



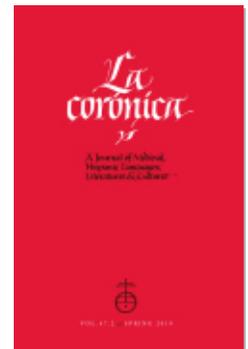
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*To Live Like a Moor: Christian Perceptions of Muslim Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* by Olivia Remie Constable (review)

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*Constable, Olivia Remie. To Live Like a Moor: Christian Perceptions of Muslim Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Spain. Edited by Robin Vose, foreword by David Nirenberg, U of Pennsylvania P, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-8122-4948-4.*

*To Live Like a Moor* is, unfortunately, Olivia Remie Constable's final contribution to the field of Medieval Iberia. Published posthumously, Constable was unable to finish it before her passing. It is missing the final planned chapter. The final manuscript was prepared for publication by her former student, Robin Rose. In the editor's preface, Rose explains that her intervention in the manuscript was "deliberately minimal" and was limited to including conclusions to each chapter "for the sake of consistency" (xv). She notes that one planned chapter, that of "Evolving Christian Perceptions of the Arabic Language," and another one related to music, poetry and song were not completed and, therefore, not included. Despite its incompleteness, it is an exemplary illustration of what organized, exhaustive and well-written research produces. In this book, Constable masterfully documents how day-to-day cultural habits such as dress, bathing, and food, that are, in many ways, passive cultural acts, reveal a great deal about assumed and unconscious cultural identities, how they come about, and how they evolve. Through these commonplace topics, she paints a vivid picture of what life must have been like for a person of the Muslim faith living under Christian rule after 1567.

David Nirenberg provides the foreword, which situates the book in the broader scholarship. He explains that the surrender of Granada in 1492 and the subsequent "choice" given to Muslims to convert to Christianity or face expulsion created a new category of peoples, the Moriscos (vii). The change of religion and, therefore, identity, meant much more than just a change of religious beliefs or practices. With this new category, questions of religious identity arise, mainly "what it meant to be Muslim, what it meant to be Christian, and what aspects of a person's behavior or belief needed to change in order to make the transition from the one to the other" (vii). Through the analysis of everyday actions, Constable seeks to answer the essential question of what it meant to convert from Islam to Christianity in Christian Spain beyond the practices tied to specific religious dogma.

The first chapter, "Being Muslim in Christian Spain," is the account of a memorandum written by Francisco Núñez Muley to the chief administrator

of the city of Granada, in 1657, some seventy-five years after the conquest of that city by Christian forces. This memorandum was written in response or even as a rebuttal to the ban on practices that were perceived to be of Islamic origin. Núñez Muley was born of an elite Muslim family shortly before the conquest of the city and had converted to Christianity. Records show that he was employed in the household of the archbishop of Granada. It seems that Núñez Muley was not a marginal or an unknown character to the city administrators. His memorandum discusses such traditions as “bathing, dressing, naming, language, and music” (1) in the aftermath of the conversions. The memorandum focuses not so much on the religious reasons for certain practices as defined and demanded by holy texts and religious law. Rather, the rebuttal offers other rational reasons, often economic, for those same practices that are offensive to the Christian authorities. This chapter shows that laws regarding how to deal with the Christian-Muslim problematic in Granada changed over time and were informed by the perspectives of the archbishop of Granada and Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros.

In chapter two, “Clothing and Appearance,” Constable plots the progression of expectations and laws in both the Christian and Muslim circles that defined how one should dress and how this dress is part of a “visual identity” of a group or person. Núñez Muley defends the use of Islamic clothing, especially in the case of women, because it would cause economic hardship to have to buy new wardrobes. He goes on to point out that “all regions have their particular styles” (3) and that the practice of wearing veils was shared by Old and New Christians in Granada. Since clothing is regional and is also linked to acquisition capacity (and, therefore, economy), women should not be punished for keeping the Islamic dress.

In Chapter 3, “Bathing and Clothing,” the author shatters the stereotype that in the Middle Ages people did not bathe. In fact, from the tenth through the fifteenth century, in Medieval Iberia “Muslims, Christians, and Jews visited bathhouses on a regular basis” (63). As in chapter two Constable traces the unfolding changing attitudes towards bathing after January 1567, when the mandate no longer allowed the use of public baths. In his rebuttal, Núñez Muley points out that both Old and New Christians also frequented the bathhouses. He divorces the concept of bathing from Muslim religious practice and focuses on their main use, “to cleanse oneself” (67). He also addresses concerns that the bathhouses are in fact a place for other illicit activities.



The final chapter, “Food and Foodways,” is the story of Jerónima la Franca, a Morisca from Toledo who was accused of “eating like a Muslim.” The case against her “stressed not only the particular food she ate—couscous—but also that she ate in a Muslim manner” (104). While this topic was not part of Núñez’s original rebuttal memorandum, he had sent a petition to Charles V in 1523 where he asked for a revision of recent laws regarding butchering and restrictions on where to purchase meat. The existence of this prior letter demonstrates, again, that these concerns were not new but rather part of a broader arc of shifting levels of tolerance and mutual understanding. In this chapter, Constable lays out the various manners in which Moriscos’ food practices were scrutinized. These include everything from the slaughtering of meat, the eating of couscous or ingredients closely associated with couscous such as “raisins, figs, milk, butter, honey, rice, fruits, eggplants, tripe, goat, fritters (*buñuelos*), and other items” (108). As in the other chapters, Constable shows the progression of how the perspectives related to food practices changed before and after the year 1500, citing specific legislation and events.

The book ends here, but by no means does it leave the reader unsatisfied or with a feeling of incompleteness. In the four chapters included, Constable convincingly shows how laws were formed from fundamental misunderstanding of the origins of practices related to dress, hygiene, and food. At the same time, through the writings of Núñez Muley, she demonstrates how the Morisco population was reacting to prohibitions that must have seemed completely absurd, sometimes random, and overly punitive. In essence, this book has two voices, that of Núñez Muley, the author of the rebuttal, and that of Constable, who provides the context for the new prohibitions, how they came about, and the Christian and Muslim perspectives on these matters.

In conclusion, this is a wonderfully crafted book that elegantly draws back the curtain on what it must have been like to be a Morisco in Granada in the sixteenth century. She shows how, on the one hand, a recent convert had to make sure that his/her conversion was seen as genuine, while at the same time sticking to those practices that would have been impossible to abandon due to economic hardship, reasons of hygiene, and the mere fact that these practices were not necessarily “Islamic,” but “regional,” in their eyes. Núñez Muley treads a fine line between advocating for his community and not being an apologist for disingenuous conversions. Likewise, Constable gives a voice to the Morisco population of Granada and lays out the complexity of living in a shifting

socio-political context. Finally, although not explicitly stated in the book, the evidence presented here serves as a good explanation for the Morisco Revolt (or the Revolt of the Alpujarras) just a year later, in 1568.

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*Cuesta Torre, María Luzdivina, editor. "Esta fábula compuesta, de Isopete sacada." Estudios sobre la fábula en la literatura española del siglo XIV. Peter Lang, 2017. ISBN: 978-3-0343-2760-2.*

This book consists of a brief introduction and six articles by leading scholars of Medieval Spanish literature and is but one facet of the research project FF12012-32265 (<http://fele.unileon.es>), funded by the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad in Spain. It is well organized and includes an exhaustive bibliography, author biographies, and summaries of the articles in Spanish, German, French, and English. María Luzdivina Cuesta Torre's introduction contains a brief overview of the history of the fable, its many traditions (both Eastern and Western), with an explanation of how fables became included in Spanish vernacular literature, especially that of the fourteenth century.

The first article in this collection is by Cuesta Torre on the fables and prologue in the *Libro del caballero Zifar*, examined in their historical and political contexts. The fables of the "Ass and the Lapdog," "The Wolf and the Ram," "The Lark and the Hunter," "The Wolf and the Leeches," and the tale of "The Water, Wind and Truth" are analyzed in great detail, especially in the context of the lives of Gonzalo Pétrez (also known as Gonzalo García Gudiel), Ferrand Martínez, Gonzalo Díaz Palomeque, and Queen María de Molina. Cuesta Torre goes into the very complex history of early fourteenth-century Spain in the Diocese of Toledo at great length (this article comprises more than a third of the entire book) and it demonstrates how that history is included not only in the aforementioned stories, but also reflected in the actions of several of the main characters of the *Zifar*. She gives a convincing defense of the hypothesis that Jofré de Loyasa is the author of the *Zifar* and that the book's publication date was between 1301 and 1307.