The Bagnios of Algiers AND The Great Sultana

TWO PLAYS OF CAPTIVITY

Miguel de Cervantes

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Introduction

Cervantes, Playwright

Universally renowned as the author of *Don Quixote,* Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616) also wrote multiple plays. He was eager to prove himself as a playwright and poet, since these were the most established measures of literary worth in his time. Cervantes had some early successes on the Madrid stage in the 1580s, yet his later plays never found an audience. He was less facile in the style of the new *comedia,* and the complexity and interest of his prose are somewhat flattened in his verse drama. In 1615, shortly before his death, he chose to publish a collection of his new plays, *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nuevos, nunca representados* (Eight New Plays and Interludes, Never Performed). This highly unusual venture, in a period where plays were generally published only after having been exhaustively performed, served Cervantes as an alternative to the theatrical success that eluded him.

Cervantes lived through great transformations in European drama. In the Spanish context, he spans the transition between the early, simple theater of Juan del Encina (1469–1529) and Lope de Rueda (1505?–1565), who wrote religious, comic, and pastoral plays, or eclogues, and the more sophisticated productions of the *comedia nueva,* or new drama, whose most prolific and talented exponent was Félix Lope de Vega Carpio (1562–1635). Had Cervantes's later plays been performed, they would have been staged in a sophisticated, urban, open-air, public theater—the *corral*—where audiences of all classes and of both genders mingled. Successful playwrights sold their work to *autores,* company managers who were a combination of producers and directors. The plays were performed by companies of professional actors of both genders. Hundreds of *comedias* were produced annually to satisfy the audience's seemingly infinite demand for them. The plays were introduced by music and racy dances, with farcical interludes (*entremeses*) performed between the acts.

The prologue to Cervantes's 1615 collection, which includes the two plays translated in our volume, offers a wealth of information on the development of Spanish drama in the period and Cervantes's perception of his place within that literary culture. The author describes a conversation with friends on the state of the theater in Spain. As the oldest interlocutor, Cervantes charts the recent history of the stage based on his own recollections. Lope de Rueda, he explains, "was the first to bring Spanish plays out of the nursery, to exalt them and make of them something to admire" (Cervantes 1995, 23). In that more innocent era, "plays were dialogues, much like eclogues, between two or three shepherds and a shepherdess, enlivened and spaced out by two or three interludes, on either a black woman, a villain, a fool, or a Biscayan" (Cervantes 1995, 24). Moreover, the material trappings of the theater were then as simple as the plays themselves:

> In the time of this famous Spaniard, all the appurtenances of the company's manager fit in one sack, as they were no more than four white shepherd's jackets embossed with gilt leather, four beards, wigs, and shepherd's crooks, and little else. . . . There were no stage machines, nor fights between Moors and Christians, on foot or on horseback; no figure appeared or seemed to appear from the center of the earth through the space beneath the stage, which was made of four benches arranged in a square with four or six planks on top, so that it was raised about four handspans from the floor; nor were there clouds full of angels or souls that descended from the heavens. The theater was adorned with an old blanket, pulled from one side to the other with two strings, to make the tiring room. Behind it were the musicians, singing some old ballad with no guitar to accompany them. (Cervantes 1995, 24)

Gradually, the theater began to acquire some of the accouterments that were missing in the early days. A certain Navarro, Cervantes tells us,

> made plays somewhat more elaborate, moving the costumes to chests and trunks; he moved the music out from behind the blanket, where it had been sung before, onto the stage; he removed

> the actors' beards, for until then no-one had acted without a false one, and made them all play their parts barefaced, except for those who were to play old men or other characters who required a change in appearance; he invented machines, clouds, thunder and lightning, challenges and battles, yet none of this reached the lofty pinnacle it occupies today. (Cervantes 1995, 25)

The irony in Cervantes's tone as he ends his description betrays his chagrin, for he has not climbed that lofty pinnacle. Instead, his theatrical production is located at that earlier, intermediate point, when, he tells us, "the theaters of Madrid showed *The Traffic of Algiers*, which I composed, *The Destruction of Numancia*, and *The Naval Battle*." The last of these three has been lost, and the two extant plays do not support Cervantes's claim that he was the first to modernize Spanish drama by reducing five acts to three at this time: both *Traffic* and *Numancia* feature four acts and are written in a ponderous, occasionally allegorical style. Nor can we know whether he in fact wrote "twenty or thirty plays at this time, all of which were performed without meriting an offering of cucumbers or other projectiles" (Cervantes 1995, 25–26). The more likely number is somewhere between ten and twenty, including the eight plays Cervantes published much later, some of which may have been reworked from earlier versions.

According to Cervantes's own narrative, his budding theatrical career was cut short by his attention to other matters and the spectacular arrival of Lope on the scene: "Then came that prodigy of nature, the great Lope de Vega, and stole the crown of playwriting; he overwhelmed all actors and placed them under his rule; he filled the world with his own pleasing and well-made plays—so many, in fact, that he's written over ten thousand pages, and, most remarkably, has seen them all performed" (Cervantes 1995, 26). Lope's success with a new, more nimble theater, which happily abandoned Aristotelian precepts and concerned itself primarily with the great crowd-pleasing themes of honor, marriage, class conflict, and monarchical politics, rendered Cervantes's production old-fashioned and undesirable. In a deeply humiliating exchange that Cervantes nonetheless shares with his readers, a bookseller tells him that, while his prose is well regarded, his verse is not worth much, according to a noted company manager. Piqued, Cervantes turns to his

old plays and interludes and decides they are not all bad. He sells them to the self-same bookseller, who publishes them despite the cavils of stage folk. And thus we have the very collection whose prologue the author uses to right matters, or at least to give us his version of events.

Yet despite Cervantes's own bitter assessment of his limited success, there is much to recover in his writings for the theater, some of which incorporate elements of the new style. These include complex love stories, paired characters such as lady and gallant or maid and sidekick, historically precise locations, varied versification, and special effects (McKendrick 134). His best-known dramatic texts are the tragedy *La destruición de Numancia*, which describes the futile resistance of that Iberian city to Roman colonizers, and the comic interlude *El retablo de las maravillas* (The Miracle Show), a satire of Spanish obsessions with honor, legitimacy, and "blood purity" that features village notables taken in by picaresque entertainers.

Although the interludes are available in English translation, and *Numancia* and *The Traffic of Algiers* were translated in 1870, Cervantes's other dramatic texts have never been translated. Yet they shed light both on the author's better known prose oeuvre and on crucial historical dynamics. With their own versions of irony, humor, and pathos, the plays offer another turn of the Cervantine kaleidoscope, demonstrating how whatever ideological forces shaped the author's corpus were necessarily altered by the constraints of genre, if not performance.

Given that these texts were not often performed, our sense of them does not depend as heavily on a performance history as is the case for the Shakespearean corpus, for example. Nonetheless, it is striking how closely Cervantes's prologue connects the material and performance history of Spanish drama with the texts produced by its playwrights. One example of this connection is the popularity of cross-dressing on the stage: although, unlike on the English stage, actresses were permitted, dramatists produced countless plays that required actresses to cross-dress, as such risqué plots were hugely popular with audiences. Thus Cervantes's *Bagnios of Algiers* includes a minor character, Ambrosio, whose main purpose seems to be the display of a famous actress, "Lady Catalina," in male attire.

Much of Cervantes's originality as a playwright lies in his Mediterranean subject matter. As his editors Florencio Sevilla Arroyo and Antonio Rey Hazas argue, Cervantes's plays on captivity "inaugurate a kind of theatrical mini-genre, the Barbary or Turkish captivity play, which he himself perfected and enriched" (Sevilla Arroyo and Rey Hazas 2:xi). This subgenre includes the early *Traffic of Algiers*, the two plays translated here, and *El gallardo español* (The Gallant Spaniard), also published in the 1615 volume. In this realm at least, Lope imitated Cervantes, with his 1599 play *Los cautivos de Argel* (The Captives of Algiers). Of the eight plays in the 1615 collection, we have chosen to translate two that offer very different Mediterranean locales and visions of captivity, *The Bagnios of Algiers* on North Africa and *The Great Sultana Doña Catalina de Oviedo* on the Ottoman court. Variously composed from direct experience and romance commonplaces, the two plays offer a window onto these fraught Mediterranean exchanges as imagined by Cervantes, himself a former captive. The frequent return to scenes of Algerian captivity and Ottoman pomp throughout Cervantes's oeuvre makes these plays essential documents for understanding both his historical context and his broader literary production.

Cervantes's Mediterranean

The Bagnios of Algiers and *The Great Sultana* enact the intense imaginative engagement of early modern Spain with the Muslim worlds of the Mediterranean. They also reflect Cervantes's first-hand experience of captivity in North Africa, which had a crucial impact on his writing. The religious and political rivalries on this "forgotten frontier," as Andrew Hess terms it (1978), serve as the backdrop to the complex set of relationships and identities explored in the texts.

The plays are set on the edge of two Mediterranean worlds that clashed repeatedly over the course of the sixteenth century, as a newly unified Spain rejected its Semitic heritage and faced the increasing threat of the Ottoman Empire and its North African protectorates. Yet the constant

hostilities coexisted with regular contacts, commercial and otherwise. A steady stream of subjects crossed the line between these worlds, however unwillingly in some cases. Soldiers, merchants, exiles, captives, renegades—these often overlapping groups embody the complexity of the Mediterranean frontier. Identities and allegiances were frequently more complex than the rote recitation of historical facts might suggest. Cervantes's texts repeatedly underscore this complexity in the face of any ideological certainty, with unsettling effects.

The historical record indicates a recrudescence in relations between Spanish Christendom and the proximate world of Islam from the late fifteenth century, as Spain strained to consolidate as a "pure" Christian nation. The fall of Granada to the Catholic Monarchs in 1492 set the stage for an increasingly expansionist Spain in the years following, as the crusading fervor of campaigns on the peninsula was furthered on the coasts of the Maghreb. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, the Spanish conquered and looted a number of sites in North Africa—the Peñón de Vélez, Orán, Bougie, Tripoli—establishing isolated *presidios* (fortresses) that would become increasingly difficult to defend as the century wore on. Beyond immediate enrichment through conquest, the Spaniards sought to control the piracy based in the Barbary Coast. Repeated corsair attacks, such as the one depicted in *The Bagnios of Algiers*, devastated Spanish coastal settlements and took a tremendous toll in hostages.

These attacks were often enabled by Muslims who had been forced to leave Spain either during the war on Granada or during the subsequent suppression of Islamic belief. Though compelled to relocate to North Africa, these populations had a minute knowledge of their former homelands in southern Spain, as Cervantes's corsair Yzuf explains. Spanish speakers could often pass for Christians, which made them even more dangerous to unwitting ships or coastal towns. The situation was exacerbated over the course of Cervantes's lifetime, as many Moriscos (Muslims forced to convert to Christianity) and their descendants found refuge in North Africa. The years 1609–1614, the period of Cervantes's greatest productivity, saw the final expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain. This new wave of exiles, who had been Christians (however nominally in some cases) for multiple generations, also found its way to the Barbary Coast.

Beyond the Hispano-Muslim and Morisco exiles, many of the Barbary corsairs were of European origin, as renegades increasingly joined their ranks. Nor was piracy exclusively based in Algiers: the corsairs had their counterparts in Christian pirates and privateers, such as the Knights of Malta, who raided the Barbary Coast and beyond, looting and capturing hostages much as the Barbary corsairs did on European shores. On both sides of the Mediterranean, piracy furthered economic and geopolitical goals, serving as a "secondary form of war" between Christianity and Islam (Braudel 865). Yet in the early modern European literary imagination piracy was associated primarily with the North African corsair, a figure all the more troubling in that he was often a renegade.

The most famous and successful of the Barbary corsairs were the Barbarossa brothers, who in the first decades of the sixteenth century transformed Algiers into the strongest corsair base in the Mediterranean. Rallying his followers under the banner of Islam against the Spaniards, Arūj Barbarossa killed the ruler of Algiers and in 1516 proclaimed himself king of the city. He died fighting the Spaniards in 1518 and was promptly succeeded by his brother, Khair ad-Dīn, who cannily placed Algiers under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. Now nominally a protectorate, bolstered by Ottoman janissaries (elite infantry) and European renegades, Algiers became a powerful force in the western Mediterranean, launching bold attacks on Italian and Spanish coasts. Spanish control of North Africa became increasingly tenuous. In 1534, Barbarossa succeeded in capturing Tunis from the Spanish, although it was retaken a year later. In 1541, Emperor Charles V, king of Spain, assembled a massive fleet in order to attack Algiers, only to see it destroyed in a terrible storm—an episode that Cervantes possibly alludes to with the mirage of a fleet threatening the city in *Bagnios*. The balance of power thus shifted to favor the Ottomans and their client states, as conquest followed conquest: Tripoli was captured from the Knights of Malta in 1551, the island of Djerba in 1560, and the Venetian colony of Cyprus in 1570. The new Spanish ruler, Philip II, inherited from his father, Charles V, an increasingly complicated situation in the Mediterranean.

The Ottoman gains in the eastern Mediterranean and the growing power of Algiers in the west led to great anxiety in Europe. In response, Spain, Venice, and the Holy See formed an alliance against "the Turk" (the

Ottoman Empire), the Holy League. On October 7, 1571, under the command of Don Juan of Austria, illegitimate brother to Philip II, the great armada fought the Ottoman navy in the Gulf of Lepanto. On the galley *Marquesa* sailed the harquebusier Miguel de Cervantes, who acquitted himself with great courage despite being ill. The extraordinarily bloody battle ended in victory for the Holy League, albeit with heavy losses on both sides. Cervantes suffered severe wounds, leading to the loss of his left hand, whence his epithet, *el manco de Lepanto* (the one-handed man of Lepanto). He was extremely proud of his role in the battle and referred to it repeatedly in his writings. In the first part of *Don Quixote* (1605), the semiautobiographical character Ruy Pérez de Viedma, narrating his "Captive's Tale," describes his role in "that glorious battle . . . when Ottoman pride and arrogance were shattered" (Cervantes 2003, 337). The prologue to the second part of *Don Quixote* (1615) refers to Lepanto as "the greatest event seen in past or present times, or that future times can ever hope to see" (Cervantes 2003, 455).

Captivity in Algiers

Cervantes recovered from his wounds in Italy and served on a number of unsuccessful campaigns against the Ottomans. In 1575, he set sail for Spain, with letters of recommendation from Don Juan of Austria and the duke of Sessa to reward him for his heroic service at Lepanto. These would have ensured him a pension, had his voyage not come to a sorry end. Separated from its fellows by a storm, Cervantes's galley was attacked by Barbary corsairs off the Catalan coast. Along with the other survivors, including his brother Rodrigo, Cervantes was captured and taken to Algiers. There, the letters found on his person ensured that he would be treated with deference, as a *cautivo de rescate* (ransomable captive)—a valuable prize whose redemption could command a large sum. Given that Cervantes was in fact not a wealthy or well-connected man, his family could not come up with the enormous ransom of five hundred gold escudos demanded for his release.

Algiers in the 1570s was a tremendously cosmopolitan city, wealthy from privateering and the trade in captives, and thus much reviled in

Europe. Its reputation became somewhat of an overblown literary commonplace. The English travel writer Samuel Purchas colorfully described the city as "the Whirlepoole of these Seas, the Throne of Pyracie, the Sinke of Trade and the Stinke of Slavery; the Cage of uncleane Birds of Prey, the Habitation of Sea-Devils, the Receptacle of Renegadoes of God, and Traytors to their Country" (*Hakluytus Posthumous or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 6:108f., qtd. in Chew 344). In his *Persiles*, Cervantes portrays false former captives who attract passersby with their sensational account of the "glutton and devourer among all Mediterranean shores, universal haven for corsairs, shelter and refuge for thieves" (Cervantes 1969, 344). Yet for early modern Spaniards captivity was not an exotic possibility but a looming concern. As María Antonia Garcés notes, "From the massive campaigns led by the ransomer monks to raise funds for the rescue of captives, to the processions held when these ransomed men and women returned home, to the chains and shackles hung in churches and public buildings to signify liberation, the cruel reality of captivity in Barbary was ever present for the Spaniards" (Garcés 172).

Unlike the false captives in his *Persiles*, Cervantes could draw on his actual experience for a wealth of geographical and cultural details on Algiers. His texts reflect the mix of subjects to be found in the city: Muslims from throughout the Ottoman Empire, Moriscos from Spain, Jews, Christians, and renegades of all stripes. When characters in Cervantes's Algiers refer to "Turks" and "Moors," these are not imprecise catch-all terms for Muslims, as they often are in other European texts. Instead, they generally reflect a precise understanding of the mix of peoples that populated Algiers in the later sixteenth century. Cervantes also includes central historical figures in the city, many of whom he knew first-hand, such as the powerful Ragusian renegade, Agi Morato (Ḥājjiī Murad, dates unknown) who served as an *alcaide* (governor) in Algiers and conducted secret diplomatic missions for the Sultan in the 1570s; Muley Maluco ('Abd al-Malik, 1541–1578), who ruled Fez and Morocco from 1576 to 1578, and the renegade *beylerbey* (ruler) of Algiers himself, Hazán Pasha (Ḥasan Pasha Veneziano, born 1545; ruled 1577–1581 and 1583–1585).

Cervantes spent his five years of captivity in the royal *bagnio*, or prison, where the more valuable captives were kept. Less fortunate cap-

tives, who were not considered ransomable, belonged to the city and were forced to labor on public works or row in the galleys. In the royal bagnio, captives received better treatment, often through bribes, but they were not allowed to roam the city as were the city slaves. Priests were allowed to celebrate Mass for the captives, and on important holidays the services in the bagnio were open to all slaves, so long as they paid an entrance fee, as in the scene of Easter celebration depicted in *The Bagnios of Algiers*.

Despite his captors' threats, and conscious that he was being held for a ransom much higher than his family could possibly pay, Cervantes attempted escape on no fewer than four separate occasions. Surprisingly, although he did not manage to attain freedom, he was not punished for these attempts. Meanwhile, his family unsuccessfully tried to put together the ransoms for him and his brother through a series of loans. Rodrigo was ransomed first, in 1577, at his brother's urging. Miguel de Cervantes was finally freed in 1580 with help from the Trinitarians, one of the Spanish religious orders that ransomed captives in North Africa.

A View of "the Turk"

By contrast, Cervantes had no direct experience of Constantinople, where *The Great Sultana* is set, although the widespread European fascination with the Ottomans and their capital in the sixteenth century would have made familiar many of the stereotypes and commonplaces about "the Turk." In Spain, the most interesting text on the topic was the anonymous dialogue-cum-travel-narrative *El viaje de Turquía* (Travels to Turkey), probably composed around 1557, which used its sympathetic depictions of the Ottoman regime from the point of view of a captive to voice a humanist critique of Spanish venality and intolerance. The *Viaje*, which circulated in manuscript, reiterated many of the more common European perceptions of the Ottomans as they had appeared in multiple texts written by ambassadors, merchants, and other travelers to Constantinople. The harem, the janissaries, the sexual use of young boys, the justice system and its unusual punishments, all recur in depictions

of the Ottomans in the period. More important, Cervantes's texts on the Ottomans—both the play included here and the novella "El amante liberal" (The Generous Lover)—share with the *Viaje* a distinctly humanist and cosmopolitan sensibility, in which the depiction of otherness obliquely reflects Spain's limitations.

Cervantes's plot of Sultan Amurates falling hopelessly for a Christian captive corresponds to Venetian ambassadors' account of Murad III (d. 1595) and his love for the Corfiote captive Safidje. Whereas *Bagnios*, a play set in North Africa and populated by Spanish captives and renegades, would hold an obvious appeal for his Spanish audience, Cervantes renders his Ottoman fantasy more proximate by making the irresistible captive a young Spanish girl, Catalina de Oviedo. Most striking in the play is the deflation of religious fervor: although the feisty Catalina is ready to become a martyr for her faith, there is no call for her to do so, as the Sultan is quite willing to tolerate her difference and respect her Christian belief. The Ottoman tolerance of religious minorities, even if they were carefully regulated and heavily taxed, would have seemed nothing short of miraculous to post-Reformation European audiences, more accustomed to the violent repression of confessional differences within Christianity as well as to a crusader rhetoric vis-à-vis Islam.

Forbidden Pleasures

The appeal of a play on the Ottomans, besides its vision of tolerance, lay primarily in its emphasis on "Oriental" sexual practices. Early modern European audiences were fascinated by Islamic polygyny and the imperial harem, by the eunuchs who served in the sultan's retinue, and especially by the Ottomans' love for boys. Historically, the captive women from the borders of the empire forced into the royal harem were valued prizes, symbols of Ottoman power, but in the European imagination they also signaled Ottoman excess. *The Great Sultana* puts the Sultan's many concubines on display, voyeuristically exposing that most secret and forbidden of spaces, the harem, and involving the audience in the ruler's choice of multiple sexual partners. It also suggests, in a somewhat farcical key, the considerable political power that the residents of the harem

could exercise, and the emasculation of the Sultan through his erotic enthrallment.

Despite the strong disapproval of sodomy in Islamic law, amorous relations between mature men and subordinate boys were common in Ottoman aristocratic circles, as they were, to some extent, in absolutist European courts of the period (El-Rouayheb 3 and passim, Andrews and Kalpakli 17–18 and passim). While the young male beloved was the object of much passionate poetry in the Persian, Arabic, and Turkish traditions, it is by no means clear whether this idealizing rhetoric was connected with lust. Nonetheless, sodomy and pederasty became some of the most common stereotypes in the negative description of "Turks" or Moors by Europeans. Cervantes echoes these stereotypes in both plays with his frequent references to *garzones*—pageboys presumably available for sexual use by older men at court—and by suggesting that young male captives are at particular risk in both religious and sexual terms.

The plays also return repeatedly to the appeal of exogamous unions between those of different faiths. There is a particular frisson in the representation of Christian men in love with Moorish women, for although exogamous marriage was allowed for Muslim men so long as their wives were people of the book (Qur'an 5:5), it was forbidden for women (Qur'an 2:221). Although intermarriage was not unknown, a male captive's dalliance with his mistress, or even with a Muslim slave, could cost him his life. In his complex interweaving of romance plots, Cervantes exploits the transgressive appeal of such unions to the fullest.

The Problem with Renegades

The presence of religious minorities and interfaith unions did not mean that Algiers and Constantinople were neatly divided between captors and captives, Muslims and Christians. Part of what makes narratives of Mediterranean captivity so fascinating is the historical presence of renegades, who complicate any lines of allegiance or identity. *Topografia, e historia general de Argel*, a description of Algiers from the time of Cervantes, notes that more than half of its population were *turcos de profesión*,

or professed Turks, as opposed to *turcos de nación*, or Turks by birth. The professed Turks, the *Topografia* explains, come from every corner of Europe and beyond, ranging from Muscovites to Albanians, from Scots to New World Indians (*Topografía*, 1:52, cited in Garcés 34–35). While literary accounts of renegades often emphasized their depravity and disregard for Christianity, the historical rationales for conversion to Islam were far more varied and complex. Many renegades were motivated by the greater social mobility, prosperity, and sophistication of North Africa or the Ottoman world when compared to a Europe that offered few possibilities for the dispossesed (Benassar and Benassar 419). A poor European sailor or apprentice could rise through the ranks much faster in these relatively meritocratic societies than he could at home, becoming a powerful janissary—a salaried member of the sultan's standing army—or a roving corsair captain. This was also the case for the boys forcibly conscripted through the *devshirmeh* (a system of human tribute to the Ottomans, primarily in the Balkans), converted to Islam, and trained for the janissary corps. Beyond their sheer numbers, the renegades also contributed important military and shipbuilding skills to the Ottomans. In *The Great Sultana*, the captive Madrigal taunts the Sultan with his vision of the ideal slaves: "My lord, would you rather this one were a smith, the other a shipbuilder, the third a gunpowder expert, or at least a master in artillery?" (Act I).

For both their actual contributions to Ottoman power and their perceived treachery to their faith, renegades were a source of great anxiety and profound fascination for early modern audiences. *The Bagnios of Algiers* presents two versions of the renegade—the traitor and the repentant martyr. Although the villainous Yzuf has clearly prospered as a corsair captain, the play condemns his betrayal of his native land, leaving aside any material rationale for his actions (or indeed, any sense of whether Yzuf chose his passage to North Africa or was forced there by Spanish exclusion). Meanwhile, the unfortunate Hazén, who apparently converted as a child, is desperate to return to Christianity and dies in the attempt. *The Great Sultana*, on the other hand, deflates the pathos and tension of the typical renegade plot, in that no one pressures the Spanish Christian Sultana to abandon her religion. The subplot of

the captives Lamberto and Clara clearly shows the voluntary and interested embrace of Islam for political advancement, by characters safely located at a great remove from Spain.

Thus although both plays translated here are fundamentally concerned with captivity and the interactions between Christians and Muslims, their settings differ in important ways. While Cervantes had direct experience of Algiers, his notion of Constantinople was mediated by a highly conventional literature on "the Turk." Algiers represented for Spain a proximate threat, and was populated in part by voluntary and involuntary exiles from Spain, who complicated any notion of national belonging. While the depiction of Constantinople invoked the military threat of the Ottomans, its greater remove allowed for a more sustained exploration of tolerance as a considered imperial policy. Both plays feature a mix of historical specificity and literary license, with ideologically charged material—gender roles and exotic sexual practices, relations between the faiths, conversion to Christianity—clearly heightened.

The Plays

The two plays translated here were published in Cervantes's 1615 collection; they are generally assumed to have been written in the decade or so preceding publication. As Malveena McKendrick notes, both the 1601 reopening of the playhouses, which had closed to observe the death of Philip II, and the 1605 return of the Spanish court to Madrid after its sojourn in Valladolid would have led to an increased demand for plays (McKendrick 134), of which Cervantes unsuccessfully tried to take advantage. *The Bagnios of Algiers* reworks the themes of the earlier *Traffic of Algiers*, which Cervantes probably wrote in the early 1580s, shortly after his return from captivity. Its main plot, of a Spanish slave rescued by Zara, the beautiful and rich daughter of the renegade Agi Morato, forms the gist of the famous "Captive's Tale" in the first part of *Don Quixote*, in which she is called Zoraida. Both plays, as well as the Captive's story, draw heavily on Cervantes's own experience during captivity—he was

Hazán Pasha's captive during the period in which the story is set and thus knew Agi Morato as well as Zara/Zoraida.

Set almost entirely in Algiers, *The Bagnios of Algiers* features captors falling in love with their captives, and a lively cast of renegades. It opens with the renegade Hazén, who intends to return to Christianity and to Spain, collecting signatures from Christian captives who will vouch for his sincerity. Hazén's goodness and desire to reconvert to Christianity are contrasted to the perfidy of Yzuf, who leads a nocturnal attack on his native Spain. Captured in his raid are an old man and his two sons, Francisquito and Juanico; a ribald sexton, Tristán; and the beautiful Costanza, whose lover, Don Fernando, throws himself into the sea to follow her into captivity. The play also recounts the fantastic escape from Algiers to Spain of Zara, the rich daughter of Agi Morato—the plot that reappears in part 1 of *Don Quixote*.

The story of Zara and Lope the captive is both the most fanciful and the most historically specific in the play. Lope and his companions notice a pole dangling from a window over the bagnio. Attached to this marvelous pole are both money to buy the Spaniards' freedom and a letter from Zara, who informs Lope that she is Christian and wishes to escape with him to Spain. This munificent benefactor of romance is precisely identified as not only Agi Morato's daughter but also the intended of Muley Maluco (Abd-el Malik), who became the sultan of Morocco in 1576 and ruled until 1578.

Cervantes presents the life of the bagnio in great detail, including, on the one hand, the cruel punishments meted out to captives and, on the other, the surprising religious freedom they enjoyed, culminating in the representation of a *comedia* as part of Easter celebrations within the prison. *Bagnios* combines accurate descriptions of the conditions of captivity with flights of rhetorical fancy, to sometimes jarring effect. The text harnesses age-old romance motifs, often taken from the Byzantine novel, which embellish the workings of Mediterranean piracy and captivity: the travails of lovers separated by unforeseen circumstances, the erotic assault on a virtuous heroine by her captors, the unreliability and opacity of characters who exist between cultures and religions, and the marvelous escapes that ensure a protracted resolution.

The Bagnios of Algiers also presents an intriguing mix of Christian fervor and humanist skepticism. The sympathetic characters long for a return to liberty and Christianity, while the youngest captive, Francisquito, exultantly chooses martyrdom over conversion to Islam. He represents within the play the strongest version of Christian identity, and remains resistant to the lures of his master. Yet while his youth and vulnerability make him a highly sympathetic figure, his father's absolute willingness to see him martyred instead of converted introduces a jarring note. His brother Juanico's fate, meanwhile, is unclear—he simply disappears from the play after the end of Act II, but he does not escape to Spain with the other captives. Moreover, the character most closely connected to the Church in any formal sense, the sexton Tristán, is also the play's buffoon. He spends his time onstage torturing the Jews of Algiers, and forcing his victim to "ransom" from him everything from his Sabbath stew to his young child. While the Jews of the play are not particularly dignified or individualized—there is no Shylock here—Tristán's supposedly farcical infliction of the sufferings decried by Christian captives on his own scapegoat complicates any sense that the Christians are uniquely good or the Moors uniquely depraved. In fact, the Christians' appalling treatment of Jews makes the ordinariness of their existence in Algiers all the more striking. Moreover, Tristán's intimate familiarity with Jewish dietary law, which he exploits to blackmail the Jew, recalls how closely Spanish Jews and Christians had coexisted before the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in the name of religious purity in 1492.

The Moors are presented as cruel and unremittingly lustful: the captive boys become the object of their master's sodomitical desire, while Costanza and Fernando are pursued by their respective master and mistress. Yet here too there are important exceptions: from the would-be counterrenegade Hazén, who is desperate to be back in Spain, to Zara, who is the daughter of a renegade and herself a secret Christian, things are not what they seem in the world of Algiers. The large number of characters whose religious allegiances are ambiguous suggests the impossibility of essentializing difference in a world full of renegades and counterrenegades. Even the most villainous of the Moors, Yzuf, complicates any simple view of the Mediterranean divide: he was born and

raised in Spain, he tells us, and his violent attack on his former home is connected to his exile from it. And if, as the play insists, the captive boys and their father are related to Yzuf, then "Christian" piety and "Moorish" depravity exist within the same Morisco family (Irigoyen-García). Cervantes's stage direction "*Enter two or three young Moors, perhaps even taken from the street*" (Act II) suggests just how indistinguishable are the play's Moorish antagonists from its Christian, Spanish protagonists.

The Great Sultana, for its part, enacts an oxymoronic mixture of Turk and Christian in its very title—it is an Eastern tale with a Spanish Old Christian protagonist. The play tells the story of the young Spanish captive Catalina, who grows into a great beauty in the seraglio while hidden by a sympathetic renegade. Cervantes based the plot of *The Great Sultana* both on historical and on fictional sources. The former describe a Corfiote or Venetian Christian woman of whom Amurates III was enamored. Fictional sources with similar plotlines include the Byzantine novels of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus, as well as stories by Italian authors such as Bandello and Cinthio (Cervantes 1998, 15: xiii). Since Cervantes himself never traveled to Turkey, he most likely relied on commonplaces about "the Turk," or perhaps a textual source such as *Viaje de Turquía*.

In *The Great Sultana*, Spanish identity is a constant theme. Catalina holds on to all the trappings of her Spanish self: her name, her dress, and, most important, her religion. The heroine's high Spanish virtues are matched in the low register by the wily *pícaro* (rogue) Madrigal, a Spanish captive who pokes fun at Muslims and Jews while trumpeting Spanish superiority. Despite his disdain for non-Christians, Madrigal tarries in Constantinople because of his own dalliance with a Moor, an unlawful adventure that almost gets him executed. Madrigal comes closest to an authorial figure in the play: he recounts Catalina's adventures in song to entertain the Sultan, and claims that on returning to Madrid he will become a playwright, the better to profit from his exotic experiences.

Sultan Amurates falls so completely in love with his Spanish captive that he decides to marry her, allowing her to remain a Christian and generally acceding to her requests. Under pressure from his advisers, who urge him to produce an heir as quickly as possible, he is forced to turn

to others in his seraglio. Catalina triumphantly wins him back when she announces that she is already pregnant with his child—a future "Spanish Ottoman."

Meanwhile, a Hungarian captive, Lamberto, has cross-dressed to accompany his beloved Clara into the harem. Presented to the Sultan as a possible mother for his future heir, Lamberto reveals his true sex, to general horror. Yet he claims to have experienced a miracle, converting to Islam as a way to change his sex. Instead of punishing him, the Sultan rewards his blatantly opportunistic embrace of Islam with a military office. *The Great Sultana* thus resolves the contradictions of Mediterranean identity by, first, making hybridity a permanent condition in the next generation, and, second, underscoring the openness of the Ottoman Empire to those who would join it. The play has received considerable critical attention in the past decade, as scholars come to terms with its surprisingly benign version of Ottoman power. Although the Sultan seems to be completely emasculated by his love for Catalina, his canny appropriation of Spanish virtues and Hungarian manpower suggest an alternative model to Spanish imperial bravado.

The plots of both plays depend heavily on the erotic appeal of the other, nuancing complex questions of religious identity via the characters' often illicit attachments. Thus *The Great Sultana* features the striking exogamous union between the Sultan and Catalina but also, in a minor key, that between Madrigal and the anonymous Moor he desires. *The Bagnios of Algiers* anticipates the union of the captive Lope and his benefactor Zara—the Muslim daughter of a renegade, who herself wishes to become a Christian—while Muslim masters of both sexes lust after their Christian captives. When religion and eros conflict in exogamous unions, love qualifies conversion, just as conversion qualifies love.

Translations and Influence

Cervantes's vision of Algiers underlies many subsequent European representations of North African captivity, of renegades, and of the romantic fascination with religious others. As critics have noted, Cervantes was the first to bring the experience of captivity to Spanish theater, and

his combination of historical specificity and romance fancy was quickly imitated. In England, *The Bagnios of Algiers* was appropriated and transformed in Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (1623), and it clearly influenced other related plays, such as John Fletcher's *The Island Princess* (1621) and Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West II* (1631). These texts trade in the recurring European fantasy of a Moorish woman's conversion to Christianity, sweetened by erotic attraction to the Christian protagonist. As we note above, this was a powerful literary diversion from the historical realities of captivity and the overwhelming frequency of conversion *to* Islam by Christian sailors, captives, and others.

The Bagnios is also an essential text to read in conjunction with the famous "Captive's Tale" in the first part of *Don Quixote*: it tells the same basic story but with important differences in its details, and with the addition of several interesting subplots among the renegades. While "The Captive's Tale" is the better known text, Cervantes offers in the play a number of alternative solutions, some of which are clearly determined by the dramatic genre. While there are, to the best of our knowledge, no explicit reworkings of *The Great Sultana*, its titillating vision of "the Turk" and his harem participates in the broader construction of an eroticized Orient in Cervantes's work and beyond.

This Translation

The basis for our translation is the most recent critical edition of the plays, coedited by Florencio Sevilla Arroyo and Antonio Rey Hazas, published in Alcalá in 1993 by Alianza and the Centro de Estudios Cervantinos. This solid edition corrects the errors in the original texts of the plays and provides variant readings from all the manuscripts as well as noting corrections by previous editors of the collection. The editors base their text on the original 1615 edition printed by the widow of Alonso Martín, who operated the latter's press after his death in 1614, five contemporary copies of which were consulted in the Spanish National Library in Madrid; the editors also employed a facsimile edition made in 1984 by the Spanish Royal Academy. Because we are dealing with a

regularized and critically edited text, we have not faced significant problems of variant readings. We have signaled the occasional emendation to the text in our footnotes.

Since our intention is to provide a text for study rather than for performance, we have opted for a prose translation of the plays, which has allowed us to remain as close as possible to Cervantes's language. That said, every effort has been made to keep the translations and stage directions faithful to contemporary performance. Our annotation directs the reader to pertinent studies or historical information necessary for a better understanding of the plays.

A Note on Coins

Characters in Cervantes's plays mention a variety of coins. Though mainly Spanish, there is also mention of the *áspero*, a coin of lesser value that circulated under Ottoman rule throughout the Levant. As Spanish coinage under the Habsburgs was a somewhat complicated system not based on simple equivalency, we provide a list of coins below. Coin values changed markedly over time, so our list is relative. Denominations are listed in descending order of value. For reference, according to a contemporary reformist writer, a poor man in 1620 would spend 30 maravedís daily (Elliott 2002, 286), or 30 escudos in a year. Cervantes's ransom was an exorbitant 500 escudos (Garcés 28).

1 gold escudo	=	350–400 maravedís
1 silver escudo	=	12 reales, 100 ásperos
1 ducado (ducat)	=	11 reales, 375–429 maravedís
1 dobla	=	6 reales, 50 ásperos
1 real	=	34–50 maravedís, 10–12 ásperos

TURK.

Let these two swear obedience for all of them.

ZAIDA.

May God bless your nuptials and make them joyous; may your womb be fertile, and may the Great Sultan's state see the timely birth of an heir; may you achieve your aims, for I know them from Rustán; and may the world give you its blessings in a thousand ways.

ZELINDA.

Most beautiful Spaniard, crown of her nation, discreet like no other, and singular in good intentions; may heaven bring your wishes to fruition, for it knows them well; and may the pious and sweet Hymenaeus[6] revel in these nuptials; let the empire you possess be ruled by your judgment; and may you desire nothing that you do not achieve. Clearly Mohammed himself exalts you!

TURK.

Do not name Mohammed to her, for the Sultana is a Christian. Her name is Doña Catalina, and her last name, de Oviedo—to my advantage, since if it were Moorish, she would never have come into my power, nor would I enjoy the treasure that is her beauty. And now, with no silence to disguise it, I worship the great name of my comely Catalina as something divine. To celebrate the nuptials, which will astound the world, may heaven grant me its glory and may all my people attend; let the deep sea bestow on me its tastiest fish from its frightful depths; may land and sky grant me game and birds, such that each may make the choicest dish.

SULTANA.

My lord, I do not warrant the praises you sing of me.

TURK.

For your crowns, let the south grant me its pearls and Arabia its gold, Tyre its purple and Sheba its fragrances. Let April and May give flowers to adorn your forehead. And if you think my requests make little sense, come and you shall see it all.

6. Hymenaeus, or Hymen, was the Greek god of marriage and commonly invoked in Renaissance texts that celebrated it.

[*Exeunt all but* ZAIDA *and* ZELINDA.]

ZELINDA.

Oh Clara! How dim our prospects look! What will we do? We're already at our wit's end! I, a man, and in the Sultan's seraglio? I can't imagine any path, remedy, or plan to get out of this.

ZAIDA.

Nor can I. Great was your daring!

ZELINDA.

It followed Love, who ignores fear when it seeks its happiness. Skirting death on every side, I would come to see you, my love, amid blades of steel unsheathed against me. I have seen you and possessed you, and whatever ill (though mortal) may follow cannot equal this boon.

ZAIDA.

You speak like a lover: you're all verve, valor, and hope, but our misfortune has no possible remedy. Death is the only way out of this sad place, which it was our misfortune to enter. There's no fleeing from here to a safer place: one can only escape on the wings of death. No bribe is enough to soften the guards, nor is there any solution that avoids death. I, pregnant, and you, a man, and in this seraglio? Death has us in its sights.

ZELINDA.

Enough! Since our fortunes must end in death, we must not hope for an escape; but know, Clara, that we must die in such a way that death attains for us a new and everlasting life. I mean that we should die as Christians no matter what happens.

ZAIDA.

I care not for life so long as we rush to such a death.

[*Exeunt. Enter* MADRIGAL, *the elephant's teacher, with a small tin trumpet, and with him* ANDREA, *the spy.*]

ANDREA.

Madrigal, I told you that the Arab woman would be the death of you one day!

MADRIGAL.

She did me more good than ill.

ANDREA.

She made you an elephant's teacher.

MADRIGAL.

Isn't it something, Andrea? No one will ever see anything like it.

ANDREA.

Won't you die in the end, when they figure out the trick?

MADRIGAL.

That doesn't matter. Let me live for now, for in ten years' time the elephant, the Sultan, or I will die, which will remedy my woes. Wouldn't it have been worse to let them throw me into the ocean tied up in a sack where I could drown, without the aid of my great swimming abilities? Aren't I better off now? Can't you help me now, for both our sakes?

ANDREA.

That's true.

MADRIGAL.

Andrea, this is a great feat, and I intend to get away with it when you least expect it.

ANDREA.

You have talents, Madrigal, which I commend to the devil. Will the elephant speak?

MADRIGAL.

It won't lack a teacher, and it's such an able beast, I think it must have a certain something of rational discourse.

ANDREA.

Clearly you are the animal devoid of reason. The nonsense you hit upon is unlike anything any rational person would find.

MADRIGAL.

It's good to make the Cadí think so.

ANDREA.

You're doing well; but don't try to compete with me, for that's wrong.

MADRIGAL.

My nature is to make fun of my closest friends.

ANDREA.

Is that a silver trumpet?

MADRIGAL.

I requested a silver one, but the person who gave it to me said that tin was good enough. I must speak into the elephant's ear with it.

ANDREA.

A waste of time and effort!

MADRIGAL.

A great plan and a beautiful trick! They give me a stipend of one hundred ásperos[7] a day.

ANDREA.

Two escudos? What a tale! Your trickery is going well!

MADRIGAL.

Here's the Cadí. Till later—I have to speak with him.

ANDREA.

Will you try to trick him again?

MADRIGAL.

Perhaps I might.

[*Exit* ANDREA, *and enter the* CADÍ.]

CADÍ.

Spaniard, have you begun instructing the elephant?

MADRIGAL.

Yes, and it's making good progress: I've given it four lessons.

CADÍ.

In what language?

MADRIGAL.

In Basque, which is the language that plainly takes the prize for being older than Ethiopian and Abyssinian.

CADÍ.

It seems a strange tongue to me. Where is it spoken?

MADRIGAL.

In Vizcaya.[8]

CADÍ.

And Vizcaya is . . . ?

7. See the Introduction for a discussion of coinage.

8. Vizcaya, or Biscay, is the Basque region of Spain. The Basque language—a pre-Indo-European tongue—is not related to Indo-European languages spoken near it, such as Spanish, French, and Catalan.

MADRIGAL.

There on the border of Navarre, next to Spain.

CADÍ.

This powerful language is unique in its antiquity; teach it Spanish, which we understand better.

MADRIGAL.

I'll teach him all the grave languages I know, and he'll take what he wants.

CADÍ.

And which ones do you know?

MADRIGAL.

The argot of blind men, the Italian *bergamasca*, Gallic Gascon, and ancient Greek;[9] I'll make him a primer with letters from the press so that he can get the famous cant. And if he doesn't like these, for they're somewhat rocky, I'll teach him the mellifluous Valencian and Portuguese.

CADÍ.

Your life risks grave danger if the elephant does not become a great student of Turkish, Moorish, or at least Spanish.

MADRIGAL.

It will be well versed in all of them, if it pleases the infinite provider to good men, and even to bad men, for He makes the sun shine on them all.

CADÍ.

Do me a favor, Spaniard.

MADRIGAL.

Certainly, I'll be glad to. State your will, and I shall do as you say.

CADÍ.

It will be the greatest your friendship can offer me. Tell me: What were those crows you saw flying today talking about in their coarse and sad voice? Because I couldn't ask you then.

9. The *bergamasca* (bergomask in English) was a lusty sixteenth-century dance depicting the reputedly awkward manners of the inhabitants of Bergamo, in northern Italy, where it supposedly originated. Gallic Gascon: a dialect of Gascony in France.

MADRIGAL.

You must know—and you must not doubt what you'll hear from me—you must know, I say, that they were speaking of going to the fields of Alcudia,[10] where they could satisfy their great hunger: for there's always a dead cow in those wide fields on which to fill their bellies.

CADÍ.

Where are those fields?

MADRIGAL.

In Spain.

CADÍ.

Quite a trip!

MADRIGAL.

Crows fly so fast that they cover a thousand leagues in a trice: they fly so hard that today they awaken in France, and go to sleep in Paris.

CADÍ.

Tell me: What was that goldfinch saying yesterday?

MADRIGAL.

I couldn't make it out— it's Hungarian, I don't understand it.

CADÍ.

And that pretty lark, did you catch what it was saying?

MADRIGAL.

Some nonsense that you don't need to know.

CADÍ.

I know you'll tell me.

MADRIGAL.

She said, in sum, that you were after a garzon, and some other little things.

CADÍ.

May Lucifer take her! Why does she meddle with me?

MADRIGAL.

If there's something to it, you can tell that I understand her.

10. Alcudia: a town in Extremadura where cattle are taken for winter grazing (Covarrubias 78).

CADÍ.

She's not too far off; but I'm not yet burning in such a fire. Don't tell anyone a thing, for my reputation would be ruined.

MADRIGAL.

My tongue is mute to reproach you. You can rest easy in my confidence, for I'm determined always to speak your praises. Even if the thrushes proclaim your vileness, and the finches that chirp in the buds speak of it; whether the asses bray to tell of your perverse deeds, or the crows caw or the canaries sing—since I'm the only one who understands them, I'll be the one to silence them from one pole to the other.

CADÍ.

Is there no bird that sings of my virtue?

MADRIGAL.

They will respect you from here on, O Cadí! if I can do anything about it. As soon as I see a sign on their lips of your failings, I shall cut out their tongues to punish them for offending you.

[*Enter* RUSTÁN, *the eunuch, and behind him an old* CAPTIVE *who listens to what they are saying.*]

CADÍ.

Good Rustán, where are you going?

RUSTÁN.

To find a Spanish *tarasí.*

MADRIGAL.

Isn't that a tailor?

RUSTÁN.

Yes.

MADRIGAL.

Then you're looking for me, for I'm Spanish and a tailor, with such large scissors that the sun's great tailor doesn't have the like in his sphere. What are we to cut?

RUSTÁN.

Rich garments for the Sultana, who dresses in the Christian fashion.

CADÍ.

Have you lost your senses? Rustán, what are you saying? There's a Sultana, and she dresses in the Christian fashion?

RUSTÁN.

It's no joke; you heard the truth. Her name is Doña Catalina, her last name de Oviedo.

CADÍ.

You must be telling some tale to awe and anger me.

RUSTÁN.

The Sultan has married a beautiful captive, and by his love he allows her to live in the Christian faith, and to dress and behave as a Christian, as she pleases.

CAPTIVE.

O holy and just heaven!

CADÍ.

Have you ever heard such nonsense? I'll die if I don't go and scold him right away.

[*Exit the* CADÍ.]

RUSTÁN.

You'll go in vain, since you'll find him all ablaze with love. Come with me, and make sure you're a good tailor.

MADRIGAL.

Sir, there's none better in this great city, neither captive nor renegade; and to prove it, know that I am the one named to teach the elephant; and one who is to make a beast speak must be elegant at making clothes.

RUSTÁN.

I think you're right; but if you don't give me another reason, I'm against you from now on. Yet all in all I'll take you. Come on.

CHRISTIAN.[11]

Sir, if you please, I would speak with you alone.

RUSTÁN.

Speak, for I shall hear you.

CHRISTIAN.

It's clear to me from several things that this fellow knows little or

11. This character is the same as the old CAPTIVE given in the list of dramatis personae. There is no evidence in the play that this character is any more a tailor than Madrigal is, though he may be more familiar with court manners. If he is a poor nobleman, as he claims elsewhere, he is adopting the same ruse in order to approach Catalina.