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Describing Otherness in Captives' Autobiographies in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries*

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Abstract

The essay explores the description of Otherness in the autobiographies of three former Christian captives from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In these texts, authors described their experiences in the Islamic societies where they were enslaved, offering insights into Islamic geography and culture. However, these descriptions were also influenced by prevailing ideas and the authors' need to align their narratives with the hegemonic discourse, thereby perpetuating and crafting biased depictions of the Other. Understanding the motivations that guided the construction of memory in these autobiographies is crucial for a comprehensive grasp of their objectives. These objectives are closely intertwined with the authors' experiences in Islamic societies and their aspirations for reintegration into Christian ones, where they produced their writings after escaping captivity.

Keywords: Captivity, Egodocument, Mediterranean, Otherness, Slavery

1. *The Former Captive as a Subaltern Writer*

The Mediterranean of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a frontier society, i.e., 'a place of interactions, producer of social and political links, but also a place of tensions, frictions

and internal and external violence' (Bertrand and Planas 2011, 3). A complex web of econo-mic, cultural, social and political relations was woven on this frontier. Captives and slaves are a central paradigmatic example of this Mediterranean border. Captivity and slavery were part of the idiosyncrasy of the secular conflict between Christians and Muslims from its inception. In the crowns of Castile and Aragón, until the conquest of the Kingdom of Granada, captivity and slavery were primarily related to medieval warfare within Iberian Peninsula boundaries. There, slavery was legitimized by being the exchange for sparing the captured enemy's life, according to the Aristotelian definition that circulated in medieval legislation, as in the *Siete Partidas*.[1] After the Christian conquest of Granada, the conflict between Christianity and Islam moved to the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar. The Habsburg and Ottoman armies engaged in a series of battles, and corsair warfare and piracy gained strength in the sixteenth century. This led thousands of men and women to be enslaved by their 'infidel' enemies. Because of the extent of the phenomenon due to the conflict between Christianity and Islam, Mediterranean captivity and slavery in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were understood, by the common sense of the time, to be an everyday occurrence (Bono 2002; Martínez Torres 2004; Kaiser 2008; Vincent 2008; Fiume 2009; Weiss 2011).

In established historiography, captives were viewed as a product of war and as commodi-ties, mainly because of their role in the ransom economy – even their role as a labor force was relegated to the background. However, now they are also understood within the frontier society itself as cultural mediators who participated in a 'web of connectivity' that was woven betwe-en the two shores of the Mediterranean (Subrahmanyam 2011; Fiume 2013). Using Natalie Rothman's concept, these captives led 'trans-imperial lives', travelling back and forth between Mediterranean shores. They moved across imperial borders and, at the same time, produced the means to classify imperial alterities, signify their own 'in-between place' and shape-shift imperial boundaries (2012). This intermediate place was also engendered in the imperial frontiers of the Hispanic Monarchy that was carrying out a process of ethno-religious uniformization in its societies. In this sense, captivity and slavery are to be understood as disruptive practices, as defined by Daniel Hershenzon:

Piracy and captivity were disruptive practices. This statement may sound banal. Obviously, captivity disrupted the lives of the individuals who lost their freedom. But, captivity generated an ethno-religious disorder that also disrupted the political order. Captivity transplanted Christians to Muslim territory and threatened their confessional identity while forging Muslim slave communities in Europe. … and among Spanish subjects. (2017, 1-2)

Some captives managed to obtain freedom and return to their places of origin, whether enslaved or not. However, the fact that they had spent so much time in contact with Islam often led the Christian societies to which they returned to suspect that they may have transgressed certain social norms or even changed their faith. It is important to acknowledge that the captives un-derwent an experience of cultural exchange that potentially led them to question and transgress the values assumed in their place of origin. However, upon their return, they had to readapt to Iberian society, with which they no longer necessarily shared the same cultural norms. Hence, the potential cultural contagion of the Christian former captives placed them in a 'marginal' position. That is, the captive was in a situation of dislocation, of liminality, not as a phase or a

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[1] The *Siete Partidas* is a medieval legal code compiled during the reign of Alfonso X of Castile in the late thirteenth century.

transition state, but rather as a position (Rodríguez-Rodríguez 2013, 26-27). They were beyond the centrality of a well-understood Catholic culture, positioned halfway between 'them' (the Muslim Other) and 'us'. Thus, the memory of their captivity emerged from this non-centric identity position: it was a 'liminal' space between the two cultures and was marginal within the Christian one. The liminality could represent 'moments or periods of transition during which the normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behavior are relaxed, opening the way to novelty and imagination, construction and destruction' (Thomassen 2014, 1). So, we must consider this position to understand their writings well.

The collection of documents upon which the present article is based is not extensive. Of the minority of returned captives who took on the endeavor of composing their autobiographies,[2] an even smaller subset came from less privileged social backgrounds. For this particular group, writing was not a customary cultural practice or expectation, despite constituting, in principle, a literate minority within this group (Amelang 2003, 39). Their writings have been classified as 'popular' or 'common people's' forms of writing (Petrucci 1978). Within this group, I have selected three authors who wrote their works (and circulated them) in Iberian contexts at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

Jerónimo de Pasamonte was an Aragonese man captured in 1574 after having participated in several battles as a soldier in the Mediterranean, and who did not return to Christian lands until 1593. As a child, he had received some writing training because he was expected to pursue an ecclesiastical career. Upon his return to Naples after his captivity, he wrote down his life story, starting from his childhood.[3] Another author is Diego Galán, born in Consuegra (Toledo), who enlisted as a soldier in Málaga in 1589 and was captured by Muslim pirates after a few days at sea. In 1600, he escaped back to his native village from Negroponte. We can guess that Galán was literate from what he says about the jobs he was given as a slave, which required the ability to read and write. His text takes the form of a chronicle from the time he left his village until he returned more than ten years later.[4] Finally, we know very little about the origin of the Portuguese João Mascarenhas because he does not discuss his background. We know, however, that he toured the various overseas garrisons of the Portuguese empire as a soldier. On his return journey in 1621, he was captured in Algiers, where he remained until he was released in 1626. His text shows a tripartite structure: in the first part, he speaks of his capture and sale, the second part takes the form of an ethnographic treatise on the city of Algiers, and the last part is a kind of martyrology.[5] Although the stylistic frames and the external form of these three parts vary, they share the same constitutive elements.

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[2] This text does not aim to discuss the appropriateness of the use of the term 'autobiography', but, following James Amelang's thesis, it is understood from a 'deliberately open and flexible perspective, a perspective that associates autobiographical writing with almost any literary form where the expression of personal experience in the first person is present' (2003, 17).

[3] The work remained a manuscript until Raymond Foulché-Delbosc published it in 1922. The only known manuscript is preserved in the National Library of Naples and is not Pasamonte's autograph, but was written between 1603 and 1604 by Domingo Machado, Bachelor in Theology from Salamanca (Pasamonte 2015).

[4] There are two known manuscripts of this work. Its first edition was produced in 1913 by Manuel Serrano y Sanz from a manuscript in the Toledo Public Library; later, Matías Barchino found a second manuscript in the library of El Escorial. It was then seen that the first known manuscript, dated after 1621 because of references to Philip IV that do not appear in the other version, was a reworking of the second by adding passages and refining the literary style. For this work, I mainly used the edition of the manuscript of El Escorial (Galán 2011). I also consulted the edition of the reworked manuscript of the Toledo Public Library (2001).

[5] The work was printed in his lifetime: its first edition is from 1627, but it was circulated and reprinted in later decades (Mascarenhas 1993).

In short, I refer to subjects whose subaltern condition upon their return to Christianity is twofold. On the one hand, it is determined by their social class and, on the other hand, by their experience in Islamic societies, which aroused the suspicion that they did not fully belong to Christianity.

Some specialists have already noticed how autobiographical writers of popular extraction need to justify their intrusion as authors into the writing world, which was perhaps alien to them. Approaching popular writing forms, one can appreciate a kind uneasy conscience when facing the autobiographical act itself (Davis and Burdiel 2005, 21), or a palpable insecurity that writing from a marginal position so often produced, which they make clear through some formulas (Amelang 2003, 142). In this context, we can understand the feigned creation of a pretext that allows writers to tell us their story, which also appears in Pasamonte, Galán and Mascarenhas' writings. They often blame third parties for their determination to write. In Galán's case:

Me persuadieron algunos amigos, a quienes conté algunas cosas de Turquía, que compusiera un libro y, hallándome corto de ingenio para empeño igual por haber consumido el tiempo de mi juventud en poder de infieles de diferentes lenguas y costumbres, no me atreví a escribir cosa que saliese a luz. (2011, 27)[6]

Like Galán, who warns of his limited education, they question their own authority to write, but always find a reason to write down their experiences: 'que havendo nelle tantos Soldados, tantos Letrados, tantas pessoas graves, & doutas: nam houvesse quem escrevesse della algum tratado moderno em nossa lingoa, occupando por ventura a sutilesa de seus engenhos em livros de menos importancia' (Mascarenhas 1627, A3v).[7] In the end, they seem to be careful to avoid appearing vain, which they also express with their unliterary and unadorned language. Mascarenhas assures readers that 'nam foy presunção, nem confiança que tivesse. Sendo meu cabedal tam limitado, de cuydar que escritos meus pudessem sair a luz: dando à impressaõ a perda da Nao Conceyçaõ' (1627, A3r).[8] In this regard, such cautions are frequent. While Galán laments not being Lope de Vega to write the things he has seen (2011, 170), Mascarenhas says: 'Meu intento foy contar verdades … pelo que me pareceo naõ ser necessario adorno de palavras, nem lingoagem floreada, que esta muytas vezes serve mais de escurecer, & confundir a historia, que de a declarar, & dar gosto a quem a lè' (1627, A3r).[9] Therefore, it was common for authors to highlight their plain style and even their downright foolishness. The straightforward writing, or at least its announcement, may be a response to the religious precept against vanity, which would be especially relevant in a context marked, as we shall see, by the attempt to reaffirm their Catholicity. Yet the plain style also ends up being synonymous with sincerity and, therefore, with truthfulness (Amelang 2003, 134).

My aim, however, is not to assess the accuracy of the memories conveyed by each of our authors. While we can attempt to understand how they translated their experiences into written words, we cannot definitively determine the extent to which these writings truly represent the

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[6] (I was persuaded by some friends, to whom I told some things about Turkey, to compose a book and, finding myself short of wit for such an undertaking because I had spent the time of my youth in the power of infidels of different languages and customs, I did not dare to write anything that would come out in the open). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

[7] (Although there are so many literate soldiers and learned people, no one can be found to write a modern work on this subject in our language. They devote the subtleties of their intelligence to books of minor importance).

[8] (It is neither presumption nor recklessness on my part to have believed, I, whose talents are so limited, to be able to publish my writings by having the account of the loss of the ship Conceição printed).

[9] (That is why I did not consider it necessary to use embellishments and flourishes in my language, because many times all this only serves to obscure and confuse the story instead of clarifying it and pleasing the reader).

reality of their authors' lived experiences. The present article aims to understand how, through the description of alterity in those texts (the Otherness they are suspected of having approached during their captivity), they attempted to overcome the suspicion and reintegrate into Hispanic societies upon their return. By comparing three narratives from different regions of Iberian territories, I aim to observe how writing forms and models were able to circulate and how the ideological program deployed by the Catholic King may have also influenced their memories. Furthermore, I will examine how their social background may have influenced their discourse.

2. *The Literary Context: Mediterranean Captivity and Slavery in the Literature of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*

The handwritten or, more rarely, printed chronicle autobiographies written by captives proliferated throughout Europe in both Mediterranean territories and, albeit a few decades later, Central and Northern Europe (De Bunes Ibarra 1993; Matar 2001; Colley 2004; Moureau 2008; Voigt 2009; Curran-Vigier 2016; Duprat 2016). They joined an already considerable mass of literature on Africa, Muslims and captivity and slavery in the Mediterranean. This literature played an essential role in knowledge of Africa and the treatises on it, which proliferated from the fifteenth century onwards, when Europeans initiated an exhaustive study of their enemies in order to better combat them. Some of these descriptions of Africa were written precisely by authors who had been captives, such as Mármol Carvajal or Antonio de Sosa (De Bunes Ibarra 1989, 3-6).

Yet the literary productions about captivity in the Golden Age are framed within the 'literature of captivity' genre. During the early modern era, authors crafted narratives, whether from their own captivity experiences or not, by drawing from existing models like the Byzantine novel and contextualizing these stories in their contemporary time (Mas 1967; Camamis 1977). The entry of these events in the literature was added to the different accounts of confrontation between Islam and Christianity, such as the literature of crusades or, in the Hispanic Monarchy, the poetic celebration of the Christian conquest (Duprat 2010). The oral or written sermons of the religious orders for the redemption of captives also circulated throughout the early modern period. They were written by the redeeming friars themselves or by captives ransomed by those orders. So, they turned their captivity narratives into quasi-martyrologies and offered a dramatic testimony of what was happening in North Africa (Fernández 2003).

In this literary context, it is difficult to determine to what extent our autobiographical soldiers were inspired by the texts that preceded them. Many fragments are indeed commonplaces, repeated from one work to another, and they would form part of the collective imaginary around captivity or were directly borrowed from other texts. The inclusion of fictitious passages is also marked by the need to reproduce a series of stereotypes about Islam.

However, it is known that writing was also part of the daily life of some captives and slaves. As such, in some documents we can see how captives express themselves in either their handwriting or through third parties. Therefore, if we are to analyze the autobiographies of captives, we must also understand them within a broader range of egodocuments that recorded the voices of captives. Some of these have been recently studied: the letters the Christian slaves sent from North Africa to their families to ask for ransom (Fiume 2013), the autobiographical writing born of the bureaucratic imperatives of the Hispanic Monarchy (Tarruell 2013), the information that the captive in Algiers had to write upon his return to the Peninsula once rescued (Martínez-Góngora 2009), the 'literatura de avisos' (Sola 2013), the 'relaciones de causas' preserved in frontier courts (González-Raymond 1992), or captives and their relatives'

petitions for freedom received by the Hispanic Monarchy through State or War Councils (Martínez Torres 2004; Kaiser and Moatti 2007). There were also civil court statements after they were freed, where they could be interrogated about the capacity and intentions of the army or navy in which they had served as slaves (Pardo Molero 2005); and, in Inquisition courts, former slaves were required to provide an account of their actions while absent from Christian lands by considering their spiritual journey (Bennassar and Bennassar 1989).

Thanks to this set of egodocuments,[10] some researchers have sought to tell the story of slavery through the voices of the slaves who returned from Islamic lands. But it is important not to lose sight of the objectives of these sources when we examine them. These objectives might include highlighting the urgency of the captive's rescue in letters, justifying their services to the monarchy in petitions, showcasing their valuable knowledge of Islamic societies before civil courts, or demonstrating the righteousness of their behavior and faith before the Inquisition. As specialists have noted, it can be assumed that several mechanisms were employed to construct a rather stereotyped discourse of captivity in accordance with recipients' expectations, the recipients being families, the Crown, judges, or (in the case of the autobiographies analyzed in this essay) Christian readers.

3. *Describing Otherness from the Margins: From Know-How to Reintegration*

In the context of the conflict between Christianity and Islam and the Hispanic Monarchy's hegemonic anti-Islamic project, the description of Otherness plays a fundamental role in those texts. In Pasamonte, Galán and Mascarenhas' autobiographies, stories are filled with historical details, descriptions of the physical environment, known pirates, political events and explanations of Islamic customs and habits. They particularly describe the city of Algiers, where they spent part of their captivity, and the journeys they participated in, when they took the opportunity to portray some aspects of cities and coasts glimpsed from their galley bench. What mattered was what was seen and done during the journey, a far cry from eighteenth-century travel literature, in which an inner transformation is described at the expense of the external adventure (Amelang 2003, 89).

We can see how the authors emphasize the significance of the Islamic geography and ethnographic descriptions in their accounts, drawing upon the know-how gained from their experiences in Islamic societies to undertake the writing of their autobiographies. 'Dicen en nuestra España que no hay mejor maestro que el bien acuchillado' (Pasamonte 2015, 139),[11] declares the Aragonese former captive at the beginning of his autobiography. He presents his work practically as a book of advice where, by defining himself as a 'teacher', he makes his didactic vocation explicit.[12] Meanwhile, Galán declares: 'solo diré con mi mal limado estilo, algunas cosas de las que vi y pude percibir en la memoria en las jornadas que hice por mar

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[10] 'Egodocument' is a category introduced by the historian Jacob Presser in the 1950s, which he defined as 'those historical sources in which the researcher is faced with an *I*, or occasionally a *he*, as a writing and describing subject with a continuous presence in the text' (Presser 1958). Historiography has widely accepted the term to refer to this type of sources, written in the first person about one's own personal experience by 'including diaries, personal and family chronicles, some letters and travel narratives, as well as spiritual and secular autobiographies' (Amelang 2005, 64).

[11] (They say in our Spain that there is no better teacher than the well-stabbed one).

[12] Pasamonte (2015) says that his text aims to portray the evils that affect Christianity, and he plans to submit it to religious authorities for analysis. However, he already suggests a solution to these issues by proposing the excommunication of individuals responsible for perpetuating these perceived evils.

y tierra, aunque lo más fue por mar, asido un remo de las galeras de mis amos' (2011, 27).[13] Mascarenhas states that he wants to 'dar a entender clara, & brevemente como pratico na milicia da India, & na de diversas partes, & como quem militou nelas: a valerosa peleja desta Náo, & a força, que nossos inimigos tem na Cidade de Argel, & os trabalhos que em serviço desta Coroa tenho passado' (1627, A3r-v).[14] Therefore, the know-how provided by being a captive will serve as an example, and even as a service to the monarchy.

In the end, the former captives who returned to Christianity were information conveyors. The corresponding Christian authorities took advantage of them as a way of creating knowledge in a world in expansion where experience gained in importance by surpassing ancient authorities' knowledge. For this reason, as a witness of what he tells, the former captive was a source of reliable information from North Africa: both geographical knowledge and cultural and linguistic information, which could be useful politically.

Moreover, the former captive took advantage of it. It was common practice for European monarchies, including the Hispanic Monarchy, to leverage the 'talents' of these trans-imperial subjects, where 'talents' are understood as skills acquired through experience (Oldrati 2019, 119). Moreover, 'talent promotion' was clearly a trans-imperial practice because it used the enemy's force against itself (135). In this context, the captives often leveraged their own talents as a means to potentially obtain promotions within the Hispanic Monarchy, which they sometimes explicitly demanded in their writings. For instance, Mascarenhas acknowledges that 'o contentamento de contar trabalhos passados me pòde ficar por premio' (1627, A3v).[15] He does not directly admit to the pleasure of writing, seeing that few authors were sincere about this fundamental source of motivation (Amelang 2003, 172-173). Still, he relates it to the benefits he can gain from writing about his experience based on this recognition of talent.

At the same time a description is made, both from direct testimony and from culling other texts, an image of those described is being created. This image is influenced by some prejudices already circulating or determined by the interest to which the authors wished their description to respond. A description is, after all, an exercise of mediation that ranges from linguistic interpretation to the translation or adaptation of concepts and values (Pardo Molero 2011). However, while attempting to create objective descriptions, they fixed, developed and perpetuated an image of the Other biased by existing prejudices and the need to insert the story into a hegemonic discourse. That is to say, the Other (here the Berber or Turkish subject, or Algiers itself) was 'produced' in an attempt to dominate the threat it represented (Said 2003, 59).

In this sense, the captivity chronicles have been understood as an attempt to bring Islam closer to Christian readers by perpetuating myths and inserting their descriptions into the image that readers already had of Islam (Pardo Molero 2011). It is James Amelang who, in his analysis of the artisans' autobiographies, reminds us that there is nothing casual in writing (2003, 77). Therefore, what the authors included in their texts and the forms they gave to that content also form part of a strategy that goes beyond explicit declarations of intent. Thus, to understand the reproduction of these images in captives' autobiographies, we must go beyond the confessed statements and attempt to reconstruct the action of less transparent impulses (167). In this way, we can analyze the factors that influenced the construction of memory in the autobiographies of former captive soldiers.

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[13] (I will only say, in my poorly refined style, some of the things I saw and could perceive in my memory during the journeys I made by sea and land, although most were by sea, holding an oar from the galleys of my masters).

[14] (To report clearly and briefly the valiant combat of that vessel, the state of the forces of our enemies in the city of Algiers, and the ordeals I have undergone in the service of the Crown).

[15] (The pleasure of recounting my past experiences can serve as a reward).

In the reconstruction of these less evident motivations, the question of their subaltern status arises. As argued before, they were subalterns not only as low-ranking soldiers but as individuals who had forcibly co-existed with the enemy culture and then returned. In this regard, it has been discussed how their return through ransom, accompanied by specific ceremonies, facilitated the resolution of this disorder and their reintegration into their communities of origin (Fiume 2009, 101-103). It can be somehow understood as a 'rite of passage' that would lead individuals out of liminal situations (Van Gennep 1981). Former captives also developed their own strategies for reintegration: they carefully constructed their narratives and reinterpreted their captivity experiences, often with common objectives in mind. For instance, when facing civil courts and the Inquisition, they defended their steadfast adherence to the Christian faith, or provided justifications if they had deviated. In dealings with royal institutions, they presented certain actions performed during captivity as acts of merit and service. Or in their interactions with neighbors and readers, authors' narratives reshaped their identities with the aim of reintegrating into Christian society. To achieve this, the authors needed to filter and model their experiences.

Ana María Rodríguez-Rodríguez discusses a 'triple negotiation' in the writing process involving three conundrums around otherness that authors must face. Firstly, the authors negotiate with themselves, grappling with the changes they suffered during the captivity experience. Secondly, they must consider the text's potential readers, those who either approve or disapprove of the author's reintegration into the receiving Christian society. To achieve this, the author needs to align with their audience's preconceived ideas by reproducing the views of Islam and captivity in the Hispanic collective imaginary. Last, Islam itself is characterized through stereotypes in order to control the fear of the unknown and to dominate it (2013, 15). Therefore, according to Rodríguez-Rodríguez, the reproduction of the slavery experience in the former captives' autobiographies aims to make their reintegration into the Christian world easier. So, by describing their experiences of enslavement, former slaves established their own identity without ambiguity and reaffirmed their sense of belonging to the community where their works were written and received. The issue would arise when the information drawn from the collective imaginary or textual tradition used by former captives to achieve their purpose did not necessarily match their lived experiences.

Jean-Claude Laborie puts it in these terms when talking about the captivity texts of the redeeming orders:

We hypothesize that they are the site of exemplary narrative modeling of the captivity experience. Modeling that makes perceptible an underlying or implicit structure in the other individual narratives of captivity. The repetitiveness of the Trinitarian narrative devices must be read as a singular encoding of the identity ordeal that was captivity among the barbarians in the 17th and 18th centuries (2016, 23).

On the other hand, however, there is room for exceptionality and the circulating prejudices that they reproduce in their narratives are not immutable. On the contrary, the border experience can help to modify them and to create new ones, while there may also be room to circulate positive images (Pardo Molero 2011, 300). Hence, one might question whether these soldier autobiographers constantly portray their encounters with Islamic societies as confrontations and whether their status as slaves might have influenced these descriptions.

4. *The Modeling of Islam: Tradition and Experience*

In the texts of the three Iberian soldiers we are analyzing, we can find extensive descriptions of the environment and the societies where they spent their captivity. Without a doubt, Galán provides the richest one, while Pasamonte's depictions are sparser and more concise. Mascarenhas offers a detailed description of Algiers, but mentions little about other places he went to as a galley rower.

In fact, both Mascarenhas and Galán devote a part of their respective books exclusively to describing Algiers' urban landscape. Mascarenhas inserts it into his text's second part, which takes the form of a treatise (1627, 34-61); while Galán does so in a brief chapter titled 'Del sitio de Argel y distrito de su reino y planta' (2011, 57-59).[16] This emphasis on Algiers could reflect the concern generated in the Hispanic Monarchy by the city's alliance with the Ottoman Empire. It is said that in the early modern Mediterranean, Algiers became the representation of captivity itself, the 'ladronera de la cristiandad' (De Bunes Ibarra 1989, 150). In this context, it is not by chance that the descriptions of Algiers by former slaves mainly focus on the city's defensive structures and offensive potential. Although those accounts diverge in length and detail, they all focus on the same elements: they cover the wall and the moat, the quay, the bastions of walls, the forts outside walls, garrison houses, and the *alcazaba* (citadel). The form and content of those descriptions could be copied from the treatises on Africa that were already in circulation. For instance, researchers agree that these descriptions could be partially reproduced from Sosa's *Topographia* (Camamis 1977, 243-244; Voigt 2008, 220-221). Even if they had been direct witnesses, it was common among popular autobiographers to intersperse other people's texts 'to the extent that, sometimes, the author seemed more like a compiler' (Amelang 2009, 119).

Moreover, information about the enemy's military forces is also generally common. When Galán discusses the campaigns of Cuco and Labez or Wallachia to which he had to go with his master, he tries to explain the Ottoman army's organization and battle strategies during the war (2011, 47-51). However, he is even more specific with the corsair warfare, which he knows from his position as a rower, and he describes corsairs' way of acting and attacking. As Juan Francisco Pardo has noted, during interrogations of former captives before civilian authorities it was common to assess the state of the enemy's military morale, the condition of its defenses, the quality of its combatants and armaments, or the stability of the regime (2011, 300). This information was useful for the authorities, and having it was an added value for the captive, who was inserted into a broader network of communication.

These descriptions of the North African city are often followed by calls to conquest. After an idyllic description of the Algerian gardens, Mascarenhas concludes: 'que permita o Ceo seja ainda desta Coroa' (1627, 50).[17] Still one finds statements such as 'mais abayxo outros quarenta passos està outra porta, que he a principal de Argel, pela qual espero em Deos que esta Cidade ha de ser entrada, & ganhada, & em cima della arvorados os estandartes de Christo nosso Senhor' (41);[18] or through the Babaloete gate there is 'huma praya pequena por onde pòde entrar hũa Galé' (46).[19] In these arguments for conquest, the situation of Christian slaves plays an essential role. In this sense, the influence of the slave condition on these descriptions is evident because they focus on the spaces where Christian people suffered in captivity. Besides the houses

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[16] (On the siege of Algiers and the district of its kingdom and layout).

[17] (May Heaven grant that it may one day be of this Crown).

[18] (That of Babazon is the main gate, through which God will give us, I hope, to penetrate the city and to conquer it and to raise at its summit the banners of our Lord Jesus Christ).

[19] (A small beach through which a galley can enter).

or gardens where they worked, the predominant spaces described are the baths and prisons, portrayed as impoverished places (Mascarenhas 1627, 37-38). Hospitals (33), churches, chapels and Christian taverns (55) are also mentioned. The reader gets to know about Algiers and some of its places because they are related to the suffering of enslaved people. It is common to find passages naming the spaces in the city where Christian slaves were tortured, especially outside gates or walls (Mascarenhas 1627, 28; Galán 2011, 411). Therefore, conquest is presented as the sole solution to the Christians' captivity, highlighting the failure of rescue mechanisms.

Furthermore, both Pasamonte and Galán arrived in Istanbul during their captivity, but only Galán describes it. It seems that the further one moved away from the western Mediterranean, the less accurate information could be accessed. There was more room for imagination when describing eastern territories (Fernández Lanza 2006, 75-77). In this city, he stops at mosques, gardens, 'la casa del Gran Turco',[20] squares, the zoo, markets and the *alcaicería* (street market usually associated with the sale of silk), with such a variety of goods that 'parece que todo el mundo está reducido allí' (Galán 2011, 99).[21] He does not forget the shipyards where they built the Turkish galleys, 'las Cámaras',[22] the towers, the wall and the port of Istanbul. He deduces: 'No parece obra de bárbaros sino de gente la más curiosa del mundo, y digo bárbaros en cuanto a la fe que profesan, porque en lo demás aparte de ello y en su gobierno nos hacen ventaja en muchas cosas y en conservar sus vasallos con moderadas cargas' (98).[23] If, as is usual in treaties, the intricate urbanism of North African Islamic societies is associated with barbarism, here it is not. For Galán, Istanbul reflects the civility of its inhabitants. In his writing, he only reproves them for the faith they profess.

Indeed, the people of these cities are also described. Arabs, Jews, 'moros', 'turcos', 'turcos de oficio' or Moriscos, the people with whom he had to co-exist and interact in daily life, appear in the writings. The descriptions of these individuals and, above all, the descriptions of the social relationships they established with them are fundamental in texts. Nevertheless, we cannot overlook the generalization of stereotypes in these descriptions. Following Said's thesis, in its act of 'production' of Algiers and its society, the stereotyped characterization of the enemy facilitates the process of domination and controls the fear of the unknown (2003). Models created in the Middle Ages were adopted by early modern authors, also former captives, perpetuating ideas about Muslims that had dominated European thought for centuries. It was a lengthy process in which Muslims were negatively homogenized from an ethnocentric perspective. At the same time, it served as the mirror image of Christians' positive self-image (Corrales 2002, 35). Nevertheless, other researchers have highlighted how these stereotyped descriptions co-exist with ambivalence and instability within the texts when the authors faced a reality that cannot be reduced to pre-established models (Rodríguez-Rodríguez 2013, 87).

In the three texts, we find portrayals of Muhammad as a fraudulent prophet. In general, his followers are described as being false, hypocritical, cowardly, ambitious and lustful. Islam is depicted as a violent religion that is too permissive on sexual matters. Muslims were characterized as radical enemies of Christians, an idea expressed through expressions such as 'the Turk will help a suffering dog before he helps a Christian', and through descriptions of certain places as a 'slaughterhouse of Christians' or a 'savage and brutal court' (Gramaye 1998, 299). These

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[20] (the house of the 'Great Turk').

[21] (it seems the whole world is reduced there).

[22] (the Chambers).

[23] (It does not seem to be the work of barbarians, but of the most industrious people in the world, and I say barbarians in terms of the faith they profess, because in everything else besides that and in their government, they are ahead of us in many things and in maintaining their vassals with moderate burdens).

images were created by ecclesiastical elites and members of redeeming orders. Sosa's *Topographia* (1612) is an excellent example because it profusely displays all these stereotypes, which were also used by former captives. Galán speaks of 'gente sin ley y sin palabra' (2011, 83)[24] and how they 'tienen muchas ignorancias' (118).[25] Nor do they hesitate to highlight the materialistic dimension of their religion: 'Mi amo, con la buena gana que tenía de dinero …' (55).[26] Mascarenhas, who draws most extensively on this imaginary, speaks of their superstitions – '… & com esta feytiçaria, ou sacrificio, que fazem ao diabo, cuydão os miseraveis enganados, que lhes da vento, para passarem mais depressa o estreyto' (1627, 25) –,[27] their sins – 'sodomia, onzena, & roubos, forças, & mortes, sendo hum açougue, & puro tormento de Christãos' (50) –,[28] as well as their lack of justice – 'sendo assim, que elles ao renegado, que quer fugir, ou foge para terra de Christãos se o apanhaõ o engáchão logo sem apelação, nem agravo' (66).[29] The general rhetoric of hatred against Islam in this literature is justified, once again, by the suffering of Christian captives. In this context, references to hell and the devil, associating them with Algiers and Muslims, are very recurrent: 'El demonio hacía su oficio tentador, poniéndome por delante los trabajos que había de pasar y la libertad … que gozan los renegados' (Galán 2011, 35).[30]

In general, there is confusion between the terms 'Turks' and 'Moors', although some texts attempt to differentiate them. This confusion leads to the definition of an indivisible anti-Christian Muslim identity (Corrales 2002, 36). However, they do make distinctions among certain components of the Islamic community. For instance, the attention paid to Moriscos stands out. In fact, the texts were written immediately before or only a few years after their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula. Despite the negative image of Moriscos as being the greatest harassers of Christianity when they went to North Africa, both before and after expulsion, a certain proximity can be appreciated in texts. This could explain why some authors preferred Moriscos to other groups from Muslim North Africa. For instance, Pasamonte acknowledges that, although they wanted to beat them up, 'si no fuera por un mudéjar que se llamaba Hazi Salem, cierto nos los daban' (2015, 181).[31] This is surprising given the image that was disseminated, which historiography has repeated, of Moriscos as 'expatriates settled in the cities of North Africa where they became one of the most violently anti-Christian groups among the societies making up Islamic North Africa' (Hess 1968, 7).

In Islamic society, Christians experienced varying levels of acceptance or rejection. The renegades, who renounced their Christian faith and embraced Islam, were the most integrated and frequently depicted figures in these three narratives. Renegades are problematic figures because they represent one of the great dangers of captivity: the abjuration of faith. At the same time, they also represent one of the great tests to be overcome by the captive. The reasons for the conversion of those renegades are rarely delved into. Even if some of those reasons are named, they are stereotyped and simplified. Sufferings are mentioned: 'Al fin me libró Su Divina Majestad por su piedad inmensa y no me dejó caer en la ceguedad y abismo en que están metidos tantos bautizados, atollados en la mala seta del falso Mahoma, perdiendo miserablemente las

[24] (lawless people whose word is worth nothing).

[25] (are very ignorant).

[26] (My master, with his hunger for money …).

[27] (By this witchcraft or this sacrifice they make to the devil, these naive wretches believe that they make the wind blow so they can cross the strait faster).

[28] (Sodomy, usury, robbery, violence, murder and provoking massacre and the real martyrdom of Christians).

[29] (If they catch a renegade trying to escape to a Christian country, they hang him without any trial).

[30] (The devil was doing his tempting work, putting before me the troubles I had to go through and the freedom … that the renegades enjoy).

[31] (If it were not for a Mudejar named Hazi Salem, they would have beaten us).

almas por redimir la vejación de los cuerpos' (Galán 2011, 28).[32] The danger of death is also brought up: 'o patram Pieres, vendo que o outro estava à morte, & elle como livre não podia escapar de o queymarem determinou de renegar, & fazerse Janizaro' (Mascarenhas 1627, 80),[33] or the opportunities to return to Christianity:

Con la libertad que gozan los renegados, cuando llegan a robar a tierra de cristianos, con facilidad se pueden quedar en tierra a pedir misericordia a los señores inquisidores, como algunos lo han hecho, y son zancadillas y redes que tiende el maldito para cegarlos con vicios sensuales y prosperidad de hacienda, y amor de mujer e hijos los ciega … y vienen a morir en pecado. (Galán 2011, 35)[34]

Youth, fear of never being rescued, greed, persuasion, force, or even drunkenness are also some of the reasons these people may have given for abjuring. However, abjuration did not always mean abandoning the intention to return to their homes. Therefore, one of the commonplaces the renegade captives resorted to in their confessions once they returned to Christianity was that they had only outwardly adhered to the new religion. That is, they were still Christian at heart and tried to observe the most important prescriptions of Christianity (Fiume 2009, 95). The frequent presence of false renegades and apostates in captivity narratives may have provided some comfort and a sense of stability to the captives in Barbary and to Christian readers who were horrified by the abjuration of Christians. Galán met a renegade who 'todas las veces que llegaba a platicar conmigo me daba a entender que había renegado fingidamente y que en lo interior era cristiano … y decía tenía esperanza de volver a tierra de cristianos' (2011, 37).[35] Mascarenhas recounts that a cleric confessed many renegades, men and women, who were not true renegades at heart (1627, 32).

An important question arises in these situations: is there apostasy if only the body is present but not the soul? That is, if it is just pretend. In most cases, the Inquisition did not condemn the renegades who returned to Christianity and allowed them to reintegrate after they confirmed their Catholic faith. In fact, 'in European thought, the conscience of simulation has a robust tradition: it was formed in the sixteenth century during the religious battle of the Protestant Reformation' (Fiume 2009, 95). Thus, honest and useful dissimulation was accepted. So, in this sense, we find in the writings the figure of the renegade who is a victim because he is killed amidst suffering when he is caught after attempting to flee. This martyrdom can be interpreted as reintegration into the Christian church before his death.

In any case, for a slave, abjuration did not mean a direct promotion to freedom either. For instance, in Mascarenhas' text, is told the story of some renegates who had served a Turkish man and who, after his death, according to his will, were freed (1627, 48). Other young renegades are still segregated to positions of dependeny, such as Mustafa, a Fuencarral native, who was forced to be a eunuch and serve the Sultana (Galán 2011, 93). Even Mascarenhas recounts the case of a young Spanish boy who abjured without permission and 'O Patram quando soube, que

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[32] (In the end, His Divine Majesty saved me by His immense mercy and did not let me fall into the blindness and abyss in which so many baptized are stuck in the evil sect of the false Mohammed, miserably losing their souls to redeem the vexation of their bodies).

[33] (Seeing that he had killed him and that he would not escape the executioner, the master Pierre decided to recant and become a Janissary).

[34] (With the freedom that the renegades enjoy, when they come to rob the land of Christians, they can easily stay on the land to ask for mercy from the inquisitors, as some have done, and these are traps and nets that the Devil tends to blind them with sensual vices and material prosperity, and the love of wife and children blinds them … and they come to die in sin).

[35] (Every time he came to talk to me, he made me understand that he had pretended to be a renegade and that inside he was a Christian … and he said that he hoped to return to Christian land).

elle renegara sem sua licença, & contra sua vontade, o vendeo logo a hum ferreyro muyto mao homem por se vingar delle' (1627, 62).[36] These testimonies shed light on the varied situations of servitude that existed in the early modern Mediterranean.

On the other hand, we see the presence of several renegades who had already enjoyed social promotion, had managed to buy ships and had even become trusted men of the Pasha. The most integrated figure is the renegade who becomes a corsair or climbs the rungs of political power. There we see a renegade who has already completely broken away from Christianity because he is profiting by attacking it through privateering. Beyond the religious conflict, privateering could indeed be a lucrative activity, mainly when the renegade corsairs used their knowledge of European coasts or adopted the language and clothing of Christians to conceal their true identity during corsair actions. Moreover, the practice of privateering against Christians could be a powerful mechanism of integration into host societies. This is because they were acting to the detriment of the Christian society from which they came, with which they were suspected of continuing to have affinities.

Like the renegade condition itself, Christian captives' relationships with renegades in North Africa are characterized by ambivalence. Sometimes, renegades serve as a point of support. In such cases, the renegade is often portrayed as maintaining his Christian identity deep within: 'Diéronme cuatro heridas, y un renegado que me dio la que llevo en la mano derecha, que me era amigo, como me conoció, me defendió y salvó' (Pasamonte 2015, 155).[37] In other cases, his confrontation is absolute and characterized by the hate of the newly converted against Christian slaves: 'para que o tivesse ainda em conta de melhor renegado, & que de coraçam tomava aquella ley, o qual era que todos os Christáos, que tinha o banho, que serião oytenta, lhe querião fogir aquella noyte' (1627, 73).[38] In general, the attack on Christians is shown as a mechanism for integrating newly converted Muslims into Islamic society:

por se mostrarem observantes na ley, & inimigos do nome Christão, fazem em publico mil demonstra-çoens em odio do mesmo nome, & tudo vem a cahir sobre as costas dos pobres escravos, & depois em particular, alguns vem a ter satisfação com os cativos, dizendo-lhe, que se o não fizerem assim os terão por Christáos, & não se fiaram delles, nem lhe daràm lugar para em algum tempo fugirem, & se reduzirem à Fé Catholica: mas tudo he mentira: porque estes vivem com Mouros, & com Christáos, & menos se pòde fiar delles, pelo que cada dia vemos. (65)[39]

Meanwhile, this last quote shows very effectively one of the anxieties and distrusts around the renegade's liminal state between Christianity and Islam, and the difficult identification of what they really were: 'não se pòde saber se morreo Mouro, se Christão, Deos nosso Senhor o julgarà conforme sua tenção' (64),[40] or 'huma vez dizia, que era Mouro, & outra Christão, &

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[36] (when the master learned that he had recanted without his permission and against his will he immediately sold him to a very bad man for revenge).

[37] (They gave me four wounds and the renegade who gave me the one I carry in my right hand, who was a friend of mine, as he recognized me, he defended me and saved me).

[38] (To convince his master that he was the best renegade in the world and that he had taken religion sincerely, he revealed a secret: all the Christians in the slave's prison wanted to escape that night).

[39] (To present themselves as faithful to their religion and enemies of the Christian name they do in public a thousand demonstrations of hatred against this very name and everything falls on the backs of the poor slaves. Then, some justify themselves in private to the captives, saying that if they did not act, there would be no confidence in them, and they would have no occasion to flee to the Catholic faith. But these are nothing but lies because these men live with the Moors and with the Christians, and it is impossible to trust them).

[40] (No one knows whether he died a renegade or a Christian: God will judge his intention).

assim nem os Mouros o recolhião, nem os Christáos (83).[41] Through the representation of this renegade 'liminality' these former captives attempted to redeem their own. So it is not strange that they wrote against it: 'Dicen que se puede salvar el renegado que en el corazón tiene a Cristo aunque esté circuncidado y vista y viva según la secta de Mahoma … y otros semejantes errores' (Galán 2011, 55).[42]

Muslims, however, were not always rigidly portrayed as radical antagonists. Popular writings also include mitigating factors with respect to prejudices and stereotypes. Diego Galán, for instance, observes and appreciates the virtues of Turkish people, whom he admires. Indeed, when comparing the two manuscripts of this work, Ana María Rodríguez-Rodríguez noted that Galán added anti-Turkish passages that brought him closer to the predominant ideological imaginary in Christian society (2013, 37). Besides, James Amelang had already highlighted the 'particularly pronounced ethnographic dimension' in the work of Galán. He was aware that his low social status allowed him to observe things that were hidden from those captives belonging to the elites, who were much more closely watched during their captivity (2009, 11). So, he gives very extensive descriptions of Islamic customs and even admires what he sees. He marvels at Turkey and his journey there, and even briefly considers the perspective that Muslims held of Christians: 'Porque les parecía a ellos que los cristianos son como demonios, feos y de mala ley' (2011, 55).[43] According to Amelang, these brief examples confirm that the popular anthropological imaginary was not completely closed off to the positive perception of the enemy's Otherness (2009, 11).

There is room in these autobiographies, as scholars have remarked, for the circulation of 'more neutral, and even positive, images of Muslims' (Corrales 2002, 36). While religion often explains the behavior of captives and captors in these three autobiographies, the reality was more complex than a simple clash of civilizations in constant conflict: captives experienced various realities that cannot be easily explained by religion alone. Thus, in this context of religious and cultural confrontation and anti-Islamic propaganda, there are also fragments that describe experiences not exclusively marked by conflict.

As previously discussed, the literature presents unfaithful and cruel masters, dogs, traitors and materialists in constant war against the Christian slave. However, in these autobiographies, we find another aspect: the slave as an economic asset that requires investment and must be taken care of. For this reason, we find scenes in which the master shelters his slaves from the plague: 'Dio en Alejandría una cruelísima peste; mi amo nos puso a todos los esclavos en galera, porque no fuésemos por la ciudad, y íbamos dieciocho millas de allí a la boca del puerto a hacer el agua, de ocho a ocho días' (Pasamonte 2015, 157).[44] Likewise, galley officers may mistreat their rowers, but they depend on their labor to sail or to achieve victory in naval combat. So some scenes depict a more neutral coexistence during weeks at sea. Moreover, slaves were considered expensive commodities, and the chances of replacing those who died at sea were slim. Galán narrates an episode where masters started rowing with slaves to get out of a storm:

[41] (He called himself now a Moor, now a Christian, and was not welcomed by either Moors or Christians).

[42] (They say that the renegade who has Christ in his heart can be saved even if he is circumcised and dresses and lives according to the sect of Muhammad … and other similar errors).

[43] (It seemed to them that Christians are like demons, ugly and untrustworthy).

[44] (Alexandria suffered a terrible plague; my owner put all of us slaves in a galley so that we would not go through the city, and we went eighteen miles from there to the port entry to get supplies every eight days).

Tornaron a arbolar las galeras y sacaron de debajo de cubierta algunos remos que de ordinario se llevan de resguardo, y con dos remos puestos a las dos espaldas de la galera mi amo para gobernarla en lugar del timón, y amainada la antena puesta en crujía, y atada la vela a ella, y ayudándonos con los remos, y alzando el ferro tomó la galera un tantico de corriente y a gran prisa izaron el antena y cazaron la escota y, gobernando con los dos remos en lugar de timón, salió la galera como un delfín surcando las olas. (2011, 128-129)[45]

Finally, the reported social relationships could also go beyond the religious and political confrontation. When captives arrive in Algiers after being captured, Mascarenhas says that 'Nestes dias que estivemos por vender, nos vinham visitar muytos escravos velhos, & nos traziam de comer, & alguns nos davão dinheyro, com a mayor caridade do mundo' (1627, 27),[46] without distinguishing these former slaves' origins. When the new Christian slaves arrived in the city, moreover, renegades approached them to find out where they were from and to ask them for news of their country (65). The relationship between masters and slaves was not constantly characterized by violence either, because it is said that the masters trusted older slaves (Pasamonte 2015, 151). Even their interests coincided when Pasamonte speaks of a subject that 'no convenía ni para la chusma ni para el patrón' (184).[47] Moreover, slaves in North Africa could come to meet Muslim former captives who had returned from captivity in Christian lands, which could generate situations of empathy: 'Y quiso Dios que el compañero que estaba hablando con él había estado cautivo en Nápoles quince años y sabía lengua italiana …, que había estado cautivo y sabía de bien y de mal' (Galán 2011, 82).[48]

   Thus, in a frontier society, such as Algiers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, all sorts of relationships developed. These relationships, albeit forced in the case of the captured and enslaved people, also created more neutral and even positive links that are evident in these former captives' writings despite their efforts to align themselves with a hegemonic discourse of confrontation against the Islamic Other that the texts aimed to (re)construct. In the end, these relationships could go beyond religious differences.

5. *Conclusions*

In the early modern Mediterranean, many people were captured and enslaved due to ongoing border conflicts between Christianity and Islam. As discussed in this paper, by examining these captives' autobiographical accounts, we can approach their experiences and the complex dynamics of slavery in the Mediterranean. The three authors featured in this work had lived in Islamic societies as slaves but later returned to Christianity (particularly the Hispanic Monarchy), either through escape or rescue. As a result, they found themselves in a state of liminality – a transitional phase characterized by their position as captives in Islamic lands, coexisting and surviving among the enemy, and later reintegrating into Catholic society upon their return. The transition these authors experienced

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[45] (The galleys were rigged again, and some oars were taken from under the deck, which are usually carried for safety, and my master put two oars on the two backs of the galley to steer it instead of the rudder, and the mast was lowered and set in the center of the galley and tied the sail to it, and helping us with the oars, and raising the anchor the galley took on a little current and in great haste hoisted the mast and chased the sheet and, steering with the two oars in place of the rudder, the galley went out like a dolphin surfing the waves).

[46] (During the days when we were to sell, many old slaves came to visit us, they gave us food and some of them, the most charitable in the world, gave us money).

[47] (it was not convenient either for the rowers or the master).

[48] (And God willed that the fellow talking to him had been a captive in Naples for fifteen years and knew the Italian language …, he had been a captive and knew good and evil).

became the basis of the creative process that helped them resolve the complex situation they found themselves in. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the subaltern backgrounds of the three Iberian authors. In fact, by examining their texts, we can approach the literary techniques they used to express their marginalized position and establish their credibility as writers.

This essay has analyzed the autobiographical texts of three former Iberian slaves as subaltern writings, which served as tools for reintegration into Christian society. Specifically, I analyzed how these authors worked toward the goal of reintegration by employing strategies to portray Islam and their relationship with it. Edward Said argued that European cultural productions played a significant role in redefining the Islamic world as a way to cope with the fear they generated. By the sixteenth century, written works that reinforced these stereotypes were already in circulation. They served as a means to deal with what was perceived as an antagonistic culture.

Therefore, these individuals constructed their narrative as Spanish or Portuguese subjects who remained loyal to their Catholic faith despite the hardships of captivity in the territories of the infidels that were mainly described with the circulating discourses of it. However, these autobiographies also depict a more nuanced relationship with Islam. Amidst the intense coercion and oppression that characterized the slave societies, the authors reveal the complex and multifaceted social dynamics between masters and slaves. Captivity and enslavement were products of religious and imperial conflict, but far from merely exploiting this hostility, these autobiographies also reveal the captives' cross-cultural experiences and the know-how derived from them in the Mediterranean frontier.

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