) and his translators out of Arabic itself. It is interesting to note that King Alfonso the

no clearer example to disprove the narrative of ideological Spanish-European purity than the fact that the regional language that became the official language of Spain was created by translations from both Latin and Arabic texts. This speaks loudly to an identity forged by cultural praxis rather than the ideological purity institutionalized after the *Reconquista*. The historical narrative of *al-Andalus* provides a glimpse into one long and extraordinary chapter in history where the three monotheistic faiths struggled, with varying degrees of success, with the question of tolerance of one another. Indeed, the uniqueness of *al-Andalus* in large part lies with the fact that Muslims, Christians, and Jews were able to build thriving communities which created a culture of tolerance in medieval Spain.

Concurrent with the influence of the Arabic language, is the degree of Islamic influence. As the Cuban medievalist María Rosa Menocal points out, “It would be risky to underrate either the importance of Islam in the context of its expansion into Europe or the critical and highly complex role it played in the formation...of many aspects of culture relevant to the medieval world.”⁸ It is virtually undeniable that the importance of all things Arabic in the first place is firmly rooted in the success of Islam in this period, even among those Andalusians who were neither Arab nor Muslim. Coupled with the prominence of Islam is the centrality of the *Qur’an*. In this way, various forms of Spanish literature during the time of *al-Andalus* and in the subsequent *Siglo de Oro* (Golden Age) contained *Qur’anic* elements. The purpose of this text is to portray the presence of *Qur’anic* elements in Spanish literature, particularly in the conceptualization of courtly love in Ibn Zaydun’s *Nūniyya*, and through the relationship of the “pen” that forged

Wise was the figure most responsible for introducing Arabic culture to the Christian West, particularly through his personal translations, and that of all the members of his court.

⁸ Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, 34.

Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra's *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* to the Supreme Pen or *al-qalam al-a'lā* of the *Qur'an*.

The Qur'an and Courtly Love in Ibn Zaydun's Nūniyya

The poets of *al-Andalus* brought together the two realms of religion and love at the intersection of the three major monotheistic religious traditions. In the area of *ghazal* ("love talk"), the poets of *al-Andalus* achieved a depth that, both within the Arabic and non-Arabic worlds, still astonishes.⁹ Michael Sells explains that, "...the Arabic *ghazal* as a poetic form originates in the *nasīb*, the first movements of the pre-Islamic *qasida*." The *nasīb* opens out of a meditation on the *aṭlāl*, the ruins of the beloved's campsite, or an encounter with the *ṭayf* or *khyāl*, the phantom of the beloved. As the Bedouin poet stands over the campsite, a recognition occurs.¹⁰ Into this form of the pre-Islamic love lyric, Islam was almost immediately incorporated. For example, Prophet Muhammad's companion-poet, Ḥassān ibn Thābit, transformed the *nasīb* remembrance of the beloved into an elegy for the Prophet, with the *aṭlāl* as Muhammad's pulpit and the prayer yard in Medina.¹¹

The Andalusian poets enriched the presence of Islamic elements in the love lyric, and extended the influence of these to the realm of Spanish literature. The most famous of all Andalusian love poets, Ibn Zaydūn, was born in Córdoba (b.1003 AD) and died in Sevilla (d.1070 AD). He was born in a time when the Umayyad caliphate in Iberia was in decline, and became seriously involved in the political life of his age, specifically as an anti-Umayyad collaborator. Through this involvement, he fell in love with, poetically

⁹ María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, Michael Sells, *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 126.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*,127.

¹¹ *Ibid.*,128.

enough, the Umayyad princess Wallada (herself an accomplished poetess).¹² His poetry, according to Jayyusi in her book *The Legacy of Muslim Spain* brought, "...into Andalusian poetry something of balance, the rhetorical command, the passionate power and grandeur of style that marked contemporary poetry in the east..."¹³ In this sense, Ibn Zaydūn appropriated the quintessential style of Arabic love poetry for Andalusia. True to traditional form, his *Nūniyya* (Poem in N) is replete with *Qur'anic* elements and references. Within these, the emotive power of the poem is compounded by the ambiguity between "we" as poetic and courtly plural (the lover addressing the absent beloved), and the "we" of mutuality and ongoing relations that the poet-persona attempts to create. The poem opens (ll. 1-5):¹⁴

Morning came- the separation-
 substitute for the love we shared,
 for the fragrance of our coming together,
 falling away.

The moment of departure
 came upon us- fatal morning.
 The crier of our passing
 ushered us through death's door.

The "morning of departure" that is present in the classical Islamic *nasīb* is presented in the first two stanzas is presented here with an intensity that is meant to facilitate allusions later in the poem to the *Qur'anic* expulsion from the garden and the

¹² Menocal, Schiendlin, Sells, *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, 127.

¹³ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 1992), 343.

¹⁴ The translation and text of this poem in English is from Michael Sell's "Love" article in the *Literature of al-Andalus*, p. 129-134. In his footnotes, Sells contends that the verses of the *Nūniyya* are notoriously difficult to order, as various versions have different orders. For this analysis, his rendering of the verses has been followed, as it is his translation to English that was used as well.

Day of Judgment. The poem intensifies when developing the theme of the lover's secret, as in (l.13)¹⁵:

When our secret thought
whispered in your ear,
sorrow would have crushed us,
had we not held on to one another.

It is important to note that in this section the lover may be speaking of himself in a courtly plural, in other words, the "our" may not only refer to the lover and beloved, but also to the persona of the lover as lover *and* poet addressing the absent beloved, which is essence of courtly love. It is this ambiguity that heightens the allusions to the *Qur'anic* virtue of patience (*ṣabr*) and to the quintessential "whisperer"- *al-shaytān* (the satan).¹⁶ It is interesting to note that these allusions to the *Qur'an* are balanced by the language of the classical *nasīb*, so that the ambiguity is not limited to the courtly love in the verse, but also to the religious elements that bolster the presence of courtly love within it. Indeed, as the poem progresses, the anguish of love becomes increasingly more religious, in that the proclamation of the beloved becomes the only creed (*i'tiqād*) the lover takes and the only religio-legal opinion (*ra'y*) he follows.¹⁷ This is even reflected in the depictions of the beloved in terms of alchemical and astrological allusions to the creation of gold and silver and to the engraving of star signs on amulets. Toward the end of the poem, the *dīn* becomes more prominent, as the poet-lover begins to shift to a greater degree of lamentation and nostalgia of the life gone by (ll. 33-35)¹⁸:

We cannot name you.
In station you transcend

¹⁵ Menocal, Schiendlin, Sells, *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, 130.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 130-131.

all names, freeing us
of the obligation.

You are unique, the one and only.
Your qualities cannot be shared.
We are left to describe you
as best we can.

O garden never dying,
your lote tree and spring of Kawthar
are now for us the tree of skulls
and the drink of the damned.

The “you” in this section of the poem refers to the happiness of the lover-poet’s past. He extols not only its uniqueness, but the inability of its qualities being shared. It is interesting that Sells notes that the word in Arabic for “share” is *yushārikuka*, which is based on the same root as the word for idolatry, *shirk*.¹⁹ Within the context of courtly love, its meaning is clearly that it would be a form of lover’s *shirk* to look to any other happiness. Furthermore, Zaydūn’s poet-lover explicitly states that this former happiness transcends all names. When read while aware of the *Qur’anic* elements within the verses, it is clear that these stanzas are specifically allusion to the theological disputes about whether the infinite God can be delimited by names and those regarding sharing His qualities. Furthermore, in regards to *Qur’anic* symbolism, the lote tree (*sidr*) is the tree over which the Prophet Muhammad saw his original prophetic visions, as exemplified in the *Sūra al-Najm*.

This *Sūra* opens with the oath of God swearing by every one of the stars, as they descend and disappear beneath the horizon, that Muhammad is indeed God’s awaited messenger. It is in Q 53:14-16, where the *Qur’an* proclaims, “By the lote tree of the ultimate boundary, near which is the garden of the abode, when there covered the lote

¹⁹ Menocal, Schiendlin, Sells, *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, 131.

tree what covered it.”²⁰ Of further significance to the *Qur’anic* depictions in *Nūniyya* is that the waters of Kawthar are the waters of paradise promised to those who keep the faith. The skulls and drink of the damned, on the other hand, are found within *Qur’anic* depictions of the fate of those who betray the faith.²¹ The following verses further underscore the *Qur’anic* allusions in the poem (ll 40)²²:

We read our sorrow,
that dawn of parting
as Qur’an, reciting it by heart
from the verse of patience.

The sorrow here implied the loss of a blissful moment stolen from the night and from fate. It is here that the classical dawn of parting that the poem opened with is combined with *Qur’anic* revelation and predetermination through the statement that sorrow is read and learned as a *sūra*, to the point where it is recited by heart. The final verses of the poem deepen the combination of the classical *nasīb* and *Qur’anic* themes within the religion of courtly love (ll. 46, 49)²³:

Be true to our vow
as we have been.
The noble give back,
loyally, as given...

I am left sad, keeping the faith
though you have shut
me out. A phantom
will be enough, memories suffice.

Here the lover is speaking directly to the beloved (the ambiguity is lost), “*dūmi ‘ala l-ahdi*” [be true to the vow]. It is crucial to note that the poetic tradition had long

²⁰ Q 53: 1-18. This and all translations into English from the *Qur’an* are from N.J. Dawood, trans., *the Qur’an*, 5th rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1997), cited by *sūra* verse number.

²¹ Menocal, Schiendlin, Sells, *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, 132.

²² *Ibid.*, 132.

²³ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

associated the *ahd* (oath) of lovers with prophetic covenants in the *Qur'an*, as well as with the larger and more significant covenant implicit in the conversation that took place between God and the souls of all humanity before the creation.²⁴ This conversation appears in Q 7:172, where it is written, “When your Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their descendents and made them bear witness over themselves, [He said to them], ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said, ‘Yes indeed! We bear witness.’ Lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘Indeed we were unaware of this.’”²⁵

The interaction between the *Qur'anic* elements in the *Nūnniya* and the classical *nasīb* format created a religion of love within the poem, so that this religion of love has its own parallel sacred scripture, ritual, law, theology, mythic allusions of expulsion, eschatology, and mysticism-as well as alchemy, astrology, and magic.²⁶ All of these serve to channel the conditions and experiences of love through the interplay between the world of religion and that of human love. The conceptualization of courtly love is characterized by this adherence to a “religion of love”. Essentially, it is a way of conceiving love itself as something to be courted and worshipped, even as it is to be a desire without the possibility of fulfillment. It is from this conceptualization of courtly love in Andalusian poetry that the Provençal troubadours and knight-poets of the eleventh century would develop the Christian-European approach to chivalric love and knighthood.²⁷ The image of the knights they created was deeply indebted to the Andalusian poets who conceptualized courtly love through their innovation of the pre-

²⁴ Menocal, Schiendlin, Sells, *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, 133-137.

²⁵ Q 7:172.

²⁶ Menocal, Schiendlin, Sells, *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, 133.

²⁷ Titus Burkhardt, *Moorish Culture in Spain*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), 93.

Islamic *nasīb*, which had eternalized the model of the Knight of the desert.²⁸ The impact of courtly love, and of the tradition of chivalry that developed from it, was extensive. So much so, that the greatest Spanish writer of all time, and one of the greatest writers in human history, made chivalry the major theme of his greatest work.

In context: El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha

It may be that no other knight-errant has captured the hearts and minds of at least Western civilization, more than the fearless windmill fighter- *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Miguel de Cervantes published the first part of this novel in 1605.²⁹ Almost immediately after publication, the novel became a phenomenon, especially in the thriving colonies of the New World. Its second part appeared in 1615, quickly after a false sequel was written by an obscure figure whose pseudonym was Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda.³⁰ It seems that this impostor appeared to take advantage of the popularity and sales of the original novel. Nonetheless, Cervantes' own second part begins with a half-ironic denunciation of the pretender to the authorship of a *Quijote* that is not the authentic one. It is important to note that some scholars have sought to point out that the publication of the false *Quijote* is a historical prank, because if Avellaneda and his rogue sequel had not existed, Cervantes may have had to make them up.³¹ The reasoning behind this supposition is the fact that thanks to this impostor, Cervantes ended pondering more openly the problem of fiction's relationship to reality.

²⁸ Burkhardt, *Moorish Culture in Spain*, 94-97.

²⁹ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 256.

³⁰ E.T. Aylward, *Towards a Revaluation of Avellaneda's False Quixote*, (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs, 1989), 33.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 34. For more information, also see Maria Rosa Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 257.

Published during the Spanish Golden Age (*Siglo de Oro*), the *Quijote* puts forth a historical irony that would have been painfully felt in the Spain of this time. This historical irony reflects in this novel's original conception of itself, which was recounted in one of the early chapters of the text, when the narrator "finds" the story of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Cervantes' complex fiction is that the novel is actually the work of an Arab historian, Cide Hamete Benengeli, that the book that contains the true story of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* was originally written in Arabic, and that it was once lost, but now found in Toledo's bedraggled Jewish quarter.³² To boot, Cervantes fictionalizes that this newly rediscovered text was translated for this fictional Arab historian by a *morisco* who happened to be wandering the streets of Toledo and could still read the old language.³³ The irony that Cervantes evokes in this fictionalization of the origins of *Don Quijote* acquires a uniquely serrated edge in the sense that by 1615, there were no *moriscos* left in Spain. Between 1605, when the first part of *Don Quijote* appeared and 1615, when Cervantes published his sequel, the Spanish government had expelled the *moriscos* or "new Christians", and had thus ended a century of forced conversions of Muslims who in 1492 had been guaranteed religious freedom.³⁴ Cervantes' *Quijote* was written in full historical consciousness of the broad and complex tragedy that represented the Spanish, and particularly Toledan scene.

In the fifth chapter of Part I of *Don Quijote*, Cervantes recounts the "Inquisition of Books" that began at the turn of the previous century (1500). Through his

³² Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 257.

³³ Ibid. *Morisco* was the term used to depict a Muslim convert to Christianity, so the old language in reference is Arabic.

³⁴ Anthony J. Cascardi, *Ideologies of History in the Spanish Golden Age*, (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 25-30. These conversions had been required by the authorities since they abrogated the *dhimma*-like guarantees of religious freedom in the Capitulation Agreements issued by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella upon the fall of Granada in 1492. In 1605, the government decided that these forced conversions were not good enough and expelled the *moriscos* from Spain.

quintessential use of irony, he laments the loss of the knowledge of the languages of those books, which were written in both Arabic and Hebrew. Knowledge of these languages was what had once made comprehensive knowledge and the transmission of this knowledge and learning possible. This was what had made Toledo the center of the universe during the times of *al-Andalus* for many civilized people. Cervantes' beautiful use of irony is magnified by the fact that this is *precisely* the kind of knowledge a reader would need in order to unravel, dismantle, and solve the mysteries and historical ironies to be found within the pages of *Don Quijote*. It is this factor, more than any other that accounts for the presence of the *Qur'an* within the masterpiece of Spanish literature, and particularly through the Arab historian that Cervantes credits with writing *Don Quijote*-Cide Hamete Benegeli.

The Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli and the al-Qalam Al-A'lā of the Qur'an

Cervantes closes his inverted chivalric sage by giving the final word to Cide Hamete Benengeli's pen. This pen is instructed to speak autonomously, without a hand to guide it, while hanging by a wire from an ordinary kitchen rack. The incongruence of this final scene has baffled scholars for years, but as Francisco Márquez Villanueva points out in *Personajes y temas del Quijote*, Cervantes, above all seeks to be understood by the educated and sagacious reader.³⁵ The key words here are *educated* and *sagacious*. Given the fact that the character which held the pen was Arab, and the political turmoil Spain had endured for over one hundred years with its Arab-Muslim population, it follows that if this scene is read within the cultural coordinates of Islam, one part to Cervantes' secret code may be cracked open.

³⁵ Francisco Márquez Villanueva, *Personajes y temas del Quijote*, (Madrid: Impulso Global Solutions, 2011), 34.

The Puerto Rican medievalist Luce López Baralt points out that the prodigious pen that wrote *Don Quijote* bears a close relationship to the “Supreme Pen” or *al-qalam al-a’lā* of the *Qur’an*.³⁶ Cide’s pen, necessarily Arabic, extols the fact that the novel was born “para mí sola” [for me alone] and that the enterprise of its writing was “para mí estaba guardada” [reserved for me alone].³⁷ In this way, Cervantes gives homage to the work’s Islamic context, for this primordial Arabic pen, associated with the sacred writing of God the creator and his Supreme Intellect, inscribes the destiny of human beings on the “Well-Preserved Tablet” (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*), which is also of *Qur’anic* origin. Indeed Q 85: 21-22, states “Rather it is a glorious *Qur’an*/ in a preserved tablet.”³⁸ Looked at from this angle, the final scene of *Quijote* begins to yield its secret ironies.

At the end of *Quijote*, Cide says to his writing instrument:

Aquí quedarás, colgada de esta espetera y de este hilo de alambre,
ni sé si bien cortada o mal tajada peñola mía, adonde vivirás
luengos siglos, si presuntuosos y malandrines historiadores no
te descuelgan para profanarte. Pero antes que a ti lleguen,
les puedes advertir, y decirles en el mejor modo que pudieres:
“¡Tate, tate folloncicos!
De ninguno sea tocada;
porque esta empresa, buen rey;
para mí estaba guardada.”³⁹

[Here you shall rest, hanging from this rack by this copper wire, my
goose-quill. Whether you are well or ill cut I know not, but you
shall live long ages there, unless presumptuous and rascally
historians take you down to profane you. But before they approach
you, warn them as best you are able:

“Beware, beware, you scoundrels,
I may be touched by none;
This is a deed, my worthy king,

³⁶ Luce López Baralt, “The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote*”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30: 3 (2000): 507.

³⁷ James H. Montgomery, *Cervantes’ Don Quijote*, Eng. Trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2009), II:592-93; 940. A note on translations: All English translations have been derived from James H. Montgomery’s edition of *Don Quixote*.

³⁸ Q 85: 21-22.

³⁹ Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Luis Andres Murillo (Madrid: Castalia, 1978), II: 592.

Reserved for me alone.”] ⁴⁰

Cide’s pen thus celebrates that the work was born itself alone and that the “enterprise” (*empresa*) of its writing was likewise carefully “reserved” for it only. In this way, the text is to remain sealed together in such a way that no one can “sacrilegiously” resuscitate its characters and thus violate a destiny kept and guarded by death ⁴¹:

...a quien advertirás, si acaso llegas a conocerle, que deje reposar en la sepultura los cansados y ya podridos huesos de don Quijote, y no le quiera llevar, contra todos los fueros de la muerte, a Castilla la Vieja; haciéndole salir de la fuesa donde real y verdaderamente yace tendido de largo a largo, imposibilitado de hacer tercera jornada y salida nueva. ⁴²

[...and should you chance to make his acquaintance, you may tell him to leave Don Quixote’s weary and mouldering bones to rest in the grave, nor seek, against all the canons of death, to carry him off to Old Castile, or to bring him out of the tomb, where he most certainly lies, stretched at full length and powerless to make a third journey, or to embark upon any new expedition.] ⁴³

What the pen has written is thus final. To continue to use it to work would be to challenge a destiny that has been frozen (in death) forever. It is clear that in these lines, Cervantes is attacking the impostor Avellaneda, and is warning him that he is incapable of competing with the all-powerful Arabic pen of Cide Hamete. It is, however, when this pen is placed within its Islamic lineage that the true extent of its power is better understood.

In her *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Annemarie Schimmel emphasizes the symbolic meaning of the Islamic Supreme Pen. She contends that a central theme of *Qur’anic* mythology is the concept of the Well-Preserved Tablet or *lawḥ al-mahfūz*

⁴⁰ Montgomery, *Cervantes’ Quixote*, II:825.

⁴¹ Baralt, “The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote*”, 507.

⁴² Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Luis Andres Murillo, II: 593.

⁴³ Montgomery, *Cervantes’ Quixote*, II:826.

previously mentioned. On this tablet the destinies of men have been engraved since the beginning of time, so that the “...primordial pen has become the standard expression in Islamic poetry in general and in Sufism in particular, for everything that happens is written with this instrument and cannot be changed.”⁴⁴ Baralt points out that Arabs express the inexorability of destiny as it is inscribed by the Pen on the Well-Preserved Tablet using the common phrase *maktūb*, which means “it is written.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Arabic root “k-t-b” or “kataba” associates the meaning “to write” with “to destine”, so that an Arab- it is important to remember Cide Hamete is one- would not think of writing without associating this action with the establishment of an unchangeable destiny.⁴⁶ It is in this way that it seems that Cide Hamete is wisely warning Avellaneda with an ominous *maktūb*: the story of *Don Quijote* has remained written and no one should desecrate the bones of this tomb against the guardianship of death.

The implacability of the writing of this Primordial Pen is set in that the ink which writes on the Well-Preserved Tablet has dried. Baralt points to a tradition attributed to the Prophet, which says that “the pen has already dried” [*qad jaffa ’a al-qalam*].⁴⁷ In *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, William Chittick explores the meaning of this *ḥadīth*, “The pen has dried concerning what shall be.”⁴⁸ The Pen, as identified by the Prophet Muhammad, is connected to the Intellect through which creation takes place, and it is this Intellect that has already inscribed everything that will happen from the

⁴⁴ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 414.

⁴⁵ Baralt, “The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote*”, 508.

⁴⁶ Ibid. It is curious that the common Islamic phrase, “As it is written, so it shall come to pass.” has survived in the Spanish vernacular as “*estaba escrito que iba a pasar.*”

⁴⁷ Ibid, 509.

⁴⁸ William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 113.

beginning of creation to its end.⁴⁹ This is the basis for Muslim belief in that all has already been created, and indeed, predestined. It is because of this that no one should (or even *could*) take up the Supreme *Qur'anic* Pen again to “rewrite” that which the Supreme Intellect (God) has already written with ink that has already evaporated forever. Perhaps this is the reason why Cervantes has the fictitious Cide hang up his pen. This would be a way of indicating to Avellaneda that he will not be able, against the author’s will, to resuscitate *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, because the prodigious ink with which he was written has already dried forever.⁵⁰ It is important to point out that in Spanish “Don Quijote de la Mancha” literally means “Don Quijote of the ink stain”, as *mancha* in the non-proper form of the noun means “stain”. Cide also admits that the pen with which he has written *Quijote* might either be “well or ill cut.”⁵¹ This is significant in light of the fact that the Sufi poets complained, according to Schimmel, in a number of variations that, “the writing of their destiny was crooked, because the Pen was cut the wrong way.”⁵²

Although the invective against Avellaneda has significance in the more popular Islamic context previously discussed, the depth of its Islamic character is rooted in a more learned theological context, particularly in relation to the *Sūra al-Qalam* or *sūra* of the “Pen”. Indeed, Baralt points out that it is plausible that Cervantes had the curiosity to investigate more closely the popularized leitmotiv of the Creator-Pen and of the Well-Preserved Tablet, then perhaps his acquaintance in Algiers was able to explain to him

⁴⁹ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, 117.

⁵⁰ Baralt, “The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote*”, 509.

⁵¹ Montgomery, *Cervantes' Quixote*, 825.

⁵² Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 414.

what the *Qur'an* had to say on the subject of this mythology.⁵³ Although it is admittedly difficult to gauge the range of Cervantes' information of matters of Islamic theology, it remains in evidence that the *Qur'an* should constitute one the most useful contexts for understanding Cide Hamete's apostrophe to his Creator-Pen.⁵⁴

The *Sūra al-Qalam* opens with the address: “*Nun*. By the pen and what they [the angels] write, you are not mad: thanks to the favour of your Lord!”⁵⁵ It is clear from this that the *sūra* of this Pen of Destiny serves the Prophet Muhammad as a form of solace, because he has been accused of being mad for echoing the divine discourse. Further on the passage, the disbelievers deny the story written by the Supreme Pen of the all-encompassing God. As Q 68:44 states, “So leave me with those that deny this discourse/ We will draw them into imperceptibly [into ruin]/ whence they do not know.” The divine word admonishes this symbolic traitor by entreating, “And do not obey the mischief-making slanderer/the opponent of the good/the wicked transgressor/the bully who is of doubtful birth”⁵⁶ The similarities between the invective of this *sūra* against those who doubt the divine word, and that of Cervantes against Avellaneda are astounding, particularly when read in the context of Cervantes' warnings to his imposter, who published his “bastard” writing as a continuation of Cide Hamete Benengeli's “true” story. The characterization of Cide Hamete Benengeli's “true” *Quijote* bears an added degree of significance in light of the verses within this *Sūra* that not only defend the Prophet's words as true, but because the pen of the *Sūra al-Qalam* writes the “authentic” divine word.

⁵³ Baralt, “The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote*”, p. 509.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Q 68:1.

⁵⁶ Q 68: 10-13.

The *Sūra al-Qalam* continues with the parable of the garden. The *Qur'an* makes it clear that in this passage the garden symbolizes the writing or divine creation that the “bastards” have wanted to desecrate: “Therefore leave to Me those that deny this revelation!”⁵⁷ The passage contends that the unbelievers have a secret plan to deprive the just man of his rights, and that they secretly enter the symbolic garden at night to loot it. However, once they arrive at the orchard, they realize that God has ruined it, thus impeding the offense the planned to carry out.⁵⁸ It is important to point out that Cervantes similarly found himself having to precipitate the destruction of his character *Don Quijote*, accelerating his death in order to prevent further misappropriation of his text, already once violated by Avellaneda.⁵⁹ Furthermore, it is known that *Don Quijote* is characterized as being mad and delirious. After all, he is the man who confused windmills with giants. Nonetheless, upon an honest reading of the text, it is apparent that his delirium is only one of appearance. In fact, it transmits lucid literary secrets for the reader who cares to unravel them with good faith.

There is a parallel between the madness of *Don Quijote*, which is the character through which Cide Hamete Benengeli pens his quest, and between the accusations of insanity the Prophet Muhammad had to endure from the disbelievers. In both cases, the delirium or insanity charged was false and only believable to incredibly narrow-minded and twisted individuals. Although *Don Quijote* is a critique of chivalry from the outside, once the reader begins to peel the layers, and opens up to the text, it becomes clear that Cervantes praises and laments the loss of this ideal through irony and exaggeration. Likewise, the perception of the Prophet as insane could only occur through a narrow

⁵⁷ Q 68:44.

⁵⁸ Q 17-27.

⁵⁹ Baralt, “The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote*”, 509.

rendering and close-mindedness to the divine word. It is important to note that the comparisons between *Don Quijote* and the *Qur'an* are not meant to portray *Don Quijote* as a text imbued with sacredness. The point of these comparisons is to portray how Cervantes defended his creation from spurious falsification by structuring his invective towards Avellaneda within a grander allusion to the Celestial Pen in the *Sūra al-Qalam*.

The Pen's admonition with which this *sūra* opens is a clear challenge to every possible attack on the authentic, revealed text-an inviolable garden-written by the Supreme Pen.⁶⁰ Cervantes uses the same kind of challenge to structure Cide Hamete Benengeli's speech to his pen in the *Quijote*. As Baralt points out, "His delirium...is only one of appearance...it transmits lucid literary secrets for the prudent reader...and [one] with not two ounces not of the Tuscan language, as Cervantes once said, but of the Islamic language or culture that he or she might possess."⁶¹

Cide's speaking pen boasts that the writing of the text had been destined "for her alone" [para mí sola]. The Supreme Pen and the Well-Preserved Tablet constitute in Islam an inviolable "spiritual marriage". It follows that this Well-Preserved Tablet of the *Qur'an* has been reserved since eternity for this Celestial Pen- exactly as the enterprise of Cide's pen was reserved solely for its creation.⁶² Baralt points out that the Celestial Pen and the Tablet are as inseparably wedded in Islamic cosmology as the primordial pair of Adam and Eve, created by God. It is of further note that in his *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* or Meccan Revelations, Ibn 'Arabi of Murcia argues that the Pen is active in relation to the Well-Preserved Tablet, but that it is receptive in its relation to God, for whom it serves as

⁶⁰ Baralt, "The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote*", 510.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 510-511.

a creative instrument.⁶³ This duality intimates that the Primordial Pen of God serves as an intermediary between the Supreme Creator and His “written” creation because it “ties together” both cosmological poles.⁶⁴

In other words, the Supreme Pen simultaneously looks to God and to the created cosmos that lies below it. The face that is turned towards the creator is receptive, while the face that is turned to the Tablet (which represents the lower levels of creation that arise from this celestial calligraphy) is active. In the *Tao of Islam*, Sachiko Murata explains that the Pen, is an isthmus, a bridge, or a connecting thread between two poles.⁶⁵ Indeed, Murata also contends that, “Just as the human world needed an Adam and an Eve, so also the cosmos as a whole needed a spiritual Adam and a spiritual Eve-Pen and Tablet- to bring the heavens, earth, and everything between the two into existence.”⁶⁶

It is vital to note that perhaps when Cide claims he is hanging his prodigious pen from a wire, he is indicating that his goose-quill pen is the symbolic intermediary between the Creator-Intellect, the author Cervantes, and his written creation, the story of *Don Quijote*.⁶⁷ Cide could also be suggesting that his writing is duly “tied” to the powerful wit of its author, who knows how to control it perfectly. From this perspective, Cervantes offers that this symbolic cord that sustains the mediating pen between the invisible Supreme Intellect (Cervantes) and the fictional world this Intellect has created.⁶⁸ To this end, Cervantes uses a pen that is more Islamic than Western.

⁶³ Baralt, “The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote*”, 510-512.

⁶⁴ Laleh Bakhtiar, *Sufi Expressions of the Mythic Quest*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 28.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 163. (Sachiko Murata, *Tao of Islam*, as cited in Bakhtiar, *Sufi Expressions*).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁶⁷ Villanueva, *Personajes y temas del Quijote*, 37.

⁶⁸ Baralt, “The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote*”, 512.

The final coincidence between the Supreme Pen of the *Qur'an* and Cervantes' *Quijote* involves the fact that in Islam, the Supreme Pen, the ink with which it writes, and the Well-Preserved Tablet are all identified with a procession of angels.⁶⁹ These angels are the co-creators of the divine writing, and lead us to consider the name of Cide Hamete Benengeli. The name of the presumed "Arabic" author of *Quijote* has given rise to a number of attempts at decoding on the part of critics, but the most relevant to this study is the hypothesis put forth by Julio Baena. Baena emphasizes the phonetic rule that Cervantes frequently uses in his invention of name: "Para Sancho, Benengeli no *significa*, sino que *suena* a 'berenjena'" [For Sancho, Benengeli does not *mean* "berenjena" (or eggplant); instead it *sounds* like "berenjena"].⁷⁰ Baena concludes that to one who focuses on sound over meaning, "*Ben-Engeli* sounds like *Hijo del Angel* (angel's son), although that is not its etymological meaning."⁷¹ Cide has, in effect, a name that could phonetically be associated in Spanish with *Ben-Engeli* or *hijo del angel* (angel's son). It is possible that Cervantes is insinuating the his Cide Hamete *Ben-Engeli* is an intermediary between the Supreme Maker- Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra- and the story of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Whatever the case, it is important to recall that Cervantes also has an angel's name. More directly, he has the name of an archangel- "Miguel" or "Michael" in English. This nominal connection leaves him inexorably tied to his Muslim alter-ego.

Concluding Remarks: Sealing the Connections

The *Qur'an's* influence in literature is usually studied within its relationships with the Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Punjabi, and Malay literary canons. This is only natural, as

⁶⁹ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, 117.

⁷⁰ Julio Baena, "Modos del hacedor de nombres cervantinos: el significado de Cide Hamete Benengeli", *Indiana Journal of Hispanic Studies* 2 (1994): 55.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Islam has been most influential in these areas. However, in continuing to explore the role of the *Qur'an* in Spanish literature, which includes the literature of *al-Andalus*, as well as that of the periods and cultures beyond, it may be possible to expand the scope of the relationship between the *Qur'an* and literature. This expansion may aid in portraying *al-Andalus* as something beyond Muslim nostalgia. Furthermore, at a time when the world is characterized by deeply rooted problems of foundational identities, exploring the role of foundational religious texts in the literary canons of various cultures, will aid in dispelling myths of ideological purity within civilizations. Possibly the key achievement of *al-Andalus* was to create an identity from difference. In other words, the questions of identity and belonging that plague so many in both the modern Muslim and European worlds, were confronted on a daily basis, successfully and unsuccessfully, by the inhabitants of Old Andalusia. Their exceptionality lies in the fact that they were able to forge an identity whose distinguishing characteristic was difference as the common factor. It was an identity forged from cultural praxis, and not from ideological purity.

Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra understood that the literature of *al-Andalus*, and the Muslim influence in Spain were inextricable parts of Spanish history, as well as of Muslim and European history. Ultimately, by portraying the influence of the *Qur'an* in both Andalusian literature and in the classical (*Siglo de Oro*) Spanish literature, it is possible to broaden not only the narrative of the influence of the *Qur'an* in the Spanish arts, but also the narrative of literary history in Spain and in the Muslim world to be more inclusive, representative, and infinitely richer.

III. Contextualizing the Vestiges of an Old World: Américo Castro and Aljamiado Literature

“Doquiera que estamos lloramos por España; que, en fin, nacimos en ella y es nuestra patria natural [...]. Agora conozco y experimento lo que suele decirse, que es dulce el amor de la patria.”⁷²

“No matter where we are we weep for Spain; for, after all, we were born in her and she is our native country [...]. Now I know and experience what is commonly told, that love of one’s country is sweet indeed.”⁷³

- Don Quijote de la Mancha
II

The line above is part of a larger confession of loss found in the second part of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* in an exchange between *Quijote*’s trusted and affable companion, *Sancho Panza*, and a *morisco*⁷⁴ named *Ricote*. In this episode, *Ricote* has returned from his exile disguised as a German pilgrim, and expresses the acute pain of exile to his former neighbor.⁷⁵ The highly influential Spanish cultural historian and philologist, Américo Castro y Quesada (1885-1972) cites this episode in his *España en su historia* [Spain in its history, 1948] as literary evidence for his theory that the *moriscos* subscribed to an idiosyncratic form of Spanish nationalism. He contends that the *moriscos* felt as “Spanish” as the Old Christians, and that they founded their national consciousness in the glorious past of *al-Andalus*.⁷⁶

Contentions such as these challenged the dominant perceptions of Spanish identity, especially because they formed part of Castro’s larger historiography, which

⁷² Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Luis Andres Murillo, II: Chapter 54; 813.

⁷³ Montgomery, *Cervantes’ Don Quijote*, II: Chapter 54; p.451.

⁷⁴ *Morisco* is a term meaning “moorish” and was the designated term for Muslims forced to convert to Christianity under threat of expulsion and/or death in Spain and Portugal in the early 1500s. Over time, it became used in a pejorative sense and applied to Catholics that were secretly practicing Islam. The *moriscos* were eventually expelled between 1609 (in Valencia) and 1614 (Castile).

⁷⁵ Vincent Barletta, “Américo Castro, los moriscos y la literatura aljamiada”, *Iberoamericana* X: 38 (2010): 116.

⁷⁶ Américo Castro, *España en su historia. Cristianos, moros y judíos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1948), 85.

held that Spaniards did not become the distinct group they are until the Muslim conquest of Iberia in 711 A.D. Castro also catalyzed a polemic amongst Spanish intellectuals by stating that Spain and Portugal were adversely affected by the *Reconquista*, and by the subsequent expulsion of both Jews and Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula.⁷⁷ A crucial part to this historiography was his idea of *convivencia*. *Convivencia* aspired to describe the mental processes taking place in the collective consciousness of the three cultures-Christian, Muslim, and Jewish-present in Muslim Spain.⁷⁸ The concept, however, was never meant to be tested against the social and political realities of the interactions between these three cultures.⁷⁹ By extension, the quotidian experience of living was missing from the concept, which in English is usually translated as “living together.”

Due to the far-reaching influence of his idealized historiography, studying the role of Muslims in Spain has generally been hampered by the inability to move beyond Castro’s grand narrative. This is not to deny that Castro’s scholarship is the reason why the history of Muslims in Spain was even taken seriously, but it is important to move beyond Castro’s narration in order to visualize a clearer and more comprehensive history of Muslims in Spain- particularly of those who remained after the *Reconquista*. The purpose of this analysis is to move beyond the aspects of Castro’s grand narrative that have stunned the presence of Muslims in Spain by exploring the socio-historical origins of *aljamiado* literature, and through an analysis of the *aljofores*- or prophecies- that comprise a substantive part of *aljamiado*. Before proceeding with this examination, however, it is necessary to understand the historical context of Castro’s thought in order

⁷⁷ Maya Soifer, “Beyond *convivencia*: Critical Reflections on the Historiography of Interfaith Relations in Christian Spain”, *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* I: I (2009): 19.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 21-23.

to better assimilate the inability of his historiography to provide a proper framework for the study of *aljamiado* literature.

The Historical Context of Castro's Historiography

Castro's earliest interest was in *Don Quijote*,⁸⁰ and his initial fame emerged from his study of *El Pensamiento de Cervantes* (Cervantes' Thought), which came out in 1925.⁸¹ His efforts to comprehend Cervantes in the terms of thought set forth by the European Renaissance proved to be particularly difficult because Spain and its history were so vastly different, and in some ways, entirely apart from the larger Renaissance trends. His dissatisfaction with his own efforts to understand Cervantes in European thought- or the inability to place Cervantes within the larger social and intellectual paradigms of the Renaissance- led to his interest in Spanish history and historical theory. For this reason, Castro's perceptions and interpretations of Spanish history first came into wide circulation throughout the 1940s. His theories and publications expanded once he was in the United States, after being forced to emigrate in 1936 as a result of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).⁸² This latter fact is vital to understanding another aspect of Castro's thought, in that it is important to keep in mind that he was a member of the government of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939), and served as its ambassador to Germany. This anti-monarchist government was officially dissolved in 1939- by the victorious loyalist Republican forces, or *nacionales*, led by the *generalissimo* Francisco Franco.⁸³ Castro's participation in the government of the Second Republic is significant because his thought was staunchly part of the Liberal tradition in Spanish history. This

⁸⁰ Stephen Gilman and Edmund L. King, *An Idea of History: Selected Essays of Américo Castro* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 5-7.

⁸³ *Ibid.*,10.

tradition formed a crucial part of the anti-monarchist intellectual movement that led to the creation of the Second Spanish Republic in the first place.

Due to the tumultuous and highly politicized environment of Spain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is impossible to ignore that these were plagued by the creation of multiple national myths of both sacred and secular character.⁸⁴ It is interesting- although not surprising- that the majority of these newly-created myths took the sixteenth century as their starting point. Since the early nineteenth century, liberals, conservatives, and subsequent ideologues of both the left and the right in the political spectrum, relied heavily on the early modern period because it was the most fertile ground for the construction of myth. The past was a territory that, once “conquered and defined, would serve to construct the present.”⁸⁵ In this sense, a significant portion of the ideas that marked the Spanish intellectual tradition during the early twentieth century contributed to, and were, “myths” in as much as they were deliberately created to respond to a positive need. They were subsequently construed as “true” because they represented a certain perception of the past.⁸⁶ Such is the case with the representation of King Philip II in the Liberal tradition of Spanish history.

The nineteenth century Liberal formulation came from men who were writers and politicians who had spent years in exile as a result of civil conflict in Spain. In their writings, they tried to find ways through which they could distance Spain from the despotism they experienced during, and after, the Napoleonic invasion.⁸⁷ Philip II’s historical standing in Spanish history provided them with the figure they needed to

⁸⁴ Henry Kamen, *Imagining Spain: Historical Myth and National Identity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 22.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 22-24.

⁸⁷ Gilman and King, *An Idea of History: Selected Essays of Américo Castro*, 59.

substantiate their perspective. A classic expression for their perception of Phillip II comes from Lafuente, who wrote in his 1850 *History*:

“We have found in Philip II the gifts of a great statesman but also the qualities of a great despot. He refused to be dominated by anybody and had to dominate everybody, he had to be an absolute king. All his acts bore the seal of mystery and darkness.”⁸⁸

The ideas of the Liberal tradition were almost entirely inherited by the intellectuals who led the Second Republic in 1931, and they took up, once more, the tale of a particularly evil Philip II.

Castro was one of these intellectuals, and in the appendix to his *España en su historia*, he even commented on the theme “Why the Spaniards did not love Phillip II”.⁸⁹ In this way, it is apparent that the appendix was a product of Castro’s time, especially when it’s taken into account that the Franco regime attempted to rehabilitate the monarchy, and pursued an aggressive acclamation campaign to this end.⁹⁰ As an inheritor of the Liberal tradition, Castro’s ideas formed part of the accepted image of a Spain run by friars and monks, and rendered illiterate by the tyranny of Philip II and the Inquisition.⁹¹ While Philip II’s tyranny and the Inquisition did have devastating effects on Spanish society, the total acquiescence to this idea is rendered suspect by the fact that it was used to explain why Spain was always at the rear of European scientific and intellectual life.⁹² In other words, the excesses of Philip II’s reign and of the Inquisition were used to explain away Spain’s lack of productivity, and its slowly paced industrialization.⁹³

⁸⁸ Gilman and King, *An Idea of History: Selected Essays of Américo Castro*, 59

⁸⁹ Américo Castro, *España en su historia*, 673.

⁹⁰ Kamen, *Imagining Spain: Historical Myth and National Identity*, p. 61.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 141.

While these were certainly factors, the sixteenth century in Spanish history was far too complex and intricate to serve as the source of a simplistic narration of history. Furthermore, Spain was a land far too diverse and distinct from Europe to have been held to the standard of other European nations. Nonetheless, even renowned historians like Castro pandered to this simplified vision, as is evident in statements like, “The most informed and free spirits say that the country suffered from a clerical tumor, which they sometimes identify as one of the causes of national decline.”⁹⁴

Despite its subjection and contributions to national myth-making, Castro’s analyses of Spanish history are invaluable to the study of this history, if only because he was the first to correctly identify Islam as a major force for cultural creation and change in Iberia.⁹⁵ His work-and the controversies it generated- brought the formative Semitic elements of Spanish culture into the larger construct of Spanish history.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the limitations of Castro’s thought offer opportunities to contextualize *aljamiado* literature beyond his more essentialist characterizations of Muslims in Spain. However, before understanding the limitations that Castro’s grand narrative poses to the study of *aljamiado* literature, it is vital to comprehend the historical context in which this form of literature arose.

Origins of Aljamiado Literature

The *moriscos* were the descendants of the last freely practicing Muslims of what became a unified Christian Spain in 1492, after the *Reconquista*. By 1499, the guarantees

⁹⁴ José Luis Gómez- Martínez, *Américo Castro y el origen de los españoles: historia de una polémica* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1975), 55.

⁹⁵ Soifer, “Beyond *convivencia*: Critical Reflections on the Historiography of Interfaith Relations in Christian Spain”, 27.

⁹⁶ For a more detailed look at the controversies Castro’s thoughts generated- specifically the polemic that ensued with the historian Claudio Sánchez Albornoz- see José Luis Gómez- Martínez’s “Américo Castro y el origen de los españoles”, 34-42.

of religious freedom of the Capitulation Accords signed by Ferdinand and Isabella in Granada had been violently rescinded.⁹⁷ As a result, Spain's cultural landscape was radically redrawn by the forced conversions of the *mudéjares*,⁹⁸ and by the public burning of books written in Arabic all throughout the sixteenth century.⁹⁹ It is interesting to note that this was also the century during which the New World was being explored, and then colonized, by men and women who were mostly from the southern provinces that had previously composed the heartland of *al-Andalus*.¹⁰⁰ The descendants of the Andalusians were now the *moriscos*, who were forced to convert to Christianity by forces well beyond their control. As a result, the *moriscos* both were and were not Muslims. In the same way, their Jewish counterparts- the *conversos*- faced similar problems that came from having to keep an imposed identity. The *conversos*, however, were more successful in assimilating to the new Spanish cultural landscape than the *moriscos*, and were thus able to remain intellectually active.¹⁰¹ Many Spaniards, of every stripe and every background, were thus caught living in a world of, as the late Cuban Professor of Spanish Literature María Rosa Menocal, puts it, “fun-house mirrors”.¹⁰² It was a world created by a whole series of edicts, which required people to profess transparent falseness in exchange for their lives.

⁹⁷ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 258-259.

⁹⁸ *Mudéjares* were the last freely practicing Muslims of Iberia. They remained in the Peninsula after the *Reconquista*, and subsequently became *moriscos*, which was the designated term for the new Muslim converts to Christianity.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹⁰¹ Luce López Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 171. An example of one of these *conversos* was the Spanish author, dramatist, and successful lawyer Fernando de Rojas. He is known for his only surviving work, *La Celestina*, which is considered to be one of the most significant in the Spanish literary canon, even as it oscillates between being considered the last work of the Spanish Middle Ages and/or the first work of the Spanish Renaissance.

¹⁰² Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 259.

The *moriscos* who did not (or would not) totally succumb to the culture and religion of their conquerors, or those who did not escape to Muslim countries, were forced to go underground in the sixteenth century. Throughout this century, laws were passed decreeing their gradual cultural assimilation, and by extension, their ultimate annihilation as a distinct people. Islamic religious practices were forbidden in the Edicts of 1501, 1502, 1524, and 1526. In the Edict of 1567, the use of written and spoken Arabic was prohibited, as was the possession of Arabic books “of any kind and quality whatever.”¹⁰³ But in the midst of their collective misfortune, the men and women of this group fought to keep alive a sense of their identity and cohesion as a people, in spite of the forced baptisms they were subjected to, and even up to the time of their expulsion from Spain in 1609.¹⁰⁴ These *moriscos*, who in a few years had become a strangled minority condemned to death as a people, produced an astonishing, and still very little-studied, literature: Moorish *aljamiado* literature.

Aljamiado (meaning “mixed”) literature is a clandestine literature that was discovered well after the expulsion in 1609. In 1728, several manuscripts that had been hidden inside the column of a house in Ricla (in Zaragoza, Aragón, Spain) were discovered.¹⁰⁵ In 1884, a much larger collection was discovered under a false floor in a demolished house in Almonacid de la Sierra in Zaragoza.¹⁰⁶ A significant portion of this literature remains largely unpublished, and is dispersed in libraries throughout Spain, the East, and across Europe.¹⁰⁷ The first thing one notes about this literature- and the most

¹⁰³ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, p. 171.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁰⁵ Luce López Baralt, “The Secret Literature of the Last Muslims of Spain”, *Islamic Studies* 36: 1 (1997), 22.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

¹⁰⁷ Luce López Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 172.

significant- is its hybrid and cryptic nature. The manuscripts are written in the Spanish (that is, Castilian) language, or in other Romance languages such as Portuguese or Valencian, but with Arabic characters.¹⁰⁸ This incredible phenomenon leads to the logical (and startling) realization that a considerable portion of the literature of the *Siglo de Oro* was so orientalized that knowledge of the Arabic language is necessary in order to read it.¹⁰⁹

When the study of *aljamiado* began in the nineteenth century, there were very high hopes for this literature because scholars believed that this discovery would lead to the literal unearthing of hidden gems of Spanish literature. Indeed the words of the Spanish author Serafín Estébanez Calderón when he accepted the chair of Arabic at the *Ateneo de Madrid* in 1848 reflect this enthusiasm: “It [*aljamiado* literature] is, one might say, the Indies of Spanish literature, virtually undiscovered and unexplored, and offering great riches to those first men and women who visit it.”¹¹⁰ Despite the optimism, however, Menéndez y Pelayo’s remark remains true today: “*el éxito no ha correspondido a tan risueñas esperanzas*” [‘success has not smiled upon these bright hopes’].¹¹¹

Unfortunately, *aljamiado* literature has not yielded great figures of literature, history, or religion, but rather consists of largely utilitarian and proselytizing texts. In general, the manuscripts tend to be of two sorts: they either record Muslim rites and doctrines which were beginning to be lost, or they indulge in fiercely anti-Christian polemics.¹¹² In both cases, they betray a significant decline from the sophisticated writings of the Muslims of *al-Andalus* like al-Hashimī, Ibn-Ḥazm and Averroës.

¹⁰⁸ Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 259.

¹⁰⁹ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 172.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Baralt, “The Secret Literature of the Last Muslims of Spain”, 23.

Although not yielding much substantive literary value, the deciphered manuscripts do reveal other interests of the *morisco* community.

These manuscripts were legal tracts, treatises on magic and sorcery, recipes, prophecies for the future (called *aljofores*), instructions on how to proceed should the Inquisition surprise their authors and readers, testimonial writings that chronicle their persecution, *ḥadīṣ* or legends, *azjāl* in honor of Muhammad, and poetry in imitation of Lope de Vega.¹¹³ While *aljamiado* literature is generally considered to be pedestrian by those who have studied it from a strictly aesthetic point of view (especially in comparison to the literary production of Spain during the *Siglo de Oro*), Professor Luce Lopéz Baralt of the University of Puerto Rico contends that, "...it offers up some literary pieces of real and indisputable beauty."¹¹⁴ A couple of these pieces are the epic-romance legends or *ḥadīṣ* (as the *aljamiado* authors refer to them) of the Golden Fortress [*El Alcázar de Oro*] and the *ḥadīṣ* of Zaryeb's Bath [*El Baño de Zaryeb*].¹¹⁵ Certain poems by the *aljamiado* author Mahomed Rabadán are also considered to be in this category.¹¹⁶

Despite the number of reservations regarding the aesthetic value of *aljamiado* works, it is impossible to deny that these tragic and hybrid anonymous writers merit a place in the literature of the Spanish Renaissance, to which they undoubtedly belong. These manuscripts written in Arabic characters but in the vernacular languages of Iberia, have a very significant literary quality if read attentively from a somewhat different literary perspective: through them it is possible to see- and more importantly, to feel- the sorrow of the gradual extinction of an entire people, as well as their efforts to abate the

¹¹³ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 174-179.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹¹⁵ Z. David Zuwiyya, "Arab Culture and Morisco Heritage in an Aljamiado Legend: "Al-hadit del baño de Zaryeb", *Romacen Quarterly* 48: I (2001), 33.

¹¹⁶ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 174.

historical forces that would overwhelm, and eventually, crush them. For this reason, it is necessary to do justice to this form of literature by avoiding studying it simply within Castro's grand narrative of Muslim presence in Spain.

Aljamiado Literature and Castro's Historiography

*“Pero la tradición, la conciencia del prestigio islámico, permitieron al morisco, no obstante su decadencia, labrarse una vida propia y en cierto modo independiente en cuanto a la economía y a la práctica más o menos clara de su religión.”*¹¹⁷

“But the tradition, the consciousness of [their] Islamic prestige, permitted the Moor, regardless of his decline, to create his own life and in some way, one that was independent, in regards to the more or less apparent practice of his religion.”

- Américo Castro

The statement above exemplifies Castro's theory of continuity in regards to the Andalusian heritage of the *moriscos*, which forms part of his greater historical and ideological program. Castro suggests that it was precisely the existence of this kind of collective consciousness amongst the *moriscos* that allowed them to resist the attacks of the dominant group [the Christians] after the *Reconquista*.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, he contends that it was this factor that allowed them to maintain a separate culture throughout the sixteenth century until their official expulsions in 1609 from Valencia and in 1614 from Castile.¹¹⁹ What does not form part of Castro's argument- at least not explicitly- is the role of *aljamiado* literature in the processes of resistance he mentions.

In general terms, Castro seeks to establish a religious, historical, and cultural continuity amongst the Muslim communities of Iberia in the fifteenth (pre-*Reconquista*) and sixteenth (post-*Reconquista*) centuries. In the second chapter of Castro's seminal work, *España en su historia*, “*Islam e Iberia*” [Islam and Iberia], he offers a monolithic view of the Muslim community from the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries. An

¹¹⁷ Américo Castro, *España en su historia*, 92.

¹¹⁸ Barletta, “Américo Castro, los moriscos y la literatura aljamiada”, 113.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

important point to make in regards to his analysis is that he does not even mention in “Islam and Iberia” the complexity of *morisco* experience in Portugal. This kingdom contained a significant Muslim population before and after the conversions and expulsions of 1497.¹²⁰ Additionally, in anthropological terms, it does not make much sense to separate the Spanish *moriscos* from the Portuguese ones. Apart from the profound transnational quality of the *mudéjar* communities, a significant number of the “Castilian” *mudéjares* that were forcibly converted in 1502 were actually Portuguese Muslim men and women who entered the Kingdom of Castile after being expelled from the Kingdom of Portugal in 1497.¹²¹ This is not to say that differences between Portuguese and Castilian *moriscos* did not exist. The point is that they were not distinct enough to justify a division of these communities by modern historians, especially not in a chapter that pretends to analyze the conditions of Islam in “Iberia”.

Moving beyond Castro’s cultural reductionism, it becomes necessary to focus on the literary question to which he briefly alludes. Despite the weight he attributes to the *aljamiado* literature that was produced and/or re-copied in Aragón and Castile during the sixteenth century, this literature contains two fundamental characteristics in Castro’s mind: 1) it is not very good, and 2) it reflects the Spanish nationalism of the *moriscos*- no matter if they were Castilian, Aragonese, or Valencian (or for that matter, Portuguese).

In the first case, Castro explicitly speaks about the scarce literary merit of *aljamiado* literature:

“In sum, the relation between *Moriscos* and Christians still recalled that of the Middle Ages, with the difference that the literary and scientific culture of the *Moriscos* now boasted no Averroës or Ibn Ḥazm, and that their writings (preserved in Spanish as spoken

¹²⁰ Barletta, “Américo Castro, los moriscos y la literatura aljamiada”, 114.

¹²¹ Ibid.

in Aragón and written in Arabic characters- that is, *aljamía*, as this written language is called) are lacking in any special value.”¹²²

From the excerpt above, it is possible to infer that Castro proposes to define the culture of the *morisco* communities along the lines of what it was not or, better stated, of what it had *ceased* to be. For Castro, the *moriscos*- and their literary culture- essentially represent an echo of *al-Andalus*. Their writings are what Professor Vincent Barletta from Stanford University described as, “...a leaf ripped from the tree of *la convivencia*...,” which Castro seeks to present as the basis of the Spanish nation or, in his words, of the “*alma ibérica*” [Iberian soul].¹²³

In regards to the second point, Castro assigns to the *moriscos* a singular form of Spanish nationalism, as was alluded to at the opening of this analysis in the exchange between *Sancho Panza* and *Ricote*. In this contention, the case of the Portuguese *moriscos* needs to be re-visited, specifically because the fully *Iberian* context of the various processes of conquest, conversion, collaboration, negotiation, resistance, assimilation, and expulsion that altogether form the *morisco* phenomenon in the early modern period are nearly entirely left out of his analysis. It is fitting to ask what the nationalist inclinations of the Portuguese *moriscos*- in regards to Castro’s vision of “Spain”- would be, given that the majority of these Portuguese *moriscos* were (even in 1536, when the Portuguese Inquisition was established) slaves and recent immigrants from the Maghreb.¹²⁴

These two points notwithstanding, a large part of the problems that attenuate the strength of Castro’s theories of *aljamiado* literature is that he was not familiar with the

¹²² Américo Castro, *España en su historia*, 91.

¹²³ Barletta, “Américo Castro, los moriscos y la literatura aljamiada”, 115.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

aljamiado manuscripts. Castro could not read Arabic, and he derived his knowledge of *aljamiado* literature solely through transcriptions and modern editions that in many cases erased the most significant aspects of these documents.¹²⁵ In other words, despite the fact that Castro was an astute historian who was motivated by a serious commitment to systematize Iberian history within the theoretical vertices of the Liberal tradition- and their concurrent nationalist and ideological programs- he never had contact with the most important sources from which to create any viable theory concerning the nationalist, aesthetic, linguistic, and religious practices of the *moriscos*.¹²⁶ In simpler terms, Castro's project far exceeded his grasp. What he could not do now presents itself as a challenge for other scholars, who now have the tools to present *aljamiado* for what it was in the lives of the people who wrote and read it.

In context: La literatura aljamiada

The *aljamiado* authors were the chroniclers of a vanishing world. In contrast to the chroniclers of the "New" World, who speak about the founding of a world, and who in order to do so are forced to use a language that is barely sufficient to the task of describing so many alien experiences and vistas, the *morisco* chroniclers describe their gradual sense of being culturally maimed. They recorded the experience of being gradually stripped of their cultural and religious heritage, and did so in a language that became ever more withered and stunted. The sheer sorrow of their testimony is so dramatic that that aspect alone constitutes one of its most important values, not only in human and historical terms, but also in literary ones. Professor Baralt points out that:

¹²⁵ Barletta, "Américo Castro, los moriscos y la literatura aljamiada", 115.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

“*Aljamiado* literature is as a legitimate and as worthy a study as Columbus’s *Diary* or Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la nueva España*, though for opposite reasons: these last-mentioned chronicles speak to us about the founding of a world, while the first, of the extinction of a world.”¹²⁷

The sixteenth century bore witness to an incredible historical juxtaposition. At the same time Spain was colonizing the new Indies, it was strangling out the last vestiges of Orientalism in its own land. In a way, it was purging itself of an Old World, while simultaneously creating a new one.

The most elemental of the many tragedies that befell these *morisco* chroniclers was that they could not produce literature, religious proselytism, or narratives of their historical misfortunes in the language of their Peninsular forefathers. Classical Arabic, and even the most common form of Arabic, quickly slipped away from the *moriscos*. This situation is most acutely observed in the fact that there exist both Spanish and *aljamiado* versions of the *Suma de los principales mandamientos y devedamientos de la ley y çunna* [“Summa of the Principal Commandments and Prohibitions of the Law and Sunna”], by ‘Isā ibn Jābir written in 1462.¹²⁸ This important *alfaquí* and *mufti*, who lived in Segovia, wrote for the *mudéjares* of Castile, who would not have been able to understand had he written in Arabic.¹²⁹ The Arabic characters in which the *moriscos* wrote their Spanish, and which virtually comprised the full extent of their knowledge of their holy tongue, testify to their collective tragedy. The loss of the language of the *Qur’an* was grievous to Muslim believers, not only from the point of view of culture, but specially from the point of view of religion, given that in Islam, praying in the sacred tongue of the revelation is an essential part of the faith. It is not difficult to infer that the

¹²⁷ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 175.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

authors of these texts clung to their Arabic characters less for considerations of secrecy, than for the sacred dignity the Arabic letters held for them and their clandestine readers.¹³⁰ Due to this, the particular indignation of one of these crypto-Muslims, who had to translate an Arabic tract from Arabic to *aljamí*, is more acutely felt:

“...not one of our religious brothers or sisters knows the Arabic in which our Holy *Qur’an* was revealed, nor understands the truths of the religion, nor can appreciate its refined excellence, unless these things be conveniently stated to them in a foreign tongue, which is that of these Christian dogs, our tyrants and oppressors. May *Allah* confound them! Thus, then may I be pardoned by him who reads what is written in the heart, and who knows that my only intention is to open to the faithful of the Muslim religion the path to salvation, even if it be by this vile and despicable means.”¹³¹

While reading the Arabic phrases that open and close *aljamiado* texts, scholars of *aljamía* find that the classical tongue is plagued with errors.¹³² This occurrence is more poignantly felt after making the realization that these *moriscos* are the cultural heirs of authors such as Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi and Ibn Zaydūn. In light of this, Castro’s static view of Muslims in Iberia becomes even more unsubstantiated. The *moriscos* might have been the cultural heirs of the Andalusians, but they were entirely different- largely due to historical forces that were against them- from their forefathers.

The *moricos*’ ignorance of Arabic extended to the most basic rules of grammar. In his religious tracts, the Young Man of Arévalo, a supposedly “educated” *aljamiado* author, constantly rendered advice and teachings on Islamic subjects to readers within the dying Islamic culture in Iberia.¹³³ Despite his being an “educated” *aljamí*, the Young Man of Arévalo shows no theoretical mastery of the transcription which he so often uses, and engages in discussions that Professor Baralt claims, “...would be laughable were

¹³⁰ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 176.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 176-177.

¹³² M. de Manzaneres “El otro mundo en la literatura aljamiado-morisca”, *Hispanic Review* 41: 4 (1973), 601. For this reason, the parts of the texts that are linguistically in Arabic are often transcribed using the phonetic rules for *aljamiado* transcription.

¹³³ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 178.

they not so pathetic.”¹³⁴ This particular value judgment comes in response to one of the Young Man’s self-proclaimed “erudite” discussions on Arabic grammar within which he claims that the letters *ʾalif* (ا), *bāʾ* (ب), and *jīm* (ج) are the “vowels” of *aljamiado* (when, of course, except for *ʾalif*, they are not vowels, not even in Arabic): “for *aljamí*, its vowels are the alif and the be and the jīm, and without these three letters one cannot render a word into *aljamí*. All other letters accompany these...”¹³⁵

The extinction of Iberian Muslims as a cultural community is gradually revealed through the language they use, and it becomes apparent that they became another people. Even when the authors of religious treatises such as the Young Man of Arévalo try to show off their “knowledge” of the prestigious names of Islamic theologians and mystics of old, the result is slightly pathetic because they do not go beyond mere name-dropping. For example, even one of their better poets, Mahomed Rabadán indiscriminately scatters the names of “classic” Arab writers through his verses:

“To have beside my tongue
The conversation of Alhaçan
Of Cabualahbar the science
The sayings of Cadredata
Of Algazel the eloquence
Of Ben Arabi the discourse
The similes of Avicenna
Of Omar Bei the style
Of Almorabi the sententiousness...”¹³⁶

From excerpts like these it is difficult to escape the impression that the Moors were attributing doctrinal points to any convenient prestigious name. The linguistic and intellectual impoverishment of the *moriscos* frames the impression that *aljamiado* literature is the literature of a vanquished community that is reduced to tears and

¹³⁴ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 178.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Baralt, “The Secret Literature of the Last Muslims of Spain”, 22.

incessant wailing. The “Mora de Ubeda”, an old Muslim woman, shares her tragic personal story with the Young Man of Arévalo. She tells her interlocutor in detail about how she lost all her relatives and possessions during the siege of Granada in 1492.¹³⁷ The world of this old crypto-Muslim woman is coming apart before her eyes, and in another passage of the Young Man’s *Breve compendio (Abridged Compendium)* she grieves at the destruction of the holy books of Islam: “I saw *el alto alkiteb al-ḥaršidal*” [the Exalted Heavenly Book], “in the hands of a merchant who made a child’s papers out of it, and I picked up these folded folios, to my great sadness...”¹³⁸ Interestingly, the old Mora thinks that the Muslims of *al-Andalus* are themselves to blame for the present collective tragedy because of their lukewarm observation of the tenets of the faith: “The weepers themselves are the cause [of our present misfortunes], for the past [weepers] determined that the present [weepers] were to suffer”.¹³⁹ Despite (or possibly in spite) of her grief, the Mora is still hopeful that God will be merciful towards the Spanish Muslims and that He will permit, “that the minarets once more will stand in fixed tall peaks.”¹⁴⁰ This nearly desperate form of optimism amongst the *moriscos* led them to indulge in a staple of *aljamiado* literature- the *aljofores* or prophecies.

Los aljofores: Prophet Muhammad’s Oracle and the Prophetic Writings of St. Isidore

The collective despair of the *moriscos* predicated the need of the *aljamiado* writers to create an adequate subterfuge that helped distill the acuteness of their reader’s pain, and quite possibly, provided a small form of happiness, even if it was all false hope.

¹³⁷ Baralt, “The Secret Literature of the Last Muslims of Spain, 21.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22. Although this is not nearly an extreme example, it should be noted that undoubtedly due to the pressures they lived under, many *morisco* texts are known for their harsh and sometimes rigid religious judgments. This is readily seen in their more proselytizing texts as well as in their anti-Christian polemics, which the scholar of Islamic Spain, L.P. Harvey documents.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 22-24.

Aljofor writing is one of the most curious and moving dimensions of *aljamiado* literature because it was a pathetic example of collective wishful thinking. Written in the sixteenth century, *aljofores* pretend to be ancient manuscripts which foretell a glorious and triumphant future for the Muslims in Spain.¹⁴¹ By means of these *aljofores*, the *moriscos* attempted nothing less than the rewriting of their history and the manipulation of their future. Essentially, it was a literary and human experiment through which the *moriscos* sought to, as Américo Castro puts it, “un-live their lives”, and to destroy history by means of imagination.¹⁴² One of these attempts to thwart destiny through the pen was the creation of an *aljofor* that has the Prophet Muhammad himself bemoan the fall of Spanish Islam:

[Ibnu] ‘Abbāç rađiya al-lahu ‘anhu [may God have mercy upon him], recounted to us that one day Muḥammad, the messenger of God, řal-la al-lahu ‘alayhi wa řal-lam [may God bless him and give him salvation], was praying the evening prayer, and when he had done with his prayer he leaned over the pulpit and looked toward the setting sun [the West] and he cried and cried very greatly.

[Ibnu] ‘Abbāç radiya al-lahu ‘anhu [may God have mercy upon him], then said: “Oh, messenger of God! Why have you cried until you have wet the hairs of your beard with your tears?”

The Prophet Muḥammad, řal-la lahu ‘alayhi wa řal-lam [may God bless him and give him salvation], then said:

“I have wept because my Lord has shown me an island which is called Andalusia, which will be the most distant Island which will be populated of all of Islam, and will be the most first that Islam will be thrown from it.”¹⁴³

It is obvious that the Moors were offering a literary interpretation of their own existence, and they tried to dignify and exalt their historical fate with mystical earnestness.

Nevertheless, the fantasy of it all prevented them from taking a sober look at their

¹⁴¹ J.N. Lincoln, “Aljamiado Prophecies”, *Modern Language Association* (PMLA) 52: 3 (1937), 631.

¹⁴² Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 198.

¹⁴³ Luce López Baralt, “El oráculo de Mahoma sobre la Andalucía musulmana de los últimos tiempos en un manuscrito aljamiado-morisco de la Biblioteca Nacional de París”, *Hispanic Review* 52: I (1984); p. 51. In this excerpt, it is possible to see the transliteration of *aljamí* Arabic. It should be noted that this particular manuscript is found in the folios of ms.77 in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*.

writings. Another interesting *aljofor* found in the same manuscript as the one of Prophet Muhammad involves St. Isidore.

In a prophecy curiously favorable to Christianity titled “Plaint of Spain, taken by St. Isidore, most excellent doctor of all Spains, from a very old book called Secret of Secrets of Spain”, one “St. Isidore”¹⁴⁴ assumes a very oracular tone and states:

“Pity on the Agarenes [Muslims] of Spain! for the pride of their Alhambra, by the highest it will be taken, and the most lovely chivalry of Ronda, which it was wont to be called, and the great beauty of Málaga, and the fortress of Gibraltar, and the most delightful orchards and mountains which were their solace, all of it they will abandon. And so great will be their sorrow that they will not know where to flee nor what consolation to take.”¹⁴⁵

The author often uses a confused and fantastic symbolism reminiscent of that found in chivalric romances, as seen in statements like: “there will arise in the East a powerful serpent, and he will approach the ancient city of Constantinople and he will kill the Greek prince.”¹⁴⁶ The *morisco* who pretended to be St. Isidore foretells the final victory of the Muslims over the Spaniards, and thus scripts the optimism which laced the words of the Mora de Ubeda.

Interestingly, this pseudo-St. Isidore is familiar with certain historical events which he then manipulates to favor the Muslim cause. In his text he makes reference to the Edict of 1501 and describes it as the “wheel of one thousand five hundred and one” that will make the Muslims, “...take the holy oil [of baptism] by force...and will have very great injustices done to them.”¹⁴⁷ While the “wheel of 1501” did mark the

¹⁴⁴ This is an appropriation of the name of the eminent sixth-century doctor of the Church, St. Isidore of Seville.

¹⁴⁵ Baralt, “El oráculo de Mahoma sobre la Andalucía musulmana”, 42.

¹⁴⁶ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 203.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

beginnings of the forced baptisms, this collective tragedy would soon turn against the Christians:

“...when the wheel of two comes, or before, Christianity will be so strongly abashed, and in such a way worn and tattered, that good fortune in that time will be had by the Christian man that shall have a Moor as a friend. And if he shall have done good or ill, then he shall see: for there comes over the Christians a most corrupt illness and evil, which the fortress of evil will never stop, until the end of [their sect]...it will be stopped by Moors who shall will all the land of Spain.”¹⁴⁸

Following a similar vein of thought, in an *aljofor* written by an author who seems to have loved his “precious island of Spain”, the Muslims are once-again destined for a victorious fate as discord will break out between, “...the two kings, the adorers of the cross and the eaters of pork...And Allah *ta‘alā* [praised be he] will send a king who shall be called Aḥmad.”¹⁴⁹ As in one of the excerpts previously cited from St. Isidore, the Turks are prophesized to come to the aid of the Spanish Muslims.¹⁵⁰ The victory that this anonymous *morisco* predicts is absolute, to the point that he asserts that when, “the Christians see their king is captive they will turn Muslim a large part of them. And the Muslims shall be conquerors, with the power of Allah *ta‘alā* [praised be he]...”¹⁵¹

History, of course, proved this optimism wrong. The *aljofor* writers had to invent their survival as a people whose manuscripts seem all the more pitiful because the path their history took was so drastically different from the one they imagined. Although they were not able to halt their destiny, they do offer us an invaluable look at their gradual and painful disappearance as a living culture. If only for this reason, these mysterious authors- who were the cultural and religious hybrids of their time- deserve to be studied

¹⁴⁸ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 205.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁵⁰ It is important to note that the image of the Turks as the vindicators and saviors of Muslim rule is present at this time because the Turks have taken control of Anatolia, and thus dismantled the Byzantine Empire. At a time when Muslim Spain was thoroughly Christianized, Anatolia was becoming Muslim.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

within the context of their times, and as distinct from their Andalusian forefathers. They need to be seen as what they were- an intellectually impoverished and vanishing people who attempted to hold on to the crumbs of their heritage in a land that was fixated on strangling it out.

Concluding Remarks

The *aljamiado* author Baray de Reminyo voiced the terse realization that, “We are not in a time of grace, but in a time of tears.”¹⁵² The sorrow encapsulated in this short statement permeates a large portion of the *aljofores*, as well as a significant portion of the rest of *aljamiado* literature. It’s because of the acute sense of tragedy that envelops this kind of literature that the importance of studying these texts beyond the construct of a grand nationalist narratives becomes imperative. The point of this study is not to decide whether the presence of *aljamiado* literature swings the balance of Spain’s literary identity to the Islamic scale, nor is it a way of undermining the purist European narrative of Spanish history- both are equally erroneous, and *aljamiado* literature proves that. Its existence denies the presence of monolithic and static identities. It’s precisely because of this that the study of *aljamiado* literature necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates Islamic literature.

Despite the fact that this phenomenon was specific to Iberia, it involved a people that were entirely distinct from any notion of what “Spaniards” (or “Portuguese” for that matter) came to be. Their faith and the cultural heritage of Islam in Iberia prevented them from ever becoming part of what these identities eventually comprised. For this reason, while *aljamiado* literature is undeniably part of the Iberian literature of the Renaissance

¹⁵² Baralt, “The Secret Literature of the Last Muslims of Spain”, 21.

era, it is also part of the greater canon of Islamic literature. As such, it needs to be studied within the parameters of the Islamic literary tradition as well. It is only when the two traditions that gave fruit to this form of literature are combined that scholarship will be able to do justice to the men and women whose grief compelled them to simultaneously chronicle and resist the disappearance of their world.

IV. *The Solitary Bird of St. John of the Cross and Islamic Mysticism*

The former parts of this work have focused on exploring conversations between Islamic texts and works of Spanish literature. Similitude in idiomatic expression, imagery, syntax, and symbolism have all been explored with the purpose of delineating a clear path of intertextuality between several Islamic narratives and works that have been traditionally considered part of the literary output of sixteenth century Iberia. The final part of this project will continue to analyze parallel patterns of symbols and imagery between Islam and Spanish literature through the mystical works of one of the most significant Catholic saints and mystics to have risen in sixteenth century Iberia: San Juan de la Cruz (St. John of the Cross). In addition, this final section also seeks to address the two most salient obstacles for future scholarship on the genealogies of influence shared between Islam and *Siglo de Oro* literature: 1) the paucity of sources, and 2) the lack of historical context when analyzing the religious landscapes in which these works were engendered.

The enigmatic nature of many of the collected works and poems of the sixteenth century Spanish mystic and member of the Catholic Carmelite order, St. John of the Cross (1542-1592) has long been the subject of much scholarly thought and debate. Its

specific relations to Islamic mysticism, however, were not put forth until the late nineteenth century by Miguel Asín Palacios. Despite the originality of his theoretical schema, it is truly the work of the contemporary Puerto Rican scholar, Luce López-Baralt that has broadened the range of this influence.

Parallels between the Sīmurgh and the Five Properties of St. John's Solitary Bird

The mystical image of the solitary bird in St. John's works has been the subject of both pining and excitement on behalf of scholars and members of the Church alike. This is due to the fact that while brief allegorical sketches to this image remain, the treatise named *Las propiedades del pájaro solitario* (The Properties of the Solitary Bird), which might throw so much light on this image, is lost.¹⁵³ The longest version of the image is that which is traditionally included in the glosses to the *Cántico* or "Spiritual Canticle", and is excerpted below:

"This knowledge [of the divine light] I understand David to have explained when he said: *Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto*; which signifies: I watched, and was made like the solitary bird on the house top (Psalm 101:8). As though to say: I opened the eyes of my understanding, and I found myself above all the natural intelligences, solitary [and] without them on the house-top, which is higher than all things below. And here he says that he *was made like the solitary bird*, because in this manner of contemplation the spirit has the properties of this bird..."¹⁵⁴

Keeping in mind St. John's equation of the soul to a bird, the initial inspiration for St. John's image could not be any clearer: his bird is "solitary" like the "passer solitarius" of David's Psalm 101:8: *Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto* ["I am sleepless, and I moan; I am like a sparrow alone on a housetop"] in the English-language

¹⁵³ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 71.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Catholic Bible.¹⁵⁵ St. John himself makes this parallel. It is in the following five

properties of St. John's bird where the connection to Islamic mysticism is more prevalent:

“...the spirit has the properties of this bird, which are five: The first, that is ordinarily sets itself [sits or perches, or because of the ambiguity of the Spanish verb *se pone*, flies] very high; and thus the spirit at this stage sets itself in the highest contemplation. The second, that it as its beak [turned] always [toward] the place from which the wind comes; and thus the spirit here turns the beak of the affections towards the place from the spirit of love, which is God, comes. The third is that it is ordinarily alone and will not suffer any other bird to be with it, but rather, should some bird alight nearby, it flies away; and thus the spirits in this contemplation is in solitude from all things, naked of all things, nor consents to have in itself anything but solitude in God. The fourth property is that it sings very softly; and the spirit does the same to God at this time, for the praises it gives to God are of the softest love, most delicious for itself and most precious to God. The fifth is that it is of no determined color; and thus is the spirit perfect, for in this [most high state of contemplation] it does not have any color of sensual affectation and self-love, nor any particular consideration [for anything] either higher or lower, nor will any [particular] manner be able to be said of it, for it is the abyss of the tidings of God that it possesses, as is said...”¹⁵⁶

It is in these five properties that the clear connections between the mystical writings of St.

John and earlier works of Islamic mysticism are readily observed. The elaboration of

these properties is what make St. John's image of the solitary bird characteristic and

unique in its usage. It is necessary to underscore this point of particularity in St. John's

use of the image because the comparison of the soul to a bird is nearly universal and very

well-documented throughout many ancient cultures, particularly those of Egypt and

Greece.¹⁵⁷ The fact that St. John assigned specific mystical properties to his image voids

its use as a solely universal archetype. In other words, it particularizes it. It is in this

singular characterization and difference from the universal archetype that the parallel

between this image and the works of Abū Ḥamīd ibn Abū Bakr Ibrāhīm, better known by

¹⁵⁵ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 71.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

his pen-names Farīd ud-Dīn and ‘Aṭṭār (the latter of which means “perfumer”), and Shihāb ad-Dīn Yaḥya Suhrawardī, or simply Suhrawardī, are found.

‘Aṭṭār was born in Nishapur, in northwest Persia, and probably died there, most likely in 1220 at an old age.¹⁵⁸ Later mystical tradition includes him in the list of martyrs of love, slain by the orthodox or, in his case, by the infidels because of his excessive divine love.¹⁵⁹ Whether he was truly killed by the invading Mongols is uncertain, but the story indicates the rank he was given in the spiritual traditions of Islam. His famed *Manṭiq al-ṭair*, or “The Conference of the Birds,” is considered one of the most beautiful literary works in the Persian language. This epic was written sometime in the second half of the twelfth century, and is considered to be, “. . .the most perfect poetic introduction to the mystical path, with its seven valleys, in which are described all the difficulties the soul will encounter on the road.”¹⁶⁰ ‘Aṭṭār uses the basic motif of birds in search of the King, called in this work, like the famous Persian mystical bird, Sīmurgh. The end of the story takes a somewhat surprising turn: the thirty birds (*sī-murgh*) that have managed to survive the arduous thousand-year-long journey discover that they themselves are the Sīmurgh or King that they had sought to find.¹⁶¹ As quoted from Dick Davis’ English translation:

“Their souls rose free of all they’d been before/
The past and all its actions were no more./
Their life came from that close, insistent sun/
And in its vivid rays they shone as one./
There in the Simorgh’s radiant face they saw/
Themselves, the Simorgh of the world- with awe/
They gazed, and dared at last to comprehend/
They were the Simorgh and the journey’s end./
They see the Simorgh- at themselves they stare, /
And see a second Simorgh standing there;/
They look at both and see the two are one,/ That this is that, that this, the goal is won.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 303.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 306.

¹⁶¹ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 77

¹⁶² Farīd ud-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 219.

The late Islamic scholar Annemarie Schimmel considers this the “...most ingenious pun in Persian literature, expressing so marvelously the experience of the identity of the soul with the divine essence.”¹⁶³

The second Muslim mystic to have notably influenced the work of St. John is Suhrawardī, who was born in 1153 in Zanjān.¹⁶⁴ He was also known as *al-Maqtūl* or, “the murdered one,” because of his condemnation to death for heresy in 1191.¹⁶⁵ Suhrawardī is also titled by some as the *shaykh al-ishrāq* or, “master of [the philosophy of] illumination,” because of his many writings on the subject and his status as the premier figure in the philosophical school of the Illuminationists. He wrote as many as fifty books in both Arabic and Persian, among which one might single out his *Hikmat al-ishrāq* (“Philosophy of Enlightenment”) and *Hayākil an-nūr* (“The Altars of the Light”).¹⁶⁶ In regards to his connection to St. John of the Cross, a point of interest is found in what Suhrawardī has to say about the mystical bird of his soul. In his *Ṣafīr-i Sīmurgh* or “The Note of the Sīmurgh”, the Sīmurgh, is not shown in flight, but rather is described on the basis of its “properties” or mystical characteristics.¹⁶⁷ This Sīmurgh stands for the Sufi (*sālik*) who has passed all stages (*maqāmāt*) on the road (*ṭarīqa*), and has reached the goal (*fanā’ fi’l-ḥaqq*).¹⁶⁸ If the Sufi technical terms are eliminated, it is possible to see that this is exactly St. John’s image of his own solitary bird: the bird is his soul, which has already achieved the highest reaches of ecstasy. The following paragraphs will be

¹⁶³ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 307.

¹⁶⁴ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 78.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 79.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 80.

devoted to exploring how the properties that St. John used to characterize his own solitary bird correspond with those of the Muslim mystics.

In review, the first of the properties St. John ascribed to his solitary bird was that it set itself very high, meaning that the spirit in this state was in the highest form of contemplation. In this, ‘Aṭṭār agrees with St. John, given that his birds are also in a state of highest contemplation. According to Baralt, this is the essence of the symbol itself –the distance from the transitory world.¹⁶⁹ Most Sufis who portray the spirit in contemplation as a bird show the bird in full flight towards the Divine.¹⁷⁰ This is the image used by ‘Aṭṭār. St. John’s bird, however, seems to have been spared most of that difficult and arduous flight that almost all other symbolic birds portrayed by Sufi mystics must take. St. John’s bird suddenly “flies into the highest part of the heaven”.¹⁷¹ In other words, the ascent or gradual flight of the bird that is present in other treatises is not present in his. Interestingly, the detailed flight is also absent in the case of Suhrawardī’s Sīmurgh. Suhrawardī explains the apparent anomaly that we do not see the bird of his soul “fly up” by telling his audience that it “flies without moving, soars without traveling, and comes near with traversing distance.”¹⁷²

The second property which St. John gives his bird is curious by virtue of being less obvious or predictable: “Its beak [is turned] always [toward] the place from which the wind comes; and thus the spirit here turns the beak of the affections towards the place from which the spirit of love, which is God, comes.” Tellingly, as ‘Aṭṭār opens “The Conference of the Birds”, he has the narrator urge the assembled birds (i.e. the religious

¹⁶⁹ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 81.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 82.

¹⁷² Ibid.

men who are to follow the mystic way) to lift their heads or, even more remarkably, their *beaks* to God: “O Wagtail...Lift up your head and make your shawm [literally “reed”, a metaphor for “beak”] resound to celebrate the true knowledge of God.”¹⁷³ ‘Aṭṭār later insists, “Salutations, O Excellent Pheasant!...Lift yourself from the pit [of darkness] and raise your head to the divine throne.”¹⁷⁴

Also in regards to this property, St. John is very specific when he states that his bird must raise its beak “to the place from which the air comes” or “to the wind of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁷⁵ According to Baralt, this image is in effect a variation on a metaphor used in Muslim mystical literature in which the wind or breeze is representative of obscure tidings from God.¹⁷⁶ Thus, in his *Ṣafīr-i Sīmurgh*, Suhrawardī states that when the Sīmurgh and God become one, “morning breeze comes from [the Sīmurgh’s] breath.”¹⁷⁷ This means that in its ultimate contemplative moment, the Sīmurgh participates in or shares the divine nature. This sharing of the divine nature corresponds to the beak of St. John’s bird sharing the wind of the Holy Ghost. It is important to point out here that the French scholar of Islam, Henry Corbin, also noticed that the Islamic symbol of the mystical bird was on occasion associated with the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁸

Although no notable similarity arises in the third property of St. John’s bird, the fourth property of the solitary bird is that it:

“...sings very softly; and the spirit does the same to God at this time, for the praises it gives to God are of the softest love, most delicious for itself, and most precious to God.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 83.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 84.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

In her *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Annemarie Schimmel explored the well-known Sufi poetic tradition in which the mystical nightingale sings its sorrows of love and sips at the nectar of the rose, which is the symbol of God. Suhrawardī is very concrete in this respect, and his Sīmurgh seems once more mysteriously akin to the singing solitary bird of St. John in that Suhrawardī notes that his entire mystical treatise is but “a brief account of the Sīmurgh and his note.”¹⁸⁰ It is important to recall that it is precisely the music of this ecstatic bird which gives the literary work its name: *The Note of the Sīmurgh*. Furthermore, Suhrawardī states that “...His note reaches all; but it is heard by few,” so that like for St. John, the solitary bird sings for God. Despite their similarities in the all that has been mentioned above, the most surprising parallels between St. John and Suhrawardī are found when analyzing the fifth property of St. John’s solitary bird.

The fifth quality of the solitary bird is that it “has no one color”. St. John explains this by saying that it is, “...thus in the spirit perfect...which has no specific quality in any thing.”¹⁸¹ It would be an understatement to say that this image of a bird with no color is curious, and yet St. John and Suhrawardī share even this extraordinary conception.

Suhrawardī attributed this same property –in identical words– to his own bird, four hundred years before St. John: “All colors are in him, but he is colorless.”¹⁸² The congruence between Suhrawardī and St. John is remarkable. In both cases, the absence of color implies exactly the same thing: letting go of all things material, and the absence of material things in the soul. While this coincidence is odd, it is important to recall that this image of the spirit as a colorless entity or process is far from foreign to Muslim mystics. According to Baralt, Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr has postulated that ‘Aṭṭār’s famous

¹⁸⁰ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 85.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

Manṭiq al-ṭair also makes indirect allusion to the Sīmurgh's lack of color in the sense that when the thirty birds –each of a different color– discover that they themselves are the Sīmurgh, the beautiful rainbow of their diverse colors must of necessity be erased, so that they too, in a moment of transformative ecstasy become “of no determined color.”¹⁸³ This image seems to be more commonplace than would have been thought, particularly in Persian mysticism. In one of his verses, the fourteenth-century poet Ḥāfeẓ also compares the spirit's letting-go to freedom from color. Professor Nasr has translated this particular verse as: “I am the slave of the will of that person who under the azur's sphere has become free of the attachment to whatever possesses color.”¹⁸⁴

Concluding Remarks: Criticism of the Field

Given so many points of parallel imagery and symbolic meaning between St. John of the Cross' symbol of the solitary bird and the Islamic mystic symbol of the Sīmurgh, and in view of the obvious chronological antecedence of the Muslim symbols, it seems reasonable to suggest the presence of a greater inter-textual relationship between sixteenth century Catholic mysticism and earlier strains of Islamic mysticism. This possibility, however exciting, must first be evaluated thoroughly.

As it stands, the only scholar who has produced work expounding upon this influence is Luce López-Baralt, and prior to her work on the influence of Islam in Spanish literature, the only one to have thought and written deeply about the issue was Miguel Asín Palacios. While both their works have been invaluable to the creation and

¹⁸³ Baralt, *Islam in Spanish Literature*, 85.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

prolongation of this field of inquiry, neither has expanded on the importance of the historical context and personal backgrounds of those whom they study.

It has been the intention of this project to contextualize the intertextuality present between Islamic works and sixteenth century Spanish literature by paying close attention to the historical conditions in which the analyzed works were written. This final section was meant to not only elucidate the parallels in symbolism and spiritual significance between St. John of the Cross and other Muslim mystics, but also to point out that endeavoring to trace a genealogy of influence is not enough to fully ground the connection. For example, the influence of Islamic narratives in *Don Quijote* needed to be contextualized in the literature of the *Siglo de Oro*, the political situation of the time, and in Cervantes' life. Likewise, the discovery and analyses of *aljamiado* literature needed to be considered alongside the political and intellectual environments in which they were written and henceforth discovered. The crux of this critique is that while all of the similarities that have been discovered by parsing through the "Spiritual Canticle" of St. John of the Cross alongside the "Conference of the Birds" of 'Aṭṭār and those relevant works of Suhrawardī, these are not enough to anchor and justify the intertextuality present in the works of Catholic mystics with those of Muslim mystics in a self-sufficient field of study.

While both Asín Palacios and Baralt have lamented the lack of sources available to them in this field of study, the fact remains that, however regrettable, there is nothing to do about this. It means that an improved understanding of this field of study depends on the contextualization of this intertextuality in the religious landscapes and personal backgrounds extant in the subjects of their study. For example, while the relationship

between St. John of the Cross and Muslim mystics was thoroughly considered and analyzed, the fact that St. John lived during the Inquisition and was from a *converso* family was nowhere mentioned. His relationship to the other very influential Catholic saint and mystic of sixteenth century Spain, Santa Teresa de Avila, was not even considered. This takes on even greater implication of necessity when Baralt considered that St. Theresa's mystical work, "Interior Castle," was also influenced by Islamic mystics, and by the fact that St. Theresa also came from a *converso* family whose members had been persecuted by the Inquisition –which Baralt notably does not take into account.

The facts of saints' lives connect and contextualize their thoughts and mystical experiences in ways that may prove illuminating as to their relationship to Islamic spiritual material. As both came from *converso* families, it would be beneficial to study the connections between their mystic works and the works of Muslim mystics alongside the intellectual and religious landscape of their contemporary *conversos*. As is well known, both founded the Discalced Carmelite order and led the reform of this order during the Inquisition. Is it possible that other intellectual influences -those borne out of their status as the children of *conversos*- somehow influenced their views on religious institutions? How did the religious landscape of the time treat those from *converso* families? Was it possible that the enrichment of Spain's intellectual and religious landscape in the years before the Inquisition –possibly as a result of the incorporation of Islamic works– resulted in the possibility that the works of Persian mystics were somehow preserved in the symbols and spiritual significance of Jewish thinkers that

might have influenced not only Judaism, but also Catholicism as it was taught and practiced in southern Spain?

The point here is that the loss of valuable sources that might have illuminated the parallelisms between Catholic and Islamic mysticism in sixteenth century Spain may be compensated for by the greater contextualization and exploration of the cultural idioms extant in the times in which the subjects of study lived, wrote, and, above all, experienced their mystic works.

V. Concluding Remarks: Thoughts on Future Scholarship

The overwhelming purpose of this project has been to identify and analyze the significance of the intertextuality between Islamic narratives and traditions and some the literature of sixteenth century Spain. To this end, three major forms of literary output of the period have been closely considered –the novel (namely, *Don Quijote*), *aljamiado*, and mystical lyric. The presence of Islamic idioms in each only underscores the necessity for closer readings of the texts in this period by those familiar not only with Islamic and Spanish history, but also with Arabic and Old Castilian.

In addition, it is necessary to point out that there is a paucity of scholars that have fully engaged with this field under this particular paradigm. It would not be an exaggeration to state that the scholars that have most engaged with this are Miguel Asín Palacios and Luce López Baralt. However undeniably valuable their scholarship has been to this area of study, both have failed to contextualize their subjects of study –Palacios because of time, and Baralt because of her focus on literary parallels. Neither sought to situate the works that they considered and the intertextuality that they perceived in the

historical landscape of those figures whom they studied. In other words, they were able to point out parallels that not many could see, but summarily failed to discuss or deeply engage with the religious landscape of Iberia at the time.

In order to thoroughly understand and gauge the impact and the role that this intertextuality played, it is necessary to evaluate the religious, political, economic, and intellectual atmospheres in which they were written alongside those in which they came to be studied. Sixteenth century Iberia was one of the most tumultuous, dangerous, and artistically vibrant times in world history, and while scholars in this field have proven that Islamic traditions played a substantive role in the literature of the period, they have failed to move beyond this and contextualize their finds in the times in which they were written. Without this contextualization, it is impossible to recreate this world and understand the way in which Islamic traditions survived the *Reconquista*. It has been the purpose of this project to move past the need to prove the continuance of Islamic conceptions in the literary output of Inquisition Spain, and start moving towards a greater understanding of these works, their influence, and their perception in Spanish historiography through historical contextualization.

Bibliography

- Arellano, I. (2009). *Autoridad y poder en el Siglo de Oro*. Madrid: Universidad de Navarra.
- Aylward, E. (1989). *Towards a Revaluation of Avellaneda's False Quixote*. Newark: Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs.
- Baena, J. (1994). Modos del hacedor de nombres cervantinos: el significado de Cide Hamete Benengeli. *Indiana Journal of Hispanic Studies* , 55-67.
- Bakhtiar, L. (1976). *Sufi Expressions of the Mythic Quest*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Baralt, L. L. (Winter 1984). El oracula de Mahoma sobre la Andalucia musulmana de los ultimos tiempos en un manuscriot aljamiad-morisco de la Biblioteca Nacional de Paris. *Hispanic Review Vol. 52, No. 1* , 41-57.
- (1992). *Islam in Spanish Literature: From the Middle Ages to the Present*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
 - (Spring 1997). The Secret Literature of the Last Muslims of Spain. *Islamic Studies Vol. 36, No.1* , 21-38.
 - (2000). The Supreme Pen of Cide Hamete Benengelu in Don Quijote. *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* , 506-518.
- Barletta, V. (2010). Americo Castro, los moriscos y la literatura aljamiada. *Iberoamerica Vol. X No. 38* , 113-122.
- Burkhardt, T. (1972). *Moorish Culture in Spain*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Cascardi, A. J. (1997). *Ideologies of History in the Spanish Golden Age*. University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Castro, A. (1948). *Espana en su historia*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada.
- Cervantes, M. d., & Murillo, A. L. (1978). *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Madrid: Castalia.
- Cirre, M. M. (Fall 1973). El otro mundo de la literature aljamiado-morisca. *Hispanic Review Vol. 41 No. 4* , 599-608.
- Dodds, J. D., Menocal, M. R., & Krasner Balbale, A. (2008). *The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Farīd ud-Dīn 'Aṭṭār. (1984). *The Conference of the Birds*, Translated by Dick Davis. New York: Penguin Books.

Gilman, S., & King, E. L. (1977). *An Idea of History: Selected Essays of Americo Castro*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Gomez-Martinez, J. L. (1975). *Americo Castro y el origen de los espanoles: historia de una polemica*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos.

Jayyusi, S. K. (1992). *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*. Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

Kamen, H. (2008). *Imagining Spain: Historical Myth and National Identity*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Kennedy, H. (1996). *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus*. London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Lincoln, J. (Fall 1937). Aljamiado Prophecies. *Modern Languages Association (PMLA)* Vol. 52 No. 3 , 631-644.

Menocal, M. R. (2002). *Ornament of the World*. New York and Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

- (1987). *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Menocal, M. R., Scheindlin, R. P., & Sells, M. (2000). *The Literature of Al-Andalus*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press.

Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra, e. L. (1978). *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Madrid: Castalia.

Montgomery, J. H. (2009). *Cervantes' Don Quixote*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

N.J.Dawood. (1997). Qur'an English Translation. *the Qur'an* . London: Penguin.

Qureshi, E., & Sells, M. (2003). *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Schimmel, A. (1975). *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Villanueva, F. M. (2011). *Personajes y temas del Quijote*. Madrid: Impulso Global Solutions.

Zuwiyya, Z. D. (Winter 2001). Arab Culture and Morisco Heritage in an Aljamiado Legend: "El-hadit del bano de Zaryeb". *Romance Quarterly* Vol. 48 No. 1 , 32-46.